

## UNION RESPONSES TO NAFTA IN THE US AND CANADA: EXPLAINING INTRA- AND INTERNATIONAL VARIATION\*

Michael Dreiling and Ian Robinson<sup>†</sup>

*In this article we ask why some unions in Canada and the United States were more actively opposed to NAFTA than others, and why these "activist" unions differed in the strategies that they adopted for fighting NAFTA and in the alternatives that they offered to it. We ask the same questions about differences between the U.S. and Canadian labor movements as embodied in the rhetoric and behavior of their central federations. We distinguish four union "types" on two dimensions: the inclusiveness of union leaders' collective identity (i.e., the kinds of workers that the union actively seeks to organize), and the radicalness of union leaders' moral economy (i.e., how critical the union is of the status quo political economy). We hypothesize that differences in union type, so defined, explain a significant part of the variation in the levels of union activism against NAFTA in both countries, as well as differences in strategies of opposition. Differences in the relative strength of union types is also hypothesized to be an important factor explaining strategic differences between the two national labor federations. We use statistical analysis of survey data, as well as qualitative analysis of institutional variables, to operationalize and assess these hypotheses. We find considerable support for them.*

Every major union in Canada and the United States officially opposed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), if not from the beginning of negotiations, then by the conclusion of negotiations on the labor "side-deal" to NAFTA in August, 1993. However, in each country, some unions actively opposed NAFTA while others did little beyond voicing their dislike of the agreement and their support for those actively opposed. Of the active union opponents, some in each country worked closely with other social movement organizations (SMOs) opposed to NAFTA, while others did not. As well, some in each country supported the development of an internationalist alternative to NAFTA and the neoliberal model of globalization that it advanced, while others tacitly or explicitly endorsed the *status quo ante*. At the level of national labor

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<sup>†</sup> Michael Dreiling is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Oregon, Eugene OR 97403-1291. Ian Robinson teaches in the Sociology Department and Residential College, and is a researcher at Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109. E-mail: dreiling@darkwing.uoregon.edu and eian@umich.edu.

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movements as manifest in the responses of the central federations, there were also differences. Federation support for social movement alliances and the development of internationalist alternatives was broader and more institutionalized in Canada than in the United States.

In this article paper, we try to explain these differences. We argue for the importance of differences in union “type,” defined in terms of the inclusiveness of union collective identities and the degree to which union conceptions of a just political economy are at odds with the existing system, as proximate causes of variations in union responses to NAFTA. We do not think that union type is the only important factor. The economic sector in which most union members are located is also shown to have an important independent effect on union responses.<sup>1</sup>

However, when comparing national labor movements, sectoral differences largely wash out because the U.S. and Canadian economies have very similar structures, and unions are concentrated in the same economic sectors in roughly the same proportions (though Canadian union density is roughly twice that of the United States). Here, differences in the dominant type of unionism within each national labor movement are by far the most important proximate cause of differences in responses to NAFTA.

The paper is divided into four parts. In the first, we lay out our typology of “unionisms.” We also categorize the dominant type of unionism in the U.S. and Canadian labor movements at the time of the NAFTA fight (roughly 1990-1993). Finally, we categorize some of the most important unions in the fight against NAFTA in each country, and offer statistical evidence supporting our categorizations of two major unions in each country. The second part of the paper develops four hypotheses concerning the relationship between union type, economic sector, and union response to NAFTA. The third part of the paper offers a statistical test of these hypotheses, using survey data collected from U.S. and Canadian rank-and-file union members in three unions early in 1994. Finally, the last part of the paper considers whether differences in the strategic choices of unions and national labor federations are consistent with those that we would expect, based on our hypotheses.<sup>2</sup>

### UNION TYPES—A SIMPLE MODEL

For almost 30 years now, the dominant tendency within the U.S. industrial relations and labor economics literatures has been to treat all unions—at least within the United States—as essentially the same in their basic goals (for overviews of the evolution of the industrial relations literature, see Kaufman 1993 and Schatz 1996). It was not always so. As late as 1967, Shister found it useful to distinguish between business and social unionism in his analysis of the evolution and possible futures of the U.S. labor movement (Shister 1967). However, by the 1970s, such differences seemed less and less important to most U.S. academic observers. Something real—the reestablishment after 1955 of business unionism as

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<sup>1</sup> Variations in union type must themselves be explained, though we do not attempt to do this here. Such an explanation would presumably identify relevant historical and institutional factors. We assume that union collective identities and moral economies are not entirely determined by economic or political structural factors. If such a reductionist account were correct, there would be little value in focusing on intervening variables that are themselves entirely explained by the independent structural variables. Marks (1989) has recently offered one such reductionist view, building on the work of Lipset (1983). On this account, technological trends in product markets combined with the level of labor repression associated with the political system largely determine union and national labor movement character and strategy.

<sup>2</sup> Canada really has two national labor movements: a French-speaking movement, located almost entirely in Quebec, and an English-speaking movement in the rest of Canada. For reasons of space, simplicity, and the lack of comparable statistical data, this paper focuses almost exclusively on the Anglo-Canadian labor movement and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) that represents most of its members.

the dominant current within the U.S. labor movement—underlay this academic reorientation. However, this diminishing of difference proved to be a local (i.e., mainly US) and temporary affair. In the 1980s, “neoliberal” economic restructuring undermined the ideology and practices of business unionism, creating a resurgence of social and social movement unionism. By the end of the decade, analysts close to the labor movement were distinguishing between “organizing” and “service” models of unionism (Midwest Center for Labor Research 1991, 1991/2), and discussing the emergence of social *movement* unionism in the service sector (Johnston 1994). Related distinctions have been applied to reform movements within embattled industrial unions (Ghilarducci 1988; LaBotz 1990; Moody 1988; Nyden 1985; Wellman 1995). These U.S. developments were complimented by work on militant worker movements in the global South (Philippines, South Africa, Brazil, etc.) which stressed the need to distinguish different types of unionism (Scipes 1992, 1996; Seidman 1994; Waterman 1993). Differences in union type are thus regaining theoretical salience in a wide range of contexts both inside and outside of the United States. But on what basis should we distinguish among different types? On this, there is no consensus at present.

### *Definitions*

We suggest that union types derive from the ideologies and practices of union “leaders,” meaning elected national-level union officials and their staff, and elected officials and unpaid, unelected activists at local levels.<sup>3</sup> Two dimensions of union ideologies and practices are important for our purposes: First, union collective identities vary in what segments of the working class they treat as eligible for membership in their union and in the wider labor movement (inclusiveness). Second, union moral economies vary in their criticisms of national and international political economy (radicalness).<sup>4</sup>

No single union seeks to represent the entire working class, but some labor movements try to do so.<sup>5</sup> Highly inclusive unionism has been particularly strong in labor movements dominated by industrial unions (Germany, Sweden), or large general unions (United Kingdom, Australia). The aspiration to full inclusivity was also found in the Knights of Labor and the Industrial Workers of the World in the U.S. (Voss 1993; Dubofsky 1988; Thompson 1955) and Canada (Kealey and Palmer 1987; Leier 1990; McCormack 1985; Rajala 1996). Movement-level inclusivity is rooted in the individual unions that frame collective identities consistent with such a class-based movement.

At the other end of the spectrum, craft unions have tended to be highly exclusive, interested only in organizing the subset of wage workers who possess certain skills or engage

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<sup>3</sup> The focus on union leadership does not imply an elitist conception of union internal political dynamics (Michels 1962, Lipset 1960). We recognize that union leaders are the ones who make decisions about goals and strategies, and in doing so have some autonomy with respect to the views of rank-and-file members. Even in the most democratic unions, leaders have a substantial capacity to influence the membership's conceptions of collective identity and moral economy, and are not mere takers of prior, independently shaped member beliefs or preferences.

<sup>4</sup> Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin (1988, 1996) have argued that internal democracy and workers' power on the shop floor are critical determinants of union character. We agree with this assessment, though we would argue that other factors also shape union leaders' ideologies and practices, and so, union type. These include national labor movement discursive traditions, the historical timing of industrialization and labor movement formation, and the behavior of states, churches, and employers toward unions and the labor movement in general. In any event, we wish to maintain a clear distinction between union type as proximate causes of differences in union goals and strategies, and the factors that in turn shape union type. The level and type of union democracy, in our view, falls in the latter category, and we exclude it from our definition of union type.

<sup>5</sup> The most notable exception to this generalization was perhaps the One Big Union movement that began in Canada after World War One, and spread quite rapidly in the United States thereafter, before being largely destroyed by government repression in both countries. On this, see (Bercuson 1978; Logan 1928).

in certain types of work. Labor movements comprised primarily of craft unions, as was the case in Canada and the United States prior to the Great Depression, are highly exclusive and rarely attempted to organize or represent unskilled workers (Haydu 1988; Lembcke 1988). Business unionism outside of the craft union framework means that the union caters to its own members/customers, but does not share responsibility to—or solidarity with—workers in other unions, let alone unorganized workers in the wider economy.

Location on the radicalness dimension is a function of union and movement leaders' assessment of the existing political economic system. Most of the unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and Canada's equivalent, the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC), were led by men who accepted the parameters of a relatively *laissez-faire* capitalist economy and a two-party political system in which neither party was founded or controlled by the labor movement. On the other hand, some unions belonging to these federations, notably the United Mine Workers (UMW) and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) (Marks 1989), as well as unions affiliated with more radical rival federations such as the IWW and (at various points) Communist organizations such as the Workers Unity League, challenged both parameters (Abella 1973; Dubofsky 1988; Leier 1990; Salerno 1989; Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin 1989; Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin 1991; Thompson 1955).

The inclusiveness and radicalness dimensions can be treated as X and Y axes on a two-dimensional plane, creating four quadrants. It should be possible to locate many national labor movements and individual unions within these quadrants, as in figure 1.<sup>6</sup> There will often be political struggles—within individual unions, and among unions within labor movements—along both of these axes. Thus, when categorizing unions we describe only the central or dominant tendency within a union or labor movement at a specified time. Clearly, there is room for variation within each of the four quadrants. By locating a union within one of the four types, we generalize about essential differences from among the myriad variations in union leadership ideology, discourse, and practice. These simplifications greatly facilitate efforts to assess the importance of collective identity and moral economy variables through intra- and international comparisons.

In assigning names to our union types, we employ terms already common in North American labor movements for three of the four.<sup>7</sup> The four ideal type unions based on the inclusiveness-radicalness dimensions are as follows: sectarian unionism; business unionism; social movement unionism; and social unionism.

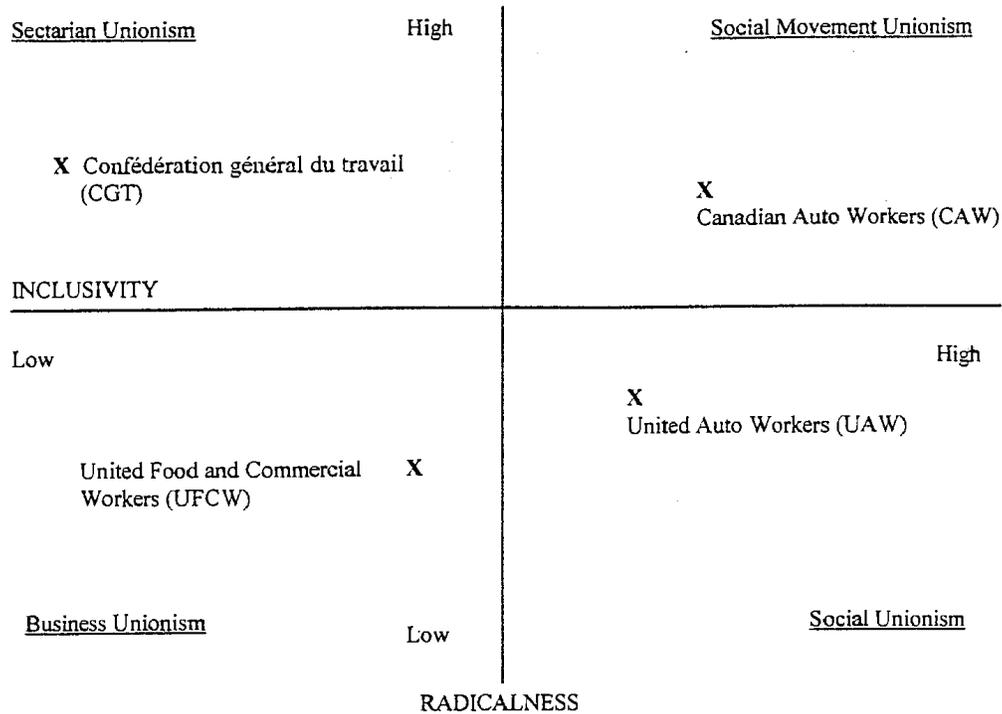
The first type, sectarian unionism (upper left quadrant) is characterized by a highly exclusive membership and a very critical perspective of the existing political economy. While sectarian unions often claim to speak on behalf of the entire working class or the entire society, they do not attempt to organize all workers. Rather, they focus exclusively on workers who embrace the particular ideology that animates that union, whether it be religious or political (catholic or communist). Until recently, the French labor movement was dominated by sectarian unions, such as the *Confédération générale du travail* and the catholic trade unions of Quebec met this description between their formation in the 1920s and the 1960s. There are currently no major cases of sectarian unionism in Canada or the United States, so the hypothetical responses of this type of union to NAFTA are not considered in this study.

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<sup>6</sup> We say “many” because these dimensions are central to union character and type only in cases of “voluntary” unionism. In state-sponsored unionism in authoritarian regimes, until recently a common form, workers are compelled to join certain unions. See Collier and Collier (1991) for a discussion of unionism in Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico.

<sup>7</sup> This risks muddying the waters because these terms are used in diverse and imprecise ways. We hope that defining them in terms of our two dimensions gives a more precise meaning without doing violence to the understandings of movement actors. This approach enables us to work with categories that are meaningful both to “outside” observers and to the actors whose choices and actions we are trying to understand.

**Figure 1. Four Union Types by Dimensions of Inclusivity and Radicalness**



The ideal-typical “business union,” like other businesses, provides highly specialized services such as collective bargaining and grievance handling to members (customers) in return for union dues (fees) (Goldfield 1987; Moody 1988: xiv). Its organization is typically top-down in its authority structure, leaving most movement objectives and resource-allocation decisions to top level leadership (See Milton 1982; Voss 1993). Union leaders who practice this type of unionism are no more concerned with internal democracy than business managers, whatever the constitutional formalities. Business unionists tend to accept the legitimacy of the business values that they bring to their own organization. Consequently, their criticisms of competitive capitalism tend to be narrow and *ad hoc*, focused on particular “bad managers” or corporations rather than the limits of the system *qua* system. This type of unionism, and the institutions and strategies that flow from it, has always been strongest in the building trades unions that dominated the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Trades and Labour Congress in Canada (TLC) (Robinson 1993b).

The ideal-typical “social movement union” has economic interests to represent and collective bargaining functions to perform, but it is also part of a larger social movement that aims to reform (or revolutionize) the economic and political order to bring them more into line with ideals of economic justice and democracy. A vitally important weapon in this struggle, for social movement unions, is the capacity to generate strong membership commitments to their union. Such commitments can motivate participation in a variety of forms of collective action, even when unions have very limited material resources with which

to supply selective material incentives. To achieve and maintain the high levels of membership commitment that they need, social movement unions must encourage members' sense that they "own" their unions, that they decide their priorities and strategies and are responsible for realizing those goals collectively. This type of unionism was strongest in the new industrial unions of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and its Canadian counterparts, the Congress of Canadian Labour (CCL) in the first 15-20 years of their existence (Milton 1983; Robinson 1993b; also see Kozura, 1997 for "alternative unionism").<sup>8</sup>

The ideal typical "social union" has elements of each of the two types just described. Like social movement unions, it is highly inclusive, and as a result, has a broader political perspective and agenda. Through some intra-movement division of labor, it actively seeks to organize most if not all wage and salaried workers. It also seeks to represent the economic and political interests of workers in general, in addition to existing union members. Kessler-Harris locates this strategic element of social unionism in the concerns for "collective activity in the community, the workplace, and above all, in the political arena" (Kessler-Harris 1987:32). Like business unions, however, social unions are less critical of the existing political economic order. Closely related, they rely less on member mobilization capacity than on the protections and incentives afforded by labor laws and other labor market institutions, and behind them, states and employers willing to recognize and cooperate with unions. Social unionism in the concerns for "collective activity in the community, the workplace, and above all, in the political arena" (Kessler-Harris 1987:32). Like business unions, however, social unions are less critical of the existing political economic order. Closely related, they rely less on member mobilization capacity than on the protections and incentives afforded by labor laws and other labor market institutions, and behind them, states and employers willing to recognize and cooperate with unions. They put most if not all of their political efforts into electoral work on behalf of an allied political party, as opposed to "extraparliamentary" political action that social movement unions and social movements in general employ.

### *Operationalization*

Table 1 locates numerous unions or groups of unions in the categories of union-type. In making these selections, we have relied on an extensive review of historical and secondary literatures—listed at the bottom of the table—in addition to our own research on the positions and activities of these unions in the NAFTA-fight. We chose the unions included in this table using three criteria: (1) we wanted to examine at least one union of each of our three types from each country; (2) we wanted to look at the unions that were most active in the struggle against NAFTA; and (3) we wanted at least one example of a major union (or group of unions) that was not active against NAFTA for each country.

We can test our categorizations, in part, with survey data collected by Robinson. He

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<sup>8</sup> Like all typologies, figure 1 freezes organizations at points in time and does not adequately capture organizational change. In North America, many industrial unions that began as social movement unions in the 1930s gradually became social unions as their more radical members were purged and labor laws were developed which offered them some protections in return for accepting restrictions on social movement tactics, such as solidarity strikes and secondary boycotts. This process went further and faster in the U.S. than in Canada, but it accelerated in both with the onset of the Cold War. By the late 1960s, social unionism was the dominant mode in the Canadian labor movement, though social movement unionism remained a powerful current, particularly in British Columbia and Quebec. In the United States, social unionism was a minority current, most forcefully represented by Walter Reuther's United Auto Workers (Lichtenstein 1995). Business unionism remained the dominant tendency until well into the 1980s, while social movement unionism was reduced to the margins by the 1950s (Moody 1988; Robinson 1993a, 1993b). Besides the United Electrical Workers (UE), the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) is probably the largest U.S. social movement union today. See Kimeldorf (1988) and Wellman (1995) on the ILWU, and the sources cited in table 1 on the UE.

**Table 1.** Major Unions in NAFTA Fight by Union Types, Canada and U.S. (c. 1993)

<i>Union Type</i>	<i>Canada</i>	<i>United States</i>
Business Unionism	building trades unions, UFCW	building trades unions, UFCW
Social Unionism	USW, PSAC	UAW, SEIU, ACTWU, Teamsters
Social Movement Unionism	UE, CAW, CUPE, CUPW	UE

*Notes:* Acronyms, union names/types and references used in categorizing are as follows:  
 ACTWU, Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers (Fraser 1991; La Luz 1991)  
 Building trades unions (Lembcke 1988; Silver 1986)  
 CAW, Canadian Auto Workers (Gindin 1992; Yates 1992, 1993)  
 CUPE, Canadian Union of Public Employees (Gindin 1997; Morton 1990)  
 CUPW, Canadian Union of Postal Workers (Gindin 1997; Morton 1990)  
 IBT, International Brotherhood of Teamsters (La Botz 1990; Romer 1962)  
 PSAC, Public Service Alliance of Canada (Morton 1990)  
 SEIU, Service Employees International Union (Banks 1991/92; Johnston 1994)  
 UAW, United Auto Workers (Lichtenstein 1995; Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin 1996)  
 UE, United Electrical Workers, (Abella 1973; Schatz 1983; Moody 1988)  
 UFCW, United Food and Commercial Workers (Crump 1991/92; Green 1990)  
 USW, United Steel Workers Herling 1972; Hoerr 1988; Morton 1990

sampled members of three unions (the CAW, the UAW, and the UFCW in both Canada and the United States; n=228) to see whether (a) there are substantial differences along each dimension among these three unions, and (b) whether those differences are of the sort that we would expect based on our categorizations. Two response items in this survey give us direct measures of the two dimensions that yield our union types: (1) whether members are willing to give financial support to workers attempting to organize in sectors other than those in which their own union is based; and (2) how critical members are of the status quo political economy.<sup>9</sup>

We assess our classification of unions by type using a chi-square test of statistical independence. On the union inclusiveness dimension, 82% of CAW members and 80% of UAW members, as opposed to 38% of UFCW members, endorsed financial support for organizing by workers outside their own union and the sectors in which it operates.<sup>10</sup> Because social and social movement unions are roughly the same in terms of inclusiveness, it is not surprising that there is little difference between the CAW and the UAW. We can be confident that our classification of unions by type is statistically independent ( $p = 0.000$ ). For degrees of radicalness, we find that, as expected, the CAW (at 59.5%) has the highest percentage of members who are highly critical of existing levels of corporate power, followed by the UAW

<sup>9</sup> The measure of radicalness is constructed from a Likert response scale to the following two statements: "Corporations benefit owners at the expense of workers and consumers," and, "Big corporations have too much power in this country." Please contact authors for a full discussion of the sample, survey and reliability analyses.

<sup>10</sup> The rationale behind using support for organizing in other sectors as our measure of inclusiveness is that it directly assesses whether union members feel a sense of responsibility to, and/or solidarity with, unorganized workers who are not likely to ever be members of their union. A pure business unionist would not exhibit such feelings or concerns.

(at 47.2%), with the UFCW lowest (at 36.1%). Since it is the degree of radicalness that separates social movement from social unions, it is appropriate that on this dimension, the UAW is closer to the UFCW than to the CAW.<sup>11</sup> The probability is very low that these results are not statistically independent ( $p=0.007$ ). As we would expect, given that the UFCW is classified as a business union in both countries, there were not statistically significant differences on the inclusiveness or the radicalness dimensions between the union's Canadian and U.S. members.

### UNION TYPES AND RESPONSES TO NAFTA: A THEORY

Why and how should differences in union type affect union responses to NAFTA? We advance three hypotheses, one concerning variations in the intensity of union opposition to NAFTA, and two others concerning variations in strategies among these activist unions. Table 2 sums up these hypotheses.

NAFTA is a powerful tool for advancing neoliberals' laissez-faire agenda at the continental level (Grinspun 1991). The more critical unions are of the neoliberal economic policies, the more forcefully they should oppose the agreement, other things being equal. This leads us to our first hypothesis ( $H_1$ ): social movement unions will tend to oppose NAFTA more intensely than the other two types, *ceteris paribus*. This is because they are (by definition) more critical of the neoliberal status quo than the other two types.<sup>12</sup> There is no basis in union type for ranking the intensity of opposition of the other two types.

Social movement unions will tend to behave like other social movement organizations (SMOs). They will rely on their capacity to mobilize their members for various forms of collective action as a power resource, and they will tend to employ extra-parliamentary as well as parliamentary strategies for deploying this power resource. The greater common ground between these unions and other SMOs should make social movement unions more open to alliances SMOs with having similar agendas. Also, the greater inclusiveness of both social movement and social unions means that they will generally have

**Table 2.** Three Hypotheses Regarding Union Type and Responses to NAFTA

Union Type	<i>H1: Intensity of Opposition</i>	<i>Strategies of Opposition</i>	
		<i>H2: Support SM-Alliance</i>	<i>H3: Support Internationalist Alternative to NAFTA</i>
Business Unionism	least	none	least
Social Unionism	intermediate	intermediate	intermediate
Social Movement Unionism	most	most	most

<sup>11</sup> This observation holds *a fortiori* when we consider that the UAW sample comes exclusively from Local 600, which has a long tradition as a leader of the radical end of the spectrum within UAW politics (Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin 1996). If our sample came from a more representative UAW local, we would expect it to show lower levels of radicalness.

<sup>12</sup> In fact, other things are seldom equal in this particular case, as will be discussed below.

a diverse membership that often overlaps with social movements (e.g., women, civil rights, environment, etc).<sup>13</sup> These members will bring the concerns and experiences gained in other movements to their unions. This too should make their unions more open to working closely with SMOs.

Taken together, these considerations generate our second hypothesis (H<sub>2</sub>): Of the three union types social movement unions will be the most open to alliances with other “progressive” SMOs, and the most likely to include extraparliamentary strategies in their political repertoires. Social unions will be more open to such alliances than business unions because of their greater inclusiveness, but less open than social movement unions because they lack the same interest in the political strategies characteristic of these other SMOs.

Social movement unions, again because they are the most critical of the existing economic and political order, will be less open to nationalist “producer alliances” with employers than the other two types of unions, whether protectionist or otherwise in orientation. With this strategic response foreclosed, these unions will have to focus more on building alliances with other progressive SMOs at home, and with workers in other countries. The latter orientation should result in greater support for the principles of international labor solidarity. These considerations lead us to hypothesis three (H<sub>3</sub>): social movement unions will be the strongest supporters of the development and advocacy of internationalist alternatives to the neoliberal conception of globalization embodied in NAFTA, other things being equal.

All three of these hypotheses have been framed in a *ceteris paribus* fashion. Two additional factors worth building into our analysis, so that we can control for them when evaluating the three hypotheses just summarized, are the economic sector in which a majority of a union's members are located, and the skill levels of those members. We do not anticipate that these factors will have much if any impact on the *strategies* of opposition. However, the *intensity* of union opposition to NAFTA could well be affected by the degree to which (1) the sectors in which union members are concentrated are expected to experience a significant increase in exposure to international competition as a result of NAFTA, and (2) union members within this sector are largely unskilled.

The first is relevant because, while NAFTA's effects will ripple through the entire economy, its most direct and obvious effects will be in the trade-impacted sectors. As a result, it is here that members are likely to take the greatest interest in trade-related agreements. Factor two is relevant because, in keeping with the “factor price theorem” of conventional economic theory, unskilled workers in labor-scarce economies—and the U.S. and Canadian cases are both considered labor-scarce, relative to the rest of the world—will see their wages and benefits negatively affected by trade liberalization (Rogowski 1989). The larger negative impact of liberalization on these workers should induce their unions to more intense opposition to NAFTA, other things being equal.

On this analysis, opposition to NAFTA should be most intense among unions whose members are predominantly low-skilled and concentrated in a heavily traded sector such as electronics assembly, auto parts manufacture, and textiles. Unions representing highly skilled workers in sectors that are not highly exposed to international trade competition, such as engineers and public educators, should be the least inclined to intensely oppose NAFTA. Together, these expectations constitute hypothesis four (H<sub>4</sub>), and are summarized in table 3.

These arguments purport to derive union members' economic interests directly from the objective characteristics of the sector in which they work and the type of work that they

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<sup>13</sup> U.S. examples include the United Farm Workers and the Chicano movement, and AFSCME and Southern Christian Leadership Council's poor people's campaign. See Kazis and Grossman (1982) for a discussion on links between “social” unions and environmental groups. For an analysis of overlapping concerns among labor and “new” social movement activists in British Columbia, Canada, see Carroll and Ratner (1995).

**Table 3.** Sectoral Characteristics and Intensity of Union Opposition to NAFTA

<i>Impact of NAFTA</i>	<i>Un- or Semi-skilled Workers</i>	<i>High Skilled Workers</i>
Direct and Large Increase in International Competition	highest activism many manufacturing workers and trucking UAW, CAW, Teamsters, USW, UE, ACTWU	intermediate activism some manufacturing, public and private service workers GENERALLY NOT WELL REPRESENTED BY UNIONS
Indirect and Limited Increase in International Competition	intermediate activism many public and private service sector workers UFCW, SEIU, CUPE, PSAC CUPW	lowest activism many building trades and some public sector workers BUILDING TRADES UNIONS

do. While such objective economic factors are clearly important, economic interests must always be interpreted and constructed. This process of construction will be shaped by the ideology and practices that underpin union type. Thus, social movement unions might strongly oppose NAFTA even where their members are relatively high-skilled and concentrated in non-traded sectors. It will be important to identify such cases where these two considerations point in opposite directions in order to assess whether union type has an effect independent of objective economic factors.

Table 3 suggests that the ideal unions to examine, with this purpose in mind, would be the building trades unions of each country, located in the lower right corner. However, as already noted, these unions form the core of business unionism in both Canada and the United States. The second best test is the unions in the lower left hand corner. If objective economic factors alone determine intensity of union opposition, then all of these unions should be less intense opponents than unions in the upper left corner. If, on the other hand, union type has an independent effect on the intensity of union opposition to NAFTA, then we might expect to see social movement unions in the lower left corner exhibiting levels of opposition equal to or greater than those of business or social unions in the upper left corner.

### STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

In this section, we test our four hypotheses using the survey discussed in the previous section. Comparisons are confined to three unions: the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), the United Auto Workers (UAW), and the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) as representative of union types. We assume that, where unions are not experiencing substantial political conflict, there is rough congruence between leadership positions and member views

on our two defining dimensions of collective identity and moral economy. If this assumption is valid, differences in union type will be reflected in the ways that members respond to our survey questions.<sup>14</sup> We will explore whether differences in union type, as represented by these three unions, are closely related to differences in union responses to NAFTA as suggested by our hypotheses.

The survey permits us to operationalize all four hypotheses with varying degrees of precision. H<sub>1</sub> is explored by member responses to a question that asked whether they would be willing to volunteer time to their union to help fight for a better trade policy. Our presumption is that only those most intensely opposed to neoliberal trade policies would volunteer time to fight them. H<sub>2</sub> is tested through a question that asked members how much they trusted environmental groups as sources of information on NAFTA. The assumption here is that higher levels of trust will be associated with greater willingness to work with environmental organizations on the kinds of economic issues raised by NAFTA. H<sub>3</sub> is examined through a question that asks whether members are willing to help finance the organizing efforts of democratic unions in other countries such as Mexico and South Africa. Our assumption here is that a willingness to support such organizing is a good indicator of support for international worker rights and solidarity, which in turn is an important motive for supporting an internationalist alternative to the neoliberal model of globalization. Finally, H<sub>4</sub> is examined by distinguishing the sector in which respondents work (auto versus grocery retail) and the skill levels associated with their work. The impact of these two independent variables on variations in volunteerism to fight for a better trade policy is explored. We expect lower skilled and more trade-exposed workers to be more willing to volunteer for a better trade policy. Table 4 summarizes what we expect to find, based on our first three hypotheses. H<sub>4</sub> cannot be summarized in the table, since it does not involve treating union type as the independent variable.

**Table 4.** Expected Relative Values for Three Hypotheses, by Union Type

<i>Hypotheses and Variables</i>	<i>UFCW (Business Unionism)</i>	<i>UAW (Social Unionism)</i>	<i>CAW (SM Unionism)</i>
H1: % of members willing to volunteer time to union to fight for better trade policy	lower	lower	higher
H2: % of members with high levels of trust in environmental orgs' statements on NAFTA	lower	higher	highest
H3: % of members willings to fund overseas union organizing efforts	lower	higher	higher

<sup>14</sup> This rough congruence could be the product of leadership influence on membership beliefs or leadership responsiveness to membership beliefs. We think that there is almost always a dialectical relationship between the two, with the character of union democracy being an important determinant.

**Table 5.** Cross-Tabulation and *Tau* Results for Three Hypotheses (n=228)

<i>Hypotheses and Variables</i>	<i>UFCW (Business) (%)</i>	<i>UAW (Social) (%)</i>	<i>CAW (SM) (%)</i>	<i>Goodman and Kruskal's Tau Coefficient and (Sig.)</i>
H1: % of members willing to volunteer time to union to fight for better trade policy	36.8	72.2	70.3	.104 (.000)
H2: % of members with high levels of trust in environmental orgs' statements on NAFTA	42.6	55.6	62.2	.025 (.061)
H3: % of members willings to fund overseas union organizing efforts	51.4	75.8	78.4	.060 (.001)

Table 5 summarizes the results of our bivariate analysis for the same three hypotheses. We use Goodman and Kruskal's tau, which has a chi-square distribution, to show the association and observed significance levels between our dependent variables (rows) and our union-type variable (column). The tau coefficient (and significance levels) are presented in the final column of the table. A very small significance level suggests that we may reject the null hypothesis that tau is equal to zero. We then may interpret the tau coefficient as a rough measure of the degree to which knowledge of union type reduces the probability of error in correctly classifying the responses on our dependent variables.

It can be seen that the percentage values for each type of union are consistent with the expectations set out in table 4 in all but H<sub>1</sub>. We expected the share of social movement union members volunteering to fight for a better trade deal to be higher than for social union members, but the reverse is the case (marginally).<sup>15</sup> However, all the other relationships are as expected, and the results are statistically significant (though the significance test value for H<sub>2</sub> is slightly above the conventional .05 cutoff point). Clearly there are real relationships here, though they are not terribly strong.<sup>16</sup> The limited strength of these relationships could be due in part to measurement error, but it is also due to the fact that other factors affect the intensity and the strategies of union opposition to NAFTA.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> One possible explanation is that mobilization against NAFTA was generally more intense in the United States; in Canada, the more intense union mobilization was against the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement of 1988. A more general question about whether members have volunteered time to their union over the previous year yields the expected pattern: 13% for the UFCW, 47.1% for the UAW, and 70.3% for the CAW. The Tau coefficient is .252 (Sig.=0.000). This result supports the view that the different national dynamics surrounding the CUSFTA and NAFTA distort the underlying relationship between union type and member volunteerism.

<sup>16</sup> The strongest of the three, found in H<sub>1</sub>, implies that knowing union type would reduce our error in predicting willingness to volunteer to fight for a better trade policy by a little over ten percent. The weakest association, found in H<sub>2</sub>, implies a reduction in error of about 2.5 percent. To put these results in some perspective, it is rare for the Tau coefficient to show a reduction of error of more than 30 percent.

<sup>17</sup> We introduced various demographic control variables into these analyses. Neither the international solidarity nor trust in environmental groups were affected in a statistically significant way. Levels of volunteerism, on the other hand, were effected by age, gender, years in union, and hours worked per week. For the most part, the patterns in these effects varied unpredictably by each union. There were no differences when nation was controlled for, an observation that runs counter to the arguments made by S. M. Lipset concerning "American exceptionalism" (1986, 1991, 1996, 1997). Please contact authors for additional information.

We noted two such factors bearing on intensity of union opposition in H<sub>4</sub>. Employing the same statistical method, we found that knowing the sector in which workers were found reduced our error in predicting whether or not members would volunteer to fight for a better trade deal by almost exactly the same percentage (10.4%) as knowledge of union type. This result was statistically significant (.000). By contrast, knowing worker skill levels reduced error by less than one percent, and this result was not statistically significant. Moreover, the relationship was the opposite of that expected, with more skilled workers more likely to volunteer than less skilled workers.<sup>18</sup>

### QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Our statistical analysis tells us that union members' intensity of opposition to NAFTA, and their support for different strategies for opposing NAFTA vary more or less as predicted by our hypotheses. The same is true of the sector in which those union members work, though not their skill levels. But knowing what members want and support does not tell us what unions actually do. Nor does it permit us to go beyond individual unions to consider national labor movements as a whole. In this section, we explore the same four hypotheses with these questions and levels of analysis in mind. The evidence upon which we base our discussion comes largely from interviews with union and other NGO participants in the anti-NAFTA fight in each country. Our combined research involved interviews from a purposive sample of seventeen U.S. and twenty-one Canadian union leaders and coalition steering committee members. Interviewees were asked to clarify union positions, strategies, and activities on NAFTA-related events as well as to provide their assessment of coalition politics, strategies and outcomes. We supplemented these interviews with extensive reviews of union and coalition documents, anti-NAFTA position statements, and union actions. Interviews, organizational documents, and secondary reports allow us to gauge variations among unions in the intensity of their opposition to NAFTA (H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>4</sub>). We then assess variations in oppositional strategies among unions and national labor federations (H<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>3</sub>)

#### *Intensity of Union Opposition*

Our statistical analysis suggested that union type and the sectoral location of union members were roughly of equal importance in explaining variations in the intensity of union opposition to NAFTA. Our observations and interviews support this conclusion. On the one hand, it is clear that most of the unions that most actively opposed NAFTA were in the upper left hand corner of table 3, as predicted by H<sub>4</sub>. On the other hand, in each country, there were clear cases of major unions not found in this quadrant which were nonetheless front and center in the opposition to NAFTA. The most important of these in the United States was the Service Employees International Union (SEIU); in Canada, the equivalent position was occupied by the country's largest union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

The high intensity of opposition from the SEIU in the U.S. and from CUPE appears to be an anomaly from the standpoint of H<sub>4</sub>, but from the perspective of H<sub>1</sub>'s stress on the importance of union type, the mystery dissolves. The SEIU became a leading exponent of social unionism in the U.S. labor movement in the 1980s, and many of its activists experimented with innovative social movement organizing strategies and tactics (Johnston 1994). For reasons explored in the previous section, we expect social and social movement

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<sup>18</sup> However, the number of highly skilled workers in the sample (7) was too small to yield reliable statistical results, so this finding is inconclusive.

unions to be more active against NAFTA, other things being equal. Over the same years, CUPE became increasingly critical of the emerging neoliberal order, and determined to increase its membership mobilization capacity in response. In the process, CUPE became (along with the CAW) one of the two largest and strongest exponents of social movement unionism in the Anglo-Canadian labor movement (interview with Jim Turk, executive assistant to the national president, CUPE, July 7, 1997). It seems clear, then, that both factors (and perhaps others) are necessary to explain adequately variations in union opposition-intensity in each country.

### *Strategies for Fighting NAFTA*

By contrast, we expect that the kinds of economic factors just considered are not very important in explaining variations in union strategies for fighting NAFTA. Rather, H<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>3</sub> specify that union type is the most important factor explaining a union's willingness to ally with other anti-NAFTA SMOs and to support the development of internationalist alternatives to NAFTA. As discussed earlier, we expect social movement unions to be the strongest supporters of these two strategies, social unions to be weaker supporters, and business unions the weakest. As we interpret it, these differences are manifest in two ways: first, in the types of unions that develop strong linkages with anti-NAFTA umbrella organizations that bring together labor and non-labor leaders; and second, in the strength of the relationship between national labor federations and these umbrella organizations. We first offer a brief description of the four umbrella organizations, and then consider the two levels of the relationship between labor movement organizations and these umbrella organizations.

Each country had two major anti-NAFTA umbrella organizations, as indicated in the center column of figures 2 (Canada) and 3 (U.S.). In the U.S., they were the Citizen's Trade Campaign (CTC) and the Alliance for Responsible Trade (ART); in Canada, they were the Action Canada Network (ACN) and Common Frontiers. In each country, one of those organizations—the Citizen's Trade Campaign and the Action Canada Network—was primarily oriented to coalition work among national SMOs with a view to building public and parliamentary opposition to NAFTA. In each case the other organization—the Alliance for Responsible Trade in the US and Common Frontiers in Canada—was a much smaller organization, focusing primarily on building an international network of SMO leaders opposed to NAFTA, with a view to developing a progressive internationalist alternative to NAFTA (Ayres 1996; Cowie 1996; Dreiling 1997; Robinson 1994).

### *Union Type and Union Linkages with Umbrella Organizations*

H<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>3</sub> lead us to expect the social movement unions would exhibit stronger ties with both umbrella organization, while business unions would exhibit weak links if any. Social unions would fall somewhere in between. As figures 2 and 3 indicate, these expectations were largely correct, although there are some intriguing anomalies.

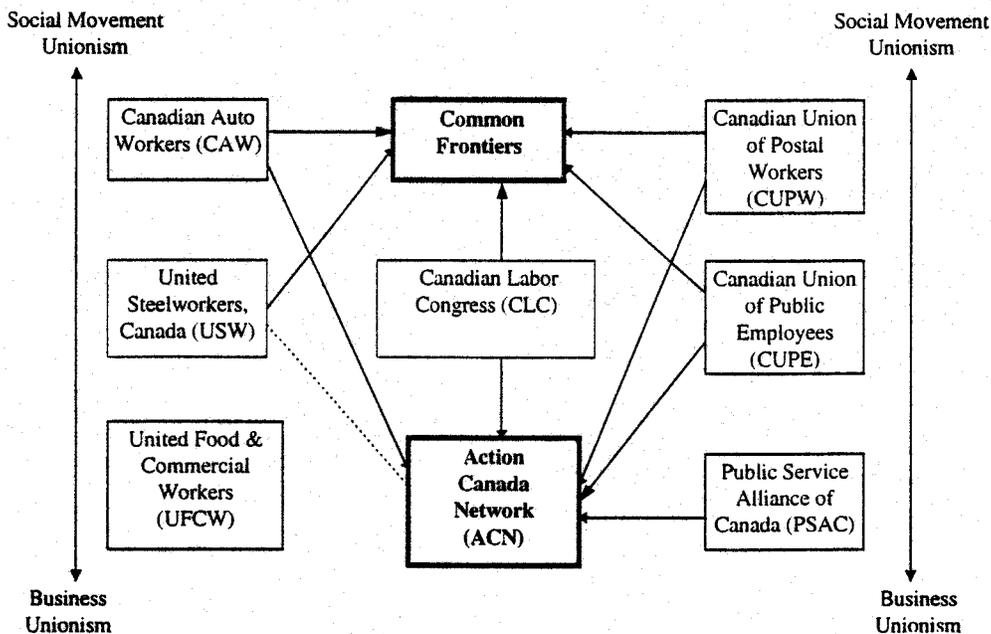
In Canada, the most active unions in both the ACN and Common Frontiers are either social movement or social unions. The only business union represented in figure 2, the UFCW, had no real links with either organization. Instead, it operated exclusively through appeals to its own members and its connections with the Canadian Labour Congress. Figure 2 does not enable us to distinguish between levels of commitment to each of these organizations. However, there is evidence that the social movement unions—particularly the CAW and CUPE—were more deeply committed to the Action Canada Network, and saw its social movement coalition strategy as a more important part of their overall political strategy,

both with respect to defeating NAFTA and for the purposes of fighting neoliberal policy initiatives more generally.

Most importantly, when the Anglo-Canadian labor movement's traditional political ally, the New Democratic Party, suffered a major setback in the September 1993 federal elections, Canada's premier social union, the United Steelworkers, blamed the ACN. From that point forward, the Steelworkers ceased contributions to the ACN, and built a coalition with other unions (including the UFCW) aimed at boosting the labor movement's support for the New Democratic Party and curtailing support for the ACN. The social movement unions rejected this interpretation of the NDP's declining fortunes, and continued to support an expansive conception of the ACN's potential role in coordinating progressive social movement collective action aimed at changing the agenda of Canadian politics.

The most important anomaly in the Canadian case is the fact that there is no apparent difference between social and social movement unions in levels of support for an internationalist alternative to NAFTA, as manifest in union linkages with and commitment to Common Frontiers. Here, both before and after the federal election of 1993 and NAFTA's implementation a few months later, the leading social movement unions (CAW and CUPE) and the leading social unions (the Steelworkers Union and the Communications, Electrical, and Paperworkers Union (CEP) were strong supporters of Common Frontiers and its

**Figure 2.** Labor Union Affiliations in Canada's Anti-NAFTA Umbrella Organizations

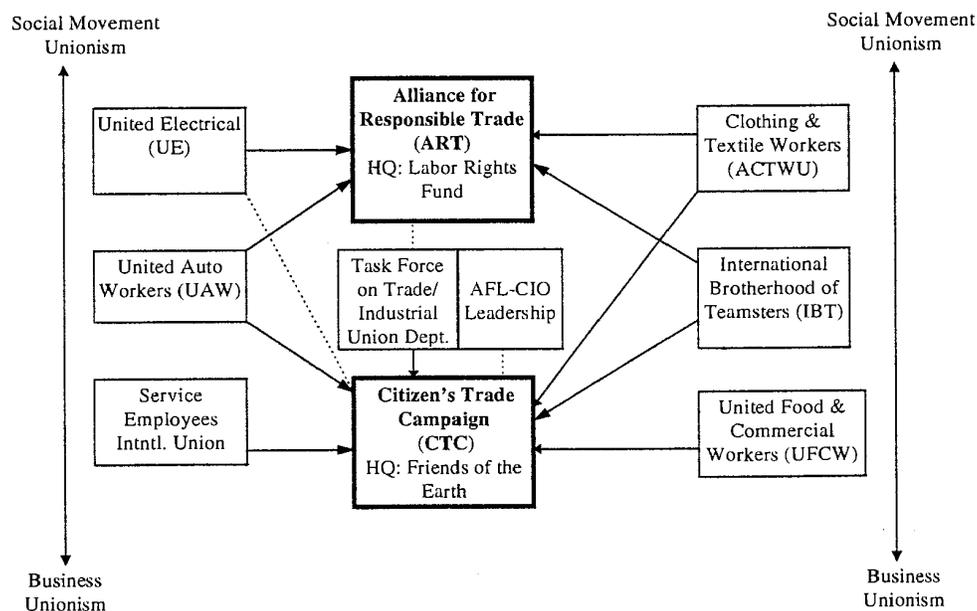


orientation.<sup>19</sup> The lack of difference is particularly striking when we consider that Common Frontiers was originally created and funded by the Action Canada Network and a number of international development NGOs with a strong interest in Mexico. H<sub>3</sub> leads us to expect that the social movement unions will be more supportive of internationalist alternatives. However, it also suggests that social unions will support such an approach. So the predictive failure involves a problem of relative magnitude, rather than getting the signs wrong.

In our U.S. analysis (figure 3) three of the four social unions (UAW, ACTWU, and IBT) had links to both the Citizens' Trade Campaign and the Alliance for Responsible Trade. By contrast, the only active business union represented in figure 3, the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) was linked only to the CTC, and the only social movement union among those studied, the United Electrical Workers (UE), was linked only to ART.<sup>20</sup> This evidence is broadly in line with what H<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>3</sub> would lead us to expect as regards H<sub>3</sub> but not H<sub>2</sub>, where the UE's absence of linkages to the CTC is contrary to expectations.

The most likely explanation for this anomaly is the UE's small size—it had roughly 45,000 members by the early 1990s—which greatly limited the resources that it had available

**Figure 3.** Labor Union Affiliations in the U.S. Anti-NAFTA Umbrella Organizations



*Note:* Directed arcs indicate direct participation, support, and influence. Broken lines indicate weak, informal support and influence. Vertical axis represents a continuum of union-type tendencies in individual unions. Umbrella organizations are in bold.

<sup>19</sup> In 1997, Common Frontiers received slightly less than half of its operating budget from the Canadian Labour Congress and five union affiliates. Of this sum, the three social movement unions (CAW, CUPE, and CUPW) contributed somewhat less than the two major social unions (Steelworkers and CEP).

<sup>20</sup> Looking beyond these organizational linkages, there is little doubt that the UE was the most deeply committed to developing a strong working relationship, including common organizing efforts, with the autonomous Mexican unions represented by Frente Auténtico de Trabajo (FAT). The Teamsters also made some efforts along these lines but they were much more limited. In the case of the UAW, most of the linkages with Mexican workers were established by locals, without the leadership or encouragement of the international executive board.

to commit to the congressional lobbying strategy that dominated the CTC. A less important anomaly, but one still worth noting, is the fact that the SEIU, while categorized as a social union, did not participate in ART. We think the most plausible explanation here is the fact that the SEIU began its life as an AFL affiliate led by business unionists. This remained the dominant tendency within the union until the rapid growth of its public sector locals in the 1970s changed the balance of power within the union, a shift reflected—and then further advanced—by the election of John Sweeney as international president in 1979. Business unions, including the SEIU before 1979, did not have large research departments with extensive linkages to left-wing think tanks such as the Economic Policy Institute and the Institute for Policy Studies, or to the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO. This was important because ART was built upon these prior networks among union and federation research staff and those in sympathetic think tanks. On this account, union type is still the key variable, but we have to pay attention to the legacy of past union type, as well as the current one.

#### *National Federation Relations with Umbrella Organizations*

Figure 3 indicates that the AFL-CIO as a body had no formal relationship with either CTC or ART. Instead, it delegated that responsibility to a Task Force on Trade within the federation's Industrial Union Department. This Department did have a formal relationship with the CTC, but not with ART. By contrast, Figure 2 indicates that the Canadian Labour Congress was affiliated with, and played a major role in funding, both the Action Canada Network and Common Frontiers.<sup>21</sup>

The type of unionism dominant within each national labor federation helps to explain this difference. We have already suggested that by the early 1990s, the U.S. labor movement—and the AFL-CIO—were quite evenly divided between business and social unions.<sup>22</sup>

However, prior to the election of the New Voices slate, led by John Sweeney, in 1995, the top leadership of the AFL-CIO clearly leaned toward the business unionism wing of the movement on most issues. Consistent with H<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>3</sub>, the business-union wing of the movement was generally either uninterested in fighting NAFTA, or uncomfortable with strategies for doing so that involved working closely with non-labor social movement organizations. The response of the AFL-CIO leadership was to allow the Federation's Industrial Union Department—an organization dominated by the industrial unions, and hence, strongly oriented to social unionism—to play the lead role on NAFTA and related issues. One or two IUD researchers participated in ART, but as an organization the IUD never developed formal ties with ART because it opted to concentrate on stopping NAFTA in Congress. This implied working with the Republican right-wing that opposed NAFTA (i.e., Republicans sympathetic to the messages of Pat Buchanan and Ross Perot on this issue). And this, in turn, implied downplaying talk of alternatives (upon which there could be no agreement across the left-right divide) and framing the issues instead in terms of national sovereignty that was tacitly hostile to internationalist alternatives to neoliberal globalization.

In Canada, by contrast, all three types of unions were represented in the labor movement, with social movement unionism growing in power over the 1980s and 1990s, and

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<sup>21</sup> Tony Clarke, Chairman of the Action Canada Network from 1987 to 1993, indicates that the CLC and the affiliates indicated in Figure 3 together provided about two thirds of the ACN's budget over these years. Personal interview with Tony Clarke, Ottawa, July 23, 1994. See also Bleyer (1997).

<sup>22</sup> It is important to recognize that Figure 3 is in no way a representative sample or cross-section of the AFL-CIO affiliates.

business unionism declining. By the time of the NAFTA fight, business unions (concentrated in the building trades) had been marginalized within Canadian Labour Congress politics, and the balance between social and social movement unions was roughly even. Since, as we have seen, both social and social movement unions in Canada were strongly committed to developing an internationalist alternative by 1990, the CLC faced no internal disagreement of the sort that forced the AFL-CIO to distance itself from the umbrella organizations. The same was true of social movement coalition building and CLC support for the Action Canada Network prior to the summer of 1993. However, from that point forward, there was a division on this dimension parallel to that which existed in the AFL-CIO during the NAFTA fight. The result was also similar: the CLC leadership distanced itself from the ACN, reducing its financial support and arguing that the ACN should play a more limited role (essentially, become a clearing house on matters related to fighting neoliberal policy initiatives for progressive SMOs).

### CONCLUSION

Given the apparent significance of union-type in determining the parameters of union-mobilization against international trade initiatives, we recognize the relevance that varying union strategies will play in shaping the politics of globalization. It is unlikely that a national labor movement bound by the narrow political identities and restrained pressure group tactics of business unionism will be able to generate the political power to channel and reframe the political economy of globalization in a manner that works for workers, both at home and abroad. A more favorable standpoint, from the perspective of workers standing across the international gulfs of global capitalism, would involve a deepening of social movement unionism within national labor movements. This deepening of social movement unionism will likely occur only with a significant democratization of North American unions, as levels of internal democracy are likely to be one of the proximate and more volatile factors that determine union-type. Because social movement unionism is more willing to envision internationalist alternatives and to engage progressive, intermovement alliances, enhanced mobilization of this union type may be the most successful avenue to confront the economic and political consequences of neoliberal globalization.

Even in the limited and imperfect form in which they emerged during the NAFTA fight, the labor movement and the broad anti-NAFTA alliances demonstrated their power by dramatically reshaping public opinion regarding free trade agreements. In both countries, public opinion shifted from about two thirds in favor of further trade liberalization to more than half opposed. Moreover, these movement alliances were able to raise the political salience of their issue to the point where it dominated the 1988 and 1993 federal elections in Canada and commanded very high levels of public awareness and media attention in the United States. Neoliberal globalization is creating unprecedented pressures on national market regulations and welfare states, and these changes are increasing the potential for the kind of social movement alliance and mobilization that will transform the globalization process. A key to understanding these domestic political alignments requires a sensitivity, we argue, to variations in the types of unionism that characterize national labor movements as well as individual unions.

In this paper, we distinguished three basic types of unionism in Canada and the United States by reference to the inclusiveness of union collective identities and the radicalness of union moral economies. We then offered three hypotheses that linked union type to intensity of opposition to NAFTA and to oppositional strategies, particularly alliances with other anti-NAFTA national social movement organizations, and international union and

NGO alliances aimed at developing a progressive internationalist alternative to NAFTA. We also developed a fourth hypothesis, which argued that the skill levels of union members and the exposure of their employers to international competition would also affect the intensity of union opposition to NAFTA. We considered two types of evidence bearing on these hypotheses: statistical evidence from a survey of two major unions in each county, and qualitative evidence based on interviews with union and other participants in the struggle against NAFTA in each country. We found considerable evidence to support our hypotheses from both types of evidence, though we also found some intriguing anomalies.

We expect that differences in union type, as defined here, are relevant for the explanation of many kinds of variation in union strategy and action, not just in the United States and Canada, but in other countries with voluntary unionism and democratic capitalist political economies. Among other things, we expect that they are highly relevant to differences in levels of union commitment to organizing the unorganized, and to strategies for pursuing this goal. Union types are also likely to shape the political strategies unions pursue, and as a result, the shape of national party systems.

Finally, and building on these last two points, union-type differences may well be important sources of variation in the economic and political power of unions and labor movements. It will be important to explore these possibilities in future work, as well as the factors that shape the evolution and character of union type itself, such as levels of internal democracy and historical context of union-formation. A question is what factors shape the balance of power among rival types within national labor movements. Here the responses of states and employers to unions are likely influences, as are the ideologies and institutions (including the quality of democracy) brought to unions by the activists that build and maintain them. In the future, scholarship that examines unions as important constituents of a larger social movement should contribute to theory of unions as movement organizations that vary by the scope of their collective identities and the character of their moral economies.

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