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**Gender and Identity in an Era of Globalization:**

**Transnational Political Organizing in North America**

by

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A Dissertation submitted to the

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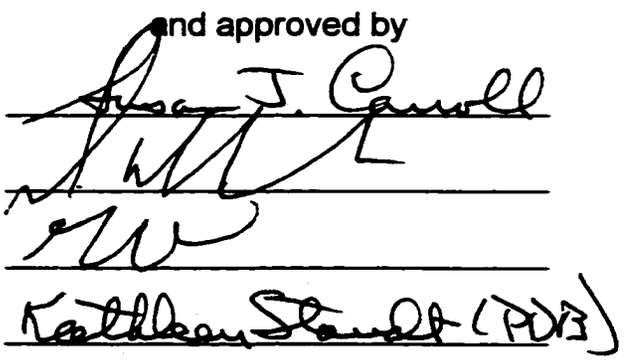

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Gender and Identity in an Era of Globalization:

Transnational Political Organizing in North America

Dissertation Director:

Susan J. Carroll

This project explores the role that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), or policies of economic and political globalization, play in fomenting transnational and oppositional political organizing. I interrogate transnational women's (often feminist) political activism around globalization of the economy in Mexico, Canada and the United States. I highlight the possibilities and difficulties that globalization engenders for the establishment and sustainability of transnational political alliances. I appraise the attempts by non-governmental organizations to construct a new regional "American" self-definition and argue that the politics of identity—gender, race, nation—are fundamental to unraveling the possibilities for and limitations of transnational advocacy networks.

As the case of North American integration suggests, grassroots organizations are addressing the impact of globalization on the quality of life in their communities. Despite high rates of participation by non-governmental organizations generally, and the fact that gender and race clearly structure economic opportunities, the participation of women's NGOs varied widely among the three signatory nations. Indeed, women's organizations in Canada were

among the vanguard of organizing efforts, while women's organizations in Mexico, and especially the United States, were more peripheral to the political debate. My exploration of this variation highlights the institutional, national and gendered politics of creating cross-national political alliances. In doing so, I elucidate the role that narratives of gender, race, and nationalism play in North American economic integration and in policies of globalization more generally.

Furthermore, I argue that the extent to which national political actors engage in transnational political organizing is conditioned not only by changes at the systemic level but perhaps even more importantly, on differences in the domestic political and institutional relationships of those actors. While globalization and the politics of identity created opportunities for cross-border coalitions, the heterogeneity of women's identities and the way that globalization paradoxically amplifies difference complicates cross-border advocacy work. This work contributes to the integration of critical understandings of gender and race in debates about macro-economic policy and political organizing by analyzing efforts to create a feminist counter-hegemonic transnational political space in the "new" North America.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have imagined writing the acknowledgments section of my dissertation for a long time. It was a fantasy about what it would feel like to be finished with the project. Bringing this fantasy to reality was the result of my good fortune. Throughout this process I have been privileged to have an amazing group of people–friends and family–who have supported me intellectually and personally. Thanking all those who assisted me in the course of this process feels both like a momentous and impossible task. I will attempt it nevertheless.

From start to finish I was part of dissertation group that read and critiqued my work. There is no doubt in my mind that the final product is much stronger because of their feedback. At various times Lisa Adler, Susan Craig, and Sam Frost all played critical roles in this group. We challenged each other when necessary, encouraged one another when appropriate, and celebrated milestones along the way. However, Anne Manuel is the only dissertation group member to have been part of this group since the embryonic stages of my work. To her I owe a special thanks. She joined the group while she was preparing for comprehensive exams and was a steadfast supporter right down to the final draft of the final chapter. Our writing sessions during the summer in our Women's Studies' offices made the process of finishing infinitely more enjoyable.

As I have engaged in this process of writing a dissertation, I have had the good fortune to work with four scholars who, each in different ways, have been critically engaged in the project. As a sage advisor, teacher, and friend, Sue Carroll has been unfaltering in her role as dissertation advisor. She skillfully walked the tightrope between assisting me whenever necessary, giving me useful substantive

feedback whenever I needed it, and yet always allowing me the space to do my own work. I have greatly benefitted from her advice and cannot say enough thanks. Like Sue Carroll, Michael Shafer has been, from the first day of my graduate school career, an important teacher and mentor. I can only hope that I have picked up some of his ability to read and critique material with such a keen macro-analytic eye. Robert Kaufman's work in comparative politics has been important in my intellectual development. His expertise in Mexican politics was particularly valuable to me as I was doing my research for this project. Finally, Kathleen Staudt's expertise in the area of gender and U.S.-Mexico relations was immeasurably important in my process of writing up this material. Both her written work and her insightful comments on earlier versions of the chapters herein were critical to the germination of this project. I have also greatly benefitted from her professional encouragement and guidance.

The idea for this dissertation took concrete form as I worked on a project at the Center for the American Woman and Politics (CAWP) at Rutgers University. The CAWP project, focused on the impact of women in the 103rd Congress and was funded by the Charles. H. Revson Foundation. I particularly want to thank those that put the Women in Congress project together: Sue Carroll, Debra Dodson, Ruth Mandel, for their visionary thinking about what policy issues were relevant, and specifically for their supporting me to do the research on gender, Congress, and international trade policy. More generally, CAWP has been an important home for me and I would additionally like to thank Tobi Walker and Debbie Walsh for their support on this and other CAWP projects.

For people doing work in the area of gender studies, Rutgers is an incredible

place to be trained. The wealth of scholarly resources is enormously rich and my association with this community has provided me with a host of opportunities that have been pivotal in shaping and guiding me intellectually. In particular, I would like to thank the Rutgers Women's Studies Program and the people who have run that program during my time at Rutgers: Barbara Balliet, Alice Kessler Harris, and Harriet Davidson. I would also like to thank all those involved in the two interdisciplinary faculty-graduate student seminars that I had the good fortune of getting fellowships to participate in. These groups both provided critical fora for discussions of my work: the Institute for Research on Women / Institute for Women's Leadership's Seminar on *Women in the Public Sphere: Power, Practice, Agency,* 1997-1998 and the Center for the Critical Analysis of Contemporary Culture's Seminar on *An American Century in the Americas*, 1998-1999.

The research in this book relied heavily on the generosity of those who were involved in transnational organizing in response to NAFTA. I want to thank them for allowing me a window into their work and for being willing to talk at length about it. When living and doing research away from my home base I relied on friends and colleagues to point me in the right direction for work and for fun. Many thanks to Patricia Fernández, Claudia Hinijosa, Adriana Ortiz Ortega, Lynda Yanz, Denise Nadeau, Becki Birner, and the staff at the National Action Committee on the Status of Women for their assistance in this endeavor.

I have waited to the end to thank my closest friends and family because these are the people who I consistently relied on and who always came through. In fact, I have been truly blessed to have a group of friends who have provided the day to day encouragement, support, and humor to bring this project to completion.

Bob especially wants to thank Kathleen Casey and Jeanne Bowlan, as the commune, both real and virtual, has been a joyous lifeline. Ronnee Schreiber and John Evans are the two best and smartest cheerleaders that anyone could wish for. Thanks also to Tobi Walker, C. Lynn Carr and Gwen Roedel for consistently being there at all the crucial moments. Gwen's phone calls, each day of the last week of writing, sustained my momentum. I also want to express my appreciation for my furry muses (both past and present) whose presence has helped me keep life's difficulties into proper perspective. I also want to thank my family for their love and encouragement throughout this process. I especially want to thank my mother, my father, Kathy, Ken, Beth, Gene, Marc, Jackie, Lise, Rose, Diana, Alan and Sharon.

Finally, there is Susana Fried. I cannot express ample gratitude for the love, happiness, and day to day encouragement she has brought into my life. Her support was critically important as she accompanied me through the exciting and challenging aspects of this project in addition to providing vital feedback on my written work. Thank you.

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# CHAPTER 1

## I. Introduction

When the United States, Mexican and Canadian governments first announced their intentions to negotiate a free trade agreement, they expected that the negotiations would advance without much fanfare. They anticipated that negotiations on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) would proceed outside the spectrum of popular political attention–business as usual.[1] Such an expectation (and hope) is now history. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) responded to their government's call to redefine the borders dividing Mexico, Canada and the United States by crossing those borders themselves. Regional economic integration created a unique opportunity and a set of incentives for NGOs to work together across borders to articulate an alternative "North American" creation. They dared to imagine a "North America" that did not conform to the vision of Mexican President Salinas, U.S. President Bush, and Canadian Prime Minister Mulroney. Instead, myriad organizations pressed for greater environmental and workers' rights protections. Women's rights advocates articulated an alternative vision where gender discrimination would be ameliorated not exacerbated by North American economic integration.

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[1] Many have contemplated why this expectation was so mistaken, see for instance Frederick W. Mayer, *Interpreting NAFTA: The Science and Art of Political Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

This project explores the role that NAFTA played in fomenting transnational political organizing focused on gender issues. In particular, my dissertation interrogates transnational women's (often feminist)[2] political activism around globalization of the economy in Mexico, Canada and the United States. By looking at the specific organizations and networks that participated in these advocacy efforts, I highlight the possibilities and difficulties that globalization engenders for the establishment and sustainability of transnational political alliances. I appraise attempts by non-governmental organizations to construct a new regional "American" identity among women in the context of an increasingly integrated transnational economy.

Except for a very recent flurry of attention, the role of non-governmental actors in international politics has not been adequately examined. My research is designed to help fill the conceptual gap. Indeed, we know little about how, why, and under what conditions, NGOs will attempt to work with their counterparts across borders to affect change. Given the state-centric bias of Political Science, particularly international relations scholarship, the role of these actors remains relatively unexamined.[3] Research in international relations has only just begun to

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[2] See section IV of this chapter for a discussion of when I use the term 'feminist' to describe the activities of the organizations and individuals studied in this project.

[3] Indeed, most major theories in international relations (IR), like the realist paradigm, attempt to explain events in the international system in terms of the behavior of states, or the relationship between systemic imperatives and state action. In doing so, they often ignore internationally relevant actors and processes which do not inhere in or are not themselves nation-state actors. For a few examples of state-centric approaches to IR see Robert O. Keohane, ed., *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (Boston: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1977); Richard N. Lebow, *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (New York: Academic, 1974); Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979).

focus attention on acts of resistance, contestation and political mobilization that help to constitute global political order(s). Moreover, my research is additionally warranted because most of the existing work on transnational advocacy by non-governmental organizations focuses specifically on international NGOs (those organizations that themselves have offices in more than two countries), and not on the transnational connections made by what are essentially national or local organizations.[4]

By the same token, while feminist scholarship has championed 'global feminism' or a 'feminist internationality', little has been written which carefully interrogates the factors that promote and inhibit the generation and maintenance of transnational alliances. Such an evaluation and critical endeavor is needed. Women's movements have been among the vanguard of social movement organizing globally. Thus, if we are to understand the viability of transnational political organizing, we need to look at women's efforts in this arena. For instance, the 1995 United Nations' IV World Conference on Women held in Beijing drew over 30,000 women, from all regions of the world to participate in what was the largest ever United Nations conference. My dissertation addresses the question of what the impact of women's transnational organization will be by looking specifically at the transnational response of women's rights advocates to one policy initiative–NAFTA.

Most attention to the connections between women and international

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[4] See for example the important book by Jackie Smith, Charles Chatfield and Ron Pagnucco, eds, *Transnational Social Movements and Global Politics: Solidarity Beyond the State* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997).

economic issues has occurred because women comprise the majority of the poor and dispossessed and often bear the brunt of global economic restructuring. Indeed, there is an important body of research which details these connections.[5] While this avenue of research uncovers important patterns of gender difference as a consequence of economic processes, my research takes a different turn. I contribute to the discussion about women's economic inequality by examining the multiple ways that women's organizations and movements have lead efforts to define and redefine international political and economic policies. In other words, this dissertation looks at women's efforts as international political **actors**. I examine women as transnational political actors via an in-depth exploration of one set of organizing efforts: endeavors to highlight the gendered consequences of NAFTA. In doing so, I look first at alliances made among organizations across national borders. Second, I analyze the ways that these transnational efforts were generated and constrained by national level factors.

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[5] Lourdes Arizpe and Josefina Aranda, "Women Workers in the Strawberry Agribusiness in Mexico," in *Women's Work: Development and the Division of Labor by Gender*, ed. Eleanor Leacock and Helen I. Safa (South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1986); Haleh Afshar, *Women, Development & Survival in the Third World* (New York: Longman Inc., 1991); Ryan Bishop and Lillian S. Robinson, *Night Market: Sexual Cultures and the Thai Economic Miracle* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Naila Kabeer, *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought* (New York: Verso, 1994); Helen I. Safa, *The Myth of the Male Breadwinner: Women and Industrialization in the Caribbean* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1995); Pamela Sparr, ed., *Mortgaging Women's Lives: Feminist Critiques of Structural Adjustment* (New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1994); Susan Tiano, "Maquiladoras in Mexicali: Integration or Exploitation?" in *Women on the U.S.-Mexico Border: Responses to Change*, ed. V. Ruiz and S. Tiano (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 17-39; Susan Tiano, *Patriarchy on the Line: Labor, Gender, and Ideology in the Mexican Maquila Industry* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Irene Tinker, ed., *Persistent Inequalities: Women and World Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

## II. Transnational Political Organizing and NAFTA: An Overview

The North American Free Trade Agreement, initially signed by U.S. President George Bush, Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, and Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney on December 17, 1992, is the product of a long history of economic integration between the United States and Mexico, and the United States and Canada. This agreement, an extension of the 1989 Canadian American Free Trade Agreement (FTA), established the world's single largest trade bloc with a labor market of more than 362 million people and a combined annual Gross National Product of over $6.5 trillion.[6] While the process of economic integration in North America did not begin with NAFTA's inauguration on January 1, 1994, the Agreement did, however, bring normative debates to the foreground about whether, and under what conditions, economic regionalization should proceed. The proposal of the agreement led to an unexpectedly active and contentious debates in Mexico, the U.S., and Canada over the benefits and drawbacks of regional economic integration.[7] Although economic integration in North America was a reality long

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[6] Economic integration between Mexico and the United States on the one hand, and the United States and Canada, on the other, have histories which extend long before NAFTA's birth. In the Mexico-U.S. relationship, the current era of establishing U.S.-owned manufacturing plants (*maquiladoras*) on the Mexico side of the border began in 1965 when the governments launched a border-area industrialization program. This program legalized the establishment of "off-shore" plants for U.S. corporations. While the *Maquilas* are still concentrated along the border, they have actually extended into a number of cities in Mexico's interior. *Maquila* production accounts for 15% of Mexico's gross domestic product and in 1997 was up a full 30% from the year before. Ben Fox, "Mexico's Booming Maquiladora Industry Branches From Border Into the Interior," *Wall Street Journal*, October 28 1998.

[7] A number of recent books provide important background on the issues associated with economic integration in the North American region: Donald Barry, Mark O. Dickerson and James D. Gaisford, *Toward a North American Community? Canada, the United States and Mexico* (Boulder: Westview, 1995); Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, *Which Way for the Americas: Analysis of NAFTA Proposals and the Impact on Canada* (Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, November 1992); ed Earth Island Press, *The Case Against "Free Trade": GATT, NAFTA, and the Globalization of Corporate Power* (San Francisco: Earth Island Press and

before NAFTA was proposed, the formalization of globalization that NAFTA represented gave non-governmental organizations clear reasons for establishing cross-border allies.[8] Indeed, NAFTA's proposal legitimated an interest in, and the desirability of, organizing collaboratively across national boundaries and facilitated significant cross-border coordinating efforts among NGOs in North America.

As the case of North American integration suggests, grassroots organizations addressed the impact that globalization was having on the quality of life in their communities and on their constituents. During the debate over the North American Free Trade Agreement environmental, labor, religious and consumer groups argued against the adoption of the agreement and tried to influence the contours of the policy itself. However, the participation of women's NGOs varied widely among the three signatory nations. In Canada, women's groups were among the leaders of a broad-based national anti-NAFTA coalition. In Mexico, a few women's groups, including several located on the U.S.-Mexico border, were involved in autonomous organizing around the agreement. In the U.S., in contrast, the broad-based anti-NAFTA coalitions included no major national women's organizations, but were joined by smaller women's organizations, particularly those focused on international or economic issues or those primarily addressing the concerns of women of color

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Noth Atlantic Books, 1993); Ricardo Grinspun and Maxwell A. Cameron, eds., *The Political Economy of North American Free Trade* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1993); Gary Clyde Hufbauer and Jeffrey J. Schott, *North American Free Trade: Issues and Recommendations* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 1992); Gary Clyde Hufbauer and Jeffrey J. Schott, *NAFTA: An Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 1993).

[8] On this point see María Lorena Cook, "Regional Integration and Transnational Politics: Popular Sector Strategies in the NAFTA Era," in *The New Politics of Inequality in Latin America: Rethinking Participation and Representation*, ed. Douglas Chalmers, A., et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 516-40.

and immigrant women.

The case of North American economic integration demonstrates that transnational political organizing has developed in direct response to the increasingly global economy. Cross-border political organizing plays an important role in shaping economic integration by contesting a version of globalization and economic restructuring that does not adequately address the needs of economically marginal populations. This work suggests that the process of globalization is not inexorable, but rather it is constituted through political resistance and engagement. Indeed, as political contestation to NAFTA shows, structural political and economic changes have an impact on the relations between and among citizens and states. In other words, the "logic of collective action" has been altered by international economic restructuring.[9] Consequently, the terms of the debate over trade policy and globalization more generally have been reconfigured.[10] Economic integration at the governmental level reshapes the cartography of political contestation since the processes of policy formation and decision-making do not inhere within national borders. Governmental negotiation about North American integration was occurring at the regional level and in order to maximize their influence women NGO activists sought to operate regionally as well.

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[9] Philip G. Cerny, "Globalization and the Changing Logic of Collective Action," *International Organization* 49, no. 4 (Autumn 1995): 595-625; Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971). Furthermore, Arturo Escobar suggests that social movements emerge largely because of economic inequality and the failure of development. Arturo Escobar, "Culture, Economics, and Politics in Latin American Social Movements Theory and Research," in *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy, and Democracy*, ed. Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992).

[10] The decision by Bill Clinton to withdraw his request for extension of "fast-track" trade negotiating authority from the U.S. House of Representatives because he could not garner the votes to pass it, exemplifies this change.

## III. "Power Shift?"

The transnational activism of labor, environmental, consumer, religious and women's NGOs in response to NAFTA has become emblematic of the emerging power and importance of non-governmental organizations to shape the terrain of political and economic globalization. Increasingly, NGOs are seen as powerhouses in the international arena. According to Jessica T. Mathews, a Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, the international political system is in the midst of a "Power Shift" where power is being transferred from nation-states to global civil society. Although Mathews' article does not focus on NAFTA, she refers to transnational NGO activity in response to the Agreement as "formidable." NGOs, Mathews argues, had the power to "push around" the Mexican, Canadian and U.S. governments during the NAFTA debate. Specifically she notes,

> Groups from Canada, the United States, and Mexico wanted to see provisions in the North American Free Trade Agreement on health and safety, transboundary pollution, consumer protection, immigration, labor mobility, child labor, sustainable agriculture, social charters, and debt relief. Coalitions of NGOs formed in each country and across both borders. The opposition they generated in early 1991 endangered congressional approval of the crucial "fast track" negotiating authority for the U.S. government. After months of resistance, the Bush administration capitulated, opening the agreement to environmental and labor concerns. Although progress in other trade venues will be slow, the tightly closed world of trade negotiations has been changed forever.[11]

Scholars like Mathews are not alone in expressing a seemingly boundless optimism about the power of transnational NGO networks. More and more, NGO activists themselves turn toward cross-border alliances in order to help realize their political goals. Berta Luján, an independent union activist and the general secretary of the

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[11] Jessica T. Mathews, "Power Shift," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 1 (January/February 1997): 50-66. P. 54.

umbrella anti-NAFTA organization in Mexico, Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio (RMALC) said:

> Given these overwhelming economic processes which trample labor rights and human rights, unity among peoples and organizations is what is going to allow us to build a defense that is more appropriate given the scale of the forces that we are confronting. This is important given the challenges that we have before us.... The networks have been pioneers and have been very important in building these international relationships.[12]

Mathews' and Luján's comments provide a window into what I argue is the central tension in current analyses of transnational NGO mobilization. My research on women's organizing around NAFTA suggests that this tension revolves around the need and desire, on the one hand, to frame NGOs as important actors in international politics, and, on the other hand, to consider and explicate the barriers to, and limitations of, NGO transnational organizing efforts.

On the one hand, my data affirm Mathews' assessment that NGOs did play a critical role in the NAFTA debate. In this dissertation, I argue that non-governmental organizations were successful in reshaping the policy making terrain and that these advocacy efforts have changed the international policy making arena for the foreseeable future.[13] In particular, and most significantly for my research, those concerned with gender issues strongly articulated the substantive connections

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[12] Berta Luján, Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio - Secretaria, Interview (Mexico City, November 18 1996).

[13] There are many examples of the lasting impact that NGO mobilization around NAFTA has had on debates over trade policy in the U.S., Mexico, and Canada. In November 1997, for instance, the U.S. Congress voted against granting "Fast Track" negotiating authority to President Clinton to broaden the North American Free Trade Agreement to include Chile and other South American countries. Fast Track's defeat was, in large part, the result of a grassroots campaign spearheaded by the Citizen's Trade Campaign and the AFL-CIO, to highlight the labor and social concerns associated with NAFTA's extension and grew directly out of transnational NGO mobilization around NAFTA.

between gender and policies of free trade. Organizing in opposition to NAFTA jump-started a long-range process of challenging the supposed irrelevance of gender to macro-economic policy.

Since macro-economic policies are traditionally thought to be gender-neutral, one would not expect to find significant involvement on the part of women's organizations in debates concerning the pace and direction of economic globalization. Nor, for that matter, would traditional approaches to thinking about international economic policy lead one to suspect that women's organizations would attempt to influence the contours of an international trade agreement like NAFTA. However, when examining the networks and alliances which were created to challenge the terms of the Agreement, women's organizing was evident in Mexico, Canada, and the United States. Moreover, as Luján's comment indicates, transnational links can be critical to the domestic political visibility, voice, and credibility of local or national non-governmental organizations within the domestic context.

Yet, I also argue that Mathews' and Luján's optimistic depiction of transnational organizing among NGOs needs further specification as the "power shift" is actually only inching along. Although transnational advocacy among NGOs is increasing in frequency and strength, my research indicates that critical barriers remain. While there is tremendous academic and activist enthusiasm about the possibilities of a global civil society that could respond to, and help shape, the forces of globalization, it is clear that political opportunities, mobilizing structures,

and framing processes,[14] combined with political and economic resources, constrain the desirability and sustainability of such alliances. Indeed, I use this investigation of women's transnational organizing around gender and NAFTA to highlight both the possibilities for transnational networking among civil society actors and, at the same time, to identify the problems with assuming that globalization leads to the creation of advocacy movements that readily transcend nation-state borders.

I focus on two dimensions of transnational advocacy. First, I argue that the extent to which national political actors engage in transnational political organizing is conditioned not only by changes at the systemic level but perhaps even more importantly, on differences in the domestic political and institutional relationships of those actors. Indeed, a domestic political movement's institutional position vis-a-vis the state circumscribes the possibilities, desire, and need for strategic cross-border alliances and activism. Oppositional political communities have their own histories and are embedded in radically different institutional settings. Thus, the domestic historical and political context in which NGOs work helps to explain women's organizing around NAFTA. The structure and history of organizing in a country, as well as a movement's relationship to the state, are important explanatory variables.

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[14] These terms come from the social movement literature. 'National political opportunities' refer to the need to see the possibilities for collective action in the context of the broader political system, or the domestic political institutions, in which the movement is embedded; 'mobilizing structures' can be understood as the organizational infrastructure of the movement; and, 'framing processes' highlights the role of ideas in generating or facilitating collective action as the ideas that people bring to the table are critical to explaining patterns of political mobilization. I discuss these concepts in detail in subsequent chapters. For more information see Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes--Toward a Synthetic, Comparative Perspective on Social Movements," in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, ed. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Using insights from social movement literature, I examine the mobilizing structures and the political opportunities confronted by women's advocacy around gender and NAFTA.

Second, I argue that the politics of identity--gender, race, nation--are fundamental to unraveling the possibilities for and limitations of transnational advocacy networks. Indeed, cross-border organizing entails continual negotiation of the politics of identity since such work highlights both the commonalities and the fissures that exist between groups. This comparative analysis highlights the need to look at the theoretical and practical limitations of a narrowly construed identity politics as the basis for movement building and cross-national solidarities. Globalization and the politics of identity created opportunities for cross-border coalitions. At the same time, the heterogeneity of women's identities, and the way that globalization paradoxically promotes cross-border collaboration, complicated cross-border advocacy work as it amplifies differences. Indeed, questions and debate concerning the politics of identity were evident in women's organizing around NAFTA and they pervade analyses of globalization more generally.

Issues surrounding the politics of identity resonate with ongoing discussions in feminist communities about how people can be brought together without homogenizing difference.[15] Indeed, debates about the construction of identity and

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[15] See for instance Johnnetta B. Cole, "Commonalities and Differences," in *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology*, ed. Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins (New York: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1995), 148-53; Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism," in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 1-47; Maxine Molyneux, "Mobilization Without Emancipation? Women's Interests, State, and Revolution," in *Transition and Development: Problems of Third World Socialism*, ed. Richard R. Fagen, Carmen Diana Deere and José Luis Coraggio (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1986); Nellie Y. McKay, "Acknowledging Differences: Can Women Find Unity

the fixedness of identity categories is at the core of feminist theory and practices.[16] Questions about the boundaries of identity categories are important because they are directly relevant to the types of political coalitions established and the extent to which interests are compatible and cross-border cooperation is desirable. My analysis of women's transnational advocacy contributes to the integration of critical understandings of gender and race in debates about macro-economic policy and political organizing by analyzing efforts to create a feminist counter-hegemonic transnational political space in the "new" North America. To this end, my research elucidates the factors that promote and inhibit the establishment and sustenance of cross-border advocacy efforts.

The efforts of individuals and groups to highlight the gendered dimensions of the free trade debate, can be understood as a "transnational advocacy network."

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Through Diversity?" in *Theorizing Black Feminisms: The Visionary Pragmatism of Black Women*, ed. Stanlie M. James and Abena P.A. Busia (New York: Routledge, 1993), 267-82; Bernice Johnson Reagon, "Coalition Politics: Turning the Century," in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, ed. Barbara Smith (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1983), 356-68.

[16] Debates about what constitutes the basis of feminist analysis have centered on the category women. See for instance, Norma Alarcón, "The Theoretical Subject(s) of *This Bridge Called My Back* and Anglo-American Feminism," in *Making Face, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1990), 356-69; Mary Hawkesworth, "The Reification of Difference," in *Beyond Oppression* (New York: Continuum, 1990), 17-46; Susan Hekman, "Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited," *Signs* 22, no. 2 (Winter 1997): 341-65; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs* 17, no. 2 (1992): 251-74; Deborah King, "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology," *Signs* 14, no. 1 (1988): 42-72; Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in *Sister Outsider* (Freedom, California: Crossing Press, 1984), 114-23; Trinh T. Minh-ha, "Not You/Like You: Post-Colonial Women and the Interlocking Questions of Identity and Difference," in *Making Face, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1990), 371-75; Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 51-80; Denise Riley, *Am I That Name? Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Monique Wittig, "One Is Not Born a Woman," *Feminist Issues* 1, no. 2 (1981): 47-54; Jacquelyn N. Zita, "The Male Lesbian and the Postmodernist Body," *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 7, no. 4 (Fall 1992): 106-27.

This network of individuals and organizations consisted of a variety of non-governmental organizations working in concert across borders to pressure their governments to alter the proposed Agreement. For analytic purposes, a "transnational advocacy network" includes all relevant actors working internationally on an issue. According to Keck and Sikkink, the groups are "bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services."[17] My research traced the activities of those activists and organizations engaged in the transnational advocacy network to raise issues of gender and NAFTA. I targeted the primary organizations and individual participants in this transnational advocacy network.

During the NAFTA debate, a number of transnational advocacy networks emerged. The general network consisted of labor, environment, development, human rights, consumer, religious, and women's NGOs. This umbrella network included those organizations represented by the broad anti-NAFTA coordinating bodies in each country--in English Canada, the Action Canada Network and Common Frontiers; in Mexico, La Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio; and in the United States, the Alliance for Responsible Trade and the Citizen's Trade Campaign. The efforts of the women's transnational advocacy network intersected with those of the broader coalition and at other times, this subgroup of women functioned relatively autonomously from the broader anti-NAFTA network.

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[17] Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, "Transnational Advocacy Networks in a Movement Society," American Political Science Association Annual Meeting (Washington, D.C., August 28-31 1997).

Before describing my methodology, it is important to explain a bit about the terminology I use to describe organizations that participated in advocacy efforts around gender and NAFTA. While I consider the efforts to be 'feminist', I generally refrain from using the term except in cases where an individual or organization embraces the label themselves. I would argue that use the term 'feminist' is an appropriate descriptor of these advocacy efforts for two reasons. First, the overwhelming majority of those activists that participated in transnational organizing around gender and NAFTA use the label "feminist" to describe themselves and their organizations. Second, the work of these organizations was designed to improve the conditions of women's lives and to provide women greater access to decision making arenas. In other words, their work had what I understand to be feminist goals. The issue of whether or not to label women's organization, or activities on behalf of women's rights, as feminist is most important with reference to the Mexico case. In Mexico, the historic application of the term 'feminist' is different than that in either the United States or Canada. Historically, Mexican 'feminist' organizations addressed "women's issues" like suffrage, while the *movimientos de mujeres* or *clases populares* focused on the concerns of poor women. As a result, the label 'feminist' was seen as applying to only one segment of those advocating for women's rights.[18]

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[18] On this point see Nancy Saporta Sternbach, et al., "Feminisms in Latin America: From Bogotá to San Bernardo," in *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy, and Democracy*, ed. Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 207-39; Marta Lamas, et al., "Building Bridges: The Growth of Popular Feminism in Mexico," trans. Ellen Calmus, in *The Challenge of Local Feminisms*, ed. Amrita Basu (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1995), 324-47.

## IV. Methodology

My research consists of a three-country comparative study in which women's organizing on policies related to globalization of the economy provide a single focal point for analysis. Since advocacy on gender and NAFTA did not inhere within national boundaries, I trace these efforts through the myriad tentacles of the transnational advocacy network. In this research, I delineate the lines of connection and communication within the transnational advocacy network to raise issues of gender and NAFTA.

This comparative research design highlights the local and global responses to similar phenomena. The comparative research design is critical here as economic integration and globalization of the economy are by definition international processes. In addition, this approach facilitates articulation of the difficulties inherent in, and possibilities of international feminist coordination. Such an approach allows me to explain the cross-national variation in the level of activity by women's organizations in Mexico, Canada, and the United States.

### Research Overview: A Multi-Methods Approach

Research for this project was conducted in Mexico, Canada, and the United States between 1995 and 1997 and uses qualitative methods to elucidate the data on women's transnational organizing in response to the North American Free Trade Agreement. In-depth interviews, organizational documents/newsletters, etc., meeting records, non-participant observation, media reports about these advocacy efforts; and appropriate government materials pertaining to the NAFTA debate were

used to generate the data for the analysis herein. Information gleaned from the files and archives of some of the key organizations involved in these advocacy efforts proved particularly important. Indeed, these documentary and personal sources provided the first-hand information critical to examine the politics of gender and transnational activism.

Data collected from the key organizations, especially that from Mujer a Mujer and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, was important in determining which actors were critical to interview. Interviews were conducted with key activists, lobbyists, policy makers, and researchers in each of the three countries. More specifically, I interviewed key individuals from each of the organizations that were substantively engaged in transnational organizing around gender and NAFTA. Here I defined "key individuals" as those who were centrally involved in these advocacy efforts. In addition, I interviewed a range of political observers/researcher/writers who had studied or been party to transnational NGO activities in North America. Interviews ranged in length from thirty minutes to four hours with the average interview length being one and one-half hours. While most people were interviewed only once, a few key informants were interviewed a second time in order to follow-up with additional questions as a means of obtaining greater clarification of the data.

The interviews were semi-structured and all interviewees were asked questions about their involvement in national and transnational organizing in response to NAFTA. In particular, interviewees were asked to reflect on how they attempted to articulate the connections between gender and NAFTA and what

methods they used to mobilize others to participate. Finally, they were also asked a series of questions about the constraints on and opportunities for transnational collaboration in their organizing efforts. While all informants were asked to reflect on relevant organizing efforts, the particular questions were tailored to the expertise of the informant. Many of these key informants discussed data that led me to pursue additional data sources. Table 1.1 provides the total number of people interviewed in each of the three countries. These numbers are explained in greater detail in the subsequent sections of this chapter where I discuss the timing and specifics of research conducted in each of the three countries. The vast majority of interviews were conducted in person, although a few in each of the Mexico, U.S. and Canadian cases were conducted by phone. In addition to my note taking during interviews, the data collection process was made possible by the tape recording of all interviews.

**Table 1.1 - Interviews Conducted**

| | Canada | Mexico | United States |
|---|---|---|---|
| Named[19] | 8 | 17 | 45* |
| Anonymous | 2 | | 34‡ |
| Total | 10 | 17† | 79 |

* This includes interviews with 37 = women members of the United States Congress. I conducted only a portion of the Congresswomen's interviews and all of the other interviews counted in the category.
† This number does not include discussions with participants in the III Taller Nacional de la Red Temática-Género y Economía, Construyendo la Red.
‡ Some of these interviews were conducted by other researchers working on the CAWP project. However, I conducted all of the interviews most critical to my project. In addition, I wrote interview questions for all the interviews including those which I did not conduct myself.

**Mexico**

My research in Mexico was conducted in two trips: the first in the period from December 1995-January 1996 and the second in September-December 1996. Many of the interviews of Mexican activists were conducted in Spanish and I am also responsible for the translations. Because most of the organizations that participated in transnational advocacy around gender and NAFTA were based in Mexico City, my work was concentrated there. In addition, I had two opportunities to talk with those who worked in organizations along the Mexico-U.S. border that were significantly involved in these advocacy efforts. First, while in Mexico City, I was a non-participant observer in a two-day working meeting of organizations attempting to construct a nationwide network on gender and the economy.[20] This

[19] See Appendix A for list of named interviewees.

[20] The meeting, held on November 14-15, 1996 was called the III Taller Nacional de la Red Temática-Género y Economía, Construyendo la Red.

workshop was the third meeting of the network and its purpose was to formulate the goals and mission of the network. Importantly, this was the first meeting that involved a truly national representation of organizations. Many of the organizations participating in this meeting had also done work around the gendered implications of NAFTA and as such, I was able to use my time there to talk with organizers who worked outside of Mexico City. Second, in August 1996 I spent time at the California/Baja California border meeting with relevant activists.

**Canada**

Research in Canada was conducted in February and March 1997 in Toronto. In particular, while in Toronto, I spent a considerable amount of time at the office of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), Canada's national umbrella women's organization. The documents and resources in NAC's library were particularly useful for this endeavor. In addition to this research trip to Toronto, I interviewed Canadian activists at the September 1997 meeting of the Association of Women in Development which was held in Washington, D.C. The rest of my interviews with Canadian activists were conducted by telephone in 1996 and 1997.

**United States:**

The United States research was conducted throughout the period 1995-1997. Part of this work was done as part of a large-scale research project at the Center for the American Woman and Politics (CAWP) at Rutgers University and was funded by the Charles H. Revson Foundation. As part of this project, I researched

the impact of that women in the 103rd Congress had on trade policy. The 103rd Congress passed both the North American Free Trade Agreement and the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs and as such, these issues played an important role in the larger CAWP study which focused on the impact of women in the 103rd Congress.[21] For the first time, the number of women in Congress was large enough to examine systematically in both their roles as individuals and as a group. The overall study, based largely on the analysis of documents and on in-depth interviews, examined whether and how women made a difference across a variety of policy issues. The policy issues chosen for inclusion in the study ranged from those traditionally considered "women's issues" to those seen as "gender-neutral" to those where women are traditionally assumed to have little or now expertise.[22]

My participation in this CAWP project allowed me tremendous access to lawmakers and NGO activists in the United States who were active during the NAFTA debate. Since the research for the U.S. case was conducted as part of the CAWP project, two factors distinguish it from my research in Canada and Mexico. First, the availability of resources meant that I was able to conduct more interviews in the U.S. case. In addition, I had tremendous access to U.S. lawmakers involved in the deliberations over NAFTA. However, many of the interviews conducted as part of this project were focused on the extent to which women in Congress were active during the NAFTA debate and, as a result, only some of them are directly

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[21] For summary results of this research see Debra L. Dodson, et al., *Voice, Views, Votes: The Impact of Women in the 103rd Congress* (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for the American Woman and Politics. Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey., 1995).

[22] The policy issues examined in the CAWP study on women in the 103rd Congress were women's health, abortion, health care reform, crime, and the North American Free Trade Agreement.

relevant to this dissertation. Most important to this project are those interviews with labor and women's rights activists who were engaged in the debate over NAFTA. Some of my interviews with congressional staff, especially those who worked closely with members of Congress active on the issue of international trade, were also critical to the analysis herein as were interviews with the Congresswomen who actively raised gender issues in the context of the debate over NAFTA's passage.[23]

Second, interviews with staff, lobbyists, and NGO activists conducted as part the CAWP study guaranteed the subjects' anonymity. Therefore, any information used from these interviews cannot divulge the identity of the interviewee. In the body of the dissertation these interviewees are described generally (for instance, as a lobbyist working on NAFTA) so that their identity not be revealed. However, interviews with the Congresswomen were conducted on the record and consequently these interviewees are quoted by name.[24]

## V. Project Summary

The organization of my dissertation reflects my concern with highlighting three factors: (1) the relevance of identity categories (race, nation, gender) in transnational advocacy and in particular, the efforts of women activists to expose the gendered implication of NAFTA; (2) the importance of understanding the implications of the domestic political context of transnational organizing; (3) the

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[23] While some of the interviews for the CAWP project were conducted by other researchers, I conducted the vast majority of international trade related interviews and all of the interviews critical to this dissertation.

[24] For a list of Congresswomen interviewed about international trade policy see Appendix A.

factors that facilitated and constrained women's efforts as they worked across borders.

Chapter 2, "Women's Transnational Organizing and the Paradox(es) of Globalization" lays out the foundation for the dissertation by situating my analysis of women's transnational organizing within the context of contemporary debates on globalization. In this chapter, I examine the tremendous growth in transnational NGO organizing and the increasing importance of non-governmental actors to international politics. I argue that the practices and ideology of globalization provide an important lens through which to view cross-border coordination on the part of women's organizations.

Chapter 3, "Gendered Transnational Resistance to Globalization: Identity and the Mexico/Canada Connection" provides an overview of the efforts to construct a transnational advocacy network to address issues of gender and North American economic integration. In particular, I highlight the role that Canadian activists played in reaching out to both their U.S. and Mexican counterparts and the strength of the Canada/Mexico connection. In this chapter, I argue that women's transnational organizing efforts in response to NAFTA were quite remarkable. Yet, efforts to organize "as women" were challenged by the complexity of transnational difference among movement participants. Differences of race, gender, nation and class among participants created underlying contradictory interests and approaches even within the bounds of shared rhetoric and political strategy.

Chapter 4, "Highlighting the 'National' in Trans/national Organizing" further explores these issues by explaining what types of organizations were involved in

these transnational organizing efforts. This chapter takes up the puzzle of why women's organizations in Mexico, Canada, and the United States participated in transnational activism to shape the North American Free Trade Agreement at such varying rates. In presenting a framework for understanding significant differences among the participation of women's organizations in Mexico, Canada, and the United States in these advocacy efforts, I call attention to the ways that national level factors impede and facilitate transnational activism. The differences in the substantive and quantitative participation of women's organizations in these three countries, I argue, can be accounted for, in part, by highlighting two critical national level factors: domestic political institutions and the women's movement's relationship to them, and the ideology of the women's movement itself.

Chapter 5, "Conceptualization as Mobilization," analyzes the most significant conceptual challenge activists confronted as they attempted to organize across-borders. That is, the need to articulate links between women's interests and the free trade debate. While Chapter 4 explained the differences in the extent to which each of the national movements were receptive to addressing the nexus of international political economy and gender, this chapter magnifies one aspect of their work. Here I examine organizers' efforts to break through the veneer of *NAFTA's gender neutrality*. This chapter explores why organizations in Canada, Mexico, and to a lesser extent, the United States, were interested in establishing transnational political alliances. In this chapter, I argue that activists' efforts to illuminate the relationship between gender and free trade are significant because they viewed the conceptual work as a critical to transnational political mobilization.

They had to **frame** the connections between gender and trade policy, in order to justify political mobilization efforts.

Chapter 6, "Making Transnational Links: NAFTA and Beyond" concludes the dissertation by arguing that women's transnational advocacy in response to NAFTA was successful in jump-starting the process of making clear that gender is analytically relevant to international economic policy. However, I suggest that analysts of "global civil society" must be more cautious in their estimation of the power and impact that non-governmental organizations can command. Issues of race, class and gender circumscribed attempts to articulate a common agenda across borders and national political factors, like the relationship between the women's movement and the state, clearly affected these transnational advocacy efforts.

# Women's Transnational Organizing and the Paradox(es) of Globalization
## Chapter 2

## I. Introduction

In this chapter, I locate my analysis of women's transnational organizing within the context of contemporary debates on globalization. Focusing on issues of gender and North American free trade I explore the role of non-governmental organizations in international politics, emphasizing the ways globalization has revised the context of political contestation. In particular, I argue that the practices and ideology of globalization provide an important lens through which to view cross-border coordination on the part of women's organizations.

I begin by reviewing debates about globalization itself, highlighting the way globalization creates new political opportunities, challenges, and sites for mobilization. In part, I ask whether a new "logic of collective action"[1] is being constructed. I then explore the increasingly important role played by non-governmental actors in international politics. Finally, I turn to an analysis of women's transnational advocacy in theory and in practice.

## II. Globalization

In both academic and popular discourse, "globalization" has become one of

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[1] Philip G. Cerny, "Globalization and the Changing Logic of Collective Action," *International Organization* 49, no. 4 (Autumn 1995): 595-625.

the catch words of the '90s. A range of phenomena are held up as examples of the processes of globalization: corporate downsizing; the prevalence of communications technologies which alter the space/time continuum; and the increasing importance of international trade regimes like NAFTA, the World Trade Organization, the European Union, the World Trade Organization, MERCOSUR,[2] and APEC[3] in international politics. For both academics and activists the concept of globalization calls attention to current political, social, economic, and cultural dynamics. Globalization posits the domestic and international political spheres as inexorably linked and in doing so taps into a long tradition in international relations scholarship. It emphasizes the intricate web(s) of culture, politics, and economics that constitute the global order. Current analyses of globalization can be seen as the successors to earlier theories of international politics which examined the implications of increasing interdependence between countries. These theories have emphasized the convergence of the nation-state system or conceptualized this system as part of a single global whole.[4] However, as with any trendy term, the notion of

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[2] MERCOSUR, known as the Southern Common Market, was created in 1991 and includes Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. Since its inception, Chile and Bolivia have become associate members.

[3] The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, established in 1989, currently has 21 member nations.

[4] See for instance, John Burton, *World Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); Robert Gilpin, *The Political Economy of International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); Robert Keohane and Joseph. Nye, eds., *Transnational Relations and World Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); James Rosenau, *The Study of Global Interdependence* (New York: Nicols, 1980); Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (New York: Academic, 1974); Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System II* (New York: Academic, 1980).

globalization has been over-used and under-specified.[5] The concept has been used to describe and explain a range of phenomena--cultural, religious, technological, political, and economic. Moreover, the rhetoric of globalization has been used to express a range of ideological positions about how the world does and ought to work.

For the purpose of this research, I use the term "globalization" both descriptively and prescriptively. In its descriptive sense, globalization refers to the trend toward greater levels of international economic and political integration, as well as the increased circulation of social and cultural practices primarily though telecommunications and communications technologies. The end of the Cold War has made this policy convergence more evident; with the collapse of the Soviet bloc no politically viable alternatives to market capitalism are being forcefully articulated.[6] Politicians from most parts of the world--Ernesto Zedillo, Brian Mulroney, Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, and Gerhard Schröder--argue that there is no alternative to a program of economic reform which promotes less regulated markets and freer trade, while reducing government subsidies.

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[5] There is a rich debate about whether the concept of globalization describes a set of phenomena that are historically unique. For details about the arguments see Paul Krugman, et al., "Workers and Economists: The Global Economy Has Left Keynes in Its Train. Responses to Kapstein's Workers and the World Economy," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 4 (July/August 1996): 164-81; Doug Henwood, "Globalization and Interdependence," *International Political Economy List, IPE@csf.colorado.edu*, June 5 1996; Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson, *Globalization in Question: The International Political Economy and the Possibilities of Governance* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995); Ethan B. Kapstein, "Workers and the World Economy," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 3 (May/June 1996): 16-37; James H. Mittelman, ed., *Globalization: Critical Reflections* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1996); James H. Mittelman, "How Does Globalization Really Work?" in *Globalization: Critical Reflections*, ed. James H. Mittelman (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1996), 229-42.

[6] For instance see C. Fred Bergsten, "Globalizing Free Trade," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 3 (May/June 1996): 105-20; Krugman, et al., "Workers and Economists: The Global Economy Has Left Keynes in Its Train. Responses to Kapstein's Workers and the World Economy."

In its prescriptive sense, I define the term "globalization" as an ideology that extols the virtues of the market, and it's ability to create economic growth, efficiency, and prosperity. In economic terms, the globalization ideology champions a neo-liberal economic philosophy as the necessary precursor to democracy and prosperity for all. Francis Fukuyama's vision of the collapse of Soviet-communism leading inexorably to the great promise of democracy via market economics is far from being realized.[7] The triumph of liberal capitalism, according to Francis Fukuyama, may signal "the end of history" but the emerging new world order is better than the imaginable alternatives. Indeed, as David Rothkopf suggests, "Globalization is a vital step toward both a more stable world and better lives for the people in it."[8] Importantly, a range of economic policy prescriptions promote globalization, like structural adjustment and free trade. Such policies can, and often do contribute to efforts to "grow the economy," as U.S. President Bill Clinton is oft-quoted as saying. Yet, the failures of this approach are also well-documented.[9]

However, in using the language of globalization, I am not arguing that the policies of nations are, or are becoming, the same. Even when driven by similar

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[7] Frances Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992). For substantiation of this argument see Jane S. Jaquette and Sharon L. eds Wolchik, *Women and Democracy: Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

[8] David Rothkopf, "In Praise of Cultural Imperialism?" *Foreign Policy*, no. 107, Summer 1997: Page 39.

[9] Witness for example the increasing gap between the rich and the poor within industrialized nations, the Asian economic crisis, the economic problems created by "shock therapy." See for instance United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report 1997* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Richard Falk, "An Inquiry Into the Political Economy of World Order," *New Political Economy* 1, no. 1 (1996): 13-26; Richard J. Barnet and John Cavanagh, *Global Dreams: Imperial Corporations and the New World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994).

forces or institutions, national policies are mediated by distinct yet related sets of historical, political, geographical, strategic, gendered, and racialized influences. In fact, globalization is characterized by the mutual, but usually asymmetrical vulnerability of nation-states to policies and political forces.[10]

In the context of examining women's transnational activism in response to NAFTA, the term "globalization" is useful as it indicates a synthesizing of forces that together are "shrinking" the global sphere. This metaphorical shrinking of the globe provides an important context for understanding, I argue, increasing transnational activism among non-governmental actors. As Roland Robertson suggests, "[g]lobalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole." People in different locations are increasingly becoming aware of one another and have a "growing sense of the world as a single place."[11] The spread of rapid communication technologies which facilitate the nearly instantaneous dissemination of information has metaphorically "shrunk" the distance between Mexico City and Montreal.

This "compression of the world" and "intensification of consciousness" are important in political terms because the mechanisms used to construct and shape "domestic" economic policy are increasingly global in their reach. Moreover, in the context of my research, globalization impacts the rhetoric and strategies that businesses, labor, and grassroots activists employ to realize their policy interests.

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[10] Deborah Haddad, "Globalization," *International Political Economy List, IPE@csf.colorado.edu*, June 7 1996.

[11] Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992). P. 8.

Some embrace the possibilities globalization brings, especially the financial benefits that globalization appears to afford. Others, (like Le Pen in France or U.S. Presidential Candidates Ross Perot and Pat Buchanan) spout protectionist, often xenophobic rhetoric which proposes to reinforce the boundaries of nation-states--making them less permeable to trade, investment, and (im)migration. My research illustrates how grassroots activists are grappling with the implications of this heightened consciousness. They are working to perfect the strategies that they employ and decisions about the groups with whom they ally in the context of shifting global circumstances.

While this dissertation focuses primarily on the impact that globalization has had on advocacy efforts by NGOs, the end of the cold war also has created increased cross- border cooperation at the intergovernmental level. As Anne-Marie Slaughter has argued, the new world order is a place where the state is disaggregating into its constituent parts and "[t]hese parts--courts, regulatory agencies, executives, and even legislatures--are networking with their counterparts abroad, creating a dense web of relations that constitutes a new, transgovernmental order."[12] There are many examples available to illustrate this point, but one of the most interesting examples of cross-border cooperation is the response by the international community to the December 1994 rapid devaluation of the Mexican peso. When President Ernesto Zedillo announced the devaluation of the peso by forty percent against the U.S. dollar in one week, the international financial and political community mobilized immediately to stabilize the Mexican currency. In an

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[12] Anne-Marie Slaughter, "The Real New World Order," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 5 (September/October 1997): Page 184.

extraordinary move, President Clinton offered loan guarantees of $20 billion from the U.S. Treasury.[13] As the example of the Mexican peso crisis indicates, globalization has affected relations between states.[14]

In his discussion of the globalization debate, Dani Rodrik points out that the economic and political import of international trade and the substantial pressure governments face to promote and maintain "international competitiveness" has had, and will continue to have, an influence on government policies and decision-making.

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[13] Clinton also brokered an additional $30 billion from the International Monetary Fund and other lenders to help stabilize the Mexican economy. The crash of the peso, coming shortly after the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement, was an enormous political embarrassment to the Clinton administration, and was seen as a threat to the health of the international political economy. The U.S. response was unprecedented. Surplus Treasury dollars had never been used in a similar endeavors. This crisis demonstrated the intricate web of connections which binds states together, linking the economic stability of states and regions. Indeed, the international community's rescue of the Mexican economy was devised precisely to avoid the regional and potentially global reverberation of economic instability.

For discussions of the political implications of the peso crash see Jorge G Castañeda, *The Mexican Shock: Its Meaning for the U.S.* (New York: The New Press, 1995); "The Egg on Zedillo's Face," *The Economist*, January 7 1995, 31; "Putting Mexico Together Again," *The Economist*, February 4 1995, 65-67; Gerardo Otero, ed., *Neoliberalism Revisited: Economic Restructuring and Mexico's Political Future* (New York: Westview Press, 1996).

[14] On this point see also Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* (Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1999); Hans-Henrik Holm and Georg Sorensen, *Whose World Order? Uneven Globalization and the End of the Cold War* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995); Anthony D. King, ed., *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1991); A. McGrew, "A Global Society?" in *Modernity and Its Futures*, ed. S. Hall, D. Held and T. McGrew (Cambridge: Polity/Open University, 1992), 61-116; Walter Russell Mead, "Review Essay: Roller-Coaster Capitalism," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 1 (January/February 1997): 146-52; James H. Mittelman, "The Dynamics of Globalization," in *Globalization: Critical Reflections*, ed. James Mittelman, H. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1996), 1-20; Roger Rouse, "Thinking Through Transnationalism: Notes on the Cultural Politics of Class Relations in the Contemporary United States," *Public Culture* 7 (1995): 353-402; Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York: The New Press, 1998); Claire Turenne Sjolander, "The Rhetoric of Globalization: What's in a Wor(l)d?" *International Journal* LI, no. 4 (Autumn 1996): 603-16; R. Stubbs and G.R.D. Underhill, eds., *Political Economy and the Changing Global Order* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Peter J. Taylor, "The Modern Multiplicity of States," in *Globalization: Theory and Practice*, ed. Eleonore Kofman and Gillian Youngs (New York: Pinter, 1996), 99-108; Malcolm Waters, *Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Marc Williams, "Rethinking Sovereignty," in *Globalization: Theory and Practice*, ed. Eleonore Kofman and Gillian Youngs (New York: Pinter, 1996), 109-22; The Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighborhood*, The Report of the Commission on Global Governance (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Globalization changes the means and methods of state policy-making because it shifts the very nature of the needs that states attempt to address.[15]

As one manifestation of the globalization impulse, NAFTA created a unique situation where the boundaries of political decision-making transcended national lines. The Mexican government, realizing that Congressional passage of the agreement was not assured in the United States, initiated a lobbying effort on Capitol Hill that cost more money than any other single issue campaign ever waged by a foreign government on U.S. soil. Indeed, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari's premier foreign policy initiative was dependent on a vote in the United States Congress. Salinas needed not only the assent of his own PRI-dominated government, but also a "yes" vote in Washington and Ottawa. This fact was not lost on Salinas as the Mexican government and Mexican business groups spent more than $25 million to convince members of the U.S. Congress to support NAFTA's passage. As part of this effort, they hired more than thirty-three former U.S. government officials to lobby on NAFTA's behalf.[16] Likewise, Mexican critics of NAFTA realized, for instance, that they could have more impact at home by getting a critical story in the *New York Times* or on *60 Minutes* than they could by lobbying in Mexico City. Such *realpolitik* was not lost on women's anti-NAFTA organizers. Women's rights advocates noted that it was more effective to raise concerns about

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[15] A paradox becomes apparent in talking about role of the state in light of globalization. The state both responds to and is a part of constructing the politics and economics of globalization.

[16] According to a study conducted by the Center for Public Integrity, the Mexican government spent roughly $10 million on NAFTA-related activities in 1993 and about $18 million in 1991 and 1992. For more information about the lobbying campaign see Charles Lewis and Margaret Ebrahim, "Can Mexico and Big Business USA Buy NAFTA?" *The Nation*, June 14 1993, 826-39.

the exploitation of women workers in Mexico's export processing sector in Canada and the United States than it was to take up similar concerns with Mexican officials.

In this way, the ideology of globalization frames the way that political problems are understood and solutions are articulated. In essence, the ideology of globalization is important because it shapes people's understandings of political and economic materiality and in turn, conditions the political strategies they pursue. In other words, the globalization paradigm helps to give meaning to changing political, economic, cultural and social processes and institutions. The terrain of globalization sets the stage for political activism in the "new" world order as it has permeated the consciousness and organizing strategies of NGO activists.

## Is Globalization Causing the "Demise of the State?"

Coupled with an exuberance about the triumph of capitalist democracy, policy makers and analysts alike have noted the "withering away" of the nation-state as the organizing unit in international affairs.[17] The 'demise of the state' is framed as both a consequence of, and element of, globalization processes. Indeed, a great deal of the debate about the implications and impact of "globalization," pivots around questions about of the role of the state. While most analysts acknowledge that globalization has changed the role of the state in both national and international politics, there is great variation in the degree of alarm or optimism that this induces, and the degree to which the state is understood as an anathema in the face of

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[17] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Public Worlds, 1 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press); Kenichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State: The Rise of Regional Economies* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, Simon & Schuster Inc., 1995).

globalization. Some like Kenichi Ohame, are excited about this development and expect that the world will achieve tremendous levels of economic prosperity and growth without the regressive interference of the state in economic affairs.[18] Others, like David Korten and William Greider, point to the "withering" of the state in order to alert us to what they see as a disturbing and potentially dangerous trend.[19] They argue that neo-liberal economic reforms are further polarizing the economic "haves" from the "have nots" and that the nation-state has not adequately challenged the negative consequences of globalization. Exploring more of the cultural/political implications of this trend, Arjun Appadurai also laments the demise of the state and focuses on the extent to which transnational flows of capital, culture, and people are an indication of the way that the state is finally decaying as an effective governing institution.[20]

At the heart of these contrasting political analyses and polarized world views lay the contradictions created by the processes of globalization. While open

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[18] Kenichi Ohmae's (1995) work is illustrative of those who suggest that geographical borders are increasingly superfluous to international political and economic life. He argues that "Public debate may still be hostage to the outdated vocabulary of political borders, but the daily realities facing most people in the developed and developing worlds–both as citizens and as consumers–speaks a vastly different idiom." (Page 8). Neil Smith's work challenges such arguments by focusing on the depoliticization inherent in this "end of geography" thesis. In addition, Saskia Sassen's work on global cities supports Smith, by suggesting that globalization is much more "placebound" than the rhetoric generally suggests. Kenichi Ohmae, *The Borderless World: Power and Strategy in the Interlinked Economy* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1990); Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State: The Rise of Regional Economies*; Neil Smith, "The Lost Geography of the American Century," Center for Critical Analysis of Contemporary Culture Seminar: An American Century in the Americas (New Brunswick, NJ, December 1998); Sassen, *Globalization and Its Discontents*.

[19] William Greider, *One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997); David Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World* (New York: Kumarian Press, 1995).

[20] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*.

markets and privatization do lead to economic prosperity in many cases, some scholars and many activists argue that policies of free trade undermine national labor and social standards and, ultimately, the quality of life of all people. Ethan Kapstein, for instance, suggests that "[t]he global economy is leaving millions of disaffected workers in its train. Inequality, unemployment, and endemic poverty have become its handmaidens."[21] Amartya Sen, Nobel Prize winner for Economics, concurs, while holding out the possibility that the negative impacts of globalization can be mitigated through national and international action. Sen argues that "a significant broadening of national and international efforts to promote equity and protect the rights of workers can transform the dreaded anticipation of the globalization of the economy into an agreeable and constructive reality."[22] Laura D'Andrea Tyson, former chair of President Clinton's Council of Economic Advisors, noted that "Globalization has depressed the way growth of low-wage workers. It's been a reason for the increasing wage gap between high-wage and low-wage workers."[23] Thus, Sen, Kapstein, and D'Andrea Tyson are concerned about the impact of policies of globalization on average citizens. Others, like Jeremy Brecher and Tim Costello make complementary arguments. For instance, they suggest that as corporations transcend national boundaries, nations and communities are forced to compete against one another in a "race to the bottom."[24] Canadian activists

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[21] Kapstein, "Workers and the World Economy." P. 16.

[22] "Sen: Support for 'Decent Work,'" *World of Work: The Magazine of the ILO*, no. 30, July 1999: 10.

[23] Quoted in Jeremy Brecher and Tim Costello, *Global Village or Global Pillage: Economic Reconstruction From the Bottom Up* (Boston: South End Press, 1994). Page 28.

[24] Brecher and Costello, *Global Village or Global Pillage*.

Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke similarly contend that global competition has been used in Canada to justify the dismantling of Canada's "social safety net", having tremendous negative consequences on employment and wage inequities.[25]

Indeed, these scholars and activists argue that many individuals, especially those already occupying the bottom rungs of the socioeconomic ladder (women, indigenous communities, minority groups) have suffered and will continue to do so from policies of economic globalization unless compensatory policies are put in place.[26] Moreover, as Thomas Friedman highlights in his book *The Lexus and the Olive Tree,*[27] one of the residuals of this process of globalization has been increasing pressure on the state to buffer negative consequences. For example, states are implored to provide assistance to those who become unemployed

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[25] Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke, "Canada--The Broken Promise," *The Nation* 263, no. 3 (July 15/22 1996): Page 24.

[26] For more information about feminist analyses of globalization or neo-liberal economic policies in particular see Isabella Bakker, "Engendering Macro-Economic Policy Reform in the Era of Global Restructuring and Adjustment," in *The Strategic Silence*, ed. Isabella Bakker (London: Zed Books, Ltd., 1994); Isabella Bakker, ed., *Rethinking Restructuring: Gender and Change in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Rae Lesser Blumberg, et al., *EnGENDERing Wealth & Well-Being: Empowerment for Global Change* (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1995); Christine E. Bose and Edna Acosta-Belén, *Women in the Latin American Development Process* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts: Ideologies of Domination, Common Interests, and the Politics of Solidarity," in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, ed. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (New York: Routledge, 1997), 3-29; V. Spike Peterson, "Shifting Ground(s): Epistemological and Territorial Remapping in the Context of Globalization(s)," in *Globalization: Theory and Practice*, ed. Eleonore Kofman and Gillian Youngs (New York: Pinter, 1996), 11-28; V. Spike Peterson, "The Politics of Identification in the Context of Globalization," *Women's Studies International Forum* 19, no. 1-2 (January-April 1996): 5-15; Pamela Sparr, ed., *Mortgaging Women's Lives: Feminist Critiques of Structural Adjustment* (New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1994). The literature on feminist economics is also quite useful in this regard. See for instance, Marianne A. Ferber and Julie A. Nelson, eds., *Beyond Economic Man: Feminist Theory and Economics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Edith Kuiper, et al., *Out of the Margin: Feminist Perspectives on Economic* (New York: Routledge, 1995); and the journal *Feminist Economics* published by Routledge.

[27] Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization.*

because of corporate relocation, to retrain those who have been employed in industries that are no longer competitive, and to train those at bottom of the income and educational ladder so that they are able to take advantage of new jobs that are created.[28] However, in many cases the state is not a reliable guarantor of individual welfare. As Kapstein points out, "Just when working people most need the nation-state as a buffer from the world economy, it is abandoning them."[29] Although Kapstein argues that easing pressure on the "losers" of the new open economy must be the central concern of policy makers, if the process of globalization is to be sustained,[30] he acknowledges that there is tremendous pressure on the (post) Keynesian welfare state to be leaner and meaner.

For my purposes, the debate about the role and scope of the state in light of globalization is important insofar as it provides the context for understanding the role of NGOs in transnational political relations. While I would not support the 'demise of the state' thesis, I do argue that concrete policy manifestations of globalization do significantly affect the necessity and desirability of transnational connections among civil society actors. When activists, politicians or academics lament the inability of the state to govern the processes of globalization, they most frequently turn to the development of civil society and transnational political mobilization by non-governmental organizations as the champions of social and

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[28] Former U.S. Labor Secretary Robert Reich promotes this view both in his writings and while he was in office. See for instance, Robert B. Reich, *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st Century Capitalism* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1991); Robert B. Reich, *Locked in the Cabinet* (New York: Knopf, 1997).

[29] Kapstein, "Workers and the World Economy." P. 16.

[30] For a similar argument see also Dani Rodrik, "Sense and Nonsense in the Globalization Debate," *Foreign Policy*, no. 107, Summer 1997: 19-37.

economic justice governance in an increasingly globalized world.[31] However, these grand visions must be checked against experience. To this end, I attempt to understand transnational organizing among NGOs in response to NAFTA in the context of globalization. As I illustrate, globalization does indeed shift the methods and means used in political organizing. In effect, it reshapes the terrain of political action in response to new opportunities and challenges.

## Globalization and the Logic of Collective Action

As I show in my examination of political organizing around the North American Free Trade Agreement, globalization is indeed reconfiguring the dynamics of the public sphere. The reshaping of economic and political relations on a global scale reconstructs the space within which governments, citizens, civil society actors, and non-governmental organizations operate. As global political and economic changes occur, the role of the state and relations between states, citizens, and NGOs are restructured accordingly. Thus, the proposal of a free trade zone in North America opened new spaces for political resistance. NGOs opposed to the North American Free Trade Agreement used the political opportunity to construct a broad coalition of organizations committed to addressing the impact of globalization.[32] As Philip Cerny has pointed out, structural political and economic

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[31] I develop this point later in this chapter.

[32] The actual proposal of NAFTA is an important aspect of this story of NGO organizing. In many ways, NAFTA provided a concrete vehicle to which activists could attach their concerns. Mayer, makes a similar point by arguing that much of the response to NAFTA by NGOs in the United States was about the symbolic importance of the agreement. Frederick W. Mayer, *Interpreting NAFTA: The Science and Art of Political Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). On this point, see also María Lorena Cook, "Regional Integration and Transnational Politics: Popular Sector Strategies in the NAFTA Era," in *The New Politics of Inequality in Latin America: Rethinking*

changes influence on the relations between and among citizens and states. He suggests that the "logic of collective action" has been altered by systemic level changes. Thus, economic integration at the governmental level reshapes the political terrain since the processes of policy formation and decision-making do not inhere within national borders. In other words, since governmental negotiation about North American integration was occurring at the regional level, NGO activists too, sought to operate regionally in order to maximize their influence.

NAFTA altered the "logic of collective action" such that organizations concerned with labor, women's, and consumer rights, as well as those addressing environmental degradation and poverty, increased the quantity and quality of their cross-border contacts.[33] They believed that in order to protect the rights of their constituents and promote the issues with which they themselves were concerned, political engagement at the regional level was imperative. My research demonstrates that NAFTA changed the logic of collective action for women in Mexico, Canada and the United States as they worked to create transnational alliances to raise the gendered dimensions of international economic policy to the level of policy debate.

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*Participation and Representation*, ed. Douglas Chalmers, A., et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 516-40.

[33] Dieter Rucht's research shows a similar pattern with regard to the European Union. Rucht demonstrates that the evolution of authority in the EU has changed the logic of collective action such that a number of national environmental movements have changed the target of their action, increasingly making use of EU bodies and mechanisms to pursue their goals. Dieter Rucht, "Limits to Mobilization: Environmental Policy for the European Union," in *Transnational Social Movements and Global Politics: Solidarity Beyond the State*, ed. Jackie Smith, Charles Chatfield and Ron Pagnucco (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 195-213.

## III. Non-Governmental Organizations

While NAFTA helped to shift the logic of collective action for NGOs in the North American region, the same pattern can be observed in different parts of the world. In general, cross-border organizing--governmental and non-governmental--has steadily increased in the post-World War II era. The close of WWII brought a host of inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), most notably the United Nations and its constituent agencies like the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank. More recent international cooperation has resulted in the burgeoning of IGOs, by 1992: more than 3,000 such organizations existed world wide.[34]

The number and type of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) has increased even more dramatically in the past few decades. A tremendous growth of INGOs occurred during the period between 1960 and 1990. In 1960 there were approximately 1,300 international non-governmental organizations. In 1970 there were approximately 2,250, in 1980 approximately 4,000, and by 1990 there were approximately 4,800 INGOs.[35] The scope of their activities is quite broad. They include humanitarian organizations that assist in times of conflict like the International Committee of the Red Cross and Médecins

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[34] Waters, *Globalization*. P. 112.

[35] Waters, *Globalization*. P. 114. For additional figures about the rapid increase in the numbers of NGOs in the past few decades see Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Directory of NGOs* (Paris: OECD, 1991); Union of International Associations, *Yearbook of International Organizations* (London: KG Saur Verlag, 1999/2000). See also the Union of International Associations' web site at www.uia.org.

Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders); human rights organizations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International; environmental organizations like Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund, and the Rainforest Action Network; professional associations like the International Studies Association or the International Association for Feminist Economists; and women's organizations like Women's Environment and Development Organization, and the International Planned Parenthood Federation.

Women's organizations have been a significant element of this burgeoning international NGO sector. While statistical data are not available to delineate this growth, there are a number of clear markers of it. Perhaps the best indicator was the size the IV United Nations World Conference on Women. Held in Beijing in 1995, the Conference demonstrated that by the mid-1990s women's movements have flourished in nearly every country of the world. Few movements for social and political change are as ubiquitous as are women's movement(s) and organizations--from the movement in Latin America by mothers and grandmothers of those who had been "disappeared"[36] to the coordinated work of organizations in the European Community to get more women elected to parliament. Indeed, the more than 33,000 participants at the Beijing Conference made it the largest United Nations conference

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[36]The first and best know of these groups began in 1977 in Argentina, Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo and Las Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo. However, similar groups emerged in many other Latin American countries: in Colombia the Asociación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos, ASFADDES; in El Salvador the Comité de Madres y Familiares de Presos, Desaparecidos y Asesinados Políticos de El Salvador and the Federación de Madres de Presos, Desaparecidos y Asesinados Políticos de El Salvador which was established in 1987, seven years after its predecessor; and in Uruguay the Grupo de Madres y Familiares de Procesados por la Justicia Militar.

ever.[37]

## Transnational Advocacy Networks

Even though NGOs working in multiple locations are an increasingly important part of what some refer to as "global civil society", scholars have only just begun study the form and significance of this tremendous increase in cross-border political organizing. The transnational organizing that took place around the North American Free Trade Agreement has helped to focus attention in this direction.

My dissertation addresses this gap by tracing the efforts of those organizations and individuals that participated in transnational organizing around gender and North American economic integration. In its simplest form, a transnational advocacy network includes those individuals and organizations

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[37] Transnational women's organizing has been particularly visible at United Nations world conferences. For more on women's organizing internationally see Sonia Alvarez, "Latin American Feminisms "Go Global": Trends of the 1990s and Challenges for the New Millennium," in *Cultures of Politics, Politics of Culture: Re-Visioning Latin American Social Movements*, ed. Sonia E. Alvarez, Dagnino (Boulder: Westview Press, A Division of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1998), 293-324; Martha Alter Chen, "Engending World Conferences: The International Women's Movment and the UN," in *NGOs, the UN, and Global Governance*, ed. Thomas G. Weiss and Leon Gordenker (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1996), 139-55; Barbara Crossette, "Women See Key Gains Since Talks in Beijing," *The New York Times*, March 8 1998, A15; Women's Environment and Development Organization, *Mapping Progress: Assessing Implementation of the Beijing Platform 1998* (New York: Women's Environment and Development Organization, 1998); Ellen Dorsey, "The Global Women's Movement: Articulating a New Vision of Global Governance," in *The Politics of Global Governance: International Organizations in an Interdependent World*, ed. Paul F. Diehl (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1997), 335-60; Felice D. Gaer, "Reality Check: Human Rights NGOs Confront Governments at the UN," in *NGOs, the UN, and Global Governance*, ed. Thomas G. Weiss and Leon Gordenker (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1996), 51-66; Amrita Basu, ed, *The Challenge of Local Feminisms: Women's Movements in Global Perspective* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995); Charlotte Bunch and Niamh Reilly, *Demanding Accountability: The Global Campaign and Vienna Tribunal for Women's Human Rights* (New Brunswick, NJ: The Center for Women's Global Leadership and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), 1994); Deborah Stienstra, *Women's Movements and International Organizations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

working on similar issues in different countries.[38] Such networks are characterized by a loose set of connections established by individuals who are usually working for, or volunteering in, a non-governmental organization. However, network members can also include non-affiliated movement activists or academics, policy makers, and sometimes even government or multilateral agencies. These networks have evolved from a recognition that information sharing and collaborative strategy building between NGOs in different countries can strengthen the work of all involved.

Networks, like the one that formed in response to the debate over North American economic integration, often bridge borders between developed and lesser developed countries. Indeed, transnational advocacy networks can be understood as a response to shifting definitions of the "center" and the "periphery," as they reconfigure relations between and among individuals and organizations in different geopolitical locales. Such networks exploit the porousness of state borders strategically in their attempts to influence the debate over international and regional public policy. Moreover, transnational advocacy networks reflect an understanding of the increasingly integrated and conflictual webs of power and policy making that traverse nation-state boundaries.

The process of globalization has given rise to new methods of formal and informal political collaboration across nation-state borders. The increasing reliance of NGOs on transnational advocacy networks (TANs) should be viewed in this light. As Keck and Sikkink demonstrate in their book *Activists Beyond Borders*, this form

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[38] Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, "Transnational Advocacy Networks in a Movement Society," American Political Science Association Annual Meeting (Washington, D.C., August 28-31 1997).

of organizing is becoming more and more common.[39] Keck and Sikkink's research on TANs represents an important effort to distinguish cross-border collaboration on the part of individuals and organizations from social movements.[40] TAN's are different from social movements as they are primarily "*communicative structures* for political exchange"[41] and are not necessarily designed to mobilize a group of people to engage in a longer-term process of movement building. Moreover, while many of the NGOs participating in these networks may see themselves as part of a social movement, transnational advocacy networks are often made of organizations with professional staffs and can include researchers and policy makers. The collaborative efforts of TAN affiliates are also distinguishable from that of social movement organizing as their activities are not necessarily undertaken by organized collective actors that maintain a sustained pattern of interaction in order to attain

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[39] For an excellent discussion of transnational advocacy networks see Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998). My definition of these networks is based largely on their work.

[40] For a discussion of social movements see Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez, eds., *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy, and Democracy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992); Joe Foweraker and Ann L. Craig, eds., *Popular Movements and Political Change in Mexico* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1990); Marco G. Giugni, Doug McAdam and Charles Tilly, *From Contention to Democracy* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998); Enrique Laraña, Hank Johnston and Joseph R. Gusfield, eds., *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); John D McCarthy, "The Globalization of Social Movement Theory," in *Transnational Social Movements and Global Politics: Solidarity Beyond the State*, ed. Jackie Smith, Charles Chatfield and Ron Pagnucco (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 243-59; Jackie Smith, Charles Chatfield and Ron Pagnucco, eds, *Transnational Social Movements and Global Politics: Solidarity Beyond the State* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997); Cyrus Ernesto Zirakzadeh, *Social Movements in Politics: A Comparative Study* (New York: Longman, 1997).

[41] Keck and Sikkink, "Transnational Advocacy Networks in a Movement Society." P. 1.

their goals or to represent the perspective of their constituents.[42]

Among transnational advocacy efforts, women's networks have achieved some of the most successful organizing.[43] Much of this work finds a theoretical impluse from a now well-developed feminist critique of development policies and practices. (I introduce this work in more detail in Section IV of this Chapter). While these critiques are analytically sophisticated, macro-economic discourse and policy has remained fairly impervious to feminist critiques and to the incorporation of a gender perspective. In women's cross-border organizing around globalization, these tensions were brought to heightened significance with the mounting evidence that policies of globalization have a specifically negative impact on those members of society who are economically vulnerable--women, children, members of minority groups, and the poor. Thus, the capacity of women to engage in the debate over policies that structure social, economic, and political life is of crucial importance. Indeed, I argue that women's cross-border advocacy networks play an important role in shaping economic integration by contesting a version of globalization that neglects the needs of economically marginal populations. My research suggests

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[42] This distinction is based on Tarrow's definition of a social movement. Tarrow, among others, has been instrumental in conceptualizing this increase in cross-boarder organizing as distinct from cross-border social movements. Sidney Tarrow, "Fishnets, Internets and Catnets: Globalization and Transnational Collective Action," Paper presented at Rutgers University Emerging Trends Seminar (November, 1996).

[43] The international movement against violence against women and the Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights are two such examples. Furthermore, women have long used international fora like the United Nations world conferences to organize and strengthen cross-border connections. In Latin America, the series of almost biannual *Encuentros* beginning in Bogotá in 1981 have provided feminists in the region with the opportunity to develop political networks. For more information see Bunch and Reilly, *Demanding Accountability*; Nancy Saporta Sternbach, et al., "Feminisms in Latin America: From Bogotá to San Bernardo," in *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy, and Democracy*, ed. Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 207-39.

that the process of globalization is not inexorable and is constituted through political resistance and engagement.

Indeed, in some cases these alternative visions are finding formal venues at least rhetorically open to their participation. International bodies are recognizing the potential role of NGOs, and are more frequently turning toward them for expertise and support. As former United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali expressed, "I wish to state, as clearly as possible–I need the mobilizing power of NGOs" for the effective functioning of the U.N.[44] His turn to "global civil society" has been echoed by numerous others who hope that the strengthening of "global civil society" will serve as a check on transnational capital. For example, the Commission on Global Governance--founded in 1992 in an attempt to capitalize on the neo-Wilsonian idealism of the post-Cold War era–echoed Boutros-Ghali's faith in the ability of global civil society to restrain transnational capital. The Commission consisted of 26 world leaders including: Oscar Arias, former president of Costa Rica and Nobel Peace Prize Recipient for his role in helping to negotiate an end to the ongoing civil wars in Central America; Jacques Delors, former president of the European Commission; and Adele Simmons the president of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. In their final report, the members of the Commission find that NGOs and civil society actors are key to ensuring that globalization does not simply make the rich richer and the poor poorer. The Commission even proposed structural changes to strengthen the role of NGOs in

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[44] Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "Foreword," in *NGOs, the UN, and Global Governance*, ed. Thomas G. Weiss and Leon Gordenker (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1996), Page 10.

global governance, such as the creation of an annual Forum of Civil Society that would operate as part of United Nations governance and help the U.N. General Assembly to make decisions.[45] While this interesting proposal suggests a structural alteration in the relationship between NGOs and the U.N., this solution begs the real question of what kind of power NGOs can be expected to wield in the international policy-making arena. In fact, the members of the Commission on Global Governance are quite optimistic about the potential advantages of a more active civil society. Yet, even if the Commission's suggestion of a permanent structural incorporation were adopted, NGOs would not be formally enfranchised or provided with increased financial resources necessary to be effective. Even with this Forum of Civil Society, their concerns and opinions would play only an advisory role to the General Assembly.[46]

Calls for non-governmental organizations to engage issues of globalization are not limited to the United Nations or those concerned with U.N. governance. Canadian Minister for Foreign Affairs Lloyd Axworthy recently called for increased participation of NGOs in the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation Forum (APEC) since the Asian financial crises has "dramatically illustrated the interconnections

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[45] See the Commission's final report for this and additional structural recommendations. The Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighborhood*. For an analysis of the Commission's work see Upendra Baxi, "'Global Neighborhood' and the 'Universal Otherhood': Notes on the Report of the Commission on Global Governance," *Alternatives* 21 (1996): 525-49.

[46] The Commission suggests that the Forum would provide a space for between "300-600 organs of global civil society" to influence the decisions of the U.N. General Assembly (pages 258-260). Among the many problems with this suggestion is that governments themselves would control the process of accrediting the organizations which would participate. The Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighborhood*.

between the economic, social and political realms."[47] In part, his comments were, no doubt, in response to the transnational organizing efforts of NGOs to insert human rights and environmental issues into APEC's work.[48]

In addition to calls by international governmental bodies, major non-governmental organizations are also joining in the chorus of those encouraging NGOs to participate more internationally in shaping the terrain of globalization. The World Council of Churches (WCC), for instance, recently excoriated globalization as "a competing religious vision," and suggested that it is in the interests of churches and social movements to engage such concerns. The WCC suggested that these organizations ought to monitor the activities of transnational corporations and international bodies like the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the International Monetary Fund in order to campaign for a new, more ethical international financial system.[49]

Thus, while globalization has shifted the "logic of collective action" the question still remains about the extent to which policy makers, scholars, and activists are suggesting that transnational alliances among NGOs can ensure that global economic integration attends to its social consequences. As the above examples illustrate, cross-border activities on the part of non-governmental actors

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[47] Lloyd Axworthy, "The Fifth Column: Managing Our People," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 14 1998.

[48] The transnational advocacy network challenging APEC, has become increasingly vocal in the past couple of years. In fact, during the APEC Leaders' Summit in November, 1997 in Canada, activists organized a parallel conference to highlight their concerns. Indeed, the protests generated a significant amount of attention and a number of organizers were arrested.

[49] World Council of Churches Eighth Assembly Press Release No. 56, December 15, 1998 quoted in International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development, tradedev@igc.org. "In Brief." *BRIDGES Weekly Trade News Digest* 2 (December 21 1998).

to address issues of globalization are viewed as increasingly critical to international governance. Activists and policy makers alike are championing the role of "global civil society." Such increased activity suggests that international relations' experts have underestimated the importance of these transnational forces for problem solving and policy making.[50] As women's organizing around gender and NAFTA illustrates, transnational advocacy networks are increasingly fulfilling these expectations by addressing the questions and problems raised by globalization. Indeed, the work to shape North American economic integration by transnational advocacy networks is an indication of a heightened awareness of globalization among NGO activists.

For women's organizations worldwide this trend toward cross-border cooperation on international economic issues has become increasingly important. More and more networks are forming to expose the gender dimensions of economic change and integration in the context of mainstream debates. Networks have formed around a range of issues: on gender and free trade with particular attention to NAFTA, FTAA,[51] APEC and the WTO; the transnational campaign to force the World Bank to take account of the gendered implications of its lending and development projects; and, the ongoing campaign against shoe and clothing manufactures to force better treatment of the mostly women and young girls who work for them. In addition, international economic issues like structural adjustment,

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[50] On this point see Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*; David S. Meyer and Sidney Tarrow, *The Social Movement Society: Contentious Politics for a New Century* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 1998); Bas Arts, *The Political Influence of Global NGOs: Case Studies on the Climate and Biodiversity Conventions* (Utrecht, The Netherlands: International Books, 1998).

[51] The Free Trade Agreement of the Americas.

trade, and development represented a major theme at the NGO Forum at the 1995 United Nations' IV World Conference on Women in China. These concerns comprised a greater proportion of the agenda at the NGO Forum than had been true at the three previous Conferences.

The network of women organizing around NAFTA consisted primarily of professional, career activists working in NGOs, who came together to share information as a means to understand the needs and interests of women in the three signatory nations. However, some researchers and a limited number of policy makers also participated in these collaborative efforts. They were interested in collectively articulating the gender issues associated with globalization as a step toward substantively affecting the agenda of the broader anti-NAFTA advocacy network and discussion of globalization more generally.

Indeed, transnational advocacy networks are increasingly addressing the questions and problems raised by globalization. This turn toward NGOs and civil society to restrain and reframe globalization stems from a recognition that non-governmental actors can play critical roles in national and international policy-making arenas. Those concerned about global governance increasingly argue that transnational networks must be nurtured "to deal with a political economy...that increasingly escapes national regulation."[52] Yet, the question still remains about the extent to which these expectations are reasonable, and the extent to which NGOs actually have the power and authority to effectively monitor, and then address, the deleterious consequences of globalization. As I explore the transnational activism

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[52] Anthony K. Appiah, "Foreword," in *Globalization and Its Discontents*, ed. Saskia Sassen (New York: The New Press, 1998), xi-xv.

of those concerned with the gendered consequences of North American economic integration, these challenges and questions are in the forefront of this analysis.

## IV. Gender and Globalization

In order to understand the activism of those engaged in transnational advocacy around gender and NAFTA, it is important to review the analytic frameworks that they have used to make these connections. While this research is not an assessment of the extent to which processes of globalization have gender specific consequences, the relationship between gender and globalization is the core of what the groups I have studied were organizing to address. Organizers framed their concerns in the language of gender and globalization in order to make clear that policies like NAFTA were not gender neutral. As I will analyze in greater detail in Chapter 5, these groups were interested in shattering the veneer of NAFTA's gender neutrality. Indeed, the theoretical foundation for those concerned with gender and NAFTA focused on the relationship between gender and globalization. The groups examined in this dissertation argued that not only are women affected in particular ways by globalization, generally, and regional economic integration, more specifically, but that policies of economic integration used and required these gender differences. Given the arguments made by those engaged in transnational advocacy around gender and NAFTA, I will briefly review the scholarly literature on gender and international political economics as a means of contextualizing and framing the work of this transnational advocacy network.

Traditional approaches to international political economy (IPE) and

international relations (IR) consider gender issues to be irrelevant to international trade policy. Indeed, gender issues are seen as irrelevant to nearly all aspects of international political and economic relations. Mainstream IR and IPE literature fails to recognize gender as an important analytic category and this is particularly true in discussions of macro-level economics and politics. Yet, in ignoring gender as a constitutive element of international relations, it is assumed that international processes are actually gender neutral. In her important book *The Strategic Silence,* Isabella Bakker describes this as a "conceptual silence" on gender issues and economic restructuring.[53] Notwithstanding the relatively recent academic work by feminist economists, development experts, and political scientists which focuses on the gendered nature of economic theory and global restructuring (Bakker's work included), there has been a general failure by academics and policy makers to recognize and adequately theorize the gendered terrain of global economic change. For the most part, these scholars have failed, as Halliday argues they must, to examine how "gender issues and values affect international relations and how international processes--military, economic, political and ideological--have gender-specific consequences."[54]

Yet, recent scholarship about the relationship between gender and the international political economy does indeed demonstrate that silence about the gendered implications of globalization leads to an inadequate understanding of the

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[53] Isabella Bakker, ed., *The Strategic Silence: Gender and Economic Policy* (London: Zed Books, Ltd., 1994).

[54] Fred Halliday quoted in V. Spike Peterson, "Introduction," in *Gendered States: Feminist (Re)Visions of International Relations Theory*, ed. V. Spike Peterson (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992), Page 16.

processes and consequences of global economic change. Feminist analyses of development point to the myriad ways that redressing gender discrimination multiplies the benefits of economic development in the family and in the community.[55] Moreover, taking account of the gendered implications of international economic policy is critical because as the *1997 Human Development Report* puts it, "no society treats its women as well as its men."[56] The conclusions of this report are based upon extensive data analyses assembled and conducted by the United Nations Development Program. In large part, their conclusions are based on the gender disparities evident when comparing their Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) to the Human Development Index (HDI). Both indexes are composite measures of development, and measure development along three variables: "life expectancy, educational attainment (adult literacy and combined primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment) and real GDP per capita...."[57] The comparison reveals that the GDI is lower than the HDI in each of the 146 countries examined and that is significantly lower in the vast majority of countries. Indeed, this analysis illustrates that "substantial progress in gender equality has been made in only a few societies."[58]

The fact that women and men have socially constructed, gender-specific

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[55] Ferber and Nelson, *Beyond Economic Man: Feminist Theory and Economics*; Wendy Harcourt, *Feminist Perspectives on Sustainable Development* (New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1994); Kuiper, et al., *Out of the Margin: Feminist Perspectives on Economic.*

[56] United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report.*

[57] United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report.* Page 14.

[58] Indeed, the report indicates that "only 41 countries have a GDI value of more than 0.800...." United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report.* Page 39.

economic roles and have had different levels of access to economic power means that the processes of economic restructuring will have a unique set of impacts on women. Moreover, these gender roles are constructed through the particularities of racial, ethnic, cultural, and economic background. At its most basic level, as international trade policy weakens some and strengthens other industries and economic sectors, workers are necessarily touched. Depending on where a women lives, how she earns a living, and her socio-economic status, international trade agreements will have varied implications. In this case, differential impact is not to be taken as synonymous with "negative impact" since the consequences of globalization take different forms in different locations and can be (and often are) simultaneously positive and negative. With this said, the transnational organizing to raise the gendered implications of NAFTA was focused on what organizers saw as the likely negative consequences for women.

The gender analysis of trade policy, formulated by activists working around North American economic integration, was based on the work of feminist scholars to articulate a gender analysis of international economic policy. A growing number of feminist scholars are challenging the political and economic assumptions and consequences of dominant political economic paradigms.[59] In her book, *Gender in*

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[59] V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan, *Global Gender Issues*, Second edition (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999); Mohanty, "Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts: Ideologies of Domination, Common Interests, and the Politics of Solidarity."; Jane Jenson, "Introduction: Some Consequences of Economic and Political Restructuring and Readjustment," *Social Politics* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 1-11; Geeta Chowdhry, "Women and the International Political Economy," in *Women, Gender, and World Politics: Perspectives, Policies, and Prospects*, ed. Peter R. Beckman and Francine D'Amico (Westport, Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey, 1994), 155-71; M. Patricia Connelly, "Gender Matters: Global Restructuring and Adjustment," *Social Politics* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 12-31; Bakker, *The Strategic Silence: Gender and Economic Policy*; Bakker, *Rethinking Restructuring: Gender and Change in Canada*; Diane Elson, "Micro, Meso, Macro: Gender and Economic Analysis in the Context of Policy Reform," in *The Strategic Silence*, ed. Isabella Bakker

*International Relations*, Ann Tickner argues that the world economy has rewarded men and women differently, and these inequities stem from a masculinist bias apparent in prevailing political economic approaches. She contends that "models of international political economy that make gender relations explicit must be constructed."[60] Others, like Patricia Connelly, argue that "any analysis of global adjustment must consider gender. Gender matters...."[61]

Feminist scholars from a variety of disciplines have shown that the basic premises of neo-liberal economics are imbued with gendered assumptions. However, the bulk of this work has concentrated on the gendered impacts of policy in two areas: economic development[62] and structural adjustment.[63]

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(London: Zed Books, Ltd., 1994); Ferber and Nelson, *Beyond Economic Man: Feminist Theory and Economics*; J. Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); Jeanne Vickers, *Women and the World Economic Crisis* (London: Zed Books, Ltd., 1991).

[60] Tickner, *Gender in International Relations*. Page 70.

[61] Connelly, "Gender Matters." Page 12.

[62] Anne Marie Goetz, *Getting Institutions Right for Women in Development* (New York: Zed Books Ltd., 1997); Rounaq Jahan, *The Elusive Agenda: Mainstreaming Women in Development* (New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1995); Catherine V. Scott, *Gender and Development: Rethinking Modernization and Dependency Theory* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995); Maruja Barrig and Andy Wehkamp, eds., *Engendering Development: Experiences in Gender and Development Planning* (The Hague, the Netherlands: NOVIB, 1994); Caroline O. N. Moser, *Gender Planning and Development: Theory Practice and Training* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Haleh Afshar and Carolyne Dennis, eds, *Women and Adjustment Policies in the Third World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992); Diane Elson, *Male Bias in the Development Process* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991); Irene Tinker, ed., *Persistent Inequalities: Women and World Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Gita Sen and Caren Grown, *Development, Crises, and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987); Ester Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970).

[63] Abigail B. Bakan and Daiva K. Stasiulis, "Structural Adjustment, Citizenship, and Foreign Domestic Labour: The Canadian Case," in *Rethinking Restructuring: Gender and Change in Canada*, ed. Isabella Bakker (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 217-42; Antonieta Barrón, "Mexican Rural Women Wage Earners and Macro-Economic Policies," in *The Strategic Silence*, ed. Isabella Bakker (London: Zed Books, Ltd., 1994), 130-36; Swapna Mukhopadhyay, "The Impact of Structural Adjustment Policies on Women: Some General Observations Relating to Conceptual Bias," in *The Strategic Silence*, ed. Isabella Bakker (London: Zed Books, Ltd., 1994), 158-64; Sparr,

To date, only a small portion of feminist work on gender and international political economy has looked specifically at the relationship between gender and international trade.[64] This emerging scholarship on gender and trade policy has as its basis, research on the working conditions of women in export-oriented industries in the global South.[65] These industries, many of which are owned by U.S., European or East Asian companies set up shop in third world countries where

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*Mortgaging Women's Lives: Feminist Critiques of Structural Adjustment*; Elson, *Male Bias in the Development Process*; Giovanni Andrea Cornia, Richard Jolly and Frances Stewart, *Adjustment With a Human Face, Volume: I: Protecting the Vulnerable and Promoting Growth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Giovanni Andrea Cornia, Richard Jolly and Frances Stewart, *Adjustment With a Human Face, Volume: II: Country Case Studies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

[64] Marjorie Griffin Cohen, "New International Trade Agreements: Their Reactionary Role in Creating Markets and Retarding Social Welfare," in *Rethinking Restructuring: Gender and Change in Canada*, ed. Isabella Bakker (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 187-202; Christina Gabriel and Laura MacDonald, "NAFTA and Economic Restructuring: Some Gender and Race Implications," in *Rethinking Restructuring: Gender and Change in Canada*, ed. Isabella Bakker (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 165-86; Marianne Marchand, "Selling NAFTA: Gendered Metaphors and Silenced Gender Implications," in *Globalization: Theory and Practice*, ed. Eleonore Kofman and Gillian Youngs (New York: Pinter, 1996), 253-70; Anne Sisson Runyan, "The Places of Women in Trading Places: Gendered Global/Regional Regimes and Inter-Nationalized Feminist Resistance," in *Globalization: Theory and Practice*, ed. Eleonore Kofman and Gillian Youngs (New York: Pinter, 1996), 238-52; UNIFEM, *Global Trading Practices and Poverty Alleviation in South Asia: Regional Perspectives on Women and Trade* (New Delhi, India: United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), 1996); Lourdes Benería and Amy Lind, "Engendering International Trade: Concepts, Policy, and Action," in *A Commitment to the World's Women* (1995), 69-86; Eva Haxton and Claes Olsson, eds., *Women in Development: Trade Aspects on Women in the Development Process* (Stockholm, Sweden: United Nations Youth and Student Association of Sweden (UFFN), 1995); Susan Joekes and Ann Weston, *Women and the New Trade Agenda* (New York: United Nations Development Fund for Women, 1994); Marjorie Griffin Cohen, *Free Trade and the Future of Women's Work: Manufacturing and Service Industries* (Toronto: Garamond Press and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 1987).

[65] Peter Kwong, "American Sweatshops 1980s Style: Chinese Women Garment Workers," in *Women Transforming Politics: An Alternative Reader*, ed. Cathy J. Cohen, Kathleen B. Jones and Joan C. Tronto (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 84-93; Leslie Salzinger, "From High Heels to Swathed Bodies: Gendered Meanings Under Production in Mexico's Export-Processing Industry," *Feminist Studies* 23, no. 3 (Fall 1997): 549-74; Helen I. Safa, *The Myth of the Male Breadwinner: Women and Industrialization in the Caribbean* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1995); Susan Tiano, *Patriarchy on the Line: Labor, Gender, and Ideology in the Mexican Maquila Industry* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Kathryn Ward, ed., *Women Workers and Global Restructuring* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1990); Eleanor Leacock and Helen I. Safa, eds., *Women's Work: Development and the Division of Labor by Gender* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1986); June Nash and María Patricia Fernández-Kelly, *Women, Men and the International Division of Labor* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983).

wages are considerably lower than in their home countries, often employing predominantly women.

Although the literature on gender and trade policy is in its infancy, one can discern two primary areas of agreement. First, the importance of understanding gender is emphasized. In other words, "effective economic policies need to be sensitive to gender relations."[66] Changes in the international political economy, especially the prevalence of new trade agreements, are assumed to have gender-specific effects on women. Second, these scholars are concerned about whether new trade practices will contribute to a more equitable distribution of income and labor between women and men, or whether these changes will exacerbate the inequities that currently exist. As, Benería and Lind note, "the implications of the new trade policies for women depend upon women's position in the process of production and reproduction."[67] Scholars examining the gendered implications of trade also agree that more research is necessary if we are to understand what is at stake for women as the process(es) of globalization proceed. This focus on gender is critical because it highlights the fissures in the process of globalization. In this process, the weakest economic units, whether groups of people (women, people of color, recent immigrants) or industries (clothing and textile or electronic manufacturing in the North), are the most vulnerable.[68]

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[66] Joekes and Weston, *Women and the New Trade Agenda*. Page 2.

[67] Benería and Lind, "Engendering International Trade: Concepts, Policy, and Action." Page 82.

[68] David Rothkopf, "Whistle-Stops on Wall Street," *New York Times*, March 8 1999, A17; , "Sen: Support for 'Decent Work'."; Kapstein, "Workers and the World Economy."; Brecher and Costello, *Global Village or Global Pillage*; Mehrene Larudee, "Trade Policy: Who Wins, Who Loses?" in *Creating a New World Economy: Forces of Change and Plans for Action*, ed. Gerald

Up to this point, little attention has been paid to the ways that women act as agents of change by engaging and participating in a political economic dialogue about their future. Instead, as Rowbotham and Mitter point out, much of the work on women and economic change, has depicted women as "passive recipients of change" and as "victims of forces they do not generate or control."[69] To begin to fill this gap, Rowbotham and Mitter's book focuses on "women as social and economic protagonists, who, in their struggle for control over their working lives, carry certain potentials for differing forms of economic organization."[70] My research builds on this endeavor, and demonstrates that while women face significant constraints on their agency in the arena of international political economy, it is important not to overlook the ways that they attempt to control, change, and organize politically to shape this terrain.

## V. Women's Transnational Organizing and the Paradoxes of Globalization

> How does global capitalism, in search of ever-increasing profits, utilize gender and racialized ideologies in crafting forms of women's work? And, does the social location of particular women as workers suggest the basis for common interests and potential solidarities across national borders?[71]

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Epstein, Julie Graham and Jessica Nembhard (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 47-63.

[69] Three important edited volumes highlight the ways that women's political activism challenges traditional definitions and understandings of political and economic concepts: Ann Bookman and Sandra Morgen, *Women and the Politics of Empowerment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); Shelia Rowbotham and Swasti. Mitter, eds., *Dignity and Daily Bread: New Forms of Economic Organising Among Poor Women in the Third World and the First* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Cathy J. Cohen, Kathleen B. Jones and Joan C. Tronto, eds., *Women Transforming Politics: An Alternative Reader* (New York: New York Univerisity Press, 1997).

[70] Rowbotham and Mitter, *Dignity and Daily Bread: New Forms of Economic Organising Among Poor Women in the Third World and the First*. Page 4.

[71] Mohanty, "Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts: Ideologies of Domination, Common Interests, and the Politics of Solidarity." Page 5.

It is to this question of the relationship between one's social location and the creation of transnational solidarities that I now turn. In concluding this theoretical contextualization of my research, I suggest that, in large part, the complexities of cross-border political mobilization can be better understood by exploring the two central paradoxes of globalization--its homogenizing and polarizing impulses and the ways that globalization foregrounds questions of identity.

As I argued above, metaphorically speaking, globalization has "shrunk" the distance between Buenos Aires and Beijing. However, the dispersion of information and cultural and economic forms, does not mean that the world is "getting smaller," or solidifying into a unified and cohesive whole. However, it does imply that "what happens in Frankfurt or Tokyo [has] profound economic effects on workers and peasants in Bombay and Benin...." More importantly, "the workers and peasants in Bombay and Benin know that it does and have the cognitive tools to attribute the causes of their dissatisfactions to their extra-national origins."[72]

In other words, while globalization does have profound impacts at the micro- and macro-level, it has not brought a singular "global" culture, economy, religion, or polity. While globalization may increase people's awareness of each other, of different cultural practices, life styles, and forms of political participation and repression, it has not erased differences.[73] To the contrary, globalization has in

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[72] Tarrow, "Fishnets, Internets and Catnets: Globalization and Transnational Collective Action." Page13.

[73] The debate about the power of globalization to erase difference has focused on the role of nationally defined states. As Peter Drucker suggests, surviving globalization "will be a greatly changed nation-state, especially in domestic fiscal and monetary policies, foreign economic policies, control of international business, and, perhaps, in its conduct of war" Peter F. Drucker, "The Global Economy and the Nation-State," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 5 (September/October 1997): Page 160.
For further elaboration of the competing positions on the state and globalization see Cerny,

some respects made people more aware of difference(s) between themselves and "others" and serves to create and recreate "others" within and between groups. Indeed, economic integration contributes to social, cultural, and political (dis)integration and as such, globalization must be understood as a simultaneously homogenizing and fragmenting force.[74] Indeed, there are many aspects of this globalization paradox. The International Labor Organization examines this paradox with reference to figures about worldwide economic growth. While trade and cross-border investment has grown dramatically in the past few decades, unemployment and poverty rates have also increased in many parts of the world.

> Viewed as a whole, therefore, the world economy would appear to be creating the basis for rising prosperity and employment growth. The expansion of trade and investment flows against a background of a worldwide shift towards more open economic policies, and a greater reliance on market forces should also be contributing to improved resources allocation and efficiency worldwide. Nevertheless, while essentially correct from an overall standpoint, this view of the global economy neglects differences in the position of different countries and of different social groups

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"Globalization and the Changing Logic of Collective Action."; Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985); David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995); Hirst and Thompson, *Globalization in Question: The International Political Economy and the Possibilities of Governance*; R.J. Barry Jones, *Globalisation and Interdependence in the International Political Economy: Rhetoric and Reality* (Pinter/Cassell, 1995); King, *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*; Jessica T. Mathews, "Power Shift," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 1 (January/February 1997): 50-66; Mittelman, *Globalization: Critical Reflections*; Rodrik, "Sense and Nonsense in the Globalization Debate."; Slaughter, "The Real New World Order."; Stubbs and Underhill, *Political Economy and the Changing Global Order*; Taylor, "The Modern Multiplicity of States."; Williams, "Rethinking Sovereignty."

[74] For examples of those who talk about the contradictory impulses of globalization see, Barnet and Cavanagh, *Global Dreams: Imperial Corporations and the New World Order*; Janet Abu Lughod, "Going Beyond Global Babble," in *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. Anthony D. King (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1991), 131-38; Mittelman, "How Does Globalization Really Work?"; Sjolander, "The Rhetoric of Globalization: What's in a Wor(l)d?"

within these which raise serious adjustment and distributional issues.[75] Fragmentation is evident as inequities between social groups become larger and people become more aware of those inequities. In essence, individuals, communities, and their advocates, recognize the ways that their well-being is imbricated in global economic forces, institutions, and imperatives.

The very paradox of globalization--its tendency to homogenize and simultaneously fragment--may also be said for identity-based organizing. At the same time that women's organizations and movements vary dramatically, the very basis of "women's" organizing is a common identity that ostensibly serves to cohere--rhetorically, analytically, and practically--these efforts. A central question is whether there are sufficient similarities in the social, political, economic situation of women across national borders to justify a political movement on their behalf or whether differences among women are too great for the establishment of categorical interests. The use of the category "women" to initiate political activism has been very important but has also drawn a significant amount of critique from the very constituency that the category seeks to construct.[76] By its very nature, any identity category implicitly suggests that the differences among individuals constituting the category are less significant or salient that the differences

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[75] International Labor Organization. 1995. *World Employment, 1995.* Geneva: ILO. Page 5. Quoted in Jenson, "Introduction."

[76] These critiques were articulated from the beginning of the second wave feminism in books like: Toni Cade, *The Black Woman: An Anthology* (New York: Signet, 1970); bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981); Gerda Lerner, ed., *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York: Vintage, 1972). The critiques of the category women focusing on the exclusion of Black women were echoed by lesbians. See for instance Nancy Myron and Charlotte Bunch, *Lesbianism and the Women's Movement* (Baltimore: Diana Press, 1975).

separating members of that category from the members of other categories. There is an assumption that women can be characterized as a "group" based on shared experiences of oppression and marginalization. When stated too broadly, this formulation elides the historical and material specificity of women's lives. But weighted together, it can also enable disparate women's organizations to have a more significant impact in the policy making arena.

Similarities and differences, common interests and competing imperatives are core concepts in my analysis. For examples, as I examine in some detail in the next chapter, transnational political organizing around NAFTA was initiated primarily by Canadian organizations and activists. The Canadian organizers approached individuals and organizations in Mexico to work against the free trade agreement because they believed that as "junior" partners to the United States, the Mexicans and Canadians shared common interests in defeating NAFTA. As a result, the Canadians were instrumental in helping to build Mexican organizations to address the issue of free trade. The Canadian organization Common Frontiers helped establish la Red Mexicana Frente al Libre Comercio (RMALC), the large-scale umbrella organization dealing with trade issues in Mexico. As the first organization of its kind RMALC played a pivotal role in the NAFTA debate and in Mexican civil society more generally.[77] Individuals active with the National Action Committee on the Status of Women in Canada worked with the members of Mujer a Mujer in Mexico to raise issues of gender and NAFTA.

This cooperation stemmed from the creation of a shared identity on the part

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[77] Doug Chalmers, et al., *Mexican NGO Networks and Popular Participation*, Papers on Latin America #39 (Columbia University: The Institute of Latin American and Iberian Studies, 1995).

of the Mexican and Canadian organizers as junior partners to the United States in the negotiations on NAFTA. This common position led organizers to assume that they shared a common interest in defeating NAFTA. However, the differences between the Canadians and Mexicans emerged as an issue very early in the debate and their disagreements were quite fundamental: Canadian organizers argued a resounding "NO" to NAFTA while their Mexican counterparts were arguing "Yes, but...." For the Mexicans, saying "no" to NAFTA did not make sense. It was impractical given the domestic political context, and more importantly, such a position was against their self-interest. How could Mexicans say "no" to NAFTA? Economic integration, with the United States in particular, had long been a political reality and was, and remains, in the broad economic interests of Mexico.

Addressing these differences, one Mexican activist commented, "There were difficulties in how we conceived the battle against the free trade agreement. The emphasis of the Canadian and U.S. organizations was to say "no" to the agreement. In our case, we said "yes" to an agreement, but only to the extent that it meets our needs for development as a continent."[78] More importantly, many of the Mexican organizers whom I interviewed interpreted the "no" positions of Canadian and U.S. groups as a nationalist/protectionist sentiment based on thinly veiled racism. This point of view illustrates the problems with assuming first, that there is a common identity and second, that this identity can be readily translated into common interests. A large gap still exists between identifying a set of common interests and creating a common political agenda. Common interests don't simply emerge from

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[78] From my interview with Berta Luján, Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio - Secretaria, Interview (Mexico City, November 18 1996).

a common identity like Athena from the head of Zeus; they must be constructed. This is the challenge that NGOs faced in their attempts to configure a new North America. And, as my research illuminates, many organized politically in an attempt to shape the terrain of North American economic integration. However, they themselves have faced challenges associated with the paradox of globalization: reconciling both the homogenizing and fragmenting aspects of globalization in their transnational advocacy work.

This discussion of globalization and the way that it contributes to changes in the "logic of collective action," provides a critical framework for understanding the terrain of women's transnational advocacy. In this chapter, I highlighted the ways that globalization creates new political opportunities, challenges and openings for political contestation. The next chapter, takes up these issues by presenting an in-depth examination of how transnational connections were constructed to address issues of gender and North American economic integration. In particular, I highlight the role that Canadian activists played in reaching out to both their U.S. and Mexican counterparts and the strength of the Canada/Mexico connection.

# Gendered Transnational Resistance to Globalization: Identity and the Mexico/Canada Connection

## Chapter 3

> The collective power of people to shape the future is greater now than ever before, and the need to exercise it is more compelling. Mobilizing that power to make life in the twenty-first century more democratic, more secure, and more sustainable is the foremost challenge of this generation. The world needs a new vision that can galvanize people everywhere to achieve higher levels of co-operation in areas of common concern and shared destiny.[1]

> We need to turn the process around and you can't do that by yourself. You have to be connected to other people or groups...especially because the process itself is global. We need to have globalization empower women and not just harm them.... This is an optimistic vision for how we can develop global strategies for changing the situation of women.[2]

## I. Overview

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) created the single largest trade bloc in the world with a combined annual GNP of over $6 trillion and a labor market of more than 362 million people. Non-governmental organizations responded to their government's call to create a "borderless" North America by crossing those very same borders. Somewhat unexpectedly, non-governmental political organizers found their own ways of breaking down national borders dividing the three countries by working to critique, reframe or challenge the proposed

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[1] The Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighborhood*, The Report of the Commission on Global Governance (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[2] Patricia Fernández, Fronteras Comunes - Directora de la Programa de Genero, Interview (Mexico City, January 12 1996).

agreement. This chapter focuses on feminist non-governmental organizing in these efforts.

In this chapter, I examine the transnational connections made among women in Mexico, Canada, and the United States in response to the North American Free Trade Agreement. Examining the response to NAFTA by feminist organizers highlights the difficulties attendant to, and possibilities of, international collaboration to address gender issues. Given the gendered and racialized nature of political, economic and social restructuring, feminist cross-border organizing must be understood in greater depth and theorized more precisely. We need to understand the impact that globalization has on the ability of NGOs to create and sustain cross-border organizing networks and hence the reconfiguration of political contestation as we enter the twenty-first century.

While transnational NGO organizing efforts were quite remarkable in response to the NAFTA, differences among the groups in perspective, ideology, political context and their ability to address issues of difference (race, nation, class) were evident. Indeed, the construction and sustenance of these organizing efforts requires an attention to the differences among those who are participating. Healy and Macdonald adeptly point out that in "each attempt to articulate a common platform, there are unspoken diverse and even contradictory ontological assumptions" undergirding a group's shared rhetoric.[3] In this chapter, I argue that differences among participants, differences of race, gender, nation and class, create

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[3] Teresa Healy and Laura Macdonald, "Continental Divide? Competing Approaches to Understanding Social Movement Organizing Across North America," International Studies Association Meeting (Toronto, Ontario, March 18-22 1997), 1-21.

underlying contradictory interests and approaches even within the bounds of shared rhetoric and political strategy.

While the problematic of identity is always an issue in political organizing, transnational networks face the additional pressure of cross-border work in an era of globalization. Globalization--or the pressure for economic, cultural, and political convergence--brings questions of difference to the foreground. Yet, the pressure of globalization also serves to flatten, ignore, and downplay those very same differences. As a result, understanding the politics of identity and difference in an era of globalization is crucial to theorizing transnational political organizing as it highlights both the commonalities and the fissures between groups that facilitate or militate against the success of their efforts. While globalization and the politics of identity set the stage for cross-border coalitions, the heterogeneity of women's identities and the way that globalization paradoxically highlights difference serve to complicate cross-border advocacy work.

The use of the category "women" to initiate political activism has been very important but has also drawn a significant amount of criticism from the very constituency that the category seeks to cohere.[4] The women's movement in many parts of the world has been criticized by both internal and external sources for the construction of a hegemonic movement which excludes by not adequately taking differences among women into account. More generally, this critique is an

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[4] These critiques were articulated from the beginning of the second wave feminism in books like: Toni Cade, *The Black Woman: An Anthology* (New York: Signet, 1970); bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981); Gerda Lerner, ed., *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York: Vintage, 1972); Nancy Myron and Charlotte Bunch, *Lesbianism and the Women's Movement* (Baltimore: Diana Press, 1975).

important part of women's history, feminist theory and scholarship, and is both theoretical and practical in origin. Feminists have criticized an understanding of women's interests and identity which is too unidimensional and have proposed alternative theoretical paradigms which highlight the mutual constitution of gender, race, class, sexuality and ethnicity in formulating identity and in contributing to an individual's social and political power and position. For instance, bell hooks calls for a resistance based on "radical postmodernism" where "those shared sensibilities which cross the boundaries of class, gender, race, etc....would promote recognition of common commitments, and serve as a base for solidarity and coalition."[5] Here, hooks argues that the way to address difference in the context of political struggle is to recognize "common interests."

The goal of women's transnational advocacy networking in response to NAFTA was to articulate "common interests" which could serve as the basis for cross-border organizing. As Chandra Mohanty suggests, this does not imply a search for "common experiences," since the quest for sameness necessarily obscures the historical and cultural specificity of women's lives.[6] Instead, political organizing that is based on the mutuality of interests takes its strength from the

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[5] bell hooks, "Postmodern Blackness," in *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 27. Quoted in Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, "Introduction: Transnational Feminist Practices and Questions of Postmodernity," in *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*, ed. Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 1-33.

[6] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts: Ideologies of Domination, Common Interests, and the Politics of Solidarity," in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, ed. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (New York: Routledge, 1997), 3-29.

common context of political struggles.[7]

Inserting a gender analysis into the NAFTA debate required a concerted effort to develop the analysis and concepts necessary to construct appropriate organizing strategies.[8] As a result, feminists participated in the broad anti-free trade networks and simultaneously created a separate transnational advocacy network. In doing so, they faced not only the difficultly of bringing women's issues and a gender analysis to debates about free trade and the creation of a restructured North America, they also confronted the challenges of addressing issues of identity, race, class and nation among women in their own organizations and in the women's transnational advocacy network. Before discussing issues of identity in greater depth, I will explain the leadership role played by Canadian feminists in transnational organization around gender and NAFTA. From there, I look at the Canadian's efforts to reach out to their Mexican and U.S. counterparts.

## II. Leaders of the Anti-Free Trade Fight: The Women's Movement in Canada

While the story of anti-free trade organizing by non-governmental actors began with NAFTA in the United States and Mexico, in Canada it begins nearly 10 years earlier. Signed in 1988, after three years of debate and negotiation,

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[7] Mohanty, "Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts: Ideologies of Domination, Common Interests, and the Politics of Solidarity." For a detailed discussion about the relevance of a "common context of struggle" see Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism," in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 1-47.

[8] I explore the analyses of these organizers in depth in Chapter 5.

Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and U.S. President Ronald Reagan committed the two countries to lowering tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade in a free trade agreement (the FTA). The agreement represented a new direction for the policies of the Mulroney government. As late as 1984, Mulroney had opposed the idea of a free trade agreement between Canada and its behemoth neighbor to the south. The Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada (better know as the Macdonald Commission)[9] published a report in 1985 calling for the promotion of free trade with the U.S. Although the government of Prime Minister Mulroney previously had been critical of free trade, he endorsed the recommendations of the Commission, announcing in September 1985 his intention to negotiate a free trade agreement with the United States.[10]

The specter of a free trade agreement between the U.S. and Canada led to opposition organizing in nearly all sectors of Canadian civil society. Emphasizing this point, Marjorie Griffin Cohen writes, "..coalitions developed in unprecedented ways and people and groups which had never worked together before began to

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[9] The Commission was set up by the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau to address the economic recession of the early 1980s. The Commission traveled around Canada holding public hearings about the economic situation of the country and the report they issued served as the basis for government economic and social policy in the years to come. For further discussion of the Commission see Marjorie Griffin Cohen, "Feminism's Effect on Economic Policy," in *Canadian Women's Issues: Volume II - Bold Visions*, ed. Ruth Roach Pierson and Marjorie Griffin Cohen (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., 1995), 263-98.

[10] Cohen attributes this turn about to pressure from the international business community. Bashevkin talks about a number of other reasons: the FTA with the U.S. would let Canada focus on products where Canadian industries enjoyed a comparative advantage; it would give Canada access to the large U.S. market; and would give Canadian consumers access to a greater variety of cheaper products. Cohen, "Feminism's Effect on Economic Policy." For more information see Sylvia B. Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love: The Politics of Canadian Nationalism* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1991).

identify their common interests in opposition to free trade."[11] Indeed, the fight against the FTA in Canada was hard fought and touched most non-governmental organizations in the country. The first anti-free trade group in Toronto was initiated by Laurell Ritchie, a member of the trade union movement who was then on the executive governing body of the largest women's organization in Canada-the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC). Formed in 1972, NAC is an umbrella organization for hundreds of women's organizations in Canada.[12] It represents approximately 600 member organizations[13] with a combined membership of more than five million.[14]

From her position with NAC, Ritchie had members of all groups--women's, native, poverty, trade unions, arts and religious organizations come to the NAC office to discuss the issue of free trade. As a result, the national Canadian women's organization became a catalyst for anti-free trade organizing. For many of the groups which came to this and subsequent meetings, it was important that they were meeting on NAC's turf. While mistrust between the various trade unionists was significant, all the groups were comfortable with NAC. Meeting on neutral ground helped participants to develop trust among themselves.[15] The group met

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[11] Cohen, "Feminism's Effect on Economic Policy." Page 277.

[12] Chapter 4 explains more about NAC's unique organizational structure and its relationship to state institutions.

[13] Figure is from Sunera Thobani, *Presentation to the Standing Committee on Finance*, National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) (Ottawa: NAC, September 16, 1994).

[14] This figure comes from Sylvia Bashevkin, *Women on the Defensive: Living Through Conservative Times* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

[15] This description of the dynamics of these first meetings comes from my interview with Marjorie Griffin Cohen. She was also on the NAC executive at the time and as an economist, did one the first alternative analyses of the Macdonald Commission's report. This alternative analysis

monthly at the NAC offices for about three years and was called the Coalition Against Free Trade.

Ultimately, the Coalition Against Free Trade and NAC joined the anti-free trade coalition, the Pro-Canada Network. In 1991 the Pro-Canada Network was renamed the Action Canada Network (ACN) and the ACN functioned as the broad-based anti-trade organization in English Canada throughout the fight against NAFTA. This change in name is significant since it stemmed from an acknowledgment that some groups had a problem with the name "Pro Canada." First, anti-free trade groups in Québec felt that the name was "a little too federal for their liking."[16] In fact, they were opposed to having "Canada" in the name at all. Others argued that framing the anti-free trade debate in nationalist terms might ultimately limit the group's ability to work collaboratively across national borders.[17] NAC was one of the founders of the anti-free trade coalition in Canada and has always held a seat on the ACN's executive body.

During the debate over the FTA, women's organizations, supported by NAC's initiatives, developed a relatively sophisticated analysis of the impact that the

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was published for NAC and titled "Weakest to the Wall," *Policy Options*, December 1985.

[16] From my interview with Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Simon Fraser University, Department of Women's Studies, by telephone, April 24, 1997.

[17] Opposition to the Canadian-U.S. Free Trade Agreement in Canada was extremely nationalist in form and substance. Much of the opposition talked about how opening up the border to U.S. goods and services would jeopardize core Canadian values and identity. See for instance, a collection of anti-FTA writings entitled Laurier L. LaPierre, ed., *If You Love This Country: Facts and Feelings on Free Trade* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987). For a discussion of the politics of nationalism in the free trade debate see Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love: The Politics of Canadian Nationalism*. For a discussion of nationalism in the context of Québec see Daniel Latouche, "Quebec in the Emerging North American Configuration," in *Identities in North America: The Search for Community*, ed. Robert L. Earle and John D. Wirth (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995), 117-39.

agreement would have on women in Canada.[18] One of the primary tasks was to analyze what such an agreement would mean and educate NAC's constituency using that information.[19] At first, they focused on what the implications would be for industrial labor. However they soon came to realize that it would also have a significant effect on the service sector.[20] This was the first trade agreement that included trade in services in such a significant way. Marjorie Cohen said in an interview, "When we saw the draft of the first agreement...we realized how far it was going to go in services and this was going to be the real issue for women. Later on we focused on what the implications were going to be on public services and later on indeed, we focused on what they were going to mean around issues of democracy for women."[21] Cohen's analysis of the FTA provided a critical basis for movement organizing.

## III. Establishing Cross-Border Linkages--from Canada to Mexico

The centrality of the Canadian women's movement to the debate over the FTA set the stage for the cross-border outreach that they initiated during the subsequent NAFTA debate. Once the Canadian government announced its

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[18] See chapter 5 for further discussion of the arguments used by activists.

[19] This effort was largely successful and public opinion surveys at the time showed a significant gender gap where women in Canada were between 12 and 20 percent less likely to support free trade than men Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love: The Politics of Canadian Nationalism*. Page 145.

[20] See NAC, *What Every Woman Needs to Know About Free Trade* (Toronto: National Action Committee on the Status of Women, 1988); Marjorie Griffin Cohen, *Free Trade and the Future of Women's Work: Manufacturing and Service Industries* (Toronto: Garamond Press and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 1987).

[21] From my interview with Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Simon Fraser University, Department of Women's Studies, Interview (by telephone, April 24 1997).

intention to join the U.S. in expanding the FTA to include Mexico, creating a North American free trade zone, opposition groups in Canada began looking at expanding their anti-free trade organizing to include groups in Mexico and the U.S. Working with organizations in the U.S. and Mexico required some changes in the work of NAC since their work had primarily focused on domestic issues.[22] This move toward international work represented an important shift for NAC. However, the tension between having a more international focus and concentrating on domestic political issues continues to concern the organization.[23]

The Canadian women's movement was among the first to begin promoting strategies of cross-border solidarity in their work against NAFTA. In order to integrate international work into NAC's mission, a "Global Strategies Committee" was established in 1991. The purpose of the committee was to "strengthen NAC's commitment to international solidarity;...deepen NAC's understanding of how global restructuring is affecting women's lives and struggles in Canada and other countries; identify more effective ways of working together internationally...."[24] This committee, and its coordinator Lynda Yanz, were instrumental in building linkages between women in Canada and Mexico around the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement.

Given the likely consequences of capital mobility throughout the hemisphere,

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[22] From my interview with Lynda Yanz, Mujer a Mujer, Canada and Maquila Solidarity Network (Toronto, October 9 1996).

[23] Anonymous Interview.

[24] Lynda Yanz and Global Strategies Committee, "Confronting Global Restructuring with Women's Global Solidarity," Final Report of the NAC Global Strategies Consultation June 4-7, 1992 held in Ottawa (Toronto, July 1992).

women in Canada believed that they shared common interests with women in Mexico and the U.S. to fight the proposed agreement. Assumptions about common interests were based on the gendered divisions of labor in the international political economy and the ways that poverty and labor are structured along race and gender lines. While they knew that NAFTA was going to affect women in the three countries differently, they believed that "there were common interests among women in limiting the strength and mobility of capital."[25] Furthermore, they believed that "[n]ew and creative collective organizing initiatives and solidarity are essential to ensure that women are not left to bear the brunt of government' and corporations' actions to restructure our economies."[26] This articulation of shared interests based on their identity *as women* was the impetus to commence transnational networking efforts. However, as the rest of this story shows, a shared identity must be constructed, cannot be assumed, and many obstacles exist to articulating a shared identity strong enough to sustain transnational organizing efforts.

One of the groups that Yanz and the NAC Global Strategies Committee worked most closely with was Mujer a Mujer (Woman to Woman). Founded in 1985 by a small group of U.S. activists, Mujer a Mujer began by connecting Mexican and U.S. grass roots and activist women. Mujer a Mujer was established with the explicit purpose of making transnational linkages between activists in the U.S. and Mexican women's movements. The organization's goal was to help activists gain

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[25] Cohen, "Feminism's Effect on Economic Policy." Page 283.

[26] From a statement by Mujer a Mujer called the "Women's Plan of Action." The statement was signed by women from Mexico, Canada, the U.S., and Central America at the First Tri-national Conference of Women Workers on Economic Integration and Free Trade (*Primer Encuentro Trinacional de Trabajadoras ante la Integración Económica y el Tratado de Libre Comercio)*, February 1992.

international access to people with similar interests and concerns. Mujer a Mujer became the most important women's organization working against NAFTA in Mexico. Importantly, the group was started by white women from the U.S. who lived in Mexico (I will return to this point as who these organizers were affected how they operated and the issues they confronted).

One of Mujer a Mujer's first projects was to organize a number of worker-to-worker exchanges between Mexican and U.S. women and set up similar exchanges between political activists in the two countries. Their work promoted women's leadership using popular education and grass roots cross-cultural exchange as their primary tools. The organizing was particularly unique as they helped women to understand the broader economic context of their own work by highlighting the connections between gender and economic change. Although Mujer a Mujer addressed a range of women's issues--women in the urban popular movement, domestic violence, lesbian rights, the rights of women workers--their work always addressed the connections between gender and the economy. In particular, Mujer a Mujer worked with the national coordinating council of urban popular movements called the *Coordinadora Nacional del Movimiento Urbano Popular* (CONAMUP).

Connections between gender and economic issues had been especially important to organizing in Mexico's urban popular movements.[27] These

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[27] For additional information about the connections between gender and class based organizing in Mexican politics see Teresa Carrillo, "Women and Independent Unionism in the Garment Industry," in *Popular Movements and Political Change in Mexico*, ed. Joe Foweraker and Ann L. Craig (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1990), 213-33; Carmen Ramos Escandón, "Women's Movements, Feminism, and Mexican Politics," in *The Women's Movement in Latin America: Participation and Democracy*, ed. Jane S. Jaquette (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 199-222; Marta Lamas, "El Movimiento Feminista en la Década de los Ochenta," in *Crisis y Sujetos Sociales en México*, ed. Enrique de la Garza (Mexico City: UNAM-Porrúa, 1992); Kathleen Logan, "Women's Participation in Urban Protest," in *Popular Movements and Political Change in Mexico*,

*movimientos populares* blossomed during the economic crisis of the late 1970s and the early 1980s in a context in which social movements have had a long history of responding to issues of economic crisis. Popular movements (or "grass roots movements") demanded that services--education, housing, sewage, health care, nutrition--be provided in poor urban areas. Historically, popular movements have played a significant role in Mexican politics and are generally recognized as "one of the most significant political developments of the past twenty years."[28] While they are not "women's organizations" in the Northern sense of the term, women have been central to their work.[29] By 1983, women had created the Women's Regional Council *(Consejo Regional de Mujeres* or CRM) within CONAMUP to increase their voice and political power.[30] Mujer a Mujer worked extensively with the Women's Council of the CONAMUP by arranging exchanges with U.S. organizations for their members. Eventually, women working with CONAMUP began participating in the Mujer a Mujer collective.

Mujer a Mujer's interest in working on issues of gender and the economy with activists in the U.S. and Canada came from their realization that the economic crisis in Mexico was not, according to one of the organization's founders, "a whim of

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ed. Joe Foweraker and Ann L. Craig (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1990), 150-59.

[28] Joe Foweraker, "Popular Movements and Political Change in Mexico," in *Popular Movements and Political Change in Mexico*, ed. Joe Foweraker and Ann L. Craig (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1990), 3-20.

[29] For more information see Nikki Craske, "Women's Political Participation in *Colonias Populares* in Guadalajara, Mexico," in *'Viva': Women and Popular Protest in Latin America*, ed. Sarah A. Radcliffe and Sallie Westwood (New York: Routledge, 1993), 112-35.

[30] For more information about CONAMUP see Ingo Bultmann, "Movimiento Populares Vecinales y Transformaciones del Sistema Político en México y Chile," in *Democracia Sin Movimiento Social? Sindicatos, Organizaciones Vecinales y Movimientos de Mujeres en Chile y México*, ed. Ingo Bultmann, et al. (Caracas, Venezuela: Nueva Sociedad, 1995), 131-209.

Salinas, but was an economic package that was being implemented all over the world. It has an internal coherence that women needed to understand."[31] The main question driving their work was "how did these structural adjustment policies impact women's ability to realize their rights?"[32] Mujer a Mujer refocused their energies due to concern about the impact and logic of structural adjustment policies in Mexico. They reduced their direct exchange work with groups in the U.S. in order to devote more time and energy to studying and analyzing the gendered implications of free trade, structural adjustment and the economic model of globalization. In large part, this shift to looking at the impact that the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement would have on women in Mexico was the result of connections made between women's organizations in Canada and the women of Mujer a Mujer in Mexico. They began using what was happening in Canada as part of their popular education and organizing work and began working with women in Canada to establish a Canadian branch of the organization.[33] Importantly, Mujer a Mujer became a place for people to meet across organizations and borders to examine "an issue which was impacting all of them."[34]

This coordinated work was initiated because the women in Canada and Mexico believed that they had common interests in defeating the agreement.

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[31] From my interview with Elaine Burns, Mujer a Mujer - Mexico, Interview (Mexico City, January 10 1996).

[32] Burns, Mujer a Mujer - Mexico.

[33] Mary McGinn, Mujer a Mujer - Mexico, Interview (By telephone, February 19 1997). For more information see the December 1990 issue of *Correspondencia*, the tri-annual publication of Mujer a Mujer.

[34] Burns, Mujer a Mujer - Mexico.

Seeing the NAFTA as an extension of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, Canadian activists worked with Mexican organizers to help them resist and reshape the agreement.[35] After two years of monitoring the impact of the FTA in Canada, many argued that the agreement was not working in the interest of most Canadians. A 1992 report issued by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives articulates this sentiment:

> Canadians were falsely promised much in the original Free Trade Agreement with the United States--jobs, prosperity, protection. Now, our experience with more than three years of the Free Trade Agenda has convinced the majority of Canadians that this vision/agenda is not in our interests--nor in the interests of the peoples of the Americas.[36]

From the perspective of Canadian feminists, NAFTA was designed to benefit corporate interests in the U.S. and was especially problematic since it further entrenched the principles of the FTA. As Lynda Yanz suggested,

> [p]eople in Mujer a Mujer were really sort of visionary in thinking that there could be some networking around the free trade stuff. I was centrally involved in some of the anti-free trade organizing taking place here [in Canada] so when I got involved in Mujer a Mujer I helped to bring those issues into the focus of the organization's work.[37]

An awareness of the similarities of the situation of women in Mexico and women in Canada with regard to NAFTA, led activists to use Mujer a Mujer as a vehicle to

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[35] The connections between Canadian groups that organized around the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and anti-NAFTA activism in Mexico are quite extensive. For instance, Canadian groups like the Action Canada Network and Common Borders were instrumental in the founding of the broad-based anti-NAFTA coalition in Mexico, La Red Mexican de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio (The Mexican Action Network on Free Trade) Berta Luján, Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio - Secretaria, Interview (Mexico City, November 18 1996).

[36] Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, *Which Way for the Americas: Analysis of NAFTA Proposals and the Impact on Canada* (Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, November 1992).

[37] From my interview with Yanz, Mujer a Mujer, Canada and Maquila Solidarity Network.

coordinate resistance to the proposed agreement.

Indeed, Mujer a Mujer's role in transnational organizing in response to NAFTA was critically important. In 1992, they sponsored the First Tri-National Conference of Women Workers on Economic Integration and Free Trade. This conference, held in February 1992 in Valle de Bravo, Mexico, brought together 120 women to cooperatively analyze the impact of the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement on women in the region.[38] As Elaine Burns, one of the founders of Mujer a Mujer in Mexico said during my interview,

> With NAFTA it became obvious to us that we had to get to know each other across borders to try and influence the process of regional integration rather than just accepting the negative effects that it was going to have on women. The question was how could we develop new forms of working together given the ways that globalization was....changing the nature of all three economies.[39]

This conference was a place for women in Mexico, Canada, and the U.S. to strategize about how to actively shape the process of North American political and economic integration. How could they work to redirect the process and reduce the harm that globalization would have on women? Moreover, conference participants asked whether collaborative organizing efforts would not augment their negotiating positions with regard to the proposed agreement.

The conference participants examined the impact of economic restructuring in Mexico, Canada, and the United States. As a political strategy, they shared

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[38] For additional discussions of this conference see Christina Gabriel and Laura MacDonald, "NAFTA, Women and Organising in Canada and Mexico: Forging a 'Feminist Internationality,'" *Millennium: Journal of International Politics* 23, no. 3 (1994): 535-62; Anne Sisson Runyan, "The Places of Women in Trading Places: Gendered Global/Regional Regimes and Inter-Nationalized Feminist Resistance," in *Globalization: Theory and Practice*, ed. Eleonore Kofman and Gillian Youngs (New York: Pinter, 1996), 238-52.

[39] Burns, Mujer a Mujer - Mexico.

experiences about the consequences of economic and political change as a way to establish common ground across national, racial, ethnic, and class differences. For example, they explored ways that "'restructuring', 'integration' and 'modernisation' are words that have real effects on the lives of women" especially on women's role in the workforce.[40] Women from the U.S., like Mary McGinn of Labor Notes in Detroit (who also lived in Mexico and worked with Mujer a Mujer until 1991), talked about the ways that transnational corporations push for "concessions from labour" and then "blam[e] it on international competition."[41] As McGinn underscored, transnational corporations are reticent to take full responsibility for their business and financial strategies. Instead, they blame their decisions on the larger "invisible forces" of globalization.[42] However, conference participants argued that globalization is not an exogenous force over which states and NGOs have little or no control. Instead, they hoped that sharing these experiences would demystify the rhetoric of globalization. As a result, they aspired to build strategies that demand accountability on the part of transnational capital and individual states.

The Valle de Bravo meeting provided an opportunity for Canadian women to discuss their experiences under the first few years of the Canadian-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. They did so in order to explicate women's interests with regard to NAFTA. For example, Mary Shortell of the Canadian Auto Workers Union/ Women's Committee explained that "many of our social programs were redefined

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[40] Mujer a Mujer, "Changes in the Workplace, Changes in Labor Relations," *Correspondencia*, no. XIII, Summer 1992: 5-9.

[41] Mujer a Mujer, "Impact on Culture and the Community," *Correspondencia*, no. XIII, Summer 1992: 10-13.

[42] Mujer a Mujer, *Correspondencia*, no. IX, December 1990.

by the U.S. as 'unfair advantage' and are being destroyed."[43] The concerns of women in Mexico, however, were slightly different. As NAFTA would increase U.S. and Canadian investment in Mexico, employment opportunities for women were expected to grow. While it was clear that North American economic integration would create jobs for young Mexican women, participants at the Valle de Bravo meeting noted that these jobs are only hiring "at a fraction of the wages of traditional industries in Mexico."[44] As Rosaura Davila of CAM pointed out,

> There are 80 *maquiladora*[45] plants in Matamoros, providing jobs for 32,000 women. These plants have brought hope for women who had no other means of livelihood. But they have also resulted in a worsening of our city's problems, such as public safety....Some of the *maquiladoras* are highly polluting....Children are born with mental retardation because their mothers worked with PVC's while they were pregnant.[46]

As these women and many others noted during the conference, women are affected in particular ways by economic integration. Thus, the activists argued, the gendered nature of globalization must be made visible and such insights must consistently inform the policy process.

This tri-national conference on gender and NAFTA generated a set of demands and joint organizing strategies that focused on insuring that integration

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[43] Mujer a Mujer, "Economic Integration: Structural Readjustment, Free Trade," *Correspondencia*, no. XIII, Summer 1992: 4.

[44] Mujer a Mujer, "Changes in the Workplace, Changes in Labor Relations."

[45] In 1965 the governments of Mexico and the United States launched a border-area industrialization program which legalized the establishment of "off-shore" plants for U.S. corporations. The term maquiladora is a derivative of the old Spanish word maquilar which refers to the work performed in an oat or corn grinding mill. Maquila originally meant "the unit of grain a mill held back as payment for grinding the farmer's grain, hence its association with the assembly plants, whose foreign owners pay duty only on the value added to the product on the Mexican side" Carnegie Corporation, "Promoting Binational Cooperation to Improve Health Along the U.S.-Mexico Border," *Carnegie Quarterly* XXXVI, no. 1-4 (1991): 1-8.

[46] Mujer a Mujer, "Impact on Culture and the Community."

proceed with the "upward harmonization" of workplace health and safety standards, increased training for women workers, full democratic participation of women in the NAFTA negotiation process and in the work by unions on this and related issues. Patricia Fernández, head of the gender and the economy program at Fronteras Comunes in Mexico said in an interview that this meeting was very useful and that some women expressed a desire to continue to "work together to build a common platform which respects the differences in the national contexts from which we come."[47] Furthermore, she suggested that one of the most difficult parts of nurturing transnational organizing efforts was ensuring respect for difference(s). This would prove to be particularly important in attempts to establish connections between groups in the United States and Mexico since anti-Mexico and anti-immigrant sentiment permeated the NAFTA debate in the United States in particular.

The collaboration between Mujer a Mujer in Mexico and the Global Strategies Committee of NAC in Canada continued after the conference in Mexico. By 1991 the Canadian branch of Mujer a Mujer was producing the group's tri-annual publication *Correspondencia* and was centrally involved in feminist transnational advocacy work in response to NAFTA. In June 1992, as part of NAC'S 20th anniversary "Strategies for Change" conference and annual general meeting (AGM), the Global Strategies Committee, in collaboration with Mujer a Mujer, hosted an international consultation in Ottawa. The Global Strategies Committee brought women from 7 countries: Nicaragua, the Phillippines, South Africa, Chile, Mexico, and the U.S. to this meeting. The international guests participated in the NAC

[47] Fernández, Fronteras Comunes - Directora de la Programa de Genero.

annual general assembly bringing issues of international solidarity to the fore. This was important because it increased Canadian feminist grassroots participation in the NAFTA debate by educating NAC member organizations about the importance of transnational coordination. In addition, a working group that included the international guests and key contacts from NAC's Global Strategies Committee and NAC's Future of Women's Work Campaign met in a number of formal and informal sessions to identify common interests in addressing issues affecting women in different regions of the world. The goal of these meetings was to explore possible areas for future collaboration.[48] This was not the first time that activists from other countries had participated in NAC's AGM. In 1991 two international guests, from Mujer a Mujer in Mexico and the U.S. had come to the meeting, but they were "marginal to everything except one workshop on Free Trade..."[49] However, the 1992 session was much more successful than a similar effort at the 1991 NAC AGM as work with the international participants was better integrated into the conference program.

While the work of NAC was an important part of facilitating cross-border networking in the fight against NAFTA, tensions existed about the relative importance of international economic issues and transnational advocacy within the women's movement in Canada. Although, there were people who argued for the need to integrate an international perspective into all of NAC's work, this was not

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[48] Yanz and Global Strategies Committee, "Confronting Global Restructuring with Women's Global Solidarity."

[49] Yanz and Global Strategies Committee, "Confronting Global Restructuring with Women's Global Solidarity."

achieved. It proved difficult to translate NAC's commitment to international links into programmatic and practical priorities as there remained a tension between the more traditional domestic issue focus of the coalition and questions of economic globalization.

In addition to NAC's work in facilitating transnational advocacy among women, smaller NAC affiliated groups--particularly Woman to Woman Global Strategies in Vancouver, B.C.--were also instrumental. Established after the debate over the FTA in Canada, Women to Women Global Strategies began making connections with women in Mexico just as NAFTA was proposed. They were involved in a number of efforts to bring Mexican women activists to Canada and to send Canadian activists to Mexico. The goal of these exchanges was to build international solidarity and to enhance education and advocacy work on free trade and global economic issues.[50] For instance, Women to Women Global Strategies developed a cross-sectoral training program for women organizers focused on global restructuring and the future of women's work. The program was adapted from a training by Mujer a Mujer in Mexico City called "*Promotoras Internacionales.*" It brought women together on a weekly basis from diverse sectors of society to examine the gendered impact of globalization of the economy and to develop coordinated strategies for minimizing the negative and maximizing the positive

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[50] They were involved in a number of projects that were coordinated with the Canadian labor movement. For instance, in 1991 they co-sponsored an exchange with the British Columbia Federation of Labour Women's Committee on free trade and the global economy. This information comes from my interview with Denise Nadeau, Woman to Woman Global Strategies, Interview (Vancouver, B.C., by telephone, February 27 1997). They also coordinated efforts with Oxfam Canada's *Women in the Americas* program. Miriam Palacios, Director, Women in the Americas program, Oxfam Canada, Interview (Vancouver, B.C. by telephone, April 16 1997). In addition to Mujer a Mujer, they worked with women from Mujeres en Acción Sindical and Fronteras Comunes in Mexico.

aspects of these changes. Both the program in Mexico and the one in Vancouver challenged participants to explore the consequences of global economic restructuring. Both training programs were designed to counteract women's traditional absence from political economic policy debates. Training women organizers was expected to have a "multiplier effect"[51] where women would go back to their organizations and apply the skills and the international perspective that they gained to their work. As Denise Nadeau, an organizer with Woman to Woman Global Strategies in Vancouver, B.C. stated in her interview, the goal of the organization was to empower politically and economically marginal communities to engage in policy debates.[52]

The development of this feminist transnational advocacy network was also facilitated by the cross-border connections simultaneously being established among labor, environmental and consumer groups. In fact, the discussion and analysis of the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement was brought to the attention of these groups in Mexico by their Canadian counterparts in much the same way that the issue came to the attention of women's groups in Mexico, like Mujer a Mujer. The Canadians, having organized around the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement were eager to share their experiences with Mexican organizers. They believed that they had common interests in defeating the proposed agreement, and by extrapolating from the consequences of the FTA in Canada, they argued that

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[51] Mujer a Mujer, "Training Project for Women Organizers," *Correspondencia*, no. XVI, May 1994: 24; Denise Nadeau, "Training of Women Organizers: Project Update," *Correspondencia*, no. XVII, May 1995: 21-22.

[52] Nadeau, Woman to Woman Global Strategies.

NAFTA would have negative effect on people in Mexico. As a result, they acted as consultants in the development of organizing efforts in Mexico. Two Canadian groups, Common Frontiers[53] and the Action Canada Network, sponsored the first two NGO workshops on free trade in Mexico.[54] Held in October 1990 they focused on 'Citizens' Organizations and the Free Trade Agreement' and the theme of articulating and constructing 'Common Interests.' One of the results of these first two meetings was the creation of the broad anti-NAFTA NGO network in Mexico-*La Red Mexicana de Acción frente al Libre Comercio* (RMALC).[55] This NGO network was modeled after the Canadian anti-free trade network and Canadian organizers, along with the Mexican independent union *Frente Autentico del Trabajo* (FAT), played a critical role in RMALC's 1991 birth.[56] Mujer a Mujer was also one of the founding members of RMALC.

## IV. Tri-national networking and the role of the U.S.

Compared to their Canadian and Mexican counterparts, U.S. women's organizations participated in anti-NAFTA networking to a much lesser extent. Unlike

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[53] Common Frontiers should not be confused with the Mexican organization, Fronteras Comunes, although the two groups did work together.

[54] Common Frontiers and the Action Canada Network (ACN) were the major anti-free trade networks in Canada. They worked very closely, but there was a nominal division of labor where Common Frontiers coordinated the transnational organizing and the ACN focused on organizing within Canada.

[55] In English: The Mexican Action Network on Free Trade.

[56] Chalmers, et. al. address the development of the NGO sector in Mexico. RMALC, and the negotiations around NAFTA, played an important role in the development of "watchdog" NGOs or networks of NGOs. Doug Chalmers, et al., *Mexican NGO Networks and Popular Participation*, Papers on Latin America #39 (Columbia University: The Institute of Latin American and Iberian Studies, 1995).

Canada, where the major national women's organization was centrally involved in the debate over free trade, mainstream feminist organizations in the U.S. were conspicuously absent from the broad anti-NAFTA networks. By the summer of 1993 when the Citizen's Trade Campaign (CTC) was created, labor unions, consumer groups, environmental organizations, animal rights groups, farm groups and religious organizations were all participating in this broad-scale anti-NAFTA network.[57] On the one hand, self-identified feminists were in leadership positions within organizations that were part of the coalition, and some struggled to bring a focus on gender within the NAFTA debate. On the other hand, women's organizations did not participate in this network. Some smaller feminist organizations did engage in anti-free trade work like the Washington based Alt-WID, Alternative Women in Development. Smaller groups of women of color or immigrant groups were also involved in the trade issue, but little interest was evinced by mainstream women's organizations.[58]

Women's organizations were approached by organizers of the CTC, but there were no takers. As someone involved with the CTC put it, "There are no national women's groups in the coalition. And believe me, we tried."[59] A union

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[57] It was at this point that two other campaigns merged to form the CTC: the Fair Trade Campaign and Tradewatch. In the summer of 1993 CTC hired its first executive director and it became more than just a project of Public Citizen. Public Citizen continued to be centrally involved in this work and was one of the driving forces behind the CTC in both monetary as well as organizational terms. Founded in 1971 by Ralph Nader, Public Citizen focuses on consumer education and related lobbying efforts and has a project called Global Trade Watch which is headed by Lori Wallach.

[58] Chapter 4 explores the reasons for these differences in the substantive and quantitative participation of women's organizations in Mexico, Canada, and the United States.

[59] This interview was conducted as part of a larger study at the Center for the American Woman and Politics and respondents were guaranteed anonymity as part of that project. Therefore, any information used from those interviews will not divulge the identity of the interviewee.

lobbyist who participated in the CTC explained the absence of U.S. women's organizations in the CTC in an interview:

> Trade is a funny kind of issue. Historically, it's been a very narrow kind of thing that was not embraced broadly as affecting people. The NAFTA campaign, I think, represented a break through on that in the sense that we did succeed in making it a citizen's issue and accessible to people. It was something that people could grasp. Why the women's groups didn't gravitate towards it, which they should have, I can't explain to you.[60]

In addition, U.S. women's organizations, like the National Organization for Women (NOW), were approached during both the debate over the Canadian-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and during the debate over NAFTA. Feminists, organizing around the FTA in Canada went so far as to schedule a meeting with people from NOW to talk about how they could work together on the issue. However, as Marjorie Griffin Cohen put it in my interview, "we had one meeting with people from NOW and we couldn't get them very interested."[61] Members of the CTC received a similar response from NOW when they tried to get them involved in the anti-NAFTA campaign. While some individual members of national women's organizations were interested in addressing macro-economic issues, the organizations (NOW, AAUW, Feminist Majority Foundation, etc.) opted not to affiliate themselves with this effort. One of the people involved in attempting to recruit women's organizations to participate in anti-NAFTA networking explained the women's movement's reticence by saying,[62]

> I think this goes to what I understand to be a larger debate that is going on.

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[60] Confidential Interview.

[61] Cohen, Simon Fraser University, Department of Women's Studies.

[62] Confidential Interview.

> For instance, in NOW,...there is a group of women who think that dealing with the effects of... globalization of the economy and...economic issues is as much a women's agenda item as affirmative action and reproductive rights. [This is in comparison]...to people who are more focused on the traditional women's-group agenda....[M]y analysis of why there wasn't more direct involvement of those groups, is that the debate was still playing out and it still is.

In other words, mainstream women's organizations did not see working against NAFTA as a women's issue and as such were not willing to get involved. Chapter 4 more fully explores why these organizations opted not to participate in transnational advocacy efforts around NAFTA.

U.S. women's organizations were not alone in their relative disinterest in making transnational connections during the NAFTA debate. In fact, attempts to link U.S. labor and environmental organizations to anti-NAFTA efforts were slow and a bit more difficult than was the case in either Canada or Mexico. While the Alliance for Responsible Trade and the Citizen's Trade Campaign were involved in broad-based transnational coordination, they got into the game much later than their northern and southern counterparts. And, while there were clearly successes in making these links, many network participants in Mexico and Canada felt that it was, at times, difficult to work collaboratively. In both Canada and in Mexico, the size of the country and the history of oppositional political organizing is such that there is a much "stronger sense of doing things as a national movement"[63] whereas this is less true in the United States. Lorraine Michael who works with the Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice in Toronto and was actively involved with NAC and transnational efforts to challenge NAFTA commented on this in my

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[63] Lorraine Michael, Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice (Toronto, March 24 1997).

interview:

> During the NAFTA struggle for instance, our relationship with the left in Mexico was much different with our relationship with the States. That is not only because Canada and Mexico were in similar positions, vis-a-vis US power in NAFTA, but also because we still can't find any group in the U.S. that has that same national sense of solidarity...that we have in the ACN and that Mexico has in RMALC. While we work with the Development Gap, working with them is working with one group. The AFL-CIO, because of its politics, could never come to the kind of position that the Canadian Labor Congress could come to. We just don't have parallels in the States to what we have here.[64]

Furthermore, Michael suggested that working with the anti-NAFTA coalitions in the U.S., ART and the CTC, was not the same as being part of the Action Canada Network.

> At the tri-national meetings that I have been to in Mexico, the Canadians come and present the Canadian position, the Mexicans represent the Mexican position, and the Americans are there and everyone presents their own position. You can't get the one position. The three or four American pieces [organizations] end up fighting with one another. You want them to get their act together and then come back to the table.[65]

Many of the Mexican organizers who I interviewed echoed these sentiments.

These comments point to the role that the domestic political context–culture and institutions–play in conditioning the possibilities for and difficulties inherent in transnational political organizing. These issues are addressed in greater depth in chapter 4 where I argue that the issues that circumscribe the creation of transnational political networking around opposition to NAFTA are as much the result of domestic political context and particular social movement histories as they are the consequences of the issue around which the advocacy is taking place or the

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[64] Michael, Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice.

[65] Michael, Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice.

fact that the work is transnational in character. Although globalization has shifted the "logic of collective action" in a way that facilitates transnational organizing among NGOs, the domestic political context from which individual organizations and networks emerge always conditions and constrains the resultant efforts.

## V. Calling "Common Interests" into Question: Understanding Difference in Transnational Networking

The strength of the links between organizations in Canada and in Mexico can, in part, be attributed to the fact that Canadian nationalist sentiment, which framed their anti-free trade position, was directed at the United States and not at Mexico. The U.S.-Canadian Free Trade Agreement had generated such an enormous amount of concern in Canada because social movements saw it as yet another indication of the "Americanization" (read U.S. hegemony) of Canada. Interestingly, Canadians did not see themselves as part of the "Americas" and instead identified with their "first world" counterparts. This denial, symbolized by Canada's empty seat in the Organization of American States until after NAFTA was signed, was called into question by the prospect of North American economic integration.[66] By and large, Canadians believed that Mexico stood to loose from the agreement in ways that were similar to the impact that the FTA had had in Canada. Thus, they believed that it was possible to find common ground with Mexican organizers in order to defeat the agreement. They believed that women as women had an interest in defeating NAFTA.

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[66] Healy and Macdonald, "Continental Divide? Competing Approaches to Understanding Social Movement Organizing Across North America."

Nationalist sentiment also framed opposition to NAFTA in the United States, but it was very clearly focused on Mexico. The primary argument against NAFTA in the U.S. was that "U.S. jobs" were going to flood over the border into Mexico. This is what Ross Perot dubbed the "giant sucking sound." Nationalism pervaded the rhetoric of both the anti- and pro-NAFTA forces. The most prominent example of U.S. nationalism was the way that NAFTA proponents argued that, in addition to creating economic growth in the U.S., NAFTA would slow the flow of illegal immigrants into the United States by giving "those people" jobs in "their own country."

Questions about the Mexican economy, democracy, labor relations, child labor, treatment of women workers, human rights, health and safety standards and the environment moved to the center of popular discourse during the U.S. debate over NAFTA. This attention represented a victory for NGO's working to frame the policy debate as a series of political, rather than strictly technical, economic concerns. In the past, debates over free trade, including bilateral trade deals between the United States and Mexico, had been routine.[67] In the U.S., they had attracted little attention and were supported by Republicans and by most Democrats, especially those whose districts included economic sectors that appeared to benefit from free trade. The debate over NAFTA radically altered this political terrain. Yet, the attention directed toward trade with Mexico was often

[67] As I've discussed above, this was not the case in the debate over the 1989 Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) as the discussion was particularly contentious in Canada.

sensationalized.[68] Political activists and the media focused "blame" on Mexico for many regional problems, particularly environmental degradation, the exploitation of labor, and deindustrialization in the United States. Economic integration was framed as a zero-sum game. Everything that the Mexicans stood to gain from NAFTA was presented as coming directly from the pockets of U.S. citizens. This rhetoric employed stereotypes, racism and nationalism to create Mexicans as "others" who were to be feared, and who were less deserving than the "hard working" U.S. labor force. In essence, this strategy legitimated fear and prejudice.

Constructing Mexicans as "other" was, and continues to be, an important part of the discussion of economic integration. This construction of "others" both inside and outside of U.S. national borders is important since it exploits fears of economic instability and uncertainty among U.S. workers. In this case, blaming either immigrants in the United States for taking the jobs of "Americans" or arguing that NAFTA's passage would send "U.S. jobs" to Mexico serves the same purpose. It helps to justify discriminatory treatment of those who are constructed as different. In an interview with a manager of a *maquila* plant, Claire Sjolander encountered this sentiment toward Mexican workers: "'Mexicans,'" he said, "'are not like us. If they ate like us--if they liked meat, vegetables, fruit--the peso devaluation would be a problem. But they are not like us. All they eat is rice, beans, tortillas, and Coca-Cola.'"[69] Although the value of the peso had fallen precipitously and inflation was

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[68] In talking about the debate over NAFTA, here I am focusing on the issues associated with linking Mexico with the United States and Mexico with Canada. During the debate, it was these connections that received the most attention. Connections with Mexico drew more attention in part because Canada and the United States were already party to a free trade arrangement.

[69] Claire Turenne Sjolander, "The Rhetoric of Globalization: What's in a Wor(l)d?" *International Journal* LI, no. 4 (Autumn 1996): 603-16.

running rampant, this attitude allowed the plant manager to downplay the significance of the situation for Mexican *maquila* workers. Indeed, he absolved himself of any responsibility for the well-being of the workers he managed. He had no reason to worry about paying the workers in his plant higher wages. They simply didn't need the additional money. "They" were not like him.[70]

Even if the vast majority of feminist organizers resisted or challenged the racist and nationalist rhetoric, like that of the maquila manager, they still grappled with the way that this discourse affects transnational political cooperation. Indeed, racist nationalism played a major role in constituting the political discourse around NAFTA and it influenced the desirability and efficacy of cross-border advocacy. While many organizers on the ideological left recognized the problems of framing opposition to free trade in purely nationalist terms, they often worked collaboratively with individuals and organizations who promulgated these views. Indeed, conflict around issues of difference was an important aspect of feminist transnational advocacy in response to NAFTA.

Feminists grappled with questions of difference and identity in a number of different ways during their work on gender and NAFTA. In an article discussing a tri-national organizing meeting held in Berkeley, California, Canadian Lynn Bueckert expressed concerns about issues of difference. She wrote: "We parted knowing that our challenge continues to be to develop common strategies that are relevant locally, nationally, and internationally and that do not homogenize us, but rather,

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[70] It is rhetoric like this that Mujer a Mujer pointed to when arguing that women's organizations needed to pay attention to international economic issues. See for instance, Mujer a Mujer, "Come to Mexico! Or, You $ Me 4-Ever, Amigo," *Correspondencia*, December 1990, 10-13.

reflect and interweave our diversities and our commonalities."[71] In other words, organizers came together across borders to challenge NAFTA as 'women.' However, various conflicts made it clear that questions of difference–race, class, and nation–complicated the notion of a globalized (or regional) women's agenda. There was a need to recognize that NAFTA brought with it both the homogenizing and fragmenting impulses of globalization.

Issues of identity and difference also play a major role in shaping the character of transnational organizing. To illustrate how issues of difference and identity manifest, I will briefly examine the work of the Women's Alternative Economic Network (WAEN). WAEN existed from 1990-1994 as a network of women's organizations and feminist activists working in the United States on issues of economic justice. The goal of the network was to search for "economic alternatives to overcome poverty and attain a higher standard of living" for all people.[72] In order to do this, participants sought to educate themselves and their colleagues about economics and the impact that various economic policies had on women and communities of color.[73] The group held a number of network meetings during their four year existence, but here I will briefly describe the November 1991 meeting in El Paso and the final WAEN meeting in Berkeley in February 1994.

While the network was comprised of activists and organizations from the

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[71] Lynn Bueckert, "So Where Do We Go From Here?" *Correspondencia*, no. XVI, May 1994: 25.

[72] Mercedes López, "Discussing Economics on the Border," *Correspondencia*, no. XII, Winter/Spring 1991 & 1992: 15-17.

[73] From my interview with Marlene Kim, WAEN Participant, Interview (New Brunswick, NJ, November 13 1997).

United States, the orientation of the organizers was more global in scope. In fact, the original idea for the network stemmed from conversations among women at the United Nations' III World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985. They were interested in understanding, articulating, and organizing to change models of local, regional, and global economic integration which did not adequately protect vulnerable populations. Organizers viewed economic processes as global in character, and therefore argued that resistance to them must be global as well. Given this, the network held its 1991 meeting in El Paso, Texas "on the border between the developed and the underdeveloped world."[74]

This meeting took place at the headquarters of one of WAEN's members, La Mujer Obrera (The Woman Worker). La Mujer Obrera is a labor and education organization for Mexican-American women in the garment industry in El Paso. The group took advantage of the meeting's location to explore issues facing women workers in American-owned *maquiladoras* on the Mexico side of the border, by taking a tour of the factories and of the workers' neighborhoods in Juárez and El Paso. During the meeting they focused on the international context for economic restructuring in the United States. They were explicitly interested in promoting "the

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[74] López, "Discussing Economics on the Border." The meeting was held on the border between the United States and Mexico, but the lines between "developed" and "underdeveloped" do not oblige this demarcation. There have been a couple of recent studies that exposed the poverty and lack of service provision on the U.S. side of the border. In a comparison of the provision of basic services, like water and sewage, in *colonias* in El Paso, Texas and Juárez, México, Kathleen Staudt showed that the provision of services came more quickly to those on the Mexico side of the border. Kathleen Staudt, with Angélica Hoguín and Magda Alarcón, "Mexico Reflects on the U.S.: Colonias, Politics and Public Services in Atomized, Fragmented Federalism," in *The U.S.-Mexico Border: Transcending Divisions, Contesting Identities*, ed. David Spenser and Kathleen Staudt (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1997). See also a recent NYT article for additional evidence: Sam Howe Verhovek, "Long Wait for Water Ending on Texas Border," *New York Times*, October 27 1997, A1 & 16.

participation of other women at the international level."[75] These events and discussions served as a general introduction to the contribution of the delegates from Mexico who attended the conference. Women from Mujer a Mujer and Mujeres en Acción Sindical[76] talked about the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement and its implications for women workers.[77] This discussion represented WAEN's first formal introduction to feminist organizing against NAFTA.

The network again took up this issue in a February 1994 meeting held in Berkeley, California. The meeting brought together women from across the U.S. who were doing education and training work on the international economy and trade with women or who did this work using gender as a category of analysis. The goal of the meeting was to evaluate the effectiveness of education and organizing efforts in the previous two years and to "strategize on the important elements of ongoing education and organizing around the international economy and trade."[78] Once again, the meeting consisted of a very diverse group of U.S. participants, but included key Mexican and Canadian trainers to ensure an "internationalist perspective" and to learn from those who had been centrally involved in transnational organizing in response to NAFTA.[79]

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[75] López, "Discussing Economics on the Border."

[76] As noted earlier, both of these Mexican organizations were centrally involved in anti-free trade organization and worked together to hold the First Tri-National Conference of Women Workers on Economic Integration and Free Trade in February 1992.

[77] López, "Discussing Economics on the Border."

[78] Kalima Rose, Ellen Teninty and Sydney Brown, Letter of invitation to WAEN Berkeley meeting (In possession of Debra Liebowitz, December 8 1993).

[79] Rose, Teninty and Brown, Letter of invitation to WAEN Berkeley meeting.

The vision of establishing a network of groups in the U.S. that addressed gender and economic issues and that situated this work within an international framework was well-received, but the network itself did not survive. While a variety of factors led to the organization's demise, I focus on the particular impact of identity politics. The network came together to explore ways to educate about and organize to resist the gendered structure of the economy. A diverse group of women from different regions and organizations came together under its umbrella to explore economic issues and to develop and share educational and organizing strategies to address local, national, and global economic problems. In other words, women came together based upon an understanding of their common interests *as women*. However, addressing differences--particularly issues of race and class--within the group, proved quite difficult and this ultimately made further national and transnational coordination impossible in the context of WAEN.

The network included a very diverse group from organizations such as: the Women of Color Resource Center; Southerners for Economic Justice; the Center for Ethics and Economic Policy; Asia Immigrant Women Advocates; United Methodist Women; the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, Equal Means; and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. On the one hand, this diversity represented the very strength of the network because participants learned a great deal about how economic restructuring effected different constituencies. On the other, as a former participant put it, there was "a lot of distrust among the people participating in WAEN."[80] Divisions within the group usually surfaced on issues of

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[80] From my interview with Kim, WAEN Participant.

race and class. As a participant in the Berkeley meeting put it in an interview:

> People were very concerned about their particular issues and the mistrust made it difficult to work together. We had people who were from the south who insisted that we had to talk about blacks in poverty....and then there were people from Appalachia saying 'Hey, white people can be poor too.' Everyone wanted to talk about a different part of the elephant and they couldn't see that the tail was connected to the body which was connected to the head. It was very hard.[81]

These divisions contributed to the demise of the network because the group lacked the leadership to effectively address the issues that arose. The group's demise is noteworthy from two perspectives: the future of organizing on gender and economics in the U.S; and, the possibilities for transnational collaboration. In talking about her experience of how women in the United States work together, Patricia Fernández, one of the Mexican activists who participated in the Berkeley meeting said during my interview: "The women of color enclosed themselves in a separate space in order to protect themselves since they didn't feel understood in the larger group. This is where they were comfortable."[82] In other words, differences among women within the U.S. movement had an impact on the possibilities for transnational cooperation. Fernández also observed that:

> ...the white women and women of color presented their work in very different ways. The African-American women presented the discrimination that African-American women face...while...the Latinas, Asian and White women talked about poor women....Their perspectives were very fractured and...[the participants] were ....very afraid to touch the racial or class aspects of these issues.[83]

She went on to suggest that these "cultural and national differences" further

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[81] Anonymous Interview.

[82] Fernández, Fronteras Comunes - Directora de la Programa de Genero.

[83] Fernández, Fronteras Comunes - Directora de la Programa de Genero.

complicated tri-national collaboration. As the example of WAEN shows, grappling with difference is arduous and requires a concerted effort. The inability to address these issues makes both national and transnational networking fragile.

WAEN was not the only organization involved in discussion of gender and NAFTA that grappled with what common interests among women meant in the face of differences of race, class, and nation. Mujer a Mujer, the first women's organization in Mexico to address these issues played an interesting role because the organization was started by white women from the U.S. who were living in Mexico in the mid-1980s. While the organization commenced by connecting feminists in Mexico and the United States, their work around free trade was ultimately much more closely linked to feminists in Canada, as it was difficult to get women's organizations in the U.S. to pay attention to international issues on the one hand and regional economic issues on the other. Issues of identity were particularly complicated in Mujer a Mujer because of who constituted the group. After a few years of operating, the organization began to integrate non-white women into the organization, but that proved to be difficult. Both Mexican and Chicana women began participating, but this was not an easy process. The first thing that Mujer a Mujer did, was to open the organization to Chicana student interns from the U.S. as a way to bridge the gap.[84] In my interview with Mujer a Mujer activist Mary McGinn, she noted that it "was a very hard experience. It was very good, but very hard. The Chicana women came [up] against a lot of racism."[85] For instance, the white women

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[84] From my interviews with Vicki Villanueva, Mujer a Mujer-Mexico and CONAMUP, Interview (Toronto, March 21 1997); Burns, Mujer a Mujer - Mexico.

[85] McGinn, Mujer a Mujer - Mexico.

in Mujer a Mujer worked as translators and were constantly being praised for their Spanish language abilities. But, the "Latina who [who grew up in the U.S. and] was scolded by her parents not to speak Spanish and...had taught herself the language...was constantly being accused of being a traitor to her nation."[86] In other words, the U.S. born women of Latin American descent who came to Mexico to participate in the work of Mujer a Mujer were expected to speak Spanish, and when they could not do so perfectly, they were sometimes treated with suspicion and/or contempt by the Mexicans with whom they interacted. This experience was in direct contrast to the way that the white women in Mujer a Mujer were treated.

In addition, the group had to confront difference, particularly issues of class and race, when they tried to recruit Mexican women to participate. The white women who started the organization made enough money working part time as translators to devote a substantial amount of time to the organization without pay. However, by and large, Mexican women could not afford to donate a substantial portion of their time to Mujer a Mujer's activities. This meant that the entire volunteer basis of the organization was called into question. Raising money and setting up a more formal office did not prove to be a strong point of Mujer a Mujer and this ultimately contributed to the organization's demise.

Transnational political resistance can reinscribe the very gender, race, and national hierarchies which mirror those that activists also seek to challenge. Constructing political alliances such that gender, racial, sociopolitical, and geographical differences are taken into account is not easy in any situation.

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[86] McGinn, Mujer a Mujer - Mexico.

Feminist transnational advocacy in response to NAFTA raises a number of questions about how identity both facilitates and impedes the creation of cross-border collaborations or political organizing in general. Frequently, differences among potential participants mitigates interest in broad-scale political coalitions, especially where there is inadequate attention paid to the politics of difference, but the differences within groups require more attention if transnational organizing efforts are to live up to their potential.

The story of feminist transnational networking around NAFTA demonstrates that "[A]n inclusive movement cannot emerge from the search for a common good, however, but only from careful attention by each vulnerable social segment to the specific experience and vulnerabilities of others."[87] The notion of a shared identity, or a perception of commonalities among the experiences of women, brought feminists together across borders to challenge NAFTA's version of economic restructuring. Their articulation of women's interests served to create a shared movement across national borders. Yet, as I have argued in this chapter, questions of difference and identity also fragmented these efforts. Addressing differences among women of race and class and the intersections of race and class with gender identity, are crucial to network building.

## VI. Conclusion

The women's organizing efforts I have examined shared a common commitment to addressing issues of gender and macroeconomics, and faced

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[87] Iris Young, "The Complexities of Coalition," *Dissent*, Winter 1997, 64-69.

similar challenges in addressing the significance of difference(s) within their groups. At the same time, they also were quite varied in organizational structure, institutional strength, and the domestic political context from which they originated. These variations put each group in a different position to deal with the challenge of identity and difference in the larger context of gender, free trade, and globalization.

While women's organizations and movements are fundamentally diverse, thinking about organizing based on "women's rights" or "women's interests" necessarily illuminates the tensions that exist surrounding questions of identity, sameness, and difference. The very basis of *"women's"* organizing is a common identity that ostensibly serves to cohere these efforts--rhetorically, analytically and practically. In this case, globalization in the form of NAFTA, highlighted common gender interests at the same time that it brought differences into sharp relief.

More than two decades of second wave organizing and feminist scholarship has illustrated clearly that attention to differences among women must be a central focus. Feminist organizing efforts which neglect differences among women invariably flounder and fracture along these lines and become rife with the consequences of often unintentional exclusionary practices. Issue focused transnational advocacy networking, like women's organizing around NAFTA, represents a strategy for organizing across differences. It attempts to do this by articulating common interests in reference to the issue at hand. Indeed, such organizing strategies draw on a multiplicity of perspectives by relying upon the input of those in different national contexts. Furthermore, the impact of this work is by definition strengthened via the coordination of different organizations in a variety of

sociopolitical and national locations. As such, this strategy has a great deal of promise to grapple with both the polarization and convergence engendered by the trend it seeks to resist--globalization. However, this is only an effective strategy if attention to difference is a **fundamental** part of working conversations and strategy building. As alternative forms of political organizing cannot be substituted for attention to the power differences that social location or identity (gender, race, class, nation) create. The next chapter, further explores these issues by explaining in more detail, what types of organizations were involved in these transnational organizing efforts. I use this information to explain evident differences through discussion of the history and construction of domestic political institutions and movement culture.

# Highlighting the "National" in Trans/national Organizing

## Chapter 4

> The multiple levels of NAFTA politics were nested, not layered. They were *simultaneously* international, intergroup, and interpersonal. The behavior of Mexico, Canada, and the United States in the international arena is an artifact not only of international processes but also of domestic processes operating at the next level, which in turn often reflected processes at still lower levels.[1]
>
> There are no topics that are exclusively women's, nor can there be themes about which we are prohibited from opining and deciding. The great global preoccupations concern us. Human rights, nuclear and military disarmament, the eradication of poverty, the deepening of democracy grounded in the respect for difference, and a sustainable development centered on people are key for the future of humanity.[2]

## I. Calculating Participation: An Introduction

This chapter takes up the puzzle of why women's organizations in Mexico, Canada, and the United States participated in transnational activism to shape the North American Free Trade Agreement at such varying rates. In presenting a framework for understanding significant differences among the participation of women's organizations in Mexico, Canada, and the United States in these advocacy efforts, I call attention to the ways that national level factors impede and facilitate

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[1] Frederick W. Mayer, *Interpreting NAFTA: The Science and Art of Political Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). P. 337.

[2] Virginia Vargas quoted in Sonia Alvarez, "Latin American Feminisms "Go Global": Trends of the 1990s and Challenges for the New Millennium," in *Cultures of Politics, Politics of Culture: Re-Visioning Latin American Social Movements*, ed. Sonia E. Alvarez, Dagnino (Boulder: Westview Press, A Division of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1998), 293-324. P. 300.

transnational activism. The differences in the substantive and quantitative participation of women's organizations in these three countries, I argue, can be accounted for, in part, by highlighting two critical national level factors: domestic political institutions and the women's movement's relationship to them, and the ideology of the women's movement. This focus on national conditions will provide a more complex understanding of the differences in participation. It helps to explain why, for instance, Canadian women's organizations were among the leaders of the anti-free trade movement in Canada and why they were the instigators of transnational activism in this context. It will also shed light on why, for example, the participation of U.S. groups was limited primarily to smaller organizations concerned with international economic issues and groups at the U.S. - Mexico border. This framework will also explain why a number of small Mexican women's organizations engaged extensively in these advocacy efforts.

In general, there are four ways to think about why non-governmental organizations would decide to engage in transnational organizing to realize their advocacy objectives. First, globalization, or change at the system level redirects the locus of political power away from the nation-state and toward international and transnational actors. For NGOs this means that the "logic of collective action" changes commensurately. NGOs work transnationally because they believe that in order to affect change they must adjust to increasingly transnational political imperatives.[3]

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[3] See for instance Philip G. Cerny, "Globalization and the Changing Logic of Collective Action," *International Organization* 49, no. 4 (Autumn 1995): 595-625; James N. Rosenau, *Along the Domestic-Foreign Frontier: Exploring Governance in a Turbulent World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Jackie Smith, Charles Chatfield and Ron Pagnucco, eds, *Transnational*

The second reason why NGOs engage in transnational organizing is that it is in their interest to do so. Rational choice theories suggest that based on their preferences or interests it is possible to predict the behavior of political actors. In essence, political actors will work to maximize their interests. When it is in a group's interest to work transnationally to address a certain issue or problem, it will, and when it is not, it will not.[4]

The third type of explanation for why NGOs engage in transnational organizing focuses on state/society relations. In particular, the character and composition of state institutions influence whether or not non-governmental actors pursue, or see it as in their interest to pursue, transnational solutions to problems. This explanation is based on social movement scholarship which addresses the structures of political opportunity faced by organizations and movements. In other words, domestic political structures affect an organization's calculus about how to pursue political goals.[5]

The final way to explain why NGOs engage in transnational organizing activities is based on the ideology of movement organizing. Some philosophical approaches will be more conducive to or encouraging of transnational organizing

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*Social Movements and Global Politics: Solidarity Beyond the State* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997).

[4] For a thorough examination of the utility of rational choice explanations to explaining the mobilization of non-governmental actors see Mayer, *Interpreting NAFTA: The Science and Art of Political Analysis.*

[5] See Hanpeter Kriesi, "The Political Opportunity Structure of New Social Movements: Its Impact on Their Mobilization," in *The Politics of Social Protest: Comparative Perspectives on States and Social Movements*, ed. Craig J. Jenkins and Bert Klandermans (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 167-89; Thomas Risse-Kappen, ed, *Brining Transnational Relations Back In: Non-State Actors, Domestic Structures and International Institutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Sydney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

than others. Some movements will take relatively isolationist stances while others will have more internationalist visions. Thus, the ideology of a movement will play a significant role in shaping whether, when and why organizations will decide that transnational cooperation is in their best interest.[6]

All four of these explanations are important and explain some part of why particular types of organizations, from either Mexico, Canada, or the United States, participated in transnational organizing to address issues of gender and NAFTA. However, this chapter deals primarily with the final two explanations: state /movement relations and issue framing within the movement. The first explanation--the way that globalization has changed the logic of collective action--is analyzed at length in Chapter 2 and the question of rational interests (the second explanation) is addressed in Chapter 3. Before I proceed with an in-depth examination of state /movement relations and issue framing within movements, I will briefly summarize my argument about explanations one and two: the changed logic of collective action and rational determinants of NGO behavior.

## Changing Logic of Collective Action

While I do think that global economic, political and cultural changes are creating opportunities for cross-border collaboration among NGOs, this is not the

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[6] For development of the concept of issue/idea framing in the context of social movements see Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); John D McCarthy, "The Globalization of Social Movement Theory," in *Transnational Social Movements and Global Politics: Solidarity Beyond the State*, ed. Jackie Smith, Charles Chatfield and Ron Pagnucco (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 243-59. For a related discussion in the context of foreign policy see Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, eds, *Ideas & Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

whole story. Framing transnational NGO organizing as a *natural outgrowth* of the globalization of capital commits one to a systemic level argument about political processes which, I argue, are far too complex to be simplified in this way. In essence, the argument that NGOs worked politically across borders because the nexus of political authority shifted oversimplifies the variety of factors which contributed to NGO transnational organizing. Missing from this position is a way to explain why the "internationalization" of the "domestic" political sphere is not an automatic process. The creation of a transnational target like NAFTA alone does not adequately account for the differences in the level and type of participation of Mexican, Canadian, and U.S. women's NGOs in cross-border organizing. Indeed, differences in the participation of Mexican, Canadian, and U.S. women's organizations need to be explained if we are to understand why NGOs engage in transnational political organizing. Without such an analysis, it is impossible to predict under what conditions transnational NGO organizing is likely to materialize in the future.

**Rational Interests**

For an organization to engage in transnational advocacy efforts it must be in their interest. As a general rule, organizations do not intentionally take a path that is contrary to their interests.[7] While interests clearly constitute a key explanatory

[7] One of the limitations of the strictly defined rational choice hypotheses is that it is not easy to define the interests of a particular NGO or group of women. For instance, in the case of organizing in response to NAFTA, a group's understanding of their interests may be based on both economic data and the symbolic significance of the issue for an organization's constituency.

factor, a rational choice approach to political analysis is not alone sufficient for explaining why some women's organizations engaged in transnational organizing in response to NAFTA while others did not. A rational choice approach to political analysis suggests that political actors have predictable preferences and that based on those preferences or interests, they consider all options and information before choosing a strategy which maximizes their interests.

If we apply this rational choice formulation to the behavior of NGOs during the NAFTA debate, we would expect that NGOs which believed their constituencies were likely to be negatively affected by NAFTA would have mobilized against its passage. To further qualify this hypothesis, the intensity of NAFTA's threat to the constituency of an NGO should be positively correlated with the amount of activism witnessed: a greater threat would lead to more activism. Conversely, we would predict that NGOs whose constituencies were expected to benefit from NAFTA's passage would likely advocate to support the agreement. Again, we would expect that the greater the potential benefits of NAFTA's passage, the stronger the intensity of advocacy efforts in support of the Agreement.

As Chapter 3 and the following analysis demonstrate, the hypotheses derived from rational choice theory do indeed account for a good deal of the activism around gender and NAFTA. However, rational choice theory fails to provide a

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Moreover, economic data are not value neutral: what most economists would dismiss as having minimal negative consequences for women workers may very well be interpreted by a women's rights NGO as devastating to their particular community. Fredrick Mayer makes a similar point in his discussion of the utility of rational choice arguments for understanding the NAFTA negotiations. Mayer writes that rational choice arguments are problematic because, "The domestic grassroots opposition to NAFTA was based less on what NAFTA was and more on what it *symbolized*." Mayer, *Interpreting NAFTA: The Science and Art of Political Analysis*. Page 257.

sufficiently nuanced explanation of why particular types of women's organizations in particular locations get involved in organizing efforts while others do not. For instance, rational choice does not explain why a number of local U.S. women's organizations got involved in transnational organizing in response to NAFTA while the national U.S. women's organizations did not.

In many cases, rational choice theory leads us in the right direction. For instance, many Canadian women's organizations believed that NAFTA's passage would lead to cutbacks in the government programs they cared about. Or, they believed that NAFTA would result in the southward flight of manufacturing industries where women were disproportionately employed. As a result, a number of Canadian women's organizations, including the large national umbrella organization (NAC), mobilized against the agreement. In this way, rational choice theory leads us in the right direction. However, a number of questions still remain: why, for instance, did women in Canada begin the process of investigating the relationship between gender and trade when there was no such discussion in the policy arena and when the connections between women's interests and trade were not obvious? And, in what ways does the history and national context of political organizing affect the mobilization patterns of organizations?

The general story in Mexico also followed rational choice expectations. Mexican women's organizations interested in issues at the Mexico/U.S. border, for instance, were concerned that NAFTA's passage would increase the exploitation of women workers in the *maquiladora* industries. Given that NAFTA would increase the number of jobs in the *maquilas*, these organizations worked transnationally to

challenge a version of the agreement that did not include what they saw as adequate protection for the rights of women workers. Yet, unlike their Canadian counterparts, most Mexican women advocates did not argue for the unequivocal defeat of NAFTA. The fact that NAFTA was expected to create jobs for women along the Mexican side of the border led women's NGO's to support the idea of the agreement, while suggesting that social and labor protections had to be included. In other words, Mexican NGOs were active in the debate in order promote better working conditions for women workers. However, contrary to a strict interest analysis, while Mexican women clearly had something to gain from NAFTA's passage, they did not advocate for the agreement. In other words, they were more interested in working transnationally to push for better labor, environment, health, and safety protections than they were with supporting an agreement which was slated to bring jobs to their constituents. Furthermore, they were willing to push for these protections even if it meant that their efforts could contribute to the defeat of the Agreement in the U.S. Congress.

## Framework for Analysis

In order to understand divergence from rational choice predictions, and to dig below the surface of rational choice expectations, I turn to national level factors. In essence, I argue that institutional structures have to support or promote transnational organizing and that organizations have to be "prepared" to see the validity of a political strategy which includes transnational political mobilization and cross-border collaboration. Cross-border work is most likely to occur when the

history and/or ideology of the political movement supports the notion of transnational resolutions to identified problems. Thus, while it may be in the economic "interests" of an organization to work against a policy like NAFTA, "interest" alone will not lead an NGO to frame the issue in this way. An organization must be situated in a national or movement context that supports the use of transnational collaboration as a strategy for change.

The remainder of this chapter explores the unanswered questions of why certain groups raised concerns about the relationship between gender and NAFTA and then endeavored to find common cause across borders. The national contexts in which these NGOs were operating is central to the analysis in this chapter. In particular, I am concerned with how political and movement structures and domestic institutions constitute critical aspects of an organization's calculus around participation in transnational organizing efforts. Part of this story entails explaining the cases where the political, social, and historical context meant that some women's NGOs never seriously considered participation in transnational organizing in response to NAFTA while their counterparts did.

The next section of this chapter (Section II) provides a country-by-country overview of the types of NGOs that were engaged in transnational organizing in response to NAFTA. In this descriptive section, I illuminate the important cross-national trends and differences that are evident in the types of organizations that participated in advocacy around gender and NAFTA. An analysis of why these differences exist, with particular attention to politics at the national level and the structure of the movement, is taken up in Sections III and IV.

After describing the types of NGOs that participated in transnational organizing around issues of gender and NAFTA in Canada, Mexico, and the United States, I will, in Sections III and IV, show how the structure of movement organizing in each of these national locations fundamentally shaped who engaged these issues. In doing so, I highlight two ways that the character of the national movement influenced transnational organizing efforts: domestic political institutions and the women's movement's relationship to them, and the ideology of the women's movement or how women's interests are typically defined in movement politics.

**Table 5.1. Organizational participation in transnational organizing around issues of gender and NAFTA by type.**

| Organization type | Mexico | Canada | U.S. |
|---|---|---|---|
| National women's organizations | | X | |
| Local women's organizations - particularly organizations of immigrant women, women of color or those focused on economic issues or issues at the Mexico/U.S. border | X | X | X |
| Women's bureaus or programs of non-women's organizations (programs of union or development organizations) | X | X | |

Overall, three types of NGOs participated in transnational organizing efforts to raise issues of gender and NAFTA: (1) national women's organizations; (2) local women's organizations - particularly organizations of immigrant women, women of color or those focused on economic issues or issues at the Mexico/U.S. border; (3) women's bureaus or programs of non-women's organizations (i.e., programs of

unions or development organizations). Table 5.1 illustrates, in general terms, the patterns of participation in transnational networking around gender and NAFTA from Mexico, Canada, and the United States. By exploring in greater depth, which types of groups participated in each of the three countries and then highlighting the forms and content of this participation, I hope to shed light on questions about the general and ever increasing prevalence of transnational political mobilization.

## II. Describing the Types of NGOs That Participated in Transnational Organizing in Response to NAFTA

In order to understand the particular patterns of participation, it is necessary to specify which types of organizations participated in transnational organizing around gender and NAFTA from Mexico, Canada, and the United States. In this section, I explain the cross-national differences evident in the types of organizations that participated in advocacy around gender and NAFTA. The following Sections, III and IV, analyze these patterns.

### Canada

Three types of groups participated in transnational organizing around NAFTA from Canada (see Table 5.1). Most of this activity was coordinated through one organization, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), the country's national women's organization. NAC's coordinating role was instrumental to the process of information dissemination and movement building around issues of gender and free trade. In fact, NAC's central role in coordinating activities and

bringing diverse organizations into discussions of gender and free trade largely accounts for the two other types of organizations that were involved in these activities. The second type of organization involved in these efforts were local Canadian women's organizations. In particular, organizations addressing primarily economic issues, and organizations focused on the concerns of immigrant women and women of color became engaged in these debates. The federated structure of NAC was quite important because it exposed a wide range of organizations to ideas about the connections between gender and free trade, thus legitimating the issue as a concern for women's organizations. The final type of organization to be involved in efforts around gender and NAFTA from Canada was women's bureaus or programs of non-women's organizations like unions, development and religious organizations. NAC was often instrumental in bringing these programs or bureaus of non-women's organizations into these debates as many of them were also NAC members.

From the beginning of NGO engagement with issues of free trade in Canada, women's organizations were among the movement leaders. Feminists were at the forefront of debates over the Canada - U.S. Free Trade Agreement and their leadership continued into the debate over NAFTA. In particular, Canadian women were clear leaders of the transnational organizing efforts that I examine in this project. Importantly, for instance, the first anti-free trade group in Toronto was initiated in late 1985 by Laurell Ritchie who was then on NAC's executive governing body. In addition to NACs efforts to help coordinate initial meetings between a range of organizations (labor, consumer, environment, women's) to discuss the

implications of free trade, NAC's Global Strategies Committee and its chair Lynda Yanz played a critical role in generating transnational coordination among women on NAFTA.

The structure of NAC, as an umbrella organization for approximately 600 member organizations[8] with a membership of more than five million,[9] affords it a particular kind of leverage and connection with local women's organizations around the country. NAC, founded in 1972, is constituted by member organizations which range in size and issue focus and come from all parts of Canada. According to NAC's Constitution, eligible member organizations must have ten or more members and one of their stated objectives must be to advance the status of women in Canada. This means that organizational membership is open to groups identifying as "women's organizations" as well as to those which address women's issues as one aspect of their group's work. Indeed, NACs role as the primary representative and voice of the women's movement in English Canada meant that the organization held important roles in the broader anti-NAFTA organizing efforts in Canada. For instance, NAC was a founding member of the Pro-Canada Network, renamed the Action Canada Network (ACN) in 1991, and maintained a representative on the ACN's Executive Committee. The ACN was critical to the Canadian debate over NAFTA as it was the umbrella anti-free trade organization operating in Canada throughout the fight against NAFTA.

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[8] Figure is from Sunera Thobani, *Presentation to the Standing Committee on Finance*, National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) (Ottawa: NAC, September 16, 1994).

[9] This figure comes from Sylvia Bashevkin, *Women on the Defensive: Living Through Conservative Times* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

Each year, NAC holds an Annual General Meeting (AGM) at which member groups reflect on their work during the previous year and set the course for the organization in the year to come. In determining the strategic direction of NAC for the subsequent year, policy resolutions are submitted, debated, and put to a vote. These resolutions provide an interesting window into the substantive evolution of ideas and issues in the Canadian women's movement. It is possible to track what feminists see as the most pressing policy issues of the day by analyzing these resolutions. Because NAC has a federated membership structure, the AGM resolutions highlight new policy directions for the organization and the women's movement as a whole, and help to set the agenda for women's organizing nationally. It is through the AGM, as well as other campaigns and committee work, that NAC coordinates national and local activities across the country. As a result, it is not surprising that local Canadian women's organizations were also involved in transnational organizing around issues of gender and international trade.

For the most part, locally-based women's organizations worked in conjunction with NAC on issues of free trade. The local Canadian women's organizations which participated in transnational organizing in response to NAFTA were those whose mission highlighted either economic issues, international issues, or both. For instance, Woman to Woman Global Strategies in British Columbia was centrally involved in these efforts as was Mujer a Mujer, Canada. The mission of both of these organizations was centrally concerned with economics and international politics. While organizations did work autonomously from NAC,

particularly in coordinating activities with groups and individuals in Mexico,[10] much of the work of local Canadian women's organizations was coordinated through NAC's provincial or national bodies. In this way, the structure of NAC served as a mechanism for information dissemination and coordination. Indeed, the role of locally-based women's organizations in Canada was critical to NAC's leadership. Since NAC is an umbrella organization, it was member organizations who championed the need to address issues of gender and free trade. This integral connection between NAC's activities on free trade and that of its constituent members is perhaps best exemplified by the role of NAC's Global Strategies Committee in transnational efforts to respond to NAFTA. NAC's Global Strategies Committee, which served as a central coordinating body for much of the national and transnational organizing to raise issues of gender and NAFTA, was chaired by Lynda Yanz, who was also a primary force behind Mujer a Mujer in Canada. Mujer a Mujer-Canada, had strong ties with Mujer a Mujer in Mexico and these two organizations were the primary initiators of cross-border cooperation around gender issues in the NAFTA debate.

NAC also worked with a number of non-women's organizations in their organizing efforts around gender and international trade and was able to encourage or successfully support the transnational mobilization efforts of these organizations. A number of other non-women's organizations worked with NAC on issues of free trade. Indeed, NAC membership is open to organizations or institutions which are

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[10] For instance, in my interviews with members of Woman to Woman Global Strategies in Canada they talked about orchestrating exchanges with women in Mexico and bringing Mexican women to Canada to work on developing joint strategies and to increase their educational activities around gender and global economic issues.

not primarily defined as women's organizations. Membership is open to the "women's branch/program/issue component of organizations" that endorse the purposes and objectives of NAC.[11] Partially because of their connection with NAC, a number of organizations that would not be identified as "women's organizations" were involved in advocacy efforts around gender and NAFTA. For example, organizations like the Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice (ECEJ) worked closely with NAC around the international economic issues. ECEJ focuses on research, education and advocacy on issues of trade and fiscal policy and became a NAC member organization, according to Lorraine Michael, the chief ECEJ/NAC liaison, because they wanted to do more on "the impact on women both in Canada and globally because of changes to trade and fiscal policies." ECEJ worked closely with NAC because they "couldn't be doing research on women without doing it from inside the women's movement."[12] The women's programs of other non-women's organizations were also involved in transnational organizing around NAFTA. The *Women in the Americas: Changing the Terms of Trade*[13] program of Oxfam Canada was, for instance, involved with groups in British Colombia to raise awareness about the gender implications of trade and to coordinate transnational activities among women in Canada and Mexico.[14]

When describing the type of groups that participated in organizing efforts

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[11] See the NAC Constitution for further delineation of membership requirements.

[12] From my interview with Lorraine Michael, Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice (Toronto, March 24 1997).

[13] This program changed its name to *Women in the Americas* in the mid-1990's.

[14] From my interview with Miriam Palacios, Director, Women in the Americas program, Oxfam Canada, Interview (Vancouver, B.C. by telephone, April 16 1997).

around gender and NAFTA, the central role of Canada's main women's organization–NAC–is quite evident. Smaller local women's organizations and the women's programs of non-women's organizations were also involved in these efforts. However, these organizations often used NAC as a coordinating body for their national and transnational advocacy efforts. I will return to the terrain of participation in transnational organizing around gender and NAFTA in Sections III and IV of this chapter. There, I will explore in greater depth why NAC, local women's organizations, and the women's programs of unions and development organizations, participated actively in these organizing efforts by focusing particular attention on the relationship of the Canadian women's movement to state institutions and the ideology of this movement.

**Mexico**

The distribution of Mexican groups participating in transnational organizing around issues of gender and NAFTA stands in sharp contrast to that in Canada. In Mexico, the nexus of these organizing efforts was not a national organization, but rather a solid collection of locally-based women's organizations combined with a number of women's programs of development organizations or unions. The smaller women's organizations that got involved, like Mujer a Mujer and Mujeres en Acción Sindical, were those whose mission highlighted economic and international issues as well as those focused on the *maquiladoras* along the Mexico-U.S. border. In addition, a number of unions, particularly the women's program Frente Autentico del Trabajo (FAT), an independent union, were involved in these efforts. Development

organizations like Fronteras Comunes also developed a gender program which was quite engaged in national and transnational organizing efforts.

While the Mexican women's movement does not have a national umbrella organization akin to NAC in Canada, Mujer a Mujer did serve as a coordinating body and clearinghouse for strategy building and information dissemination. While there are women's organizations that work in a number of different states, in Mexico City, Chiapas and Chihuahua, for instance, there is no one organization with a national profile and an open or general mandate to address the whole spectrum of "women's issues." Most of the truly national women's organizing efforts are facilitated by umbrella organizations or coordinating bodies which focus on a particular issue, like women's health or electoral quotas.[15] During the NAFTA debate, there was no such coordinating body addressing international or economic issues in the country.

Smaller women's organizations, particularly those focused on international and/or economic issues and those which specifically address issues of concern to women working in the *maquiladoras*, constituted the backbone of national and transnational organizing efforts. Although Mujer a Mujer did not have a national profile, it played a central role in energizing, encouraging, and coordinating these efforts. Interestingly, Mujer a Mujer was founded in 1985 by a small group of U.S. activists living in Mexico. The group began by connecting Mexican and U.S. grass roots and activist women. Mujer a Mujer was established with the explicit purpose of making transnational linkages between activists in the U.S. and Mexican women's movements. The goal was to help activists gain international access to people and

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[15] Claudia Hinojosa, Email message to Debra Liebowitz, Discussion of the structure of the Mexican women's movement (June, 1999).

resources with similar interests and concerns. Mujer a Mujer became the most important women's organization working against NAFTA in Mexico. As Canadian organizer Lynda Yanz suggested, the women of Mujer a Mujer in Mexico were "really...visionary" because they understood the importance of facilitating transnational advocacy efforts.[16] They recognized that changes in the international political and economic arena meant that women's organizations needed to work collaboratively across borders in order to ensure that gender issues were alive on policy making agendas.

The role of Mujer a Mujer in Mexican organizing around gender and free trade is even more surprising because of the particular composition of the group. The organization was started by women from the United States living in Mexico. It did, however, evolve to include Mexican women among its core group of activists.[17] In talking with Mexican activists about Mujer a Mujer's history and role in the NAFTA debate, no one suggested that it was a problem that the organization had been started by women from the U.S. In fact, the group was always represented to me as one of the "Mexican" women's organizations involved in the NAFTA debate.

In addition to the central role played by Mujer a Mujer, many other smaller women's organizations were actively involved in these debates. Mujeres en Acción Sindical (MAS), for example, was another important player in these advocacy efforts. With Mujer a Mujer, MAS coordinated the most important tri-national

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[16] From my interview with Lynda Yanz, Mujer a Mujer, Canada and Maquila Solidarity Network (Toronto, October 9 1996).

[17] See for instance my interview with Vicki Villanueva, Mujer a Mujer-Mexico and CONAMUP, Interview (Toronto, March 21 1997).

meeting around gender and economic integration, the Tri-National Conference of Women Workers on Economic Integration and Free Trade held in February 1992 in Valle de Bravo, Mexico. Also participating in some of these efforts were organizations like Grupo de Educación Popular con Mujeres, which focuses on popular education with women in rural areas and in the workplace.

In addition to the participation of locally-based women's organization, a number of non-women's organizations in Mexico were also extremely active in transnational advocacy efforts around gender and NAFTA. The women's programs of Mexican development organizations and unions were engaged in transnational organizing around gender and NAFTA in much greater numbers than those of similar groups in Canada and the United States. Of those organizations based in Mexico City, the two primary examples are the gender program at Fronteras Comunes, a development organization and the women's program of Frente Autentico del Trabajo (FAT), an independent union. The directors of these programs worked closely with Mujer a Mujer in organizing on both the national and transnational levels. Further, members of these organizations played a significant role in raising gender issues within the guise of Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio (RMALC), the national umbrella organization which coordinated those critical of the NAFTA agreement in Mexico. Their participation in RMALC meant that gender issues were being raised by people other than just Mujer a Mujer members.

In addition to these Mexico City-based unions and development organizations, a number of organizations which primarily address border-related

issues, were also particularly attuned to the NAFTA debate. While these groups were not necessarily "women's organizations" they were involved in transnational organizing efforts around gender issues. Because workers in the *maquila* region are predominantly women, and were until very recently, overwhelmingly women, many of the grassroots organizations operating in the area specifically address gender issues and participated in transnational organizing efforts around gender and NAFTA. The organizations on the border "were already dealing with the reality of NAFTA"[18] and as a result they were only concerned with whether further economic integration would make conditions better or worse. Many of these organizations saw the debate over NAFTA as an opportunity to raise some of their concerns about the conditions under which Mexican workers labored in foreign-owned factories.

The vast majority of community organizations in the *maquila* region eventually participated in the NAFTA debate. They constituted a core part of the organizing efforts, and coordinated with many U.S. organizations that brought delegations of policy- and opinion-makers to the border. These U.S. and Mexican groups brought people to see first hand, the consequences of economic integration when it proceeds without the implementation of clear labor and human rights standards. Many of these organizations, like the Comité Fronterizo de Obreras[19] (CFO) do not identify as women's organizations. However, by virtue of the constituency they serve, they regularly grapple with a wide range of gender issues.

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[18] Confidential Interview

[19] The translated the name of the organization is the Border Committee of Women Workers.

Therefore, they found themselves working closely with those interested in gender and NAFTA from the U.S. and Canada.

By and large, the types of groups that participated in transnational NAFTA organizing around gender issues from Mexico were quite different from participating Canadian organizations. In Mexico, transnational organizing was spearheaded not by a large national umbrella organization, but instead was the brainchild of Mujer a Mujer–a small women's organization that focused on economic issues and promoted international collaboration. While Mujer a Mujer served some of the coordinating functions in Mexico that NAC did in Canada, it was a small organization with limited resources. In addition, it did not have the national audience of NAC. This meant that the majority of organizations that participated in transnational advocacy efforts from Mexico were either women's organizations similar in type to Mujer a Mujer or were the women's programs of development organizations or unions. For the most part, these local women's organizations or women's programs of development organizations and unions established an internationally focused agenda that included work on the relationship between gender and North American economic integration.

**The United States**

In the United States, organizing around gender and North American economic integration was more moderate than it was in either Mexico or Canada. U.S. women's organizations participated less in national and transnational venues than their counterparts to the south and the north. There was no one

organization–like NAC in Canada, or Mujer a Mujer in Mexico–which coordinated activities and created opportunities for transnational collaboration among women in the region. In the U.S., major women's organizations like the National Organization of Women (NOW) or the Feminist Majority Foundation opted not to participate in these advocacy efforts. While participation of major national women's organizations was solicited by feminists in Canada as well as by the national U.S. anti-NAFTA coalition, the Citizen's Trade Campaign, these women's organizations opted not to do so. In Sections III and IV, I will talk more about why national women's organizations made the decision not to participate in cross-border advocacy endeavors.

Though the lack of participation on the part of the major U.S. women's organizations limited cohesive organizing efforts, a number of small or local U.S. women's organizations participated in national and transnational advocacy efforts in response to NAFTA. Women's organizations with particular interests in economics, international issues, or the needs of immigrant women and women of color participated in these advocacy efforts. Organizations like Alt-WID (Alternative Women in Development) based in Washington D.C. worked in conjunction with groups like Women's Alternative Economic Network (WAEN) around issues of gender and the politics of economic integration. WAEN existed from 1990-1994 as a network of women's organizations and feminist activists working in the United States on issues of economic justice. The goal of the network was to collectively search for "economic alternatives to overcome poverty and attain a higher standard

of living" for all people.[20] While WAEN members did participate, to some extent, in the NAFTA debate, they were more focused on domestic political organizing than they were in participating in transnational organizing in response to NAFTA.

Some U.S. women's organizations raised concerns about gender in the NAFTA debate, but did not participate much in transnational organizing efforts. For some, it was easier to raise these issues in the context of domestic political organizing around the agreement than it was to do so in a transnational setting. For an organization like La Mujer Obrera in El Paso, the politics of transnational organizing are restricted by the very goals or purpose of the organization: to "protect U.S. jobs" by organizing garment workers in Texas.[21] Since their goal was to encourage factories not to move south of the border, transnational collaboration was difficult. While if groups in Mexico shared similar concerns, collaboration would have required a rethinking of their *raison d'etre*.

Although organizations of union women were engaged in domestic political organizing to raise issues of gender and NAFTA, like some of the U.S. border organizations, they too were not very involved in transnational organizing efforts. One such organization, the Coalition of Labor Union Women, actively participated

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[20] Mercedes López, 'Discussing Economics on the Border', *Correspondencia*:XII, Winter/Spring 1991 & 1992, pp. 15-17.

[21] Benjamin Marquez makes a similar point about La Mujer Obrera (LMO) in an article about their organizing efforts. He writes, "LMO argues that the source of garment workers' problems is the free market itself that allows corporations to move their operations at will, gives them access to large pools of cheap labor and the power to amass large amounts of wealth. For lasting reform, they see the need for a political movement that will seize control of a productive process in order to redistribute wealth and power." Quoted from Benjamin Marquez, "Organizing Mexican-American Women in the Garment Industry: La Mujer Obrera," *Women & Politics* 15, no. 1 (1995): 65-87. P. 74.

in national education and organizing efforts around the agreement, but only tangentially engaged in transnational advocacy efforts. This pattern of domestic political participation around NAFTA and only minimal participation in cross-border efforts was also evident with unions which primarily represent women workers like the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.[22] Like most union organizing during the NAFTA debate, their work was primarily national in scope with relatively few resources geared toward transnational organizing efforts. The primary foray of these groups into the transnational arena was in making connections with women's organizations in Mexico in order to bring delegations of U.S. opinion- and policy-makers to the U.S.-Mexico border region.

Unlike in Mexico and Canada where non-women's organizations played a significant role in transnational organizing around gender and economic integration, such organizations by and large did not participate in these efforts from the United States. While many think tanks, development organizations and unions were active in the national NAFTA debate, and participated in the Alliance for Responsible Trade's[23] transnational coordination efforts, this work did not raise gender issues. In sum, those who participated in transnational organizing efforts around gender and NAFTA from the United States were primarily locally based women's organizations whose main focus was either economic or international issues or those whose primary constituency was immigrant women or women of color. And

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[22] In 1995 the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers' Union merged to form UNITE, the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees.

[23] In the U.S. there were two primary anti-NAFTA coordinating bodies. While the division of labor between the groups was not absolute, the Citizen's Trade Campaign focused on domestic political work while the Alliance for Responsible Trade concentrated on cross-border networking.

the major U.S. anti-NAFTA coalition did not, for the most part, address issues of gender.

## III. Exploring Differences: A Turn Toward Movement Structure

As I explained in introduction to this chapter, the changes in the international political arena that NAFTA represented altered the political calculus for NGOs interested in international economic issues. Those groups that participated in transnational organizing around gender and NAFTA believed that the proposal of a comprehensive North American trade agreement shifted the political terrain in a way that encouraged or fostered cross-border collaboration. The agreement signified changes in the way that business was to be done, as well as changes in the channels of power and responsibility in the economic and political systems of the region. In other words, these changes at the international political level, shifted the "logic of collective action" on the ground. If Mexico, Canada, and the United States were to comprise the world's largest trade bloc, NGOs too would have to work across borders in order to raise issues of concern. As governance took a small step toward regionalization, so too would NGOs do the same. However, this shift in the political landscape, which increased the desirability of cross-border collaboration, does not mean that NGOs saw NAFTA as the instigator of regional economic integration. Indeed, economic integration was increasingly a fact of economic life in both Mexico's and Canada's bilateral relationship with the United States, and NAFTA was understood as an expansion of an existing and growing trend. Moreover, a significant number of the NGOs participating in these organizing

efforts previously worked on issues of international economic import–economic development, politics in the *maquiladora* sector, national debt, and budgeting issues. Yet, negotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement formalized the trend toward economic globalization and provided a focal point for advocacy efforts.[24] The intense national and transnational mobilization efforts that took place in response to NAFTA were indeed a sign of the political, economic, and social changes which the Agreement symbolized.

While this story of the shifting logic of collective action is a compelling and accurate one, it represents only part of the story. As Section II illustrated, the type of groups that participated in transnational organizing to raise issues of gender and NAFTA varied significantly across the three countries. In this section, I explore the complex contextual factors that help to explain why particular groups opted to engage in these cross-border advocacy efforts while other refrained. As Section II highlighted, even within the national women's movements of Mexico, Canada, and the U.S., tremendous differences existed in terms of which types of groups participated in cross-border advocacy efforts. To explain these differences, Sections III and IV explore two national-level factors: domestic political institutions and the women's movement's relationship to them, and the ideology of the women's movement. The importance of both of these categories is supported by an increasing body of literature that analyzes the dynamics of and conditions under

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[24] In different ways, both Maria Lorena Cook and Frederick Mayer argue that NAFTA congealed globalization both symbolically and substantively. Maria Lorena Cook, "Regional Integration and Transnational Politics: Popular Sector Strategies in the NAFTA Era," in *The New Politics of Inequality in Latin America: Rethinking Participation and Representation*, ed. Douglas Chalmers, A., et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 516-40; Mayer, *Interpreting NAFTA: The Science and Art of Political Analysis*.

which social movements emerge.[25]

In the introduction to their important edited book, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald synthesize the emerging consensus among social movement scholars about the questions that need be asked in order to explain collective action.[26] These authors present three concepts to help organize new social movement research. First, they suggest the importance of framing possibilities for collective action in the context of the broader political system, or the domestic political institutions, in which movements are embedded. In other words, McAdam, et. al., draw attention to the *national political opportunities* that are available to social movement actors. They also suggest the need to interrogate *mobilizing structures* as they comprise the building blocks of movement organizing. Here, the "organizational infrastructures" of a country are important as is an "assessment of the effect of both state structures and national 'organizational cultures' on the form that movements take in a given country."[27] In other words,

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[25] See for instance, McCarthy, "The Globalization of Social Movement Theory."; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*; David S. Meyer and Sidney Tarrow, *The Social Movement Society: Contentious Politics for a New Century* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 1998); John Anner, *Beyond Identity Politics: Emerging Social Justice Movements in Communities of Color* (Boston: South End Press, 1996); Jackie Smith, Ron Pagnucco and Charles Chatfield, "Social Movements and World Politics: A Theoretical Framework," in *Transnational Social Movements and Global Politics: Solidarity Beyond the State*, ed. Jackie Smith, Charles Chatfield and Ron Pagnucco (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 59-77.

[26] McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*.

[27] Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes--Toward a Synthetic, Comparative Perspective on Social Movements," in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, ed. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). P. 4.

movement scholars must pay attention to the collective vehicles, both formal and informal, through which individuals organize collectively. Finally, McAdam, et. al., suggest the importance of *framing processes* to explaining patterns of mobilization. The concept, *framing processes*, highlights the role of ideas in generating or facilitating collective action. The ideas and meanings that people or movements bring to the table are critical to explaining patterns of political mobilization. Indeed, shared meanings mediate between political opportunity structures, mobilizing structures or organizations, and the end result--action.[28]

The factors that I use to analyze the significant differences in the type of groups that participated in transnational advocacy to raise issues of gender and NAFTA from Mexico, Canada, and the United States, stem from the above framework. In Sections III and IV, I highlight the interactions between national political opportunity structures, mobilizing structures, and framing processes by focusing on two factors: (1) the role of domestic political institutions and the women's movement's relationship to them, and (2) the ideology of the women's movement.

## Domestic Political Institutions and the Women's Movement

When examining why certain types of women's and non-women's organizations in Mexico, Canada, and the United States opted to participate in transnational organizing about gender and NAFTA, the relationship between the women's movement and the state is critically important. Indeed, as social

[28] McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, "Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes--Toward a Synthetic, Comparative Perspective on Social Movements." P. 5.

movement theorists suggest, examples of collective action must be examined within the context of the broader political system in which they are embedded. This is fundamentally important in thinking about transnational political mobilization and is something that, as John McCarthy has pointed out, remains understudied in the literature on cross-border organizing efforts.[29] While it goes without saying that scholars must pay attention to the pivotal role that the state plays in structuring domestic political participation, most studies of transnational mobilization focus more on changes at the international level, than on how national political institutions encourage or circumscribe transnational political action. Consequently, what follows is an exploration of the way that the political institutional contexts of Mexico, Canada, and the United States shaped transnational advocacy around gender and NAFTA.

## Mexico

The debate over NAFTA was radically different in each of the three signatory nations. The primary reason for these differences was that, in the most general sense, the relatively closed nature of the Mexican political system meant that the fight over NAFTA was not going to be played out on Mexican soil. The centralized nature of the federal system and the domination of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) meant that there was no doubt that the Mexican National Congress would wholeheartedly assent to the adoption of a free trade agreement with its Northern neighbors. The Free Trade Agreement was Mexican President

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[29] McCarthy, "The Globalization of Social Movement Theory."

Carlos Salina's economic baby. Furthermore, his political authority and control meant that there were only very limited points of access for non-governmental actors to influence federal policy.

In contrast to the Mexican political system, the Canadian and U.S. political systems are more democratic and relatively more open to pressure politics. Since the terms of the Free Trade Agreement and NAFTA's ultimate fate were never in doubt in Mexico, organizers opted to work with their U.S. and Canadian counterparts to influence the agreement where they thought that their efforts would be more efficacious. Mexican critics of NAFTA realized that they could have more impact on the Mexican government by garnering the attention of the U.S. or Canadian media or lawmakers than by lobbying in their own country. As I explored in Chapter 3, transnational collaboration was also important to Canadian and U.S. organizers. For them, these connections legitimized their critiques of the agreement. Often, the arguments and positions of U.S. and Canadian organizers were strengthened by their ability to point to Mexican organizers who were raising the very same issues. In other words, the lack of democratic access available to Mexican NGOs, led them to seek out strategic alliances across borders as these connections broadened their opportunities for influencing national policy.

Speaking to this point, the head to Mexico's anti-NAFTA umbrella organization, Berta Luján, said that the network's international connections had absolutely strengthened the organization's national standing: "We were able to sit down at the table with them [the Mexican government], at the negotiation table and have them present at our events due to the image that the network [has].... This

was...because of our international work." In addition, Luján attributed part of the credit for the achievements of RMALC and it's constituent organizations to their transnational connections. In her words, "The...achievements that we have had would not have been possible if it wasn't for those relationships."[30] From her perspective, as well as many others who were engaged in the NAFTA debate from Mexico, the cross-border contacts of these NGOs increased their leverage within Mexico, ultimately providing them with a forum for advocating their ideas in spite of the universally positive view of NAFTA within Mexican governmental circles. Moreover, for independent labor unions in Mexico, the corporatist structure of the labor movement meant that they had very little effective power within the country. Yet, independent unions like the Frente Autentico del Trabajo (FAT) could use their connections with RMALC and other international actors to influence state policy. These Mexican organizations, and a number of other women's organizations, intentionally used their international connections to put pressure on the Mexican government. For them, this proved to be an astute political decision.

For women's rights advocates, the scarcity of opportunities for raising issues at the national level clearly influenced the desirability of transnational networking. In other words, the structure of national political opportunities was such that making transnational connections was in the interests of these activists. As a result of progress toward democratization, the Mexican women's movement is now focusing more energy on lobbying government officials. For instance, the organization, *El*

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[30] From my interview with Berta Luján, Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio - Secretaria, Interview (Mexico City, November 18 1996).

*Consorcio Para El Diálogo Parlamentario y La Comunicación Hacia La Equidad*[31], started in early 1999, is dedicated to doing just that. In an interesting way then, the lack of national opportunities during the NAFTA debate actually led to increased transnational organizing around the relationship between gender and North American economic integration. The lack of democratic openness in Mexico led organizers to raise concerns in Canada and the United States about exploitation of women workers in Mexico's export processing sector.

According to Sara Román, an organizer with Mujeres en Acción Sindical (MAS), the connections of Mexican women's organizations with those in the United States and Canada facilitated the process of disseminating "information about the reality faced by Mexican women workers." Because NGOs have been able to disseminate information via their cross-border connections, the international community is "listening to more than just the official governmental or union version of the story...." Cross-border NGOs organizing provided the opportunity, venue and connections to share diverse perspectives. In conclusion, Román suggested that there have been two principal benefits of the international collaboration around NAFTA:

> First, people in other countries now know much more about the situation of women workers in Mexico and they have come to know us so we have increased credibility. Second, the money that we have received [primarily from North American and European NGOs and foundations] has allowed us to expand nationally.[32]

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[31] In English: The Consortium for Parliamentary Dialogue and Communication Toward Equality.

[32] From my interview with Sara Román Esquivel, Mujeres en Acción Sindical (MAS), Interview (Mexico City, November 19 1996).

In essence, Román's comments point to the ways that transnational organizing around NAFTA was, in part, a consequence of the relationship between Mexican NGOs and the Mexican state. By and large, they did not have true access to the national policy making arena and opted to pressure from "outside."

**The United States**

In the United States, the composition of the executive branch of government significantly influenced women's transnational political mobilization against NAFTA. Indeed, this was the primary way in which the structure of state institutions, and the women's movement's relationship to them, affected the organizing efforts that I investigate in this research. The election of Bill Clinton in 1992 was seen as a watershed for women's issues. Given the general animosity between women's organizations and both the Reagan (1981-1988) and Bush administrations (1989-1992), Clinton's election opened up a range of political opportunities for the U.S. women's movement. Indeed, Clinton actively courted the women's vote and feminist leaders during his election campaign. One of his first acts as President was to sign into law the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). For the women's movement this was an important act, symbolically and substantively. National women's organizations had long lobbied for FMLA and they hoped for a range of other legislative victories in the ensuing months.

As I have noted, national women's organizations did not significantly participate in cross-border organizing, in contrast to their Canadian counterparts. In evaluating why organizations like the National Organization for Women, the

Feminist Majority, or the American Association of University Women did not participate in either national or transnational organizing efforts to highlight the gendered implications of NAFTA, the timing of the NAFTA debate and their expectations of the Clinton administration were critically important.[33] The debate over NAFTA was heated during the election campaign, reaching its zenith just before the Congressional vote in November 1993. Involvement in anti-NAFTA organizing efforts would have required national women's organizations to challenge Clinton on his premier foreign policy agenda item in the 103rd Congress. One of the primary reasons why the major Washington D.C.-based women's organizations did not participate in these transnational mobilization efforts was because of their relationship with the newly elected administration. The fact that the NAFTA debate came at the very beginning of Clinton's first term is important to this history. While it is impossible to know whether these organizations would have been more likely to challenge Clinton on NAFTA if the debate had come a later in his administration, the timing made it even less likely that these organizations would use their political capital by taking an oppositional stance on this issue. While U.S. national women's organizations have a long history of challenging friendly candidates for public office as well as friendly elected officials, they were not willing to do so on an issue like international trade policy.[34] In her discussion of women's organizations, Joyce Gelb

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[33] A number of the U.S. activists I interviewed talking about the importance of timing.

[34] National women's organizations have subsequently criticized Clinton on a range of issues, such as welfare reform and health care. See for instance Eileen Boris, "Scholarship and Activism: The Case of Welfare Justice," *Feminist Studies* 24, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 27-31; Eva Feder Kittay, "Dependency, Equality, and Welfare," *Feminist Studies* 24, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 32-43; Margaret M. Conway, David W. Ahern and Gertrude A. Steuernagel, *Women and Public Policy: A Revolution in Progress* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1995).

discusses how women's organizations face the necessity of balancing between "their desire to create change against the need to accommodate the demands...[of] political decision-makers..."[35] Walking this "political tightrope", Gelb argues, is a necessary part of an organization's strategic decision-making processes.

While national women's organizations did not take a stance on NAFTA they did engage in conversations about whether to do so. One activist, involved in the broad-based anti-NAFTA coalition in the United States, stated that members of the group's attempted to get Washington, D.C. women's organizations involved in the NAFTA debate.[36] Talking specifically about the National Organization for Women's decision not to take a stance on NAFTA, a local NOW organizer said,

> ...there were discussions at the national level, but they just essentially...said that they didn't want to take a stand on it, so that's basically how it came down. It's not like there wasn't discussion on it, there was. And there were a lot of people in favor of coming out against NAFTA.[37]

In essence, NOW was unwilling to risk alienating a friendly president over this particular policy initiative. The character of the executive, especially given that women's organizations had just lived through three consecutive presidential administrations who the organization's viewed as hostile, meant they were unwilling to jeopardize gains on their primary issue agenda. In this sense, their assessment of political opportunities in the U.S. deterred national women's organizations from participating in cross-border anti-NAFTA organizing.

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[35] Joyce Gelb, "Feminist Organization Success and the Politics of Engagement," in *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement*, ed. Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancey Martin (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 128-44.

[36] Confidential Interview.

[37] Confidential Interview.

**Canada**

In examining the Canadian terrain of participation in transnational organizing efforts to address issues of gender and NAFTA, a critical factor is the relationship between the state and women's movement organizing. As I explained in Section II, the national Canadian women's organization, NAC, played an instrumental role in coordinating both national and transnational organizing efforts. While NACs role can be traced to a variety of factors, the structure of state/society relations is of fundamental importance.

The connections between the Canadian women's movement and the federal government are unlike that of the women's movements in either the U.S. or Mexico. Indeed, the second wave of the Canadian women's movement was heavily influenced by government action and this played an important role in circumscribing the movement's activism around NAFTA. In order to understand this connection, a brief history of NAC is in order.

In 1967 the federal government established The Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) which issued its final report in September 1970.[38] The report documented women's inequality in Canada and served as an important focal point for women's activism. In April 1972, a group of nearly 500 women gathered

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[38] Information on NAC's founding and the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada comes from Anne Molgat, *An Action That Will Not e Allowed to Subside: NAC's First Twenty Years* (Toronto: National Action Committee on the Status of Women, n/d); Monique Bégin, "The Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada: Twenty Years Later," in *Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States*, ed. Constance Backhouse and David H. Flaherty (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 21-38; Jill Vickers, "The Intellectual Origins of the Women's Movements in Canada," in *Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States*, ed. Constance Backhouse and David H. Flaherty (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 39-60; Marjorie Griffin Cohen, "The Canadian Women's Movement," in *Canadian Women's Issues: Volume I - Strong Voices*, ed. Ruth Roach Pierson, et al. (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., 1993), 1-31.

together at the historic *Strategy for Change* conference, designed to move the Commission's recommendations forward and it was through this process that the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) was born. In preparation for this conference, a smaller group of women's organizations submitted to the federal government a $15,000 grant request for the conference. The language of this grant submission makes clear just how intertwined NAC's founding is with federal government action. The proposal suggested that the group would "...take responsibility for effecting change in the status of women in Canada. We believe that improvement in the status of women can most effectively come about through initiatives taken by women themselves and supported by government."[39] This statement illustrates the integral role envisioned for the federal government by women's movement organizers in redressing gender inequality.

Indeed, details about NAC's founding remain relevant today, and are vital to this particular discussion, because the women's movement in Canada continues to work in closer collaboration with the federal government than is true in many other countries. Indeed, the history of cooperation in Canada, between the federal government and NAC, differs sharply from parallel relationships in both the U.S. and Mexico. As Monique Bégin has remarked, "The political consequences of this [NAC's founding] are extraordinary and help to explain the powerful role played by NAC in its interaction with the federal government in later years."[40] It is common for

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[39] Quoted in Molgat, *An Action That Will Not e Allowed to Subside: NAC's First Twenty Years.*

[40] Bégin, "The Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada: Twenty Years Later." P. 35.

the Canadian women's movement, often through NAC, to comment on and participate in debates over major issues of the day. In other words, the political opportunity structures strongly facilitated NAC's participation in anti-NAFTA advocacy. NAC's prominent role in promoting and coordinating Canadian activism around issues of gender and trade can in large part be explained by the organization's connections to the state policy making arena.

The connection between the federal government and the women's movement extends beyond the founding of NAC. Generally, it is expected that the movement will participate in a wide range of pressing policy discussions. At the same time, the Canadian women's movement has been much more dependent on government funding than women's organizations in either the United States or Mexico. Up until the late 1980's, the Canadian government contributed upwards of two-thirds of NAC's annual budget. In the late 1980's NAC took positions critical of the federal government on two major national issues: against the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and against a proposed Constitutional amendment (dubbed the Meech Lake Accord) to grant Quebec greater autonomy.[41] What followed was a sharp reduction in NAC's federal funding. As a result of cuts to women's programs in the 1989-1990 federal budget, NAC's grant was cut 50%.[42] In my interview with then NAC Treasurer Maureen Leyland, she talked extensively about the impact of federal

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[41] For more on NAC's opposition to both the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accord to grant Quebec greater autonomy see Paula Bourne, "Women, Law and the Justice System," in *Canadian Women's Issues: Volume I - Strong Voices*, ed. Ruth Roach Pierson, et al. (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., 1993), 321-93; Matthew Sparke, "Negotiating National Action: Free Trade, Constitutional Debate and the Gendered Geopolitics of Canada," *Political Geography* 15, no. 6/7 (1996): 615-39.

[42] Molgat, *An Action That Will Not e Allowed to Subside: NAC's First Twenty Years*.

government funding cutbacks, which continued into the early and mid-1990s, and clearly linked these cutbacks to NAC's challenging the government on vital policy issues.[43] Moreover, Leyland and a number of other interviewees suggested that these cutbacks had been, and continue to be, very difficult for the organization to absorb. It remains to be seen whether a more contentious relationship between NAC and the federal government will curb NAC's ability to effectively engage in the policy making arena. While the Canadian women's movement has retained autonomy from the state, it has historically had a closer relationship to the state than the largest women's organizations in Mexico and the United States. Moreover, this relationship clearly affected women's involvement in transnational NAFTA organizing.

## IV. Ideology and Women's Movements

In addition to the role of state institutions, social movement theory, directs us toward mobilizing structures and framing processes as rich ground for investigation. Mobilizing structures constitute the building blocks of movement activities, and as such, the study of collective vehicles through which individuals organize is critical. The notion of framing processes calls attention to the role of ideas in generating or spurring collective action. The ideas and meanings that people or movements bring to the table are integral to explaining patterns of political mobilization.

I take up this discussion in the following section by examining how women's NGOs in each of the three countries delimit what counts as a "women's issue."

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[43] Maureen Leyland, Public Service Alliance of Canada and Formerly Treasurer on the NAC Executive Committee (Toronto, March 24 1997).

Arguing, in essence, that while we may adopt a common label for the "women's movement" in Mexico, Canada, and the United States, the scope of issue foci (framing processes) among these movements is actually quite varied and this is directly related to the movement's mobilizing structures. In other words, the way that women's issues are framed is, in part, a consequence **of** the composition of women's NGOs and yet has consequences **for** the types of mobilization efforts in which movements engage.

## Issue Definition in Women's Movements

As the issue of a North American trade agreement emerged in policy making circles, it met with varying receptions from the women's movement in Mexico, Canada and the United States. While none of the individual organizations or overall national movements had longstanding experience addressing issues of international trade,[44] the structure and history of each country's movement was a factor in determining which organizations would be disposed to advocacy work on the topic. In examining the issue focus of these movements, I am looking precisely at the point where mobilizing structures and framing processes come together. Indeed, I argue that movements with a history of addressing related issues were significantly more likely to see transnational organizing around gender and NAFTA as in their interests. More specifically, movements with a history of addressing three issue categories are relevant: economic issues, international policy concerns, and/or issues primarily affecting women of color, immigrant women, and/or poor women.

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[44] As I have discussed extensively, the Canadian women's movement's involvement in the trade debate can be dated to NAFTA's precursor–the 1989 Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement.

In other words, the issue focus of the movement, the predominant ideology of the movement, and the way organizations understand their mission conditions mobilization patterns.

In the case of the U.S. women's movement, for instance, mainstream organizations have historically not focused much attention on international politics or on issues which are seen as disproportionately affecting women of color or poor women. Consequently, it was harder to interest them in participating in organizing efforts around NAFTA. Regardless of whether or not the policy was likely to have a particular set of consequences for women, these U.S. organizations were unlikely participants. Because the attention of these organizations has not focused extensively on either international issues or on issue affecting primarily poor women in the U.S., it makes sense that free trade would be seen as tangential to their primary policy concerns. While I will explore the issue focus of the women's movement in the United States in greater depth in a moment, this brief example illustrates how the issue focus or approach of a national social movement will have tremendous consequences for whether or not actors in that movement see their interests as implicated in a particular policy debate. Consequently, the issue focus of a particular social movement must be understood as an important aspect of facilitating or inhibiting opportunities for transnational political action.

**The United States**

To continue the story of why national women's organizations were not active around NAFTA, it is important to look at how the movement has addressed

international economic issues and issues of concern to poor women. Doing so requires an examination of the ideology of national women's organizations as well as the history and focus of particular national organizations. To a large extent, the multi-issue national women's organizations, like the Feminist Majority Fund, the National Organization for Women, and the American Association of University Women have not focused much attention on international economic issues.[45] Thus, the mobilizing structure and framing processes in the U.S. women's movement deterred national organizations from participating in anti-NAFTA cross-border collaboration.

Mobilizing structures in the U.S. differ greatly from their Mexican and Canadian counterparts. In the United States, there are a large number of national women's organizations. In addition to the multi-issue organizations mentioned above, there are also a number of other women's organizations that are national in scope: National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, National Women's Political Caucus, National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League among others, too numerous to list. However, the particular foci of their work made them unlikely to see international economic issues as within their purview.

In addition, there are a number of other national women's organizations that frame their mission as primarily designed to redress economic discrimination against women, for example: the Coalition of Labor Union Women, 9to5, Wider

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[45] Since the IV World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in 1995, one national U.S. organization, the Feminist Majority Fund, has begun to incorporate international issues more centrally onto their advocacy agenda.

Opportunities for Women, and the Institute for Women's Policy Research. Given their issue focus, one might have expected these organizations to participate in transnational organizing around the gender implication of NAFTA. Yet, among national women's economic justice organizations only CLUW was engaged in the NAFTA debate and interestingly, their work was nearly exclusively confined to the domestic political arena.[46]

Indeed, national U.S. women's organizations have taken up economic issues (pay equity, equal credit, affirmative action, child support enforcement, Equal Rights Amendment, etc.). However, they have framed these issues almost entirely within a domestic political context. In looking at these domestic economic issues, national U.S. women's organizations rarely consider the relationship between the domestic economy and international economic change.[47] As a result, the U.S. women's movement has found it increasingly difficult to address issues which arise from changing economic times.[48] The U.S. economy may be increasingly globalizing, but the U.S. women's movement has been slow to incorporate these issues into their

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[46] Anonymous Interview.

[47] This is not limited to women's organizations in the United States. For example, the modern U.S. labor movement has up until quite recently developed strategies which do not adequately address the globalization of capital. See for instance Brian Burgoon, "NAFTA Thoughts: Evaluating Labor's Fair Trade Strategy," *Dollars and Sense*, September/October 1995, 10-13 and 40-41; Barry Carr, "Crossing Borders: Labor Internationalism in the Era of NAFTA," in *Neoliberalism Revisited: Economic Resturcturing and Mexico's Political Future*, ed. Gerardo Otero (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 209-31; David Glenn, "How Fast Track Was Derailed: Lesson's for Labor's Future," *Dissent*, Fall 1998, 47-52.

[48] Martha Burk and Heidi Hartmann, "Beyond the Gender Gap," *The Nation*, June 10 1996, 18-21.

agenda.[49] Only a few small women's organizations, like Alterative Women in Development, consistently make these connections and they were also the organizations that were most likely to participate in the NAFTA debate.[50]

The fact that national women's organizations did not have a history of defining their interests as encompassing international economic issues, meant that when free trade was hoisted up the feminist flagpole, the right people did not salute.[51] The decision about whether or not to pursue the issue is dependent on who and how many people salute. Acccording to Heidi Hartmann, the notion of "flagpole feminism" can be linked to the inattention of national women's organization's to NAFTA.

> What you could say about flagpole feminism is that when these other groups raised globalization or NAFTA or international trade up the flagpole no body [within the women's movement] saluted.... The best way to make strategic progress might be to say, "Well what is the political situation and where are the opportunities? They're working on NAFTA and here's a place where the women's movement could [get] visibility.... If we all work on this...if we all got up to snuff and learned...." Everybody would have said, "My god, the women's movement has a position on NAFTA, unbelievable." There would have been lots of press and lots of visibility because it would have been so unexpected.
>
> So, opportunities are missed. I mean, if your goal is to influence policy and to recruit more people to the women's movement then NAFTA

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[49] Leslie R. Wolfe and Jennifer Tucker, "Feminism Lives: Building a Multicultural Women's Movement in the United States," in *The Challenge of Local Feminisms*, ed. Amrita Basu (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1995), 435-62; Charlotte Bunch, "Bringing the Global Home," in *Passionate Politics: Feminist Theory in Action* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).

[50] Alt-WID, *Reaganomics and Women: Structural Adjustment U.S. Style - 1980-1992* (Washington, D.C.: Alternative Women in Development, 1992).

[51] Burk and Hartmann, use the term "flagpole feminism" to describe the process whereby movement organizations determine their issue agenda. It works something like this: someone gets an idea for an issue or strategy that they think the women's movement ought to pursue, they raise it up the flagpole, and then wait and see who salutes.

would have been a great issue.[52]

I quote Hartmann at length because her analysis of the way that the women's movement defines its agenda is particularly relevant to this analysis. Given national women's organizations' inattention to international economic issues, there is no reason why they would have saluted as NAFTA lumbered up the pole. On this point, Leslie Wolfe and Jennifer Tucker argue that

> To flourish in the coming years, the women's movement in the United States must increasingly see itself as part of global women's movement's. It will increasingly be affected by global changes in government and economic systems and by the way technology links the destinies of people throughout the world in ways that have never existed before.[53]

Yet, to continue using the flagpole metaphor, NAFTA **was** actually hoisted up the pole. Major U.S. women's organizations were approached by Canadian activists. They were also encouraged to get involved in these organizing efforts by members of the broad-based anti-NAFTA coalitions in the U.S. However, a number of activists suggested that both the Citizen's Trade Campaign and the Alliance for Responsible Trade were not particularly interested in addressing gender issues.[54] Moreover, some women within major U.S. women's organizations did raise the debate over NAFTA in internal policy making discussions. For instance, explaining her attempts to get local chapters of the National Organization for Women (NOW) to more fully engage economic issues, a long-time NOW activist expressed her

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[52] Heidi Hartmann, President, Institute for Women's Policy Research, Interview (New Brunswick, New Jersey, May 22 1996).

[53] Wolfe and Tucker, "Feminism Lives: Building a Multicultural Women's Movement in the United States." Page 457.

[54] Confidential Interview. Also, see Chapter 3 for more details.

belief that participating in the NAFTA debate might help counter the movement's ignorance of global economic concerns. "...I thought that if they learn and they know how issues like NAFTA and GATT and transnational corporations influence women and have an absolute impact on their own living conditions, then they'll change their mind" and participate more fully in these efforts.[55]

The deleterious impact of NAFTA on women in the U.S. was expected to affect primarily women of color and poorer women concentrated in vulnerable manufacturing industries.[56] Thus, NAFTA's primary negative impact on women was expected to fall on constituencies whose organizing efforts *as women* are concentrated in smaller local organizations and are not, ofr the most part, at the center of the organizing efforts of national groups. In this sense, the terrain of mobilizing structures within the U.S. women's movement helps to explain why participation in transnational organizing in response to NAFTA was confined to small women's organizations in the U.S. Indeed, these organizations focused particularly on international economic issues or served predominantly women of color, immigrant and/or poor women.

In this regard, many scholars and activists have argued that inadequate attention to the needs of poor women is linked to insufficient consideration of issues primarily affecting women of color. Highlighting this connection, Kimberly Christensen, argues that "a poverty in political discourse about real-world economic

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[55] Confidential Interview.

[56] Congressional Research Service, "Proportion of Women Workers in Manufacturing Jobs Likely to Be Affected by the North American Free Trade Agreement," Memorandum from Charles Ciccone to U.S. Representative Marcy Kaptur (Washington D.C., April 20 1993).

alternatives" is what makes it particularly difficult for organizations of predominantly white women to adequately address racism and engage women of color.[57] Her logic is simple: mainstream women's organizations in the United States have not yet fully developed "antiracist positions on current economic issues." Thus, in order for these organizations to be open to addressing issue like NAFTA, whose impact in the immediate sense would be felt by women of color, immigrant women, and low-income women, feminist organizations must be pressured "to develop new organizations and new coalitions to properly address these issues."[58] In their article about directions for the women's movement Burk and Hartmann strike the same note,

> ...we must address the traditional complaint of women of color that the movement has not been for them. Emphasis on a new, primarily economic agenda–pay, promotion and advancement, employment environment, child care, violence and sexual harassment–could cut across race and class lines.[59]

Johanna Brenner, in her insightful discussion of feminism in the U.S., suggests that "The women's lobby has mobilized much more effectively around the threat to abortion rights than it has around other threats to women's lives–the crisis of the inner cities, lack of healthcare and childcare, low wages...."[60] Others like Burk and Hartmann observe a gap between the main priorities of major U.S. women's

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[57] Kimberly Christensen, "With Whom Do You Believe Your Lot Is Cast?" White Feminists and Racism," *Signs* 22, no. 3 (1997): 617-48. P. 634.

[58] Christensen, "With Whom Do You Believe Your Lot Is Cast?" White Feminists and Racism." P. 638.

[59] Burk and Hartmann, "Beyond the Gender Gap."

[60] Johanna Brenner, "The Best of Times, the Worst of Times: Feminism in the United States," in *Mapping the Women's Movement: Feminist Politics and Social Transformation in the North*, ed. Monica Threlfall (New York: Verso, 1996), 17-72. P. 39

organizations and the most pressing concerns of large numbers of U.S. women. In response, they call for a reassessment of these priorities in order to recover what they identify as "lost ground." Specifically, they suggest the women's movement is too "identified with abortion" and that organizations have not done enough to

> ...educat[e] women as to why fair pay, for example, is something they could help to bring about through a movement. Nor have we shown women that contingent employment, loss of benefits, forced part-time work or the falling value of the minimum wage are women's issues that the women's movement is addressing.[61]

Indeed, I argue that many of these issues are constituted through processes of globalization. Yet, in spite of these calls for change and the existence of an analytic perspective which could have linked NAFTA to U.S. women's concerns, participation was resisted, not embraced.

As I argue, the history of issue-definition within a national social movement, in this case the women's movement in the United States, frames, constrains, and delimits the types of people who participate in these organizations. In turn, who participates affects the issues that are addressed and the strategies employed to confront these concerns. In this case, the framing of issues and mobilizing structures of major U.S. women's organizations deterred their participation in NAFTA.

This analysis of the mainstream U.S. women's movement illustrates that the history of a movement, in particular, the issues with which the movement concerns itself (i.e. the mobilizing structures and framing processes), serve as critical filters in assessing organizing opportunities. The history of the women's movement with

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[61] Burk and Hartmann, "Beyond the Gender Gap." P. 20.

regard to economic, international, and issues facing women of color limited the extent to which participation in transnational organizing around gender and NAFTA was seen as in the interests of national U.S. women's organizations. In other words, the understanding of women's economic issues as primarily domestic concerns, and limited integration of women of color and class issues into the "mainstream" women's movement, were an important factor in forestalling significant participation in anti-NAFTA cross-border organizing by the major U.S. national women's organizations.

**Canada**

In comparison to the national women's movement in the United States, the Canadian movement has had a very different history of addressing economic issues. When discussion about the possibility of NAFTA emerged, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) already had a significant advocacy record on international trade policy. As I suggested in the Section III, the close relationship between the federal government and NAC, in part explains why NAC saw it as in its interest to participate in the free trade debate. NAC had a history of working with the government by commenting on policy proposals and suggesting particular reforms. Indeed, for most of the first twenty years of the organization's existence, it had been able to win a significant number of policy victories.[62]

At the same time, while NAC had a history of commenting on major issues

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[62] Bégin, "The Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada: Twenty Years Later."

of the day, their work on free trade represented a departure from the status quo. First, attention to free trade within the Canadian women's movement represented an extension of NACs policy agenda to include more "non-traditional" women's issues. In part, this shift occurred because of an ideological struggle that was underway within the organization. In general, this struggle was between liberal feminists, on the one hand, who were content with using the government structure to make incremental reforms and more radical or socialist leaning members, on the other hand, who advocated more fundamental challenges to the policy process.[63] The debate over free trade represented a second departure from NAC's status quo: It was the first time that the organization vociferously opposed the government on a major foreign policy initiative.

While NAC's central role in the free trade debate was a challenge to the status quo, attention to economic issues within the Canadian women's movement did not begin there. Efforts of the Canadian women's movement in the 1970's "focused to a considerable extent on economic issues."[64] Yet, during the same period of time, confrontation with the federal government over macro-economic policy was not particularly common. However, more sustained critiques of economic policy developed quite logically out of women's everyday experiences with economic constraints–at work, in the family and as clients of and workers in social

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[63] For analysis of this split see Sylvia B. Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love: The Politics of Canadian Nationalism* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1991); Ruth Roach Pierson, et al., *Canadian Women's Issues: Volume I - Strong Voices* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., 1993).

[64] Marjorie Griffin Cohen, "The Canadian Women's Movement and Its Efforts to Influence the Canadian Economy," in *Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States*, ed. Constance Backhouse and David H. Flaherty (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 215-24. P. 216.

service agencies. As was evident in the free trade debate, these experiences highlighted the importance of engaging in macro-economic policy debates in order to achieve feminist goals.[65]

As I mentioned in Section II, NAC holds an Annual General Meeting (AGM) each year. The AGM plays an important role in the development of policy initiatives for the organization and the women's movement as a whole. Each year, policy resolutions are submitted, debated, and put to vote. These resolutions provide an interesting window into the substantive evolution of ideas and issues in the Canadian women's movement. It is possible to track what feminists see as the most pressing policy issues of the day by analyzing these resolutions. And, as I mentioned before, NAC's federated membership structure means that AGM resolutions propose policy directions for the women's movement as a whole.

In order to understand why the Canadian women's movement was more likely to take up the issue NAFTA, and engage in transnational organizing to promote their position, it is critical to understand the movement's history of engagement with free trade. In order to assess this history, I reviewed all resolutions passed by NAC members at the AGMs between 1979 and 1996. Prior to NAFTA, eight resolutions were passed at AGMs which addressed issues of free trade. While there was one resolution passed in 1979 which urged "trade policies

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[65] On the history of the Canadian women's movement with regard to economic issues see Martha MacDonald, "Economic Restructuring and Gender in Canada: Feminist Policy Initiatives," *World Development* 23, no. 11 (November 1995): 2005-17; Cohen, "The Canadian Women's Movement and Its Efforts to Influence the Canadian Economy."; Marjorie Griffin Cohen, "Social Policy and Social Services," in *Canadian Women's Issues: Volume I - Strong Voices*, ed. Ruth Roach Pierson, et al. (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., 1993), 264-320; Marjorie Griffin Cohen, "Feminism's Effect on Economic Policy," in *Canadian Women's Issues: Volume II - Bold Visions*, ed. Ruth Roach Pierson and Marjorie Griffin Cohen (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., 1995), 263-98.

that protect domestic industries" the bulk of the resolutions were passed during the debate over the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA). See Table 5.2 for a summary of the resolutions passed between 1979 and 1990.

**Table 5.2.**
**National Action Committee on the Status of Women Annual General Meeting Resolutions on Free Trade Prior to the NAFTA Debate, 1979-1990.**

| Resolution # | Year | Resolution Summary |
|---|---|---|
| **300.10.7** | 1979 | That NAC urge trade policies that protect domestic manufacturers |
| **300.10.16** | 1986 | That NAC condemn government attempts to rely on the market to direct the economy; and oppose privatization, deregulations, and free trade. |
| **100.10.8** | 1987 | That NAC oppose free trade with the U.S. out of concern for women's jobs, conditions of work, and social programs in Canada. |
| **100.10.9** | 1987 | That NAC endorse the executive's call for an immediate federal election in which free trade, child care, taxation, etc., can be addressed. |
| **100.20.14 and 500.10.16** | 1988 | That NAC oppose government policies permitting profit making firms to deliver essential health and social services, and in particular the provisions of the Canada U.S. free trade agreement that would allow such U.S. service firms to locate in this country. |
| **300.10.27** | 1988 | That NAC support the Day of Action of the Pro-Canada Network in opposition to the Canada-U.S. free trade agreement. |
| **300.10.30** | 1989 | That NAC continue to work with the Pro-Canada Network and other coalitions against free trade and the free trade budget. |
| **300.10.31** | 1989 | That NAC continue to actively oppose the Free Trade Agreement and monitor and publish its effects on women. |

**Sources:** National Action Committee on the Status of Women. *Index of Abridged Resolutions 1972 to 1995.* Toronto, Canada, NAC, n/d.

What becomes evident upon examination of this material is the extent to which NAC members discussed and took positions on the politics of free trade. In the mid- to late-1980's NAC members passed at least one free trade related general assembly resolution each year. In other words, NAC members discussed and debated the relationship between gender and free trade at four consecutive AGM's before NAFTA was even officially on the table. By and large, these resolutions addressed the range of issues being discussed in the free trade debate. Moreover, the framing of the issue highlighted the importance of the trade debates to women or women's organizations.

While I am primarily using NAC resolutions to illustrate the Canadian women's movement's predisposition to taking up the question of NAFTA, there are many other examples of such activism around gender and trade in the mid- to late-1980s. For instance, early in 1988, a group of women meeting in Toronto, called "Women Against Free Trade" (WAFT) wrote what they termed a Manifesto to "make clear to women that free trade is indeed a feminist issue."[66] In order to make the issue relevant to women, the Manifesto argues that economic facts always have social consequences and feminist therefore need to be politically engaged in debate over the FTA. They believed that feminists had to engage these issues if the social welfare gains of the previous two decades were to be sustained.

In the early 1990's, when the Canadian government requested inclusion in bilateral talks between Mexico and the United States to establish a free trade zone, the idea of NAFTA was born. At that point, a wide variety of Canadian women's

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[66] Varda Burstyn and Judy Rebick, "How "Women Against Free Trade" Came to Write Its Manifesto," *Resources for Feminist Research* 17, no. 3 (1988): 139-42.

organizations had some experience with the relationship between gender and trade. In the years 1990 and 1991 no resolution on free trade was passed during the annual NAC membership meetings. However, with the NAFTA debate brewing on the horizon, the 1992 meeting passed a multifaceted resolution on the issue (See Table 5.3 for full text of the resolution). First, it endorsed the Action Canada Network's (ACN) campaign in opposition to NAFTA. As the primary anti-NAFTA coordinating body in Canada, the ACN considered NAC's continued support as critical.[67] Second, the resolution directed NAC committees to continue to their work on the relationship between gender and trade. Finally, the resolution called on NAC to "strengthen efforts to work in solidarity with women's groups though out the hemisphere...." In many ways, this resolution points out the Canadian women's movement's three-pronged strategy with regard to NAFTA: working within broad-based anti-NAFTA coalitions; promoting continued analysis of and education about the gender implications of free trade; and working with women's groups in Mexico and the United State to realize policy objectives.

[67] In 1987 NAC was one of the founding members of the Pro-Canada Network, later renamed the Action Canada Network.

**Table 5.3.**

**Full Text of National Action Committee on the Status of Women's Primary Annual General Meeting Resolution on NAFTA.**

| Date Adopted | Text of Resolution |
|---|---|
| **June 7, 1992 at the Annual General Meeting, National Action Committee on the Status of Women, Ottawa.** | **Background**<br><br>Behind closed door negotiations continue between the governments of Mexico, Canada and the U.S. to finalize a North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which will provide a further opening for transnational corporations to move ahead on the restructuring of the North American economies for profit and at the expense of working people and their communities.<br>The impact of the 1989 Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement has been devastating for women. Conditions will continue to worsen with a North American agreement, and without adequate controls on corporations and governments.<br>Global restructuring is making it crucial that women's groups work more closely together to develop alternative strategies to counter the Corporate Agenda with a Feminist and Women's Agenda.<br><br>BE IT RESOLVED THAT NAC endorse the ACTION CANADA NETWORK campaign call for SUPPORT for an Alternative People's Agenda for Canadian economic recovery and development, which includes TERMINATION of the Canada/US Free Trade Agreement, OPPOSITION to the North American Free Trade Agreement currently being negotiated and further resolved that NAC work to ensure a feminist analysis and voice in the ACN Campaign.<br><br>BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT NAC through its Global Strategies committee and Future of Women's Work Campaign support efforts to develop analysis, education, networking and action on the impact of free trade and global restructuring on Canadian women and their responses to it.<br><br>BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT NAC, through its Global Strategies committee, strengthen efforts to work in solidarity with women's groups through out the hemisphere and globally. |

**Source:** National Action Committee on the Status of Women. *Annual General Meeting Resolution*. Full text in possession of author. Ottawa, Canada, NAC, Adopted June 7, 1992.

NAC member groups continued to take up the issue of free trade as the NAFTA debate heated up. In 1993, NAC member groups passed two resolutions

related to the issue, which directed NAC to take up opposition to NAFTA as a "prime objective" of the organization's election year strategy. Table 5.4 lists NAC resolutions on free trade during the time of the NAFTA debate until 1996. Importantly, even after NAFTA's passage, member organizations have remained active on the issue and have vocally critiqued the Canadian government's support of the World Trade Organization, Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation, and the proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment.

**Table 5.4.**
**National Action Committee on the Status of Women Annual General Meeting Resolutions on Free Trade, During and After NAFTA Debate, 1990-1996.**

| Resolution # | Year | Resolution Summary |
|---|---|---|
| **not numbered** | June 7, 1992 | BE IT RESOLVED THAT NAC endorse the ACTION CANADA NETWORK campaign call for SUPPORT for an Alternative People's Agenda for Canadian economic recovery and development, which includes TERMINATION of the Canada/US Free Trade Agreement, OPPOSITION to the North American Free Trade Agreement currently being negotiated and further resolved that NAC work to ensure a feminist analysis and voice in the ACN Campaign. |
| **700.20.26** | 1993 | That a prime objective of NAC's election strategy be opposition to the adoption of NAFTA and a cancellation of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. |
| **700.20.27** | 1993 | That, in relation to election strategy, NAC a) make a priority the election campaign and use its resources to impress upon Canadian people the urgency of issues being decided, b) focus campaign on key issues of social programs, child care program creation, jobs and women's access to them, recognizing unwaged work, employment strategies accounting for women's special needs, women's groups/program funding, equality rights, education promotion/access, c) present issues committed to eliminating racism, homophobia, discrimination on basis of disability, poverty or anything oppressing women, d) emphasize fight against NAFTA, e) develop public education tools, including a women's budget, to promote our alternative vision of Canada and the world, contrasting the Conservative agenda, g) promote its vision/issues using its own strength and combining efforts with other groups sharing the same agenda, h) be bi-partisan, but urging parties and candidates to publicly support our vision/issues. |
| **1200.10.6** | 1995 | That NAC call for the removal of clause 901 of the NAFTA which could prohibit Canada from refusing to receive nuclear waste from the U.S.A. |
| **500.50.30** | 1996 | BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that NAC work to promote international intellectual property rights (IPR) standards that reflect the public good, and to resist the current moves to impose regressive IPR standards through GATT, NAFTA, the World Trade Organization and other bilateral and multilateral arrangements. |

**Sources:** National Action Committee on the Status of Women. *Index of Abridged Resolutions 1972 to 1995.* Toronto, Canada, NAC, n/d.; National Action Committee on the

Status of Women. *Annual General Meeting Resolution*. Full text in possession of author. Ottawa, Canada, NAC, Adopted June 7, 1992.

As this review of NAC resolutions on free trade demonstrates, the Canadian women's movement came into the NAFTA debate with a history of dealing with the politics of free trade. In other words, the issue of free trade was framed as a feminist concern. Prior to rancor over NAFTA, the women's movement had expanded their landscape of issue concerns to include the politics of international economics and mobilized around these issues. Indeed, as NAFTA emerged on the policy horizon, Canadian women's organizations were more likely to be seen as legitimate stakeholders than were their Mexican and U.S. counterparts. This policy experience proved critical to their leadership in transnational organizing efforts.

**Mexico**

Although in a very different way, and for very different reasons, Mexican women, like their Canadian counterparts, and unlike their U.S. counterparts, have long addressed economic issues in movement organizations and activities. I contend that the explanation for why a range of small Mexican women's groups, as well as programs of larger development organizations or unions, engaged in national and transnational advocacy around gender and NAFTA stems in part from the extent to which economic concerns have long permeated women's organizing in the country. The ideological legacy of contemporary Mexican politics takes its strength from a range of influences–Marxist, populist, democratic–yet questions about economic inequality have been central to the modern state's founding. This

legacy has affected the organizing efforts of all parties in the Mexican context.[68] Indeed, this history supports my argument: the way a movement constructs its issue territory will directly affect the likelihood of the movement's future engagement with a particular policy concern. In other words, because Mexican women's organizations have grappled with economic issues, attention to the gendered consequences of NAFTA was more likely. When NAFTA emerged on the policy horizon, there were a number of groups poised to take up the question of the relationship between gender and free trade.

Mexican women's organizations have a history of addressing the gender dimensions of economic issues and generally believe that organizations must work on behalf of women to intervene in all relevant policy making circles. Like other women's movements in the developing world, Mexican women have a history of responding to policies of globalization since it has been clear for some time that these policies are shaping their political, social and economic futures.

The relationship between economic issues (or class as an analytic category) and gender, has been an ongoing source of debate in Mexican movement circles. Indeed, since the first wave of feminist organizing in the early 1900s, the question of whether gender oppression should be subsumed to the struggle against class oppression has been perhaps the most enduring dilemma and source of movement conflict.[69] As I discussed in Chapter 1, conflicts over the relationship between

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[68] See for instance Carlos B Gil, *Hope and Frustration: Interviews with Leaders of Mexico's Political Opposition* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1992).

[69] For analysis of this conflict during feminisms 1st wave in Mexico, see Carmen Ramos Escandón, "Women's Movements, Feminism, and Mexican Politics," in *The Women's Movement in Latin America: Participation and Democracy*, ed. Jane S. Jaquette (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 199-222. For a discussion of these tension in the contemporary Latin American women's

gender oppression and economic issues have historically divided "feminists" (those focusing on gender issues at the expense of economic issues) from those who work in organizations focused on issues directly affecting poor women: *clases populares* (popular classes), the *movimientos de mujeres* (women's movement), or the *movimientos femeninos* (feminine movement).[70] Often this division is often posed as intractable. However, my analysis of movement organizing illustrates that these lines are increasingly becoming blurred. Recognizing these changes helps explain why a number of small Mexican women's organizations, as well as the women's programs of development organizations or unions, participated in activism around gender and NAFTA.

Both the divisions and the blurring is rooted in the history of Mexican political struggle. However, its current manifestation can be dated to 1975. The year 1975 proved to be a watershed year for Mexican women's activism as the first United Nation's World Conference on Women was held in Mexico City. Since the organization of the United Nations conference was controlled by the Mexican government and women in the ruling party, activists organized a parallel meeting to that being convened by the UN. This parallel effort stimulated a significant amount of activism and led to the founding of major organizations. In the context of this research, the Mexico City meeting is importantly because it "marked the beginnings

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movement see Nancy Saporta Sternbach, et al., "Feminisms in Latin America: From Bogotá to San Bernardo," in *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy, and Democracy*, ed. Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 207-39.

[70] Some also label these groups as "popular feminism." For instance, see Marta Lamas, et al., "Building Bridges: The Growth of Popular Feminism in Mexico," trans. Ellen Calmus, in *The Challenge of Local Feminisms*, ed. Amrita Basu (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1995), 324-47. On the topic of categorizing women's organizing see Lynn Stephen, *Woman and Social Movements in Latin America: Power from Below* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1997).

of cross-class linkages between middle-class and poor women in Mexico...."[71] As early as 1975, Mexican women were bridging the gap by addressing the intersections of gender and economic concerns. This trend is even clearer when examining the first four Latin American feminist *Encuentros* (meetings), held between 1981 and 1990. Sternbach et. al. insightfully suggest that

> The feminist movement and the movimientos de mujeres, though too often perceived as diametrically opposed, have,...reinforced, strengthened, and supported each other....More and more the demands of both groups are being incorporated into the movement.[72]

In other words, the nexus of gender and economic issues is increasingly being addressed in women's/feminist organizing.[73]

The centrality of questions about economic justice to both women's organizing specifically and the Mexican left more broadly, also helps to explain why a number of the important participants in transnational organizing around gender and NAFTA were the women's programs of development organizations like Fronteras Comunes or unions like Frente Autentico del Trabajo (FAT). These groups focused on domestic and international economic issues and worked on gender issues for two reasons. First, as was the case with the independent union FAT, a large number of the union's members were women and the debate over NAFTA created an opportunity to link the work on gender to broader organizational objectives. The second major reason that non-women's organizations were

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[71] Lamas, et al., "Building Bridges: The Growth of Popular Feminism in Mexico." P. 325.

[72] Sternbach, et al., "Feminisms in Latin America: From Bogotá to San Bernardo." Pp. 235-236.

[73] As I explained in chapter one, I use the term "Mexican women's movement," as opposed to labeling the movement feminist, in order to include those who work on gender issues, but would not, given the history I have just outlined, identify with the label "feminist."

involved in these efforts was because they were concerned about the exploitation of women workers, particularly in the *maquiladora* region along the Mexico-U.S. border.

In fact, the involvement of the FAT clearly follows these patterns. Indeed, the women's program of the FAT started by addressing the issues of NAFTA. As the program's director, Matilde Arteaga indicated in my interview with her, the debate over NAFTA created an opening for addressing gender issues more substantively within the organization.

> I have always been interested in issues of women's rights, but up until then there had not been the opportunity or conditions to bring up these issues within the FAT. The original purpose was to analyze the impact that [NAFTA] would have on women and so this has been the main thrust of our organizing work.[74]

Moreover, Arteaga suggested that making the connections between gender and the economics of free trade was an important step toward getting "...people to see that if we do not look at the causes of the economic condition of women's lives then we will exhaust ourselves simply trying to deal with the consequences."[75] Importantly, some non-women's organizations like FAT, which had a significant female constituency and were concerned with the gender stratification of economic resources and exploitation (particularly in the *maquiladora* region), involved their "women's program" in transnational organizing around gender and NAFTA.

For Mexican women, rapid changes in the Mexican economy have had wide-

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[74] From my interview with Matilde Arteaga, Frente Autentico del Trabajo y Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio, Interview (Mexico City, November 27 1996).

[75] From my interview with Arteaga, Frente Autentico del Trabajo y Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio.

ranging effects on women's economic and social positions in society, and the women's movement has attempted to respond to these challenges. For instance, organizations have developed along the Mexico-U.S. border to advocate for the rights of women workers in the *maquiladoras* and to raise concerns about gender specific forms of discrimination and exploitation. Increasingly, activists realize, as Sonia Alvarez suggests, that transnational corporations, multilateral institutions (like the UN, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund) and regional agreements and organizations, play significant roles in defining the terrain of women's lives as they greatly influence national and regional economic development.[76] In part, this attention to economic issues, and the ways national economic health is imbricated by international actors and agreements, explains why a number of local women's organizations got involved in transnational organizing in response to NAFTA.

While women's organizations are attempting to adapt to increasingly rapid changes in the Mexican economy by theorizing and organizing around the gendered implications of globalization, they are also a number of factors that limit the extent to which the nexus between gender and economic issues are addressed. First, as I suggested in Section III in this chapter, the absence of a cohesive national movement or organizational structure is an impediment to large-scale movement organizing. The fact that small organizations are the ones that took up NAFTA organizing is important because this made it more difficult to consolidate ideas and to develop cohesive organizing positions. This has proved to be an issue generally with regard to the Mexican women's movement's engagement with international

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[76] Lamas, et al., "Building Bridges: The Growth of Popular Feminism in Mexico."

economics. While attention to economic issues has been central to women's organizing for some time, the movement as a whole does not yet have the collective knowledge to fully participate in these debates given the rapid pace of globalization. In other words, the mobilizing structures have not kept pace with the framing of the issues. Indeed, organizers are currently grappling with a collective deficit as it has implications for the future strength of advocacy efforts.

This point is perhaps best illustrated with an example: In March 1996 the *El Congreso Nacional Feminista para el Cambio Social* (National Feminist Congress for Social Change) was convened by more than 200 women's organizations in Mexico. One of the conference organizers, Gloria Careaga, explained that the Congress was structured to "strike a balance between talking about our accomplishments, the proposals now before us, and ways to address the problems that the current economic model presents us with."[77] Organizers choose four themes for the three-and-a-half-day conference, and ultimately a full quarter of the policy agenda for the conference was devoted to questions of globalization, economic development and equity.[78]

On the one hand, the amount of attention paid to the consequences of globalization is impressive, especially when compared to similar questions by women's movements in most "first world" countries. From this cursory view one

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[77] Gloria Careaga Perez, Coordinadora de Area del PUEG (Programa Universitario de Estudios de Genero), Interview (Mexico City, December 6 1996).

[78] The other themes were (1) State Reform: including political participation, electoral democracy, citizenship and political parties; (2) Political Alliances: addressing forms of feminism and the women's program; (3) The Right to Information: the media and culture.

might conclude that women's organizations in Mexico devote a significant portion of their work to the impact of globalization. However, more in-depth probing reveals the ways that women's historic exclusion from economic policy making circumscribes these discussions. Sara Román, an expert on gender and economic issues who works with Mujeres en Acción Sindical (Women in Union Action), noted a gap between the amount of time devoted to the discussion of globalization at the Congress and the sophistication of the discussion. In my interview, she noted,

> ...[globalization and the neo-liberal economic model] was talked about a lot at the Congress, but the level of discussion on these themes was at a very low level. Because we haven't been discussing these themes for very long...as a community [we] don't have very much information on these topics[79]

The lack of understanding of the complexity of international economic issues during the Congress was even more dramatic, according to Román, when compared to the discussion generated by the presentations on the Congress' other three themes. She suggested that when the Congress was focused on globalization, there was "less input" from participants than on other issues. More specifically, Román noted that "There are some of us who can talk about these issues but we have a level of analysis about the economy that the rest of us don't. In order to go beyond saying that the free trade agreement is to blame for everything...we have to educate our community about these issues."[80]

As Román suggests, the feminist community must address this lack of knowledge about economic issues so that their perspectives will be better

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[79] From my interview with Román Esquivel, Mujeres en Acción Sindical (MAS).

[80] From my interview with Román Esquivel, Mujeres en Acción Sindical (MAS).

represented in policy debates and forums. An article in *fem*, a Mexican feminist periodical, summarized the conclusions of the debate, demands and discussion on globalization during the Congress: "What is undoubtable....is that the neoliberal project is generating a culture of desperation" and that feminists have to work to redirect the political economic path of Mexico and the world.[81]

The experience of activists at the National Feminist Congress for Social Change illustrates that on the one hand, given Mexican women's organizations long history of addressing economic issues, there is a clear interest in attempting to understand the implications of global economic change for women's lives. Economic issues have, indeed, been framed as women's issues. At the same time, however, the movement's analytic and organizational tools are themselves underdeveloped. This analysis of the Mexican women's movement illustrates the importance of understanding the history of how a movement delimits its policy terrain. Understanding the way a particular movement defines its policy terrain illuminates critical filters that shape movement organizing. While economic and international issues have indeed been framed as women's issues, this has occurred within the context of movement debate. The mobilizing structures–i.e., the bridges among different groups addressing issues of feminism, women workers and globalization–have not yet solidified in the context of political practice.

## V. Conclusion

This chapter details the participation of non-governmental organizations in

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[81] "Congreso Nacional Feminista por el Cambio Social," *fem*, Mayo 1996, 11-16. P. 16.

efforts to call attention to the relationship between gender and the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement. As I delineated, participation varies across the three countries along two axes: the type of group that participated (national women's organizations, local women's organizations, and the women's program of development organizations and unions) and the rate of participation (from nothing to highly involved). In presenting a framework for understanding significant differences among the participation of women's organizations in Mexico, Canada, and the United States in these advocacy efforts, I argue that national level factors are critical as they can impede and facilitate transnational activism. In particular, I argue that the differences in the substantive and quantitative participation of organizations across national boundaries can be accounted for by highlighting two critical national level factors: domestic political institutions and the women's movement's relationship to them, and the ideology of the women's movement.

In essence, I argue that institutional structures which support and/or promote transnational organizing must be in place before groups will see it as in their interest to participate in such efforts. Moreover, organizations have to be "prepared" to see the need for and validity of a political strategy which includes a focus on the substantive policy issues up for debate, transnational political mobilization, and cross-border collaboration. If a particular issue resonates nationally, and the history and/or ideology of the political movement is such that transnational resolutions to identified problems makes sense then organizations are going to be more likely to work across borders. In other words, while it may be in the economic "interests" of an organization to work against a policy like NAFTA, "interest" alone will not lead an

NGOs to frame the issue in this way. An organization must be situated in a movement context that supports the transnational strategies for change. The next chapter expands on this point by exploring the ways that organizations articulated the connections between gender and NAFTA.

# Conceptualization as Mobilization

## Chapter 5

> For ten years now we have been working in a very activist movement, that worked a lot with popular and grassroots sectors of the population with very important activities and achievement. We have a feminist movement which has created at lot of theory and their has been significant activism that has gained a crucial social base. However, now we need to create another leap...another leap toward generating feminist theory which has this economic element to it. So that we can really influence and impact the broader sector of the women's movement. Activism along the same path is not enough any longer. We can't continue with that rhythm and now we are searching. We are searching for ways to continue to strengthening ourselves internally and analytically in order to elaborate strategies and our own alternatives.... This is one of our greatest challenges.[1]

## I. Ideas and Framing Processes

Activists in Mexico, Canada and the United States who raised issues of gender and NAFTA faced a series of organizational and conceptual challenges as they engaged in transnational advocacy efforts. In this chapter, I focus on the most significant conceptual challenge activists confronted: articulating the link between women's interests and the free trade debate. While Chapter 4 explained the differences in the extent to which each of the national movements were receptive to addressing the nexus of international political economy and gender, this chapter magnifies one aspect of their work. Here I examine organizers' efforts to break through the veneer of *NAFTA's gender neutrality*. This chapter explores the why

[1] Sara Román Esquivel, Mujeres en Acción Sindical (MAS), Interview (Mexico City, November 19 1996).

organizations in Canada, Mexico, and to a lesser extent, the United States, were interested in establishing transnational political alliances. Activists' efforts to illuminate the relationship between gender and free trade are significant because they viewed the conceptual work as a critical to transnational political mobilization. Given rapid global economic and political changes, these organizers recognized that without the conceptual building blocks in place, they could expect no concrete policy results. They had to **frame** the connections between gender and trade policy, in order to justify political mobilization efforts.

When the debate over NAFTA began (or the debate over the FTA in Canada), most activists in the labor, environment, and consumer advocacy movements, policymakers, as well as many women's organizations did not see gender as analytically relevant to trade policy. The trade debate was never conceptualized in relationship to women's interests. As such, it was generally assumed to have no gender implications. Indeed, most policymakers, labor and environmental advocates, as well as many women working withing women's organizations never considered trade policy to be an appropriate target for political mobilization based on women's interests. The organizing around gender and NAFTA directly challenged this assumption.

Even in places like Mexico and Canada where there was a history of addressing macro-economic concerns within the women's movements, activists still had to expand the conceptual terrain in order to articulate the gendered implications of trade policy. While national culture and institutional factors shaped women's organizations' approaches toward issue framing, all of the leading participants in

women's transnational organizing in response to NAFTA struggled to crack the veneer of NAFTA's gender neutrality. One of the primary goals of these organizing efforts was to elucidate the ways that policies of economic globalization, like NAFTA, rely on and exploit inequitable gender relations and assumptions about women's work. This organizing helped to explain and articulate the conceptual / theoretical linkages between women, gender, and international trade. In doing so, it has helped to deepen our understanding of the relationship between theory and practice in moments of political contestation.

Unfortunately, scholarship in both Political Science and Gender Studies has tended to frame theory and practice as two, often separate, fields of inquiry. As a result, scholars have paid inadequate attention to the ways that political activism itself can open new analytic spaces, challenging groups, governments, individuals, and nations to see old patterns in new ways.[2] In the case of NAFTA, theoretical insights about the ways that gendered categories undergird the economy were made visible by and through the transnational advocacy in which feminists engaged. Interrogating the ways that organizers articulated the relationship between gender and trade demonstrates the myriad ways organizers challenge what we know and give us new lenses through which to view the world. Indeed, if we abide the bifurcated categorization of theory and practice, we leave ourselves unable to fully appreciate the work of these organizers.

Debates about the relationship between theory and practice in the context of political mobilization and contestation have long been debated in discussions of

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[2] On this point, see for instance Judith Grant, *Fundamental Feminism: Contesting the Core Concepts of Feminist Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

politics.[3] While an in-depth discussion on the topic is beyond the scope of this project, my research does shed some light on the interaction of knowledge production and political contestation in this policy debate. Those who participated in the women's transnational advocacy network in response to NAFTA cannot easily be defined as simply activists. A number of the most important activists (particularly in Canada, but also in Mexico) were activist/scholars who self-consciously used their academic research in conjunction with their organizing work to help articulate the linkages between gender and international trade. In other words, the delineation between activists and theorists or organizers and academics is too muddy for simple classification schemes and the work of movement organizing must be understood in this light.

By examining how feminist organizers attempted to reconceptualize "women's issues," I argue that organizing around gender and NAFTA was, in large

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[3] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings, 1972 - 1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, et al. (New York: Pantheon books, 1980); Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971); John Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (New York: HarperCollins, 1984); Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (New York: Verso, 1985); Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971); Ronald Rogowski, *Commerce and Coalitions: How Trade Affects Domestic Political Alignments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

For works by feminist scholars about the relationship between theory and practice see Martha A. Ackelsberg, "Communities, Resistance, and Women's Activism: Some Implications for a Democratic Polity," in *Women and the Politics of Empowerment*, ed. Ann Bookman and Sandra Morgen (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 297-313; Charlotte Bunch, *Passionate Politics: Feminist Theory in Action* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987); Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott, eds, *Feminist Theorize the Political* (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 1992); Heidi Hartmann, et al., "Bringing Together Feminist Theory and Practice: A Collective Interview," *Signs* 21, no. 4 (Summer 1996): 917-51; Temma Kaplan, *Crazy for Democracy: Women in Grassroots Movement* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

part, about the politics of ideas and the construction of knowledge.[4] I specifically challenge the dominant dualistic model of knowledge production versus political contestation by showing that organizers concerned with issues of gender and NAFTA recognized that they had to dissect the fiction of NAFTA's gender neutrality. In other words, they believed that constructing an analysis of gender and trade was a necessary step in developing effective organizing strategies to raise their concerns in the broader NAFTA debate. While much of the literature on social movements directs inadequate attention to the ways that ideas and concepts are used by and in mobilization efforts, the scholarship does provide a way to think about the importance of such an endeavor. In explaining the dearth of attention to ideas and concepts in the social movement literature, McAdam et. al., argue that framing processes mediate between the mobilizing structures of a movement and the political opportunity structures in which they operate.[5] Moreover, their definition of framing processes is useful for this discussion. Framing processes can be defined as the "*conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate*

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[4] In his analysis of the U.S. labor and environmental movements' opposition to NAFTA, Frederick Mayer makes a related argument. He suggests that the vehement opposition to NAFTA among these groups was about the Agreement's symbolic importance. U.S. labor and environmental organizations focused on the politics of ideas in order to reframe the trade debate. Frederick W. Mayer, *Interpreting NAFTA: The Science and Art of Political Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

[5] Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes–Toward a Synthetic, Comparative Perspective on Social Movements," in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, ed. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). On this point see also Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez, "Introduction: Theory and Protest in Latin America Today," in *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy, and Democracy*, ed. Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 1-15.

*collective action*."[6] One of the most important and most challenging endeavors that these activists undertook was to attempt to frame trade as a gendered phenomenon.

What follows in this chapter is a mapping of efforts to **frame** international trade policy (NAFTA) as pertinent to women because of the ways that gendered differences and categories undergird international trade policy. In order to explore how participants in the women's transnational advocacy network around gender and NAFTA articulated the connections between gender and trade policy, I turn to three primary organizing examples. First, I examine the Mujer a Mujer's initial analysis of the relationship between gender and trade published in their newsletter *Correspondencia*. Then, I turn to an analysis of the primary arguments made by Canadian feminists as they negotiated this complicated terrain. Finally, I look at the substance and rhetoric of a fact-finding trip taken by U.S. Congresswomen during the NAFTA debate as the trip was planned in conjunction with women NGO activists in the U.S. and Mexico. With these examples of women's transnational organizing in response to NAFTA in mind, the end of the chapter explores the relationship between the national and transnational dimensions of organizers' framing of the gendered dimensions of free trade.

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[6] McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, "Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes--Toward a Synthetic, Comparative Perspective on Social Movements." P. 6.

## II. Analysis as a Mobilization Strategy: Theorizing the Gender / Trade Nexus

### Mujer a Mujer and *Twin Plant News*

Mujer a Mujer, the first women's organization in Mexico to specifically take up the debate over NAFTA, spent a great deal of effort forging analytic links that previously had been unarticulated. Elaine Burns, one of the founders of Mujer a Mujer, suggested that one of the organization's goals was to connect macro-economic policy, particularly free trade, to the work of women's organizations.[7] In my interview with Burns, she disclosed why Mujer a Mujer initially began their work on free trade. Burns stated, "we wanted to work on what it would mean for women to have rights that they had been working for--access to work, health, housing, credit" in the face of a NAFTA-like economic environment. "How did these policies of Structural Adjustment impact women's ability to realize their rights? This was a different way of framing these issues...because the demand hadn't been pressed in this way."[8] Articulating these connections was critical. There was a limited history in the women's movement of specifically addressing macro-economic policy. Thus, Mujer a Mujer could not simply organize their constituents to engage in policy debates. Instead, they had to make it clear that gender **was** a relevant category for analysis when negotiating international trade policy. As such, the work consisted of both conceptual and practical strategies. This organizing work was intended to

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[7] One of the things that Mujer a Mujer did was to produce a number of different publications that linked gender to international political and economic concerns. See for instance, Viky Villanueva, et al., *Descubriendo Nuestro Poder en la Economía*, Una Guía de Exploración, Número Uno (México, D.F.: Mujer a Mujer, n.d.).

[8] Elaine Burns, Mujer a Mujer - Mexico, Interview (Mexico City, January 10 1996).

expose and articulate the connections between women's interests and policies of international economic integration so that activism to challenge particular aspects of the proposed North America Free Trade Agreement could be encouraged.

Vicki Villanueva, another Mujer a Mujer activist suggested that the group's work on free trade was about developing "an analysis and a broad vision..."[9] They were committed to highlighting the reasons why women's organizations needed to pay attention to the establishment of a regional free trade zone. Organizers realized that in order to engage more women's organizations in debates over macro-economic issues, they had first to explain how women's interests were linked to such policy. In other words, making the theoretical links was a necessary precursor to broad-based political mobilization.

In challenging the unimaginable–the myth of NAFTA's gender neutrality–organizers turned to the props that were readily available. They based their analyses on the rhetoric and materials of NAFTA's proponents. For example, Mujer a Mujer' December 1990 issue of their newsletter, *Correspondencia*, their first to address the issue of free trade, analyzed materials designed to sell Mexico to U.S. and Canadian investors. In particular, Mujer a Mujer used the July 1990 issue of *Twin Plant News,* a monthly periodical, published out of El Paso, Texas about the *maquiladora* industry as the analytic backbone of their analysis in *Correspondencia.* In general terms, *Twin Plant News* (TPN) addresses issues affecting cross-border trade and investment, concentrating on the operations of major companies in the *maquiladoras* of Mexico. While numerous analytic lenses could be brought to bear

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[9] Vicki Villanueva, Mujer a Mujer-Mexico and CONAMUP, Interview (Toronto, March 21 1997).

on this advertisement and the publication in which it was found, the ad and this particular issue of *Twin Plant News,* are important for my purposes because the Mexican women's organization Mujer a Mujer used them to launch their own analysis of the North American Free Trade Agreement. For Mujer a Mujer, this critique of TPN represented their first written attempt to articulate the connections between the construction of gender and free trade. Building on the theoretical and practical work already done on the issues of gender in the *maquiladora* industry and in export processing zones, they sought to extend this analysis to a broader field of macro international economic and political issues.[10] Their goal was to conceptually link the international policies that create, promote, and reinforce conditions of gendered exploitation.

This issue of TPN depicts a highly sexualized advertising image: a seductive, buxom caricature of a Latina clothed in a tight fitting, low-cut dress, long gloves and flowing black hair asks, "Are You Looking For A Long Term Relationship?" If you are, she knows where you can go and what you should do. Yes, she can help you as you are not the only person desiring such a relationship, states the ad: "So are we!" "Call us and see how good we are at what we do!"[11] (See Figure 1, Page 190). This is not an ad for a dating service, a sleazy massage parlor or sex trade

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[10] See for instance, June Nash and María Patricia Fernández-Kelly, *Women, Men and the International Division of Labor* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983); Eleanor Leacock and Helen I. Safa, eds., *Women's Work: Development and the Division of Labor by Gender* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1986); Kathleen Staudt, "Programming Women's Empowerment: A Case from Northern Mexico," in *Women on the U.S.-Mexico Border: Responses to Change*, ed. V. Ruiz and S. Tiano (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 155-73; Susan Tiano, "Maquiladoras in Mexicali: Integration or Exploitation?" in *Women on the U.S.-Mexico Border: Responses to Change*, ed. V. Ruiz and S. Tiano (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 17-39; Kathryn Ward, ed., *Women Workers and Global Restructuring* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1990).

[11] Criterion Plastics Inc., Advertisement, *Twin Plant News* 5, no. 12 (July 1990): 50.

workers, but rather an ad for Criterion Plastics, Inc., a company selling "injection molded plastics."

Mujer a Mujer's critical appraisal of *Twin Plant News* is an attempt to mark the conceptual connections between gender and free trade policies. The organization engaged in a discourse analysis of TPN, using a method normally attributed to a more academic or "theoretical" milieu than engagement in political mobilization and policy debate. Mujer a Mujer highlighted the ways that, in addition to using sexual caricatures of Mexican women to sell Mexico to U.S. investors, TPN generally worked to sell Mexico as a place where labor conditions were favorable to U.S. investment. Mujer a Mujer's strategy with regard to TPN was two-fold. First, they highlighted the actual words of NAFTA supporters in order to expose the ways that Mexican workers are portrayed. Here they analyzed a number of TPN articles, commenting on a range of issues which implicate Mexican workers as a group. Second, Mujer a Mujer paid particular attention to the ways that gender exploitation is written into TPN articles. They looked at what TPN author's said directly about women as well as what these words implied. In *Correspondencia*, Mujer a Mujer held up TPN's vision of women's labor in the *maquiladoras* in order to shine a spotlight on the ways that women are used, and gender categories deployed, in international economic integration.

**Figure 5.1**


**Source:** Criterion Plastics Inc., Advertisement, *Twin Plant News* 5, no. 12 (July 1990): 50.

Mujer a Mujer argued that TPN depicts Mexican workers as easy to control and frames the business climate in Mexico as free from government or union intervention. For instance, one article about Guadalajara suggested that many "Americans and Canadians" choose to live and work in Mexico because of its temperate weather and because "the labor climate has been supported for years by a tradition of harmony between business leaders, workers and government."[12] To Mujer a Mujer, this strongly suggested that companies need not worry that labor organizing or the existing official unions would undermine the companies' chosen modes of operating.[13]

In this attempt to market Mexico to U.S. investors by portraying Mexican workers as passive and labor conditions as favorable to capital investment, Mujer a Mujer argued that the magazine minimizes the significance of a language barrier between Mexican workers and U.S. investors. TPN suggests that U.S. business owners and managers do not have to know much Spanish because Mexican workers are pleased if you know only a few words or phrases. The burden of communication, Mujer a Mujer pointed out, clearly falls on those who are in the less powerful position in the relationship–Mexican workers. TPN suggests that U.S. and Canadian business people can get their message across in Spanish with only the most rudimentary knowledge of the language. By providing a few simple hints about how to "make requests and give polite orders without conjugating verbs at all!"

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[12] Rosa Maria Nibbe, "La Perla Tapatia," *Twin Plant News*, December 1990, 33, 35, 37--8.

[13] Mujer a Mujer, "Come to Mexico! Or, You $ Me 4-Ever, Amigo," *Correspondencia*, December 1990, 10-13.

TPN can teach you all that you need to know.[14] The notion of giving "polite orders" without knowing any Spanish, according to Mujer a Mujer, necessarily positions Mexico in a subservient or dependent position. Moreover, the tone and content of these articles paternalistically situates the "needy" [read brown people] as eager for whatever scraps will be offered up by their Northern neighbors.[15]

For Mujer a Mujer, it was critical that TPN used women and stereotypical images of women's labor and abilities to "sell" Mexico. In addition to the advertisement (Figure 1) noted above, gender stereotypes undergird the information provided in a number of the magazine's articles. For instance, while U.S. or Canadian investors may worry that setting up shop in Mexico is too difficult, TPN suggests there is no need to worry. Why? Because "We are as one big family" says Alejandro Gomez Montoy, General Manager of an electronics maquiladora in Guadalajara. Montoy continues,

> We all use the same uniforms, and we all feel responsible for the success of our company. Eighty percent of our direct labor are women. They acquire immediate efficiency due to the fact that [they]...have a natural ability to work with their hands that yields a short training curve and a high degree of efficiency.[16]

Rosa Nibbe, the article's author, stresses the importance of having a predominantly female workforce for the smooth, conflict free operation of the foreign owned factories. In other words, the emphasis on being part of a "big family" suggests that workers lack independence and individualism. Therefore discord or 'trouble-

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[14] Tom Webber, "Making Requests in Spanish," *Twin Plant News*, December 1990, 69.

[15] Mujer a Mujer, *Correspondencia*, no. IX, December 1990.

[16] Nibbe, "La Perla Tapatia." P. 35.

makers' are not likely. By highlighting notions of traditional femininity, and women's "natural" dexterity, TPN is able to sell Mexico as a "safe" destination for U.S. capital. Women workers are "manageable" and are not threatening, therefore *maquila* investment is a good bargain. According to Mujer a Mujer, the magazine clearly employs stereotypes about traditional female roles and behavior to normalize Mexico as a site for foreign investment. Understanding that the majority of workers are simply young women is meant to make it clear that this can be a "no-risk" investment.

Having established that women are docile and "manageable," TPN addresses the pervasive racist stereotypes about Mexican workers as "lazy." For example, the Mexican laborers, according to TPN, do an exceptionally good job **even** in high technology industries. "They do well with high-tech equipment, as all young people today love to work with electronic gadgets, just as our teenagers at home love three-way calling and the latest digital music equipment." In *Correspondencia*, Mujer a Mujer noted the condescension in this comment: the writer was surprised to discover that Mexicans are capable of doing such a good job.[17] Moreover, TPN's evaluation of young Mexican workers as good with electronics because young people in the United States are comfortable with such high-tech innovations as "three-way calling" and "digital music equipment" was an obvious attempt to both minimize and emphasize differences between workers on either side of the border.

As Mujer a Mujer highlighted in *Correspondencia*, one purpose of TPN is to

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[17] Mujer a Mujer, "Come to Mexico! Or, You $ Me 4-Ever, Amigo."

assuage the concerns of potential investors. For TPN, this strategy includes directly addressing investor concerns while portraying them as simple to overcome. One of these concerns is employee turnover in the maquilas. As TPN author Dr. Lois Elias points out, turnover can be particularly acute "depending on the 'stage of development'..." of the plant.[18] Elias outlines these stages of maquila development: first "there is a plentiful supply of workers, and the maquilas frequently hire young, unmarried females. Productivity is high, and there is almost no turnover." In the final stage of development "the supply of workers has almost disappeared, and the maquilas will hire anyone who is over 16 and can work."[19] To Mujer a Mujer, Elias' analysis of turnover in the maquilas was particularly disturbing because it legitimates harsh working conditions in these factories. In addition, rampant employee turnover is justified as a natural outgrowth of the factory's developmental stage instead of as a consequence of difficult working conditions.

Mujer a Mujer is extremely critical of how young women workers are strategically deployed in maquilas: "Should we gently remind our readers of the long-hard labor struggles against child labor, discrimination based on sex and physical ability?"[20] Their goal was to bring attention to the ways that trade policy relies on particularly gendered conceptions of labor by making exploitation seem justifiable. Mujer a Mujer argued that *Twin Plant News* can be read as surreptitiously justifying child labor (particularly among girls) to their U.S. and

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[18] Mujer a Mujer, "Come to Mexico! Or, You $ Me 4-Ever, Amigo." P. 11.

[19] Dr. Lois Elias, "How You Can Reduce Turnover," *Twin Plant News*, December 1990, 55, 57-60. P. 55.

[20] Mujer a Mujer, "Come to Mexico! Or, You $ Me 4-Ever, Amigo." P. 12.

Canadian readers. One TPN article suggests that young Mexican workers "have grown up in a manufacturing environment and are seasoned veterans at age 20."[21] In other words, employing teenagers is not actually exploitative because they are "veterans" by the time they are 20 years of age. Another article in the same TPN issue does note that hiring these young women may mean they need "a replacement for the kind of nurturing they received from their families." However, entrepreneurs can easily accommodate such needs as focusing limited attention on the "individual needs" of the workers will counteract any problems or negative effects that may arise from hiring women when they are still quite young.[22]

For Mujer a Mujer, the articles and ads in *Twin Plant News* provided a justification for and inducement to exploit young Mexican women. More generally, Mujer a Mujer suggested that the way free trade is represented and sold to U.S. and Canadian business rests upon integral connections between gender and international trade. According to Mujer a Mujer, TPN's rhetoric seeks to normalize exploitative practices. On the one hand, TPN downplays the fact that many of the workers are quite young and that most are physically unable to continue working in these factories for more than a few years. On the other hand, employing very young Mexican women becomes palatable to potential investors precisely because women are more vulnerable, often paid less, and expected to register fewer complaints. The subtext of the magazine's discussions pinpoints for potential investors the desirability of employing young women who are believed to be

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[21] Don Nibbe, "High Tech," *Twin Plant News*, December 1990, 40-41.

[22] Elias, "How You Can Reduce Turnover."

dextrous and passive and whose work is likened to activities kids in the United States do all of the time–e.g., sit on the couch playing video games or stroll though the living room on a cordless phone. Following Mujer a Mujer's analysis, the fact that women constitute the majority of maquila workers is no accident. The "innocent" or "docile" femininity of these workers is employed precisely to make business in Mexico less threatening to U.S. and Canadian investors, who face rising labor costs and environmental, health and safety standards in their home countries.

Mujer a Mujer's use of the arguments of NAFTA enthusiasts can be seen as a critical step in the political mobilization process. In order to excite women's organizations to engage in the NAFTA debate, Mujer a Mujer recognized that they had to conceptually demonstrate how and why free trade ought to be an issue of concern. Using documents like those in TPN gave Mujer a Mujer an opportunity to show how gendered language and concepts are encoded in the debate over free trade, thus highlighting the connections between the proposed of North American Free Trade Agreement and violations of women's human rights. In other words, these activists revealed how gender exploitation undergirds specific macro-economic policies. Articulating these conceptual links proved to be a critical aspect of the political mobilization efforts in response to NAFTA.

Activists with other Mexican women's organizations described a similar impetus for exploring the gendered implications of free trade. They saw their work as bridging the theory/practice divide. Their political engagement stemmed from critical insights about women's economic position and power in national economies. While the recognition that women earn less than men, have minimal access to

benefits, and less control in the workplace was not new, activists and scholars questioned, for the first time, the extent to which international economic integration would exacerbate or ameliorate these trends. They sought to expand the ways that gender could be used to analyze international economic policy.

In my interview with Matilde Arteaga, the director of the women's program of the Frente Autentico del Trabajo, the largest independent labor union involved in the NAFTA debate, she stressed the importance of helping grassroots women's organizations see the relevance of international trade issues for their own political work. "We want to link all of the local groups who are working on issues of self-esteem, economic survival, or health promotion, for example, to the relevant broader economic issues...."[23] Making these connections was important to Arteaga as she sought to recast the way that women's economic subordination was conceptualized and to open up new paths of analysis as a critical aspect of achieving the goals of political mobilization. Arteaga's insight here is critical. It provides a window into the approach taken by, and the concerns of this group of organizers. In order to be successful in their advocacy goals, organizers had to create new understandings about the relevance of gender to discussions of international trade.

In addition to Mujer a Mujer and Frente Autentico del Trabajo, a number of other Mexican organizations worked to expose gendered presumptions of trade policy, thereby expanding definitions of women's interests. The organizers of

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[23] Matilde Arteaga, Frente Autentico del Trabajo y Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio, Interview (Mexico City, November 27 1996).

Mujeres en Acción Sindical[24] (MAS), a group that addresses concerns of women workers, played an important role in articulating and clarifying the relationship between gender and free trade. MAS organizers Elisa Villaescusa and Sara Román spoke about the importance of developing an analysis of economic issues, particularly free trade, so that the connections could be clearly articulated and subsequently addressed politically.[25] Román, for instance, recognized the need for organizers to work toward greater conceptual clarity about the impact of free trade on women. She noted,

> We always blame everything on globalization and the free trade agreement, but that is too easy. We have to have a more refined analysis...to be clearer about...the [degree to which]...the problems women face are a result of the free trade agreement, or are the result of globalization more generally, or are due to our own internal economic problems.[26]

MAS organizers clearly saw the need to flesh out the theoretical concepts as a critical step in movement building. They recognized that there was no way to begin a political campaign around gender and NAFTA without first highlighting how and why gender was analytically relevant to international trade policy. Mexican activists from organizations like Mujer a Mujer, the women's program of Frente Autentico del Trabajo, and Mujeres en Acción Sindical explicitly framed women's economic marginalization as the fulcrum of international trade policy. As a result, their work as organizers defies static categorization as either theory or practice. Indeed, it straddled the theory/practice divide in significant ways. It underscores the

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[24] In English the name of the organization is Women in Union Action.

[25] Sara Román Esquivel and Ma. Elisa Villaescusa. Mujeres en Acción Sindical (MAS). Interview. Mexico City, November 19, 1996.

[26] Román Esquivel, Mujeres en Acción Sindical (MAS).

interaction between the process by which policy issues are framed, the political opportunities which can be harnessed and the mobilizing structures through which political engagement proceeds.

## Women in Canada: Making the Conceptual Links

In Mexico, the debate over NAFTA generated the first articulations of the relationship between gender and trade. In Canada–and, indeed, only in Canada–had these connections been made previously as part of political discourse. Canadian women had begun to reframe women's interests to include trade policy during the debate over the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Canadian feminist organizers recognized the importance of developing an analysis of gender and trade as a critical element of engaging these issues in the political arena. Indeed, they saw the conceptual work as a necessary and important part of their political mobilization to defeat the free trade agreement. For instance, in 1988 the Antigonish Women's Centre, in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, participated by passing out information sheets on Women's Vote Day in 1988 stating "Free Trade is a Women's Issue."[27] Their goal was to begin the process of articulating how and why the politics of free trade ought to fall within the purview of women's organizations. As I discussed in Chapter Four, Canadian feminists working on the FTA instigated a more general national debate about the politics of free trade as they delineated these connections. Even in the debate over the FTA in the late 1980s, theorizing

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[27] May 15 Antigonish Women's Resource Centre. Letter in response to NAC's "Women and Free Trade Action" Questionnaire, 1989. Reprinted in, "Feminism's Effect on Economic Policy," in *Canadian Women's Issues: Volume II - Bold Visions*, ed. Ruth Roach Pierson and Marjorie Griffin Cohen (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., 1995), 263-98.

and practical political organizing were inextricably intertwined in the political activities of feminists. An important aspect of their work was conceptual. Indeed, their efforts to theoretically link international trade policy and gender continued after the passage of the FTA and served as a touchstone for transnational networking in response to NAFTA.

In March 1988 the general working group of the Toronto-based Women Against Free Trade (WAFT) published the "Women Against Free Trade Manifesto."[28] WAFT included representatives from the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), The OFL Women's Committee, the New Democratic Party (NDP) and a host of other local women's groups. Participants believed that "the anti-free trade campaign as a whole badly needed something more than a collection of sectoral critiques and nationalist laments."[29] WAFT undertook this project to provide an alternative way of thinking about the trade debate. Importantly, they were interested in making "their needs and their strength more known within the anti-free trade forces...and...to make clear to women that free trade is indeed a feminist issue."[30] In other words, the work of these activists was designed to reframe the way that gender issues were understood. One of the goals of their activism was to further expand the terrain of "women's interests" by demonstrating that gender was analytically relevant to discussions of free trade policy.

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[28] Varda Burstyn and Judy Rebick, "How "Women Against Free Trade" Came to Write Its Manifesto," *Resources for Feminist Research* 17, no. 3 (1988): 139-42.

[29] Burstyn and Rebick, "How "Women Against Free Trade" Came to Write Its Manifesto."

[30] Burstyn and Rebick, "How "Women Against Free Trade" Came to Write Its Manifesto."

As the specter of NAFTA emerged on the policy horizon, Canadian feminists sought to highlight the question of NAFTA's impact on women. Organizers recognized that very little empirical or theoretical work had been done to guide them in determining the consequences of such an agreement. And, as they had during the debate over the FTA, Canadian feminists engaged in an analysis of the Agreement to explain why the notion of "gender neutrality" was inaccurate. For instance, as Woman to Woman Global Strategies, an organization in Vancouver, B.C., stated, "We still do not know the full impact of government policies–of deregulation, of privatization, of free trade–on women's labour force participation. We are alarmed by what we do know."[31] Indeed, they did realize that free trade would have a dramatic impact on their national economy and that women's role in this process had been understudied yet was likely to be significant.[32] Organizers feared that "the restructuring that is happening as a result of free trade policies is dramatically altering the kinds of work available to women, making a bad situation worse."[33] In other words, the politics of ideas and knowledge construction were critical to their mobilization efforts. This connection between theoretical analysis and advocacy strategies is evident in much of the work of Canadian feminists in response to NAFTA. Canadian feminists argued that trade policy had the potential

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[31] Judy Rebick, Monique Simard and Hari Dimitrakopoulou-Ashton, "NAC Brief to the Sub-Committee on International Trade," Presented Testimony on behalf of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (Ottawa, Canada, 1992).

[32] See for instance Woman to Woman Global Strategies, *Changing Economies: Free Trade and the Global Agenda. Bringing Women Into the Picture* (Toronto, Canada: Woman to Woman Global Strategies, 1993).

[33] Rebick, Simard and Dimitrakopoulou-Ashton, "NAC Brief to the Sub-Committee on International Trade."

to reinforce and exacerbate already existing labor market inequities. As a result, they engaged in significant theorizing and transnational activism in response to NAFTA.

Once again, the work of anti-NAFTA feminists reveals a complicated relationship between knowledge production and political contestation. Indeed, in the Canadian, and to a lesser degree in the Mexican context, those involved in these advocacy efforts defied simple categorization as either activist or academic. In Canada, advocacy around gender and trade gained its strength from the collaboration of academics, grassroots activists, and professional women from both the private and public sectors.[34] In other words, the approach and background of movement participants highlights the interconnections of feminist theorizing and feminist activism. For instance, Marjorie Cohen, a feminist economist at York University was also a vice president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) during the debate over the FTA. Cohen was actively involved in doing research designed to help make the case about why women's organizations ought to pay attention to the politics of trade. Her analyses were fundamental in much of the organizing work in Canada in which both she and others were engaged. Moreover, her work helped to ground and then spark similar work by women in Mexico and the United States and these analyses were critical to women's transnational advocacy in response to NAFTA.

The theoretical work of Canadian activists sought to demonstrate that free trade was indeed a "women's issue." On the one hand, activists functioned in a

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[34] Martha MacDonald, "Economic Restructuring and Gender in Canada: Feminist Policy Initiatives," *World Development* 23, no. 11 (November 1995): 2005-17.

political movement where the connections between gender and economic issues had long held prominent place on the movement agenda. On the other hand, organizers realized that in order to engage a large number of women's organizations in advocacy around free trade, they had to first explain what the connections were between policies of free trade and gender. In this case, political organizing was used to articulate new ideas and understandings about the relationship between gender and international economic policy thus challenging more traditional conceptions of women's interests.

The conceptual work of Canadian organizers centered on two lines of inquiry, both designed to generate support for the view that international trade policy could be framed as a women's issue. In the remainder of this section I present a brief analysis of the two major conceptual arguments made by those organizing around gender and trade in Canada. These arguments are important as those concerned with gender and trade framed the development of these insights as integral to the process of political contestation and mobilization. In other words, knowledge production–the process of explaining why gender was analytically relevant to free trade–was a central to organizers' advocacy work.

The first major argument made by feminists concerned with the politics of free trade in Canada centered on their concern over the potential consequences for women working in manufacturing industries. Canadian organizers argued that the existing sex segregation of the labor force would lead to disproportionate displacement of women workers in the event of NAFTA's passage. In 1987 scholar-activist Marjorie Griffin Cohen published a study about free trade and the future

women's work.[35] In this study, Cohen investigated the impact that the free trade agreement would have on the five manufacturing industries which were then the largest employers of women. Over 60 percent of women in manufacturing, Cohen noted, are concentrated in five sectors: textiles, clothing, food processing, electrical and electronic production, and leather products. Given this concentration of female employees in particular manufacturing industries, it was clear that in some of the industries which are major employers of women "there will be serious production and job losses."[36]

The question of how free trade would affect employment patterns was critical to movement organizers. Marjorie Cohen realized in the early 1980's that "this was going to be very tough on immigrant women in particular. The industries that were most vulnerable were going to be the industries that they were most concentrated in."[37] Because women were concentrated in "weaker" manufacturing industries and in the service sector, organizers predicted that women would be disproportionately likely to lose their jobs. Moreover, given pervasive gender discrimination, women would likely have a harder time regaining lost ground.

Support for this argument was found in research conducted by the Canadian government. In writing about the relationship between gender and free trade, Ellen Adelberg cited a study done in the 1970s by the Canadian government. The study,

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[35] Marjorie Griffin Cohen, *Free Trade and the Future of Women's Work: Manufacturing and Service Industries* (Toronto: Garamond Press and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 1987). P. 15.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Simon Fraser University, Department of Women's Studies, Interview (by telephone, April 24 1997).

Adelberg noted, found that "women who lost their jobs" during times of tremendous increase in imports "remained unemployed longer than men, and ultimately found worse-paying jobs than did the men who were laid off."[38] By implication, organizers pointed out, the dislocations created by free trade were more politically palatable precisely because weak economic and political citizens do not have the political power or clout to retaliate or protest too loudly when harmed. By highlighting the ways that free trade would affect women in particular economic sectors organizers helped to expand the political and conceptual terrain of women's issues in Canada.

By drawing attention to the fact that women were concentrated in manufacturing industries vulnerable under a free trade agreement, feminists argued that a decline in women's jobs in the manufacturing sector would accelerate the trend toward "service-type jobs." While they expected women's employment in the service sector to increase, the jobs available were usually not unionized and typically paid less than manufacturing employment. The National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) in concert with Marjorie Cohen, was the first to pay concerted attention to the impact of free trade in the service sector.[39] A NAC brief presented to the sub-committee on International Trade in Ottawa, clearly argued this point: "Women are increasingly being pushed out of sectors where we once held secure jobs and into more 'precarious' employment,–or what the Economic

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[38] Ellen Adelberg, "Restructuring: The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to Women: Free Trade Ahead," *Breaking the Silence* 5, no. 1 (September 1986): 21-22, 33.

[39] See for instance NAC, *What Every Woman Needs to Know About Free Trade* (Toronto: National Action Committee on the Status of Women, 1988).

Council refers to as 'bad jobs' in its 1990 report."[40] In both Canada and the United States, the majority of working women are employed in the service sector, and the vast expansion of women's employment in the past fifty years has come about, in large part, as a growth in service industries. Data from the late 1980's, for instance, showed that nearly 87% of all women employed in Canada were in service related positions.[41] Given this tremendous concentration of women in service industries, feminists argued, any policy with implications for service industries was inevitably going to have a significant impact on women. While Canada could be characterized as a service economy, the country was not a service exporter. In other words, the national balance of accounts showed that Canada was a net importer of services and feminists feared that the trend toward increased importation of services would be exacerbated by policies of free trade. Moreover, they argued that the pressures on the Canadian service sector from the U.S. and Mexico would be tremendous, leading to lower wages and diminished employment benefits.[42] For feminist activists, attention to the consequences that free trade would have on particular patterns of women's employment was an important aspect of their organizing efforts. By directing attention toward these issues, feminists were able to expand the terrain of "women's issues" and feminist organizing.

The second major argument Canadian feminists raised regarding the

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[40] Rebick, Simard and Dimitrakopoulou-Ashton, "NAC Brief to the Sub-Committee on International Trade."

[41] Cohen, *Free Trade and the Future of Women's Work*. P. 59.

[42] See for instance Part Two of Cohen, *Free Trade and the Future of Women's Work*. See also Rebick, Simard and Dimitrakopoulou-Ashton, "NAC Brief to the Sub-Committee on International Trade."

gendered construction of trade was the likely impact of free trade on traditionally generous state welfare benefits. Would a free trade agreement affect generous government social services? Feminists argued that under a free trade agreement Canada's social assistance payments (i.e., health care, daycare and unemployment insurance), upon which women disproportionately rely, could be construed as an "unfair government subsidy." Activists were concerned that U.S. companies would challenge any public subsidy program as "an unfair subsidy to business."[43]

In other words, Canadian activists were concerned that U.S. companies would challenge social service programs by contending that these programs provided Canadian companies with an unfair trade advantage. These social services, they might argue, were subsidized by the Canadian government, while companies in the United States were themselves required to pay. As a result of the differences in the situation of U.S. and Canadian companies, the overhead of the U.S. company would be higher and the government provision of this service in Canada could be seen as undercutting the competitive edge of U.S. firms.[44] Feminists feared such claims by U.S. companies given that women are disproportionately represented among both the clients and the employees of government funded social service programs. In addition, the fact that Canada's social welfare programs are considerably more generous than those in the United

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[43] NAC, *What Every Woman Needs to Know About Free Trade*.

[44] NAC, *What Every Woman Needs to Know About Free Trade*. Concern about NAFTA's impact on government provided social services was also voiced in many of my interviews with Canadian activists. For example, my interviews with Lorraine Michael, Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice (Toronto, March 24 1997); Maureen Leyland, Public Service Alliance of Canada and Formerly Treasurer on the NAC Executive Committee (Toronto, March 24 1997).

States made it quite likely that U.S. companies would press such arguments.[45]

Cutbacks in social services prompted by free trade policies would exacerbate existing inequities in the sex segregation of labor both in the public and private spheres, argued Canadian feminist organizers.

> Women have also had to take on the burden of sick, disabled, child, and elder care as governments "opt out"...and privatize. In fact women's work load increases in direct proportion to government cutbacks....Basically huge amounts of labour - that is not socially recognized and is unpaid - are being systematically extracted from women. NAFTA and FTA are economic strategies grounded in an assumption of the poverty and exploitation of women.[46]

Because women are disproportionately represented among Canada's poor, organizers believed that cutbacks in social services would "exacerbate women's poverty, and add dramatically to women's workload in the home."[47] In other words, free trade policies could not be understood as "gender neutral." Instead, organizers attempted to elucidate the ways that free trade relies on, reinforces and in some cases exacerbates a gendered division of labor that marginalizes women.

This discussion of the ways that activists in both Mexico and Canada worked to conceptualize the relationships between gender and trade helps to broadly frame the purpose of women's transnational organizing. Their work to recast trade as a

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[45] These concerns were not groundless. Under pressure brought by U.S. firms, the Canadian government ceased contributing to the national unemployment insurance program. U.S. firms charged, under the FTA, that the Canadian government's fiscal support of the program was "an illegal subsidy" to employers given that U.S. employers must themselves support such a program. Jean Swanson, "Canadian Women Say: `Free Trade Isn't Free!'" *Equal Means*, Winter 1991, 25-6.

[46] Woman to Woman Global Strategies - Comox Valley, "The Visible and Hidden Costs of NAFTA for Women," A brief to the Select Standing Committee on Economic Development, Science, Labour, Training and Technology: Victoria Hearings on NAFTA (Vancouver, B.C., January 19 1993).

[47] Rebick, Simard and Dimitrakopoulou-Ashton, "NAC Brief to the Sub-Committee on International Trade." P. 9.

"women's issue" demonstrates that activists **were** involved in the construction of theoretical arguments to help ground their organizing endeavors. In other words, the organizing work itself included aspects of what we traditionally label both theory **and** practice. The process of constructing knowledge was itself seen as a critical aspect of the political contestation. These ideas, elucidated and articulated in conversations between feminists outside and inside the academy, were a fundamental part of the process of political mobilization. In order to construct a transnational advocacy network to address issues of gender and NAFTA, activists had to articulate conceptual linkages that up to that point had not been made. In other words, their political organizing was, in part, about theorizing the relationship between gender and trade. They were making the invisible--visible.

## Reframing the Trade Debate in the U.S.: Crossing the NGO/ Policymaker Line

As I discussed extensively in the previous chapter, the role of women's organizations in the United States in raising issues of gender and NAFTA was markedly different than that of their Canadian and Mexican counterparts. In many ways, women's organizations in the U.S. were less involved in this process of redefining trade as a gender issue. However, there are a few notable examples of the way that U.S. organizations and activists used transnational organizing around gender and NAFTA to begin the process of redefining the terrain of women's issues. Here, I will focus on one example in particular: a fact-finding trip to Mexico taken by women members of the U.S. House of Representatives in May, 1993. This example

is interesting because it highlights a number of issues not raised by the previous Mexico and Canada examples.

Relatively early in the U.S. debate over the North American Free Trade Agreement, Representatives Marcy Kaptur, a Democrat from Ohio, and Helen Bentley a Republican from Maryland, led a delegation of eight[48] women members of Congress on a four day fact-finding trip to Mexico. They called the trip, "The Human Face of Trade," since, as a staff member involved in planning the trip noted, "we heard in the U.S. Congress that Mexico wanted the NAFTA, but we didn't hear from the grassroots organizations or the [Mexican] people that would really be affected by it." Nydia Velázquez, a Democrat from New York, talked about why the trip's emphasis on women was important to her:

> ...as a woman, especially as a Latina woman, I wanted to be there and to help my American colleagues, non-Latina members of Congress, to understand the human aspect of trade, and to understand that women, compared to any other person in Latin America, are more subjected to exploitation not only in the workplace but also in their homes.[49]

This designation of this trip as one which focused on "the human face of trade" is an important example of how those involved in organizing this trip attempted to recast the issue as having gendered consequences. Activists involved in putting the trip together recognized that this provided a rare opportunity to begin the process of connecting women's interests to macro-economic policy making.

The trip was the brainchild of Congresswoman Kaptur. On two previous trips

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[48]In addition to Representatives Kaptur and Bentley, the following members of Congress went on the trip: Leslie L. Byrne (D-VA), Eva M. Clayton (D-NC), Cardiss Collins (D-IL, Pat Danner (D-MO), Karan English (D-AZ), and Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY).

[49] Nydia Velazquez, U.S. House of Representatives, D-NY, Interview (Washington, D.C., 1995).

to Mexico, Kaptur was frustrated because the groups she traveled with met with almost no women. Consequently, she wanted to go back to Mexico and focus on women's issues. She wanted to take a "group of women members.... [to] ...meet with women in Mexico City representing education, workers' organizations...and just listen to them."[50] The trip organizers saw it as an opportunity to challenge those concerned with women's issues in the United States to broaden their agenda. As one of the trip's organizers put it, they were "trying to say to women...that the...women's agenda it's too narrowly drawn. And we as women have got to register in.... We can have a tremendous impact on economic choices in the country if we...weigh in. But we choose not to."[51]

While the trip was Kaptur's idea, she worked with a transnational group of women activists to orchestrate the trip's agenda. In this sense, the trip's agenda was determined in a very non-traditional fashion and the U.S. State Department's role was kept to a minimum. The substance addressed during the U.S. Congresswomen's fact-finding trip to Mexico was, in part, the result of these alliances. U.S. women activists, in women's, labor and environmental organizations used their links with activists in Mexico to help expose the Congresswomen to a range of issues and ideas about the proposed Agreement. The Congressional leaders of the delegation asked NGO organizers in Washington to help connect them with Mexican women concerned about the terrain of North American economic integration. Working together, they planned the trip's agenda with an eye toward

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[50] From my interview with Marcy Kaptur, U.S. House of Representatives, D-OH, Interview (Washington, D.C., July 26 1995).

[51] From my interview with a union activist who helped organize the trip.

maximizing the time spent with women grassroots activists. The trip was also unique in that a number of the U.S. women activists accompanied the Congresswomen on the four day journey.

While in Mexico, the group met with some government officials, but spent the majority of their time meeting with grassroots women activists. The Congressional delegation made history by conducting the first-ever binational meeting of women legislators from all political parties in both the U.S. and Mexico. In addition to this event, then-Governor Ann Richards of Texas made a special trip to Mexico to join the delegation for discussions of the proposed agreement. The group's time was divided between Mexico City and the border towns of Matamoros and Reynosa.

When the debate over NAFTA began in the early 1990s, the work of *Comité Fronterizo de Obreras* (CFO or the Border Committee of Women Workers), gained visibility. Founded in 1986, the CFO works with maquiladora workers in six Mexican municipalities, along a 450-mile stretch of the Mexico-Texas border, in cities ranging from Matamoros to Piedras Negras. The CFO helps educate women workers about their labor rights under Mexican law. During the NAFTA debate, the CFO expanded its alliances with U.S. organizations interested in workers' rights in the maquiladoras. U.S.-based NGO organizers worked with CFO organizers to plan the Congresswomen's trip to Matamoros and Reynosa.

Since the Congresswomen knew that economic integration would link their fate, and that of their districts, ever more closely with that of Mexican citizens, they wanted to understand the interests and concerns of the Mexican grassroots women organizers. While in Matamoros, the group toured the *colonias* (homes) of women

who were working in U.S.-owned factories. What they saw horrified them. In the midst of the *colonia* where General Motor' employees lived flows "a really nasty canal that runs out of one of the industrial parks" and down through the community. "It is absolutely disgusting," the CFO organizer continued. "It is usually bright green," but sometimes, it is "bright pink."[52] As could be expected, the members of the U.S. delegation were appalled at the environmental conditions in and around the factories. They couldn't believe that those who labored for U.S.-owned companies would reside in such substandard and squalid conditions.

To the Mexican government, the fact that such a high-level U.S. government delegation expressed direct interest in working more closely with NGO activists than with Mexican government officials to plan the trip was a significant threat. It was clear that the agenda of these activists was quite different from that of the government and the Mexican government wanted to limit the extent to which the Congresswomen would be exposed to people who were concerned about the gender implications of free trade. Indeed, the group had to confront a number of obstacles before and during the trip. For instance, during one meeting in a fancy Mexico City hotel, twenty grassroots women activists met with the Congresswomen and U.S. NGO activists. At first, the U.S. delegation held a press conference, and then moved downstairs to another room for the meeting with Mexican women. One of the U.S. NGO organizers involved in planning the trip, recounted the Mexican government's surveillance surrounding the group's encounters with Mexican women. About this meeting in particular she said,

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[52] Anonymous Interview.

> And there are window washers outside. This is like a movie! I mean, okay, I didn't think anything of it, I don't know if anybody did. All right, it's a big hotel, there are lots of windows. The press conference ends, we go downstairs, ten minutes later here are the window washers [again], and they're just looking in! So at this point, I go over and I say to one of the Mexican women...[who] actually organized all this.... And I asked..., 'Am I just paranoid? Is this just what an Abbott and Costello movie would have?'... And [the person] I asked said, 'Oh no, of course it's them. And it's ridiculous. They don't need to do that to know who's here. They've had somebody else watching everybody come in. They have the list of who is supposed to be here anyway'.... But it's just part of the harassment.[53]

Given the Mexican government's staunch pro-NAFTA stance, they did not want U.S. lawmakers to have contact with Mexicans who were critical of the terms of the agreement.[54] The Mexican government did not want the Congresswomen to probe issues of gender, labor rights, and trade. They had no interest in having trade framed as a "women's issue" or at having the group explore the "Human Face of Trade."

My argument that transnational political organizing helped to begin the process of expanding the definitions of women's interests and trade policy is indicated by the way that the Congresswomen used the information that they gained on the trip. Most of the women who went on the trip returned to Capitol Hill and talked extensively about what they had found. Most of them brought this material to the public debate on NAFTA. For instance, a few months after the trip, the group presented a final report to a subcommittee of the Energy and Commerce Committee

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[53] From my interview with a U.S. NGO activist who worked on issues of women and labor. Anonymous interview.

[54] At times, the Congresswomen encountered more than just simple surveillance. In interviews, both Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) and Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez (D-NY) said that the trip was often misrepresented in the Mexican media and they were continually misquoted. Velázquez who speaks Spanish, would realize that they were being mistranslated and would challenge the reporters to accurately portray the Congresswomen's mission. Only sometimes was she successful in this endeavor.

of the U.S. House of Representative. Several of the Congresswomen interjected the perspectives of grassroots Mexican women activists into Congressional debate. One of the group's major findings was that "it is absolutely necessary that the United States and Mexico take the time necessary to shape a continental agreement that encompasses the full range of economic, social and political issues involved in such an integration."[55] The report continues in this vein,

> Our delegation saw firsthand that failure to see trade in this broad context has already created painful dislocation in the U.S., Mexico and Canada.... We cannot ignore the human face of trade....
>
> The majority of our meetings were with Mexican women, and it is women who have been most affected by trade policy.[56]

It is apparent in the group's findings from the trip that their journey to Mexico helped them to begin redefining what trade policy was about and what women's relationship to it should be.

Cardiss Collins, an Illinois Democrat and Chair of the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Competitiveness, used her experiences on the trip to help focus two hearings that her subcommittee held on jobs and the environment on September 23 and November 4, 1993. In her opening statement for the first hearing Collins said,

> I think I can speak for all of us who were members of the delegation that we were deeply disturbed by the desperate living conditions of the workers at these factories....
>
> Supporters of NAFTA claim that each Mexican consumer buys $450 worth of U.S. exports each year. I can tell you than none of the Mexican workers I met with, as hard-working as they are, earn wages high enough to

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[55] Marcy Kaptur, *Statement on the Women's Trip to Mexico: The Human Face of Trade*, Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Commerce, Consumer Protections and Competitiveness (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993), Serial No. 103-81.

[56] Kaptur, *Statement on the Women's Trip to Mexico: The Human Face of Trade.*

allow them to purchase $450 in U.S. products.[57]

The Congresswomen's fact-finding trip to Mexico served an important purpose. It began a process of redefining both the terrain of women's interests and the trade debate in the United States. According to one Congresswomen, the trip "moved trade policy out of economics textbooks and....personalized the issues" by bringing women's faces and voices into the debate.[58] The trip made the gendering of international trade visible and concrete. Since trade policy affects employment patterns, consumer prices, consumer choices, consumption patterns, the role of the informal sector, and local, regional and national income, the gendered consequences of these changes must be interrogated. Gender-specific roles in the family and in the economy (re)inforce and (re)create gendered patterns of economic restructuring. Such far-reaching economic changes inevitably, organizers showed, reverberate in families and communities.

For the U.S. and Mexican women's organizations involved in shaping the gender and trade fact-finding mission to Mexico, cross-border alliances were essential for drawing attention to the gendered dimensions of international trade. Their organizing efforts were designed to initiate conversations about how trade policy and women's issues are inaccurately defined as mutually exclusive concerns. As this case illustrates, transnational organizing facilitated the process of raising issues associated with gender and trade--issues that otherwise would have

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[57] Cardiss Collins, *Opening Statement on Women's Trip to Mexico*, Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Competitiveness (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993), Serial No. 103-81.

[58] Kaptur, U.S. House of Representatives, D-OH.

remained unarticulated.

Importantly, this example demonstrates the significance of issue framing and the politics of ideas to movement activists. Organizers were concerned with demonstrating to those who participated in the fact-finding mission that gender is analytically relevant to trade policy. Indeed, they recognized that this process of issue framing and reframing were critical aspects of mobilization efforts.

## III: Trans/national Issue Framing

The organizing efforts that are detailed in this chapter suggest an important relationship between a nationally-based process of framing the issue of gender and free trade and the transnational character of these processes. A large portion of women's transnational advocacy around NAFTA was designed to frame the nexus between gender and free trade. Feminist practice helped to draw a new theoretical map, locating "women's interests" in a wider variety of conceptual spaces. The question I want to end with is to what extent did this process of issue framing happen within national boundaries and to what extent was it a transnational process? The relationship between the national and transnational in these ideas and strategies must be better understood to explain the terrain of movement organizing.

On the one hand, the advocacy examples discussed in this chapter each emanate from a particular national movement: Mujer a Mujer in Mexico, WAFT and NAC in Canada and the Congresswomen from the United States. Yet, the theories and strategies these groups were producing were constituted both in a national and

a transnational context. National differences were understood as significant from the very beginning of attempts to work collaboratively across state borders. Consequently, the central focus of the transnational work around gender and NAFTA was designed not to create a **singular international** agenda but to strengthen the "local" through transnational advocacy. Organizers coordinated their efforts, but were not attempting to create one strategy or approach or idea about the relationship between gender and NAFTA.

Importantly, transnational coordination, like that which facilitated the Congresswomen's trip to Mexico, was designed to help those concerned with gender issues further develop "a regional vision of what is happening to...[them] locally."[59] In other words, the frame of reference in most organizing work continued to be the local or the national with the goal of situating the national in a regional context. Activists concerned about issues of gender and NAFTA thought it was important to "confront 'global' issues, even in areas that once seemed local."[60] Organizers constructed their working relationships and ideas with a sensitivity to the different national contexts from which their concerns emerged. In fact, instead of starting their organizing work from the assumption of sameness or the homogeneity of women's interests, activists were forced to negotiate globalization's contradictory impulses. NAFTA encouraged them to think about their interests as linked to those across the Mexican, Canadian, and United States borders. Yet, the saliency of

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[59] Mujer a Mujer, "International Connections: New Possibilities/ Vínculos Internacionales: Nuevas Posibillidades," *Correspondencia*, no. XIII, Summer 1992: 24-26.

[60] Woman to Woman Global Strategies, *Changing Economies: Free Trade and the Global Agenda. Bringing Women Into the Picture.*

national borders meant that women anti-NAFTA organizers entered transnational alliances with the differences among them foremost in their minds.

Women anti-NAFTA activists argued that attention to the grassroots was critical but that there was also a need to expand the organizing work beyond the local level.[61] One of the goals of transnational mobilization in response to NAFTA was to expand traditional notions of women's interests and to challenge the assumed gender neutrality of the NAFTA debate. Doing so meant framing supposedly 'local' concerns in the context of globalization of political and economic realities.

This approach to transnational organizing is evident in many of the documents and statements developed during the NAFTA negotiations. For example, in March, 1993 the Toronto branch of Woman to Woman Global Strategies (WTWGS) published a pamphlet entitled *Changing Economies: Free Trade and the Global Agenda. Bringing Women into the Picture.* The pamphlet was the result of a year-long series of meetings about the impact of free trade and economic restructuring on women. Indeed, these meetings can be understood as a part of producing the analytic insights and issue framing I have been discussing in this chapter. In the process of the pamphlet's development, members of WTWGS worked with NAC's Global Strategies Committee and members of Mujer a Mujer to both refine their analysis and to work on joint organizing strategies.

The final section of the WTWGS pamphlet can be read as an attempt to

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[61] This comment was made by an organizer who works with La Mujer Obrera in El Paso, Texas. Quoted in Mujer a Mujer, "International Connections: New Possibilities/ Vínculos Internacionales: Nuevas Posibillidades."

articulate some basic principles for transnational organizing efforts to raise issues of gender and trade. WTWGS lays out five reference points for transnational organizing:

- "The [economic] restructuring that is taking place is reinforcing our analysis that women's organizing can't be artificially divided between work and home and community. Strategies that rely on these old divisions are less and less effective.
- Strategies need to be conceived of as part of a long term process. It's harder to get immediate gains, even small ones.
- Strategies need to include working with other groups, understanding their issues and building common ground. That means understanding our different realities (class, race, disability, etc).
- Strategies need to give women the tools to understand the connections between what's happening to them personally and the larger picture, including the complexities of the world economy within which we live and work.
- Strategies need to include an international vision--a commitment to learning about the realities of women's lives in other parts of the world, like Mexico or Central America, and learning how to work in solidarity with them, rather than falling into the trap of competition."[62]

WTWGS's "reference points" for developing political strategies around gender and economic restructuring point to two important factors. First, they suggest the need to think critically about how categories of identity--class, race, and nation--circumscribe women's political and economic situation and participation, and hence their activism. As "reference point" numbers three and five suggest, recognizing and accounting for difference is critical to organizing around free trade. These categories of identity are vital axes from which to view the political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and issue framing processes in a particular moment of political contestation or policy debate. Second, WTWGS's approach

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[62] Woman to Woman Global Strategies, *Changing Economies: Free Trade and the Global Agenda. Bringing Women Into the Picture*. P. 10.

spotlights the need to recognize that the "global" is increasingly present in the "local," a point also made viscerally clear to the U.S. Congresswomen during their trip to Mexico. In linking the local and global, it is important to understand the material consequences of economic restructuring for various groups of women in different parts of the world. And, at the same time, it is important to recognize the commonalities of experience and "common context of struggle."[63]

At one and the same time, WTWGS suggests, there is a need to see trade as a women's issue and, in a broader sense, to recognize how gender is analytically relevant to an analysis of trade policy. Women's interests in regard to trade policy need not be universal or the same across lines of material difference. Instead, analyzing the way that gendered forms of exploitation are required by, reinforced by, or challenged by free trade is critical to assessing its long-term impact.

In this chapter, I explored the central conceptual challenges activists grappled with as they organized around issues of gender and North American economic integration: their struggle to contravene the notion of NAFTA as gender neutral. These activists framed the connections between gender and trade as a critical step in the process of political mobilization. Attention to the ways that organizers push analytic boundaries shows the artificiality of a rigid distinction between the production of knowledge and political contestation. Doing so has limited our ability to understand the myriad ways that political mobilization frames

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[63] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism," in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 1-47.

and reframe policy issues and ideas. Women's organizing around NAFTA presents us with one example of a way through that divide.

# Making Transnational Links: NAFTA and Beyond

## Chapter 6

"The NGOs have tasted blood.... They'll be back for more."
- a free trade advocate[1]

## I. Exploring Success and Will They "Come Back for More"?

In this dissertation, I have examined the politics of transnational advocacy among those addressing the gendered implications of North American economic integration. In this examination, I have paid particular attention to the creation of transnational linkages, the national context from which transnational advocacy emerges, and the ways that these advocacy efforts were designed to challenge NAFTA's gender neutrality. In concluding my analysis, I now turn to evaluate the implications of these transnational advocacy efforts. First I ask, to what extent were the organizations examined here successful in redefining the terms of the trade debate? To what extent were they able to crack the veneer of NAFTA's gender neutrality? Second, I focus on what these organizing efforts suggest about the possibility for continued transnational organizing among women's NGOs.

In response to these questions, I argue that while women's transnational advocacy in response to NAFTA did achieve some of its goals, gains were mitigated and constrained by specific critical factors. In particular, I argue that two categories

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[1] "Network Guerrillas," *Financial Times (London)*, April 30 1998.

of constraints–the politics of identity (race, class, nation) and the domestic political context of the women's movement–must be negotiated as organizations attempt to collaborate across national boundaries. I have found that most analyses of transnational political organizing downplay the constraints on success, instead becoming enthralled with the "taste of blood." In exposing this gap, and more fully assessing the political opportunities and constraints of women's transnational advocacy, my dissertation helps provide a deeper understanding of the new terrain of political contestation in the current context of globalization.

## II. Redefining Debates over International Trade

As I have shown, the women's anti-NAFTA network not only wanted to change the agreement itself. They also sought to shift the terms of the debate. To that end, feminists allied with labor, religious, environmental, consumer and development organizations to challenge the construction of a "new" North America that at best ignored, and at worst exacerbated, gender and racial exclusion and exploitation. Women's organizations engaged in conversations about the relationship between gender and trade, the role of women workers in the new North America, and the reliance of transnational capital on gendered assumptions of women's work. Organizers concerned about gender issues highlighted the fact that women constitute well over half of the employees in the *maquiladoras* and that exploitation of female workers has been rampant. In other words, while NAFTA was expected to increase the employment of Mexican women, these organizers asked at what cost. In addition, organizations that participated in transnational organizing

around issues of gender and North American economic integration showed that women in Canada and the United States were concentrated in precisely those manufacturing industries that were especially vulnerable to relocation under a free trade agreement. Women, they argued, were disproportionately concentrated in industries slated to relocate. By highlighting these issues, organizers helped to expose the gendered construction of international trade, demonstrating the centrality of gender to broader discussions about the consequences of international economic policy. Indeed, the activists stressed that gender interests are not "special interests," since gendered assumptions are at the core of international trade agreements. From the perspective of those who participated in the transnational organizing efforts examined in this project, gender concerns were part and parcel of the dynamics of trade.

In order to assess the extent to which NGO activists were successful in realizing their goal of cracking the veneer of NAFTA's gender neutrality, I have examined the participation of the women's transnational advocacy network in a set of organizing endeavors which collectively served to redefine the terrain of international trade policy. The decision by the governments of the United States, Mexico and Canada to negotiate a regional free trade agreement created an opportunity for non-governmental organizations in all three countries to shine a spotlight on the negative social consequences of globalization. NGOs worked together across borders to highlight what they saw as the deleterious social, environmental and economic effects of the proposed agreement. The work of NGOs to address these issues served to fundamentally challenge the narrow

conception of trade policy as strictly economic, concerned only with relative tariff levels, trade barriers, and trade-related regulations. The debate over NAFTA showcased a substantial challenge to the de facto framing of international trade that had previously excluded labor and environmental concerns.[2]

**NAFTA Side-Agreement on Labor**

While my dissertation explains many of the ways that women's organizing attempted to highlight the gendered implications of trade, one of the more significant successes was the inclusion of two provisions related to gender and trade policy in the NAFTA side-agreement on labor. The addition of the NAFTA side-agreements on labor and environment were themselves a clear representation of the success of NGOs to redefine the policy agenda. Pressure from NGOs and sympathetic members of Congress led President Clinton to push his counterparts in Mexico and Canada to expand the trade agenda to include provision on labor and environmental issues. Importantly, the negotiation of the side-agreements took place after the main body of the agreement had already been negotiated. This NGO success has indelibly altered future trade debates by expanding the purview of economic policy; the precedent has been set. Policy makers are now clear that future international

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[2] This process of redefining the scope of trade policy was an important part of Canadian activism around the Canada - U.S. Free Trade Agreement, and was also evident in innumerable ways during the NAFTA debate. For instance, on the day before the final vote on the NAFTA implementing legislation in the U.S. Senate, U.S. lawmakers engaged in a very interesting discussion about what constitutes trade policy. They focused, in particular, on the role that labor and environmental issues played in this definition. Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK), introduced a motion on the Senate floor to strip the side agreements (dealing with labor and environmental concerns) from the NAFTA implementation bill as he argued that these were not "trade issues." The amendment was overwhelmingly defeated (73-26, Senate vote #389). For full text of this debate see United States Senate, *Congressional Record*, Debate on the Steven's Amendment to the NAFTA Implementing Legislation, 103rd Congress (Washington, D.C., November 19, 1993).

economic agreements will have to address labor and environmental issues. If they do not, policy makers have to be ready to fight a political battle to justify why these issues are not on the table.

The NAFTA side-agreement on labor, officially called the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation (NAALC), created the North American Commission on Labor[3] to promote the enforcement of labor standards. Each of the participating governments agreed to involve the other two countries in monitoring the enforcement of their respective national laws by signing the side-agreements on labor and environment. In defining the scope of the side-agreements the gender/trade nexus was addressed in two substantive ways: (1) the three signatory countries agreed to allow each other to raise concerns about the elimination of employment discrimination on the basis of sex; and, (2) enforce laws on "equal pay for men and women."[4] While the long-term efficacy[5] of the NAALC process is as of yet unknown, the side-agreement represented the **first time** that gender issues had

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[3]The North American Commission for Labor Cooperation is the international body that was created by the side-agreement on labor. It is supported by a Secretariat. In addition, the agreement called for the creation of domestic institutions called National Administrative Offices (NAOs) in each of the countries. The NAOs serve as points of contact between Commission entities and national governments.

[4] U.S. Department of Labor, *North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation*, Document #1010 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. National Administrative Office, Bureau of International Labor Affairs, U.S. Department of Labor, April 1998).

[5] It is also important to note here that the conflict resolution mechanisms set up by NAFTA's labor side-agreement are quite weak. The strongest recourse available to complainants are official government "consultations" on the issue. Indeed, as the agreement's authors intended, labor disputes arising in the region should be "addressed and settled through dialogue and cooperative consultations" between the appropriate governmental parties. The NAFTA side-agreements have no power to enforce sanctions except in very limited situations of violations of child labor laws or violations of minimum wage laws.

explicitly been addressed in a free trade agreement in the region.[6] In this respect, NGO activists were successful in using the debate over NAFTA to show that gender issues were empirically and analytically relevant to international trade policy, even if the remedies provided are weak.

## International Trade Negotiations: NGO Successes in the Post-NAFTA Era

An important part of highlighting gender issues as a constitutive element of of international trade was working with other activists to challenge the presumption that "social issues" (like issues of workers' rights and the environment), fall outside the scope of international trade policy. In many critical ways, I argue, anti-NAFTA activists were successful in forcing the inclusion of labor and environmental issues onto a trade agenda resistant to adopting a broader working definition of economic policy. I argue that the consequences of NGO's efforts to redefine the trade debate are far-reaching. The effect of their work has reverberated into number of other international economic policy making arenas. A few examples of the expansion of the terrain of the trade debate in the post-NAFTA era will clarify this point. As the following examples illustrate, there are recent cases where agreements which attempted to treat trade as strictly "economic" were actually defeated. In other cases, international organizations and national legislatures have begun to

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[6] By 1998, nine complaints had been brought before the NAALC dispute resolution process. Eight of these cases focused on the rights of workers to organize, and the ninth was a sex discrimination case, addressing the injustice of mandatory pregnancy testing of women workers in the *maquiladoras*. Human Rights Watch, *Mexico A Job or Your Rights: Continued Sex Discrimination in Mexico's Maquiladora Sector*, This report was used as the basis for NAO proceedings on the issue (Human Rights Watch, 1998).

acknowledge that trade policy must be understood as more broadly defined. For activists working to redress gender discrimination, these victories are important. Indeed, women's rights activists have been involved in the organizing efforts that resulted in these victories. Women's NGOs have been involved in these efforts because they realize that the only way to get gender onto the international trade policy agenda is to be successful in broadening it to includes "social" issues.

In November 1997, for instance, the U.S. Congress voted against granting "Fast Track" negotiating authority to President Clinton to broaden the North American Free Trade Agreement to include Chile and other South American countries. Fast Track's defeat was, in large part, the result of a grassroots campaign spearheaded by the Citizen's Trade Campaign and the AFL-CIO, to highlight the labor and social concerns associated with NAFTA's extension.

Secondly, in December, 1998 officials from MERCOSUR, the Southern Cone Common Market met for their semi-annual summit and signed a "social-labour declaration." The declaration established a Social Labour Commission whose purpose is to ensure compliance on basic workers' rights issues. While NGOs staged protests calling for an even clearer commitment to workers' rights within the MERCOSUR framework, they acknowledged that the signing of this Declaration represented a significant step in the direction of their demands.[7]

Also in December 1998, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development announced that negotiations toward a Multilateral Agreement on

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[7] Institute for Policy Studies Press Release <tradedev@igc.org>, "A Movement in Decline Stands up to Mercosur Summit," *BRIDGES Weekly Trade News Digest* 2, no. 48 (December 14 1998).

Investment (MAI) were ending after three years without an agreement due in part to the inability of the negotiators to reach an agreement over how to address labor and environmental concerns. This announcement can be seen as an example of the success of transnational NGO organizing to raise these issues. The end[8] to the ailing negotiations was precipitated by an October 1998 announcement by the French government stating that it was withdrawing from negotiations.[9] The MAI had been vigorously opposed by labor, environment and citizens' groups for its failure to incorporate labor and environment standards, and for its lack of transparency in negotiations and implementation. An article in the *Financial Times* of London, about the success of NGO opposition to the MAI, states

> ...the unexpected success of the MAI's detractors in winning the public relations battle and placing governments on the defensive has set alarm bells ringing. "This episode is a turning point," says a veteran trade diplomat. "It means we have to rethink our approach to international economic and trade negotiations."[10]

The outcomes in these three examples–Fast Track, MERCOSUR and the MAI–are, in part, the legacy of anti-NAFTA NGO organizing. The NAFTA debate helped to redefine the trade agenda to be more holistic. These NGO organizing successes have redefined trade as something that affects the health and economic well-being of workers, consumers, and the environment. Further, NGO organizing efforts have shown that economic processes, often articulated as inexorable, are

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[8] To be sure, this is only the end of the first round of discussions over the MAI. There have been discussions about reformulating the negotiations under the guise of the World Trade Organization.

[9] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Informal Consultations on International Investment OECD TALKS ON MAI OFFICIALLY END," December 3 1998.

[10] "Network Guerrillas." *Financial Times* (London), April 30 1998.

actually malleable, politically controlled and determined.[11] As a result of NGO organizing, trade policy is no longer business-as-usual among government representatives and economic experts.

## Straddling Locations: Articulating the Gender Implications of Trade

As I have shown, women's transnational advocacy in response to NAFTA challenged assumptions of the gender-neutrality of international trade with policy makers. Yet, it also challenged these same assumptions held by the broader coalitions contesting NAFTA–labor, environment, religious, consumer and development organizations. While those concerned with issues of gender and trade participated in the broad-based anti-NAFTA coalitions in their respective countries, many of the organizers realized that these coalitions were not always supportive or interested in integrating a gender analysis into the core of their anti-NAFTA work. From my interviews with feminist organizers, it is clear that they felt especially taxed. They needed to be centrally involved in the broad-based national and transnational coalitions change the trade agreement, and, at the same time, they had to challenge these coalitions to more fully acknowledge the gendered implications of NAFTA. My research suggests that their efforts were critical in these fora, as they were able to educate coalition members and encourage them to integrate gender issues into their advocacy platforms.

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[11] For a similar argument about the need to expose the political side of "economic" policy, see Frieden's analysis of the politics of exchange rates. Jeffry A. Frieden, "The Politics of Exchange Rates," in *Mexico 1994: Anatomy of an Emerging-Market Crash*, ed. Sebastian Edwards and Moises Naim (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1997), 81-94; Jeffry A. Frieden, "The Economic of Intervention: American Overseas Investments and Relations with Underdeveloped Areas, 1890-1950," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 1 (January 1989): 55-80.

At the same time, many organizers acknowledged the frustration and demoralization of working within the broad-based anti-NAFTA coalitions. One Mexican organizer emphasized both the importance of her participation in RMALC, the broad-based anti-NAFTA coalition in Mexico, as well as the difficulty of doing so. She said, "I worked with RMALC in order to make sure that a gender perspective was represented in such an important space." She continued, "Women need to participate in mixed spaces like RMALC because if we don't we will continue to be marginalized...." Yet, she also described feeling like the "gender symbol," and believed that people sometimes "let her participate" because having a "gender symbol" was more important than actually integrating gender into the organization's analyses.[12] These struggles indicate the difficulty that NGO advocates experienced when attempting to raise integrate gender issues into the context of broader discussions of international trade even among NGO allies.

In addition to raising gender issues within the bounds of the anti-NAFTA coalitions in Mexico and Canada,[13] those concerned with gender and trade also worked to educate the broader women's and feminist communities. Advocates concerned with the gender/NAFTA nexus wanted to spark the attention of women's rights advocates toward international economic policy. In important ways, these organizations have been successful in achieving this goal. As increasing attention is being paid to the social consequences of trade policy (witness the above examples of the Fast Track debate, MERCOSUR, and the MAI) , a concern with

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[12] Confidential Interview.

[13] I did not include the U.S. here since women's organizations were only minimally involved in the broad-based anti-NAFTA coalitions in the United States.

trade's gender dimensions is being raised more consistently than ever before. Indeed, in the significant transnational NGO organizing in response to both the World Trade Organization (WTO) and to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation organization (APEC), gender issues are being raised more regularly.[14] In fact, some of the organizations that participated in transnational organizing efforts around gender and NAFTA, are also bringing their expertise to these efforts. For instance, in April 1998, 200 women's rights activists from the 35 countries of the Americas met in Santiago, Chile for the Alternative Women's Forum at the People's Summit of the Americas.[15] The People's Summit of the Americas was scheduled as a parallel NGO organizing conference to the official government meeting on the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA). The purpose of the FTAA is to extend the North American Free Trade Agreement to include all countries in the Americas. Many of those women's organizations that were involved in raising the gendered implications of NAFTA are also engaged in organizing in response to the FTAA.

In addition, their work has also sparked the formation of new organizations concerned about gender and globalization in the region. Perhaps most importantly is *Women's EDGE: The Coalition for Women's Economic Development and Global Equality* located in Washington D.C. The organization "advocates for economic,

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[14] See for instance InterContinental Caravan for Solidarity and Resistance <PGA Action at WTO Seattle <PGA_Seattle99@listbot.com>>, "Caravan99, Issue No. 1," May 30 1999; George Tibbits <Associated Press>, "APEC Opponents Take to the Streets," November 23 1997; Judges' Statement from The International Tribunal on Workers' Human Rights <apecforum-l@netserver.web.net>, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, November 20-21 1997; Amnesty International <amnesty@oil.ca>, "APEC Summit: Economics and Human Rights Converge," November 19 1997.

[15] Gustavo Gonzalez <online@ips.org, InterPress Third World News Agency>, "Alternative Women's Forum Reflects Diversity," April 21 1998.

political and social policies that empower women globally and improve the conditions that impact their lives."[16] The mission of the organization is designed precisely to fill a number of the critical gaps in U.S. activism around gender and international economic issues that were evident during the debate over NAFTA. First, Women's EDGE is concerned with both policy advocacy and educating the broader international and domestic non-profit community about the relationship between gender and international economic issues. As a coalition organization, they are concerned with "stimulating our international and domestic organizational members on behalf of issues such as aid to girls and women in the developing world and just economic globalization policies."[17] Their goal is to collaborate with U.S. domestic women's organizations on issues of mutual concerns. In addition, they are working to build grassroots chapters in various parts of the country.[18] Up to this point, their advocacy endeavors have addressed gender issues within the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, the World Trade Organization, and in the context of the Asian financial crisis. Women's transnational organizing around NAFTA became a catalyst for these subsequent advocacy efforts.

Thus far, I have argued that women's transnational advocacy in response to NAFTA was able to integrate gender issues into the debate over the merits of international trade policy. And, as I argued above, the efforts of these activists have

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[16] Women's EDGE, *What is Women's EDGE?* Organizational Information Sheet (Washington D.C., n.d.).

[17] Women's EDGE, *What is Women's EDGE?*

[18] Personal correspondence with Marceline White, Senior Policy Associate for Women's EDGE.

had lasting implications for subsequent debates over free trade. However, I also want to suggest that a hearty note of caution is necessary. Many of these changes have occurred at the margins of the policy making arena. To a large extent, the strides made by these organizations have not been institutionalized in decision-making fora. Gender issues still remain marginal to debates about international economic policy. While there are clear signs that workers' rights and the environmental concerns have legitimately taken their place in the policy making arena, serious efforts to foreclose these discussions continue. By and large, non-governmental organizations have limited power to affect change in international politics.[19] Moreover, women's rights advocates must continue to bridge the gap that separates those who see gender as analytically relevant to trade policy and those (policy makers and NGO advocates) who do not. As my research demonstrates, those activists who worked to challenge the veneer of NAFTA's gender neutrality, often did so from within small, understaffed or volunteer-run organizations. While size and money are not destiny, it is important to acknowledge that, by and large, these organizations do not have the power to compel either policy makers or other NGO advocates (like those who participated in the national anti-NAFTA coalitions in each of the three countries) to satisfactorily address the gendered implications of macro-economic policy.

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[19] While the question of power is ever present for non-governmental organizations, it is intensified when decision-making authority and mechanisms are increasingly distant and diffuse (in a geopolitical sense) and when NGOs are expected to fill gaps left by governments in globalization's wake.

## III. Feminism Without Borders?

As I have discussed above, scholars are increasingly extolling the virtues and effectiveness of transnational organizing among NGOs. Jessica Matthews suggests that NGOs can actually "push around even the largest governments."[20] Mehrene Larudee argues that NGO transnational organizing can "control the arbitrary power of corporations [and]...bring the benefits of trade without its problems."[21] And, Laura MacDonald and Christina Gabriel, who have examined aspects of women's organizing during the NAFTA debate claim that these organizing efforts, in particular, represent an example of "feminist internationality."[22] While MacDonald and Gabriel, for instance, suggest that issues may arise which inhibit transnational connections, their work does not focus on these factors. Indeed, in work of all of the above scholars, the significant barriers to, and constraints on, transnational organizing may be noted but are unspecified. Frequently, they are even downplayed. In these cases, optimism about the power of NGO organizing makes sense since women's transnational organizing in response to NAFTA saw relative success. NGO advocates successfully created linkages across borders to address the gendered consequences of the agreement. Nevertheless, there are nearly as many reasons for concern and scepticism as there are for proclaiming a renewed

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[20] Jessica T. Mathews, "Power Shift," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 1 (January/February 1997): 50-66.

[21] Mehrene Larudee, "Trade Policy: Who Wins, Who Loses?" in *Creating a New World Economy: Forces of Change and Plans for Action*, ed. Gerald Epstein, Julie Graham and Jessica Nembhard (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 47-63. Page 61.

[22] Christina Gabriel and Laura MacDonald, "NAFTA, Women and Organising in Canada and Mexico: Forging a 'Feminist Internationality,'" *Millennium: Journal of International Politics* 23, no. 3 (1994): 535-62.

"feminist internationality."

The uncritical assumption that the globalization of the economy will lead to the globalizing of NGO activities ignores the broader issue of the high transaction costs inherent in participating in these activities. Even with shared national borders, these costs can be daunting. New communications technology, like the fax machine and the internet, have indeed facilitated the ease and reduced the cost of transnational communication. However, an organization still needs substantial resources to use these technological innovations on a regular basis. This was a vexing issue for many NGOs (particularly those in Mexico) interested in the debate about international trade.

While a significant portion of the transnational coordination around NAFTA was conducted electronically, the organizing efforts also required periodic meetings of participants, necessitating costly international travel bills. While this was a serious consideration for U.S. and Canadian organizations, it was even more burdensome for interested Mexican organizations. Moreover, most transnational networking by NGOs, like the work of most international organizations, is conducted in English. However, many NGOs, particularly the smaller ones, do not have the resources to pay for adequate translation services. As a consequence, those who are not English speakers are simply unable to participate. These constraints have serious implications for the democratic potential of global civil society.

In addition, some Mexican organizers were concerned that participation in international spaces was overly determined by the priorities and decisions of

Northern funding agencies.[23] Charges of elitism invariably arose in all three countries about who participated in international gatherings, particularly since limited resources affected the extent of transnational organizing efforts. For example, in 1992, Mujer a Mujer and Mujeres en Acción Sindical sponsored the First Tri-National Conference of Women Workers on Economic Integration and Free Trade. The conference, held in Valle de Bravo, Mexico, brought 120 women together to discuss the impact of the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement on women in the region. This was the "first" conference of its kind and a second one, focusing specifically on issues of health and worker safety, was planned for the following year. Yet, this second meeting was canceled. The organizers ultimately determined that they lacked the resources to organize it in a way that would have enabled Mexican women to participate in significant numbers.[24]

The issue of resources and the democratic accountability of NGOs are important as they suggest that even in light of the incentives that globalization provides, transnational organizing among NGOs faces many structural constraints. Most organizations simply do not have adequate resources to act as international guardians of social rights and to effectively check global capital. As R.B.J. Walker has commented "Political life tends to thrive on contradictions, contingencies and unintended consequences. Things are rarely quite what they seem to be, let alone

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[23] From my interview with Gloria Careaga Perez, Coordinadora de Area del PUEG (Programa Universitario de Estudios de Genero), Interview (Mexico City, December 6 1996).

[24] From my interview with Fernández, Fronteras Comunes - Directora de la Programa de Genero.

what they are supposed to be."[25] Such contradictions are central to an assessment of women's cross-border activism around NAFTA as it highlights both the promise and the limits of transnational advocacy. My research demonstrates that transnational connections among NGOs in the face of globalization are multi-layered and complex, and that while successes were evident, they are clearly mitigated. In assessing the possibilities of transnational organizing among NGOs, two factors are critical: the politics of identity (race, nation, class), and the domestic political and institutional relationships of the women's movements in Mexico, Canada, and the United States. Together these two factors circumscribe the capacity of NGOs to achieve their goals (and the roles assigned them) and make the possibilities of "feminist internationalism" or "global feminism" more tenuous. I will explore each factor in turn.

## Identity, Common Interests and the Paradoxes of Globalization

Insofar as "globalization" is metaphorically shrinking the global sphere, efforts to highlight commonalities across borders can be quite useful. The ideology of globalization, comprised of economic, social, cultural, and political components, too easily suggests that capital and culture are increasingly global in scope, and there is a "growing sense of the world as a single place."[26] The undercurrent of globalization rhetoric is that national differences are becoming less and less

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[25] R.B.J. Walker, "Social Movements/World Politics," *Millennium: Journal of International Politics* 23, no. 3 (1994): 669-700.

[26] Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992).

significant in the New World Order. The rhetoric of the Mexican, Canadian, and U.S. political and business leaders during the NAFTA debate echoed this sentiment. They argued that the economic health and well-being of the region are increasingly interdependent and NAFTA's passage would ensure prosperity for all North Americans.

Transnational organizing among women's non-governmental organizations was, by and large, motivated by similar logic. NGOs worked together across borders because they believed that NAFTA exposed their common interests. For instance, Canadian anti-NAFTA organizers were instrumental in starting the broad-based Mexican NGO critical of the agreement (RMALC) because the former believed that Mexicans and Canadians had common interests in defeating the agreement. Mexican and Canadian women cooperated in an effort to challenge the hegemony of U.S. capital in the hemisphere. Feminist organizers suggested that women as a group had an interest in defeating the agreement because of the deleterious impact it would have on women and marginalized communities in particular.[27]

However, for governments and women's NGOs alike, the seemingly contradictory trends of homogenization, on the one hand, and polarization, on the other, were brought into sharp relief by NAFTA. Governments were pushing for integration while assuring legislators and the public that its passage would not result in a loss of national sovereignty. In other words, they simultaneously emphasized

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[27] Arguments based on the notion of common interests across borders were also articulated by members of progressive NGOs–labor, environment, development, consumer–in Canada and the United States.

and downplayed the consequences and potential implications of economic integration.

Women's NGOs found themselves juggling a similar set of contradictions: arguing that political interests transcended territorial boundaries, yet also needing to account for national political imperatives. Sometimes proactively, and often reactively, women's NGOs grappled with the fact that regional economic integration did not automatically generate common interests for similarly focused organizations in different countries. While NAFTA did shine a light on the similarity of interests, unified interests were not created nor did they emerge. Despite the rhetoric of globalization, homogenization is nowhere in sight and difference has not been erased.

To the contrary, North American economic integration was premised on an exploitation of difference(s) between nations. Women NGO activists confronted this paradox of globalization in their attempts to coordinate activities across borders. To the extent that globalization promotes integration, it also contributes to social, cultural, and political (dis)integration. It must be understood as a simultaneously homogenizing and fragmenting force. Globalization's impulse to fragmentation surfaced when activists and organizations were forced to confront the power inequities between groups. Globalization does not countermand the politics of identity. While individuals, communities, and their advocates, recognized the ways that their well-being was implicated in global economic forces, they still confronted challenges associated with the politics of identity--both its homogenizing and fragmenting pulls--in their transnational advocacy work.

NGO organizers concerned with the gender implications of NAFTA admirably confronted this complex terrain. They put significant effort into the difficult task of constructing common interests and a common agenda. In order to engage in transnational organizing efforts, women activists confronted obvious national differences in NAFTA's expected impact on women. Organizers seriously grappled with, for instance, the fact that North American economic integration was likely to create jobs for Mexican women at the same time that it was expected to result in a net job loss for Canadian women. For all participants, these differences highlighted the question of what it really meant to act in the interests of "women" and how to cooperate across national lines given such varied constructions of women's interests. NAFTA encouraged activists in each country to think internationally, to consider how their interests linked to those across the Mexican, Canadian, and United States borders. In fact, they were relatively successful at educating each other as well as the broader NGO communities involved in anti-NAFTA organizing about the salience of gender, race, class and nation to the politics of economic integration. However, they were less effective at translating this understanding of difference into concrete policy goals. In part, the difficulty of doing that translation was the result of the need to go back and forth between the "local" and the "global." The saliency of national borders meant that anti-NAFTA women organizers entered transnational alliances with a consciousness about the substantive differences among them. Indeed, the meaning of identity cannot, in the end, be understood outside of its particularity--its location. Thus, while globalization is changing the role of nation-states in the international political arena, concrete mechanisms to ensure

economic justice and political accountability are most effectively situated in the local arena.

## The Domestic Political Context of Women's Organizing

In addition to issues of identity, national level factors play a major role in constituting transnational political action. In this dissertation, I argue that national level factors create the context in which transnational advocacy is facilitated or impeded. Transnational organizing is usually undertaken by political actors whose home base is in a particular geopolitical locale. Thus, domestic politics and the role of particular actors in the national political sphere fundamentally shape transnational political action. Social movements and political organizations have their own histories, resources, and their own sensitivities to issues of difference. In particular, the women's movements' relationship to domestic political institutions and the ideology of domestic women's movements greatly shaped the quantity and quality of transnational connections made by women's organizations in Mexico, Canada, and the U.S.

The simple thesis that globalization leads to the creation of global civil society belies the critical role that the "national" plays in constituting the "transnational." While some NGOs are formed with the explicit purpose of participating in transnational activism, most organizations see their mission as national or local in scope. Although some organizations with primarily domestic political agendas did participate in cross-border organizing around NAFTA, their activities were inevitably circumscribed by the national political environment from which they originated. For

example, women's organizations in Canada have historically maintained strong relationships with the Canadian labor movement. In fact, the connections between the Canadian women's movement and Canadian labor movement are considerably stronger than similar relationships in either Mexico or the United States. Ties like this one, within and between national social movements, are important to understanding the terrain of women's transnational organizing in response to NAFTA. Given the centrality of the labor movement to broad-based anti-NAFTA organizing, the strength of the feminist-labor ties in Canada facilitated the participation of women's organizations in these transnational advocacy efforts.

National level factors affected transnational participation not only in Canada but in Mexico and the United States as well. For instance, the fact that historically national political organizing has remained concentrated in Mexico City, meant that most of the organizations participating in these efforts were based there. Or, in the case of the United States, the issue foci of the national women's movement, combined with the political landscape of Washington during the NAFTA debate, kept national women's organizations from risking their political capital by confronting NAFTA. National differences such as these are central to any explanation of why and how organizations participated in transnational organizing in response to NAFTA. In other words, women's NGOs did not engage in transnational political cooperation by transcending the "national" only to reside in a "transnational" political sphere. Rather, participation in (trans)national political activism around gender and NAFTA was constituted through and by key domestic factors.

## IV. Conclusion

This analysis of women's organizing in response to NAFTA suggests that while globalization may provide new opportunities and incentives for transnational organizing among NGOs, there is a clear need for caution about the range and extent of NGO impact. In some ways, globalization has increased the incentives and opportunities for transnational organizing. Contrary to the optimistic predictions, however, my research on women's transnational advocacy demonstrates that the capacity of NGO transnational organizing to ensure redress of the negative social consequences of globalization is real but severely circumscribed.

Women's transnational advocacy in response to NAFTA brought attention to the gendered consequences of globalization. Without their efforts, these issues would have most likely remained invisible. At the level of implementation, redress, and accountability, however, the impact of women's NGO advocacy is less definitive. Expecting transnational NGO networks to act as the watchdogs of "global governance" is unrealistic. This over-reliance on NGOs to develop comprehensive analyses and policies for alleviating the negative consequences of globalization excuses governments from their responsibilities to protect citizens and check the market. Indeed, NGOs are still denied access to many of the spaces in which economic and social policy decisions are discussed, constructed and deployed. Moreover, NGOs do not have the power or the resources to forestall or ameliorate the economic and social impacts that these policies may set in motion.

With regard to continuing transnational advocacy efforts, my research

suggests that these efforts can be effective but in a manner that remains highly demarcated. Understanding the possibilities and boundaries for women's NGOs in the international arena is particularly important as transnational advocacy will continue to be an important form of engaging in a wide range of regional and international policy debates. A clear understanding of the opportunities and obstacles of women's transnational advocacy deepens both the analyses and practices of political contestation in an era of globalization. While transnational organizing among women's rights advocates should continue to play an important role in redressing global gender discrimination, it is important to fully appreciate the limitations of such strategies given that transnational organizing is always constituted through and by that which is local or national in scope. At the same time, and indeed one of the strongest aspects of women's transnational advocacy, was the depth in understanding how the "local" is always already imbricated in a global context.

## List of Named Interviewees

**Appendix A**

**Mexico:**

Arteaga, Matilde. Frente Autentico del Trabajo y Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio. Interview. Mexico City, November 27, 1996.

Burns, Elaine. Mujer a Mujer - Mexico. Interview. Mexico City, January 10, 1996.

Birner, Becki. SEDEPAC. Interview. Mexico City, January 8, 1996.

Buenrostro, Esther Madrid. Mujeres en Acción Sindical (MAS). Interview. Mexico City, November 19, 1996.

Careaga Perez, Gloria. Coordinadora de Area del PUEG (Programa Universitario de Estudios de Genero). Interview. Mexico City, December 6, 1996.

Cooper, Jenny. UNAM. Interview. Mexico City, December 2, 1996.

Fernández, Ana Ma. Grupo de Educación Popular con Mujeres. Interview. Mexico City, December 13, 1996.

Fernández, Patricia. Fronteras Comunes - Directora de la Programa de Genero. Interview. Mexico City, January 12, 1996.

———. Fronteras Comunes - Directora de la Programa de Genero. Interview. Mexico City, November 11, 1996.

López, Elsa Castellanos. Mujeres en Acción Sindical (MAS). Interview. Mexico City, November 19, 1996.

Luján, Berta. Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio - Secretaria.

Interview. Mexico City, November 18, 1996.

Martínez, Guadalupe. Grupo de Educación Popular con Mujeres. Interview. Mexico City, December 13, 1996.

McGinn, Mary. Mujer a Mujer - Mexico. Interview. By telephone, February 19, 1997.

Mercado, Patricia. Mujeres en Acción Sindical y Grupo de Información en Reproduccción Elegida. Interview. Mexico City, November 19, 1996.

Román Esquivel, Sara. Mujeres en Acción Sindical (MAS). Interview. Mexico City, November 19, 1996.

Velazquez, Concepción Flores. Mujeres en Acción Sindical (MAS). Interview. Mexico City, November 19, 1996.

Villaescusa, Ma. Elisa. Mujeres en Acción Sindical (MAS). Interview. Mexico City, November 19, 1996.

Villanueva, Vicki. Mujer a Mujer-Mexico and CONAMUP. Interview. Toronto, March 21, 1997.

**Canada:**

Cohen, Marjorie Griffin. Simon Fraser University, Department of Women's Studies. Interview. by telephone, April 24, 1997.

Kerr, Joanna. The North - South Institute. Interview. Washington, D.C., September 7, 1996.

Leyland, Maureen. Public Service Alliance of Canada and Formerly Treasurer on the NAC Executive Committee. Toronto, March 24, 1997.

Michael, Lorraine. Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice. Toronto, March 24, 1997.

Nadeau, Denise. Woman to Woman Global Strategies. Interview. Vancouver, B.C., by telephone, February 27, 1997.

Palacios, Miriam. Director, Women in the Americas program, Oxfam Canada. Interview. Vancouver, B.C. by telephone, April 16, 1997.

Vosko, Leah. Woman to Woman Global Strategies. Interview. Toronto, March 21, 1997.

Yanz, Lynda. Mujer a Mujer, Canada and Maquila Solidarity Network. Toronto, October 9, 1996.

**United States:**

Hartmann, Heidi. President, Institute for Women's Policy Research. Interview. New Brunswick, New Jersey, May 22, 1996.

Heidkamp, Kay. Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers. Interview. San Diego, CA, August 20, 1996.

Kim, Marlene. WAEN Participant. Interview. New Brunswick, NJ, November 13, 1997.

McKinney, Phoebe. Director, Maquiladora Project, American Friends Service Committee. Interview. New Brunswick, NJ, May, 1996.

Rich, Cynthia. Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers. Interview. San Diego, CA, August 20, 1996.

Wright, Melissa. UNAJ. Interview. El Paso, Texas by telephone, April 29, 1997.

Nathan, Debbie. Interview. El Paso, Texas by telephone, April 24, 1997.

Sparr, Pamela. Alt-WID and the Office of Environmental Justice, General Board of Global Ministries, the United Methodist Church. Interview. Washington, D.C., by telephone, September 4, 1997.

**U.S. Congresswomen**[1]

**U.S. House of Representatives:**

Helen Bentley (R-MD)

Leslie Byrne (D-VA)

Eva Clayton (D-NC)

Rosa DeLauro (D-CT)

Karan English (D-AZ)

Tilly Fowler (R-FL)

Elizabeth Furse (D-OR)

Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Nancy Johnson (R-CT)

Marcy Kaptur (D-OH)

Barbara Kennelly (D-CT)

Blanche Lambert Lincoln (D-AR)

Marilyn Lloyd (D-TX)

Nita Lowey (D-NY)

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[1] The following Congresswomen were interviewed on international trade policy as part of the Center for the American Woman and Politics' research project on the impact of women in Congress. They were all interviewed in the last half of 1995 and the beginning of 1996.

Carolyn Maloney (D-NY)

Cynthia McKinney (D-GA)

Carrie Meek (D-FL)

Jan Meyers (R-KS)

Patsy Mink (D-HI)

Susan Molinari (R-NY)

Constance Morella (R-MD)

Eleanore Holmes Norton (D-DC)

Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)

Deborah Pryce (R-OH)

Ileana Ros-Lehitnen (R-FL)

Marge Roukema (R-NJ)

Lynn Schenk (D-CA)

Patricia Schroeder (D-CO)

Karen Shepherd (D-UT)

Olympia Snowe (R-ME)

Karen Thurman (D-FL)

Jolene Unsoeld (D-WA)

Nydia Velazquez (D-NY)

Lynn Woolsey (D-CA)

**U.S. Senators:**

Carol Mosley Braun (D-IL)

**Nancy Kassenbaum (R-KS)**

**Barbara Mikulski (D-MD)**

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M.A., Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, Political Science, 1996.

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## FELLOWSHIPS & AWARDS

**Best Graduate Student Paper Award,** 1998 Annual Meeting, International Studies Association, Feminist Theory and Gender Studies Section.

**Graduate Fellow, 1998-1999,** Center for the Critical Analysis of Contemporary Culture, Theme: *An American Century in the Americas.*

**Christabel Pankhurst/Miss Ella Baker Award for Women and Politics Research, 1998**, Harvard University, Kennedy School of Government's Women and Public Policy Program.

**Bevier Dissertation Fellowship, 1997-1998.**

**Graduate Fellow, 1997-1998,** Institute for Research on Women Faculty/Graduate Student Seminar on *Women in the Public Sphere: Power, Practice, Agency.*

**Dissertation Fellowship, 1996-1997,** Department of Political Science, Rutgers University.

**Rutgers University Graduate Student Teaching Excellence Award, 1996.**

**Special Study Grant for Advanced Language Training, 1996,** Rutgers University, Graduate School.

**Dissertation Research Grant, 1996,** Porte Fund for Peace and Security Studies.

## PUBLICATIONS

"Constructing Cooperation: Feminist Activism and the North American Free Trade Agreement," forthcoming, 2000. In **Global/Local/Theory/Practice in the Twenty-First Century**, Marianne DeKoven, ed. Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, NJ.

"TCBY® in Limón, Costa Rica: (Re)Constructing Identity in International Service Learning," forthcoming, 2000. In *Experiencing Citizenship: Concepts and*

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"Globalization = Homogenization? The Politics of Identity in Feminist Organizing." In *Power, Practice, Agency*, edited by Marianne DeKoven. Working Papers from the Women in the Public Sphere Seminar, 1997-1998. New Brunswick, NJ, Institute for Research on Women and the Institute for Women's Leadership, 1999.

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*Voices, Views, Votes: The Impact of Women in the 103rd Congress*, 1995. Center for the American Woman and Politics: New Brunswick, NJ, (with D. Dodson, S. Carroll, R. Mandel, K. Kleeman, and R. Schreiber).

## TEACHING

**Assistant Professor,** Drew University, Madison, NJ. Departments of Political Science and Women's Studies, Fall 1999-present.

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**Teaching Assistant,** Women's Studies, Fall 1995 - Spring 1996
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**Director,** National Education for Women's Leadership, New Jersey, January 1997-98
**Academic Coordinator**, Beijing Project, Public Leadership Education Network, 1995.
**Coordinator**, Douglass College Public Leadership Education Network, 1991-1993.

**COURSES TAUGHT:** American Government; Causes of War; Global Peace and War; Issues in American Foreign Policy; Theorizing Race, Class, Gender, Nation: Afro-Caribbean Culture and History in Costa Rica; Global Feminisms; Women, Culture and Society: Introduction to Women's Studies; Women's Studies Internship Seminar: Feminist Theory and Practice.

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**DIRECTOR, Costa Rica Service and Study Abroad Program, Summer 1998. Study Abroad, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ.**

**SENIOR PROGRAM ASSOCIATE, Young Women's Leadership Initiative, 1994-present, Center for the American Woman and Politics, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ.**

**RESEARCH ASSOCIATE, Center for the American Woman and Politics, 1994 - 1997.**

**DIRECTOR, National Education for Women's Leadership, New Jersey, 1997 Center for the American Woman and Politics, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ.**

**ACADEMIC COORDINATOR, Beijing Project, 4th World Conference on Women, Public Leadership Education Network, Fall 1994 - present.**

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