

# How Environmentalists “Greened” Trade Policy: Strategic Action and the Architecture of Field Overlap

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*This article examines why and how environmental activists, despite considerable political weakness and disproportionately few resources, won substantive negotiating concessions that far outstripped labor achievements during NAFTA’s negotiation. Despite a trade policy arena hostile to their demands, environmentalists gained official recognition for the legitimacy of their claims, obtained a seat at the negotiating table, turned a previously technocratic concern into a highly visible populist issue, and won an environmental side agreement stronger than its labor counterpart. We argue that this unexpected outcome is best explained by environmentalists’ strategic use of mechanisms available at the intersection of multiple fields. While field theory mainly focuses on interactions within a particular field, we suggest that the structure of overlap between fields—the architecture of field overlap—creates unique points of leverage that render particular targets more vulnerable and certain strategies more effective for activists. We outline the mechanisms associated with the structure of field overlap—alliance brokerage, rulemaking, resource brokerage, and frame adaptation—that enable activists to strategically leverage advantages across fields to transform the political landscape.*

In 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect after years of contention over its content and passage. Although the agreement itself was significant, the emergence of a U.S. anti-NAFTA move-

ment and its ability to shape supplemental labor and environmental side accords was even more historic. Indeed, the subsequent development of the anti-NAFTA campaign into a broader antiglobalization movement signaled a new dynamism in trade politics. In the United States, NAFTA is widely viewed as a turning point in the politicization of trade politics (O’Brien 1998; Rupert 1995). Environmental, labor, and other anti-NAFTA activists created both a congressional insurgency and a larger grassroots movement in an effort to promote environmental and labor protections.

This political mobilization resulted in a substantial achievement for environmentalists: they gained official recognition for the legitimacy of their claims, they obtained access to U.S. trade negotiators, they helped turn a previously technocratic concern into a highly visible populist issue, and they spurred the creation of an environmental side agreement (the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, or NAAEC) with new transnational adjudicatory

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institutions and mechanisms of enforcement.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, the mobilization was ultimately a failure for labor activists: not only did they narrowly fail to block the agreement's passage, but labor side agreement protections were also much narrower in scope and lacked the enforcement mechanisms of the environmental side agreement.<sup>2</sup>

The extraordinary politicization of U.S. trade policy that began with NAFTA, and the privileging of environmental demands in the negotiating process, presents us with two interrelated enigmas: How were environmental activists able to transform basic presumptions about international trade liberalization policy during NAFTA negotiations despite considerable political weakness?<sup>3</sup> And why did the negotiations result in the creation of labor and environmental side agreements with such disparate impact? Two distinct outcomes appeared possible at the onset of the NAFTA debates: passage of a standard neoliberal agreement, or failure in the United States as a result of exist-

ing tensions among trade policy elites. Instead, a dynamic broad-based political movement emerged that made trade a subject of popular contention and resulted in a novel trade arrangement that privileged environmental linkages for the first time.

The questions that arise out of the environmental successes are situated at the intersection of social movement and organizational scholars' efforts to develop a robust theoretical framework to explain both contentious and prescribed politics. In this article, we argue that environmentalists' success can best be understood as the result of greater strategic use of mechanisms available through the overlap of multiple fields. While field theory has previously focused on interactions within a particular field, we extend it by arguing that the structure of overlap *between* fields—the architecture of field overlap—provides critical leverage and structured opportunities to transform the political landscape.

We also outline the *mechanisms* associated with the structure of field overlap—alliance brokerage, rulemaking, resource brokerage, and frame adaptation—that enable political activists to strategically leverage advantages across fields. In the case of NAFTA, environmentalists achieved substantive policy goals by utilizing field overlap mechanisms to successfully apply pressure on actors in a hostile trade policy field. Using a combination of contentious and routine activity, they effectively shaped and channeled support among Congress members and the public. They harnessed key congressional rulemaking capacity over the trade policy field, achieving surprising substantive gains.

Environmentalists' successful NAFTA mobilization provides an empirical case that enables us to push beyond the current limits of trade policy theories promulgated by political scientists and trade economists, which lack analyses of the institutional channeling of domestic interests and the emergent, dynamic elements of politicization in trade policy formation. Given that many areas of interest to sociologists—environmental degradation, labor rights, and economic development—are significantly affected by international trade policies, we seek to remedy the relative lack of sociological engagement with trade policy formation and politicization through a theoretical framework

<sup>1</sup> In this article, we measure success in terms of the law "on the books." A full evaluation of the success of NAAEC's implementation, while a crucial question, is beyond the scope of this article. Most environmental and labor activists agree, however, that the agreements' protections and enforcement mechanisms are not strong enough in practice.

<sup>2</sup> Although labor activists generally view it as a failure, the labor side agreement helped catalyze transnational labor cooperation and collaboration (see Kay 2004, 2005). For more detailed information about the side agreements, see the Online Supplement at the ASR Web site: <http://www2.asanet.org/journals/asr/2008/toc066.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Unions had substantially more political and financial resources to draw upon during this period than did environmentalists. The AFL-CIO represented 13.9 million members in 1991, and 19 percent of voters in the 1992 election came from union households. Major national environmental organizations combined counted approximately 9 million members, with considerable membership overlap among them. Defenders of Wildlife had a \$4 million budget in 1991. The AFL-CIO reported \$60 million in general fund expenses in 1991 and reserves of more than \$65 million (AFL-CIO Executive Council 1993a; Burek 1991). Environmental organizations donated less than \$2 million in PAC contributions during the 1992 midterm elections, while labor groups contributed more than \$43 million.

that helps explain how social movement actors can shape them.<sup>4</sup> More generally, our theory of field overlap extends social movement and organizational theory to provide a framework for understanding the mechanisms that enable and limit successful political contention.

**UNDERSTANDING THE MECHANISMS OF POLITICAL CONTENTION: THE ARCHITECTURE AND OVERLAP OF POLITICAL FIELDS**

Recent scholarship weaves together useful strands from the social movement and organizations literatures to build more robust theories of collective action (Davis et al. 2005; Schneiberg and Lounsbury forthcoming). Social movement scholars, who generally focus on mechanisms for change, use elements of organizational theory to explore the structural context in which social movement actors operate. Organizations scholars, who focus primarily on structures that reproduce power, use social movement concepts to analyze how change happens within organizations. In both cases, the concept of a field is central to expanded models of collective action. Although there are different ways to define fields,<sup>5</sup> most organizational scholars focus on the dynamics

of a single field and define it to map onto existing categorizations of industries or sectors (see DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Meyer and Scott 1983). When policy questions are addressed, industry-specific regulatory agents and other state actors who influence the substantive industry are all aggregated within a single field (see Laumann and Knoke 1987).

Organizational scholars have focused on the creation of new fields, competing logics within fields, and the effect of outsiders on fields (see Armstrong 2002; Clemens 1993; Lounsbury 2007; Schneiberg and Soule 2005; Scott et al. 2000). Their research provides a theoretical foundation for understanding social movement strategy and outcomes by (1) emphasizing the networked nature of the political terrain, in which relationships between "hubs" within a field predominate and in which hierarchies of actors exist; (2) highlighting the social constructedness of the terrain, in which widely shared beliefs may limit the parameters of political debate and shape the perception of what is possible; and (3) underlining the importance of informal norms and formal regulations that restrict and channel action. While fields have different internal logics, all are organized such that actors, beliefs, and rules matter.

Despite extensive scholarship on internal field dynamics, however, there has been little work on the relationship *between* fields. Although community ecology and niche competition come closest to conceptualizing field overlap, they are more limited than the approach we advance here.<sup>6</sup> Laumann and Knoke's (1987) "organizational state" provides a useful starting point for thinking about field overlap; here the state is conceived as a complex grouping of multiple overlapping policy domains (i.e., fields) that include both state and non-state actors and organizations. This conceptualization foregrounds the relevance of actors outside a field and the influence hierarchies within it, rather than perpetuating a simple division of insiders and outsiders.<sup>7</sup> While Laumann and

<sup>4</sup> Exceptions to the relative paucity of sociological work on trade include Ayres (1998), Dreiling (2001), and Duina (2006).

<sup>5</sup> The field concept emerges from two theoretical traditions: Bourdieu's work on social fields, and organizational theory. For Bourdieu, the social spaces that constitute fields (e.g., art and economics) represent the structures of different components of social life through which power is constituted, contested, and reproduced as individuals pursue common interests (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Swedberg 2006). For organizational theorists, a field is constituted by like organizations that directly interact or are indirectly oriented to each other, and that "in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life" (DiMaggio and Powell 1991:64). Fligstein (2001:107) conceives of fields as "local social orders," such that society is a diverse collection of social arenas in which different institutional logics apply. While most organizational theorists highlight the networked component, and Bourdieusian theorists highlight the structural and cultural components of these local social orders, Fligstein (2001) draws from both.

<sup>6</sup> We thank a reviewer for noting this point (see Ruef 2000).

<sup>7</sup> The policy domain/field concept extends social movement ideas about elites and challengers; non-state actors are not all challengers because some may hold hub positions within a given field. Conversely,

Knoke’s model illuminates the routine functioning of policy decision making, it does not offer theoretical purchase on how social movement activists engage policy domains. Most important for our purposes, Laumann and Knoke cannot illuminate the mechanisms that allow marginalized actors to achieve successful policy outcomes.

As currently conceived, organizational field theory is limited because it fails to take into account that social actors and organizations—including elements of the state itself—almost always straddle multiple arenas in which the organizing principles, networks of actors, and institutional characteristics differ. Our definition of a field is quite specific and more narrowly tailored than the definition used by many organizations scholars. We define a field as a “local social order” (Fliigstein 2001:5) of actors “who take one another into account as they carry out interrelated activities” (McAdam and Scott 2005:10) and *that is characterized by an orienting principle or goal*.<sup>8</sup> The inclusion of a local social order is important because it delineates fields not only by networks of actors, but also by specific institutional logics and discrete norms. The idea of an orienting principle or goal is particularly important; a field adheres as a coherent entity only to the extent that the actions of actors operating within it are motivated, shaped, and constrained by the features of that field.

Instead of a single undifferentiated entity, as often described in social movement and political science literatures, or even as multiple policy domains, we posit that the state is best conceptualized as an aggregation of multiple fields that overlap with non-state fields. When we look at the contexts in which trade policy actors operate, for example, it quickly becomes apparent that they often stand at the intersection of multiple fields oriented to overlapping but not identical goals. Rather than draw a boundary around all the actors and institutions engaged in trade policy to define it as a single trade field,

we believe it is more analytically useful to think of these actors as embedded in distinct yet overlapping fields that address trade issues in the context of broader problem-solving directives and that operate according to distinct institutional logics in the pursuit of those goals.<sup>9</sup> By defining fields more narrowly and focusing on the places of field overlap, we capture the multiplicity and diversity of local logics in social and political life. This has critical consequences for how actors maneuver in the pursuit of novel or contentious aims. Political action, and ultimately social change, frequently occurs through the judicious use of opportunities available at the intersection of multiple fields. Analysis of these phenomena therefore requires understanding the mechanisms at work *across* fields.

### THE ARCHITECTURE OF FIELD OVERLAP

Our primary contribution in this article is to introduce a new concept of field overlap that provides a more robust theoretical understanding of collective action. We argue for a deeper fusion of the organizational and social movement literatures by theorizing how, through field overlap, mechanisms for change are embedded in every organizational context. Our contribution to a growing literature synthesizing organizations and social movements ideas is threefold. First, we show that field overlap is critical to understanding social movement action and efficacy. Second, we offer a *field theory of strategic action* that not only articulates the dimensions of field overlap, but also specifies the leverage mechanisms by which field overlap affects social movement action. Third, we demonstrate that successful actors are those who effectively broker across fields.

It is the way fields intersect and overlap—what we refer to as *the architecture of field overlap*—that creates unique points of leverage that render particular targets more vulnerable and certain strategies more effective. When fields overlap, transformation in one field can

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politicians can be “challengers” to a dominant ideology within a policy field.

<sup>8</sup> Our definition is more akin to Bourdieu’s concept of social field (see *Homo Academicus* [1988] and *State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power* [1996]) or Weber’s concept of social order (see also Martin 2003).

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<sup>9</sup> We could have called the NAFTA fields “subfields” of the larger trade policy field. We decided against using the term subfields, however, because we feel it inaccurately defines a larger cohesive whole and minimizes the structured integrity of each of the arenas of action.

occur because of the leverage derived from the way it interlocks with other fields and as a result of networked actors operating in multiple fields.<sup>10</sup> Those who are marginalized within, or excluded from, one field are not inevitably without political advantages or resources. Social movement activists can exploit sites of overlap with one field to change the parameters in another, use their position in one field to gain access to an overlapping field, use resources as leverage in another field, and expropriate legitimating discourse from one field in pursuit of the goals of another. The most fundamental changes lie in the transformation of the rules bounding a preexisting field; this can benefit previously disadvantaged groups and change the configuration of influence hierarchies within that field. The concept of field overlap places *strategy* at the center of analysis because movement success is a result of activists' ability to skillfully use leverage across fields.

The shift in analysis to the architecture of field overlap brings into sharp focus a crucial but underexplored component of contentious political activity: while challengers of existing political parameters begin from a position of relative political weakness, they draw upon resources and advantages that extend beyond that weakness as narrowly defined. This is implicit in social movement analyses of organizational capacity-building, resource mobilization, and alliance building. The status of non-state actors within a field is often defined largely by their positions outside of it. Most importantly, the state itself is not a monolith. Non-state actors may be privileged in one field and marginalized in another; officials can have considerable statutory power in one field and negligible influence in another. The discontinuities are in part due to the institutional landscape that invests different positions, departments, and bodies with distinct normative and statutory capacities. But they are also a result of overlapping status hierarchies and spheres of influence that derive from interpersonal relationships, control of key resources, and ideological affinity.

<sup>10</sup> Bourdieu's discussion of structurally homologous groups in *Homo Academicus* (1988) approximates this idea. Our thanks to a reviewer for bringing this to our attention.

## DIMENSIONS AND MECHANISMS OF FIELD OVERLAP

When fields overlap, transformation is possible because of the bounded ways fields interlock and through networked actors operating in multiple fields. We outline four dimensions of the architecture of field overlap: (1) rule linkage, (2) network intersection, (3) resource interdependence, and (4) frame concordance. We further outline the corresponding mechanisms that allow for leverage across fields: (1) rulemaking, (2) alliance brokerage, (3) resource brokerage, and (4) frame adaptation. While the characteristics of field overlap provide the context in which actors operate, the mechanisms are mediated by social skill and creative collective action (see Fligstein 2001). Table 1 outlines the characteristics and mechanisms of the architecture of field overlap and provides brief descriptions.

The first dimension of the architecture of field overlap is *rule linkage*, or the extent to which fields are institutionally connected. Rule linkage can be ranked from high to low relative to the capacity of actors in one field to shape the rules by which another field operates. The leverage mechanism for this dimension is rulemaking, which can be informal, operational, judicial, regulatory, or statutory. The most fundamental changes occur in the transformation of rules bounding a preexisting field, which can give previously disadvantaged groups an advantage and transform influence hierarchies.

*Network intersection* refers to interpersonal connectivity across fields. Intersection can be high or low depending on the linkages, with respect to both quantity and quality, that is, the number of hub connections from one field to another. The leverage mechanism for this dimension of field overlap is alliance brokerage. Actors who lack influence within a field can draw upon relationships with influential field members to gain direct access to the field, increase their legitimacy within it, or indirectly influence decision making. This mechanism captures the importance of alliance-building and highlights the potentially transferable nature of influence. Relationships outside of specific policy contexts can become an effective political resource, and legitimacy within one field can facilitate access to another.

*Resource interdependence* is the extent to which financial or political resources from one field can be useful or necessary for the effec-

**Table 1.** Characteristics and Mechanisms of Field Overlap

Characteristics	Mechanisms	Description
Rule Linkage	Rulemaking	The discretion and ability of actors in one field to influence or change the rules in another.
Network Intersection	Alliance Brokerage	The ability of actors to broker alliances that can influence how decisions are made across fields.
Resource Interdependence	Resource Brokerage	The extent to which actors can use valued financial or political resources to gain influence or power in another field.
Frame Concordance	Frame Adaptation	The ability of actors to strategically adapt frames to facilitate their resonance or adoption in another field.

tive functioning of another field. It can be ranked from high to low depending on how reliant a field is on external resources. Resource brokerage is the leverage mechanism for this dimension of field overlap. Actors can use valued resources to influence behavior in a particular field through, for example, the inducement of trade-offs, explicit buying of access, and the provision of discourse-shaping information. The extent of a field's resource interdependence, as well as the scarcity of its resources, impacts the efficacy of resource brokering; fields that lack particular resources are more amenable to brokering. Social movement scholars have long recognized the importance of resources for political mobilization. The concept of resource brokerage, however, emphasizes the importance of resources that can be rallied externally and leveraged across fields.

*Frame concordance* is the extent to which dominant discursive frames that anchor different fields have compatible underlying logics or draw from related cultural traditions. Frame concordance between fields can be high or low depending on the degree of resonance between dominant frames. The leverage mechanism—frame adaptation—refers to actors' ability to strategically adapt ascendant frames from one field to facilitate the reconceptualization of key political ideas or discursive parameters in another. Skilled actors can build upon existing frame concordance between fields or translate conceptual understandings from one field to another. They can thereby transform the collective understanding of available political options.

### THE EMPIRICAL CASE: FIELDS RELEVANT TO NAFTA

In this article, we argue that four key fields affected trade policy outcomes during the

NAFTA struggle in the United States. The *U.S. trade policy field* includes the office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), approximately 1,000 non-state members of official advisory committees (in which business and labor leaders have a legally mandated role), negotiators from various government offices, and Congress members involved in trade-related committees that coordinate with the USTR (e.g., the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee). The *U.S. legislative field* includes Congress and non-state congressional advisors. Under the Constitution, Congress determines the conditions under which trade negotiations occur and ratifies trade agreements. Fast-track privileges granted by Congress enable the USTR to negotiate changes in domestic law while restricting congressional ability to amend elements of an agreement; members can only vote up or down as a whole. It is important to differentiate conceptually between the U.S. legislative and U.S. trade policy fields because the former's broader policy mandate enables compromise and logrolling that could not be accomplished solely within the U.S. trade policy field.

The *transnational trade negotiating field* includes the negotiators and staff empowered to represent their nations in trade negotiations. During NAFTA negotiations, it included U.S., Mexican, and Canadian trade policy representatives. The field underlines the relationship between mobilization in domestic and international fields; negotiators are influenced by the actors, rules, resource considerations, and policy frames of their own domestic trade policy fields, those of their counterparts, and those within the field itself. The *grassroots politics field* encompasses the public arena, distinct from the state, in which mobilization oriented toward affecting state policy outcomes occurs.

**Table 2.** Field Overlap and NAFTA

Environmental Outcomes	Mechanisms at Work	Overlapping Fields
Defined environment as trade issue	Frame adaptation and alliance brokerage	U.S. trade policy and legislative
Gained access to the U.S. trade policy field	Rulemaking	U.S. trade policy and legislative
Initiated environmental side agreement	Resource brokerage	Grassroots politics and legislative
Ratcheted up environmental side agreement	Rulemaking	U.S. trade policy, transnational negotiating, and legislative

Table 2 illustrates the fields, mechanisms, and strategies at work during NAFTA negotiations.

The NAFTA case illustrates the importance of conceptualizing the state as an aggregation of multiple fields that overlap with non-state fields because the U.S. trade policy field has a unique corporatist structure. Further, the NAFTA debate included discrete time periods punctuated by decision points that brought different fields, actors, and points of overlap into play. Our analysis reveals how the unique architecture of these four fields created openings for environmental activists that enabled them to wield influence despite their political weakness in the U.S. trade policy field. At every stage of NAFTA's negotiation, environmentalists achieved unexpected policy goals by utilizing a unique combination of routine and contentious activity in overlapping domestic and transnational fields.<sup>11</sup> They built support for environmental protections in trade policy among the public—using contentious actions, ranging from letter-writing campaigns to protests and street theater—and among legislators by garnering support through electoral pressure and lobbying. Environmentalists were assisted by the rule-making leverage provided by Congress's role in both establishing the rules under which the trade negotiations occurred and ultimately in authorizing passage. Grassroots activists' pressure on Congress members played a crucial role in legitimizing the threat of nullification. Labor activists, in contrast, made strategic errors in their efforts to use field overlap mechanisms to

alter NAFTA's outcome. Figure 1 provides a timeline of the key events.

## DATA AND METHODS

To analyze asymmetrical social movement outcomes, we use a case study that allows us to flesh out strategic choices and events and incorporate actors' understanding of their impact into the analysis.<sup>12</sup> We analyzed every article from *Inside U.S. Trade* (N = 656), the only publication to provide weekly coverage of environmental and labor issues related to NAFTA.<sup>13</sup> Its reporting includes drafts of negotiated NAFTA texts and copies of letters to and from trade participants, as well as coverage of NAFTA-related press conferences, congressional hearings, trade-related speeches, and meetings between decision makers and NGO advocates. We supplemented *Inside U.S. Trade* coverage with all available *Congressional Quarterly* (CQ) articles, publicly-released government documents, and articles from the major national newspapers relating to environmental or labor issues associated with NAFTA (N = 328).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> We originally collected the source material for this article for related projects (see Evans 2002; Kay 2004, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> *Inside U.S. Trade* is a weekly report on government and industry trade action published by Inside Washington Publishers.

<sup>14</sup> A Lexis-Nexis search yielded more than 1,000 articles (N = 1,083) on NAFTA. Excluding duplication, we chose 202 articles for analysis that collectively cover all the major events of negotiations, grassroots activism, and the political battle in Washington.

<sup>11</sup> Like all social movements, the anti-NAFTA movement was not monolithic. For more information on the alliances and cleavages among labor and environmental activists, see the Online Supplement.

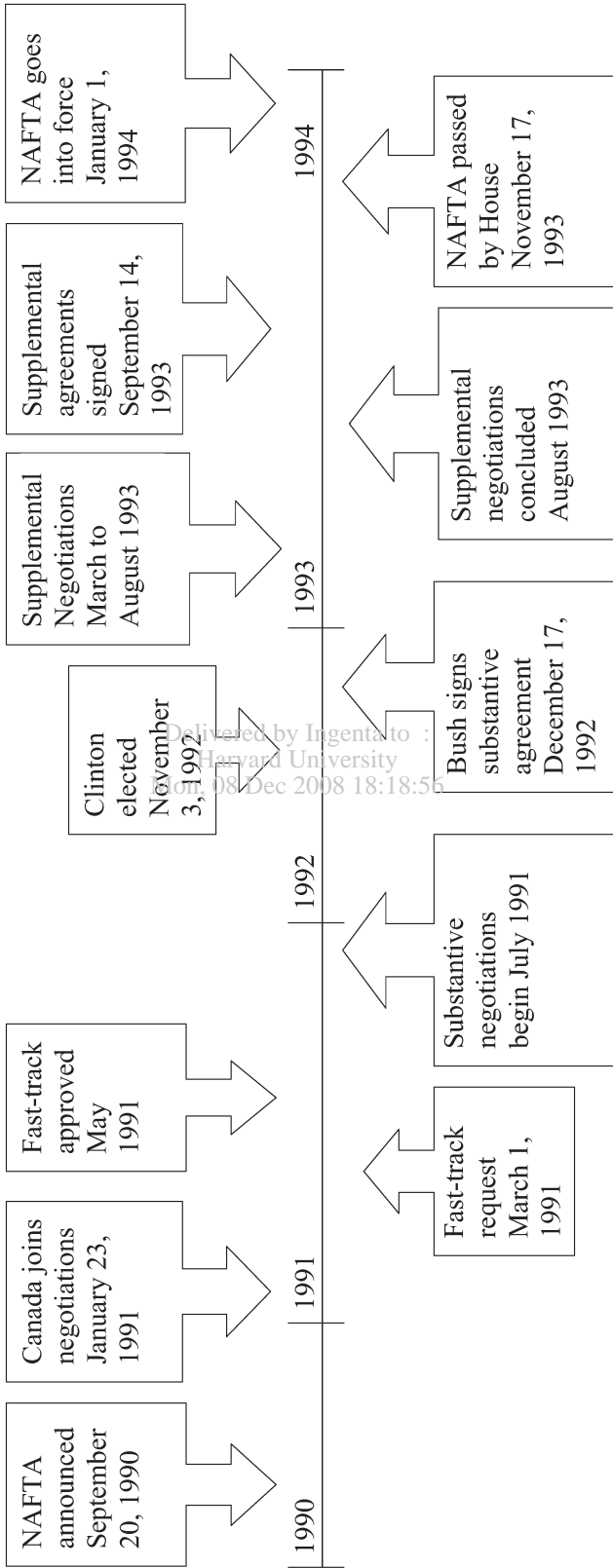


Figure 1. NAFTA Timeline



We conducted content analysis of environmental and labor representatives' congressional hearing testimony on NAFTA (N = 143) to assess the discursive frames they employed to influence legislators. We used hearing testimony because it is explicitly oriented to the legislative field, and it enabled us to eliminate sample bias by analyzing the complete body of public statements of this type. We initially used open-ended coding to tease out stated concerns, whether linkages between environmental and labor issues were mentioned, and suggested solutions. Once we determined the full range of responses for each of these variables, we verified the reliability of the coding through two additional reviews of each testimony by a single coder. We verified the validity of the coding schema through interviews with labor and environmental activists themselves.

Through access to organizations' archives and activists' personal files, we obtained a full range of public documents (e.g., press releases, position papers, advocacy ads, op-eds, and internal memos) from environmental, labor, and other anti-NAFTA groups for the time period under study (N = 1,225). We conducted in-depth interviews with at least one representative from each of the major U.S. environmental and labor NGOs involved in the NAFTA fight (N = 53) to obtain insight into activists' assessment of their strategic motivations and mistakes. We also conducted interviews with U.S., Mexican, and Canadian labor activists (N = 140).

To gauge public perception of the negotiations, we examined data from all available major opinion polls concerning NAFTA during the time period, from initial announcement through final passage (N = 50). For an analysis of congressional voting patterns concerning labor and environmental issues, we reviewed ratings by the AFL-CIO and the League of Conservation Voters for all senators and representatives of the 103rd Congress and compared them to the final NAFTA voting record. For an assessment of Congress members' receptivity to the claims of environmental and labor advocates, we analyzed all House and Senate floor speeches on NAFTA (N = 295). Finally, we conducted a detailed content analysis of the provisions of the agreement.

## FRAME ADAPTATION MECHANISMS

### *CREATING A LABOR-ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS OPPOSITIONAL FRAME*

At the onset of the NAFTA debate, both labor and environmental activists had to look outside the U.S. trade policy field to shape the negotiating principles of the key negotiators within it. Although labor unions maintained positions in the U.S. trade policy field and their fair-trade oppositional frame was acknowledged within it, they were nevertheless marginalized by negotiators. Environmental organizations had no role in the U.S. trade policy field at all, and the conceptual link between trade liberalization and environmental degradation was not even an oppositional frame within the field.

Congress's control over trade made leverage between the legislative and U.S. trade policy fields high across multiple dimensions. There was high rule linkage because the legislative field had the ability to influence both the very structure of the USTR and the circumstances under which the USTR negotiated NAFTA. There was also high network intersection because key legislative and non-state actors operate in both fields, and high resource interdependence because the legislative field controls the USTR budget. There was only moderate frame concordance between the two fields on trade issues, however; the U.S. trade policy field was more hegemonically neoliberal than Congress as a whole, although trade liberalization was still the dominant paradigm in Congress.

The rulemaking linkage between the U.S. legislative and trade policy fields, as embodied in fast-track authorization, provided legislators with leverage at the onset of debates to mandate the inclusion of environmental and labor protections in U.S. negotiating positions. They could directly revoke fast-track (enabling more direct congressional involvement in negotiations) or threaten revocation to obtain negotiating concessions in advance. The initial presumption at the onset of the NAFTA debates, however, was that fast-track reauthorization would pass in the legislative field with minimal resistance. It was presumed that any opposition to reauthorization would come from labor representatives and their congressional allies.

The strategic hurdles for environmental activists were twofold: first, how to expand the default understanding of the trade debate within the legislative field to include environmental issues; and second, how to best use leverage from the legislative field in the U.S. trade policy field once the legislative debate had expanded. To surmount these hurdles, environmentalists used frame adaptation and alliance brokerage mechanisms to legitimize both environmental critiques of trade liberalization and themselves as trade actors within the legislative field. They formed alliances with other members of the anti-NAFTA coalition and Congress members who were not traditional allies. They then worked with new and old congressional allies to inject environmental actors and an environmental frame on trade into the U.S. trade policy field.

The opportunities for environmental frame adaptation in the legislative field were considerable because fair trade was already a powerful oppositional frame in the field. But the fair trade frame, with its focus on labor, was vulnerable to being derided as protectionist. Activists therefore twinned environmental and labor concerns together through claims that incentives to move plants to Mexico as a result of less regulation could result in downward labor and environmental regulatory pressure in the United States. This "greening" discourse both expanded the scope of traditional fair trade arguments and provided legitimacy for the environmental impacts of trade (see Buttel 1992). The linkage was a win-win for environmentalists and labor unions. For environmentalists, frame adaptation allowed them to piggyback on labor's influence; it heightened the political relevance of environmental issues by rhetorically linking them with the default oppositional trade frame. Labor activists used environmental concerns to expand the authority of their oppositional position and blunt criticisms of protectionism. As John Audley, the Sierra Club's Program Director for Trade and the Environment during the NAFTA battle, explained:

Whether we were actively conscious of it or not, political power existed when we were, either loosely or formally [allied] with labor, in terms of legitimizing our work. . . . I mean, our work to defeat NAFTA at the time was based largely in our ability to form a coalition with labor. A standing alone

environment would not have beaten anything related to trade.<sup>15</sup>

Together, environmental and labor activists could fight the protectionist label that was attached to opposition in the transnational trade negotiating field, thereby expanding the pool of potential supporters of their new oppositional frame. This was particularly important for pro-labor Congress members whose constituents might lose jobs to NAFTA; appropriating a greening discourse helped them avoid a protectionist slant to their arguments as they tried to derail or modify the agreement.

Our analysis of data compiled from the 20 hearings Congress held on the free trade agreement between May 21, 1990 and May 24, 1991 (the period between the initial announcement of intent to negotiate and the vote on fast-track extension) reveals the success of the labor and environmental linkage in the legislative field. Of these hearings, fully 55 percent dealt with environmental or labor issues. Significantly, 82 percent of the hearings that dealt with environmental or labor issues addressed them *together*. While none of the hearings focused exclusively on environmental concerns, only 18 percent addressed labor issues alone. Labor and environmental standards quickly became the default oppositional frame, and the two issues became coupled conceptually. This is a remarkable finding given that the link between trade and environmental issues was novel and controversial at the time.

## ALLIANCE BROKERAGE MECHANISMS

### *GAINING LEGITIMACY AND THROWING FAST-TRACK INTO DOUBT*

In the early stages of negotiations, environmental organizations used alliance brokerage mechanisms between the U.S. legislative and trade policy fields to gain legitimacy and throw the fast-track vote into doubt. They faced stiff opposition; initially, USTR officials said they would fight the inclusion of labor and environmental issues in the agreement. USTR also tried

<sup>15</sup> Personal interview with John Audley of the Sierra Club (April 27, 1998).

to dissuade Congress members from attempting to tie labor and environmental standards to the agreement (Maggs 1991; see also Auerbach 1991; *Inside U.S. Trade* 1991a; McQueen 1991). The successful linkage between environmental and labor concerns in the legislative field, however, facilitated environmentalists' ability to penetrate the U.S. trade policy field.

In January 1991, in an early coordinated effort to build alliances, members of the Working Group on Trade and Environmentally Sustainable Development organized a trilateral public forum titled "Opening Up the Debate."<sup>16</sup> The organizers designed the forum primarily for the staff of the House Ways and Means Committee, one of the key committees that straddles the legislative and trade policy fields. The forum championed the elaboration of trade critiques to include environmental issues and used some members' network connections to extend legislative alliances to others (*Inside U.S. Trade* 1990, 1991b). In the wake of the event, a Greenpeace staffer reported that "some congressional offices are calling us for suggestions on how to frame proposals to include environmental concerns in the [free trade agreement]" (Duncan 1991). The congressional reverberations from the forum suggested a potential receptiveness among legislators to broker alliances to oppose any trade agreement that lacked environmental protections. Trade policy members also worried about the implications for passage. USTR Carla Hills warned that "opposition groups [are] forming even as we speak. . . . There are those who would be quite happy to take away our fast-track authority and in so doing cripple us" (Dunne 1991:4).

Alliances quickly multiplied after the forum. Environmental organizations that unequivocally opposed fast-track joined with labor unions and a small group of Congress members to initiate a legislative campaign to actively challenge fast-track reauthorization. They worked with Representative Marcy Kaptur and Senators Ernest Hollings and Don Riegle, who tried to convince their colleagues to vote against extending fast-track negotiating authority. Politicians

wary of an unrestricted trade agreement turned to environmental organizations to obtain technical information, frame strategies concerning the agreement's potential problems, and lobby support (see *Inside U.S. Trade* 1991f, 1991g; MacArthur 2000). For example, 18 House members sent President Bush a letter making their support for fast-track extension contingent on an environmental review of the agreement and assurances through action that "environmental concerns will be properly addressed in the proposed trade agreement" (Wyden et al. 1991; see also *Inside U.S. Trade* 1991d). The letter reflected the National Wildlife Federation's (NWF) position paper on the environmental impact of U.S.–Mexican economic integration, particularly the environmental and public health hazards of *maquiladoras*. Environmental groups that favored compromise, like the NWF, and their congressional allies became a key swing group in the passage of fast-track authorization.

Members of congressional committees that overlapped with the U.S. trade policy field also raised concerns about the viability of an agreement that lacked environmental and labor protections. Democratic members of the Senate Finance Committee invoked the labor–environmental standards frame when they forcefully questioned USTR Hills during her testimony concerning the possible movement of U.S. plants to Mexico to take advantage of lax labor and environmental enforcement (*Inside U.S. Trade* 1991e). To reduce congressional concerns, the office of the USTR quickly backed away from its initial position that environmental and labor concerns had no place in trade negotiations. After a Ways and Means Committee hearing, USTR Hills acknowledged a need to work with organizations concerned with environmental problems and labor standards, and she suggested that a concurrent environmental treaty with Mexico be explored. Hills then met privately with a number of environmental organizations to search for a compromise position (*Inside U.S. Trade* 1991c). Environmentalists had finally gained informal access to central U.S. trade policy field actors.

What began as a seemingly hopeless effort gained traction as the new labor–environmental standards frame provided legitimacy (through frame adaptation mechanisms), and as alliances (through alliance brokerage mechanisms) pro-

<sup>16</sup> The National Wildlife Federation, Friends of the Earth, and Greenpeace were among the environmental organizations represented.

vided environmental challengers with sufficient power in the legislative field to throw the outcome of fast-track reauthorization into doubt. This enabled environmentalists to sustain influence in the legislative field far beyond their resources or their position in the legislative influence hierarchy. Environmental issues gained legitimacy in the legislative field, and environmental representatives were now viewed as legitimate trade actors in the NAFTA debate.

## RULEMAKING MECHANISMS (PART I)

### *GAINING CONCESSIONS AND OFFICIAL ACCESS TO THE U.S. TRADE POLICY FIELD*

The rule linkage between the U.S. legislative and trade policy fields, as embodied in fast-track authorization, provided state and non-state legislative actors with rulemaking leverage to mandate the official inclusion of environmental and labor principles in U.S. negotiating positions. Environmentalists' and other anti-NAFTA activists' successful mobilization during the fast-track struggle left them well-positioned; U.S. negotiators in the U.S. trade policy field were now in danger of losing fast-track privileges and operating under greater negotiating constraints. They were ready to compromise.

House Ways and Means Chair Rostenkowski and Senate Finance Chair Bentsen, who were key actors in both the U.S. legislative and trade policy fields, tried to find a negotiating position that would satisfy the opposition in the House. They wrote President Bush in March 1991 requesting a trade policy plan that responded to labor and environmental concerns. They advised him to address "the disparity between the two countries in the adequacy and enforcement of environmental standards, health and safety standards and worker rights" (Cameron and Tomlin 2000:73). House Majority Leader Gephardt, who was the key network actor for potential opposition in the House, followed with a letter outlining the conditions that needed to be addressed to obtain his support for fast-track extension. He expressed concern that inadequate labor and environmental enforcement gave industries unfair cost incentives to relocate production to Mexico (Gephardt 1991).

On March 29, 1991, the NWF hand-delivered a set of "sustainable development" principles for negotiating NAFTA to USTR Hills, accompa-

nied by a letter outlining key demands, including that the USTR "create an environmental negotiating group that would be part of the NAFTA talks" (*Inside U.S. Trade* 1991f). Representative Wyden, with the support of environmentalists, also sought to include environmental organizations in the U.S. trade policy field. He insisted that "environmental experts [be] part of the U.S. negotiating team for NAFTA" (*Inside U.S. Trade* 1991f).

On May 1, the administration outlined an action plan in response to Rostenkowski and Bentsen's letter. Along with labor concessions, it included a "parallel track" for increasing environmental cooperation and expanding environmental protection through an Integrated Border Environmental Plan. The action plan also required that an Environmental Review be conducted. Finally, environmental representatives were appointed to USTR advisory committees; representatives from five environmental organizations<sup>17</sup> and one state-level Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) director were selected to advise the USTR during negotiations (see Bush 1991; *Inside U.S. Trade* 1991k). Environmentalists had won substantive gains for environmental improvements along the U.S.-Mexico border. And for the first time, environmentalists had a recognized role within the U.S. trade policy field itself. Gephardt announced qualified support for fast-track reauthorization on May 9, when he declared his adoption of a "trust but verify" approach (*Inside U.S. Trade* 1991h). While environmental organizations such as Sierra Club and Friends of the Earth, who were not appointed to USTR committees and remained outside the U.S. trade policy field, continued to oppose fast-track, the support of a large faction of environmentalists and their allies ensured reauthorization. Gephardt and Rostenkowski sponsored a resolution "memorializing" the administration's action plan that overwhelmingly passed in the House (*Inside U.S. Trade* 1991i; see also Gugliotta 1991; *Inside U.S. Trade* 1991j).

Although the passage of fast-track reauthorization in May 1991 was a disappointment to environmental NGOs that fought to defeat it, the environmental coalition's organizational and

<sup>17</sup> These advisors were culled from groups least likely to oppose negotiations.

political achievements were significant.<sup>18</sup> The president of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC 1991) said, "For the first time in history, the environment has entered trade debate [sic]. The challenge ahead is to shape international agreements that promote sustainable development worldwide." Rulemaking mechanisms between the legislative and U.S. trade policy fields enabled environmentalists, in a short period of time and with few resources, to win concessions from trade negotiators and gain representation in the U.S. trade policy field.

## RESOURCE BROKERAGE MECHANISMS

### *INCREASING PUBLIC AND LEGISLATIVE OPPOSITION TO NAFTA*

Once fast-track reauthorization was completed and negotiations began, environmental and labor actors had a limited opportunity to directly impact the direction of the negotiations themselves. Although environmental actors now had established roles within the U.S. trade policy field, their position, like labor's, was marginalized. Moreover, the labor-environmental standards frame remained oppositional within the field, generating considerable pushback from opponents. Environmentalists with USTR advisory positions worked to promote environmental protections and had some success advocating for a more environmentally-oriented agreement. But given the constraints within the field, it became clear that additional social movement mobilization outside the field was needed to maximize negotiating outcomes.

There was little overlap between the grassroots politics and U.S. trade policy fields, however, which left activists few direct leverage points. The grassroots politics field had no direct rulemaking capacity or resource leverage over the U.S. trade policy field, and given the restricted nature of the USTR advisory committees, there was low network intersection between the fields. There was also low frame

concordance between the two fields because the grassroots politics field was much less hegemomically neoliberal than even the legislative field. Activists therefore focused on the final congressional vote on NAFTA and the resource brokerage leverage available through the overlap between the legislative and grassroots politics fields resulting from Congress members' dependence on key political resources: votes, money, and organizational support. The activists' strategy was to increase public hostility to NAFTA, harness that antagonism to influence legislators, and then use their leverage to maximize agreement concessions or undermine the entire agreement.

While environmental organizations with positions in the U.S. trade policy field pressed for concessions within it, those outside the field joined with labor activists to mobilize in the grassroots politics field. They used a three-pronged strategy to leverage legislative resource brokerage mechanisms: (1) educate local interest group members to increase opposition, (2) threaten legislators with loss of votes by increasing general voter antagonism to the agreement, and (3) mobilize pressure on legislators by convening lobbying efforts in home regions. Mark Ritchie, then president of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, emphasized the strategic benefits of connecting mass mobilization in the grassroots politics field with legislative pressure:

At the end of the day, the Washington's people's contribution to all of these things is the single-mindedness of vote-counting and delivering of votes. At the end of the day, you're held accountable in Washington for how the vote goes. And outside of Washington, we don't. In fact, for us, you're able to throw up your hands and say, "oh those terrible politicians." . . . So in a way, we were very lucky that the trade campaign grew to the size that it did, so that it could involve as many people as it did, so it could in fact have a grassroots and a Washington that could then be kind of equal partners. . . . I would say a real genius aspect of the trade work—which was not easy nor always happy, but was really crucial to the success—was the ability to move it in and out of Washington. . . . When there was a fast-track vote looming or something else looming or a NAFTA vote looming, all the money and all the resources, everything got concentrated in Washington. . . . And when there wasn't that kind of focus, then people and energy and money got moved out for more of the grass-

<sup>18</sup> Friends of the Earth and Sierra Club had continued to oppose fast-track reauthorization, for example, while the Border Ecology Project struck a middle ground (see Friends of the Earth 1991; Kamp 1991; McCloskey 1991).

roots stuff. . . . I think this was really an innovation.<sup>19</sup>

Activists conducted two broad grassroots politics campaigns: the first during substantive negotiations; the second beginning with the supplemental negotiations and continuing through final passage. During the former, groups held local rallies and forums with community groups and local politicians, wrote press releases, and appeared in media outlets in more than 100 cities. There were active coalitions in 20 states, with more than 60 groups participating in the campaign (Merrilees and Weiner 1992). Protestors picketed the Tijuana hearings on the border environmental plan, which they felt was not strong enough, bearing signs with slogans like "The Plan Stinks" (Crawley 1991; Lindquist 1991; McDonnell 1991). They held "citizen receptions" at negotiation sites to provide an alternative assessment of the events. In Texas, activists met negotiators with picket signs and banners. In D.C., activists dressed in tuxedos and set up a "hospitality suite" in the building where negotiations were held. They handed out fake menus listing the pesticides that could contaminate food under proposed trade rules (Merrilees and Weiner 1992; Wastler 1992).

This grassroots mobilization succeeded in altering public opinion. Opinion polls prior to the negotiations show 72 percent of respondents broadly supportive of a North American free trade zone (Burkholder 1991). By October 1992, support had dropped to only 21 percent (NBC News 1993). The coalition also successfully leveraged grassroots mobilization to affect support in the legislative field. At the time of the signing, it was believed that NAFTA did not have sufficient support for passage given the agreement's weaknesses on labor and environmental issues. Activists had achieved a considerable victory. To secure passage, Clinton adopted a suggestion made by key environmental leaders to negotiate for additional protections.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Personal interview with Mark Ritchie of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (June 11, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> Labor leaders did not support this option. The AFL-CIO called for Clinton to renegotiate the agreement to promote "worker rights, strong labor stan-

Environmental and other anti-NAFTA activists also organized during the supplemental negotiations. Once concerns were raised about the adequacy of the side agreement protections, they launched an unprecedented mobilization in the grassroots politics field. They participated in a series of events designed to inform the public and to pressure Congress members about NAFTA. By the fall of 1993, activists maintained more than 25 coalition chapters in 43 states. They held news conferences, canvassed door-to-door, held local meetings with their elected representatives, conducted border trips, initiated postcard drives, and held public protests. Leverage between the grassroots politics and legislative fields once again significantly diminished the chances of the agreement's passage. Pro-NAFTA leaders expressed skepticism that the supplemental negotiations would overcome legislative divisions. In July 1993, Speaker Foley confided to a diplomat that he thought NAFTA was dead and there was nothing Clinton "or anyone on the planet" could do about it (Apple 1993). Most senior officials in the administration privately believed that the president should jettison the accord and "cover his tracks" (Apple 1993).

## RULEMAKING MECHANISMS (PART II)

### *RATCHETING UP THE ENVIRONMENTAL SIDE AGREEMENT*

U.S. legislators' ultimate rulemaking ability to determine NAFTA's fate meant that overlap between the U.S. legislative and transnational trade negotiating fields proved critical for environmentalists during supplemental negotiations.<sup>21</sup> British Columbia's trade minister underlined the significance of congressional rulemaking leverage when he quipped after the completion of substantive negotiations that "now that the NAFTA has been initialed, only special interests in the U.S. stand a chance of changing the text by lobbying Congress. Canadians have no such opportunity" (*Inside U.S. Trade* 1992:5). When supplemental negotiations began in

dards, consumer health and safety, and environmental protection" (AFL-CIO Executive Council 1993b).

<sup>21</sup> Of course, Mexico and Canada always had the option to simply withdraw from negotiations.

March 1993, one of two outcomes was likely: business interests would use their influence to ensure that a paper tiger document with no enforcement mechanisms was passed;<sup>22</sup> or, the labor movement would wield its influence in both the U.S. trade policy and legislative fields to secure a stronger side agreement than that of the politically weaker environmentalists.

Environmentalists were at a relative disadvantage; they had fewer seats on USTR com-

mittees, they had less money and organizational capacity to throw at legislative lobbying, and they were less influential actors in the U.S. legislative field. Up to this point, environmentalists had achieved many of their gains because of their ability to use leverage mechanisms to successfully piggyback on labor concerns. Moreover, demands for strong labor protections continued to be more central to passage in the legislative field. As a result, negotiators in the U.S. trade policy field entered into supplemental negotiations assuming that the labor side agreement would need to be stronger than its environmental counterpart (Cameron and Tomlin 2000).

<sup>22</sup> Business representatives did not push for stronger environmental over labor sanctions; they were on record as similarly opposed to both. Representatives of the Chamber of Commerce (CC) criticized both side deals, saying they had not been adequately consulted. Major business organizations said they would support only limited environmental and labor commissions and would oppose trade sanctions. A letter from the CC by International Vice President Willard A. Workman to USTR Kantor focused almost exclusively on concerns with the environmental side agreement. Workman wrote: "I must frankly tell you that there is considerable concern in the business community about the direction U.S. proposals in the environmental side agreement negotiations appear to be taking and that this could jeopardize our members' continued support for the NAFTA. Their concerns relate both to the structure and powers of a prospective North American Commission on the Environment (NACE) and to proposed provisions for the use of trade sanctions under some circumstances" (Workman 1993:S8). USA\*NAFTA released a press statement on June 30, 1993 criticizing a U.S. District Court decision to require an environmental impact statement for NAFTA in a case filed by environmental NGOs (USA\*NAFTA 1993) (see also *Inside U.S. Trade* 1993f). White House and congressional officials roundly criticized the business coalition's legislative fight; House Minority Whip Gingrich called the business effort "pathetic." Rep. Jim Kolbe "accused the business community of having led a 'dreadful effort' that misunderstands the need to provide members of Congress with the political support necessary to vote for NAFTA" (*Inside U.S. Trade* 1993g). White House NAFTA advisor Bill Frenzel acknowledged that local business efforts at the end of October 1993 had not produced results. As *Inside U.S. Trade* (1993g) reported, "Frenzel said he has talked to 'literally hundreds' of members of Congress and has found only one who got one-third of its [sic] mail in support of NAFTA. The rest of members report a ratio of 100 to one on mail against the agreement, and almost none have received calls in favor of NAFTA."

Contrary to all expectations, however, negotiations produced a diluted labor agreement and a more robust environmental agreement. By strongly leveraging rulemaking mechanisms between the U.S. legislative, U.S. trade policy, and transnational trade negotiating fields, environmentalists and their allies were able to strengthen two key provisions of the environmental side agreement that were initially weaker than the labor agreement: enforcement mechanisms and international standards. In contrast, labor leaders pursued an ineffective strategy of privileging legislative defeat. At the crucial later stages of negotiations, they did not focus on legislative rulemaking leverage to gain further traction in the U.S. trade policy field. To obtain legislative support for passage, negotiators therefore pressed for trade-offs for increased environmental concessions at the expense of labor concessions.

Initially, labor negotiators in the U.S. trade policy field, led by Labor Secretary Robert Reich, were much more insistent on the importance of enforcement mechanisms than were EPA officials operating in the field (see Cameron and Tomlin 2000; *Inside U.S. Trade* 1993a, 1993b). Environmental NGOs and their congressional allies, however, applied legislative rulemaking pressure for sanctions in the U.S. trade policy field. This pressure enabled EPA officials, concerned that the environmental side agreement would be weaker than the labor agreement, to demand similar enforcement mechanisms as the labor side agreement. Canadian and Mexican negotiators in the transnational trade negotiating field unequivocally opposed all sanctions. *Inside U.S. Trade* (1993c) reported, however, that it was difficult

to determine the bottom line of labor and environmental groups and their congressional allies because they wanted to maximize their rule-making leverage on U.S. trade policy field negotiators by not stating minimums necessary for their support. This strategy of leveraging uncertainty between fields helped state and non-state legislative actors ratchet up the environmental side agreement by bringing sanctions into play. U.S. Department of Labor official Lawrence Katz explained:

It was really tough to figure out what would be good enough. . . . Initially, the U.S. wasn't clear on whether it was going to favor sanctions or not. Lloyd Bentsen was adamantly against sanctions for anything. But as Gephardt and others sort of came into play, and as there got more heat on the labor issue, Treasury switched, and the president came down in favor of sort of trying to get some sanctions. So the negotiating position actually changed. Very early on, there was a view that there would be no sanctions in the process.<sup>23</sup>

In response, USTR negotiators changed their strategies to incorporate the importance of trade sanctions to gaining votes in the legislative field.

When negotiators met in April 1993 for the second round of talks, proposals on the table for the labor side agreement were still stronger than those for the environmental agreement, with the inclusion of labor standards enforcement and the use of labor dispute panels. Mexican negotiators, however, expressed a willingness to address the same issues on the environmental side, and advisory environmental organizations took advantage of the opening. Working with Senator Baucus, they suggested that trade sanctions would be the bottom line for environmentally-focused House members (see Audley 1997; *Inside U.S. Trade* 1993d, 1993e). Non-advisory environmental groups continued to press for additional demands, receiving support from Gephardt, who indicated that the position taken by environmentalists operating in the U.S. trade policy field was insufficiently tough to gain congressional approval (*Inside U.S. Trade* 1993e). On May 11, 1993 Gephardt announced that he intended to introduce legislation to allow the United States to launch cases

against countries demonstrating a persistent pattern of labor or environmental law violations. He also signaled, though, that he would support NAFTA with the *right* supplemental accords, which forced negotiators to continue to try to acquire concessions to obtain his support (*Inside U.S. Trade* 1993f).

### **LABOR'S CRITICAL BLUNDER: RULEMAKING BETWEEN THE GRASSROOTS POLITICS AND LEGISLATIVE FIELDS**

While the environmental and labor movements' strategies reinforced each other during the first stages of the NAFTA struggle, environmentalists' efforts worked against labor's strategy during supplemental negotiations. Clinton administration officials convinced labor leaders not to publicly oppose supplemental negotiations (Thorp 1993). AFL-CIO officials initially complied and worked with the USTR to try to improve the labor side agreement while minimizing public opposition within the labor movement.<sup>24</sup> Environmentalists, in contrast, actively organized at the grassroots level, along with some AFL-CIO affiliated unions that tried to prod the federation into assuming a more active role in the struggle.

By the summer of 1993, however, AFL-CIO leaders determined that the labor side agreement would be too weak to warrant their support. They decided to try to kill the entire deal and finally began to gear up for a grassroots campaign to bring resource leverage to bear in the legislative field (Anderson 1993). The AFL-CIO turned its focus away from the U.S. trade policy and transnational trade negotiating fields to the anti-NAFTA campaign in the grassroots politics field, and to garnering support for votes against NAFTA in the legislative field (Anderson 1993). As Mark Anderson, who led the AFL-CIO Task Force on Trade suggests, the shift in the AFL-CIO's strategy likely came too late:

And when they finally came out with these agreements and it was in August 1993, that's when we said these agreements these suck, no, we're going to try to take it down. Now that may have been a

<sup>23</sup> Personal interview with Lawrence Katz of the U.S. Department of Labor (March 13, 2001).

<sup>24</sup> Personal interviews with Bill Cunningham of the AFL-CIO (May 5, 1998) and Greg Woodhead of the AFL-CIO (April 7, 1998).



tactical mistake on our part. . . . Because that gave us a very short window to try to mobilize and get stuff up, it was mid-to-end of August. And so then the vote was when, in November? So at most you're talking about a three month window.<sup>25</sup>

This decision proved to be significant for the outcomes of both side agreements. Without AFL-CIO pressure in the trade fields, pro-labor U.S. negotiators had little additional ability to threaten their Canadian and Mexican counterparts with legislative rulemaking leverage by stating bottom-line labor demands. As U.S. labor negotiator Steve Herzenberg explained:

The U.S. labor movement was pretty ineffectual. All they [the AFL-CIO Task Force on Trade] would tell the U.S. negotiators is that we would never support this thing, and if you strengthen it, it will be a little less of a [war] by the U.S. labor movement. So there was nobody on the outside putting any pressure on the U.S. negotiators which would lead them to make a pragmatic calculation to make the agreement stronger. . . . I think the U.S. labor movement could have put pressure and that could have led to a different agreement.<sup>26</sup>

Rulemaking mechanisms between the legislative and transnational trade negotiating fields proved decisive to the final, unexpected outcome of supplemental negotiations. Environmentalists used these mechanisms to maintain pressure on legislators and negotiators, and Mexican negotiators used them to press for their own preferences in the absence of sufficient pushback from labor. When the parties could not reach an agreement on international standards and sanctions, the lead Mexican negotiator met with Gephardt, who emphasized that sanctions were essential for U.S. legislative passage. As a result, Mexican negotiators agreed to accept sanctions for both agreements in exchange for a narrower labor scope that excluded trade sanctions for violations of core labor rights such as freedom of association, col-

lective bargaining, and striking.<sup>27</sup> Environmental law remained broadly defined.<sup>28</sup>

Supplemental negotiations were not inevitably a zero-sum game; a stronger environmental side agreement did not have to come at the expense of a weaker labor agreement. The AFL-CIO could have pushed harder for stronger protections or worked more closely with environmentalists to create a common bottom line for both agreements. The AFL-CIO strategy to kill the agreement in the legislative field through pressure from the grassroots politics field would likely have been successful if environmental concessions had not blunted legislative opposition. Environmentalists utilized field overlap mechanisms at all stages of negotiations to successfully ratchet-up the environmental side agreement. Indeed, had environmentalists not been waiting and banging at the door, they likely would have achieved nothing. Their decision to focus their pressure between the legislative and transnational trade negotiating fields in the final months before the agreements were finalized proved to be judicious. It was here that the final horse-trading occurred, and environmentalists tipped the final balance to achieve an unlikely and unpredicted outcome.

## CONCLUSIONS

While field theory is central to expanded models of contentious behavior, the current focus on the dimensions and dynamics within individual fields limits an understanding of collective action. Our primary contribution in this article is to introduce a new concept of field overlap, expanding theoretically beyond a single field as a unit of analysis. A theoretical framework cen-

<sup>25</sup> Personal interview with Mark Anderson of the AFL-CIO (January 8, 2001).

<sup>26</sup> Personal interview with Steve Herzenberg, U.S. Department of Labor, assistant to the chief negotiator of the labor side agreement to NAFTA (September 27, 2002).

<sup>27</sup> Mexican negotiators' preference for weaker labor oversight reflects government and official union opposition to core labor standards with enforcement mechanisms. Mexico's labor secretary sought to maintain the country's corporatist system of labor relations, and the Confederation of Mexican Workers (Mexico's largest labor federation) supported this negotiating position (Cameron and Tomlin 2000).

<sup>28</sup> For a comparison of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC) and the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation (NAALC), see the Online Supplement.

tered on overlapping fields is important for three reasons. First, it provides the foundation for a truly integrative mapping of routine and contentious politics. Social movement scholarship largely discounts the routine to focus on disruptive behavior, drawing rigid boundaries around different kinds of activities. It therefore misses the ways in which collective action often includes both. We argue for a more systematic analysis of the ways in which routine and contentious behavior complement one another and are often used collaboratively to take advantage of different leverage points. The terrain of overlapping fields is sufficiently complex to enable differently positioned actors to employ both "insider" and "outsider" collective action tactics.

Second, a theory of field overlap constructs the state as a nexus of overlapping fields. Traditional social movement and organizations literatures assume the state to be a monolithic actor and therefore miss how multiple logics affect state actors because they straddle various fields. State officials can have considerable statutory power in one state field and negligible influence in another. Because of their influence in a non-state field, non-state actors may gain access to a state field in which they are marginal. The tendency of influence to permeate across fields results from institutional configurations that create overlapping status hierarchies, spheres of influence, and ideological affinities. The architecture of field overlap creates unique points of organizational leverage that render particular targets more vulnerable and certain social movement strategies more effective.

Finally, a shift in analysis to the architecture of field overlap explains a crucial but underexplored component of contentious political activity—how social movements succeed within hostile fields. Social movement scholarship cannot sufficiently explain how social change occurs within a hostile field because it misses the critical leverage points situated where fields overlap. Those who are marginalized within or excluded from one field are not necessarily without political advantages or resources. Our theory illuminates the mechanisms by which actors who are constrained within one field can mobilize in others to alter the rules, the distribution of influence, the conceptual understanding of a problem, or the decision-making calculus by which policies are determined.

The NAFTA case suggests that social movement organizations with routinized access to overlapping fields have better chances for transformative success the less insulated and absolute the power in the field, and the less concentrated the centers of influence. Assessing the possible outcomes of political mobilization in overlapping fields, we highlight key attributes: their degree of imperviousness to non-state actors, influence hierarchies within networks, and the sources of power and legitimacy. Our analysis, however, only provides the first step in understanding the dynamics of field overlap. An examination of other fields will help confirm the generalizability of the dimensions we have detailed and determine whether additional mechanisms are at work. More theoretical and empirical work is also needed to determine whether particular types of field overlap and mechanisms are relatively more important than others (i.e., is there a hierarchy of mechanisms), whether fields overlap according to common patterns (i.e., do fields with high network overlap always also have high frame concordance), and whether thresholds for successful leverage exist for each dimension of overlap.

Our theoretical framework provides a rich new terrain for further organizations and social movements research. Field overlap theory offers organizations scholars new ways to expand their analyses of fields, understand the interface with social movements, and conceptually map complex institutional structures and dynamics that may have previously gone unexamined. Our theory also has important implications for organizations research because it provides greater conceptual clarity to our understanding of exogenous shocks to organizational fields. Indeed, it may help explain large-scale or rapid social transformations, as change moves through overlapping fields in "contagion" or "wave" effects, facilitated by linked interactions across multiple fields. While the NAFTA labor and environmental cases illuminate the importance of field overlap mechanisms, additional cases are needed to better explore the ways in which organizational identities, interests, and constraints vary across fields, as well as the implications of different field logics for social action.

Field overlap theory has critical implications for social movement research because it provides a new framework for conceptualizing political opportunity structures and movement

success and failure. The concept of political opportunity structure faces serious criticism for being too vague and too broad (see Gamson and Meyer 1996; Goodwin and Jasper 1999), and it is disparaged because it is not clear how activists gauge the openness of a political opportunity structure, or how their strategic choices affect a structure's permeability (see Goodwin and Jasper 1999; Kingdon 1995). Our framework allows social movement scholars to reconceptualize political opportunity structures not simply as "windows" that are randomly opened or closed to movement activists (requiring clairvoyance to detect and exploit), but rather as dynamic configurations of overlapping fields that can be leveraged strategically to achieve specific policy outcomes. Political opportunity structures are constituted where fields interlock. Key allies, powerful new frames, and resources for disadvantaged actors are found at the intersections where structural contradictions are highest.

By placing *strategy* at the center of analysis, field overlap theory also offers promising avenues for new research on movement success and failure. Success results, in large part, from activists' ability to skillfully use leverage and broker across fields. Our analysis suggests that activists could improve their chances of success by looking for places where significant penetration or overlap with other fields exists, exploiting key points of leverage, and using strategies that take advantage of them. Historical comparative cases of movement success and failure would provide additional analytical leverage for better understanding social movement success, particularly as field overlap changes over time. Comparative social movement research also offers a particularly rich area for exploring how dependencies on non-state grassroots fields can be used effectively. Because labor and environmentalists' divergence in tactics is best explained by leaders' perceptions of their strengths and ability to win their objectives (labor leaders overestimated their strength while environmentalists underestimated theirs), and their calculation of where pressure would be most effective, the case is quite generalizable. Future research analyzing how activists *perceive* the viability of different leverage points, and how this affects their strategic choices, would be invaluable.

The NAFTA struggle contains important lessons for understanding the opportunities and constraints that broader movements for equitable trade face. Most importantly, it shows that the outcome of the creation of trade regimes is not predetermined. While social movements may be disadvantaged relative to capital, the possibility of establishing strong regulatory safeguards at the international level does exist. The NAFTA case highlights the lesson that political action is dynamic, collective, and contingent. Structural conditions can affect preferences, increase the political access of some groups over others, and improve the likelihood of attaining international policy goals. But such conditions neither create insurmountable constraints nor inevitably lead to particular policy outcomes. No matter how restricted policy arenas are, or how determinative influential inside actors remain in privileging particular policy aims, outside actors can mobilize in other political arenas to agitate for changes in the distribution of influence in a policy arena or in the rules by which policies are determined. Actors are constrained, but not inescapably defined, by the structural conditions and social context in which they operate.

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