

**“PUTTING A FOOT IN THE DOOR”: AN EXPLORATION
OF NGO ADVOCACY AND THE FRAMING OF
ASYLUM IN CANADA**

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Abstract: The last two decades have seen a movement within Canada towards refugee policies that increasingly focus on the restriction and exclusion of asylum seekers. One outcome of this has been the creation of a “culture of disbelief” within government discourse. This thesis explores how community-based and umbrella non-government organizations engage in advocacy and present an alternative discourse that challenges the increasingly exclusionary discourse and policy reforms of the Canadian government. Using frame analysis I analyze qualitative interviews with the directors and staff of six NGOs that work with and advocate for asylum seekers. My research highlights the frames, framing processes and organizing tasks involved in asylum advocacy. While identifying significant challenges, findings from my research also indicate that asylum advocates perceive their efforts to be effective in achieving “small wins” which mitigate worsening conditions facing asylum seekers in Canada.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
CHAPTER ONE: Introduction and Statement of Problem.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: Asylum Discourse and Policy in Context.....	11
Understanding Asylum in the Context of Forced Migration	11
The Emergence of Refugee Policy	14
Responding to Asylum Seekers: Canada and the Global North	16
Summary.....	29
CHAPTER THREE: Literature Review	32
Defining Advocacy	33
Canada’s Voluntary Sector and Government Relations	46
Advocacy for Asylum Seekers and Refugees.....	50
Refugee and Asylum Advocacy in Canada	57
Summary.....	59
CHAPTER FOUR: Research Design and Methods.....	63
Theoretical Framework.....	63
Methodology	64
Methods.....	68
Selecting the Sample.....	68
Data Collection	71
Data Analysis.....	77
CHAPTER FIVE: Analysis and Discussion.....	79
Part I: Transforming Dominant Discourse through Collective Action Frames.....	81
1) Increasing Xenophobia as a Result of Negative Government Language	83
2) Canada’s Doors are Closing	89
3) A Fair System for All Refugees	94
The Challenges of Transforming Discourse and Advancing Frames	97
Part II: Organizing in an Effort to Influence Government.....	102
Playing the Politics	104
Maintaining Relations with Decision-makers.....	107

The Challenges of Direct Advocacy	110
Internal Debate Among Advocates	112
Organizing with Asylum Seekers	116
Mobilizing Support: Using Indirect Advocacy to Pressure Government	119
Collective Action: Opportunities and Challenges.....	122
Summary	131
CHAPTER SIX: Conclusions	134
Implications for the Future.....	141
References.....	145
APPENDIX A: Description of Organizations	158
APPENDIX B: Sample Interview Questions.....	163

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction and Statement of Problem

In a world where asylum seekers are increasingly criminalized as “illegal migrants” and “bogus refugees,” refugee advocates have a critical role to play in challenging restrictive government policies and discourse. Despite the fact that refugee advocates have been actively engaged in Canadian politics for over fifty years, research examining their struggles and the gains they have made has historically been very limited. This thesis is an effort to expand knowledge of refugee advocacy by directly exploring the methods and strategies employed by organizations working on a daily basis with asylum seekers who arrive in Canada from around the world. Relying on frame analysis as advanced within social movement theory, my thesis focuses attention on *how* community-based and umbrella non-government organizations (NGOs) engage in asylum advocacy. Using frame analysis allows me to explore the struggle over the production of mobilizing and counter-mobilizing ideas and meanings (McAdam, McCarthy & Zald 1996: 6). Specifically, I document the frames advocates develop and explore strategies regarding the framing process; this provides insight into how advocates challenge dominant discourse regarding the arrival of asylum seekers and how strategies of framing change in response to the impact NGO advocates perceive they are having on policy and public opinion. This exploration also provides insight into how advocacy strategies are affected by various external factors such as the political opportunity structure and resource constraints.

Individuals seeking asylum in Canada have been routinely constructed by the Canadian government as “problematic” through both discourse and policy. In June of 2010 the

government approved the most recent changes to Canada's refugee policy with the "Balanced Refugee Reform Act" (Bill C-11). These reforms were tabled by Minister of Citizenship, Immigration, and Multiculturalism Jason Kenney. In explaining the need for reforms, Minister Kenney stated that this bill "...will resolve the problems that are crippling our broken asylum system."¹ According to the Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) website, the existing asylum system is "crippled by an ever-increasing number of new unfounded claims."² The website goes on to argue that reforms are necessary to discourage people from using the asylum system as a way to "jump the immigration queue" and as a disincentive for those who make asylum claims in order to prolong their stay in Canada.³ This focus on fraudulent claims and a broken refugee system is not a new phenomenon within government discourse and policy. Since the 1980s and 90s there has been a distinct move towards reconstructing asylum seekers arriving in Canada as "undeserving" and criminal system abusers. As "bogus refugees" they are accused of being "unscrupulous, queue-jumping economic migrants tainted with the suspicion of criminality" (Pratt & Valverde 2002: 138). Understood primarily as economic migrants and thus falling outside of the legal definition of a refugee, the dominant discourse focuses attention on bogus refugees who seek admission to Canada by fraudulently claiming refugee status (Pratt 2005: 96). This sharply contrasts with the idea of the "deserving" and "genuine" refugee victim who exists beyond our national borders. Pratt argues that genuine refugees are recognized as those who have been forced to leave a country through no personal fault of their own in order to avoid

¹ <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-eng.do?m=/index&nid=540079>

² <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/faq/refugees/ref-reform-faq.asp#changes>

³ <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-eng.do?m=/index&nid=540079>

state-sanctioned persecution. The emphasis here is on the lack of choice and the involuntariness of the move (Pratt 2005: 92).

Among scholars of asylum there is general agreement that asylum policies are shaped by a “complex configuration of national interests, international norms, and morality” (Steiner 2003: 181). In exploring the process through which immigration policies are created, a number of scholars have mapped the movement towards restrictive state policies that exclude, criminalize, deter and contain individuals attempting to claim asylum (Matas & Simon 1989; Nyers 2006; Pratt 2005; Pratt & Valverde 2002; Price 2009). This literature further critiques the mounting discourse that positions asylum seekers as bogus, criminals, disease-carriers, illegal’s, terrorists and economic migrants who are “taking advantage” of the system (Every 2006; Every & Augoustinos 2008; Pupavac 2008). In light of this negative discourse, scholars point to the pervasive “culture of disbelief” that exists in Western countries towards asylum seekers (Bohmer & Shuman 2007; Every & Augoustinos 2008). Responding to the rising number of claims since the 1970s and intense public backlash in countries such as the United States and Britain, Matthew Price (2009) argues that the last fifteen years have been a period of crisis for asylum policy throughout the West. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has similarly stated its concern over the erosion of the entire concept of asylum (Koser 2001: 85).

Scholars have studied asylum advocacy through various approaches that include analyzing the frames that are advanced, exploring influence and efficacy and identifying unique challenges facing asylum advocates. Scholars engaged in this research debate the possibilities and limitations of advocacy that attempts to counter dominant discourse and

influence refugee policy. Central to this debate however, is the understanding that the “refugee production process” is a site of struggle between governments wanting to erect barriers to entry and NGOs and refugees wanting to tear them down (Hardy 2003: 473). While acknowledging this struggle, Jacqueline Bhabha (2002) argues that asylum advocates are uniquely positioned to give “a human, individualized account of the impact of terror and tyranny on those seeking safe haven within developed democracies” and identifies the necessity of advocacy which limits the impact of “restrictionist gate-keeping” by states (2002: 181). Valerie Shamash similarly suggests that advocates have a unique role to play in questioning the status quo and in working to “de-center hegemonic perceptions” that criminalize asylum seekers and undermine the efforts of those seeking protection as refugees (1998: 58). Furthermore, Garcia (2006) points to the importance of refugee and asylum advocates in Canada, suggesting that while they remain a minority within the broader population, they have been moderately successful in countering the mounting backlash against immigrants.

While Bhabha emphasizes the importance of asylum advocacy, she also suggests that the present climate of increasingly exclusionary and xenophobic impulses within developed states has made it particularly challenging for advocates to establish the host state’s obligation to protect based on recourse to human rights and international agreements (2002: 157). Early work by Tanya Basok (1996) similarly finds that refugee advocates have had little ability to influence or shape Canadian immigration policy and successfully challenge the increasing restrictions placed on asylum seekers. Basok defines the refugee field as one of the areas where the state has historically exercised ever-increasing control and concludes

that while Canadian refugee policy has “been subjected to pressures emanating both from the international humanitarian community and from domestic human rights groups” within the last quarter of a century, they have ultimately had only a minor impact (1996: 133).

My thesis takes this debate as a starting point to explore in greater detail *how* advocates attempt to limit efforts by the Canadian state to restrict asylum seekers and how they understand their role in this endeavour. Exploring the process through which advocates aim to transform and challenge government discourse and policy reforms is important as it provides insight into the methods and strategies that are held to be effective by advocates themselves. While numerous studies have identified the increasing restrictions and the negative discourse that serves to exclude asylum seekers, there is less attention on the alternative voices of resistance to this exclusion. This thesis fills this gap in the literature by identifying the frames constructed by advocates, exploring strategies of framing and considering the organizing methods NGOs adopt in their efforts to influence the discourse and policy reforms advanced by the Canadian government. To accomplish this I rely on a methodological and theoretical approach informed by frame analysis and social movement theory. This conceptual framework analyzes advocacy as a dynamic process and provides the tools to explore how NGO advocates perceive the challenges and possibilities of policy advocacy as they engage in counter-hegemonic struggle.

My interest in asylum seekers and advocacy stems from personal experience working and living at Romero House, a non-profit transitional housing and settlement agency in the west end of Toronto that provides settlement services for asylum seekers. Part of my role as an intern at Romero House was public education - where I explained Canada’s system of

refugee protection and the importance of our in-land claims process to students, other organizations and interested members of the public.⁴ In these discussions, and in conversations with my family and friends, I often responded to questions and concerns about “bogus refugees.” These conversations sparked a desire to learn more about the efforts made by advocates to challenge this framing of asylum seekers, as well as the possibilities and limitations of advocacy at a systemic level that attempts to challenge the hegemonic view of asylum seekers as “problematic.”

Asylum advocates in Canada include a range of individuals and organizations, from lawyers, academics and church groups to community centres, legal clinics, and settlement providers; I focus my research specifically on the experiences of community based settlement agencies and the umbrella advocacy organizations to which they belong. On a personal basis, this focus made sense because of connections gained through my previous work with Romero House. However, I also based this decision on literature indicating that the front-line service delivery work of these organizations affords them a unique position when it comes to knowledge and understanding of policy implications (DeSantis 2010; Krekoski 2009). This research led me to hypothesize that NGOs working with refugees and asylum seekers can play an important role in providing an alternative discourse to that of the Canadian government, which continues to position asylum seekers arriving in Canada as bogus and “economic migrants abusing the system” (Escalante 2004; Pratt & Valverde 2002). It further led me to question *how* NGOs engage in advocacy, by specifically asking what are the

⁴ Through the in-land claims process individuals make a claim for refugee status after their arrival in Canada. This operates in tandem with an ‘overseas’ program which enables refugees to make their claim and be accepted while outside of Canada.

strategies and processes involved. The alternative discourse advanced by NGOs arises in part because the individuals who make up these organizations work and struggle alongside asylum seekers on a daily basis and are intimately aware of the challenges and realities they face. Moreover, many of those employed at these organizations arrived in Canada as refugees themselves. Their role and experience thus affords them a unique position as mediators between government, media, the general public and refugees.

On-going changes to Canada's voluntary sector have raised concerns over the ability of non-profit organizations⁵ to engage in policy advocacy. A limited number of scholars in Canada have explored changes to the sector resulting from the shift towards neoliberalism in the 1990s and, more specifically, the impact of these changes on advocacy (see Bridges 2002; Elson 2007, 2007/2008). However there is a need for more in-depth analysis of the impact changes have had on the sector, specifically within the context of policy advocacy. My research serves to deepen our knowledge in this area by exploring how organizations that work with refugees and asylum seekers attempt to overcome barriers and continue their policy advocacy efforts. By researching organizations that continue to engage in advocacy despite the challenges, my thesis provides important insight into how NGOs navigate the space for policy advocacy in Canada.

Within the field of refugee advocacy, scholars have increasingly focused attention on the discourses that challenge the hegemonic framing of refugees and asylum seekers (see Cook 2010; Every & Augoustinos 2008; Pupavac 2008). However, few studies have

⁵ According to the National Survey of Non-profit and Voluntary Organizations (NSNVO) non-profit organizations are those that are non-governmental (i.e. institutionally separate from governments), non-profit distributing, self-governing, and formally incorporated or registered under specific legislation with provincial, territorial or federal governments (Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, 2003).

examined asylum and refugee advocacy in the Canadian context. My research makes a contribution to this literature by specifically focusing on *how* alternative discourses are advanced in practice, and the strategies of contestation used to challenge and transform hegemonic discourses and restrictive policies in Canada. Exploring how alternative discourses are advanced by NGOs as they engage in policy advocacy provides valuable insight into civil society/government relations in Canada over the last decade. Exploration of this relationship is significant in that it demonstrates the ability of organizations in civil society to impact government discourse and policy processes. This makes a contribution to both the policy advocacy literature and the literature on Canada's voluntary sector.

In Chapter Two, I set the context for exploring counter-framing efforts of NGOs by identifying the dominant government framing of asylum seekers. I also review how civil society advocates within Canada have historically responded to government discourse and policy reforms. However I begin the chapter by first identifying the emergence of international refugee policy and situating the category of asylum in relation to the broader concept of forced migration. While identifying the connection between government framing of asylum-seekers and restrictive policy reforms, I explore how countries in the Global North, in particular Canada, have framed asylum seekers and perpetuated a culture of disbelief. Although I am specifically exploring how the culture of disbelief has taken shape throughout the Global North, it is important to point out that the majority of refugees remain close to their country of origin, thus remaining within the Global South (Koser 2001). Furthermore, despite the focus on restrictions within the West, countries from all regions of the world have been increasingly moving towards protective border policies that attempt to

minimize the arrival of irregular migrants. Despite these realities, I have chosen to focus on Canada in the context of the Global North as I am particularly interested in exploring the response to what many scholars have identified as a “crisis” of asylum policy in the West (Bhabha 2002; Price 2009). In Chapter Three I review the literature on policy advocacy on behalf of marginalized communities. I focus specifically on Canada’s voluntary sector and advocacy with and on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers. Through this review I emphasize the importance of a theoretical framework that emerges from social movement theory. I then identify the contributions that my research makes to the organizational advocacy and the refugee advocacy literatures. In Chapter Four I discuss my research design, explaining in more detail the theory, methodology and specific methods used to complete my primary research. This is followed by Chapter Five, which presents a discussion and analysis of the data, and finally Chapter Six, in which I summarize key findings, make recommendations for future research and discuss the implications for NGOs working with refugees and asylum seekers.

My research findings provide insight into the process of NGO asylum advocacy and further identify how advocates have adapted and changed their strategies in response to their perceived effectiveness. Findings indicate that throughout the last decade NGOs have worked to maintain communication with government in order to mitigate restrictive policies and counter negative rhetoric. However, my research points to three challenges in particular that NGO advocates perceive to be undermining their ability to engage in effective policy advocacy. First, NGOs struggle to construct frames that resonate with government and mobilize broad public support. Second, there is a decreasing willingness on the part of

government to engage in consultation with civil society organizations. Third, changes to the structure of funding have affected the ability of NGOs to engage in policy advocacy.

Advocates emphasize that these challenges have significantly limited their ability to counter negative rhetoric around asylum seekers and influence the on-going changes being made to Canada's refugee system. Despite these challenges my findings reveal a sense of hope among NGO advocates over strategies of collective advocacy. Advocates also suggest that they have succeeded in achieving "small wins" within the policy arena, indicating that their efforts are effective in mitigating worsening conditions for asylum seekers.

CHAPTER TWO: Asylum Discourse and Policy in Context

Understanding Asylum in the Context of Forced Migration

Before exploring the role of NGO asylum advocates, it is important to understand the history of discourse and policy surrounding asylum seekers and determine how this has led to the emergence of a culture of disbelief. This chapter begins with a brief overview of the category of asylum and the emergence of international refugee policy, and then focuses attention on how Canada and other countries in the Global North have responded to the arrival of asylum seekers at their borders. The aim of this chapter is to identify how asylum seekers have historically been framed by the Canadian government and the rationale for this framing. After reviewing literature on government discourse and refugee policy reforms it will be evident that asylum seekers arriving in Canada have been historically constructed and framed as a threat to both national resources and security. Furthermore, research indicates that negative discourse has been used to justify restrictive policy reforms. Ultimately, this combination of negative discourse and restrictive policy reforms excludes asylum seekers from seeking protection in Canada and has resulted in the creation of a culture of disbelief.

To understand the contemporary reaction to asylum seekers arriving in Canada it is important to consider the broader historical context and the impact of economic processes, international agreements, as well as “historical and colonial migration pathways” (Brown 2005: 1). Individuals who migrate beyond their own borders are navigating through a system of categories and labels used by states and international organizations to define the experiences, expectations and possibilities of the migrant. Within the field of refugee studies

key debates examine and problematize definitions designed to classify various forced or involuntary migrants depending upon a number of legal and political categories (Brown 2005; Castles, Crawley & Loughna 2003). In practical terms, labels are important because they define the international responsibilities and the “identities” that are given to the individual (Brown 2005: 2).

Asylum has increasingly become a major political issue in many countries in the Global North (Castles & Miller 2009). While asylum seekers are only a small proportion of the world’s migrants, they carry enormous importance for the politics of receiving nations (Hamlin 2009: 10). As potential refugees, asylum seekers do not have official legal status and as a result are particularly vulnerable to the politics of immigration control. As a general definition, asylum seekers can be identified as people who cross borders into other countries in search of protection, but whose claim for official refugee status has not yet been decided (Castles & Miller 2009). An individual claiming asylum is appealing for recognition as a Convention Refugee as defined by the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Article One of the convention defines a refugee as an individual who,

... owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (U.N. 1951 Convention)

The vast majority of states, including Canada, use the definition provided in the Refugee Convention as a guideline in determining who qualifies for recognition as a refugee and who falls outside of this definition (Brown 2005). As of 2003, one hundred and forty-five nations had become signatories to the original 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Refugee

Protocol which expanded the definition of a refugee (Whittaker 2006: 6). While states are obligated under international law to protect those identified as refugees, it is important to note that no such obligation exists for asylum seekers (Brown 2005).

Asylum seekers are only a small component of a much broader phenomenon of global migration (Brown 2005). They fall into the category of “forced migrants,” which refers more broadly to all individuals who must flee their homes to escape persecution or armed conflict (Castles & Miller 2009). Accurate statistics are difficult to calculate given the size and changing nature of asylum seeking (Whittaker 2006). However, by the end of 2010 the UNHCR identified 43.7 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, reaching the highest number in 15 years. This number was composed of 15.4 million refugees, 837,500 asylum-seekers and 27.5 million internally displaced persons (UNHCR 2011a). According to the UNHCR from 1992-2001, 86 percent of the world’s refugees originated in developing countries, while these countries provided asylum to 72 percent of the global refugee population (cited in Gallagher 2003). Given this reality, Khalid Koser suggests that the challenge for the Global North is not that there are too many asylum-seekers but rather that “there are more people arriving than states are willing to accept” (2001: 89).

The number of asylum applications in the Global North increased from 13,000 per year in the 1970s to about 200,000 in 1985. After dipping slightly in the early 1990s, applications increased again from approximately 375,000 in 1997 to 625,000 in 2002 (Price 2009: 7). Since 2001 the number of asylum claims made in industrialized countries has dropped significantly (UNHCR 2011b). In North America, an estimated 78,700 new asylum applications were submitted in 2010, which was a four percent decrease from 2009.

According to the UNHCR the U.S was the single largest recipient of new asylum claims in 2010, followed by France, Germany, Sweden, and then Canada. Last year 23,200 claims for refugee status were made in Canada, which represented a 30 percent decrease from 2009 (UNHCR 2011b).⁶

The Emergence of Refugee Policy

In order to understand current domestic debate in Canada over the “genuine” refugee and “abusive” asylum seeker it is important to understand the international context in which the definition of a refugee was first formalized through policy. After World War Two, approximately 30 million people were displaced without any state protection (Carasco, Aiken, Galloway & Macklin 2007: 468). Despite the involvement of the international community, the assistance provided to these refugees consisted of only “rudimentary legal protection” (Harrison 2009: 19). Given the resulting failure of protection it was obvious that a voluntary, humanitarian resettlement refugee policy was impossible. Refugee obligations would need to be imposed on states (Matas & Simon 1989: 15). In 1945 the UNHCR was given the task in Geneva of constructing a concrete definition of “refugee.” This would be “a modern, legal enactment of the ancient tradition of furnishing asylum to anyone at risk and danger” (Whittaker 2006: 2). In July of 1951, after seven months of discussion, the Refugee Convention was eventually drawn up and published by the UNHCR (Whittaker 2006).

The Cold War marks a period of unique interest convergence between the desire of Western nations to “protect” individuals fleeing Communism and the needs of individuals

⁶ The UNHCR suggests that this decrease is linked to the lower number of Mexican and Czech asylum-seekers arriving in Canada since visas were implemented in July 2009. In their statistics from 2009 Canada was the third largest receiver of asylum claims, after the U.S and France (UNHCR 2011b).

escaping persecution. During the Cold War, asylum was viewed in distinct political terms and was used as a tool to embarrass communist states and in an effort to de-stabilize their governments (Keely 2001: 307). As Matthew Price explains, “Intertwined with foreign policy, asylum was a vehicle for expressing Western political values” (2009: 6). In this context “asylum” and “immigration” were distinct concepts where asylum specifically referred to those fleeing the Cold War and Communism (Gibney & Hansen 2003). Given this history, Rebecca Hamlin argues that the 1951 UN Convention definition was “historically contingent” and had the specific purpose of serving as a guideline for states in providing protection to the victims of Nazi and Soviet persecution (2009: 2).

By the 1960s and 70s the geographical and ideological focus of asylum had changed as the majority of refugees were now coming from developing countries in the Global South, particularly as a result of the decolonization of Africa (Koser 2001). Refugees from these areas were seen as “less desirable” as they were from regions that nations in the Global North identified as “over-populated and socially insecure countries with weaker economies” (Fekete 2001: 23). It was not until 1967, with the UN adoption of the *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees* that the scope of refugees was extended to include those persons seeking refuge from all areas of the world (Whittaker 2006: 5). The Protocol was related to the 1951 Convention in spirit and format but was an independent instrument (Whittaker 2006: 5). A statement by the UNHCR explained that the Protocol “fundamentally transformed the 1951 Convention from a document fixed in a specific moment in history into a human rights instrument which addresses contemporary forms of human rights abuse... called persecution” (cited in Whittaker 2006: 5). By the 1980s, asylum seekers were

coming directly to Europe and North America from conflict zones in Latin America, Africa and Asia (Castles & Miller 2009).

Responding to Asylum Seekers: Canada and the Global North

While Canada has fought to control the flow of spontaneous arrivals, the methods and rationale for doing so have changed over time. Prior to signing the Geneva Convention, Canada admitted refugees on an ad hoc basis. This practice allowed the Canadian government to determine which groups of refugees to assist, with assistance focused primarily on those groups fleeing Communist regimes (Lanphier 1981). The resettlement of these refugees relied on a massive undertaking which involved the federal government and the voluntary efforts of the non-governmental sector (Lanphier 1981:114). Despite their continued involvement in resettlement, many civil society organizations challenged the practice of ad hoc admittance and advocated to the state in an effort to influence Canada's acceptance of refugees. Writing in 1981, Elizabeth Winkler points to the importance of this work, looking specifically at the role voluntary agencies in the Catholic community played as they advocated for comprehensive refugee policies that would avoid what they saw as unsatisfactory ad hoc solutions (1981: 96). More recent research by Landolt and Goldring also points to the central role played by Canadian social activist and solidarity organizations in forcing the Canadian state to recognize and admit Chilean and Columbian refugees in the 1970s and 80s (2006: 2). Quoting Rochlin, they explain that for these groups, migration to Canada was "facilitated by the political confrontation between the Canadian state and progressive civil society organization's that fight for a fair policy towards refugees fleeing right wing dictatorships" (cited in Landolt & Goldring 2006: 15). Despite lobbying efforts,

the Canadian government did not sign on to the UN Convention and the 1967 Protocol until 1969.⁷ With the adoption of the Canadian Immigration Act in 1976 the Convention definition of “refugee” would eventually be incorporated into Canadian domestic law (Shoyele 2004: 549). The Act officially created a permanent inland refugee determination system that was based on international obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention (Pratt 2005: 91).

Complementing an extensive overseas resettlement program, this domestic determination system has been referred to as the “Cadillac System” of refugee determination (Hamlin 2009: 102). However, immediately following the implementation of the Act and the inland determination system, Canada proceeded to limit access both to the physical land and the system (Pratt 2005: 91). While, on the one hand, its objective was to fulfill Canada’s international obligation to accept genuine refugees, the Act also created rigid rules for individuals attempting to enter the country (Basok 1996). These rules reflect a broader concern over the threat that spontaneous arrivals of migrants would pose to state sovereignty (Macklin 2004/2005: 367). In the following years an increasing number of asylum claims were made in Canada. While approximately 1,000 asylum claims were made in 1980 (Harrison 2009: 34), this number had jumped to 25,000 in 1987 (Mangat 1995: 34). As the number of claimants increased rapidly throughout the 1980s the in-land determination system struggled to keep up. By 1986 the backlog in the refugee system exceeded 23,000 applications (Basok 1996: 141).

⁷ Canada’s delay in signing the refugee convention is explained by its fear that doing so would undermine its ability to deport refugees for reasons of national security (Pratt 2005: 83).

The increase in application numbers throughout the 1980s raised fears over the abuse of the system. Noting the mounting fears over “bogus” claimants, J.S. Mangat (1995) identifies a change in the attitude of many working within the determination system where they gradually turned against the acceptance of claims. Many NGOs and refugee advocate groups responded by criticizing the determination system for what they saw as a biased attitude towards refugees (1995: 47). Throughout the late 1980s and into the 1990s, Canada continued to revise its policy and procedures with the objective of decreasing the numbers of claimants arriving in Canada (Basok 1996). In her analysis of Canada’s evolving immigration system, Anna Pratt finds that during the 1980s the objective of identifying and extending protection to individuals fleeing persecution shifted to identifying, barring entry and removing those framed as “bogus” and “criminal” refugee claimants (2005: 92).

While many of the enforcement initiatives implemented at this time were justified by policy-makers and government as a means of protecting “genuine” refugees, Pratt argues that this period signals a shift towards exclusion based on neoliberal preoccupations with fraud, system abuse and the “crime-security nexus” (Pratt 2005: 92). This neoliberal discourse and the focus on security replaced the “explicitly racist, moralistic and ideological grounds for exclusion” which human rights doctrine had sought to delegitimize throughout the previous fifty years (Pratt 2005: 2). With the transition from welfare liberal to a neoliberal regime of governance, Pratt further argues that neoliberalism became dependent upon the construction of moralized categories of deserving and undeserving. These categories operated through the discretionary power of individuals working within the system (Pratt 2005: 93). As a result, the asylum seeker came to be labelled as the “epitome

of undeservedness” who “victimizes the state, threatens public safety, and jeopardizes the integrity of the system through false claims of deservedness” (Pratt 2005: 93). Pratt concludes that while Canada’s inland refugee determination system has won international recognition for its legal acknowledgement of the rights of refugee claimants, the Canadian government has simultaneously sought to ensure that as few claimants as possible actually succeed in reaching Canadian soil to benefit from this system (2005: 94).

A number of reforms to Canadian refugee policy were made in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These changes focused heavily on the deterrence of individuals seeking asylum and were rationalized through government framing which constructed asylum seekers as “undeserving” and “bogus,” along with public concern over the arrival of a boatload of 174 Sikh asylum seekers on Canada’s west coast in the summer of 1987. Reforms introduced during this period allowed the government to turn back ships in international waters that were suspected of carrying undocumented migrants without first determining if they had a refugee claim (Basok 1996), increased the power of immigration officers to detain and remove refugee arrivals (Harrison 2009: 36), imposed a fine on airlines if they failed to ensure the proper documentation of all their passengers, and allowed for the discretionary detention of asylum seekers believed to be a security or flight risk. Reforms also sought to strengthen state power to interdict travellers lacking proper documentation, deport those found ineligible for refugee status (Basok 1996) and create stricter standards for port-of-entry interviews as well as fingerprinting for all claimants (Hamlin 2009). These policies were framed by the Canadian government as necessary measures that would reduce the

opportunities for “system abusers” and “criminals” by introducing a tighter, tougher and more efficient managerial immigration regime (Pratt 2005: 104).

By June of 1993, only five months after the latest reforms under Bill C-46 had been introduced, the new legislation had produced a drop of 55 percent in the number of people making refugee claims in Canada (Basok 1996: 143). Immigration and refugee advocates actively responded to the reforms, mounting pressure through their lobbying efforts to keep the determination system fair and accessible (Garcia 2006). Garcia argues that their efforts were partly responsible for the removal of some of the more restrictive measures within Bill C-86, which had also been introduced in 1993. Advocates affiliated with church groups, universities, labour groups and NGOs “staged rallies, demonstrations, letter-writing campaigns, and various forms of civil disobedience to remind the state of its humanitarian and international obligations.” Garcia (2006) argues that while these voices were a minority within the population, their efforts were influential in countering the anti-immigrant backlash.

The Canadian approach of deterrence reflects broader trends throughout the Global North. Since the early 1990s all Western states have embraced as a chief policy goal the prevention of asylum seekers’ arrival at their frontiers or territory. Through this goal they have sought to avoid their responsibilities under the 1951 Refugee Convention; in doing so they escape the expenses of asylum processing, and pre-empt the possibility of political backlash by the arrival of large numbers of claimants (Gibney & Hansen 2003: 5). States have struggled to prevent the arrival of asylum seekers through the proliferation of asylum policies designed to reduce, deter and rationalize asylum claims and processing (Gibney &

Hansen 2003; Koser 2001: 90). Many of these reforms are grounded in a belief by policy-makers and those governing international migration that “voluntary” and “forced” migration are mutually exclusive categories (Van Hear, Brubaker & Bessa 2009: 2).

The struggle to identify and distinguish between political refugees and economic migrants (or forced and voluntary migrants) lies at “the heart of the asylum ‘crisis’” (Koser 2001; Loescher 2001). Attempting to respond to the “crisis” of asylum policy, researchers and analysts in the 1990s increasingly pointed to the blurring of forced and voluntary migration categories and the continuum that exists between them (Van Hear, Brubaker & Bessa 2009: 6). By 2000 the terms “mixed migration” and the “Migration-Asylum Nexus” were introduced by scholars in an effort to respond to the crisis in the international protection of refugees which stemmed from “the increasing perception by the governments and publics of western countries that large scale abuses of the asylum system were taking place” (Van Hear, Brubaker & Bessa 2009: 7). The term mixed migration emphasizes that refugees and other migrants move alongside each other through the same routes and using the same means of transport, while the Migration-Asylum Nexus argues that while “different in scope and nature, efforts to develop better systems for migration and for asylum go hand in hand. Asylum systems cannot function effectively without well-managed migration; and migration management will not work without coherent systems and procedures for the international protection of refugees” (UNGA cited in Van Hear, Brubaker & Bessa 2009: 7).

Despite efforts to capture the complexity of migration, the perception that the vast majority of those seeking asylum are actually economic migrants - “bogus” asylum-seekers in search of work rather than protection - has come to dominate both discourse and policy

(Koser 2001). This perception is grounded in part by the proliferation of temporary foreign worker programs in Europe and North America in the post-Cold war era that prioritize flexible labour and recruit noncitizen, temporary workers (Hennebry 2008: 343). Globalization has facilitated the growth of a migration industry based on exclusionary policies and powered by developments in communication and transportation. This migration industry is composed of recruitment organizations, communication and transportation service providers and other intermediaries such as banks, remittance transfer services, telephone companies, phone card companies and local businesses that serve migrants' needs (Hennebry 2008: 353). The growth of this migration industry has enabled asylum seekers to travel farther abroad in making their refugee claims. While these changes have led to increases in the number of individuals attempting to make asylum applications in the Global North, it has also commercialized the process and perpetuated beliefs about the "bogus" nature of many asylum claims. Speaking to the complex link between economic desperation and refugee status, Jacqueline Bhabha argues that there is a presumption of economically driven illegal immigration that automatically arises from the commercialized nature of trafficked or smuggled transportation (2002: 173). These concerns are used as justification for closing the doors to bogus refugees and economic migrants who should be using the "legitimate" temporary migrant and immigration channels.

Throughout the Global North attempts were made in the mid-1990s to reduce the number of asylum-seekers by imposing restrictive policy measures. These were initially successful, however numbers soon rebounded owing to an increasing reliance on human traffickers and smugglers - another side to the growing migration industry (Koser 2001: 90).

Khalid Koser argues that rather than “reducing numbers and introducing clarity to asylum flows, restrictive asylum policies have only introduced further complexity by blurring the distinctions...between economic migrants and political refugees, but now also between legal and illegal migrants” (2001: 90). In the current political climate it is increasingly difficult for asylum-seekers to overcome the obstacles placed in the way of arriving in host countries without the assistance of smugglers (Koser 1989: 92). The very “regime of deterrence” that governments have created through policies such as carrier sanctions, visas, and fortified borders has blocked all legal routes for those seeking asylum and leaves little recourse other than smugglers and human traffickers, creating a perpetuating cycle of “illegality” (Fekete 2001; Hamlin 2009; Koser 2001). Instead of providing protection for trafficked and smuggled victims who have often experienced human rights abuses, states have moved to deport them as illegal migrants, often without investigating their possible claims to asylum (Bhabha 2002: 173).

Huysmans argues that throughout the Global North, state discourses and policy reforms have increasingly located migration within the logic of security (cited in Crépeau & Nakache 2006: 4). While this trend towards the “securitization of migration” has been ongoing for several decades, it gained momentum in the aftermath of the events of 11th September, 2001 (Castles 2003; Crepeau & Nakache 2006; Ibrahim 2005: 167). Audrey Macklin argues that the September 11th terrorist attack both “cemented and intensified the nexus between the asylum seeker and criminality, finding its ultimate expression in the specter of the foreign terrorist” (2004/2005: 367). In March 2005, the UNHCR reported that since 2001, Western countries had experienced a 40 percent drop in incoming asylum

seekers (Crepeau & Nakache 2006: 3). According to the UNHCR, the increased security measures that have been implemented since these attacks indicate that “Refugees and asylum seekers [are] perceived as the agents of insecurity rather than its victims” (UNHCR 2006b as cited in Lansing 2007). Discourse which frames asylum seekers and refugees as security concerns has bolstered the need for exclusionary immigration legislation among countries of the Global North, including Canada (Ibrahim 2005: 164). In explaining the link that is made between security and migration, Bigo describes how various state actors have created the idea of a “risky and dangerous society”:

The professionals in charge of the management of risk and fear especially transfer the legitimacy they gain from struggles against terrorists, criminals, spies and counterfeiters towards other targets, most notably transnational political activists, people crossing borders or people born in the country but with foreign parents. (cited in Crépeau & Nakache 2006: 4)

This increasing focus on concern over national and global security is also evident within Canadian discourse and policy reforms. In June of 2002 the Canadian government implemented the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) which significantly impacted every area of immigration and refugee determination in Canada. Through IRPA, the Canadian Government accepted and reaffirmed the securitization of migration discourse and followed the trend of “Fortress Europe” in erecting barriers to immigrants and refugees (Ibrahim 2005: 179). While prior to this legislation the exclusion of asylum seekers focused on the threat posed to national security by organized crime and fraud, the tragic events of September 11, 2001 significantly shifted the focus to the specific threat of terrorism (Pratt 2005: 3). Rather than challenging the anti-immigrant and anti-refugee discourse that developed in response to the September 11th terrorist attacks, the Canadian government

“mobilized and affirmed fears by further entrenching associations between crime-security, fraud and new immigrants and refugees” (Pratt 2005: 3). Providing a critique of IRPA, the Maytree Foundation argued that it “...is much more about who cannot come to Canada and how they will be removed, than it is about who we will welcome, who we will protect and how we will do that” (cited in Harrison 2009: 35). A number of organizations joined the Maytree Foundation in publically criticizing IRPA, including Amnesty International, the Canadian Bar Association, the Canadian Council for Refugees, and the UNHCR (Harrison 2009: 35).

The policies that are created by government are influenced and shaped by dominant discourse. Ibrahim (2005) calls our attention to the link between discourse and policy by reflecting on the framing of IRPA by the Canadian government. This framing is evident in an excerpt from the overview of the Act provided by Citizenship and Immigration Canada:

...the proposed *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* and its regulations carry a dual mandate: closing the back door to criminals and others who would abuse Canada’s openness and generosity while opening the front door to genuine refugees and to the immigrants the country needs. New legislative provisions aim to better ensure serious criminals and individuals who are threats to public safety are kept out of Canada and, if they have entered the country, that they are removed as quickly as possible. (CIC 2002b as cited in Ibrahim 2005: 179)

This discourse, which focuses on securitization, establishes the necessity of new enforcement activities, tools and mechanisms to govern the mobility of migrants (Ibrahim 2005). Gibbs Van Brunschot and Sherley also explore the importance of framing through an analysis of the Canadian government’s response to 9/11. They point to themes within official government speeches at the time that emphasized a “changed world” where 9/11 marked a “new struggle” and a “new security era” (2005: 654). The Canadian government’s

preoccupation with “terrorism” focused primarily on the perceived threat posed by refugees and immigrants arriving from non-Western countries (Aiken 2000: 55). Security intelligence reports confirming the existence of individuals and organizations operating in Canada to support, plan, and mount attacks elsewhere justified “a complex web of immigration security measures” (Aiken 2000: 55). Since 9/11 the fear concerning the threat of terrorism and the risk that it poses to citizens has become a dominant issue and an increasingly common theme in the political discourse of both governments and the media (Lansing 2007: 7).

Canada’s concern over national and transnational border security dates back prior to the attacks of September 11th. In December of 2001 Canada and the United States had both signed the Joint Statement of Cooperation on Border Security and Regional Migration Issues, as well as the Smart Border Declaration. According to Carasco et al., this bilateral agreement outlined a plan to “...increase border security while allowing for the smooth flow of people, goods, and services pursuant to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)” (cited in Harrison 2009: 36). However, September 11th renewed long-standing American and domestic concerns over Canada’s immigration and refugee determination systems. Canada faced criticism from the U.S for being a “haven for terrorists” because of “porous borders and a lax refugee determination system” (Pratt 2005:3). Both the IRPA and the Anti-Terrorism Act⁸, which had been introduced in December 2001, were promoted as

⁸ Bill C-36, the Anti-Terrorism Act, dramatically expanded the powers of law enforcement and national security agents to target, monitor, arrest, and detain without warrant Canadian citizens on the basis of suspicions related to terrorist activity (Pratt 2005: 3).

Canada's contribution to the post-September 11th "War against Terrorism" and continued the trend towards harmonization with U.S policy (Pratt 2005: 4).

The "Safe Third Country Agreement" (STCA), introduced on December 29, 2004, would further this trend towards harmonization. The STCA required asylum seekers to apply for refugee status in the country where they first arrived. The vast majority of the people affected by this agreement were those who enter Canada from the United States (Hamlin 2009). In providing rationale for the STCA, Canadian government discourse again outlined concerns over "abuse of the system" by "bogus claimants." Minister Denis Coderre, Canadian Minister of Immigration and Citizenship at the time, explained:

There has been widespread acceptance that some measure of control was necessary to limit abuse of Canada's refugee determination system and this Agreement represents an effective and humanitarian means to accomplish this... The Safe Third Country Agreement addresses a fundamental concern about asylum shopping for economic advantage interfering with legitimate claims for refugee protection from those in genuine need. (Crépeau & Jimenez, 2004: 5)

In response many NGOs as well as the UNHCR questioned the assumption that the U.S was a "safe" country for all asylum seekers. Through their advocacy they have continued to express concern over certain U.S practices such as detention procedures, an expedited removal process, and differential interpretations of the definition of "refugee" in U.S case law as compared to Canadian case law (Crépeau & Jimenez 2004). Refugee advocates from both sides of the border further argued that the Agreement would lead to an increase in smuggling and irregular crossing. While from 1990 to 2004, an average of 8,750 individuals a year applied at the U.S/Canada border for refugee status in Canada, data gathered one year after implementation indicated a dramatic drop in claims, with numbers at only 51 percent of what they were in 2004 (Canadian Council for Refugees 2005).

Responding to what they saw as the closing of Canada's front door, advocates from the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), the Canadian Council of Churches, and Amnesty International joined forces with Colombian refugee 'John Doe' and in December 2005 launched a court case against the Canadian government, citing the STCA as unconstitutional since the U.S was unsafe for refugees. While the advocates won on the first decision, the government appealed this decision and eventually won (Diepeveen 2009).

The latest reforms to Canadian refugee policy were introduced on March 30, 2010 by Immigration Minister Jason Kenney under Bill C-11, the "Balanced Refugee Reform Act." Minister Kenney defined these changes as essential to "fix serious problems in Canada's asylum system" and to "reinforce Canada's tradition as a place of refuge for victims of persecution and violence while discouraging abuse of our laws and of our generosity." He further remarked that "Many people abuse Canada's generosity and many claimants don't need our protection. They try to enter the country through the back door and they take advantage of our asylum system to avoid waiting in line like everyone for their application to be processed."⁹ His remarks, and the use of terms such as "bogus" and "system abuse" point to the continued framing of asylum seekers as "problematic criminals" which rationalizes government practices and policies that focus on containment and deterrence.

Along with increases in the number of refugees accepted through the *overseas* resettlement program, changes to the in-land determination system that were introduced in the summer of 2010 include interviews for asylum claimants with public servants 15 days after filing a claim with the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) and full hearings within

⁹ These quotes are from a speech made March 30, 2010 and can be found at <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/speeches/2010/2010-03-30.asp>.

90 days for the majority of claimants. The changes also include the implementation of a Refugee Appeal Division (RAD) at the IRB. Under the new reforms, a designated list of “safe” countries will be created that is composed of countries that do not normally produce refugees and are deemed capable of providing the necessary protection to their citizens. While claimants from safe countries will be able to make their claim at the IRB, hearings will occur within 60 days and they will go through an expedited appeal process before the RAD. Furthermore, the reforms seek to remove failed asylum claimants within 12 months of a final decision at the IRB.¹⁰

Ultimately, the government’s goal with these reforms is to speed up the entire determination process while limiting access for those claimants that are deemed to be “bogus” or “abusing the system.” Refugee advocates originally responded with great concern to the bill, arguing that the reforms “politicize the process” of refugee determination by creating a list of safe countries and a two-tier system which denies some claimants access to a fair hearing (Canadian Council for Refugees 2010). Those opposing these changes state a concern that the list of safe countries will be determined by the government’s political and economic alliances, rather than by an evaluation of actual safety for individuals seeking asylum.

Summary

Efforts to prevent the spontaneous arrivals of migrants to Canada’s borders have continued to limit and exclude asylum seekers attempting to seek refuge. However this exclusion has been rationalized by the Canadian government through framing that constructs asylum

¹⁰ The Balanced Refugee Reform Act (Bill C-11) received Royal Assent on June 29, 2010. Changes come into effect on June 29th, 2012. For more information on the changes see <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/reform.asp>.

seekers as “criminals” that are a “problem” for both the refugee system and for Canadians in general. In the 1980s and 90s asylum seekers were framed by the state through a neoliberal discourse that positioned them as “undeserving abusers” and “bogus refugees” who were taking advantage of Canadian resources. A quick overview of recent government framing indicates that this discourse has continued through to the most recent reforms with Bill C-11. Since 9/11 however the Canadian government has also followed other Western countries by framing asylum seekers and other “irregular migrants” as a threat to national and global security. By framing asylum seekers as a threat these discourses work to justify policy reforms that increasingly focus on restrictions and exclusion. This focus within discourse and policy reforms on deterrence has created a culture of disbelief that is directed towards asylum seekers and refugees and ultimately impacts how asylum seekers and non-Western migrants in general, are integrated into the receiving society (Hassan 2000). As Patricia Hynes explains, “To be ‘outside’ society in some way, made visible as a group and put through a process of ‘othering’ serves only to justify further mistrust of this group and the perpetuation of policies based on deterrence” (2009: 117).

Identifying the frames advanced by government and the trend in refugee policy towards further restrictions provides the background necessary to contextualize research on NGO asylum advocacy. By analyzing government discourse and policy reforms this chapter has also touched upon the involvement of civil society organizations as advocates who struggle against government efforts to bar the entry of individuals seeking protection as refugees. While it is important to study the role of the government and the increasing securitization of Canadian immigration policy, research must consider the role played by advocates in order to

have a more comprehensive understanding of refugee policy practice and discourse in Canada. In the following chapter I conduct a literature review which provides insight into the role played by NGO asylum advocates in Canada and places their advocacy efforts within the broader scholarship on Canada's voluntary sector and refugee advocacy.

CHAPTER THREE: Literature Review

Guiding this literature review is the question of how NGOs engage in advocacy which seeks to transform dominant government discourse and change policy reforms that restrict and exclude asylum seekers from gaining protection in Canada. The aim of this review is to situate my question within the broader literatures on social policy advocacy with marginalized communities and advocacy for refugees and asylum seekers. Before engaging in these literatures I begin by defining the concept of social policy advocacy that is central to this thesis. I then explore the relevant major debates within the literature on policy advocacy for marginalized communities. One of the goals in conducting this review is to identify the importance of focusing attention on organizational advocacy and the Canadian voluntary sector. To provide the rationale for this unit of analysis I include a brief history of Canada's voluntary sector which provides insight into the political and social context in which NGOs operate. The focus then shifts from the non-profit sector and advocacy in Canada to an exploration of how the literature has examined advocacy with, and on behalf of, refugees and asylum seekers both internationally and in the Canadian context.

While scholars have emphasized the important role of advocates in challenging restrictive state practices regarding asylum seekers (Bhabha 2002; Every & Augustinos 2008; Garcia 2006; Hardy 2003), this review of the literature will demonstrate the lack of specific knowledge regarding *how* asylum advocates challenge the status-quo and emphasize the need for further study on refugee advocacy in Canada. Researching the process of advocacy is important as it provides insight into the strategies non-state actors employ to influence policy and discourse and focuses attention on the space for advocacy within Canada's voluntary

sector. This ultimately leads to a more specific understanding of the role played by NGO asylum advocates in Canada and how advocates themselves understand their effectiveness in countering exclusionary state practices. Through this review I identify the specific contributions of my research, arguing for the importance of employing frame analysis as advanced within social movement theory to study NGOs engaged in advocacy. This conceptual framework deepens our understanding of the dynamic processes involved in developing strategies and techniques of asylum advocacy, and calls attention to the agency of those engaged in advocacy through NGOs.

Defining Advocacy

In seeking to provide a definition of advocacy, Laurie Rektor (2002) cautions that it is a complex and difficult concept to explain. Rektor finds that the government, the general public and the voluntary sector all comprehend and value advocacy differently. For this thesis I define advocacy as action focused on achieving justice that is done in solidarity with marginalized communities. Henderson and Pochin provide an excellent definition in their analysis of the advocacy movement in the United Kingdom. They define advocacy as an act of solidarity, “a political act with consequences for both individuals and the community as a whole, challenging inequality, opposing racism, preventing abuse...all constituting steps towards a more civil and just society” (2001: 16). In the Canadian context, advocacy has been identified as “the act of speaking or of disseminating information intended to influence individual behaviour or opinion, corporate conduct, or public policy and law” (Voluntary Sector Initiative 2000). Since my research explores how NGOs advocate in their efforts to transform government discourse and influence policy reforms, I focus specifically on social

policy advocacy. This differs from advocacy that is done with or on behalf of an individual as it looks at structural changes in the hopes of achieving more fundamental change.

According to McCubbin, Labonte and Dallaire, policy advocacy is based on the recognition that a focus on individuals is not always enough (cited in Krekoski 2009). In modifying an earlier definition of advocacy provided by Ezell, Gloria DeSantis defines *social policy advocacy* as consisting of “those intentional efforts of non-profit organizations to change existing or proposed government policies on behalf of or with groups of marginalized people” (2010: 26).

Scholars of social policy advocacy in the United States, and to a lesser extent in Canada, have focused attention on classifying organizations and determining the level of advocacy in which they engage (Boris & Mosher-Williams 1998; Child & Gronbjerg 2007). This research has been used to outline differences between the types and characteristics of advocacy organizations, specifying the unique contributions of interest groups, social movement organizations as well as non-profits (Andrews & Edwards 2004). Despite having different methods and motivations, Andrews and Edwards (2004) point out that these organizations all represent marginalized or excluded interests and constituencies through their advocacy. Providing advice for future research, Andrews and Edwards (2004) suggest that rather than narrowing the “scope of inquiry by imposing a dichotomy” (p. 485) on advocacy organizations, researchers should treat differences as variables in their analysis. They emphasize the need to move forward with research through a major reorientation of scholarship which extends beyond this focus on differences in classification by investigating the interactions between advocacy organizations and political institutions. Such questions

would allow researchers to better understand the patterns of influence and to answer core questions about democracy and government responsiveness (2004: 501).

Within the literature there is consensus over the importance of social service agencies taking part in policy advocacy (Krekoski 2009). In speaking to the role of non-profit organizations working on the front-lines, Krekoski comments that they are “the canary in the coalmine” as they are often the first to see new problems affecting marginalized communities, may notice changes in client demographics, and are able to recognize gaps in public policy (2009: 6). Krekoski argues that the first-hand experience that individuals and groups have with the issue makes their messages more compelling (2009: 9). Through her research on human service non-profits in the U.S, Jennifer Mosley comments that these organizations are able to observe policy outcomes directly and possess a complex understanding of how those policies affect people’s lives (2010: 58). Given the unique position of organizations working on the frontlines it is particularly important that research consider whether, and how, these experiences influence methods and strategies of advocacy. Examining the connection between first-hand experience and policy advocacy provides greater insight into how advocates convey the unique understanding that they hold to policy makers and politicians. Using a methodology of frame analysis as advanced within social movement theory provides the conceptual tools to analyze how front-line experiences influence the specific messaging strategies that are used by advocates. This approach fills a gap in the literature by identifying the role personal experiences play in shaping and determining methods and strategies of policy advocacy and in particular the framing used to challenge dominant discourse regarding “bogus” asylum seekers.

Despite the unique perspective of non-profit organizations working on the front-lines, research finds that policy advocacy remains a challenge for many organizations working with marginalized communities. Krekoski identifies various barriers that include inadequate resources, legal restrictions, confusion over the policy-making process, and the political context (2009: 4). Linked to this literature is research engaging in debate over why some organizations engage in advocacy and others do not (Mosley 2010; Plitt Donaldson 2007). While researchers agree that factors such as organizational size, resources, and the regulatory environment may shape whether non-profits engage in advocacy, less is known about how the process actually takes place. By focusing attention on those organizations that *do* engage in policy advocacy and analyzing the methods and strategies that they use, my research provides valuable insight into how barriers impact the development of advocacy strategies, while also focusing attention on how NGOs are working to overcome these barriers.

A key area of research emerging from the U.S has focused attention on the specific methods, tactics and strategies that are used by various advocates (McCarthy & Castelli 2002; Miller 1994; Nicholson-Crotty 2009). Several studies have attempted to list and classify the various types of advocacy activities. DeSantis, working in the Canadian context, develops a typology of policy advocacy which identifies different advocacy activities and their fluid nature. DeSantis' typology differentiates between non-profits that engage in advocacy *without* marginalized communities and initiatives that are pursued *with* their direct involvement. She further defines the process of advocacy by identifying whether organizations advocate independently, across coalitions or networks, or as a coalition working directly with government representatives (2010). Research by McCarthy and

Castelli (2002) classifies a range of broad activities that encompass social policy advocacy. They cite earlier work by American lawyer Bruce Hopkins who advanced six categories of non-profit advocacy which include programmatic or issue advocacy, legislative activity, political campaign activity, demonstrations, boycotts and litigation. McCarthy and Castelli argue that these categories are valuable for structuring the wide variety of possible behaviours and strategies that actually constitutes advocacy by an organization. They further define possible methods of policy advocacy as either direct or indirect. Indirect refers to the capacity of groups to stimulate individuals to take action on their own behalf, while direct advocacy refers to lobbying and other appearances before key decision-makers by representatives from the organization (2002). While DeSantis' work is significant in that it calls attention to process, the approach advanced by McCarthy and Castelli is also useful in that it differentiates and defines methods based on the audience advocates are trying to target.

Several scholars have identified how advocacy changes over time and highlighted differences in the visibility and scale of advocacy efforts. While Rektor explains that some scholars identify advocacy as a "continuum of activities that include, but are not limited to, research, public education and increasing awareness," she suggests that a better understanding envisions advocacy as a circle with different activities coming in and out of play at various times in the process (2002: 1). This research provides important insight into how advocacy methods may shift and change with time, but does not identify reasons and rationale for shifting strategies (2002: 2). Henderson and Pochin suggest that methods of advocacy may range "across organizational and political hierarchies and along a continuum from formal policy to informal voluntary approaches" (cited in Cambridge & Williams 2004:

98). In exploring advocacy campaigns in Edmonton, Erin Krekoski points out that every policy advocacy effort is dependent upon the specific context, and thus will necessarily be different (2009: 7). This emphasis on understanding the context in order to successfully mobilize highlights the value of analyzing advocacy through a social movement framework. Through this approach I am able to incorporate and study the role of political opportunity, shedding light on how the political and social context influences and shapes advocacy efforts. In speaking to a gap in the Canadian literature exploring the process of advocacy, Harvie comments that “surprisingly little empirical data are available on how the voluntary sector participates in public processes or how its advocacy activities vary” (2002: 5). My research extends current findings on advocacy methods and strategies by providing a more in-depth exploration of the rationale behind advocacy efforts and analyzing how advocates respond to changes in the political and social context.

A key area of debate within the literature focuses on measuring the influence and effectiveness of advocacy (Andrews & Edwards 2004; McCarthy & Castelli 2002; Schmid, Bar & Nirel 2008). Scholars engaging in this debate call attention to the challenge of conceptualizing measurements for objectively evaluating success and influence. While success may be simply identified as achieving progressive policy change, Krekoski emphasizes that policy victories are often preceded by losses, and in some cases may later be “undermined by new policies, governments, or a new politico-economic climate” (2009: 17). McCarthy and Castelli point out that few scholars have attempted to specify the extent and impact of advocacy and thus it is a challenge to determine whether organizations have more than a “token impact” on public policy outcomes (2002: 104). While Andrews and Edwards

point to problems that arise in conceptualizing influence. they also identify the challenge of accounting for additional explanatory factors and rival theories. While scholars continue in their efforts to find reliable and valid measurements, it remains conceptually and empirically challenging, if not impossible, to objectively measure advocacy success. Rather than focusing on an objective definition of success, my thesis reveals the subjective understanding of advocates themselves. Exploring how advocates understand their own influence and success can provide valuable insight into the process of policy advocacy and specifically the rationale behind changes in methods and strategies over time.

Questions over the process of advocacy are also taken up by scholars studying the organizing efforts through which non-profits engage in policy advocacy. This focus is apparent in research which considers the application of network analysis to social movements and advocacy organizations (see Diani & McAdam 2003; Kitts 2000). Research by Lin shows that networks can provide access to key resources needed to sustain advocacy (cited in Andrews & Edwards 2004). Expanding further upon this research, scholars have increasingly turned their attention to the role of advocacy coalitions (Sabatier 1988; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith 1993; Schlager 1995). According to Sabatier, advocacy coalitions consist of individuals who share a particular belief system, defined as a set of basic values, causal assumptions, and problem perceptions, and who show a significant degree of coordinated activity over time (cited in Schlager 1995: 245). Rochon and Meyer argue that coalitions have become a widespread organizing strategy for advocacy and interest in coalition formation, management, and effectiveness is growing (cited in Andrews & Edwards 2004). Krekoski suggests that coalitions offer a way for organizations to be involved in policy

advocacy without having to provide all of the financial and human resources; through this strategy they are able to build relationships with a wider cross-section of individuals and groups and often have an easier time engaging government than individual organizations (2009: 11).

Schlager (1995) finds that emerging work on advocacy coalitions and policy networks challenges single organization analyses and demonstrates the usefulness of a multiple organization, program and governmental level approach to understanding policy making and implementation. This literature indicates the importance of taking a multiple organization approach and grounding my framework in social movement theory. This approach can advance our understanding of how interactions between organizations shape advocacy efforts. In advancing the need for further research on coalitions, policy scholar Edella Schlager identifies the lack of knowledge regarding the strategies that coalitions pursue in putting forward preferred policies and further cites a failure to consider many of the collective action problems that organizations working together may encounter (1995). She questions how various actors establish and maintain relatively stable relationships and agree upon common strategies to pursue shared goals (1995: 244). Research on advocacy coalitions indicates the importance of considering their role in the process of asylum advocacy. Using a social movement approach allows me to analyze the organizing tasks involved in policy advocacy and explore the impact networks and coalitions may have on shaping NGO advocacy. This approach will advance understanding within the literature by providing greater insight into how strategies are decided upon between organizations, how tension and

conflict are handled as organizations work together, and the role different organizations play in coalition work.

Scholars studying the process of advocacy have drawn attention to the importance of social movement campaigns. Exploring policy advocacy efforts in recent years Krekoski reports that many of the successful campaigns are grounded in social movements and have a broad membership base (2009: 9). Anne Curry-Stevens also speaks to the importance of policy advocates embedding their practice in social movements by examining social policy losses throughout the last generation (2006: 114). She contends that this grounding in social movements has become necessary with the transition towards a neoliberal society. With this transition we have witnessed the erosion of progressive social policy and decreasing political space for policy advocacy within traditional arenas (Curry-Stevens 2006: 119). Curry-Stevens argues that in this political climate, policy advocates need to connect and ground their practice with social movements. She points out the particular success of social movements in Canada owing to their grassroots leadership capacity, an increased sense of constituent power, organizational development, and their counter-hegemonic practices. Curry-Stevens argues that these dimensions are critical for policy advocacy practice, “if we are invested in the long haul and are serious about practices that change the relations of power in society” (2006: 128). Based on these arguments it is important to consider how NGOs mobilize through collective action and in particular, how these efforts serve as a response to the movement towards neoliberal policies. Doing so will expand knowledge over how organizations that engage in advocacy cope with the push toward competition that follows neoliberal cut-backs.

Findings on the importance of grounding policy advocacy in social movements should further encourage researchers to explore how the social movement literature can be used to analyze organizational advocacy and efforts to transform dominant discourse. A number of scholars have identified the usefulness of a social movement approach to studying the activities of organizations (e.g Campbell 2002; Fitzgerald 2003, 2009; Krekoski 2009). In their work on advocacy organizations in the U.S, Andrews and Edwards point out that social scientists that study social movements, non-profit organizations, and democratic politics all share common questions about the causes and consequences of collective action in pursuit of social and political change (2004: 479). John Campbell (2002) suggests that since organizations and social movements are both forms of coordinated collective action they should be conducive to similar forms of analysis. He finds that while a few organization theorists have used social movement theory to generate new hypotheses for their research, overall social movement theory has been “employed only intermittently” in the study of organizations. Social movement theorists have been much quicker to apply organizational studies to research exploring the emergence and development of social movements. Campbell argues for the continued integration of these theoretical areas given the similarities between the organizational and social movement literatures (2002: 1). Using a social movement framework to study organizational advocacy is a particularly useful approach in that it conceptualizes advocacy as a dynamic and evolving process where advocates are actively engaged in creating meaning through the counter-hegemonic framing that they advance.

In his study of faith-based community development organizations in the United States, Scott Fitzgerald combines collective action and social movement theory with organizational theory. Finding that organizational theorists do not have “highly developed tools with which to examine the relationship between ideology, vocabularies, and action,” Fitzgerald turns to the social movement literature, specifically looking at how collective action theorists have employed frame analysis to “systematically examine vocabularies of action [in order to] illuminate the instrumental and multiple functions of these vocabularies in the context of movements for change” (2009: 184). This conceptual tool is valuable in that it enables researchers to identify the role of human agency in shaping collective action (Fitzgerald 2009). Frame analysis provides the tools to identify the various messages that are constructed by advocates, and also considers how advocates interpret and understand their use of these frames. This provides insight into how organizations engage in collective action that seeks to influence and change government discourse and policy. Using frame analysis moves beyond simply identifying the frames used in a moment of time, to an analysis of how advocates interpret and understand their own advocacy work and the strategies they adopt in an effort to transform dominant discourse (Creed, Langstraat & Scully 2002). This understanding of the rationale which influences and shapes organizational advocacy makes a valuable contribution to the literature on social policy advocacy and provides new insight into the impact of the specific social and political context on advocacy processes.

In using a social movement approach of frame analysis as my theoretical and methodological framework I draw particularly on the work of several scholars who analyze framing as counter-hegemonic struggle. I draw in particular from the work of Cook (2010),

who explores the challenges that pro-migrant advocates in the U.S face in countering hegemonic discourses. Cook finds that traditional approaches have failed to produce the kind of mobilization and political pressure that changes policy and moves public opinion. She argues that as securitization has “bolstered national governments’ efforts to reinforce and redefine their borders” it has become increasingly difficult for migrants and their advocates to counter or reverse restrictive national policies (2010: 145). Cook uses frame analysis as outlined within the social movement literature to examine how migrant advocates seek to “correct, counter, or challenge opponents’ arguments” (2010: 156). By focusing on frames and framing she explores the messages and “meanings” that advocates construct in their efforts to resonate with the general public, thus motivating them to take action and create social change (Benford & Snow 2000; Cook 2010: 147). Given the contentious politics surrounding immigration, Cook argues that a focus on frames and framing processes is particularly relevant.

Pauline Cullen (2009) also relies on a social movement framework in her research, combining frame analysis with the concept of political opportunity to explore pro-migrant NGOs and the politics of immigration in Ireland. Cullen’s findings indicate that NGOs “have deployed a three pronged strategy in negotiating a contentious and highly constrained policy arena.” First, they have created “access points” within formal political contexts; second, they contest negative framings of immigration within media and political discourse; and third, they engage in multi-level strategies by mobilizing through transnational NGO coalitions working on the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers (2009: 103). This analysis provides insight into the “strategic repertoire” developed by pro-migrant NGOs which they

use to influence institutional and discursive opportunity structures (2009: 124). The approach advanced by Cullens is significant as she takes a broad approach to exploring the process of advocacy by analyzing frames and incorporating analysis of organizing strategies and tasks. Taken together, this provides a comprehensive picture of the process of advocacy and the various factors that influence how and why messages are constructed.

The last several decades have witnessed a proliferation of analytical and empirical research examining frames and framing processes in relation to social movements and collective action (Benford 1997; Benford & Snow 2000). This approach has gained prominence, alongside resource mobilization and political opportunity, as “a central dynamic in understanding the character and course of social movements” (Benford & Snow 2000: 611). Scholars within this field have advanced frame analysis as a way of drawing attention to the construction of discourses intended to mobilize support and to further enhance our understanding of movement dynamics (Taylor 2000: 509). This perspective advances knowledge regarding grievance construction and interpretation, blame and causality, movement participation and the mobilization of popular support, resource acquisition, strategic interaction and the selection of tactics (Benford 1997: 410). As such, framing is recognized as an important strategic and tactical component of movement dynamics. Researchers within the social movement tradition have explored and identified a wide diversity of movement strategies and tactics and provided insight into the factors that influence strategic and tactical decisions. Attempting to synthesize this literature, Taylor and Dyke emphasize that in general these decisions are “fairly predictable, limited, and bounded by the repertoires that protestors have learned” (2004: 265). They argue further that tactics

are historically specific, adapted and borrowed between movements, and occur slowly through innovations over time.

Stevenson and Greenberg (2000) also explore how decisions are made regarding strategies through an analysis of how organizations in a network of relationships try to influence policies on environmental issues. Using concepts from social movement theory, their results indicate that strategies to take action and mobilize others vary depending on the social context which is composed of the political opportunity structure, the opposition faced by the actor and the actor's position in the network. Their findings further suggest that direct strategies are often used when the political opportunity structure is favourable, while a coalition strategy was more successful when actors face opposition and an unfavourable political opportunity structure (2000: 675). This research highlights the value of a social movement framework in exploring the strategic framing and tactical decisions made by NGOs within a specific political and social context. In the following section I explore in greater detail the specific context shaping NGO advocacy efforts through a brief overview of literature exploring Canada's voluntary sector and government relations. Following this I then move into a review of the literature on refugee and asylum advocacy.

Canada's Voluntary Sector and Government Relations

In Canada much of the research on advocacy within the voluntary sector has focused on interaction between non-profit organizations and the government (DeSantis 2010: 24).

Specifically, research points to the changing roles, responsibilities, and relationships between the public, private, and voluntary sectors and identifies the particular challenges these changes have brought to the voluntary sector (Bridges 2002). The majority of Canadian

research has focused on the limitations to advocacy imposed by government regulatory regimes (Pross & Webb 2003) and legal rules regarding charitable lobbying activities (Bridges 2002). In order to explore how NGOs that work with asylum seekers challenge restrictive government policies and transform hegemonic discourses, it is important to examine this literature and have a general understanding of Canada's voluntary sector and its relationship with government. Despite widespread interest in non-profits and the Canadian voluntary sector, researchers know surprisingly little about the sector and its role in Canadian society (Scott 2003).

The late 1960s to the 1980s mark the period of greatest growth in the sector as social policies were implemented across a growing population and an expanding economy (Elson 2007: 46). At this time the relationship between service providers and government could be described as an "interdependent partnership" (Elson 2007: 46). Many voluntary sector charities had similar program objectives, needed a reliable source of funding and felt they were in a position to influence government policy (Brock 2000; Elson 2007). As government funding became more widely available and welfare services increased, the number of registered charities and non-profit organizations also grew, leading to rapid growth throughout the 1960s (Elson 2007; Scott 2003). The movement towards neoliberalism in the 1990s led to a dramatic decline in the growth of social welfare expenditure (Elson 2007). Cutbacks to the voluntary sector beginning during this period meant a decrease in the supply of services as governments changed and eliminated funding. At the same time demands for services in the community were increasing in number and complexity (Elson 2007; Scott 2003). While cuts occurred under both the Conservative and Liberal party governments,

Elson (2007) points out that the Conservative government implemented across-the-board cuts, while the Liberals preferred to use selective cuts that were aimed in particular at advocacy groups. As a result the sector increasingly focused on the delivery of services while minimizing its role as an “expressive voice for policy advocates and social justice” (Elson 2007: 52). Those organizations that survived these cutbacks were financially fragile and became dependent on a “complex web of unpredictable, short-term, targeted project funding”¹¹ (Scott 2003: xiii).

Across Canada there has been an increasing shift away from core funding, heightening competition among non-profits for increasingly limited resources (Scott 2003). As a result a great deal of time is now spent chasing short-term sources of funding, often at the expense of the mission and mandate of the organization (Scott 2003). The overall result of new funding strategies designed to “increase accountability, self-sufficiency and competition” has been to limit the ability of the non-profit and voluntary sector to fulfill its important role in Canadian society (Scott 2003: xiii). In recent years a significant amount of research has focused on these funding issues within the voluntary sector and has examined the erosion of financial capacity among non-profit and voluntary organizations (Bridges 2002; Canadian Centre for Philanthropy 2003; Richmond & Shields 2007; Scott 2003). This research has documented the changing funding landscape in Canada, assessing the impact of these changes on the long-term sustainability of non-profit organizations (Scott 2003).

¹¹ Within the sector there is a diverse amount of government involvement. Many organizations continue to pursue a “funding mix” and combine fundraising and government support to provide services; other organizations may rely entirely on government funding. Statistics from 2004 indicate that the voluntary sector receives half of its total funding from one level of government or another (Elson 2007).

Within Canada a number of scholars have specifically explored the advocacy activities of charitable organizations (Bridges 2002, 2005; Elson 2007/2008). Eligibility for charitable registration is determined by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) through a *public benefit test* whereby the organization must prove that they provide a benefit to all, or a majority, of the public (Elson 2007: 60). This status provides automatic exemption from paying income tax and the ability to issue donation tax receipts to donors (Bridges 2002; Carter & Man 2010). However, under this status they are also subject to more stringent regulations and guidelines when becoming involved in advocacy or political activities (Carter & Man 2010). A number of scholars have identified the impact of tax regulations, exploring how the laws governing advocacy affect charitable organizations (Bridges 2002; Carter & Man 2010). Commonly referred to as the “10-percent Rule,” this section of the Income Tax Act creates quantifiable limits on political activities where 10 percent “of all the financial and physical assets of the charity as well as the services provided by its human resources” is the maximum that can be spent on “permitted political activities”; for smaller organizations the amount allowed is 20 percent. Research points to major problems stemming from a lack of clarity in the law (Bridges 2002). While Carter and Man point to a general misconception among registered charities in Canada “that they are either unable to participate at all in any political issues, or alternatively, that they can participate completely unrestrained,” they explain that in reality both of these assumptions are incorrect (2011: 535).

The Canadian approach to restricting the political activity of charities is one of the most stringent in the world. Regulations in the U.S provide greater freedom and clarity for charitable organizations involved in advocacy or lobbying (Bridges 2002: 17). In England

and Wales, political activity by charities is recognized as a valuable contribution to the policy making process. Under a 49 percent rule advocacy is permitted as long as it does not become the dominant activity of the organization (Bridges 2005). Voices within the Canadian charitable sector continue to push for reforms to improve the conditions under which charities can engage in political activities. Some of these voices point to examples outside of Canada, while others push Canadian Parliament to take action in defining what *is* charitable. In doing so they argue for the need to clearly define what charities can and cannot do in relation to advocacy (Carter & Man 2010: 57).

These findings point to the importance of exploring in greater depth the experiences of non-profit charitable organizations that *do* engage in advocacy. How do they understand the advocacy work that they do in the context of Canada's legal tax laws and does this impact their work? What is the space that they identify for "speaking out" to influence and shape Canadian refugee policy? It is particularly important that research explores the impact of the political and legal context in influencing how non-profits engage in advocacy. Specifically, research should question the impact this has on how organizations approach advocacy that seeks to challenge and transform government discourse and policy.

Advocacy for Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Jacqueline Bhabha suggests that asylum advocates must act as the interpreters and enforcers of refugee law and that through their efforts the "guarantees of refugee protection in the international arena are able to percolate down to the individuals who are fleeing persecution" (2002: 155). Keeping this responsibility in mind, it becomes increasingly important to study the role of advocates who have unique experiences as front-line workers but who are also

working within the confines of our current voluntary sector and its relationship with government. How do NGOs working with asylum seekers manage to continue their advocacy work? What methods and framing strategies do they engage in as “interpreters and enforcers,” and to what extent are these determined by the political and social context?

Recent years has seen the majority of research on advocacy for refugees and asylum seekers emerging from the United Kingdom and Australia (see Cambridge & Williams 2004; Every & Augoustinos 2008a, 2008b; Gosden 2006; Hintjens, Kumar & Pouri 2011). This literature is emerging in Australia in particular because of the emergence of a refugee advocacy movement in 2001 after a number of high profile “crisis” events and changes to the onshore component of Australia’s refugee program (Gosden 2006). By moving beyond critiquing negative representations of refugees and asylum seekers within media and public discourse, this literature engages in analysis of the counter-representations and alternative discourses that are being advanced by advocates. Research by Hintjens, Kumar and Pouri (2011) is an example of this trend, as they explore how pro-asylum seeker advocates in the Netherlands and the U.K challenge the “3-D’s” of destitution, detention and deportation. Through their research they explain that despite using diverse strategies, pro-asylum advocates recognized a common and shared worldview as they seek to resist and challenge the injustices placed upon asylum seekers. These shared injustice frames ultimately produce “broader, overlapping alliances and relationships” at the national and international level (2011: 213).

Through their study of Australian parliamentary debates, Every and Augoustinos (2008a) argue that advocates play an important role in providing alternative explanations for

the arrival of asylum seekers and in further arguing for the recipient countries responsibility to protect human rights. Using discourse analysis Every and Augoustinos examine how advocates oppose negative rhetoric and re-categorize asylum seekers as potential refugees by arguing that Australia is both legally and morally responsible for providing protection (2008a: 648). In another article based on this same research they explore advocate framing which adopts notions of nationalism in an effort to oppose harsh anti-asylum seeker regimes (2008b). This framing rests on a notion of “civic” nationalism as opposed to “ethnic” nationalism and “seeks unity through common values, political systems and rights” (2008b: 562). Significantly, their findings indicate that asylum seeker advocates working in parliament have constructed “a form of inclusive nationalism that is grounded in common goals such as economic prosperity, and in common values such as egalitarianism and generosity. In these discourses, inclusivity is embedded in the national interest, character and values” (2008b: 576). Using a critical discourse approach the authors move beyond analyzing the content of discourse to examine the “subject positions, political solutions and social realities” that define inclusivity or exclusivity (2008b: 562). While the inclusivity of a civic nationalism approach can be critiqued, the importance of this research is that it highlights the multiple ways in which the same ideology and discourse can be used in an effort to either include or exclude the “other,” and further highlights the need to consider the subjective position and social reality of the specific context (Every & Augoustinos 2008b: 564).

Exploring framing debates concerning the arrival of asylum seekers, a number of scholars have critically analyzed how the language of humanitarianism is used within both pro- and anti- asylum seeker discourses (Dauvergne 2000; Every 2008; Taylor 2001). Both

Gibney (2004) and Dauvergne (2000) identify the usefulness of this approach for making claims in support of refugees and asylum seekers (cited in Every 2008). Arguing for the importance of adopting a humanitarianism framework, Catherine Dauvergne (2000) identifies the challenges of using a rights discourse to bring about changes in refugee law. Focusing on the court system, Dauvergne emphasizes the necessity of basing both worldwide and Australian refugee advocacy on a discourse grounded in humanitarianism in order to make a more persuasive and strategic argument. In explaining the rationale for this framing, Dauvergne argues that while a rights based argument can be grounded in both law and a sense of shared humanity, it also triggers the rights-based response of the nation. This is problematic given that the rights of the nation, specifically the right to exclude, are ultimately stronger than those of the individual seeking asylum (2000: 73). Dauvergne counters that a humanitarianism discourse overcomes these challenges by appealing to “national goodness,” and is thus more likely to be effective (2000).

Savitri Taylor counters these arguments, contending that by focusing attention only on the courts Dauvergne fails to consider the “possibility of asylum seeker advocates entering, and winning, the political fray in which the content of ‘law’ is determined” (2001: 192). His perspective is important in that he considers the diverse roles of different types of advocates acting within the system. Through his response to Dauvergne, Taylor speaks to the importance of considering the *process* of advocacy as well as the frames which are advanced. In doing so he argues that asylum seeker advocates must engage in the political arena and persuade the Australian public to use “human rights principles as the relevant frame of reference for thinking about the treatment of asylum seekers” (p. 192). In challenging the

premise of alternative frames based on humanitarianism as well as economics. Taylor points out that these approaches fail to focus attention on the individual and their need for protection. In particular, charitable reasons for protection can be given or withheld depending upon the “perceived worthiness of the supplicant and the perceived cost to the giver” (2001: 195). Taylor’s solution rests in his argument that asylum seeker advocacy must focus on the interconnected and interdependent aspect of our world and he further argues that “national interest” can be served by “an international rule of law founded on universal moral principles” (2001: 198).

Chimni (2000) and Gosden (2007) also critique advocacy frames based on humanitarianism, but argue that it should be reconceptualised rather than completely abandoned by incorporating a more rights-based focus (cited in Every 2008: 225). After highlighting the conflicting debates regarding humanitarianism, Every concludes that while the flexibility of this discourse in serving the interests of the anti-asylum seeker regime is problematic, it does offer possibilities for refugee and asylum advocacy as a powerful discourse for motivating the public. Her analysis thus identifies the importance of constructing different frames for different audiences. Ultimately, Every suggests that humanitarianism should be reformulated through counter-arguments to incorporate human rights, along with concepts of individualism, reason, practicality and moderation. She argues that this approach would produce alternative solutions which emphasize a balance between the needs of refugees and the claims of citizens, and as such may resonate better with the general public (2008: 226). This argument echoes findings by Pauline Cullen, who explains that pro-migrant NGOs in Ireland attempt to link the interests of the beneficiary, or the

migrant, with the perceived interests of other actors by deploying framing strategies which “normalize” the migrant and create resonance between the struggles migrants face and those experienced by members of the general public (2009: 119).

While the literature highlights the importance of identifying framing techniques and strategies, the debate remains focused on deciphering the success of various discourses. My research makes a contribution by analyzing the framing efforts of advocates at NGOs and determining how they understand their own influence and change their strategies accordingly. Using a social movement approach to frame analysis is particularly useful to this debate as it enables me to explore the messages that are constructed by advocates and consider how advocates change their framing strategies in response to the political and social context in which they operate. This ultimately provides a more comprehensive understanding of the advocacy process and framing practices in particular and provides greater insight into the various factors which may constrain NGO advocates.

A number of scholars interested in refugee advocacy have critically explored the use of sympathetic representations by advocates to strategically counter negative portrayals of refugees within dominant media and government discourse (Godin, Kishan & Newhouse 2006; Malkki 1996; Pupavac 2008). In researching refugee advocacy in the U.K, Vanessa Pupavac finds that advocates regularly represent refugees as “traumatized, depoliticized, feminized subjects” (2008: 272); putting forward an ideal of the refugee as a “politically blameless self, untainted by compromising political allegiances or economic self-interest” (2008: 276). Cautioning that refugee organizations operate with their own policy and advocacy agenda, Pupavac explains how advocates may be tempted to present only

“endearing refugees” that emphasize the “culturally deserving exceptions, not ordinary refugees ‘warts and all.’” She argues that refugee advocacy has failed to bridge contradictory representations and to face anti-immigration and asylum arguments with representations that are grounded in the lives of ordinary refugees (2008: 291). While a “human interest approach” has been used by advocates to evoke sympathy, Pupavac cautions that since this approach may not advance beyond current counter-stereotypes it may only foster “poor understanding and bad interventions” (2008: 285-286).

Pupavac’s findings raise a particularly important dilemma for refugee advocates. How do advocates working on the front-lines challenge the culture of disbelief surrounding asylum seekers? This binary of genuine and bogus presents a particular challenge to those engaged in asylum and refugee advocacy and calls for research which examines whether, and how, advocates seek to problematize these binary categories and minimize the growing concern around the arrival of asylum seekers. In responding to Pupavac’s concerns this thesis explores how NGOs in the Canadian context construct frames that challenge the dominant representation of asylum seekers and how they understand the efficacy of these frames in challenging the binary created through dominant discourse between genuine refugees and bogus asylum seekers. Researching and analyzing advocacy strategies among organizations working on the front-lines in Toronto provides important insight into how these organizations ground their advocacy in the lives of ordinary refugees.

A number of scholars have identified the unique challenges faced by asylum and refugee advocates. Commenting on the role of asylum advocates, Bhabha finds that one of the greatest challenges arises from the need to address human rights abuses that may occur

on a number of different fronts, whether in the state of origin, through the course of migration, or speaking out against abusive host state practices (2002: 156). Furthermore, Krekoski points to the challenge advocates face in balancing the goals and interests of the individual with the more “macro orientation” that seeks structural changes to achieve fundamental change (2009: 5). Another challenge which demands consideration among advocates is the legitimizing role that advocates may play as gatekeepers (Bhabha 2002). Commenting on the reality of this challenge Bhabha explains,

Asylum is constructed to be a strictly limited humanitarian safety valve, permitting only a fraction of would-be migrants...to trump immigration restrictions and gain access to the developed world. Asylum is the process that keeps migration exclusion morally defensible while protecting the global gatekeeping operation as a whole. (2002: 161)

Through research exploring the role of advocates working with refugees and asylum seekers in the U.K, Cambridge and Williams further identify the challenge of balancing various principles that may exist in contradiction to one another. Examples they point to include protection and empowerment as well as control and autonomy (2004: 97). They suggest that to advocate for vulnerable groups that are economically and socially marginalized requires a careful balance that focuses on the needs and best interests of the individual.

Refugee and Asylum Advocacy in Canada

In the Canadian context research specifically looking at advocacy for refugees and asylum seekers is quite limited. As briefly discussed in Chapter One, this research explores the role of advocates and their relationship with the Canadian state and advances conflicting findings regarding the efficacy of refugee and asylum advocacy. Tanya Basok (1996) critiques the idea that refugee advocates are able to influence or shape Canadian immigration policy and emphasizes the continued control by the state. Despite the continued efforts of the

international humanitarian community and from domestic human rights groups, she argues that there has been little impact on refugee policy by non-state actors. In contrast, research conducted almost a decade later by Cynthia Hardy (2003) compares the refugee determination systems of Canada, the U.K and Denmark and concludes that the NGO lobby has been particularly influential in shaping legislation within the Canadian context. Hardy quotes a senior civil servant who states:

The [Canadian] legislation was influenced by the NGO lobby. Public servants always acted in good faith and have tried to do the right thing but the substance of the protection [for refugees] are the result of the influence of the NGOs, although what we offer still isn't enough for some people. (2003: 273)

These contradictions within the literature again indicate the challenge of accurately and objectively measuring the efficacy of asylum advocacy, particularly given that experiences may change over time as the context changes. However my research responds to this debate by identifying the experience of advocates in more recent years and focusing attention on how advocates themselves understand their own efficacy.

Within the Canadian context researchers Lowry and Nyers (2003) explore the methods and strategies of organizing advocacy through their transcription of a roundtable discussion with various advocacy groups including No One is Illegal (Montreal) and the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (Toronto). In this discussion, possibilities are explored for organizing a broad-based refugee and migrant rights movement in opposition to increasingly restrictive and repressive policies in Canada. They argue that traditional tactics have been a failure as it is impossible to work within the current system and humanize something that is fundamentally inhumane (2003: 71). Their discussion also emphasizes the value and importance of building alliances to work for fundamental policy change.

While refugees and asylum seekers are marginalized within the wider society and are in positions of vulnerability, research has shown that they are not passive and helpless victims (Cambridge & Williams 2004: 100; Malkki 1996). While refugees are in a position of vulnerability given their reasons for migration, they are also often involved with advocacy groups in lobbying the government for more appropriate policies and adequate treatment (Harrison 2009: 84). McNevin argues that refugees and other migrants with precarious status are emerging as key protagonists in global struggles over social recognition, worker protection, freedom of movement, and the right of asylum (cited in Nyers 2011). By analyzing campaigns directed at both the state and city levels of governance, Nyers explores how non-status refugees and migrants are acting as mediators or translators between the city and nation and how “migrant political agency is asserted in places meant to deny, limit, or repress” such actions (2011:127). Focusing on organizational advocacy within my own thesis provides the opportunity to explore how NGOs engage with asylum seekers and refugees in their efforts to transform discourse and influence refugee policy. Specifically, this calls attention to how NGO advocates construct frames that challenge discourse over the bogus refugee and to what extent are asylum seekers and refugees involved in framing processes and organizing tasks. This exploration fills a gap in empirical data and advances conceptual understanding concerning how NGOs facilitate advocacy with marginalized groups in order to challenge government policy (DeSantis 2010).

Summary

This review has examined literature on social policy advocacy with marginalized communities, advocacy for asylum seekers and refugee and provided a brief overview of the

history of Canada's voluntary sector and government relations. Key debates discussed within the policy advocacy literature highlight previous research on classifying organizations, tactics and strategies, the challenges and barriers facing advocates, the importance of networks and coalitions, the challenge of measuring efficacy and the importance of grounding advocacy in a social movement perspective. Within the refugee and asylum advocacy literature scholars have analyzed the frames used to challenge dominant discourse, debated the efficacy of asylum advocacy and identified how asylum seekers and refugees are themselves involved in advocacy efforts. While this review identifies research on asylum and refugee advocacy and advocacy within the voluntary sector, it draws attention to the lack of specific research on the process of asylum advocacy by NGOs in the Canadian voluntary sector. My thesis responds to this gap in the literature, making an empirical and conceptual contribution by examining the process of advocacy through the use of frame analysis as advanced by social movement scholars. By identifying frames, considering organizing efforts within the context of political opportunity and seeking to understand the rationale behind the decisions that are made, my thesis conceptualizes advocacy as a dynamic process and calls attention to the agency of advocates.

A review of international literature on asylum and refugee advocacy indicates a growing trend towards analyzing counter-hegemonic discourses that challenge frameworks based on securitization and exclusion. Research in this area has examined the framing strategies advanced by political actors in their efforts to counter dominant discourse; however there is a need to expand this research by considering the framing used by other non-state actors. Research on counter-frames must also take into account how political

opportunity impacts the messages that are constructed. This is particularly significant in the Canadian context of barriers to advocacy within the voluntary sector. Using a social movement framework will advance our understanding of framing strategies and advocacy efforts by providing the conceptual tools to analyze how frames change over time in relation to changes in the political opportunity structure. Specifically, my thesis responds to the need for research within the Canadian context which explores how asylum advocates are attempting to challenge the concept of the “bogus” and “criminal” asylum seeker. In advancing current scholarship on the advocacy process I identify the messages constructed by advocates, the strategies used to advance those messages and the organizing tasks involved in this work.

While scholars have identified the increasing challenges facing organizations that engage in policy advocacy, it is important that research empirically explore how NGOs attempt to overcome these challenges in practice. This thesis provides important insight into this, asking how NGOs that engage in advocacy work are negotiating and overcoming the various challenges posed by our current political climate and the restrictions posed by funding and tax regulations. This exploratory research lends insight into the relations between civil society and the state, while enhancing our understanding of non-state actors in Canadian society. By exploring asylum advocacy among community based and umbrella non-profit organizations this research brings together literature on organizational advocacy with refugee and asylum advocacy. Within both bodies of literature scholars have employed a range of methodological frameworks that include analyzing large-scale survey data (Child & Gronbjerg 2007), qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups (Scott 2003)

and performing discourse analysis on bodies of text (Every & Augustinos 2008). Advocacy has also been explored from a range of theoretical positions including social justice (DeSantis 2010), neo-institutional theory and resource dependency theory (Schmid, Bar & Nirel 2008) as well as resource mobilization theory (Mosley 2010).

By applying social movement theory to the study of organizations my research contributes to a new and growing body of work that has benefitted from the integration of these two areas. While the social movement literature has historically focused on explaining movement emergence and efforts to mobilize support, it is particularly useful for research on organizational advocacy because it provides the conceptual and analytical tools necessary to explore strategies of resistance that seek to create social change. Scholars using this approach continue to argue for the usefulness of a social movement approach for studying the activities of organizations (e.g Campbell 2002; Fitzgerald 2002; Krekoski 2009). This framework is particularly useful in identifying the relationship between ideology and action (Fitzgerald 2009). As such this theoretical approach can be used to provide valuable insight into the counter-hegemonic messages constructed by advocates and provides the conceptual tools to analyze how organizations act collectively in an effort to foster social change.

CHAPTER FOUR: Research Design and Methods

Theoretical Framework

In constructing a framework for studying how NGOs challenge dominant discourse and restrictive policies this thesis draws from several different literatures. While my conceptual framework is based on frame analysis as advanced within social movement theory, I also rely on social constructionism to understand NGO asylum advocacy. A theoretical approach informed by social constructionism is particularly useful in exploring contestations over the category of asylum given that it recognizes the social processes that make up everyday life, and analyzes how these processes are composed of different ideologies, opinions and attitudes that are subjective and often contradictory (Lynn & Lea 2003: 425). By adopting a social constructionist perspective this thesis aims to specifically explore how advocacy efforts seek to counter and transform the dominant negative discourse that constructs asylum seekers as “illegal,” “bogus” and “criminal” and influence the construction of refugee policy. This perspective is particularly useful in that it seeks explanations by placing emphasis on the *processes* of social interaction; according to Burr (1995) the “aim of social enquiry is moved from questions about the nature of people or society and towards a consideration of *how* certain phenomena or forms of knowledge are achieved by people in interaction” (p. 5).

Through social constructionism we are able to explore the dialogical processes that take place, and better understand the ways in which ideologies and opinions continually shift and alter (Lynn & Lea 2003). Lynn and Lea argue that in exploring the shifts that occur in social construction over time it is important to recognize the role of political, social, and economic influences. These influences affect both the dominant discourse and counter-

discourses. To make sense of the prevailing attitudes surrounding asylum seekers and refugees they suggest that we need to understand the wider discursive context which is both historically and culturally specific (2003). A theoretical approach of social constructionism extends beyond a focus on discourse to argue that immigration policy and mobilizing efforts are not static, but also socially constructed and change over time. Changes in the construction of policy or the organizing strategies of movement actors may occur based on the political administration in power, significant world events such as September 11th, or changes in the economy over time (Lynn & Lea 2003; Wright 2010).

Methodology

This thesis focuses on the frames, framing processes and organizing efforts of advocates to explore how NGOs challenge dominant discourse and restrictive policy reforms. To accomplish this goal I rely on a methodology informed by frame analysis as conceptualized by social movement theorists. The concept of frames was first introduced to sociological theory by Erving Goffman in his 1972 book *Frame Analysis* (Johnston 2002). Goffman presented framing as a “day-to-day sense making technique” created and used by individuals to make sense of the world around them and their daily interactions (Creed, Langstraat & Scully 2002: 36). Frames are built upon underlying structures of beliefs, values, and experiences. They provide meaning by selectively simplifying and filtering information, creating a field of vision for a specific problem (Kaufman, Elliott & Shmueli 2003). Hank Johnston sums it up well explaining, “In one’s scope of experience, frames indicate what to look at and what is important, and thereby indicate what is going on” (2002: 64).

In the 1980s, Goffman's idea of frames was advanced by a number of scholars working in the social movement tradition (see Gamson & Lasch 1983; Benford & Snow 1988; Snow, Rochford, Worden & Benford 1986). This new approach retained the focus on making sense of interactions, but emphasized more specifically the framing of contentious social issues and considered the *rationale* and *processes* individuals and groups engage in as part of this framing. Frame analysis was thus explicitly focused on "social actors' lenses and metaphors as they are deployed, particularly in the service of collective advocacy, mobilization, or public policy" (Creed, Langstraat & Scully 2002: 38). Social movement scholars at this time were increasingly interested in studying the struggle over the production of mobilizing and counter-mobilizing ideas and meanings. Snow further defines the process of "framing" as the "conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action" (cited in McAdam, McCarthy & Zald 1996: 6).

"Collective action frames" are the result of the framing process and are defined by Benford and Snow as "action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of the organization; they are the outcome of negotiations over shared meaning" (2000: 614). Through these frames, movement actors construct a particular story or message and focus attention on what they deem to be relevant. Benford and Snow explain that in developing collective action frames movement actors engage in "core framing tasks" which include constructing three types of frames: "diagnostic," "prognostic" and "motivational" frames. Diagnostic framing refers to how problems are defined and where blame for them is located, prognostic framing looks at how

solutions and appropriate strategies for attaining them are defined, and motivational framing speaks to the recruitment of new participants in the movement (2000: 615). I focus attention on the first two types of frames as these provide insight into how NGOs have constructed a response to government framing in their efforts to transform dominant discourse.

Early research by Goffman (1974) emphasized that a transformation of frame occurs when “new values may have to be planted and nurtured, old meanings or understandings jettisoned, and erroneous beliefs or ‘misframings’ reframed” (cited in Snow et al. 1986: 473). Goffman’s concept of transforming frames has remained important in the social movement literature on framing. Frame transformation was conceptualized by Snow and his colleagues (1986) as part of four frame alignment processes that explained participation in movements (p. 464). They describe four types of framing processes: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension and frame transformation. Given my research interest in the counter-framing efforts of NGOs this thesis focuses on the last alignment process of frame transformation and explores how advocates seek to transform the dominant discourse regarding asylum seekers. Benford and Snow point out that frames can perform a transformative function by turning “routine grievances or misfortunes into injustices or mobilizing grievances in the context of collective action” (2000: 384).

As NGOs engage in advocacy they construct collective action frames that seek to transform the dominant discourse framing asylum seekers; in doing so they seek to create frames that resonate with their target audience. The concept of frame resonance is used in frame analysis to explore how reality is constructed by movement actors so as to maximize mobilization within the movement and effectively transform dominant discourse (Benford

1993). Benford points out the difficulty that activists may have in systematically measuring frame resonance since the effectiveness of messages can vary across individuals, situations, and time. However, movement actors do develop a general sense of what works and what does not based on their organizing experiences (1993: 691). In exploring the framing processes of NGO asylum advocates and their efforts to transform dominant discourse, it is important to consider the capacity and ability of advocates to construct frames that they consider to resonate with the general public and government. This can contribute to our understanding of the rationale behind advocacy decisions and will provide insight into the efficacy of asylum advocacy as understood by those who are engaged in this work.

Since the 1990s frame analysis scholars have argued that frames cannot be understood without recognizing the broader contexts in which processes are embedded (Snow 2007: 401). This is based on recognition that the construction of frames is “bounded by the larger political culture or public discourse within which social and political contention develops” (Steinberg 1999: 738). Snow and his colleagues (1986) understood this when they argued that frames mediate between opportunity structures and action. Research must explore the broader social context in order to understand how organizations engage in advocacy that challenges government discourse and policy over the practice of seeking asylum. It is this context that shapes and influences the advocacy efforts and framing practices of organizations. Through their advocacy efforts, NGOs that work with asylum seekers seek to construct meaning and influence the general public, policy makers, media, and government officials. Through frames they define the problem, diagnose the cause, and suggest remedies to the situation (Kuypers 2010). By employing concepts developed in frame analysis my

research is able to explore what Diane Gosden (2006) refers to as the “everyday practice” of advocates in their struggle to challenge dominant government discourse and the way in which asylum seekers are “perceived, represented and received” by Canadian society (p. 1).

Methods

To explore asylum advocacy I identify the frames, framing process and organizing efforts of NGOs that work with asylum seekers. Based on a review of the literature on voluntary organizations and advocacy in Canada I also consider the impact changes within the sector have had on NGO asylum advocacy. Given my objectives it is important to ground my analysis in the experiences of the individuals who work with and advocate through these organizations. By interviewing individuals who have significant experience working with refugees and asylum seekers in non-profit and non-government organizations, I am able to identify the frames that are used in their advocacy work and gain insight into *how* and *why* they use them. As a method of qualitative research, interviews are a process of “inquiry in a world of complex and interwoven constructed realities” (Bradley 1993: 432). The first-hand knowledge gained through interviews allows for an exploration of the framing process as it takes place over time, and as Creed, Langstraat and Scully (2002) have argued, enables analysis to move beyond simply identifying frames to an analysis of *how* advocates interpret and understand their own advocacy work and framing strategies within a specific political and social context.

Selecting the Sample

Each year a significant portion of the asylum seekers that arrive in Canada settle in Toronto. As a result this city has a vibrant and active community of organizations that aim to serve

newcomers. Organizations that work with refugees and asylum seekers are diverse and include legal clinics, church groups, community centres, settlement agencies, advocacy councils, transitional housing organizations, and shelters. While many organizations work with immigrants and convention refugees, the number of organizations that openly provide services to asylum seekers is much smaller. One of the reasons for this is funding constraints. As explained in Chapter Three, organizations rely on various sources for their funding and may receive support from federal, provincial or municipal governments, foundations, religious communities, businesses, or private donors. Those organizations that receive funding from the federal government through Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) face restrictions in terms of whom they provide services too and how they do it. Federal funding cannot be used in providing services directly to asylum seekers or individuals without status. Given that my research is particularly interested in how organizations advocate on behalf of asylum seekers, one of the main requirements in the selection process was identifying those organizations that provide direct services or advocate on behalf of this particular population. Furthermore, as an exploratory study into *how* organizations working with asylum seekers engage in advocacy, the focus was limited to organizations that publically state their involvement in advocacy activities.

I also chose to include several umbrella advocacy organizations in the sample as these formalized councils often serve as mediators between government and community-based service delivery organizations. These organizations engage in advocacy and public education on behalf of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers while holding close relationships with non-profits working in the sector. I also hoped that through active engagement with their

membership these organizations would be a source of insight into the broader refugee and immigrant serving settlement sector, thus ensuring greater reliability in my findings. To summarize, the requirement for inclusion in the study was that the organization worked directly in providing settlement services to asylum seekers (excluding umbrella organizations), they were a registered non-profit organization and were non-governmental, and they self-identified as having engaged in advocacy concerning government refugee policy.

In making a preliminary list of potential organizations I relied on knowledge of the refugee-serving sector in Toronto that I had gained while completing my internship at Romero House. From this preliminary list I then broadened my sample by conducting a search on 211 Toronto. This database gave a comprehensive list of organizations that provide settlement services for newcomers. Using this list I selected those organizations that provided services to asylum seekers and refugees from diverse cultural communities rather than ethno-specific organizations. Given the limitations in the size of this project I felt it was important that the organizations involved be working with similarly diverse ethnic populations. Diversity was important as it provided insight into how NGOs challenge dominant discourse which frames *all* asylum seekers as “bogus refugees” rather than drawing attention to and focusing on differences between refugees from various ethnic communities. To identify organizations eligible for inclusion in this study I reviewed their web pages and followed community advocacy events that were being organized at that time in reaction to reforms to refugee policy with Bill C-11. While the majority of organizations that met my criteria were faith-based organizations, I sought to prevent bias within my sample by including both

religious and secular organizations. For the same reason I also included organizations that receive government funding and those that do not. In this way my sample reflects the broader community of NGOs working and advocating with and for asylum seekers. Organizations were then contacted by phone as well as through email to ask for their participation in the research. Since multiple follow up calls were necessary to make contact with many of the organizations this part of the data collection proved to be the most time consuming. Several organizations requested further information on the study and so I forwarded a description of the project, the importance of this research and an example of sample questions. A number of organizations did not reply to my repeated attempts to make contact or were too busy to participate, however the majority of respondents were both interested and very supportive of the research. In the end four organizations were included in my research out of the approximately eight community based service delivery NGOs in Toronto that fit all of the criteria for this study. In addition to these four organizations, I included two of the most prominent umbrella organizations that advocate for asylum seekers at the provincial and national level. Appendix A contains brief profiles of all the organizations included.

Data Collection

Focusing specifically on NGOs that provide settlement services to asylum seekers and the umbrella organizations they belong to meant narrowing the scope of research to one specific type of organization within the advocacy community. Nevertheless, I took this approach as it would strengthen my ability to make comparisons between interviews and draw conclusions. Following Andrews and Edwards (2004) and Schlager (1995), I relied on a multiple-organization approach in completing this research. Semi-structured interviews were

conducted with nine individuals who represent six organizations in different capacities. The community-based organizations that took part in this study were the Mennonite New Life Centre (MNLC), Sojourn House, FCJ Refugee Centre, and Romero House. Interviews were also completed with individuals that work with the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), and the Canadian Council of Refugees (CCR). All individuals interviewed were given the option of anonymity, both for themselves and their organization, however all consented to the use of their real identity.

Contact was first made by telephone or by email to the Executive Director of each organization, as it was reasonably assumed that they would be the source of greatest information on the subject and would have the most experience. In several cases I chose to interview other staff members as well given their history and personal experience on the subject matter. The nine individuals interviewed include: one individual who identifies as founder of the organization, six Executive Directors (two of whom are also co-founders of their organization), a settlement worker, and an individual with the title of policy analyst and public education coordinator. In most cases two interviews were conducted at each organization in order to provide more data and strengthen the reliability of findings. This was also important given that I was interested in studying advocacy from an organizational rather than individual perspective. In some cases personal referral and snowball sampling were used to secure further interviews both within the organization and reaching out to connect with other organizations in the community as well. While I was unable to interview anyone who is currently working full-time on behalf of the Canadian Council for Refugees, several interviews were conducted with individuals that are currently, or have served in the past,

with the CCR in various leadership positions while also working full time for a community-based member organization. In these cases my interview questions first focused on their role in their community non-profit organization, and then looked at their experiences with the CCR. I also attended the Spring and Fall consultations organized by the CCR which are attended by refugees, immigrants, NGO representatives, government, UNHCR and academics. The consultations are vital for information-exchange, networking, strategy development and discussion.¹²

In order to add to the data that respondents provided in interviews I sought out further information regarding their advocacy efforts by gathering resources published on organization web pages and through the CCR list-serve.¹³ This included press releases, brochures and information on community events and panel discussions. In addition to this information, I received consent from Janet Dench, the Executive Director of the CCR, to include a personal email she had sent to a third party regarding advocacy strategies at the CCR. While interviews and documents provided in-depth information regarding frames, framing and organizing activities, it is important to note the limitations of this research strategy given the constructed and selective nature of the data. This strategy did not involve analyzing the process of advocacy as it was occurring through activities such as meetings or debates. While time constraints limited my ability to analyze all advocacy efforts as they were occurring, attending the CCR consultations was important in shaping interview questions regarding advocacy activities and decisions concerning strategy.

¹² <http://ccrweb.ca/en/meetings>

¹³ This is an on-line email based server open to all who are interested in the work of the CCR. It is primarily used for networking, education, and strategic planning among other activities.

Interviews took place from August until November of 2010. They were all recorded and then transcribed. Due to time constraints I relied on the assistance of an experienced individual who assisted in transcribing three of the nine interviews. Interviews were conducted in the office space of each organization with interviews ranging in length from 40 minutes to just under two hours. Appendix B contains the semi-structured interview guide used in my research. Time constraints led me to limit the number of interviews, creating a small sample size. In light of this I decided that it was more important to focus on fewer organizations but in greater depth. However a small sample size is also a reflection of the limited number of organizations that serve asylum seekers and engage in policy advocacy. Given these limitations on sample size it was particularly important to conduct in-depth interviews. Johnson explains that through in-depth interviews researchers seek “deep” information and knowledge for understanding (2001: 106). The word deep in this context refers to the aim of the interviewer in achieving the same deep level of knowledge and understanding held by the participants, where this understanding goes beyond common sense explanations to uncover what is hidden from ordinary view (2001: 106). Using an in-depth strategy for interviews provided more conclusive data on a small subset of the refugee advocacy community. While the sample sought homogeneity in that it represented non-profit organizations that provide settlement services to asylum seekers, it also was heterogeneous in that it included religious and secular organizations and organizations with diverse funding structures.

To interview participants I relied on an open-ended technique that enabled respondents to answer more organically and discuss those aspects that they considered most

important while still remaining on-topic and discussing issues that were relevant to my particular research question. Hoffman (2007) defines open-ended interviewing as a “simple, straightforward structure of a predetermined set of questions.” These questions are used with each respondent to ensure that certain topics are covered with everyone. Follow-up questions, which may be pre-determined or based on particular responses, augment these initial probes (Hoffman 2007). Permitting the respondent to expand on any question or possibly change topics all together during the interview increases the amount of data the research is able to collect and also heightens the validity of the study (Hoffman 2007). In determining the initial interview questions I was informed by my review of the key debates within the literature. In constructing interview questions I attempted to remove leading or value-laden questions as much as possible. I also worked to ensure that the terminology I used was familiar to research participants, and that questions were open-ended and phrased in such a way that they were not based on taken for granted assumptions (Brown 2005).

During the interviews I was very open about my past experience working at Romero House and my general knowledge of the refugee system in Canada. Scholars within the social sciences have focused a great deal of attention on the dynamic between researcher and participant and have carefully examined the associated epistemological, methodological and ethical issues (Ganga & Scott 2006). The positionality of the researcher has been conceptualized as a central component in the process of qualitative data collection (Ganga & Scott 2006). In exploring “how to do” qualitative research a number of authors point to the researchers “ethical imperative to examine his or her own personal ideas, occupational ideologies, assumptions, common sense and emotions as crucial resources for what he or she

‘sees’ or ‘hears’” (Johnson 2001: 105). Given my experience at Romero House I saw myself as holding a limited amount of “insider knowledge” that was both a source of guidance as well as a challenge throughout the interview process. Arksey and Knight suggest that “insiders can draw on shared experiences, interests and language, which can stimulate rapport and interview-interviewee interaction” (cited in Brown 2005: 110). However Ganga and Scott (2006) caution that this relationship can influence objectivity and the social dynamics that shapes the qualitative interview. My own positionality was particularly important to consider in conducting interviews with staff from Romero House. While my insider position proved useful in negotiating access to informants and determining appropriate probing questions during the interview, I was careful to take steps in ensuring that the questions I asked gave respondents the freedom to respond openly. In analyzing interview data I also worked to ensure that I was not making assumptions about the answers respondents gave in light of my own experiences.

A significant body of literature has focused attention on the importance of recognizing the relations of power that are at work within the interview (Hoffman 2007; Gubrium & Holstein 2002). Hoffman explores these power dynamics explaining that while “the interviewer has power in that she initiated the interview, framed the process in terms of what questions she asked, and shaped how others understand the interviewee’s story... [t]he interviewee, too, has substantial power, since she possesses the knowledge that the interviewer seeks and can determine how much of, and how, this knowledge will be shared” (2007: 332). Hoffman identifies the multifaceted nature of power in interviews in the way that it shifts between interviewer and interviewee. My experiences in conducting interviews

reflect the findings of Hoffman who describes the lack of power she had as “interviewees could ration out their information at their own rate” (2007: 225). Hoffman describes spending “a great deal of time with certain interviewees who preferred to slowly unweave their stories, discursively and without response to my efforts to guide them in a more efficient way” (2007: 335). In approaching participants and conducting interviews it is worth noting that all of the respondents expressed a great deal of support and interest in my research and the subject matter in general.

Data Analysis

Once all of the interviews were completed and fully transcribed I then coded them using NVIVO 9 software. In coding interviews I began by using the core framing tasks discussed previously. In approaching the various texts I first coded for diagnostic framing, which looks at how problems are defined by respondents and where blame is located. I then coded for the prognostic framing respondents used to describe appropriate strategies for attaining solutions to the various problems they had identified. After coding all of the interviews for their diagnostic and prognostic framing I then coded advocacy documents such as press releases and letters to various parliamentarians in the same way. I then repeated this process coding for framing strategies and processes, including frame transformation and frame resonance. In using a methodology informed by frame analysis it is also important to explore the broader context in which framing processes are embedded (Snow 2007: 401). Given that the frames I identified occurred within a specific political and social context, the next stage of my analysis was to code the interviews looking for dominant themes. Through this process I was able to explore the organizing tasks involved in advocacy. In conducting thematic analysis I

relied on knowledge gained from my review of the literature, however I also looked for themes that emerged from the interviews themselves. In exploring emergent themes my research was informed by grounded theory as advanced by Glaser and Strauss (Heath & Cowley 2004). After identifying key themes within each interview I then compared them across organizations looking for commonalities and differences.

While analyzing the data it was again important to consider the power of the researcher. In her analysis of power relations Hoffman (2007) explores how researchers wield power by deciding which quotes, which stories, and whose voices will be included, and to what extent, in the written analysis. Scholars have asked “whether the process of coding interview responses for research purposes itself disenfranchises respondents, transforming their narratives into terms foreign to what their original sensibilities might have been” (Gubrium & Holstein 2002: 20). Incorporating grounded theory into my analysis was important in answering these concerns raised in the literature as it ensured that I provided the space to pay attention to potential issues and topics that were of particular importance and relevance to the respondents and may not have surfaced through the questions which I had formed based on my reading of the literature.

CHAPTER FIVE: Analysis and Discussion

The culture of disbelief towards asylum seekers and the increasing challenges that face the voluntary sector constrain the ability of NGOs to engage in advocacy concerning refugee policy and discourse in Canada. However throughout the last decade, despite these challenges, a small group of committed NGOs has engaged in policy advocacy in an attempt to counter continued negative rhetoric and the mounting restrictions placed on asylum seekers. This thesis focuses attention on these voices of resistance and explores their efforts to influence policy reforms and re-frame dominant discourse that increasingly criminalizes and excludes asylum seekers from seeking protection in Canada. A research strategy of frame analysis and thematic coding offered several advantages. First, it emphasized the agency of NGOs as they work to create meaning and construct messaging in response to government actions; second, it provided insight into the changing relations between government and civil society over the last decade and the impact these changes have had on NGO advocacy; and third, it emphasized the connection between frames, opportunity and action.

I have divided my findings and analysis into two parts in this chapter. In the first section I focus specifically on three broad collective action frames constructed by advocates in their efforts to oppose and transform the “already existing, established and widely accepted frames” that perpetuate the culture of disbelief (Taylor 2000: 511). Using the concepts of frame transformation and frame resonance, I discuss the experiences of advocates within the framing process, providing insight into the rationale behind the construction and use of frames, and the impact of the broader social and legal context upon framing efforts. In the second part of this

chapter I identify the various organizing tasks and strategies through which advocates seek to transform dominant discourse and restrictive policies.

My findings suggest that NGO asylum advocates seek to transform the dominant discourse regarding asylum seekers through multiple methods and strategies that are aimed directly at the government, and indirectly to the general public and other voluntary sector organizations. My analysis of the collective action frames and advocacy tactics used throughout the last decade suggests that NGOs have sought to maintain and encourage communication and dialogue with government leaders in order to mitigate the worsening conditions that face asylum seekers in Canada. Multiple prognosis frames have been constructed and advanced simultaneously by NGOs in reaction to negative government discourse and refugee policy reform throughout the last decade. Advocates perceive these multiple frames to be largely unsuccessful in resonating with the general public and government, and have not lead to significant changes within dominant discourse. However, they do perceive their efforts to be successful in achieving “small wins” within the policy arena by influencing refugee policy reforms. In general, findings reveal a change in political opportunity for advocacy at the level of the federal government in the last five years, and explore the response of NGOs that have remained engaged in policy advocacy. My findings provide insight into how NGOs work to overcome challenges and how they cope with the internal tensions that these challenges present. My overall argument is that the change in political opportunity has highlighted for NGO staff the importance of collective advocacy that presents a strong and united front. Through continued efforts to engage directly with politicians and government leaders and by centering their organizing efforts on the lives and experiences of asylum seekers and refugees, NGOs engaged

in asylum advocacy work collectively to resist both the culture of disbelief and the specific challenges facing the voluntary sector.

Part I: Transforming Dominant Discourse through Collective Action Frames

According to Goffman (1974), transformation occurs when movement actors attempt to redefine “activities, events, and biographies that are already meaningful from the standpoint of some primary framework, in terms of another framework, such that they are ‘now seen by the participants to be something quite else.’” Goffman describes this as a “systematic alteration that radically reconstitutes what it is for participants that is going on” (cited in Snow et al. 1986: 474). In seeking to radically transform dominant discourse regarding asylum seekers, advocates construct collective action frames. Through these frames advocates diagnose the problem and propose potential solutions. These frames are not static, but are the product of on-going interaction (Snow 2004: 03).

In what follows I identify three broad frames that have been used by the NGOs included in this study in a strategic effort to re-frame dominant discourse surrounding asylum seekers and refugees in Canada throughout the last decade. Exploring each frame separately, I first describe the problems diagnosed by the NGOs, and then outline the multiple prognosis frames that have been advanced as solutions in an on-going effort by advocates to transform dominant discourse. My analysis reveals a shared understanding among NGOs regarding diagnosis of the problem. Findings also indicate that NGOs have constructed multiple prognosis solutions in their efforts to counter and transform negative discourse and the restrictive climate of disbelief. The solutions proposed by NGOs have been used repeatedly throughout the last decade, and while all of the solutions are used by more than one NGO, very few of the solutions are used by all six NGOs. In

general these collective action frames have sought to maintain a balance between encouraging communication and dialogue with government leaders and advancing messages that are deeply critical of government actions.

While throughout the last decade the majority of frames have been critical of government and sought transformation by focusing in on what advocates oppose concerning refugee reforms, recent framing in response to Bill C-11 indicates that some NGOs have shifted their message to be more positive and emphasize more specifically what they *want* in a refugee system. This indicates a new strategy in efforts to transform dominant discourse. After describing the three frames I then discuss the frame resonance of various solutions as explained by respondents, thus exploring the rationale behind why certain frames are constructed as well as when and how they are used. This ultimately highlights the challenges encountered in constructing messages strong enough to counter the dominant discourse around asylum seekers. Table 1.0 presents a brief summary of the three frames analyzed in the following pages.

Table 1.0 Summary of Collective Action Frames: Diagnosis and Prognosis

<i>Frame</i>	<i>Increasing Xenophobia as a Result of Negative Government Language</i>	<i>Canada's Doors are Closing</i>	<i>A Fair System for All Refugees</i>
<i>Diagnosis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Negative government discourse leads to increasing xenophobia -There has been a change in society post 9/11 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Refugee policies focus on exclusion rather than protection -Doors are closing -Less asylum seekers are making claims 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Canada's RDS needs to protect refugees and focus on their best interests -Refugees are not the focus of reforms being made to policy
<i>Prognosis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Change public opinion -Educate politicians -Demand responsible government messaging -Present technical fact-based response -Emotional response which argues that asylum seekers are 'deserving victims' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Legal obligations and responsibility to commitment -Liberal Nationalist frame -Look to history for solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Look to experience of other countries with similar policy changes -Use personal stories to 'teach' implications of policy reforms -Create a fair, fast, efficient system in best interest of refugees

1) Increasing Xenophobia as a Result of Negative Government Language

A broad frame used by all NGOs included in my study diagnosed the key problem of increasing xenophobia within Canada which perpetuates the culture of disbelief towards asylum seekers.

Blame for this problem was directed at negative government discourse that frames asylum seekers as “bogus refugees” and “queue jumpers.” In framing this problem respondents

identified government discourse as creating hostility in the general public and leading more generally to an anti-immigrant backlash. Debbie Douglas of OCASI illustrated this diagnosis:

It's one of the things that we were saying, [and] that CCR was saying. That if our elected politicians continue to demonize refugees, the Canadian public is absolutely going to turn off of our immigration program. So the argument is that 'no, we're only talking about this group of people.' It doesn't work like that. The fact that you demonize the Tamil refugees, means that all refugees and immigrants have been cast in that same light, in the same boat. So it's not surprising when we're beginning to see poll after poll with the majority of immigrants, the majority of Canadians, and those Canadians include people from racialized communities, and they include immigrants, first generation immigrants themselves- are absolutely not in support of Canada's immigration program.

Francisco Rico from FCJ suggested in his interview that the increasing xenophobia in society arises from a government approach that defends the level of comfort and security in society and identifies refugees as a threat to that level of comfort. On the other hand, Debbie Hill Corrigan at Sojourn House emphasized the climate of fear that the government incites in the general public through negative rhetoric. The outcome of both of these government frames, however, is the creation and maintenance of a society that positions asylum seekers as “unwanted others.”

Through their framing NGO advocates suggest that the problem of increasing xenophobia has continued to worsen throughout the last decade and reflects a broader change in society. In his interview Francisco Rico of FCJ echoed a comment made in a CCR advocacy document, identifying a “Not in my Backyard” approach to refugees that has emerged since the terrorist attack of 9/11. In diagnosing the problem, Mary Jo Leddy of Romero House also commented on the change in society since September 11th 2001, “I mean, post 9-11, it’s a mean, a very mean society. And that’s not going to change easily. Fear is a very important political motivator, it’s extremely dangerous.” Since 9/11, government discourse has rationalized restrictive asylum policies as a necessary component of an immigration system focused on security and protection of the nation. Cook (2010) speaks to the power of the politics of fear, pointing out that states securitize migration through physical force as well as discursive means. She quotes Huysmans, who states:

Securitizing immigration and asylum constructs political trust, loyalty and identity through the distribution of fear and an intensification of alienation. It is a peculiar process of constitution of a political community of the established that seeks to secure unity and identity by instituting existential insecurity. (cited in Cook 2010: 155)

Other respondents echoed the concerns outlined by Mary Jo Leddy, and emphasized the challenge of responding to the negative climate that is present in society, induced by government. In emphasizing the particular challenge faced by advocates, Amy Casipullai of OCASI commented, “It’s like the sentiment against refugees has rarely been positive but it’s never been this negative...” As a result, advocates face an uphill battle in working to protect the rights of refugees arriving and making their claim in Canada.

Frames are constructed through both a diagnosis of the problem, and a prognosis, or the articulation of potential solutions and strategies to achieve those solutions. While all NGOs agreed on the problem of increasing xenophobia and blamed government discourse for perpetuating xenophobia, advocates from the six NGOs identified diverse ways that they have responded to the increasing xenophobia within society and the negative framing put forward by the Canadian government. All of the prognosis frames constructed by advocates have been used at various moments throughout the last decade in response to negative rhetoric and have been used to reach out to both government and the general public.

One of the key prognosis frames used by NGOs in responding to negative government language such as “bogus refugee” criticized the government directly and argued that they must engage in responsible messaging that educates Canadians. This frame was adopted specifically by the MNLC and the CCR. Tanya Chute Molina commented on this approach stating, “One of the messages is to ask the government to be responsible with its messaging and the way it takes on leadership in terms of shaping public opinion about people coming to the country.” This frame was also evident in advocacy work undertaken by the CCR. In a 2004 open letter to Judy Sgro, then Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the CCR stated:

As a signatory to the Geneva Convention relating to the status of Refugees, *the Canadian government has a responsibility to educate the public about our obligations and to encourage Canadians to support refugees and the system that protects them.* [emphasis added] When representatives of the government mislead the public about the refugee determination system, they undermine public confidence in the mechanism that protects refugees and foster hostility towards refugee claimants. This is particularly important because of the international context of doors closing on refugees, and the domestic context of persistent prejudices against refugees who claim our protection. (CCR 2004)

This prognosis frame was used repeatedly throughout the last decade to directly communicate disapproval of government language. Through this frame these NGOs directly criticized government, but did so in a way that highlighted the negative impact that government actions have on the broader Canadian society.

A second prognosis frame sought to undermine anti-asylum seeker discourse with a technical fact-based response. An example of this frame is found in a document outlining the response of the CCR to Bill C-11. The document, written in May of 2010, stated:

Use of language such as ‘bogus claims’ is extremely damaging. We need reasoned, fact-based discussion, not name-calling and oversimplifications. Not everyone who makes a claim needs protection but that doesn’t make them ‘abusers’. They may have compelling reasons for leaving their country, even if they don’t meet the narrow refugee definition. (CCR 2010a)

Jordan Pachciarz Cohen from the MNLC similarly countered the “bogus” discourse using a technical frame,

For example, like Mexico, like everybody says you know ‘oh, they’re bogus refugees.’ One out of ten is accepted as a refugee, and the rest of them, you look at them, and people don’t know if they’re refused it’s not because they’re bogus or making it up, it’s because the refugee definition is so narrow, they don’t fit within the, that definition of Convention Refugee, and it’s not because they’re not at risk, or lying, but because the government or the IRB believes that the Mexican government are the authorities in Mexico and are able to protect their citizens. Or that there is an internal flight alternative right? But the way that the government presents it, and in the media it’s just ‘they’re just abusing our system.’

In challenging the discourse of the Canadian government, specifically the current Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Jason Kenney, Francisco Rico of FCJ explained the approach he has taken in responding to the bogus asylum seeker discourse. His approach similarly relied on presenting a fact based argument,

Nobody listened to what I said, but you know, my position was, and I said it to the Minister in front of him once, that if he reviews the IRB decisions, the Immigration and Refugee Board decisions and any negative decisions, and if he reviewed the PRAA [Pre-Removal Risk Assessment] decisions that were made by immigration officers, he doesn't find in *one* of the decisions the term 'bogus'. Because the decisions are negative, not on the basis of that, the decisions are negative on the basis of technical criteria. And you meet the definition or you don't meet it, but nobody is saying you are not telling me the truth... [This] bogus claims concept comes from a very political and ideological concept of the Minister that doesn't exist in real terms, in terms of the system. And that has been my explanation all the time.

Another fact-based approach adopted by the CCR was to challenge the dominant frame which suggested that asylum seekers are "taking advantage of Canada's generosity." To counter this, they presented an economically based argument in a May 5th, 2010 response to proposed changes under Bill C-11. This argument pointed out that "Many claimants find work quickly, often accepting difficult, low wage jobs which Canadian employers have trouble filling. Claimants who work pay taxes that go towards services and benefits enjoyed by Canadians, but for which the claimants themselves are often ineligible." In total, three of the six organizations - FCJ, CCR and MNLC - used the technical fact-based frame in their prognosis of potential solutions, and this frame was directed mainly at government officials, but also towards the general public.

The third prognosis frame adopted by NGO advocates challenged the xenophobia and negative discourse by invoking an emotional response that identified asylum seekers as "deserving victims." The CCR illustrated this frame in a 2010 response to policy reform proposals by the Canadian government. The press release stated: "Refugees are among the most

vulnerable people in society and are easy targets for attack. as non-citizens in a foreign country. Disparaging labels, especially coming from government, profoundly damage public perception of refugees, and non-citizens in general” (CCR 2010b). Many NGOs advanced this deserving victim frame by describing the lived experiences and stories of asylum seekers and refugees. This frame was evident in the advocacy efforts of the CCR, Romero House, FCJ, Sojourn House and the MNLC. Through this frame personal accounts from asylum seekers were used strategically to create an emotional connection with the targeted audience, which focused mainly on the general public. Jordan Pachciarz Cohen of the MNLC commented on using personal stories to elicit an emotional response:

Many people are removed from, you know, very often they consider a refugee claimant, you know, refugee claimants are considered as a group of people and there’s no differences between them, and they’re all liars, and they’re all this and that, and that’s how the media represents them, and so the public discourse around refugees is...it is often very negative, and when you have personal stories about how people’s lives are really affected by the laws and it grabs people’s emotional, or feelings...

Advocates suggest that these personal stories create a positive spin, reframing the discussion away from the negative language and discourse of government. Loly Rico, co-founder of FCJ, commented further on this approach explaining the importance of personal stories in making an impact on the system and changing the opinion of the general public:

Everybody’s story is important! But could you imagine if you could bring for example someone that is a Czech from the Czech Republic who was accused of being a bogus person and prove that this wasn’t bogus and won his case and this person is an owner of a business that is hiring like 15 or 20 people? If you see it is a way to have an impact. Or a single mother that is from Mexico and she came because she was fleeing from domestic violence. Because they keep saying we are supporting too many, and all of the women suffering domestic violence will come here! It’s not true. The people that come it’s because the situation is really a life or death situation.

By appealing to an emotional connection and emphasizing the “deserving” asylum seeker, NGO advocates worked to deconstruct the negative discourse around asylum seekers and change public opinion. This strategy ultimately sought to destabilize the culture of disbelief created through government discourse and portray asylum seekers as refugees in need of protection. While advocates used this frame in an attempt to reject the binary constructed through dominant discourse between “bogus” and “genuine” refugees, using personal stories presents a particular challenge as it can also reinforce the binary of “deserving” and “undeserving.” However despite this challenge personal stories have been used throughout the last decade to broaden the discussion over refugees and asylum seekers so that, as Tanya Chute Molina from MNLCC pointed out, it is not just about statistics and policy approaches but more of a recognition that the discussion is about people’s lives.

2) Canada’s Doors are Closing

Another broad diagnostic frame that was widely adopted by NGO advocates argued that Canada is “closing its doors” and “shutting down” as refugee policies increasingly focus on exclusion rather than the protection of refugees. Through the imagery of closing doors advocates indicated that over time refugee policy has grown increasingly restrictive and focused on the exclusion of those individuals that are determined to be unwanted by the state. This visual symbol was referenced by all six organizations either during interviews or in the advocacy letters and statements that they sent to politicians and the general public. Specifically this image was referenced when speaking of changes such as the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) and visa regulations which impacted the ability of asylum seekers to physically enter Canada. In speaking to the 2004 STCA, Loly Rico of FCJ Refugee Centre stated, “The whole *purpose* of the

Safe Third Country Agreement was to close the doors.” In diagnosing the problem of “closing doors” NGOs expressed their belief that Canada is becoming increasingly restrictive and will only move further in this direction as time passes. Mary Jo Leddy of Romero House commented on this, “But you know, I can see in twenty years, the doors just close, close, close... They’ve shut the door, and history is not going to judge us very well on this, you know. It’s going to say ‘we slammed the door in the face of persecution.’” In pointing to evidence that the system is closing down Francisco Rico of FCJ emphasized a continued decrease in the number of asylum seekers arriving at his organization and seeking assistance,

We did our statistics for our board meeting yesterday. June 2009 we helped 60, we did 60 PIF,¹⁴ June 2010 we did 10. So there is a huge decrease in the number of refugees coming into Canada. I guess that would be around 40 percent because the Minister has tightened the way to make [it] harder or to reduce the intake of refugees because he imposed visas to countries that were producing refugees, Mexico, Czech Republic.

In proposing solutions to this problem, NGO advocates from all six organizations were quick to point to the obligations Canada has made by signing various international legal agreements, such as the 1951 UN Convention. In framing this as an *obligation* they placed specific emphasis on Canada’s responsibility in continuing to uphold these commitments, emphasizing that refugee protection was not charity, but a legal commitment. In an open letter to Prime Minister Harper the CCR stated:

We are writing to express our grave concern that *the Canadian government is betraying its fundamental legal and moral obligations towards refugees.* [emphasis added] We call on you to recommit Canada to the principles of refugee protection and to uphold our country’s best traditions of welcoming those who flee persecution. (CCR 2009)

¹⁴ PIF refers to Personal Information Form. Prior to reforms under Bill C-11, this form documented the refugee claimant’s personal information and narrative and was used by the immigration and refugee board member to decide on their claim. To complete the PIF many refugee claimants relied on the services of lawyers and settlement agencies to assist them with the form.

In further challenging the movement towards increasingly restrictive refugee policy, a second prognosis frame advanced by several NGO advocates pointed to solutions which place openness to asylum seekers and the protection of refugees within a “liberal nationalist” frame (Tamir 1993). Tamir explains that liberal nationalism brings together inclusiveness, universalism and nationalism while also incorporating notions of belonging, membership and cultural affiliation with personal autonomy, individual rights and a commitment to social justice within and between nations (cited in Every & Augoustinos 2008b: 563). For NGO asylum advocates this frame emphasized Canada’s tradition, reputation and values in relation to the protection of refugees. In highlighting this frame, advocates pointed to a contradiction that exists between the increasingly restrictive nature of refugee policies and Canada’s tradition and reputation for protecting refugees. Various aspects of this liberal nationalist frame were used by three of the organizations included in this study, OCASI, CCR and MNL. An example of this approach can be found in a 2002 letter from the CCR appealing the government decision to implement the STCA, Kemi Jacobs (President of the CCR at the time) wrote:

Is Canada reneging on its tradition of treating people with justice? Canada cannot ignore its relationship with its southern neighbour, but it also has responsibilities as a member of the global community. We have built ourselves a reputation internationally as a country that is fair to refugees. Should we jeopardize that now by turning our backs on refugees?

In another example, Tanya Chute Molina of the MNL expressed her organization’s concerns in a letter to Senator Anne C. Cools. The 2007 letter sought support from the Senate for Bill C-280,

which attempted to amend IRPA by calling for the implementation of the Refugee Appeal Division (RAD),¹⁵

Around the world, Canada is regarded as a country responsive to humanitarian concerns and respectful of human rights. The Mennonite New Life Centre is expressing our concern in this letter because we are proud of this reputation and wish for it to be fully reflected in Canada's immigration policy and practice. (MNLC 2007)

Along with emphasizing the importance of maintaining a liberal Canada by keeping to our tradition and reputation regarding refugee protection, NGO advocates also point to the importance of remembering Canadian values. Specifically, advocates pointed to values which are held to be important within Canadian society. Debbie Douglas provided an example of this framing strategy in her interview,

I still think we need to keep reminding ourselves that as Canadians we respect fairness. We respect the right of everyone to be able to participate. We believe in issues of equity, and that we will hold our government accountable, to ensure that we don't do away with those kinds of things.

The CCR used similar framing in an advocacy campaign directed at the general public. In an advocacy document entitled, *What We Want for Refugees: Four faces, four values* the CCR stated, "We want refugees to be treated fairly and honourably, in a process that is independent and affordable. These are Canadian values and treating refugees in this way is good for Canada and good for refugees" (CCR 2011). By focusing attention on the importance of Canadian values and how they relate to refugee protection, advocates emphasized the message that refugee protection benefits Canada as well as refugees. Through this approach advocates identified the

¹⁵ The RAD would enable refugee claimants who lost their hearing to make an appeal to have their case re-heard. The RAD was promised to advocates during negotiations over IRPA, however it was not implemented. Changes introduced with Bill C-11 in 2010 propose to finally introduce this into practice.

shift towards increasingly restrictive refugee policy as particularly problematic because it challenges Canada's tradition, values and international reputation as a humanitarian country.

Finally, NGO advocates have used historical framing to strategically suggest past moments and political decisions regarding the arrival of refugees. In using this prognosis frame advocates hoped that historical examples would encourage the government in power to make decisions that aligned with their advocacy objectives. This frame has been employed by the CCR, the MNLC and OCASI as a solution at various moments in time and in multiple ways throughout the last decade. This frame is illustrated in a 2005 pamphlet created by the CCR in response to the STCA. The pamphlet, entitled *10 Reasons Why Safe Third Country Is a Bad Deal* used historical framing by citing the denial of protection to Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution. In adopting the slogan from that period, the CCR called the STCA a "None is Too Many" agreement as it is ultimately about keeping refugees out. Several years later, in a letter dated July 27, 2009 from the MNLC to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Jason Kenney, Executive Director Tanya Chute Molina critiqued changes to visa requirements and the list of moratorium countries. Responding to the changes, Molina wrote:

Canada included the safe third country concept in its 1988 immigration law, but the provision was never implemented. *Decision makers of the day understood that the United States, for political reasons, was not a safe country for thousands of Central Americans fleeing the cruelty of repression and civil war.* [emphasis added] Canada chose to take an independent stance and the Mennonite New Life Centre participated in welcoming what is now a strong and vibrant Central American community in Toronto. (MNLC 2009)

In adopting a similar framing technique, Amy Casipullai, from OCASI, spoke of the determined efforts by advocates to get a regularization program for people without status, including all categories of refugees. Casipullai commented on the frame used in this advocacy initiative, "So we keep reminding the current Conservatives, 'you know what? The last time anything happened

in this area was another Conservative government. so this should be encouragement for you guys to take a look at this.” Through these examples we see that by grounding their concerns and demands within the context of the historical action or in-action of past governments, advocates suggest solutions that are framed so as to enable the current government to take action in ways that are consistent with their advocacy objectives.

3) A Fair System for All Refugees

While the concept of fairness is referenced by advocates through the liberal nationalist prognosis frame, the final broad frame that emerged from the data emphasized more specifically the importance of a system that is focused first and foremost on the needs and best interest of refugees and recognizes their unique vulnerabilities. Amy Casipullai from OCASI pointed out in her interview that there has never really been a *fair* Refugee Determination System in Canada, and that efforts to achieve such a system have been on-going. In advancing this broad frame NGOs identified problems in relation to the specific refugee policy reforms being put forward by government. For example, in 2004 the CCR argued that the STCA would only further increase reliance on human smuggling, increasing the vulnerability of individuals fleeing their country of origin. With Bill C-11 in 2010 the CCR and its member agencies argued that the suggested reforms were unfair as they would create a two-tier system of protection where refugees were treated differently based on their country of origin. This would particularly hurt women making gender-based claims and those making claims based on sexual orientation. The CCR argued further that a list of safe countries would politicize the refugee system and create new diplomatic pressures (CCR 2010c).

In advancing a frame which emphasized the need for a fair system, advocates focused attention on the changes that should be made to Canada's refugee determination system (RDS) in order to focus on the best interest of refugees in need of protection. Advocates argued for the necessity of a fair RDS, emphasizing that such a system would be faster, more efficient and transparent in the best interest of refugees. Identifying the importance of focusing on the protection of refugees, Debbie Douglas from OCASI explained that in suggesting changes to Bill C-11 advocates worked for a "fair, more transparent and faster system." Similarly, the CCR argued in response to Bill C-11 that a *good* Refugee Determination System would fairly and quickly determine protection. This prognosis frame pointed to a change from the previous frames used in transforming dominant discourse in that NGO advocates sought to clearly identify what they *want* rather than what they oppose.

In advancing a prognosis frame advocates from the CCR and OCASI sought to transform discourse and policy by pointing to the experiences of other countries. This comparative frame was used to identify the negative impact various policy changes would have on refugees if they are implemented in Canada. This frame was primarily used in the recommendations made by these NGOs regarding the STCA in 2004. Both the CCR and OCASI pointed to experiences in Europe and along the U.S/Mexico border to argue that policies which restrict access lead to increases in human smuggling, ultimately placing refugees in positions of greater vulnerability. Another example of this frame is evident in the CCR response to proposed reforms under Bill C-11. In a news release dated March 30, 2010 the CCR argued that creating a system that relied on civil servants as part of the decision making process for claimants would be a mistake. The article explained, "Canada has become a model for countries around the world with its current

system of initial refugee decisions made by a fully independent board member – this important asset would be lost under the government’s proposal. *Systems using civil servants in other countries have proved unsuccessful, with a large number of cases overturned on appeal*” [emphasis added] (CCR 2010). The CCR argued that an effective system requires determination of individual claims based on fact and law by an expert independent body.

A third prognosis frame employed by NGOs focused on teaching politicians the implications of policy changes. This approach constructed accounts based on the experiences of asylum seekers (both real and potential cases) to “teach” and inform politicians of the implications that policy changes would have on the lives of individuals seeking asylum; doing so in a way that was easily understandable to individuals that lacked in-depth knowledge of the lived experiences of refugees. Jordan Pachiarz Cohen from the MNLC commented on the importance of this work pointing to his experience presenting in front of the standing committee on citizenship and immigration in response to proposals under Bill C-11. Pachiarz Cohen explained the importance of using stories as a teaching tool: “So how do you talk to government when they really have no idea? And the best way is using scenarios, and saying ‘well you don’t understand the system, but maybe you can understand that if you did *this*, this person in this situation would be affected this way.’” The CCR similarly used this strategy in an effort to explain the lived impact of reforms to policy, identifying how changes would negatively impact the lives of refugees. The following quote illustrates this prognosis frame and is from a submission by the CCR on May 5, 2010 in response to the refugee reforms proposed under Bill C-11. The case, one of many used in the submission, stated:

Three children fled to Canada after their parents were killed by drug traffickers in Mexico. The IRB found that they did not meet the refugee definition, but an H&C

application offered an avenue to argue that it was against the best interests of the orphans to send them back to the scene of their parents' murder...Under C-11, there would be no opportunity to consider the best interests of refugee claimant children, although this is required by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. (CCR 2010b)

Through this framing of the problem advocates sought to inform and educate politicians and change suggested reforms so that they provided protection which was fair for all refugees.

The Challenges of Transforming Discourse and Advancing Frames

NGO actors are engaged in the production of meaning, and as such they are “deeply embroiled, along with the media, local governments, and the state, in what has been referred to as ‘the politics of signification’” (Benford & Snow 2000: 613; Hall 1982). While the core framing tasks of diagnosis and prognosis discussed in the previous section identify the conceptual and empirical features of collective action frames, my aim in analyzing the data was to also elaborate on and explore the processes behind these frames. Framing processes take into account the broader political and social contexts in which movement discussions, decisions and actions are embedded (Snow 2007: 401). Interview data revealed that NGOs have advanced multiple prognosis frames or “solutions” throughout the last decade. These multiple solutions indicate an attempt to create frame resonance that mobilizes the audiences advocates are targeting, creating the desired change to Canada’s system of refugee protection. In some cases this audience was the general public, in others it was government leaders and bureaucrats more specifically, and often it was a combination of both. As discussed in Chapter Four the concept of frame resonance explores how advocates construct reality in order to produce frames that are effective in mobilizing the targeted audience. This concept is useful in providing insight into the struggle NGOs encounter as they attempt to construct frames that challenge and transform the culture of disbelief and the negative dominant discourse regarding asylum seekers in Canada.

Evidence from the three broad frames analyzed suggests that NGOs adopt various frame solutions to express their message and challenge restrictive policies and discourse. The multiple prognosis frames advanced by advocates indicate a continued and persistent effort by organizations to produce frames that resonate with the general public and with government officials and bureaucrats. Thus while all of the NGOs included in this study spoke of the importance of countering the “bogus” asylum seeker frame, they were keenly aware of the challenges in constructing a clear and strong counter-frame and mobilizing it in such a way that it was able to shift public opinion. For example, in questioning the effectiveness of using the technical fact-based frame in challenging negative discourse, one respondent pointed out that it requires conveying complex and technical aspects concerning the mechanics of the system and refugee law in a way that is understandable and accessible to the general public. Tanya Chute Molina of the MNLC commented on this challenge stating:

So I think it's hard for the general public to understand because you're getting into technical discussion of what the refugee convention says about what's a legitimate way to arrive in the country or a technical understanding of how the refugee determination system works, and I think the average member of the Canadian public doesn't even understand the difference between a refugee claimant and a refugee, let alone the mechanics of the system. So there's a lot there to be figured out in terms of how you shift that and also how you help people beyond the major cities understand the reality when there isn't a human face to it, in their community as often.

Amy Casipullai from OCASI also spoke to the challenge of constructing a frame that resonates using the example of her brother to illustrate the problem:

If I were to ask him, in his mind, the queue jumping, the bogus refugees and all those things really are irrelevant. In his mind and in the eyes of his coworkers from what I understand, there is this group of people, and they've already labelled them, 'refugees' means they are this. Should we let them in or not? And it's a simple question. And all of the legal arguments and all of the human rights arguments, all of the moral arguments really has no resonance with this group. And it's, for them it's as simple as do we want them in or not, if we want them in then yeah we let them in. So the rights based arguments?

I don't know if it actually resonates with a lot of people...and I think when we develop our messages we don't always understand the audience we are working with and the other thing is its not one audience, you know, it's different people and different messages.

Recent efforts by the CCR to hire a communications firm suggest recognition of the importance of understanding the audience you are targeting, and creating framing messages that resonate.

In constructing frames that resonate, advocates spoke of the importance of using the personal stories of asylum seekers to advance solutions. As previously described, these narratives were applied in several ways: to create an emotional connection that constructed asylum seekers as “deserving victims” and to teach politicians of the impact of policy, thus humanizing the debate. The majority of advocates pointed to this approach as one effective strategy in transforming the debate over asylum seekers. However while findings indicate that advocates emphasized the importance of humanizing the discussion by sharing the narratives of asylum seekers with politicians, decision-makers and the general public, they also recognized problems associated with this strategy. In putting forward the narratives of refugees and asylum seekers advocates struggled with the necessity of creating a “human angle” that tells a certain kind of story. Francisco Rico commented on this need for the human angle:

Um, bullshit maybe? I don't think, and when I say bullshit it's because the way that we use it is bullshit. It's too paternalistic. You don't have to go to the, my concern is that the system is too superficial that you go with a story, it's not even personal, you invent it and you present it [unclear] this is very superficial...the understanding about the issues is so superficial, and in that way you have to use all of these disgusting mechanisms, to use the suffering of human beings. You know, bring the dead body of a girl and put it on the table, this is *crazy*! But you are forced to do it... And how the advocacy people have to play the game to bring specific stories, and everybody says, do we have a human angle here? What is *not* a human angle?

Instead of relying on this approach. Francisco Rico suggested that advocates should base their advocacy on their own experience as part of an organization to say “this is what we have seen happen,” and back this experience up with statistics.

In speaking further to the challenge of producing frames that resonate, several respondents spoke of the necessity of reconsidering traditional framing approaches that have been deeply critical of government discourse and actions and instead constructing a more positive message. This shift towards positive frames has emerged as a more recent framing strategy and is in response to the challenge of countering negative dominant discourse. Amy Casipullai commented on the challenge of successfully transforming the negative messages constructed by government discourse, “how do you create a strategy where they are not bogus, not queue jumping, they are not illegal, you know, change the conversation to they *are* this?” Debbie Douglas, the Executive Director of OCASI also spoke to this challenge, commenting on the importance of taking a positive approach:

So I think that when we talk about, paying attention to the strategy, it comes down to paying attention to the language that we’re using, right? So I think more and more, it’s not about being anti-government, as it is about being pro-something right? So how do you create the pro-message, as opposed to refugees are ‘jumping the queues’, what should we be saying? There are millions of refugees and Canada takes less than 1 percent of 1 percent of the world’s refugees.

The movement towards more positive messaging was particularly evident in my analysis of collective action frames in response to reforms under Bill C-11. One of the goals in constructing frames was to maintain dialogue with government, hopefully enabling NGOs to have an influence over policy reforms. Tanya Chute Molina from the MNLC commented on how the CCR and its member agencies attempted to frame their message in ways that would not directly contradict government actions,

I think there was a sense in terms of advocacy on refugee reform that we didn't want to be so strident that we threw out the baby with the bathwater and are seen as only saying 'no' to any changes that are proposed. So um, there was a fair bit of discussion at the CCR conference just as all this was happening about how to position the message in a way that acknowledged where there is need for change and suggest ways in which it could be made better and then perhaps accept a less than perfect outcome.

This approach was specifically adopted by some advocates in the hopes of minimizing the possibility of even further restrictions in the future.

The last prognosis frame analyzed, "A Fair System for All Refugees" is indicative of a strategic effort by the CCR and its member agencies to position their advocacy objectives as complementary to the government's agenda, rather than in strict opposition. Objectives were complementary in that they agreed with government framing on the importance of reforms in order to make the system faster and more efficient. However, advocates sought to transform the government's approach by suggesting that changes to the system were necessary in order to make the system better for *all refugees in need of protection*.

In a submission to the standing committee on citizenship and immigration dated May 5, 2010 the CCR began by stating that "All those committed to refugee protection in Canada agree that the current system is in need of improvement." They go on to point out the need for speeding up access and creating greater efficiency. A month later in a press release dated June 3, 2010 the CCR, along with Amnesty International and the Refugee Lawyers' Association of Ontario, stated that the organizations "recognize that the current refugee determination system, despite its strong points, is cumbersome and overly lengthy, as well as having significant protection gaps." This framing indicated an effort to emphasize the areas of agreement between advocates and government. The statement went on to read, "The weaknesses in the bill can still be addressed. With consultation we believe it is possible to design a system that ensures that

refugees are protected, while discouraging those who don't need protection from entering the refugee system." This framing focused attention on areas of agreement with the aim of encouraging dialogue and communication between government and refugee advocates.

In commenting on the strategy of this approach Debbie Douglas from OCASI explained, "We applauded when good decisions were made, like the imposition of RAD, that the Minister was willing to take second looks, and so I believe that without that kind of advocacy we would have not ended up where we did." While this framing approach adopted language used by government, it attempted to re-frame and transform the debate by placing refugees and asylum seekers at the centre of the discussion and asking whether changes to refugee policy are fair, fast and efficient in their best interest.

Discussion by respondents over frame resonance and the need to reconsider how they frame their message indicates awareness by NGOs of the limited power that they hold which makes it particularly challenging to shift the discourse, re-frame the discussion and influence policy reforms. Janet Dench, Executive Director of the CCR, commented on the strategic response of advocacy organizations to this lack of power, "As an advocacy group, your power is pretty limited, so the general rule regarding influence applies with great force: you need either to show how your objective aligns with the interests of those with more power, or make it in their interest to adopt your position."

Part II: Organizing in an Effort to Influence Government

While NGO asylum advocates seek to transform dominant framing of asylum seekers and restrictive policy reforms through diverse prognosis frames, they also seek transformation through various organizing tasks and strategies. Research suggests that advocacy methods and

strategies change over time and differ in visibility and scale (DeSantis 2010; Rektor 2002). As NGOs seek to transform dominant discourse and influence refugee policy reforms they initiate and participate in a range of activities that vary over time. Along with the construction of alternative frames, the various strategies that advocates engaged in included efforts to maintain relationships with government, work directly with the media, educate and organize the general public and other NGOs, engage asylum seekers in the advocacy process, and reach out to other voluntary organizations and build allies in other sectors. While these strategies targeted different audiences, the ultimate aim was to apply pressure on government and thus transform dominant discourse and restrictive policy reforms. In explaining the reason for the diversity of methods, Heather White from Romero House commented on the importance of adapting the strategy to the specific context: “I don’t think there is a recipe. I think it depends on the issue, it depends on the timing, it depends on the political climate, the social climate, how people are feeling, and all of that has to go into what strategy you develop to try and make that change happen.” Janet Dench of the CCR commented further on the importance of change, “In practice, no one has full knowledge of where all the players stand or what their interests are. Day by day your knowledge changes; so may interests. So in practice you are having constantly to re-assess and perhaps re-orient your strategy” (personal communication, November 2010). This approach to advocacy suggests that the methods and strategies employed by advocates evolve moment to moment in response to changes in political opportunity. Heather White described this approach explaining, “It’s not like one giant plan where you say ‘this is what I want to do and these are the one, two, three, four, five steps that I’m going to do... It’s this is what I’m going to do today because this is what I think I can do...It’s like this is what we can do now, and then one action builds upon

another action builds upon another". This approach was explained further by Amy Casipullai from OCASI who emphasized the impact of changes in the political opportunity structure:

Sometimes when you do events like this there is a moment in time, where it's the time and the place and it's really effective and it works and you really get the point across, and there are times when it doesn't work. Sometimes it's really hard to predict what that is. Sometimes you see an opportunity and you seize the moment and it's clear. It's something that resonates with a lot of people and that will implicitly pressure Members of Parliament to vote a certain way or speak about it in a certain way and that magical moment I am finding is more and more situation[al], it is very hard to predict when that will happen.

This quote reflects the importance of recognizing opportunity and then engaging in advocacy strategies that can effectively transform dominant discourse. Evidence from data indicates that advocacy strategies are diverse and include both the framing strategies through which messages are constructed and advanced by advocates as well as the methods and tactics through which advocacy is organized and carried out. This involves reaching out directly to the government as well as indirectly to the general public and other voluntary sector organizations. In the following section I examine the various ways that NGOs organize and engage in advocacy which seeks to transform dominant discourse and restrictive refugee policy reforms.

Playing the Politics

My findings point to a willingness and ability on the part of NGO advocates to "play the politics" by actively engaging in the political process. Mary Jo Leddy from Romero House articulated the importance of this strategy, "So I think there is a lot that can be done, I think to do it you have to get involved in the political process. I mean, you have to go to the meetings, you have to meet with M.P.s [Member of Parliament], you just have to get in there and pay your dues and make your voice heard." Throughout the last decade the main methods of advocacy that involve directly participating in the political process include writing letters and visiting

politicians (both formal meetings and chance encounters), engaging in consultations with various levels of government, writing briefs and appearing before the standing committee on citizenship and immigration. All six organizations included in this study have actively engaged in these forms of direct advocacy in response to policy changes throughout the last decade. In order to engage effectively in this work advocates must remain well informed of the policy making process and have access to influential political actors. This means having the resources, such as time, to meet with local politicians, as well as a willingness on their part to meet with NGOs. This active engagement is understood as necessary for NGOs to have a voice in changing refugee policy. This finding confirms research by Krekoski which suggests that policy advocacy success is dependent upon knowledge of the policy making process (2009).

In emphasizing the importance of access to key political figures and knowledge of the process NGOs point to its effectiveness in influencing the most recent policy change with Bill C-11. Debbie Hill Corrigan from Sojourn House commented on the advocacy approach taken for Bill C-11:

Well I would say that was due to effective advocacy. That was due to engaging the right politicians. I mean its playing the politics too, you know, aligning yourself with the opposition party and the immigration critics, I mean we're very lucky we have politicians in place like Olivia Chow, you know she knows us, she knows the CCR and so there is that connection.

Active engagement in the process of policy-making is labour intensive as it requires time and energy in ensuring access to politicians; however it is significant in that it enables NGOs to have their voice heard at an influential level. However, advocates also emphasized the lack of control that they have in creating that space for advocacy. The ability of organizations to interact

successfully with their local political leaders is dependent upon a certain amount of luck as well as effort. Mary Jo Leddy commented on this reality:

M.J.L: We're really lucky with Gerard [Kennedy]. He's somebody we can really work with.

H.B: Yeah, you've been saying he's somebody you can talk with and...

M.J.L: Yeah, and he will do something. He'll do something- that's the big thing.

For this direct advocacy to occur NGOs must have access to key decision makers and politicians.

However, not all NGOs have the same access to their local political leaders and their M.P.s.

Debbie Hill Corrigan of Sojourn House provided an example that illustrated the challenge of gaining access:

We haven't been able to get a meeting with Bob Rae, we've tried. But we don't vote. Remember that, we may be in his riding, but we're not members of the voting public, we're an agency, so and I tried to get a meeting one time with Smitherman, when he was the provincial MP here, couldn't get a meeting with him either. But I went to his open house, and then I tackled him one time on Church Street [laughs].

This example illustrates the active engagement of NGO advocates and their dedication to finding opportunities and gaining access to political decision-makers in order to advance their message.

The interview data suggested that NGOs may have different opportunities for putting forward advocacy messages based on their organizational identity. In particular, organizations may have different opportunities for interacting with various levels of government based on how they are publicly recognized. A clear example of this is evident in comments made by Tanya Chute Molina of the MNLN:

But I think at the advocacy level even the name itself does connect us to a wider community that might be seen in a different way by government than the CCR and that does say there's a general public out there, a church going public, that's concerned about these issues. And I think because the Mennonite Central Committee is also known and respected, in terms of putting forward issues to government, that connection to that faith

community [unclear]. And to say that it's not just about our organizational survival it's about a commitment to faith and a commitment to people.

My research findings on the different opportunities that NGOs experience as they engage directly in advocacy confirms previous research on non-profit organizations which suggests that organizations may “have different types of relationships, different degrees of power sharing and dependency, and different degrees of relational formality with governments” (DeSantis 2010: 25). While respondents from faith-based organizations pointed to the particular communities they are able to reach out to because of their identity, research results did not indicate any other significant differences between faith-based and secular organizations regarding their advocacy activities. Instead, findings indicated that faith operated as a more personal and individual motivator for staff at these NGOs. Mary Jo Leddy provided further insight by identifying faith as personal motivation for staff at Romero House and explaining,

I don't know if it [faith] influences our [advocacy] strategies. I think that we try, I don't know if we always succeed in this, but try to see the immigration people as our brothers and sisters. Like begin with that presumption. As a strategy, I would say that it would just influence your fidelity to the whole process.

Interview data indicated that while faith-based organizations acknowledge the role faith plays in motivating their work and influencing their relations with other actors in the sector, they did not consider it to be a major factor in carrying out their advocacy work.

Maintaining Relations with Decision-makers

In order to engage in direct advocacy with key decision-makers, NGOs must work continuously to maintain relations with political actors and senior bureaucrats. In her research study of non-profit advocacy success, Krekoski advises that policy advocacy does not need to be confrontational, but can focus on collaboration and cooperation (2009: 4). In speaking to

advocates from a number of NGOs engaged in policy advocacy and examining their collective action frames it is clear that these organizations primarily advocated through an approach that favoured cooperation and dialogue rather than direct opposition and conflict. This approach is reflected in their framing and through the methods used to interact with government. Debbie Douglas commented in her interview that her aim, as the Executive Director of OCASI, in maintaining relationships was to remain “top of mind” so that when a policy change is being planned government leaders and policy makers will consider the reaction of the refugee and immigrant serving agencies. Douglas explained, “I want them to think ‘Oh, what would OCASI think?’ Right, so I want a phone call saying “this is what’s going through...we’ll hold a consultation before you guys all yell and scream about not being consulted, what do you think?” In order to achieve this level of interaction with government, NGOs that are engaged in policy advocacy make themselves available to government leaders and work to maintain dialogue regardless of what party holds political leadership.

Maintaining this level of consultation has become increasingly challenging in the last five years with changes in the style of political leadership at the federal level that have altered the political opportunity structure for NGO actors. The political opportunity structure, as discussed in Chapter Four, is the configuration of resources, institutional arrangements and historical precedents for mobilization which facilitate or constrain movement activities (Kitschelt 1986: 58). Debbie Douglas commented on the response of OCASI to changes in political opportunity:

And one of our goals is to, with the changing, with the political swing, particularly federally, given that the federal government has most responsibility to immigration, particularly around legislation issues, that we maintain that relationship with the bureaucracy, that we ensure that our issues continue to be on the table and we change tactics, politically, in terms of how we, we still attempt to engage with the leadership...

In playing the politics, advocates continuously work to make their voice heard despite changes at the political level. This reflects the fact that the political opportunity structure is not a “fixed external environment that insurgents confront, but also something that activists can alter” (Meyer & Staggenborg 1996: 1634). Given their limited power and the intensive and time consuming nature of advocacy work, NGOs must act strategically in order to advocate effectively. This strategic work is particularly important in the context of changing relationships between government and civil society. In order to be effective advocates must be able to change strategies in response to changes in political opportunity.

The necessity of changing strategies in response to a changing political opportunity structure is evident in a comparison of IRPA in 2002 and Bill C-11 in 2010. Over these two periods, advocates identified a drastic change in their relationship with political leaders which impacted their ability to influence the discussion over policy changes and reform. In 2002 NGOs were very engaged in consultations that the Liberal government held at the time around the proposed changes to refugee policy. Debbie Douglas from OCASI pointed out that those consultations arose because of previous advocacy work and the very strong relationship that existed between the immigration department and the integration sector. In contrast, Bill C-11 was put forward with very little consultation with the voluntary sector and with pro-refugee groups. Mary Jo Leddy contrasted experiences surrounding IRPA in 2002 with Bill C-11 in 2010 commenting,

So we were kind of involved at every step of the way [with IRPA]...some of that was tokenism, but it was a really long process. It was a major overhaul of the Immigration Act, and the committee went across the country and it had a long, long consultation process. Whereas this Bill C-11, it was just rammed through in three weeks. So a lot of people were disenfranchised, including ourselves.

In responding to this change in the government's approach, NGOs engaged in framing which encouraged consultation but switched their overall strategy to working with opposition parties, specifically targeting their advocacy at opposition members as well as immigration critics and members of the standing committee on immigration and citizenship. Debbie Douglas commented on the approach taken by OCASI at the time, "We held a series of press conferences, we attempted to meet with the Minister, which wasn't successful, but he certainly received lots of letters and comments from OCASI and its member agencies around our concerns. I think that we worked with the opposition parties in terms of ensuring that our major concerns were on the table." Thus while NGOs have continued to seek collaboration and consultation, they also adopt new strategies in their efforts to maintain a space where the NGO voice will be heard.

The Challenges of Direct Advocacy

While NGOs work to create a space where they can advance their frames and engage with government, interview respondents expressed their concern that methods of direct advocacy have not led to serious consultation by government. For consultations to be effective, NGOs emphasized the need for serious communication and consultation where political leaders and decision-makers are truly seeking NGO experience, knowledge and input. Through interviews NGO advocates spoke of the challenges they encounter in engaging meaningfully in dialogue with government. Debbie Hill Corrigan commented:

Through the CCR we have high level meetings with government where you can put your own positions on the table but it's, you have to be pretty strategic as to what you say and be prepared that they are not going to listen to you anyways. It's been like banging our heads against the wall for many, many years. I always call it bogus consultations because the government asks you to come and give your position on something but they are going to do whatever they want to do anyway.

Debbie Douglas from OCASI commented further on the challenges. “I think it depends on which government is in power and I think it depends on which policy... I think that we have come to a place where government has become very adept at consulting and it means *nothing*. Basically, decisions are made but the sector wants to be consulted, so they will meet with you, they will listen, and then they will go ahead and do what they decide they want to do anyways.”

This challenge was particularly apparent in respondents’ discussion of appearing before the standing committee on citizenship and immigration in an attempt to influence refugee reforms put forward with Bill C-11. Amy Casipullai from OCASI provided the only positive comment on the impact of appearing before the standing committee:

Every time you appear in front of the standing committee you establish a relationship. And the credibility of the organization, there is name recognition, all those things. And it’s an opportunity to meet legislators as people and have an exchange of ideas...So I think it’s absolutely worthwhile and once in a while you actually do manage to get through to someone, you say something, share a story and you can see this sort of ‘a ha’ moment where they really get it. Not that they can do anything about it then, but yeah, they understand.

This was a unique view as most respondents commented on the experience as frustrating and overwhelmingly negative. Francisco Rico of FCJ referred to the standing committee process as a “circus,” stating, “I don’t believe that there is any impact whatsoever in appearing before the standing committee. I think your work is done by going to the critics of immigration or members of the committee and individually trying to convince them to do specific things or to ask specific questions or to attack specific points.” Mary Jo Leddy from Romero House shared a similar point of view in speaking to the most recent changes under Bill C-11, “So a lot of people were disenfranchised, including ourselves. Like, we went to testify and it was just like a joke, I mean nobody was listening. You had three minutes to speak about very complicated issues. So, you

know, they weren't serious. They didn't want to consult... It was just impossible." Identifying the specific challenges of advocating through this format Jordan Pachciarz Cohen explained:

...Going back to talking to the Standing Committee, that was, this was the major frustration. It's because people on that committee have no idea how the system works... But yeah so you know, this is not something they do every day, this is not something that they have you know, insight into the workings of the system and how it all plays out. And so I have seven minutes, and this other guy talking over me, and not only explaining what my points are, but having to give them the background to the whole situation... I mention something, and then I have to define that term, and define how that works before getting to my point. Because if I just continue, they're going to be like 'what is he talking about?' Right, so how do you talk to government when they really have no idea?

These examples identify the concerns expressed by respondents over the possibilities for meaningful dialogue with government, where their experiences and input are valued. Despite these concerns however, the majority of respondents continued to emphasize the importance of maintaining access to political figures and engaging in negotiations in order to mitigate the worsening conditions facing asylum seekers.

Internal Debate Among Advocates

While all NGOs emphasized the importance of direct advocacy with government for advancing collective action frames, data indicated some internal disagreement-both within and between organizations-over the tactics that should be used to engage with government. Data gathered through interviews shed light on how the process of framing and the adoption of strategies can lead to tensions within advocacy work and explores how these differences are worked out in practice.

As previously discussed many of the NGOs emphasized the importance of negotiation with government. This negotiation was aimed at reducing and mitigating damage in a climate of increasing restrictions, with the intention of ensuring that policy changes still serve to protect

refugees arriving in Canada. However another reason for negotiation emerged from my interview with Debbie Douglas from OCASI. Douglas explained that negotiation is a critical aspect of her organization's identity as the representative of settlement agencies throughout the immigration sector. Douglas identified a responsibility, as a council, to immigrant and refugee communities and the sector that works with them, to maintain effective working relationships with decision makers, both at the political level and the bureaucratic level. Despite the different reasons for continued negotiation with government, it emerged as a key strategy in responding to refugee policy reforms throughout the last decade.

While NGO advocates have traditionally focused on maintaining relations with government actors, findings from interviews indicated some tension between organizations over the importance of continuing to focus efforts on negotiation. In particular, respondents from FCJ took a position which differed from other organizations in that they emphasized the need to reconsider the current approach towards advocacy. In describing the negotiations around IRPA in 2002 under a previous government, Francisco Rico explained that, although there was a discussion which occurred between civil society organizations and government, he could not consider it a success. Speaking to the consultation that occurred at that time, Francisco Rico explained,

We were making deals, about what to do [about] this, what to do [about] that. I don't express that as a success, because in my opinion we were betrayed in the whole negotiation. Because for example we accepted the reduction from two members to one because the Minister said I will give you the appeal process...but then she was not the Minister of Immigration any longer, and the next guy, a liberal minister, said we don't have the resources to do it...

Francisco Rico then commented on the debate over strategy at the CCR conference in response to Bill C-11, explaining the approach taken by advocates, "And people were saying, if we don't

accept this they are going to come with a law that is going to be whatever. and I was standing up and saying ‘you’re crazy, this is not possible to accept just because you are scared that something worse is going to happen!’” Recognizing the struggles and challenges involved in strategies of negotiation, Loly Rico added insight by commenting on the tension between advocates, and argued the need for a new approach to advocacy:

And also some of the big advocates, it was very interesting because the ones that have experience doing advocacy and fighting for human rights issues, in a more difficult environment, in a more dead and life situation, we were pushing to say this is wrong! But the advocates that didn’t have this background, that experience, they were saying well we need to negotiate because if we don’t negotiate they will impose a worse situation. And that as I see it is a situation that, because we still believe in, they still believe that the Canadian government will listen to them. And the political situation that we have right now in Canada, and how is this Conservative government, they don’t care what we say. And this is the time that advocacy has to change. To be more strong, more outspoken, more to go to the point, this is wrong because this and this and this. You cannot go any longer in a more proactive way like we were doing before, where you come and say sit and negotiate and ok, what is this proposal? You can’t. You need to say this is wrong and this is against human rights and you need to challenge the government. If not they won’t listen because it’s a very neoliberalism government.

Comments by Francisco and Loly Rico point to contrasting views within the sector over how to engage in effective advocacy, demonstrating that the individual actors perception of a political and social context influences the advocacy strategies that they advance.

While interview data indicated some tension between NGOs in terms of how they approach advocacy, it also identified internal tensions within organizations. Amy Casipulai spoke to this in relating advocacy in response to the STCA in 2004. In organizing a response to the STCA and in recognition of Refugee Rights Day, Casipullai and another colleague at OCASI suggested organizing a ‘caravan to the border.’ In her interview, Casipullai commented on how strategies and methods are decided upon within a collective of organizations, stating: “the way organizing happens is you put an idea on the table, and if organizations around the table like the

idea and they are in support of it then we all start working towards this mutual goal and really that's what happened. And of course once you propose an idea it takes on a life of its own." The idea behind the event was to organize buses to take activists from different communities, primarily Toronto, to the border to have a physical presence there and make a public statement.

Casipullai commented on the internal tension concerning the event:

Inside OCASI we had a little bit of dissension, in fact, oh well, it's part of our history anyway! Our boss called a late night meeting...on the phone with members of the OCASI board across Ontario who were deeply concerned that we were doing this and pretty much told my colleague and me to call it off. We pointed to a couple of things, one, it's not an OCASI event, it's an event organized by a group of organizations that came together to plan refugee rights day...The second thing that we pointed out is that logistically it was impossible because we didn't have the contact information for people to do it...we actually went on this caravan two weeks later...we wanted to go to a public place and Niagara Falls is a tourist destination. We thought if you want to embarrass the government of Canada that will be a better place, and that's where we went...And so we went to the site, we had banners and signs and we handed out flowers and then we came back and had a quick debrief on the bus on the way back. And it was a one-time thing because it was for refugee rights day for that year.

In explaining the reaction within OCASI towards the event, Casipullai clarified that it was some members of the OCASI leadership at the time who felt uncomfortable with the action, and that it was not an official OCASI position. After the event had taken place the board did receive an update and the members of the board were satisfied with what had happened. In considering why there was initial concern over the event Casipullai speculated on the connection to funding and the tactics:

The clearest connection obviously is that people feel that their funding would be threatened and it has been in the past, OCASI has been defunded for having a keynote speaker who was critical of the provincial government at the time and yeah, OCASI did lose funding. So we have lived experience of that kind of impact. That could have been one reason. The other reason could have been that they could have disagreed on tactics. They may have wanted OCASI to express disagreement in a different way, not like this...So I think really the board wasn't objecting to the message as much as the tactics. The board was clearly

very much opposed to the Safe Third Country Agreement being signed but they were more nervous about how that was expressed.

Through these two examples we see tensions within collective advocacy that arise from very different concerns. On the one hand advocates within one NGO are arguing that advocacy is not critical enough of the government and there is a need for a radical change of approach, while on the other hand the experiences of another NGO indicate the internal struggle which exists based on concern over strategies and tactics which may embarrass the government and result in reprisals for the organization. However none of the tensions discussed within interviews were significant enough to be a source of major conflict between, or within, organizations.

Organizing with Asylum Seekers

My interviews revealed that as NGOs engaged in policy advocacy that maintained communication with government and decision-makers, they created a space for asylum seekers themselves to participate and engage with political actors. Literature on refugees and asylum seekers acknowledges the active role of immigration officers and those in power in reinforcing the current discourse on immigration. The power that these “officials” hold can be contrasted with the characterization of refugees as dependent and passive victims, removed from any real agency or power (Harrison 2009). Harrison points out that while refugees are inherently more vulnerable given their reasons for migration, they still may become involved in advocacy groups, lobbying the government for more appropriate policies and adequate treatment (2009: 84). My research findings indicate that through their advocacy work, community based NGOs create a space for asylum seekers to engage in advocacy themselves, presenting their own stories to politicians and political figures. Mary Jo Leddy of Romero House commented on the role that NGOs play in this regard, “...one story is more effective than one hundred statistics. It just

doesn't do anything... I mean they just. it's much better than anything I could say. So I think all that we do is just sort of connect people and once they are connected, it's kind of their- their life and their story." Through their policy advocacy efforts, NGOs play a key role in connecting politicians with the asylum seekers and refugees that they work with on a daily basis. This finding contradicts arguments made by Vanessa Pupavac who suggests that refugee advocacy "has failed to bridge contradictory representations and to face anti-immigration and asylum arguments with representations that are grounded in the lives of ordinary refugees" (2008: 291). These efforts represent a significant method of transforming dominant discourse, presenting an alternative understanding of asylum seekers as human beings who have agency and can speak for themselves.

While the involvement of asylum seekers and refugees in advocacy has been noted in previous research (see Lowry & Nyers 2003; Nyers 2011), my findings indicate the important role that NGOs can play in empowering asylum seekers by providing necessary resources and influential opportunities for interaction. For NGOs, involving asylum seekers and refugees in direct advocacy is an important strategy for framing a challenge to the hegemonic culture of disbelief. While emphasizing the importance of involving asylum seekers, respondents were also aware of the need to consider the impact advocacy can have on individuals who are under immense stress and are particularly vulnerable. Francisco Rico commented on his concerns with this strategy stating:

I don't like the way to bring someone to talk to the standing committee, because I feel I am using that person as a token. That person is not going to be there any longer and is not going to have any control whatsoever about what he or she said, everything could be taken out of context and you know what I mean?

While NGOs stressed the value of involving asylum seekers directly in advocacy, they also pointed out the difference between “using” testimony and receiving testimony as a “gift.” Mary Jo Leddy commented on the choice made by one asylum seeker to speak out publicly about his refugee case, “Well, I think that’s the biggest factor because there are, as you know, a lot who just don’t want to, they just want to be invisible. So it’s a very delicate thing. I think it’s their choice, it’s not yours. For whatever reason it was his choice to go public. We were in the caboose, but he was pulling the train. And I think in the process it gave courage to a lot of the Mexicans to speak up.” Heather White similarly spoke of the importance of having Mexican asylum seekers involved in the process of advocacy, and identified the role Romero House staff played in creating a space that would enable their involvement: “We tried to reinforce the Mexicans themselves and provide [them] with an avenue or an arena to be a part of that trying to speak up and say this is not right, you need to hear us.” In reflecting on the process of involving asylum seekers in policy advocacy, respondents spoke of the need to balance various factors. Tanya Chute Molina from the MNLC commented on the factors that must be considered, particularly in connecting journalists with asylum seekers, where the story will be used in a highly public way to speak to a policy issue:

Well I mean it’s partly about what’s the issue and what’s the message you want to convey and what’s the story that helps you make the advocacy point, but then it’s also about who’s willing to share their story who feels safe to share their story, how’s the language to communicate, or you set up a translation kind of scenario. And who you happen to know and have a strong relationship with in the moment that the issue is in public view.

Balancing these various factors and concerns is an ongoing task for all NGOs engaged in policy advocacy.

While respondents spoke of the importance of involving asylum seekers in their advocacy initiatives, several NGOs commented on the importance of advocacy activities being planned and organized by refugees and asylum seekers themselves. Specifically, Debbie Hill Corrigan described the vision of what advocacy would ideally look like at Sojourn House:

I mean our dream, like one of our visions as an agency, and this is something in our governance model for Sojourn House, we have an advocacy communications committee which is made up of board members, frontline staff, volunteers and former clients of Sojourn House, and one of the ideas that that committee is working on right now is to develop a speakers bureau. And a speakers bureau that will become the face of Sojourn House will all be full of clients. It won't be the Executive Director standing up and saying you know, refugees are good, they aren't bogus...so it's not me standing up and saying this, it would be Believe, who is one of my board members who went with me to CBC, going and telling his story as a Zimbabwean activist and not being able to go back because his colleague had disappeared, and you know it would be him telling the story.

Another approach that seeks to include asylum seekers directly in the process of organizing is the "newcomer advocacy committee" at the MNLC. This is a committee of interested newcomers that meets once a month to talk about, reflect and engage in action on issues of concern that they identify. In speaking to the advocacy efforts at MNLC Tanya Chute Molina emphasized the importance of "talking to newcomers themselves about the challenges they are facing and the solutions that they see to those challenges and then trying to make those voices heard both at the level of government and at the level of the voting public that ultimately sways the views of government."

Mobilizing Support: Using Indirect Advocacy to Pressure Government

Interview data revealed that while NGOs engage directly in the political process, they simultaneously participate indirectly in advocacy that reaches out to other voluntary

organizations and the general public. This indirect advocacy seeks to educate and ultimately mobilize a broader level of support in the effort to pressure government to transform the dominant discourse and create policies that adhere to the objectives of advocates. Indirect methods used in advocacy include encouraging members of the general public and other organizations to write letters and speak to their M.P.'s, engaging in public education and increasing awareness, contacting and responding to media, and organizing public events such as panel discussions.

In explaining the importance of indirect advocacy, Debbie Douglas commented on the significance of work that reaches out directly to the general public, “We believe that if we continue to educate Ontarians and Canadians about the importance of immigration and the need for us to be supportive as a country...that they then get behind the issue and that makes a political difference. The politicians can get into this.” Data also indicated that because of their history and identity as an organization, NGOs have connections with different networks and communities, and can successfully reach out to these through indirect advocacy. Tanya Chute Molina commented on the importance of reaching out to the faith community for MNLC:

I’ve certainly gone and spoken in churches about advocacy issues and encouraged them to come to a forum or to write a letter and be involved. Our board does have a number of representatives from different churches, some of whom are quite good at taking the issues back to their congregation as a basis for discussion and action. So I think yes, being a faith based organization does, or having those connections...

This speaks to the fact that the connections and resources that are at the disposal of NGOs impact and shape how they engage in advocacy.

Several interview respondents also emphasized the importance of using their connections to advance their messages through traditional media. Many of the NGOs work with contacts that

they have with the media and respond to invitations to engage in interviews. Debbie Hill Corrigan commented on this aspect of advocacy at Sojourn House, “Well I mean certainly myself and a board member have been on CBC radio, talking about what, and he having been a refugee himself, talking about what his experience was. So we’ve been invited by CBC to participate... so there’s media representation, we’ve had the media come to Sojourn House.” However while advocates recognized the importance of using media, they also highlighted the challenges in having their messages picked up by major media outlets. Debbie Hill Corrigan spoke to the difficulty in meeting the demands of media explaining, “I mean, the media drives me crazy but that’s always a problem. They call you on Thursday at one o’clock and say oh we need you to find us a refugee whose been smuggled into Canada. Now what refugee that has been smuggled is going to want to talk to someone in the media? Oh and we need that by five o’clock because it’s going to be on the show tonight. I mean, that’s typical of the media.” Loly Rico also spoke of the challenges in advancing a positive frame through the media,

...But anything that is sensational they are like BOOM they take it! And the problem is that they are not using sensation in a positive way, but in a very negative one...because everywhere we were swamped here in the office ‘what do you think about...’ and we were saying no it is wrong. But our voice didn’t come up in the news, instead came up the voice of people that had been living here for 40 years and they forgot that they came as immigrants.

These comments emphasize the challenge NGOs face in using traditional mainstream media as a tool for advancing positive messages that effectively counter the negative framing of government.

Within interviews, the majority of the respondents focused their comments on experiences using traditional tactics with some discussion of their use of mainstream media. Interestingly, only one respondent commented on the importance of social media as an advocacy tool. Debbie

Hill Corrigan from Sojourn House emphasized the increasingly significant role of social media and the internet for NGO asylum advocacy. Research by Brundin (2008) finds that the internet has become a political space where NGOs can use social media such as tweeting or blogging to reach out to a broader audience and spread awareness of the issue. Improvements in technology have also been vital in enabling organizations to communicate more effectively and work together to develop common strategies, fostering internal solidarity. Use of this technology was evident in the CCR's efforts to mobilize opposition against policy reforms with Bill C-11. The CCR's email listserv became a key tool for connecting organizations, providing immediate updates as political events unfolded, and developing and disseminating advocacy strategy quickly and easily to diverse organizations and actors across the country. Corrigan commented on the growing importance of social media and the impact it has had:

...advocacy has changed a lot, has changed a lot with modern technology and communication because even at the CCR we are looking at new methods, I mean tweeting! You look at blogs and you look at all these things that people have now that gets the word out, you know the whole social advocacy piece is becoming much more predominant...if you have a connection to a blog in your website and you can update that immediately so you are constantly sending out messages that um, in terms of your advocacy and your position that you want to put forward. There is so much opportunity for that and ways of doing that.

These comments suggest that while advocates may struggle to engage effectively within traditional media circles, some NGOs are finding success by turning to new forms of social media through which they are able to reach out to the general public and engage them more directly on issues of concern.

Collective Action: Opportunities and Challenges

Data from interviews revealed that one of the main ways that NGOs engaged indirectly in advocacy is by reaching out to other community organizations and other sectors in the hopes of

including a broader section of the voluntary sector in their advocacy efforts. By including other sectors such as the health or shelter network, advocates were able to expand their allies, build coalitions and ultimately strengthen their voice and their advocacy message. This work is significant in that it enabled advocates to construct messages that present various sides of a policy issue. The CCR and OCASI played particularly important roles in indirect advocacy by reaching out to their member organizations and connecting with allies in other sectors. Amy Casipullai commented on this role in speaking to the immediate action taken by OCASI in response to the STCA in 2004:

What we did in Ontario was to take the lead in connecting with Ontario based allies so that we educated our allies or we connected with them, and our allies being other community organizations, other members, other sectors, health, the shelter network, our allies in labour and not faith groups so much, mostly labour, media organizations.

In reaching out to other organizations that work with refugees, NGOs encourage their participation in policy advocacy; thus strengthening the pressure they are able to place on government through their strategies of direct advocacy.

All six NGOs spoke to the importance of working collectively, advocating together with a strong and united voice. While collective advocacy is not a new approach, it has become increasingly important in light of the limited resources available to many NGOs, but particularly in response to a political climate where government is less open to dialogue and consultation with civil society. Speaking to whether organizations like the MNLC are able to influence government policy, Tanya Chute Molina commented, “Again, not on our own and not overnight, but as part of a collective effort overtime, yes...In terms of the larger picture of trying to make an impact, I think it’s the collective, joining together with other organizations, that is the most hopeful piece.” This comment was echoed by Debbie Hill Corrigan from Sojourn House as she

explained the impact her organization has on changing policy, "As an agency ourselves? No. As a collective of agencies with the Canadian Council for Refugees? Yes. As much as we can, right? Or as a member of OCASI. Definitely there is power in numbers." This was also echoed by Loly Rico of FCJ, "If we are in a big movement, yes...like with the CCR, with being part of OCASI, that's how we influence, but not because it's just me, they won't listen." In speaking to the increasing importance of collective action for OCASI Debbie Douglas explained:

We tend to work more in coalition, I think in the last four or five years, most of our work that looked at large, big picture issues like changes to IRPA, the changes directed to the Refugee Protection Act, the increase in the temporary foreign workers, the continuing security agenda- most of that work has been done in coalition. And we think coalition works, you know, we think that it is the most effective advocacy strategy is to, work cross-sectorally.

These responses confirm findings from the literature which point to the importance of building alliances and working in coalitions (Foster-Fishman, Berkowitz, Lounsbury, Jacobson & Allen 2001; Wolff 2001). In identifying the rationale behind this approach to advocacy Francisco Rico of FCJ explained:

We do most of our advocacy through other organizations. It's very rare that I appear as FCJ, we do it as CCR we do it as OCASI we do it as a coalition of service providers for refugee claimants. We do it in this way because we believe a unique voice FCJ, going there is so isolated, no? I think you have to join as many people as you can and as many organizations as you can and have one voice to bring an issue to life. So that's the way that we do advocacy.

Heather White from Romero House commented further on the benefits of working in coalition, identifying the practical value for organizations in acting collectively:

We needed a sort of core group of people who were willing and able to commit and we just went with that. I think that strengthened the diversity of strategies, like who can we contact? What can we do? Each person brought to the table a different sort of set of ideas and I think that helped. Um, it helped with funding because each agency had like their own bit of funding that they could contribute to the pot if there was any funds that were required, Um, and just sharing work I guess.

White explained that engaging in collective advocacy may serve as both a response to limited resources and an attempt to strengthen the resonance of the message:

Sometimes you've only got so much energy and resources so if someone else is doing it you can throw your two cents in their direction and support what they are already doing. Um, sometimes it's better to have two voices doing the same thing so that whoever you're pointing your arrow at hears it twice.

While working together as allies or in coalitions is not a new strategy in policy advocacy, respondents indicated that this type of work has grown increasingly important in recent years.

This growing emphasis on the necessity of collective action is based on the perception that it is the most effective response to the challenges facing NGOs; challenges resulting from changes to the structure of funding within the sector and the decreasing ability of NGOs to engage in consultation and dialogue with government. Advocating as a collective enables NGOs to present a strong and united front and share limited resources. In deciding to work together most NGOs gravitate towards others with similar approaches and experiences. Amy Casipullai from OCASI commented on this tendency:

So right now in OCASI's history we have an executive director who is more or less fearless, and that shapes the kind of approach we take to policy work, and when that kind of approach resonates with certain member agencies we tend to work with them more because it's just easier, it's less time consuming. You are on the same page you kind of know where people are coming from. With FCJ in particular I mean they also know what they are talking about so it really strengthens our work to work closely with them.

In speaking to the relationship between Romero House and other settlement organizations,

Heather White explained how connections shape their approach to advocacy:

Well I think in the sense that we would call on each other for support. If we were trying to build a case we would say 'is this true for you guys? Cause this is what we're planning to present'. Or hey we heard that you were presenting something, this is our two cents. Ya I think we have good connections that way, and you

know, when you meet with people regularly for other reasons than you're aware of what's going on as well.

By networking together NGOs are able to educate one another, and work to develop common and unified approaches.

In her research on advocacy coalitions Edella Schlager (1995) cites a failure to consider the collective action problems that organizations working together may encounter. Exploring how NGOs engage in policy advocacy provides insight into some of the different collective action problems that are encountered in working together. While there was consensus over the importance of advocating collectively, respondents also pointed to some of the challenges inherent to this type of work. Debbie Douglas commented on some of the frustrating aspects of coalition work:

I think that's one of the things that sometimes becomes frustrating in coalition work. Because you are constantly having to explain to people why a particular strategy wouldn't work, number one. And you're also, and I know for OCASI we pay attention to this, that we're, that we don't have, we try to dampen expectations, because we do understand how the policy process *works*. That we try to point out, that these are not the people we need to be yelling at, these are the people we need to get on our side, [laughs]. Or they are the gatekeepers, so they are the people we need on our side so we can get to the people who are going to make the decision about the policy we want to change.

As NGOs broaden their coalitions to other sectors, they face increased challenges in finding common ground in order to work together. Amy Casipullai commented on the process of working with new allies:

Look, I would say working with different sectors is always challenging you have this initial get to know period where you get to know the values and the politics of your fellow advocates, um and then it's a challenge to try and find common ground. But I think what is good is that all of our allies are invested in finding the common ground, so we work to do that.

The key to working across sectors and with diverse organizations lies in finding common ground and being open to compromise. Francisco Rico of FCJ identified his approach when engaging in this work:

So I try to accommodate, for me compromising is not a defeat. If I manage to convince you to move a little bit closer to me and we do it together that's fine. If I do it by myself I would do it in this particular way, but I'm respectful of the concept. So, we always have one ass that is, you know, somewhere that is 'ok sorry, I'm leaving'. So you don't have to commit permanently or eternally to work with someone. You know the best partnerships are the ones that appear and disappear for particular issues. It's very rare that you develop a historical partnership that is going to be there forever, no. Because you are different from other organizations. You have to be very clear that I am partnering with you because this, are we agreed? Yes, move forward, no problem. But we're not getting married though. So that is totally different.

By working together in an effort to strengthen their message NGOs are able to engage more effectively in communicating with government. Interview respondents also suggested that coalitions may provide safety for NGOs that fear their advocacy efforts may lead to cuts in government funding.

This concern with funding was the main challenge cited by respondents; specifically, they focused on the limitations the structure of funding poses on effective collective advocacy. The structure of funding impacts who participates in advocacy, how they participate, and ultimately shapes relationships between NGOs. Ultimately funding constraints impact both NGOs that receive government funding and those that do not, although this impact is experienced in different ways. Organizations that receive government funding face particular challenges in actively engaging in policy advocacy. Debbie Douglas commented on the changes in opportunity for advocacy and the impact of these changes on the ability of organizations like OCASI to challenge government actions and discourse:

Also with this government in power in particular, it creates an advocacy chill. So am I careful of, far more careful about what comes out of OCASI and how it comes out of OCASI? Absolutely. 80 percent of my funding comes from the federal government... Citizenship and Immigration Canada is the largest funder of my sector, and so that means it is the bread and butter of my member agencies. So while I don't think that OCASI as the lead organization in the sector can be seen, or should be in any way dodging issues of concern we *absolutely*, [pause] it puts a bit of constraint in terms of how forceful we are in pushing that.

Both the MNLC and OCASI rely heavily on government funding for their work. Despite this dependency both organizations still engage actively in policy advocacy. In order to do this they have to find alternative sources of funding for this portion of their work. One of the challenges in finding funding specifically for advocacy arises from the very nature of advocacy work itself.

Amy Casipullai commented on this challenge:

So governments or foundations are very happy to pay for things where you can produce concrete results and say ok I found a job for these three people. But advocacy is long term, abstract, frustrating and it's not neatly organized. It doesn't have products. It very rarely has products at least within one person's lifetime or one project's lifetime. So it's a very hard thing to do. I mean advocacy is a way of change, incremental changes, very small, over a long period of time that may or may not be measurable. We cannot measure it, but it does have an impact, and it's a very, very hard thing to find financial support for that.

Through this quote Casipullai provides insight into how NGO advocates perceive success, explaining that success is not immediate or easily measured, but occurs over a long period of time and may happen through small and incremental change. The struggle highlighted here however, is that financial support is directed towards activities which are short-term, produce concrete results and are easily measurable. Tanya Chute Molina, Executive Director of the MNLC, pointed to a similar challenge in her interview and articulated the need to continuously work to find financial support for advocacy:

Funding is always an issue because we have a fairly stable funding base for the service work through government grants, but that's not the case for the advocacy work and foundations tend to work on a project basis and fund you for a year and then say 'well'

[laughs] 'maybe next year' or 'at this point we've funded you for three years so you need to look for somebody else down the road.

NGOs that rely on sources other than government to fund their work recognized a sense of freedom in their ability to advocate. Mary Jo Leddy commented on the impact of relying on government funding, "And I just don't, I don't see how you could really, with a free spirit, advocate if your taking money from the government, you just you would mentally, like as a writer, you know what self-censorship means, and it just starts to...afflict you and I just, I just don't think we should do that." While organizations that do not take government funding feel more freedom to speak openly and are less restricted in terms of how they frame their message, my research indicated that they may also face increased responsibility and pressure from other organizations. Loly Rico from FCJ spoke to this challenge:

With other networks and other organizations the challenge is because most of them they are very aware that there are too many policies in place that they don't, can't move so freely like we can do it, or can speak out so freely like we can do it...with other organizations the biggest challenge is, you know how I feel that we are in a meeting, we are doing networking, when there are these very delicate issues they don't talk and they let you talk, and they keep telling you, ok yes Loly, go ahead keep doing this because they know that we don't receive funding and they won't be affected because it's us. It's challenging because I would prefer that there's not only one voice. I want the voice of everybody.

In commenting on the experiences of FCJ, Loly Rico further identified the challenge of finding funding when you are recognized as an outspoken organization:

I can tell you because we are so outspoken doing advocacy, I believe that's one of the limitations that we haven't been receiving any funding...with the new funding from the federal government to the province...the services have been...getting broader and we could have access to funding to do workshops, to do training, but always has been the reply from them to say no because of our criteria. We believe it's more of a political position, because we say what is wrong. We say what, we are very outspoken as an organization, our awareness about the rights of refugee claimants and also for the people without status.

Evidence from interview data indicated that the structure of funding has a significant impact on how NGOs engage in advocacy, affecting both the ways that they organize and the messages that they advance. As a result organizations advocate differently based on their degree of freedom from reliance on government funding. This poses challenges for government funded NGOs that are constrained in terms of what they can say and do, as well as NGOs without government funding who face increased responsibility and less access to much needed financial resources.

While many of the respondents emphasized the importance of building alliances and working collectively, comments by Francisco Rico speak to the tension within the sector over funding. Speaking to the impact that funding has on the relationships between organizations.

Francisco Rico commented:

The other problem that is very problematic and is really *painful* is the competition among charities and the organizations like ours. To compete with the brother or the sister that is doing more or less a similar job for money. And what do we do? So do you have to present yourself as better than them?

While the literature suggests that these changes to the funding structure can make cooperation on advocacy campaigns more difficult (DeSantis 2010; see Richmond & Shields 2007) respondents did not directly identify funding competition as impacting their cooperation in advocacy coalitions. However, Amy Casipullai pointed out that funding cuts have limited the resources available to many organizations and thus impacted their ability to engage meaningfully in coalitions. Commenting on the challenge this poses, Casipullai states:

So when you are working with an ally that is better resourced, you then run the risk of having your message, what you think is important [silenced]. And your name might be used, this is a common scenario, you have a group of people working on an issue. They have the resources to send staff people to work on it, you don't. So because you are absent your voice is silent. And a lot of organizations inadvertently get dropped simply because they don't have the resources to be there, to make their point. Or don't have the staff

person to even participate in the discussion, even by email. And so it gets dropped, so that's the challenge, to find that kind of equity within our own work.

Comments by Amy Casipullai and Francisco Rico point to the tension which can exist between NGOs engaged in advocacy as a result of competition over funding and differences in funding amounts between organizations. While respondents pointed to the various challenges of working collectively and the differences between organizations in the amount of freedom they may have in terms of advancing messages, they all ultimately emphasized the importance of mobilizing as a united front in order to strengthen their message and make their voice heard.

Summary

My research findings indicate that throughout the last decade NGOs have sought to maintain and encourage communication and dialogue with government leaders in order to mitigate the worsening conditions facing asylum seekers in Canada. Through my interviews with NGO advocates and analysis of various advocacy documents I identified the frames, framing methods and organizing efforts through which these organizations seek to transform dominant discourse regarding the arrival of asylum seekers in Canada. This analysis revealed that NGOs share a common understanding of the problems facing asylum seekers arriving in Canada and have constructed multiple prognosis frames in reaction to negative government discourse and refugee policy reform. These solutions have all been advanced in moments of policy reform throughout the last decade. Advocates identify challenges in successfully constructing frames that resonate with government and the general public and transform dominant discourse regarding asylum seekers. Despite these challenges advocates perceive that their efforts in influencing policy reforms have been moderately successful in achieving "small wins" that continue to mitigate worsening conditions for refugees and asylum seekers.

As NGOs advance the collective action frames they have constructed they engage in both direct and indirect advocacy. Over the last five years the direct advocacy strategy has proven more challenging under the Conservative government as NGOs face decreasing access to government, less consultation and a greater fear of government funding cuts, thus further diminishing the space for NGO advocacy. The data revealed evidence of some tension within and between NGOs over advocacy tactics concerning NGO/government relations. Despite these tensions, the evidence suggests that the change in political opportunity has highlighted for NGO staff the importance of collective advocacy that presents a strong and united front.

The ability of advocates to mitigate worsening conditions arises from the diverse allies and coalitions behind advocacy efforts and recognition of the importance of collective action, but is also a result of organizing that is centered on asylum seekers and refugees themselves. Analyzing the collective action frames and advocacy tactics of NGOs confirms findings from DeSantis (2010) which suggest that advocacy is influenced by the daily front-line service work of non-profit organizations. Despite the many challenges that NGOs face given the politically restrictive climate in Canada, advocates continue to play a vital role by speaking out strategically in the interests of asylum seekers. As they engage in policy advocacy they create space for asylum seekers and refugees to participate, thereby connecting individuals who lack a political voice within the system to key decision makers and politicians. This connection is particularly important as it humanizes the debate over asylum seekers, thus presenting another avenue through which NGOs can fundamentally challenge the culture of disbelief.

While policy advocacy remains unsuccessful in radically transforming dominant discourse regarding the arrival of asylum seekers, respondents emphasized that it continues to be

a space for small wins in influencing policy reforms. Through continued efforts to engage directly with politicians and government leaders and by centering their organizing efforts on the lives and experiences of asylum seekers and refugees, NGOs engaged in asylum advocacy continue to resist both the culture of disbelief and the specific challenges facing the voluntary sector.

CHAPTER SIX: Conclusions

The practice of seeking asylum is increasingly under threat as governments around the world impose restrictions that limit the ability of individuals in need of protection to enter and claim refugee status within their borders. These restrictions are rationalized through discourse that frames asylum seekers as a threat to the receiving country. In Canada, asylum seekers have been framed through neoliberal government discourse as “bogus refugees” who constitute a threat both to resources and national security. This discourse has further encouraged policy reforms that restrict and exclude asylum seekers from gaining protection in Canada.

Limited research has presented contradictory findings over the effectiveness refugee and asylum advocates have had in influencing policy and reframing debate over asylum. While many scholars continue to emphasize the important role played by asylum advocates (Bhabha 2002; Gosden 2006; Hardy 2003), others argue that they remain ineffective in countering and radically transforming state policies and discourse. A number of scholars have focused on identifying and advancing various framing strategies and measuring their efficacy (Dauvergne 2000; Every 2008; Taylor 2001). In a slightly different approach Cook (2010) focuses her attention on identifying reasons for the difficulty in effectively countering and transforming dominant frames. My thesis adds to this debate but suggests that rather than seeking objective measurements of efficacy, research should advance conceptual frameworks that study advocacy as a dynamic process where success varies based on the social and political context and the perception of the advocates themselves.

By identifying the frames, framing processes and organizing tasks through which NGOs advocate, this thesis provides a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and limitations of asylum advocacy as well as the areas of opportunity. Specifically, it considers how the strategic decisions made by advocates are influenced by their broader social and political context. Of particular relevance to this is research on policy advocacy and the voluntary sector, which speaks to the challenges non-profit organizations continue to face as a result of changes to the structure of funding and the regulations for charitable organizations regarding advocacy. The impact of these changes is well-reported within the literature. A report issued by the Canadian Council on Social Development highlighted the resulting “advocacy chill” within the sector; apparent in the reluctance among funding-dependent organizations to be outspoken on behalf of their clients (cited in Wayland 2006). However Wayland explains that despite this chill, there are still many cases of advocacy groups that rely on government funding and yet have remained critical of government policies (2006: 6). While my research explores this tension, it focuses specifically on non-profit organizations that have continued to engage in advocacy throughout the last several decades. Researching these organizations is valuable as it identifies strategies for overcoming and dealing with tensions within the sector and provides insight into how these changes and the broader advocacy chill among some organizations have impacted NGOs that remain engaged in asylum advocacy.

Exploring NGO asylum advocacy is important for multiple reasons. First, it provides insight into the role NGOs play as civil society advocates and explores changing civil society/government relations in Canada. Through this exploration we are able to

gain a deeper understanding of the role NGOs play in shaping policy and how this has changed with neoliberal restructuring within the voluntary sector. Research indicates that with this transition many NGOs have come to play a key role as “agent[s] of the state in the production and delivery of ‘public goods’” (Evans & Shields 2000: 2). Given the enhanced role that NGOs play in service delivery and their unique knowledge and experience given their front-line experience, it is important to consider how changes to the sector impact and influence advocacy efforts. Exploring how NGOs engage in asylum advocacy also provides valuable insight into how some organizations with various levels of government funding are overcoming and coping with the challenges facing the voluntary sector.

My literature review highlighted research identifying the unique challenges faced by asylum advocates. This research calls for further examination into the methods, strategies and frames advanced by advocates in their efforts to ensure the continued protection of all refugees. Research which explores the experiences of advocates is especially important given the “erosion of asylum” as cited by international bodies such as the UNHCR. While a number of scholars have called our attention to the “securitization of migration” and the various discourses which criminalize and exclude individuals seeking asylum, it is important that research also bring attention to the voices of resistance that continue to challenge dominant discourse and restrictive policies.

This thesis advanced the theoretical and methodological approach of frame analysis as used in the social movement literature to study the process of advocacy. This approach furthers our understanding of policy advocacy as it allowed me to call attention

to the agency of NGO advocates who contest the dominant discourse and work collectively for social change. This methodology provided a concrete technique for analyzing how advocates identified problems and the solutions they proposed. Frame analysis was particularly useful in that it called attention to the *process* of framing as understood by respondents, and recognized the way discourses are constructed and change over time in reaction to how actors understand changes within the political and social context. Applying concepts such as frame transformation and frame resonance provided further insight into the rationale behind the frames advanced by NGO advocates, and called attention to the challenges of advancing frames within the current political and social context. To gain insight into the frames and framing processes' involved in NGO asylum advocacy I conducted interviews with the directors and staff at community based and umbrella NGOs and analyzed advocacy documents from these same organizations. This method was valuable in that it created the opportunity for respondents to reflect on the rationale of their advocacy work, the various challenges they face as they attempt to construct alternative frames and how they define successful advocacy. This ultimately provided valuable insight into the opportunities and limitations of NGO policy advocacy and the ways that advocates themselves influence opportunity.

Following previous literature, my thesis emphasizes the value of using a social movement framework to study organizations. In further contributing to social movement scholarship, my research focuses attention on the challenges of advancing frames that resist and counter hegemonic discourse. Advancing a conceptual framework which incorporated political opportunity, frame analysis and the processes of frame

transformation and frame resonance was advantageous as it provided insight into the specific challenges advocates must cope with, and how they seek to overcome barriers in practice.

While interviews provided insight into the complexity of the advocacy process and the various organizing tasks, it was important to complement this with analysis of advocacy documents. This method enabled me to accurately capture the frames used by advocates, expanding upon and supporting the information gathered in interviews. I found analysis of advocacy documents to be particularly important as it gave me first-hand knowledge of the language used to construct frames and provided a level of detail which was challenging to collect from respondents given that I was asking about advocacy activities throughout the last decade. However one limitation of this approach was that the data collected was constructed by respondents and I did not analyze the process of frame construction as it was occurring within and between organizations. Following Andrews and Edwards (2004) and Schlager (1995), a multiple-organization approach was used in completing this research. This approach was vital as it captured what one respondent identified as “the most hopeful part” of NGO advocacy – collective action and organizing together to create desired change within the system.

Key findings from this research suggest that NGOs seek to mitigate restrictive refugee policy reforms and transform negative discourse through consultation with government. This finding follows previous research, conducted through a survey of advocacy oriented associations in Ontario, which found that most of these groups “claimed to work consistently with the government as opposed to engaging in higher profile activities” such as

marches or petition drives (cited in Wayland 2006: 6). However my findings also emphasize the increasing challenge of maintaining communication with the current Conservative government, and the lack of government responsiveness to NGO demands for consultation. This echoes arguments made by Anne Curry-Stevens who highlights the “erosion of progressive social policy and decreasing political space for policy advocacy within traditional arenas” (2006: 119).

In exploring how NGOs cope with this challenge, my data indicate that while they continue to reach out to the government and seek consultation, they also adapt their strategies to reflect the changes in political opportunity. Specifically, findings indicate that some NGOs change their framing and have focused more attention on the opposition party in an effort to influence policy reforms and discourse in Canada. Advocates believe that these strategic initiatives have enabled them to “remain at the table” and have been influential in mitigating the worsening conditions facing asylum seekers in Canada.

Findings from my research further indicate that *all* organizations are affected by the challenges that have limited NGO involvement in policy advocacy. These challenges have impacted the strategies and methods of organizations involved in advocacy, and shaped interactions between organizations. Respondents focused particularly on the challenges posed by changes to the structure of funding, and a federal government that fails to listen to voices from the NGO sector. These findings suggest that NGOs engaged in asylum advocacy face a double burden in their efforts to influence policy and transform discourse. While they must cope with a shrinking space for advocacy within Canada’s voluntary sector, they also face the challenge of transforming a political and

social climate of disbelief that is focused on the deterrence and exclusion of asylum seekers.

Significantly, findings indicate a consensus among all NGOs that collective advocacy is the most effective strategy in overcoming challenges. This strategy is deemed effective in responding to the challenges of engaging with government as it strengthens the voice and the message of asylum advocates. Furthermore, consistent with previous literature, it enables organizations to be involved in policy advocacy without having to provide all of the required resources, while also making communicating with government easier (Krekoski 2009: 11). Collective advocacy is also emphasized as an important strategy as it provides greater security to government funded organizations concerned that speaking out will negatively impact their funding. Since collective advocacy advances frames at multiple levels of government and from numerous sources it ultimately increases the power of NGOs to transform dominant discourse and influence policy reforms. This finding further supports literature which points to the increasing importance of networks and coalitions as a strategy for policy advocacy.

My research findings indicate diverse ways in which advocacy can be understood to be having an important effect. The frames constructed by NGOs and the methods and tactics through which they advance these messages and organize their efforts indicate a focus on relaying the lived experience of refugees and asylum seekers. The narratives of asylum seekers are used in frames to create an emotional value based response in the audience and to educate the audience on the potential impact of policy changes. My findings confirm and reinforce literature which suggests asylum advocates play an

important role by humanizing the discourse over asylum seekers. Krekoski (2009) suggests that experience makes the messages of front-line agencies more compelling, while Mosley (2010) argues that it signals a complex understanding of the impact of policies. While confirming these arguments, my findings also show that advocates use their personal experiences and contact with asylum seekers to construct frames and advance strategies which challenge and resist the culture of disbelief. Furthermore, NGOs play an important role in challenging dominant framing by creating the space for asylum seekers and refugees to engage in policy advocacy directly with influential political actors.

Implications for the Future

In moving forward, research should examine in greater detail the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees in NGO advocacy in order to explore, from their point of view, whether engaging in policy advocacy has been an empowering experience as well as the long term impact of their involvement. Research in the Canadian context must also explore in more detail whose experiences are framed and advanced by NGO advocates, and the impact this has on shaping public perception regarding refugees and asylum seekers. While research findings indicate that advocates use personal stories to humanize dominant discourse and undermine binaries between “bogus claimants” and “genuine refugees,” advocates using a “deserving victims” frame may continue to perpetuate the idea of “deserving” and “undeserving” claimants.

My research question did not specifically focus on the role of media within NGO advocacy. However, this topic did emerge among some respondents during the interview

process. Several advocates spoke of their experiences interacting with traditional media, while one respondent commented on the importance of social media for advocacy. This is an area clearly demanding greater attention as media presents both a challenge and an opportunity – particularly in a climate where NGOs identify trouble making their message heard. While scholars have examined how the media engages in asylum advocacy (e.g Hier & Greenberg 2002), we need to know more about how NGOs in Canada use the media in their refugee advocacy work, looking particularly at ethnic and social media.

Given that my findings indicate the importance of working across sectors it is particularly important that research continue to engage in questions regarding collective advocacy and explore the relationships between community based NGOs and other refugee related groups such as legal clinics, health centres and grassroots social movements. Such research should consider how organizations and groups who approach refugee advocacy with diverse strategies, frameworks and goals interact and to what degree they work together to influence and transform discourse and policy. This research should also consider how their efforts change over time and in reaction to changes in the political opportunity structures. Future research must continue to investigate the space for policy advocacy in Canada, and in particular advocacy which emerges from within the voluntary sector. This is particularly critical given the increasing demand that government places on the voluntary sector to provide services to the community. Given the valuable knowledge and experience of organizations working with marginalized

communities, it is important that there is a defined space in which they can freely speak out and add to public debate and discussion without fear of reprisals.

My research has a number of implications for NGOs working with asylum seekers and refugees. First, it emphasizes the importance NGOs place on working collectively to positively influence policy and discourse in Canada. To do so means overcoming or learning to cope with tensions and challenges posed by changes to the structure of funding that have fostered competition within the voluntary sector. Findings which point to the importance of acting as a collective and working across sectors stress the necessity of reaching out to diverse community groups and social movements and engaging in dialogue. Second, findings indicate the importance of “playing the politics” by working to maintain communication with local politicians. While NGOs pointed to challenges in doing so, they emphasized that these connections were significant in enabling NGOs to have their voice heard at an influential level. My research findings ultimately lead me to conclude that NGO advocates do have an important role to play in influencing policy reforms, albeit one that is limited because of the various challenges that they face. Advocates working at NGOs play a vital role as they hold valuable financial resources, have personal contacts with political decision-makers and in-depth knowledge of the policy process. These resources can be shared with asylum seekers and refugees who, by speaking out publically and directly to politicians, engage in advocacy which challenges the culture of disbelief in Canada.

The challenge of this role for advocates is that it is not easily defined nor recognized as a valuable contribution by those whom it seeks to influence. As a result,

asylum advocacy in Canada continues to be a slow and uphill battle. However, Amy Casipullai provides insight into the continued importance of advocate efforts to engage directly with government and advance an alternative understanding:

I do know that if the NGOs did not have a presence at the standing committee then we would actually, there would be consequences, for that absence. There would be that lack of understanding, that lack of awareness and I don't think that you can actually say ok, because these NGOs were there making these points we have this kind of legislation, it's never that clear, but I think we are an important part of the process and the discussion and if we were not there I think the quality of decision making would be affected. I think we have an impact, sometimes we don't realize to what extent and we don't realize how clear. But I think we absolutely have to have a presence there.

Despite the numerous challenges, the struggle by NGOs to reframe asylum and encourage policies that focus on the best interest of refugees has resulted in small wins that, over time, ensure refugee protection remains a valued component of Canada's humanitarian tradition.

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APPENDIX A: Description of Organizations

Mennonite New Life Centre (MNLC)

Founded in 1983, the MNLC is a community-based settlement agency that facilitates newcomer settlement and integration through holistic services and community engagement. Immigrants, refugees and migrant workers receive settlement services, language instruction, employment mentoring, and/or mental health supports, while engaging with civic participation workshops and an advocacy committee mandated to address root causes of racialized poverty. The Centre also offers a specialized bridge training program for internationally trained mental health professionals. Initially founded in an effort to provide service and solidarity to refugees from Latin America, the MNLC has developed as a community that seeks to bring together newcomers and neighbours to support each other, learn from each other, and take action for a more just and compassionate society.”¹⁶ Their work is done through a gender justice and anti-oppression framework. The MNLC is a registered charitable and non-profit organization and has three offices throughout Toronto, employing around 40 staff members. Strategic planning for the organization is done through a volunteer-based Board of Directors. Funding comes from a variety of sources, with Citizenship and Immigration Canada acting as the primary contributor for front line settlement work and language classes. Other funding comes from the municipal and provincial governments, and various Mennonite organizations, church groups and individual donors. Community engagement and advocacy work is supported by private foundations, together with church, union and individual donations.¹⁷

¹⁶ <http://www.mnlct.org/about/history/>

¹⁷ <http://www.mnlct.org/about/partners/>

Romero House

A community consisting of four houses and a community centre in the west end of Toronto, Romero House identifies itself first and foremost as “a home for refugees.” The organization, founded by Mary Jo Leddy, is named after Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador, who was martyred for his outspoken defense of the poor. Since 1992 they have provided housing, settlement and advocacy services to individuals and families who are in the process of making a claim for asylum. Fundamental to the work of Romero House is the community-based vision of “accompaniment” which means living together as good neighbours. This approach is different from the standard model of a shelter with hired counsellors and social service personnel. Instead, each year the small group of around five permanent staff members welcomes a new group of interns who assist with the settlement work and all aspects of the Romero House community while living with the refugees in the houses. The Romero House Board of Directors plays an important role in supporting new interns, and developing long term plans for the organization. Romero House is a registered charitable and non-profit organization. While funding for the houses comes from municipal government sources, all programs and services are funded through the support of foundations and grants, private donors and various fundraising activities.¹⁸

FCJ Refugee Centre

For over 20 years the FCJ Refugee Centre has assisted “up-rooted people” overcome the challenges of rebuilding their lives in Canadian society. FCJ was founded through the

¹⁸ <http://www.romerohouse.org/romerohouse/myweb.php?hls=10001>

combined efforts of the Faithful Companions of Jesus and Francisco and Loly Rico. Through an “open door approach” the Centre offers an integrated model of refugee protection, settlement services and education.¹⁹ As a non-profit and charitable organization, FCJ offers temporary accommodation to women and children seeking asylum as well as workshops on various aspects of the refugee and immigration process, legal information and assistance, and referrals to other services. The organization consists of a Board of Directors, two Executive Co-Directors and nine full and part-time staff, volunteers and placement students. FCJ does not receive any funding from the federal government, instead relying on a diverse mix of funding sources that include foundations, businesses, religious groups and churches, government agencies, community groups, labour unions and individuals.

Sojourn House

For over 20 years Sojourn House has existed as the largest shelter in Toronto that specifically serves the refugee population. Responding to the diverse needs of refugees, Sojourn House provides short term accommodation, transitional housing and support services, counselling, and cultural orientation to individuals and families who have had the refugee experience. Sojourn House has 50 beds in their shelter, and space for 120 people in the transitional housing apartments. There are 48 staff members and a Board of Directors. Programs serve all of the current residents within the shelter, as well as past residents and refugees in the broader shelter community. As a shelter Sojourn House receives almost all of its funding from the city of Toronto with the remainder coming from the provincial government,

¹⁹ http://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/?page_id=39

foundations and private donations. Sojourn House has status as a registered charity and non-profit organization.²⁰

Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR)

Created in 1978 the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) is a national non-profit umbrella organization committed to the rights and protection of refugees in Canada and around the world and to the settlement of refugees and immigrants in Canada. It has come to be recognized as a key advocate for refugee and immigrant rights in Canada, educating the public and putting issues onto the agenda of the various players in immigration and refugee law and policy in Canada, including parliamentarians, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Canada Border Services Agency, and the Immigration and Refugee Board. Membership is made up of over 180 organizations across Canada involved in the settlement, sponsorship and protection of refugees, migrant workers and immigrants. The Council structure is made up of three working groups- Inland Protection, Overseas Protection and Sponsorship, and Immigration and Settlement. There is also an Executive Committee made up of individuals from across the country. The working groups and the Executive Committee steer the direction of the organization and the daily work of the six full time staff members. The Council sees its role as serving the networking, information-exchange and advocacy needs of its membership. The CCR has charitable status and relies on support from private donations,

²⁰ <http://www.sojournhouse.org/index.htm>

foundations and member donations. As an independent coalition it does not receive any core funding from the government.²¹

Ontario Council for Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)

Formed in 1978, OCASI has a staff of approximately 40 individuals. The mandate of the organization is to act as a collective voice for immigrant-serving agencies in coordinating responses to shared needs and concerns. OCASI is a registered charity governed by a volunteer Board of Directors with a membership of more than 200 community-based organizations in the province of Ontario. The mission of OCASI is to achieve equity, access and full participation for immigrants and refugees in every aspect of Canadian life. Part of the mission of OCASI is to advocate for positive and accurate representation of immigrant and refugee issues in the media, in public debate, and in political discourse. Funding for OCASI is primarily from Citizenship and Immigration Canada as well as various foundations, the city of Toronto, as well as through membership fees, private donations and various fundraising strategies.²²

²¹ <http://ccrweb.ca/>

²² <http://www.ocasi.org/index.php>

APPENDIX B: Sample Interview Questions

Background Information on Individual and Organization:

- 1) Please describe the mandate of your organization.
- 2) What is your specific role and how long have you worked in this position?
- 3) Can you briefly tell me where funding comes from for your organization and what percent is from government sources?

Questions on Advocacy:

- 4) What does the word advocacy mean to you in the context of your work as an organization?
- 5) Would you identify advocacy as a significant part of your work as an organization? Why or why not?
- 6) Can you describe some of the ways your organization currently engages in advocacy on behalf of refugee claimants?
- 7) Can you think of specific times when your organization has spoken out regarding government refugee policy?

-was there a specific strategy used? How did you decide on that? Did you consider what other organizations were doing at the time or work with them?

-specifically looking at IRPA and Bill C-11, did your organization do advocacy work before or after these changes were brought forward? How was advocacy around these reforms similar/different?

- 8) Do you think that organizations such as yours are able to influence government policy? Do you think that you have had more or less influence in past years as compared to currently and why?

-what accounts for this change? To what extent have changes in strategy played a role in changing degrees of influence? How do changes in the government in power affect your ability to influence? How do you respond to changes in government?

- 9) How are decisions made at your organization in terms of how to approach advocacy work?

- 10) Are there other examples of past advocacy work on behalf of refugee claimants your organization was involved in?
- 11) What do you identify as the goals (both short term and long term) of your advocacy work for refugee claimants?
- 12) What are some of the challenges you and your organization face in your advocacy work? Ie. Funding constraints, lack of time, understanding policy process
- 13) Are there specific methods of advocacy that you have found to be most successful in your work?
- 14) Do you feel that there is the space to define the conversation and 'choose' what issues you put on the table as advocates?

Questions on Asylum:

- 15) What would you say is the motivation behind the work of your organization? (probe on faith, human rights, social justice etc)
- 16) Faith-based Organizations: Does faith play a role in the advocacy efforts in which you engage? For secular organization: Do you think that faith-based organizations engage in advocacy differently from secular organizations?
- 17) How would you describe the political climate towards refugee claimants in Canada today?
- 18) Since starting in your position at X, have you seen a change in the government's position and policies towards refugee claimants? If so, what would you identify as the reasons for this change?

Relationships to other Actors:

- 19) How would you describe your organization's relationship with the Canadian government?
- 20) In what ways does your organization advocate directly to the Canadian government for change regarding refugee policy?
- 21) Can you speak a little about the relationships you have with other agencies, specifically with regards to advocacy work?
- 22) Can you speak a bit about your relationship with other 'umbrella' groups like the CCR?

- 23) How important is networking for your advocacy work? Do you work with organizations at the local, national or international level?
- 24) With regards to this network of organizations, how are tasks or various advocate roles divided and various tasks allocated?