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# Movements, Countermovements and Policy Adoption: The Case of Right-to-Work Activism

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*Research on social movements and public policy has expanded tremendously in recent years, yet little of this work considers the role of movement opponents in the political process or how the movement-countermovement dynamic is influential in contests over policy. This historical study begins to fill this void by analyzing the contestation between employers and labor movement actors in relation to two critical right-to-work campaigns in the industrial Midwest in the 1950s. I find that actors who balance formal, professionalized organization with a more localized presence on the ground are in a better position to pursue multiple mechanisms of influence and to shape policy, while internal divisions severely limit their prospects. Event structure analyses of right-to-work campaigns advance this discussion, revealing how social movement organizational characteristics matter to the extent that they enable opposing movements to counter each other's actions in unfolding political processes. I conclude by discussing the implications of the findings for perspectives on social movements and politics, and for research dealing specifically with the U.S. labor movement.*

Social movements are potentially effective political actors. Considerable research demonstrates their impact on policy, the types of movement organizations best suited for political mobilization and the conditions under which social movements are most influential (Amenta et al. 2005; Andrews 2001; McCammon et al. 2001; Soule and Olzak 2004). Yet, much of this work neglects the other half of the story – the role of movement opponents in the political process. Few studies, for example, consider the *interplay* of social movements and their opponents and its implications for policy battles (for important exceptions see Andrews 2001; Meyer and Staggenborg 1996).

This article extends scholarship on social movements and policy by analyzing the contest between employers and labor movement actors in relation to two critical right-to-work campaigns in the industrial Midwest

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in the 1950s. Specifically, I question how employer organizations were successful in advancing right-to-work law in Indiana in 1957, but not in neighboring Ohio a year later. The issue is a critical one for the labor movement. Right-to-work laws forbid the union shop and substantially increase the costs of collective action for labor unions. Labor research suggests a number of contextual factors that are important for the passage of right-to-work laws over time (Jacobs and Dixon 2006), but this work offers less insight on how labor strategy or the mobilization and countermobilization of employers and unions may affect policy outcomes (but see Canak and Miller 1990). In advancing an explanation for the divergent right-to-work outcomes during a critical period of business and labor political mobilization, this research also contributes to literature on the American labor movement and labor politics.

Building on the literature of social movements and public policy (Andrews 2001), I contend that employer and labor actors that combine formal, professionalized organization with a more localized presence on the ground are in a better position to influence policy, while internal divisions severely limit their prospects. These features, however, are by no means static. Organizational characteristics matter to the extent that they enable social movement actors to wield influence in unfolding political processes. A crucial task for social movements and their opponents, then, is to counter each other's actions throughout political mobilizations. Event structure analyses of right-to-work campaigns demonstrate the importance of such associations and the employer-union interplay for labor policy outcomes.

### **Background: Labor Politics in the 1950s**

The 1950s are considered a quiescent period for the American labor movement, marked by a more or less amicable *accord* with business (Brody 1980). Literature pertaining to the capital-labor accord focuses on those factors upholding the arrangement, its eventual unraveling and the consequences for workers and their organizations in core industries (Rubin 1986). While useful, this view of labor relations necessarily downplays political struggles between labor and management during the 1950s and likely overstates the willingness of employers to bargain with labor. Fones-Wolf (1994) demonstrates that while some business moderates viewed the 1955 merger of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations as a positive step toward "responsible unionism," a much larger conservative segment of the business community feared the consolidated AFL-CIO, thinking it would prompt renewed organizational drives and greater political power. Many employers thus turned to politics and right-to-work in particular to curb the union threat.

Right-to-work laws are important because they increase the costs of collective action for labor unions. After winning an election, unions are legally bound to collectively bargain for all workers covered by the contract, but in a right-to-work state unions cannot compel all workers to eventually join. Employers began campaigning for right-to-work in the mid-1940s to counter the tremendous wartime growth of labor unions. The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 affirmed prior state efforts to pass and enforce right-to-work laws and campaigning for the issue accelerated thereafter. Early proponents of right-to-work included small-business and regional employer associations like the Southern States Industrial Council, the American Farm Bureau Federation, and some far-right organizations like the Christian American Association (Dixon 2007). Yet, by the 1950s, more prominent organizations such as the National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and some major corporations like General Electric championed the issue (Fones-Wolf 1994). These organizations along with the National right-to-work Committee provided campaign assistance and expertise to their state affiliates and to local employers.

Unions were slow to develop an effective counter-strategy to right-to-work and the powerful individual rights message promoted by business groups. While there is little systematic state-level public opinion data for these years, private polling by both business and labor groups suggests that the right-to-work message was potent; a majority often supported these laws even if few understood the specifics (Gall 1988). It was not until the late 1950s, however, that the national union movement offered its state affiliates any meaningful campaign assistance. Many state labor movements did not formally merge for another two to three years following the national AFL-CIO merger, which also hampered mobilization. Though the original split of the AFL fostered innovative organizing and political mobilization by the CIO, by the 1950s lingering divisions more often limited labor gains (Quadagno 2005).

These deficits were compounded by the anti-union publicity generated by the McClellan committee hearings on union corruption – hearings that turned Teamsters' leader Jimmy Hoffa into a household name for many Americans. The issue took on national prominence as right-to-work passed in heavily unionized Indiana in 1957. With several campaigns slated for the following year, Ohio emerged as *the* key battleground state and a bellwether for employer ascendancy in the industrial heartland.

How was business successful in advancing right-to-work in Indiana but not in neighboring Ohio a year later? Previous research identifies a number of factors that are important for the passage of right-to-work laws including the political climate and receptivity of state actors, union density, the predominance of small business within a state, and racial cleavages within the union movement (Jacobs and Dixon 2006; Moore 1998). Canak

and Miller's (1990) careful study of right-to-work campaigns in Louisiana points to changes in the composition of business activists and inter-union conflict as important causal factors (see also Ratcliff and Jaffe 1981). To my knowledge, however, no sociological studies have systematically examined the encroachment of business and right-to-work activism into the industrial Midwest in the 1950s – the very center of union strength and during the heyday of the accord. And, while Canak and Miller's work suggests that coalition work and union strategy are influential, most labor research does not theorize on, or empirically examine, the tactics, mobilization and countermobilization of these actors in political battles. Indeed, these problems, and the cases considered here, lend themselves to key theoretical questions pertaining to the political efficacy of social movements and their opponents.

### **Social Movement Organizations and Public Policy**

The success of Social Movement Organizations in shaping policy is undoubtedly influenced by political opportunities, popular support for an SMO's cause, and the alignment of movement activism and favorable state characteristics (Amenta et al. 2005; Meyer and Minkoff 2004). Considerable research also notes the importance of the strategies and mobilization of SMOs themselves. Resource mobilization and related organizational approaches provide a useful starting point in this regard by demonstrating how the presence and extent of supportive SMOs can affect policy outcomes (Andrews 2001; Gamson 1990; McCammon 2001). This literature suggests that SMOs influence political decision makers through a host of *persuasive* mechanisms and often routine means. SMOs wield influence by navigating multiple institutional arenas (e.g., political, media and public venues) and by employing a range of tactics beyond disruptive protest, including but not limited to litigation and lobbying where SMOs may begin to look much like interest groups (Staggenborg 1991), electoral activism (Andrews 2001), coalition work (Staggenborg 1986), and public outreach and the strategic framing of movement issues (Cress and Snow 2000; McCammon et al. 2001; McCarthy et al. 1996; Rohlinger 2006).

Recognizing the diverse tasks required of politically-oriented social movements, Andrews (2001) advances a *Movement Infrastructure* model. Social movement challengers, he argues, will have the greatest impact on policy when they are able to pursue multiple mechanisms of influence, from disruptive protest to routine negotiation with political elites. But some groups will be better equipped than others for these purposes. Drawing on civil rights and anti-poverty initiatives in Mississippi, Andrews demonstrates that social movements that encompass many organizations – including those embedded within informal community networks as well

as more formal SMOs – are in a better position to manage the many tasks required of political challengers and to affect policy.

Ties to informal community networks and a more localized movement presence aids grassroots mobilization and the ability to turn out large numbers of activists. Advancing claims within the political system requires a different set of tools. Formal, professionalized SMOs thus provide a necessary expertise when movement actors pursue insider tactics such as lobbying where the focus is on providing reliable and electorally relevant information. To be successful, social movement challengers may need to pursue grassroots and insider strategies simultaneously.

This sometimes uneasy balance between a professional movement apparatus and a more localized organization on the ground enables challenging groups to have a hand in multiple institutional arenas and to pursue numerous mechanisms of influence. However, weaving together distinct organizations is not an easy task. Persistent divisions among SMOs undoubtedly complicate these efforts; such divisions detract from the combat readiness needed to deal with resource-rich opponents and the state (Gamson 1990), and have proven influential for labor mobilizations in particular (Canak and Miller 1990).

This literature provides a useful starting point, but it does not go far enough. Most social movement research neglects the role of movement opponents in the political process. This omission is surprising given that countermovements and other *non-state antagonists* likewise engage in a wide range of political mobilization, take framing tasks seriously, turn to grassroots efforts, and otherwise affect the political prospects of social movement challengers (Griffin et al. 1986; Isaac 2002; Quadagno 2005). Indeed, the movement-countermovement dynamic has been influential for the tactics and development of a wide range of challengers including populist (Goodwyn 1978), labor (Griffin et al. 1986) civil rights (Morris 1984) and abortion rights (Rohlinger 2006). What is more, countermovements face many of the same organizational constraints as the challengers that precede them. For example, Kimeldorf's (1988:68) comparative research on longshoreman's unions demonstrates that limited solidarity and disunity among east coast *employers* precluded successful collective action against labor. What is missing from this discussion is a clear linkage between organizational perspectives on SMOs and policy and the literature on movement-countermovement dynamics. That is, how might the interplay of opposing movements, and employer and labor organizations in this case, matter for policy?<sup>1</sup>

Meyer and Staggenborg's (1996) important work develops a number of propositions on the implications of movement-countermovement dynamics for the strategies, tactics and trajectories of opposing groups. A central insight is that opposing movements are often tightly coupled



in their behavior, so that the actions of one might be shaped in important ways by the other. Considering the particular venues in which movements operate, they propose that "*Once a movement enters a particular venue, if there is a possibility of contest, an opposing movement is virtually forced to act in the same arena.*"(1649) Given that SMOs advance their claims in multiple venues, a group that does not target the venue in which its opponent is active risks given the opponent a competitive advantage. When pursuing claims within the political system, a challenging group runs the risk of letting its opponents shape policy debate uncontested if they are not active, present at hearings and supplying expert testimony. Opposing movement organizations tend to target similar venues and sometimes adopt parallel tactics for this reason (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996).

The most straightforward implication for this research is that opposing movements, often forced to act in similar venues, must attempt to *counter* each other's actions throughout political campaigns. This theme figures prominently into several analyses. McAdam's (1983:736) classic work on tactical innovation and adaptation suggests that when social movement challengers have sufficient organization, the pace of insurgency becomes an issue of strategy. Mobilization is then critically influenced by the "creativity of insurgents in devising new tactical forms... and... the ability of opponents to neutralize these moves." Hewitt and McCammon (2004) demonstrate the importance of this dynamic for framing and recruitment. A key framing task for SMOs, they argue, is to continually *neutralize* the claims put forth by opposing groups.

These insights can be extended to the policy arena. Without adopting a formal or game theoretic approach to collective action, it is reasonable to assume that SMOs and their opponents are more or less rational political actors that pursue strategies that they believe will be successful. In doing so, they have a multitude of tactical options to draw on and different venues in which to advance their claims. An important task for politically oriented challengers is to continually counter and diminish the influence of their opponent's actions – be it framing and public outreach, lobbying or protest activities. As SMOs target one venue, their opponents must do likewise. This suggests a more dynamic quality to many of the proposed mechanisms through which SMOs affect politics. Zald and Useem's (1987:247) imagery of the movement-counter movement dynamic as a "loosely coupled tango of mobilization and demobilization," is useful when considering discrete political mobilizations, including right-to-work contests. Employer and labor organizations must target similar venues and carry out many of the same political tasks. This suggests that the organizational capacity of relevant contenders provides a starting point for understanding movement impact, and that this loosely coupled dance – the framing and counter-framing of policy

issues, the back and forth on insider tactics and grassroots' efforts – then figures prominently into *how* they influence policy.

The approach I take does not discount the many actors and contexts that movements and their opponents face. These dynamics are admittedly shaped in important ways by political opportunities. What I argue is that *in settings where the relevant contenders are well organized and current political arrangements do not preclude a contest, the interplay of movements and their opponents is crucial*. The primary contribution of this research lies in bringing focus to the interplay of these contenders, the dynamic quality of the mechanisms through which SMOs wield influence, and demonstrating how this affects contests about policy.

### Case Selection

I undertake historical case studies of right-to-work campaigns in Indiana and Ohio in the late 1950s to assess the importance of business and labor mobilization for policy adoption.<sup>2</sup> While detailed historical analyses of particular cases run the risk of undermining efforts toward generalizable conclusions, cases that lend themselves to the assessment of theoretically meaningful questions have been crucial for our understanding of important social processes (see especially Reuschemeyer 2003). These cases are important for substantive and theoretical reasons. First, the Indiana and Ohio campaigns are arguably the most important labor political battles of the period. The passage of right-to-work in heavily unionized Indiana in 1957 galvanized actors on both sides of the debate; and the Ohio campaign the following year emerged as *the* key battleground state for right-to-work. Many point to the failure of right-to-work in Ohio as a crucial turning point that stemmed the movement from engulfing the heavily unionized states (Fones-Wolf 1994). Second, and perhaps more importantly, the campaigns are uniquely situated for assessing how SMOs and their opponents influence policy outcomes. The neighboring states offer markedly similar backdrops from which to examine the interplay of these actors.

Table 1 displays political and industrial characteristics for the two cases. Both are heavily unionized, industrialized, Midwestern states. Each is Republican-dominated. Though comparisons of party strength may not necessarily capture the ideological predisposition of voters, the reader will also note their close similarity in presidential voting. Importantly, the political arrangements of the two states did not preclude a contest over right-to-work; neither business nor labor interests were able to definitively shape politics to their advantage during the decade (Form 1995; Mayhew 1986).

These similarities and the potential for a contest across both cases effectively control for some of the basic features that political opportunity theorists deem crucial for movement success (Meyer and Minkoff 2004),



**Table 1: Selected Characteristics for Indiana and Ohio Right-to-Work Campaigns**

	Indiana 1957	Ohio 1958
<b>Business &amp; Labor Organization</b>		
% of Workforce Belonging to Labor Unions	40	38
Employers Organized Politically	Yes	Yes
<b>Political Context</b>		
% Republican Legislature	71	67.25
Republican Governor	Yes	Yes
% Voted for Eisenhower in 1956 Presidential Election	59.90	61.13
<b>Industrial Composition &amp; Population</b>		
% Employed in Manufacturing	42.47	41.04
% Urban	61.67	72.75

Note: Figures correspond to campaign years unless otherwise noted. State-level data for union density and percent urban were not available for the specific campaign years and were estimated using linear interpolation. Sources: Troy (1965); U.S. Bureau of the Census (1975).

and allow for a greater focus on the key organizations promoting labor policy. The contenders on each side of the debate exhibit important differences. Indiana unions were still deeply divided for the 1957 campaign. The state AFL and CIO federations had yet to merge. Business groups received considerable assistance and expertise from national organizations involved in labor politics while Indiana unions were left on their own. By contrast, Ohio labor unified early on to counter the right-to-work threat and received assistance from the national union movement in forging their public claims on the issue. These differences should matter for the opposing actors' ability to contend in unfolding right-to-work campaigns.

### **Analytic Strategy**

Historical narrative is well suited for assessing movement-counter-movement relations. Yet, if not systematic, this approach runs the risk of conflating temporal order and causality, or otherwise improperly building causal assumptions into the account (Brueggemann and Brown 2003; Griffin 1993). In order to overcome some of these limitations while preserving the strengths of a narrative approach, I use Event Structure Analysis. ESA is a heuristic methodology that builds on the strengths of narrative by forcing the analyst to explicate the underlying causal structure of a larger event and graphically displaying these relations in an event structure diagram (Griffin 1993).

ESA, and its interactive computer application ETHNO, require the analyst to imbue the temporal ordering of a narrative with his or her own

understanding of causal connections between events. The program prompts the analyst to indicate whether or not each event in the temporal sequence requires the occurrence of a previous event. It then tracks the connections implied by the analyst's responses and checks these sequential links against a series of logical constraints to generate a causal diagram. A causal argument that might otherwise only be implied is now laid bare in a concrete event structure diagram for careful examination. ESA facilitates rigorous historical explanation by interrogating the sequential and causal ordering of events and generating diagrams that can be replicated or used to develop more general models (Griffin 1993).

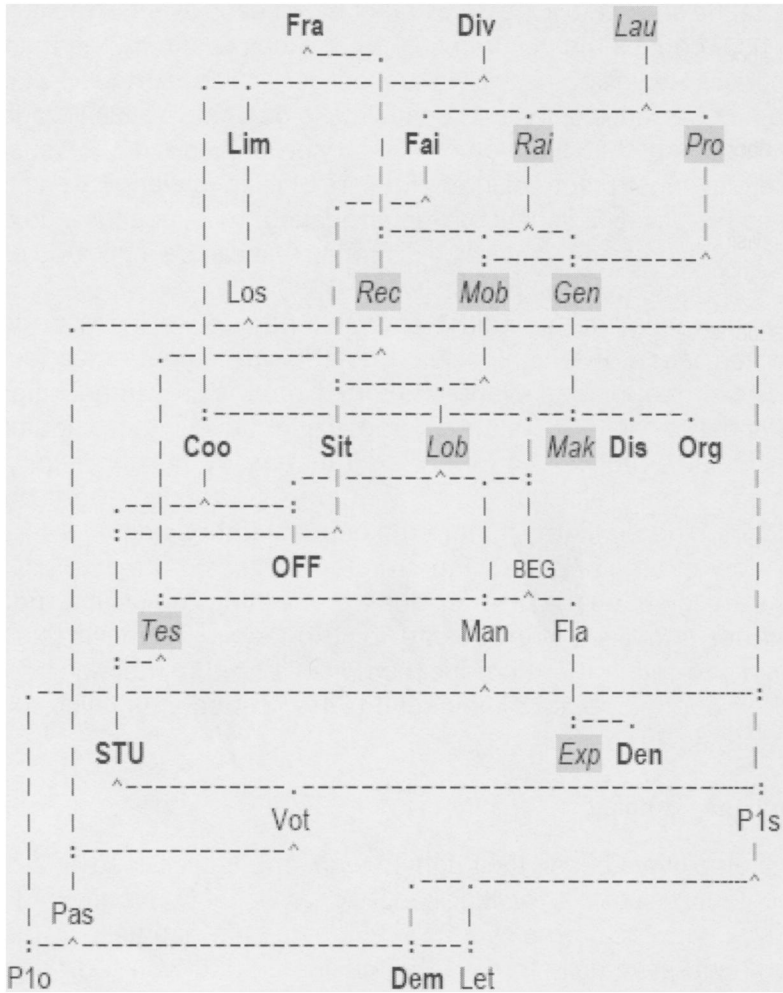
Case narratives of the Indiana and Ohio right-to-work campaigns are presented, each of which is constructed with insights gleaned from ESA. The corresponding event structure diagrams presented in figures 1 and 2 enhance these accounts by graphically conveying the significance of particular employer and labor actions and by making explicit the complex causal relations and sequences underlying right-to-work outcomes. The diagrams situate the actions comprising a larger event in the flow of time and in relation to other actions, so that subsequent actions are lower on the diagram and a connecting vertical line indicates the higher entry is a prerequisite for the lower.<sup>3</sup> To make this more intuitive and retain the theoretical emphasis on the interplay of SMOs and their opponents, employer actions are shaded and italicized while labor actions are bolded.

### **The Indiana Campaign**

Indiana employers began their right-to-work efforts well in advance of the 1957 legislative session. The Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce organized meetings with local employers in 1955 to gauge enthusiasm for right-to-work, and eventually formed the Indiana right-to-work Committee to coordinate the campaign (Lau). The organization was spearheaded by the state Chamber of Commerce, but also included the Associated Employers of Indiana, the Indiana Manufacturers Association, alongside several individual employers (U.S. Chamber of Commerce 1957). The Indiana Farm Bureau also supported right-to-work. The committee urged Indiana businesses to contribute one dollar to the cause for each of their employees (Rai) and the response was particularly good from small to mid-size firms.

The Indiana labor movement carried lingering divisions into the right-to-work effort (Div). The State Federation of Labor and the Industrial Union Council – the umbrella organizations for Indiana labor unions – had failed to merge by 1957 (two years following the national AFL-CIO merger), which hampered union political mobilization. In the 1956 gubernatorial race, the Republican candidate Harold Handley stated that he would not support

Figure 1. Event Structure of the Indiana Right-to-Work Campaign



any punitive labor legislation (Witney 1958). The craft unions and the state federation of labor took this to mean that he would veto any right-to-work legislation and steered clear of the electoral activism initiated by the industrial unions. Labor's limited (Lim) mobilization was a contributing factor in Handley's easy victory and continued Republican control of state government in the late 1950s (Kahn 1970).

In launching right-to-work, the INRTWC received assistance and expertise from the national business associations involved in labor politics (Pro) such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers and the National Right-to-Work Committee. The professional assistance

Figure 1 *continued*

Abbreviations (in chronological order)	
Fra	Labor frames RTW as employer initiative (prior campaigns)
Lau	INRTWC launches campaign
Rai	INRTWC raises money
Div	Labor divisions (state federations fail to merge after national merger)
Pro	National business organizations provide assistance for campaign
Fai	AFL-CIO fails to provide assistance
Lim	Divisions limit labor electoral mobilization
Los	Democrats lose in state races
Mob	INRTWC mobilizes local employers
Sit	Labor sits pat on member mobilization
Gen	INRTWC generates interest
Mak	INRTWC makes violence an issue
Dis	IUC distributes literature on RTW
Org	Individual unions organize in opposition
Coo	Labor federations fail to coordinate counter-campaign
Rec	INRTWC recruits workers
Lob	INRTWC lobbies state reps
Off	Labor offers no coordinated lobbying effort
Beg	Legislative phase begins
Tes	Workers testify at hearings
Stu	Labor stumbles in testimony
Fla	Strike violence flairs while legislature is in session
Exp	INRTWC exploits violence
Den	Labor denounces violence
Vot	House votes RTW out of committee without recommendation
Pas	House passes RTW
Man	Lieutenant Gov maneuvers RTW before entire senate
Bac	Craft unions propose backroom deal
P1s	Senate passes RTW
Dem	Unions demonstrate
Let	Gov lets RTW become law without signature

proved crucial for the multi-pronged campaign that included training and mobilizing their employer base, extensive public relations efforts to generate interest in right-to-work, as well as more direct lobbying. The labor federations, by contrast, received almost no help from the national AFL-CIO (Fai) (Gall 1988). The Indiana Chamber of Commerce and the INRTWC first sponsored “Working Together” programs throughout the state to mobilize employers (Mob). The sessions provided basics on political activism for local business people and spurred many to take a lead in right-to-work efforts. Many employers who had not been previously active in politics began contacting their political representatives on the issue. The program reached some 2,500 local businessmen and employers, and enlisted the

active support of its 156 affiliated local chambers and 72 affiliated state trade associations (Fones-Wolf 1994). There was no comparable effort by labor to mobilize union members around the issue (Sit).

The INRTWC spent considerable time educating the public on the excesses of labor unions and especially labor leaders (Gen). They retained a publicist early on, they held speaking engagements with civic groups across the state, mailed thousands of pamphlets on the issue, and took out newspaper and radio ads promoting right-to-work legislation (U.S. Chamber of Commerce 1957). They emphasized right-to-work as a matter of individual rights, but also pointed to union violence. For example, their early media efforts focused on violence (Mak) that occurred at an industrial plant in New Castle for which the Indiana National Guard was called on to break up armed battles between strikers and replacement workers.

The labor response to these and other claims was uneven. As right-to-work emerged as a public issue in the state, some individual union locals held meetings (Org), and the industrial union council distributed (Dis) literature on the issue, but the rival federations did not coordinate, or even meet for that matter, to forge a systematic anti-right-to-work effort; nor did they forge alliances with any civic groups outside of the labor movement (Coo) (Witney 1958).

Prior to the legislative session the INRTWC also cultivated the support of key political representatives. They held a series of legislative breakfasts where they enlisted the backing of the speaker of the house and the lieutenant governor (Lob). Additionally, they devoted sizeable resources toward recruiting workers to their organization (Rec) in order to counter the longstanding labor claim that right-to-work was solely an employer initiative (Fra).

Recall that social movement theory posits a more or less tight coupling of movement-counter movement behavior, where contestants are often forced to act in the same venues as their opponents. The right-to-work experience reveals a rather loose and uneven coupling of movement-counter movement behavior, one that varies across the particular venues or tactics employed. Employer efforts to recruit and involve everyday workers (in response to labor's framing of the issue) evolved haphazardly over several years of campaigning. At the same time, Figure 1 demonstrates the more immediate effects of union failures to act in similar venues, showing several instances where labor offered little (e.g., Org, Dis) or no response (e.g., Sit, Coo, Off) to the varied INRTWC efforts.

Rep. Arthur Atwell, a Republican from Anderson, introduced right-to-work legislation at the beginning of 1957 legislative session and C. Wendell Martin of Indianapolis introduced a companion bill in the Senate soon after (State of Indiana 1957). INRTWC recruitment efforts appeared to pay dividends early on when at public hearings on the bill, most of the witnesses

testifying in favor of right-to-work were dissident or former unionists recruited by the INRTWC. All had short and carefully prepared statements (Tes). An RCA employee testified that "the unions have become worse than the corporations they are supposed to be fighting." In these meticulously staged presentations, only one employer testified in favor of right-to-work. Testimony in opposition to right-to-work was instead marked by a stream of state labor leaders and officials who denounced it as a misnomer and as blatant "class legislation." Dallas Sells, President of the IUC, gave a lengthy prepared speech associating right-to-work with the "enemies of a free and democratic trade union movement." (testimony in Hunt 1957:1,24) Union members themselves did not play a prominent role in public testimony. With no coordination between the rival federations and little assistance from the national union movement, labor testimony and lobbying were marked by a lack of expertise (Stu) (Kahn 1970; Witney 1958).

Labor's problems were compounded when violence flared in a machinists' strike in Princeton. Just as right-to-work activity was picking up in the legislature, the home of a non-striker was shot and a baby was wounded. While nobody knew who fired the shot, and both the company and the union deplored the act (Den), right-to-work advocates and the press seized on the moment as added rationale for restrictive labor legislation (Exp) (Witney 1958). Within days of the incident the House labor committee voted the bill to the floor without recommendation. One week later the full House of Representatives passed Right-to-Work by an eight-vote margin (*Indianapolis News* 1957). Though many labor leaders attributed the bill's passing to the publicity surrounding the strike violence, there is no evidence that any votes were swayed in favor of Right-to-Work as a result (Witney 1958).

Right-to-Work still faced significant hurdles in the Senate. With the Senate labor committee likely to vote the bill down, Lt. Gov. Crawford Parker, whose support the INRTWC had enlisted early on, skillfully maneuvered to bring the bill in front of the entire Senate (treating the Senate as committee). While the bill received new life in the Senate, divisions between the rival labor federations again reared their head. In a move of desperation, some craft union leaders approached Right-to-Work supporters on the eve the Senate vote, urging them to exempt craft unions from the bill, after which they would "throw their weight" behind the measure (Bac). Hearing of the attempt, an exasperated CIO unionist questioned a sponsor of the bill: "Is the AFL trying to drop us off the bridge?" (*Indianapolis Star* 1957)

The last-minute attempt of craft unions to stave off Right-to-Work did not sway supporters; Right-to-Work passed the Senate in its original form by a narrow three-vote margin. Still holding out hope for a veto by Gov. Handley, the state federation of labor demonstrated in opposition to the bill. The day after the Senate vote more than 10,000 raucous union members poured



into the capitol building demanding a veto (Dem). Glaring labor divisions persisted even at this stage. The mass demonstration consisted of only AFL unions, while CIO unionists stayed home (Witney 1958). Right-to-work supporters maneuvered to keep both houses in session during the protest in order to respond to a potential veto. The large demonstration did not persuade the Governor. He stated his reservations on the bill to the crowd and let it become law without his signature (Averitt 1957).

Figure 1 suggests that the blatant showings of labor disunity at the very end of the legislative session did not determine the outcome. Rather, labor stumbled from the outset to match INRTWC efforts at pivotal moments throughout the campaign. Labor leaders acknowledged as much. Stanley Elliot, the vice president of the State Federation of Labor stated that "We didn't know what hit us," while IUC leader Dallas Sells recognized that labor's belated efforts did not compare to the "superbly organized" INRTWC campaign (Kahn 1970:237-238). The success of Right-to-Work in Indiana did, however, arouse national labor interest, after which point the AFL-CIO steered considerable resources toward the problem.

### **Right-to-Work in Ohio**

The Ohio Chamber of Commerce called for a public referendum campaign for Right-to-Work in 1957 (Lau). By November, the Chamber of Commerce, the Ohio Manufacturers Association, and the Ohio Retail Merchants Association formed *Ohioans for Right-to-Work* and the *Labor Committee for Right-to-Work* to coordinate their efforts. A polling of state Chamber of Commerce members showed unanimous support for Right-to-Work, and that more than three quarters believed that the issue would pass in Ohio if put up to a public vote (Miller and Ware 1963). Many prominent individual employers in the state including Timken Roller Bearing, General Electric and Armco Steel believed that this was "the year" for a public right-to-work vote given the recent success in neighboring Indiana and the negative publicity generated through the McClellan Committee hearings.

Representatives from Ohio labor unions wasted no time in coordinating their own campaign. While Ohio labor federations would not merge until the spring of 1958, craft and industrial factions began meeting in late 1957 and formed *United Organized Labor of Ohio* ((Uni). National organizations on each side of the debate also pledged professional assistance (Pro). For the first time since right-to-work activism took hold in the United States, the AFL-CIO had a formal organizational structure devoted to the problem (Ple) that offered research, funding, and campaign assistance to state affiliates (Gall 1988). Ohio unions first contracted with a public relations firm for their outreach and educational efforts, but also drew on the expertise of the national union movement. Beginning in the spring of 1958, Walter Reuther

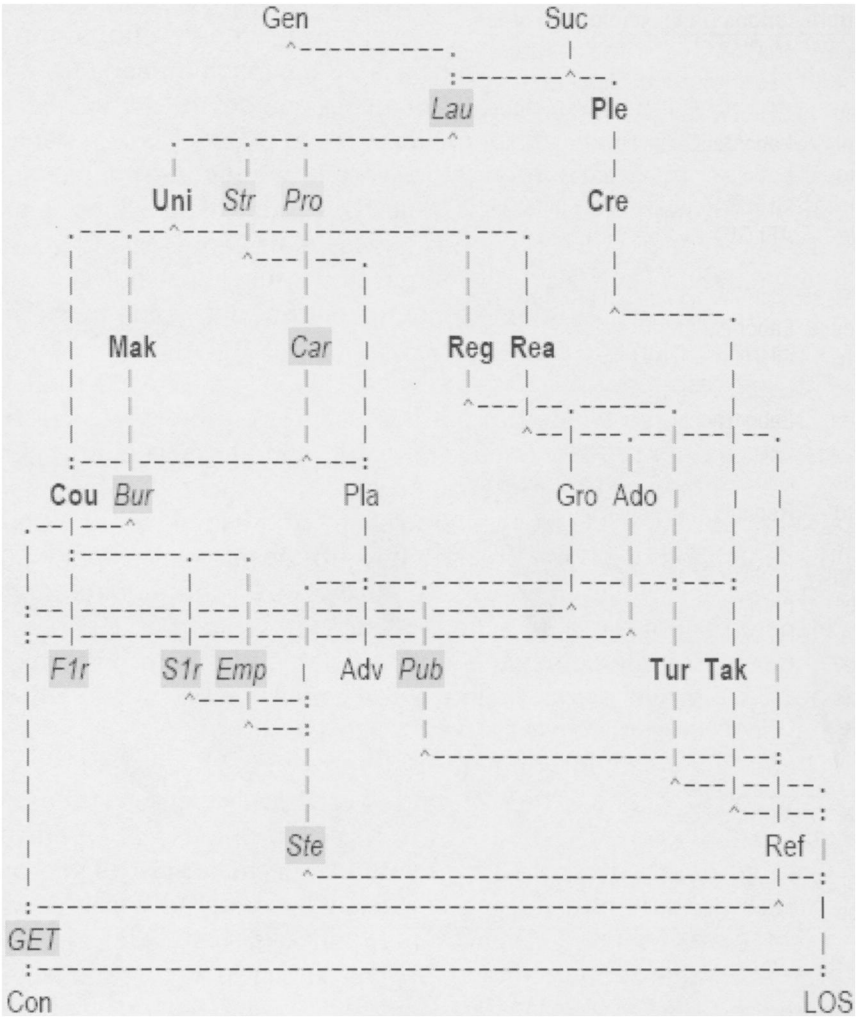
helped steer the AFL-CIO's right-to-work strategy and their public outreach on the issue. Rather than relying on reactionary claims that attributed right-to-work to enemies of the union movement as in prior efforts, the idea for labor was to take a more sophisticated approach that articulated the broader social and economic roles of unions and demonstrated how right-to-work would diminish prosperity for working people (Cre). In Reuther's words, "The answer to the right-to-work problem is a practical job of political education." (Gall 1998:202) OHRTW also had an extensive public relations campaign, relying on the in-house staff of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce (Zavacky 1968). They stressed the traditional individual rights focus, but also pointed to union corruption (Str) and some of the more sensational exploits revealed by the McClellan committee.

The first step for right-to-work advocates was to collect the more than 350,000 signatures needed to put the initiative on the November ballot (Car). But as right-to-work activists distributed and collected petitions, union activists urged them not to do so. When this did not work labor activists published lists of local employers who had signed the petition and encouraged union members to boycott these establishments (Cou). Right-to-work advocates would eventually collect the required number of signatures, but the labor actions nonetheless forced OHRTW and the Chamber of Commerce to expend considerable resources on petitioning alone (F1r), while discouraging some small business owners from supporting the campaign (Miller and Ware 1963).

In addition to countering the petition drive, UOLO took to voter registration (Reg) and to the courting of various civic groups (Rea). After failing in previous voter turnout efforts, Ohio unions appeared to be making some headway. Labor registered the majority of Ohio union members heading into the fall of 1958 while also adding thousands more of mostly working class voters to the rolls (Gall 1998). Labor also garnered notable support among religious and civic organizations. In the spring, the Ohio Catholic Welfare Conference came out against Right-to-Work and the major Protestant and Jewish representatives in the state soon followed. Several civic organizations also adopted resolutions against Right-to-Work, including the Fraternal Order of Eagles, the Ohio Disabled Veterans and the Ohio NAACP. In some cases, labor supporters pressured city councils to adopt resolutions against the issue. These were primarily the larger industrial areas with a strong union and Democratic presence (UOLO 1958a).

OHRTW had difficulty relying on the active support of what should have been their staunchest allies. Heading into the summer, some Republican strategists and politicians in the state were wary that the public referendum would draw a heavy labor vote and prove damaging for party candidates (Gro). Republican Senator John Bricker urged right-to-work proponents to

Figure 2. Event Structure of Ohio Right-to-Work Campaign



delay the campaign until 1959, but employer activists dismissed this idea. This left Republican Governor William O'Neil as the most forceful political advocate of Right-to-Work (Fenton 1959).

Divisions also emerged within the employer base. Right-to-work advocates first thought the Chamber of Commerce would provide a natural organizational structure to coordinate activism with their many local chapters and affiliated employers. However, some local chapters were less than enthusiastic about the campaign due to labor pressure. The Cleveland Chamber of Commerce strayed from the campaign plan and did not endorse the measure (S1r). Some smaller employers also

Figure 2 *continued*

<b>Abbreviations (in chronological order)</b>	
Gen	McClellan committee generates negative publicity
Suc	Rtw succeeds in Midwest
Lau	OHRTW launches public campaign
Uni	Labor unifies to counter RTW
Pro	National business orgs provide assistance
Str	OHRTW stresses corruption
Ple	AFLCIO pledges assistance
Cre	Labor creates new frame for RTW
Car	OHRTW carries out petition drive
Cou	Labor counters petitioning
F1r	OHRTW forced to spend more money
Reg	Labor voter registration
Rea	Labor reaches out to civic groups
Mak	Labor makes rural inroads
Ado	City Councils adopt resolutions
Gro	Republicans grow wary
S1r	Cleveland COC strays from campaign
Emp	Small employers defect
Bur	Farm Bureau stays silent on RTW
Pla	RTW placed on ballot
Adv	Governor advocates for RTW
Tak	Labor takes new message door to door
Ste	OHRTW steps up mailings
Pub	OHRTW publishes pamphlet targeting African Americans
Ref	Black press refutes OHRTW claims
Get	OHRTW gets desperate (inflammatory ads)
Con	Church group condemns ads
Tur	Labor voter turnout operations
Los	Amendment fails

defected from the right-to-work effort (Emp) because of labor pressure and dissatisfaction with the Chamber's handling of the campaign. Figure 2 suggests that while initial labor pressure did not prevent right-to-work advocates from collecting the necessary number of signatures for the ballot measure (although it forced them to spend more money in doing so), it dissuaded some of the employer base from actively participating. What is more, the Ohio Farm Bureau – whose parent organization, the American Farm Bureau Federation, had long been a vocal proponent of Right-to-Work – remained conspicuously silent on the issue (Bur). This amounted to a UOLO victory; they had long worked to make inroads in rural parts of the state and with agricultural interests (Mak) (UOLO 1958a).

Right-to-Work was officially placed on the ballot in August. According to an August opinion poll sponsored by UOLO, approximately one third of

the electorate was for Right-to-Work, another third against it, and a third undecided (Gall 1998). These figures provide a useful window into the campaign. Just prior to the accelerated media and educational outreach phase of the campaign, the poll shows voters to be somewhat evenly split, and with a large group undecided. OHRTW stepped up their attacks on union corruption in the final phase of the campaign. Gov. William O'Neil made this a focus of several speeches leading up to the election, in which he often pointed to the exploits notorious labor leaders such as Jimmie Hoffa: "I am for the Right-to-Work amendment because I want to protect the union member from the corrupt labor bosses... This man – James Hoffa – is the national dictator of the Teamsters Unions... all members... must belong and pay dues or they lose their jobs." (O'Neil 1958)<sup>4</sup>

Union activists stressed the importance of labor for the prosperity of Ohio families and the public welfare in their advertising and public outreach efforts. Thousands of union members carried this new labor message door-to-door throughout Ohio communities (Tak). Right-to-work activists – with less than anticipated support from their base, including local Chamber of Commerce chapters and affiliated employers – were forced to rely more extensively on mailings and advertising (Ste) (Miller and Ware 1963).

OHRTW published a pamphlet targeting the black community in the final weeks, arguing that the Indiana law had opened up opportunities for black workers (Pub). Here, labor coalition work appeared to pay off. The black press immediately refuted these claims and denounced the right-to-work campaign. OHRTW then moved toward a more strident attack on unionism in principle (Gall 1998; Miller and Ware 1963). They took to the airwaves with near hysterical charges of union violence (Get). OHRTW aired television ads featuring clips of a Cecil DeMille film showing labor mob violence during earlier organizing struggles. The clips showed cars being overturned and burned, rioting, and beatings. Other pro Right-to-Work ads featured a threatening figure, the stereotypical "union boss," warning viewers not to vote for the amendment (Gall 1998; UOLO 1958b). Several church leaders condemned the ads as inflammatory and some stations stopped airing them.

Importantly, UOLO and Ohio labor unions coordinated extensive voter turnout efforts (Tur). A midterm election record number turned out to the polls and the right-to-work amendment lost in a landslide. The margin was nearly two-to-one in favor of labor and was soundly defeated in even some of the most rural counties (Fenton 1959). No political observers, or union activists for that matter, expected such widespread support for labor. Unions got their message out early, appearing to throw off the right-to-work campaign at times. This was most glaring at the end of the campaign as right-to-work advocates reverted to a near hysterical attack

on unionism. Historian Elizabeth Fones-Wolf (1994:274) suggests that this particular exchange was influential not only for the Ohio outcome, but for the shape of things to come, noting that business leaders learned that “future efforts to limit the power of labor needed to differentiate between unions as institutions and the abuses of labor leaders.”

## Discussion

Analyses of two critical right-to-work campaigns demonstrate how differences in the organization of the contenders mattered for success. The INRTWC drew on the expertise of national business organizations to forge their public claims regarding Right-to-Work, but also worked with local employers to coordinate grassroots efforts, and reached out to a non-traditional constituency in workers to lend legitimacy to their campaign. This was in stark contrast to the Indiana labor federations, who were deeply divided and received no meaningful assistance from the national union movement. The Ohio case saw nearly the opposite pattern: labor unified early on, tapped into the expertise of the national union movement to frame the right-to-work problem, forged coalitions with popular civic groups, and mobilized union members to carry out extensive voter registration and turnout activities. It was the Ohio business campaign that experienced divisions within and had only limited ties to local employers and organizations.

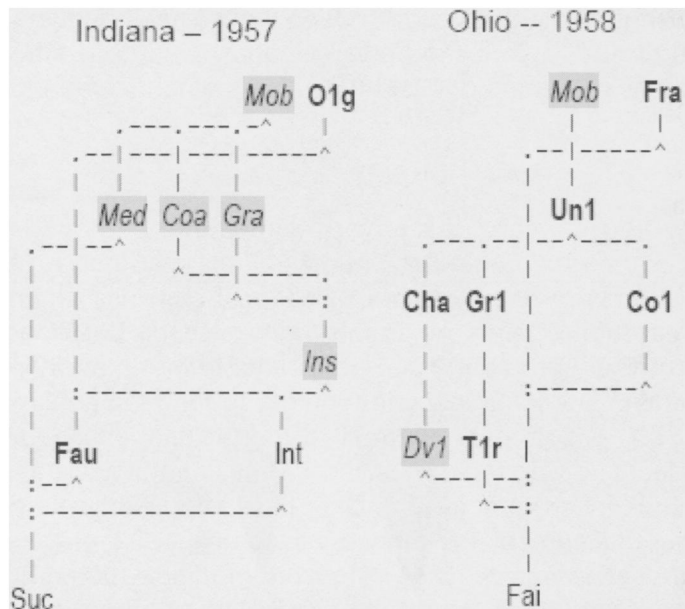
While there are no reliable figures on spending across the two campaigns, meaningful differences in the organizational capacity of the contenders are clear.<sup>5</sup> Most notably for labor, individual unions and the torn rival federations were left on their own to tackle Right-to-Work in Indiana. Yet, the national union movement certainly learned from this defeat. A year later a unified Ohio labor movement benefited from the active support of the AFL-CIO.

Readers may still question how such characteristics mattered across a broader range of right-to-work contests. For this reason, I conducted a supplemental Qualitative Comparative Analysis on the influence of labor, employer and political characteristics on the success or failure of state right-to-work campaigns that were brought to a vote in the late 1950s, which is presented in Appendix Tables 1 and 2.<sup>6</sup> QCA analyses reveal two distinct configurations leading to the adoption of Right-to-Work, each of which include labor divisions as a causal factor. The *absence* of national union support was only present in one of the two configurations leading to Right-to-Work.<sup>7</sup>

This suggests the importance of union divisions for labor's fortunes, although it is undoubtedly a complex issue. The original split of the AFL in the 1930s allowed for political innovations by a nascent CIO, which pioneered a political and social unionism that proved markedly successful and that forced the AFL into politics as well. In this way, early divisions



Figure 3. Generalized Event Structures of Indiana and Ohio Right-to-Work Campaigns



Note: Labor movement actions bolded; employer actions shaded and italicized.

provided a necessary space for innovative political action. What this article demonstrates, is that following the exceptional labor upsurge of the 1930s and 1940s, these divisions limited some of the basic features that make unions effective political vehicles and social movement actors. Such divisions indeed hampered labor's ability to counter employer initiatives.

The findings presented here are consistent with literature on SMOs and policy (Andrews 2001; McCammon et al. 2001), but also extend this work by demonstrating how employer and labor tactics were meaningful in *relation* to their opponent's actions. ESA is useful for depicting these dynamics and can facilitate more systematic case comparisons in the form of *generalized* event structures. Generalized models extract pertinent concepts and relations from the "concrete" event structures (depicted in figures 1 and 2) and subject them to the same interrogative process involving ETHNO queries. The generalized event structures cannot violate the causal or temporal relations of the initial models (Griffin 1993; see also Brown 2000). The resulting diagram presented in Figure 3 maps the relations among theoretically relevant actions and lists their "instantiations," or instances of the more general concept in the associated case-specific action.<sup>8</sup> Thus, under the "Instantiation" headings in Figure 3, the first element in each line refers to the concrete event structure while the second element refers to the generalized event structure.

Figure 3 *continued*

Instantiations (from Figure 1)		Instantiations (from Figure 2)	
From Lau to Mob		From Lau to Mob	
From Div to O1g		From Cre to Fra	
From Gen to Med		From Uni to Un1	
From Rec to Coa		From Cou to Cha	
From Mob to Gra		From Emp to Dv1	
From Lob to Ins		From Rea to Co1	
From Stu to Fau		From Reg to Gr1	
From Man to Int		From Tur to T1r	
From Let to Suc		From Los to Fai	
Abbreviations			
Mob	Business mobilizes	Fau	Labor falters in the legislative process
O1g	Labor organizational schisms	Int	Elected official intervenes on behalf of business
Coa	Business coalition Efforts	Suc	RTW Succeeds
Co1	Labor coalition efforts	Fra	Labor framing innovation
Gra	Grassroots mobilization among employers	Un1	Labor organizations unify
Gr1	Grassroots labor activism	Cha	Labor challenges campaign process
Med	Business media campaign	T1r	Labor voter turnout operations
Ins	Business Insider Tactics	Fai	RTW fails
Dv1	Divisions emerge among employers		

The generalized event structures in Figure 3 show that a host of persuasive mechanisms of influence – coalition work, framing and insider tactics such as lobbying – were important for organizations on each side of the debate. Here, organizational differences mattered to the extent they enabled opposing movements to counter each other’s actions in unfolding political contests. A divided and ill-equipped Indiana union movement had few responses to the multiple employer actions throughout various stages of the campaign, be it public outreach and education on Right-to-Work (Med), grassroots efforts with local employers (Gra) as well as more insider tactics (Ins). The labor federations faltered (Fau) in the legislative phase and could not cultivate the allies within the state that proved meaningful for the INRTWC. Ohio labor instead countered employer actions early on (Cha), and took the initiative in the contest.

Figure 3 demonstrates how differences in organizational capacity or movement infrastructure may translate into movement success. The narratives and event structures presented here also reveal a complex movement-countermovement dynamic – one where movement responses evolve unevenly and the coupling of movement-countermovement behavior

varies in degree across venues and the tactics employed within particular mobilizations. Understanding just where and when movements or their opponents gain an upper hand in this regard is benefited by a comparative historical design that allows for close attention to the cases.

## Conclusion

This article extends the understanding of the relations between SMOs, their opponents and public policy, and of labor and employer mobilization more specifically. Movement-counter movement relations are shown to be influential in battles over labor policy. In settings where current or longstanding political arrangements do not preclude a contest, and opposing movements are well organized, the interplay of these opposing actors figures prominently into *how* social movement actors affect political outcomes. While researchers note the importance of similar dynamics for movement recruitment or tactics, the literature on SMOs and policy offers relatively little in this regard. This study suggests the importance of not just counter movement presence, but of the particular forms of contestation between opposing movement actors.

Alongside the various persuasive mechanisms through which SMOs affect political outcomes, *countering* their opponent's actions presents another crucial task for social movement challengers. While these particular cases may not correspond perfectly to contemporary social movement activity – the labor movement of the 1950s being the prototypical “old” social movement – movement-counter movement dynamics have been an important fixture of much political mobilization, whether old or new. These campaigns, moreover, are uniquely situated for assessing the influence of such relations in policy contests. Indeed, historical and comparative case study approaches, including formal ones such as ESA, are well suited for investigating these processes, and can provide significant insights for social movement scholarship. I am therefore confident in the findings presented here and their utility for the understanding of other social movement political mobilizations.

This research also contributes to work specifically on the American labor movement. The contentious right-to-work battles of the 1950s add a layer of complexity to literature on the capital-labor accord. This article shows that such an accord did not preclude important segments of the business community from targeting the state to constrain labor – not just in areas with little union organization, but in the industrial heartland and the very center of union strength. The campaigns also capture an important moment in these contests, when unions were able to stem the tide of employer mobilization and Right-to-Work from engulfing the heavily industrialized states. Though certainly of historical significance, the insights generated here on union and

employer mobilization also hold relevance for contemporary labor politics where problems of framing, sophisticated employer tactics and fissures among labor organizations remain salient.

## Notes

1. Power structure research has long focused on such an interplay, although it does not incorporate social movement concepts. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this insight.
2. I draw from archival materials from the organizations involved, state documents, newspaper coverage of the campaigns and the following secondary accounts: Fones-Wolf 1994; Gall 1998; Kahn 1970; Miller and Ware 1963; Witney 1958; Zavacky 1968.
3. An event that is a prerequisite for multiple events has a short vertical line down from it that connects to a horizontal brace line linking to the multiple dependent events. Abbreviations in all capital letters indicate disjunctive relations where one of multiple antecedents is a sufficient cause. *Unrelated* lines that cross each other (due to space constraints) are distinguished by a short open gap. See Griffin (1993) for a detailed explanation of ESA.
4. The McClellan Committee hearings certainly influenced the debate on Right-to-Work and made the Teamsters and union leaders like Hoffa prime targets. As for the Teamsters, they played little visible role in the Ohio campaign. The AFL-CIO expelled them in 1957 and they did not work with UOLO in 1958.
5. Zavacky (1968) estimates that business and labor expenditures were roughly equal in Ohio.
6. QCA uses Boolean logic to reduce combinations of theoretically proscribed causal factors and specify configurations that shape outcomes (Ragin 2000). For recent applications to labor and social movement mobilization, see Boswell et al. 2006 or Dixon et al. 2004. Data for this analysis are from Troy (1965), U.S. Bureau of the Census (1975), and the author's prior work.
7. QCA results show that national union support did not help labor in Kansas in 1958, where the union movement was relatively weak. Yet the successful involvement of the AFL-CIO in Ohio dampened employer willingness to initiate future right-to-work ventures in the Midwest. NAM public affairs director Carl Biemiller acknowledged that such efforts would dwindle as a result of the Ohio setback (Born 1958).
8. Griffin (1993) suggests that decisions about abstracting concrete actions to a generalized diagram should be guided by their theoretical relevance and empirical significance as revealed by the concrete event structures. Figure 3 retains the theoretical emphasis on the interplay of opposing movement actors.

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Appendix. Qualitative Comparative Analysis of Right-to-Work Campaigns, 1955-1960

Table A1: Causal Factors Included in QCA Model

Causal Factor	Description
Labor Divisions (Divisions)	Whether or not state AFL & CIO federations have merged (1 = No)
Union Strength (Union)	Union density above the mean (1 = Yes)
National Assistance (National)	State labor federation(s) received assistance from national AFL-CIO (1 =Yes)
Employer Organization (Emp)	State has NAM affiliate organization (1 = yes)
Republican Control (Rep)	Republican control of state legislature (1 = yes)
Referendum Vote (Ref)	Right-to-Work put to a public vote (1 = yes)

Table A2: Reduced Causal Configurations for Right-to-Work Passage

Configuration	States
DIVISIONS*national*REP*ref*EMP	Indiana; Utah
DIVISIONS*NATIONAL*union*REP*REF*EMP	Kansas

Note: Capital letters denote the presence of a given attribute and lowercase letters indicate its absence. An asterisk indicates conjoined attributes. Configurations associated with Right-to-Work Passage are for the 11 RTW campaigns brought to a vote (legislative or public) between 1955 and 1960: California; Colorado; Idaho; Indiana; Kansas; Maryland; Ohio; Utah; Vermont; Washington (1956 and 1958). Repeal attempts or RTW bills that died in committee are excluded.