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Blue-Green Coalitions: Fighting for Safe Workplaces and Healthy Communities

Brian Mayer

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Blue-Green Coalitions: Fighting for Safe Workplaces and Healthy Communities

Abstract
[Excerpt] My goal in this book is to examine the formation of labor-environmental alliances that focus on health issues. Health concerns are increasingly a common ground on which blue-green coalitions are developing across the United States. Activists from both movements often see health issues through different lenses, which lends a particular slant to how they approach potential solutions for reducing exposures to toxics. The coalition framework emphasizes the fundamental link between occupational and environmental health, providing an internal cohesion and a politically persuasive agenda based on the centrality of health-related issues. By engaging labor and environmental activists in a common dialogue regarding the need for cooperative action to reduce the risks of community and workplace exposures, blue-green coalitions are creating new opportunities for progressive social change.

Keywords
safety, workplace, environment, labor, health care

Comments
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Acknowledgments

This is a book about cooperation. In this spirit, I owe many thanks to those who shared their stories and opinions about how blue-green coalitions come together and the challenges in making them work. I am especially grateful for the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow's openness and acceptance of my work, as well as their help in getting me started learning about blue-green coalitions. Similarly, I thank the members of the New Jersey Work Environment Council and the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition who generously answered my questions and allowed me to attend their meetings and events. Their accounts of the dynamics of working in a cross-movement coalition are the backbone of this book. In particular I thank Lee Ketelson, Joel Tickner, Tolle Graham, Ted Comick, and Stephen Gauthier of the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow; Rick Engler and Jim Young of the New Jersey Work Environment Council; and Ted Smith and Mandy Hawes of the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition. These few individuals are among the many environmental and labor activists, their families and fellow activists, whose hard work makes these blue-green coalitions possible.

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My deepest thanks go to friends and family who sustained me during the process of writing this book. My parents Sandy and Lynn spent many encouraging hours providing support. My wife Jenelle Chraft, through her friendship, understanding, and love, has helped make possible my academic success.
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There is a story told by members of the International Union of Electronic, Electrical, Salaried, Machine and Furniture Workers—Communications Workers of America (IUE-CWA) Local 201 about the day protestors from Greenpeace gathered outside their manufacturing plant. Located in an industrial suburb north of Boston, the General Electric Company’s Saugus Riverworks — where Local 201 represents much of the workforce — has been operating since the 1950s, creating gears that drive everything from submarines to dishwashers. Saugus Riverworks has had its fair share of environmental problems, but the union there believes that the emissions released by their plant are lower than most and within regulatory guidelines. The union has historically been well connected to the community and supports a number of local organizations and initiatives. Many of the union members also belong to social organizations, from church groups to social service providers to civic clubs where they volunteer their time to improve the neighborhood.

Ask certain union members about Greenpeace and you’re likely to hear about a group of crazy environmentalists that threatened the lives of the workers inside the plant as a part of a publicity stunt. As the story goes, protestors from Greenpeace rallied outside the plant gates to protest against the air pollution emanating from the plant’s many smokestacks. Declaring that the Saugus Riverworks polluted the air, the environmentalists marched and chanted along the fences with their placards — much
to the dismay of the employees at work that day. As part of the demonstration, the protestors allegedly sealed air vents around the plant to both physically and symbolically keep the pollution inside. Some workers claim Greenpeace went so far as to weld the vents shut, while others recall simple pieces of plywood blocking the air from escaping. As one worker at the plant told me, “Those environmentalists want to save the whales and kill the workers.”

Given this common sentiment among the workers, one might be surprised to learn that several individuals in Local 201 are leading a new movement to synchronize the interests and actions of labor and environmental organizations in Massachusetts. Over time, what distinguishes Local 201 from other union locals in the contemporary labor movement is its exceptional commitment to protecting the health and safety of its members. Prior to the alleged incident involving Greenpeace, the union had established a joint health-and-safety committee that works with the management at General Electric to establish safety practices and guidelines within the Saugus Riverworks plant. This committee is a national model for other IUE-CWA locals and other unions. Local 201’s emphasis on occupational health and their willingness to bring health issues to the bargaining table in negotiations with General Electric reveals a commitment to health beyond what many other labor groups today are willing to risk.

Among the many hazards faced by employees at GE’s Saugus Riverworks are exposures to toxic substances used in the manufacturing process, such as metal-working fluids that are often in the form of an aerosolized toxic mist produced during the machining process. Though personal protective equipment and operating procedures have been developed to protect the machinists from this hazard, a number of people have still become ill with respiratory conditions as a result of working with these substances. Based on this personal experience of occupational disease, several of the local’s members and leaders have made the elimination of potential health hazards a priority. In doing so, they unexpectedly developed a common critique of the use of toxic substances in the production process that closely mirrored the agenda of a developing environmental and public health organization in Boston. This organization, the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow (AHT), works statewide in Massachusetts with scientists, public health professionals, and community and environmental activists to promote a system of chemical policy and management that calls for the substitution of safer alternatives for hazardous substances.

Building on their common interests in preventing human exposure to toxic chemicals, the AHT has made the relationship between labor and environmental organizations a center of their advocacy work across Massachusetts. Labor activists who participate in the AHT experienced the deleterious health effects of the toxic substances escaping into fence-line communities, and these environmental activists began working with the labor local to transform their own experiences into a political agenda of anti-toxics activists belonging to the AHT. In this way, labor and environmental organizers including the New Jersey Work Environmentalists and the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition (San Francisco Bay) developed a similar approach to building relationships between labor and environmental organizations based on protecting health.

My goal in this book is to examine alliances that focus on health issues common ground on which blue-green labor and environmental activists are building connections across Massachusetts and the United States. Activists from both labor and environmental organizations work through different lenses, which lend a common perspective to potential solutions for reducing occupational exposures, blue-green coalitions for progressive social change.

Rethinking the Jobs versus the Environment

Relations between labor and environmental organizations can be complex, with clashes of interests, and enduring blue-green coalitions. At a more fundamental level, the stereotype of a "jobs versus the environment" divide between workers and environmentalists has evolved into a more nuanced understanding of the need for cooperative action to address workplace hazards. The need for new alliances that focus on occupational health challenges is compelling, as is the importance of building relationships with labor activists who have experienced the deleterious health effects of toxic substances.
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labor activists who participate in the AHT, several of whom personally ex­
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ards, and the environmental activists interested in preventing toxics from
escaping into fence-line communities and the broader environment is
fundamentally about protecting health. Labor leaders from the IUE-CWA
Local 201 and other labor organizations throughout Massachusetts have
been able to transform their own experience of illness and the experiences
of the rank and file into a political identity that mirrors the work of the
anti-toxics activists belonging to the AHT, forming the basis for a coalition
of labor and environmental organizations. Other blue-green coalitions,
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Rethinking the Jobs versus the Environment Debate

Relations between labor and environmental movements exist within a
complex web of clashing interests, electoral politics, and attempts to form
enduring blue-green coalitions. At a fundamental level, there are class dif­
fences in the interests of the two movements that often perpetuate the
stereotype of a “jobs versus the environment” debate that is seen as an
absolute divide between workers and environmentalists. Unions are often
interested primarily in protecting what remains of organized jobs and
preventing further layoffs to maintain a basic standard of living. Environmental protection, which can act as a limit on economic growth, is therefore perceived as a direct threat to jobs—driving the labor movement to ally with industry in opposition to environmental organizations (Gottlieb 1993; Schnaiberg, Watts, and Zimmerman 1986). But, as more in-depth analysis suggests, externalities such as environmental pollution and occupational health hazards disproportionately affect those at the lower end of the socioeconomic structure, the working class, which would theoretically create allies between environmentalists and organizations like unions that tend to represent working class individuals (Obach 2004a). Despite the ubiquitous nature of these environmental and health risks that have come to dominate what Beck (1992) calls the “risk society,” no broad class-based coalition in the United States has emerged to challenge the environmental consequences of the capitalist system of production, as is the case with Germany’s Green Party (Foster 1993).

This lack of a broad coalition is in part due to the distinct types of logics guiding the actions of the two movements. The labor movement, organized hierarchically through a national confederacy down through workers affiliated to a union local, relates to its membership in an instrumental fashion. The benefit from participating in the labor movement for workers is derived from collective representation, which is financed by membership fees. The influence of labor unions exists in a formalized relationship between capitalist enterprises and workers, which is facilitated through the state. On the other side, the environmental movement benefits from voluntary participation from its members and is organized more horizontally. Contributions to the environmental movement are obtained through a more normatively oriented logic. Environmental organizations must persuade their members that supporting their particular organization is an efficient way to act on their own individual values. In this model, it is assumed that these two very distinct logics of collective action are rooted in the class differences between the two movements and often prevent collaboration from occurring. However, when crises occur and disrupt the status quo, unique opportunities to work across class and identity divides arise. These moments of opportunity are essential in building blue-green coalitions.

Those economic and political actors with interests in the production and sale of hazardous substances who are threatened by collaboration between the two movements work diligently to prevent relationships between the labor and environmentalist movements from developing. One of the most manipulative strategies intended to create division between the two movements is job blackmail. Job blackmail as a strategy of intimidation try by threatening to fire or punish dissing conditions. Environmental job blackmail grievances toward environmental actors resulting environmental regulations that than the environmental movement for dency of many labor unions to side with conflict or regulatory reform does not act of the economic costs of environme (Goodstein 1999). Claims of job losses a regulations are most often politically econmically analyses (Freudenburg, Wilson, a Kazis and Grossman 1982). For the mceffectively driven a wedge between thei relationship to capital (Foster 1992).

Contrary to the allegations of indu limit their growth, most research on the tions suggests a positive impact on over 1999). Estimates vary as to the degree suggest that roughly two million people in jobs that are directly or indirectly rel (Obach 2004a). Goodstein’s (1999) ana environmental regulations in the United thousand jobs are lost annually direct ion. Unfortunately, though, the imac felt harshly in a few isolated industri ressource-extraction industries such as lo (burg, Wilson, and O’Leary 1998). Whi have a net positive effect on job grow trial sectors tend to have a major neg whose economies are based on a single relatively small economies of logging a handle major economic shifts. Further ressource-extraction industries in partic to heighten the visibility of the econom tion (Obach 2002).

The well-known controversy over the case of job blackmail and the inability o tion to more sustainable forms of prod
The two movements is job blackmail. Kazis and Grossman (1982) define job blackmail as a strategy of intimidating workers into allying with industry by threatening to fire or punish dissenters who complain about working conditions. Environmental job blackmail attempts to refocus workers’ grievances toward environmental activists, blaming their actions and resulting environmental regulations that may come from interests other than the environmental movement for cuts in jobs and growth. The tendency of many labor unions to side with capital during periods of social conflict or regulatory reform does not accurately reflect the empirical reality of the economic costs of environmental and public health protection (Goodstein 1999). Claims of job losses arising from stricter environmental regulations are most often politically motivated and unsupported by economic analyses (Freudenburg, Wilson, and O’Leary 1998; Goodstein 1999; Kazis and Grossman 1982). For the most part, however, the strategy has effectively driven a wedge between those who are potential allies based on their relationship to capital (Foster 1993).

Contrary to the allegations of industry that environmental reforms limit their growth, most research on the economic effects of these regulations suggests a positive impact on overall employment rates (Goodstein 1999). Estimates vary as to the degree of this relationship, but averages suggest that roughly two million people in the United States are employed in jobs that are directly or indirectly related to environmental protection (Obach 2004a). Goodstein’s (1999) analysis of the economic impacts of environmental regulations in the United States suggests that roughly three thousand jobs are lost annually directly due to environmental protection. Unfortunately, though, the impact of environmental protection is felt harshly in a few isolated industrial sectors—in particular the natural resource extraction industries such as logging and coal mining (Freudenburg, Wilson, and O’Leary 1998). While environmental protection may have a net positive effect on job growth, its effects in these few industrial sectors tend to have a major negative impact on the communities whose economies are based on a single industry (Goodstein 1999). The relatively small economies of logging and mining towns are not able to handle major economic shifts. Furthermore, the concentration of these resource-extraction industries in particular regions of the country tends to heighten the visibility of the economic costs of environmental protection (Obach 2002).

The well-known controversy over the northern spotted owl is a classic case of job blackmail and the inability of small-scale economies to transition to more sustainable forms of production. The controversy over the
protection of the habitat of the endangered spotted owl, which was fought
in the redwood forests of northern California and the Pacific Northwest
in the late 1980s and early 1990s, quickly became sensationalized in the
national and local media (Gordon 2004; Obach 2004a). Whereas most
cost-benefit analyses of environmental regulations are complex, the spot­
ted owl controversy was simple and visible, enabling the dramatization
of the issue (Obach 2004a). Environmentalists claimed that the only
way to protect the endangered creature was to designate large areas of
old-growth forest as off-limits to the timber industry, which threatened
the livelihood of thousands of loggers and their families. But as Foster
(1993) argues, the environmental movement's position lacked consider­
ation of class impacts in its proposed regulation. Prior to and through­
out the spotted owl controversy, environmentalists failed to enlist timber
workers in sustainable harvest plans and did not consider the impact
of job loss on the region’s economy. Though the timber industry over­
estimated the severity of the environmental regulation’s impact on the
regional economy, a damaging blow to the relations between the envi­
ronmental and labor movements was dealt at both the local and national
level. Other issues related to the economic consequences of environmen­
tal protection continued to divide the interests of the two movements,
from the Clean Air Act’s impact on the energy industry to the Corporate
Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards impact on the auto industry
to the debate over oil exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refu­
ge (ANWR) (Gould, Lewis, and Roberts 2005; Obach 2004a). A new
hope for reconciliation and future collaboration was created by the so­
called Turtles and Teamsters alliance that emerged following the protests
outside the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) summit in Seattle.
Mobilizing in opposition to the neoliberal trade policies of the WTO, en­
vironmentalists and trade unionists joined forces to call attention to the
deleterious effects on both the natural environment and on wages and
working conditions on a global scale. This event was heralded by a few
as a new moment in labor-environmental relations in the United States,
and the nation turned toward the major organizations participating in
the protests, such as the Sierra Club and the International Brotherhood
of Teamsters, to develop a common agenda (Gould, Lewis, and Roberts
2005). However, these hopes for a marriage of blue-green interests were
dashed only a few years later when the International Brotherhood of
Teamsters broke with environmentalists to endorse the Bush adminis­
tration’s energy policy, which included plans to explore for oil in the
Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Overcoming the divisive jobs versus
health, labor, and environment

Concerns about health play a major rol­
vies of both the labor and environ­
labor organizing focused on the health at
faced extraordinarily high levels of risk
ries at the dawn of the twentieth century
Noble 1986). Likewise, several environ­
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and wages, environmentalism and ecolo;
within both to the harmful health effec
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Environmentalism, in particular, is ex­
elist conservation orientation that don­
toward grassroots activities and social justice concerns (Gottlieb 2i
2000). This shift is grounded in a work:
Overcoming the divisive jobs versus the environment issue is not an insurmountable task. A handful of blue-green coalitions have managed to overcome their differences and are today the subjects of a growing field of research into this blue-green phenomenon (Gordon 2004; Gould, Lewis, Roberts 2005; Obach 2004a; Rose 2000). Though this body of literature has greatly advanced our understanding of what drives the formation of labor-environmental coalitions, where they tend to form, and what issues they address, I believe that a significant trend in labor-environmental relations is largely being ignored: the importance of health-related issues as a common ground. Many of the labor-environmental coalitions examined in the past have ultimately failed to survive to accomplish their goals. Blue-green coalitions that coalesce around issues related to health, however, are better able to draw on important connections that facilitate both the continued existence of these coalitions and their political success. Furthermore, by building on the common ground of health, these blue-green coalitions are better able to create a significant discursive shift in how the two movements interact. Each new coalition increases the likelihood of a more permanent integration of the two.

Health, Labor, and Environment

Concerns about health play a major role in the history and current activities of both the labor and environmental movements. Much early labor organizing focused on the health and safety of the workforce, which faced extraordinarily high levels of risk in the crowded and dirty factories at the dawn of the twentieth century (Wooding and Levenstein 1999; Noble 1986). Likewise, several environmental groups have placed health concerns at the forefront of their agenda, emphasizing the fundamental connection between public health and environmental pollution (Brown and Mikkelsen 1997; Hofrichter 2000). Though the mainstream elements of the two movements give greater priority to other core issues—labor and wages, environmentalism and ecology—there is increasing attention within both to the harmful health effects of unsafe working conditions and a contaminated environment.

Environmentalism, in particular, is experiencing a shift away from the elitist conservation orientation that dominated much of the movement's earlier years and toward grassroots activism that emphasizes public health and social justice concerns (Gottlieb 2002; Hofrichter 2000; D. Taylor 2000). This shift is grounded in a working-class environmentalism that...
sees as inextricable the connection between the health of the urban environment and the health of its residents (Schwab 1993). This fundamental link between work, health, and the environment is also articulated as a central element of the growing environmental justice movement, which challenges existing social structures that reinforce social inequalities and environmental hazards (Bullard 1990, 1993; Capek 1993; Pellow 2000; D. Taylor 2000). The increasingly visible and politically influential working-class and minority environmentalism is creating new opportunities for building alliances with organizations in the labor movement.

By drawing on the shared concerns about health, environmental activists interested in promoting blue-green coalitions are able to create solidarity between unions and worker organizations interested in occupational health and environmental health. This type of joining together represents a fundamental realignment of what it means to identify as a "worker" or "environmentalist." Addressing environmental health threats outside the workplace can potentially result in the concentration of hazards in the workplace by encouraging firms to insulate facilities, trapping pollution inside to improve their environmental performance. Reducing workplace chemical hazards can similarly result in dumping pollution outside the plant into the environment. Health-oriented blue-green coalitions are about identifying alternative strategies for eliminating hazards before workers or community members become endangered.

In this book I examine the role of health issues in the formation and political trajectory of blue-green coalitions. By examining how health issues are framed by coalition leaders to attract support from both movements, it becomes clear that enduring and successful labor-environmental coalitions are facilitated by the linkage between occupational and environmental health. Strategically, utilizing a health framework for legitimizing the need for blue-green cooperation enables significant and lasting relationships to be formed between labor and environmental activists. Drawing on these relationships in the health framework creates a common ground that is the basis for the social construction of a coalition collective action frame. This frame allows coalition participants to develop a working relationship based on shared interests in health and to confront the "jobs versus the environment" polarity from a position of solidarity, not divisiveness. In doing so, blue-green coalitions that primarily address health concerns are able to endure ideological disputes and external threats from conservative political interests that strive to keep the labor and environmental movements from realizing their shared potential.

One way to envision the connections linking the workplace, communities, and the larger environment is to think about a set of concentric circles emanating outward from a common figure 1). These toxic circles illustrate the threat of health hazards faced by countless communities. The concept of toxic circles is derived from Richard P. Wedeen's (1993) edited work, "Underscoring the Workplace into the Community: Ecological and Occupational Health Hazards as Utilized in Workplace Production Processes." In some extreme cases, these toxic circles threaten the health of workers are fund health hazards faced by countless communities. The concept of toxic circles is derived from Richard P. Wedeen's (1993) edited work, "Underscoring the Workplace into the Community: Ecological and Occupational Health Hazards as Utilized in Workplace Production Processes." In some extreme cases, these toxic circles threaten the health of workers and environmental activists. Drawing on these relationships in the health framework creates a common ground that is the basis for the social construction of a coalition collective action frame. This frame allows coalition participants to develop a working relationship based on shared interests in health and to confront the "jobs versus the environment" polarity from a position of solidarity, not divisiveness. In doing so, blue-green coalitions that primarily address health concerns are able to endure ideological disputes and external threats from conservative political interests that strive to keep the labor and environmental movements from realizing their shared potential.

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The Broader Environment

Fence-Line Communities

Toxics generally are the byproducts of production processes in the workplace.

As they escape, intentionally or not, they first impact the fence-line community, then become environmental problems.

Figure 1. Toxic circles.

Introduction

The Broader Environment

Fence-Line Communities

The Workplace

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circles emanating outward from a common source—the workplace (see
figure 1). These toxic circles illustrate how the toxic substances that
threaten the health of workers are fundamentally larger environmental
hazards faced by countless communities and neighborhoods. The
concept of toxic circles is derived from the title of Helen E. Sheehan and
Richard P. Wedeen's (1993) edited work, Toxic Circles: Environmental Haz-
ards from the Workplace into the Community. Hazardous substances that
are utilized in workplace production processes may be transformed and
escape or they may be otherwise disposed of in the vicinity of fence-line
communities (those on the edge of industrial areas) and beyond. As these
toxic substances make their way farther out from the point of produc-
tion, they eventually become conceived of as environmental pollution
and travel through various ecological mechanisms into every corner of
the world.

In some extreme cases, these toxic circles can encompass virtually the
entire globe. For example, polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE), sub-
stances used popularly in the 1990s as flame retardants in everything from
car seats, infants' sleepwear, computers, and couches, have even been re-
cently found in the farthest reaches of these toxic circles—in the body
tissues of polar bears. The environmental and public health risks associ-
ated with modern society are ubiquitous and do not prevent deleterious
health effects from reaching the affluent, who live farther away from their
sources, as well as the working class (Beck 1992).

The debate over who should be held responsible for the toxics gen-
erated within the workplace has been waged since the Industrial Revo-
lution (Sheehan and Wedeen 1993). When toxics are in the workplace,
their control falls under the influence of management, with only slight
oversight from a possible joint health-and-safety committee with a union local and fairly limited oversight from the state (Noble 1986). Once the toxics enter into fence-line communities and the broader environment, they are bureaucratically conceived of as an entirely different problem and are governed by distinct state entities and sets of laws and regulations. As toxic pollution spreads throughout communities and the environment, the question of whether firms responsible for its release or communities dealing with the toxic contamination should be responsible for addressing the threat becomes increasingly complex.

In the workplace, occupational injuries and disease are the resultant products of social and technological decisions linked to the management of production (Wooding and Levenstein 1999). So too are the environmental hazards products of these decisions, though the two are rarely considered as part of the same problem. The conditions of the work environment affect both the health of individuals who work at the point of production and of individuals who reside in proximity to the point of production. Analyses of work environments generally conclude that economic considerations greatly outweigh consideration of the health and safety of workers (Navarro and Berman 1983; Nelkin and Brown 1984; Noble 1986; Wooding and Levenstein 1999). As technological advancements steadily increase the pace of production and reduce the need for skilled labor, workers are increasingly disempowered and less able to advocate for health and safety—or, for that matter, environmental reforms (Schnaiberg 1980; Gould, Schnaiberg, and Weinberg 1996).

In the weakened state of the contemporary labor movement, both union and nonunion workforces are often subject to job blackmail from their employers. Job blackmail does not necessarily have to be related to environmental issues or regulation and is often employed to divert worker attention away from issues of occupational health and safety (Noble 1986). The tactic of environmental job blackmail gains force during periods of economic recession and high unemployment (Kazis and Grossman 1982). Given the choice between wages, benefits, and pensions or meeting environmental regulations, environmental job blackmail, or even the possibility of it, can be very real and can create tension between labor organizations and the environmental movement. For communities that are economically disempowered, the promise of jobs, even though toxically hazardous, can be attractive.

Once toxic hazards escape—or are intentionally released—into fence-line communities, they often become the rallying point for the formation of a local environmental organization. The anti-toxics organizations that were intent on their communities—often labeled NIMBYi (Szasz 1994). The anti-toxics movement, environmental movement and foreshadowed frame, generated enough political attention federal legislation dealing with the growing comprehensive Environmental Response, C (Superfund and Reauthorization Act of 1986), such as the National Toxics Camp House for Hazardous Waste, experienced began to increase their challenges to local be at the center of these toxic circles.

All too often, however, environmental activities that targeted a specific industry about the workers inside the fences. Who organizations rally outside a facility’s entering and earning their living, they unconsciously—alienate potential allies in th considering the hazards that workers face ins often make the mistake of thinking that envi rics are the same as the more instrumental a environmental organizations fail to identifi campaign to reduce toxics, they reinforce l as a middle-class movement insensitive to attempt at a hostile takeover of the Sierra of anti-immigration activists in 1996 anc in the Pacific redwoods by Earth First! are bias toward a narrow approach to enviro within social movements.

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the rallying point for the formation of a local environmental organization. The 1980s saw a boom in these local anti-toxics organizations that were intent on eliminating toxic waste from their communities—often labeled NIMBYism, that is, Not in my backyard! (Szasz 1994). The anti-toxics movement, which developed alongside the environmental movement and foreshadowed the environmental justice frame, generated enough political attention to generate several pieces of federal legislation dealing with the growing concern with toxics (the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980, commonly known as the Superfund, and the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986). As these environmental organizations, such as the National Toxics Campaign and the Citizens Clearing House for Hazardous Waste, experienced success they grew bolder and began to increase their challenges to local industrial facilities believed to be at the center of these toxic circles.
All too often, however, environmental organizations engaged in protest activities that targeted a specific industrial facility without first thinking about the workers inside the fences. When environmental social movement organizations rally outside a facility's gates, preventing workers from entering and earning their living, they unconsciously—or occasionally consciously—alienate potential allies in the workforce. Without first consid- ering the hazards that workers face inside a facility, environmentalists often make the mistake of thinking that employees' attitudes toward tox- ics are the same as the more instrumental attitudes of management. When environmental organizations fail to identify workers as potential allies in a campaign to reduce toxics, they reinforce Foster's (1993) critique of them as a middle-class movement insensitive to working-class issues. The failed attempt at a hostile takeover of the Sierra Club's presidency on the part of anti-immigration activists in 1996 and the condemnation of loggers in the Pacific redwoods by Earth First! are clear examples of middle-class bias toward a narrow approach to environmentalism generating conflict within social movements.
Fortunately, many progressive environmental organizations are able to see past this limited definition of the workplace and seek to form relation-}
ships with workers, both union and nonunion, inside industry facilities that produce toxic hazards. Both the environmental and labor movements can benefit from collaboration—workers gain an ally in potential conflicts with management and environmentalists gain access to information from the innermost ring of the toxic circles—and they gain a certain political legitimacy that is derived from the solidarity across class divides.
Cross-Movement Coalitions

An examination of coalitions between labor and environmental organizations offers a fertile area of research for improving our understanding of contemporary social movements. Many of the assumptions behind our understanding of coalitions come from studies of intramovement cooperation and cannot explain the dynamics of labor-environmental coalitions. Formal collaboration between labor and environmental organizations represents what Van Dyke (2003) calls a “cross-movement coalition.” These cross-movement coalitions operate in often unexpected fashions and challenge many of the assumptions behind the literature of social movements. My analysis remedies these theoretical flaws through the elaboration of a new theoretical model that integrates the three main perspectives in the literature to explain why blue-green coalitions form and how they accomplish their political goals. Before proceeding to the development of my theoretical model, however, it is necessary to first provide a basic definition of a social movement coalition.

Social Movement Coalitions and Blue-Green Coalitions

At its core, a coalition of social movement organizations represents a collaborative endeavor that is supported by all participating parties (Gamson 1961). The sharing of organizational resources such as finances, organizational infrastructure, and members, however, does not sufficiently distinguish a social movement coalition from a simple cost-sharing arrangement. The degree to which resources are equally shared between coalition partners is not included in this definition, and, as Obach notes, “the level of coordination can vary dramatically from coalition to coalition” (2004a, 25). Although some level of coordination is implied for any coalition, the partnership of labor-environmental organizations that is representative of true cooperation requires more than the joint management of organization resources. A better definition, focusing on the importance of a shared identity, is needed to understand the dynamics that link labor and environmental actors together. Though coalition partners must pool organizational resources, the political viability of blue-green coalitions requires specific attention to finding a common ground that builds connections between the two constituencies (Staggenborg 1986; Van Dyke 2003).

In this book I examine the social conditions and strategies that draw labor and environmental interests together in long-lasting coalitions. Other analyses of blue-green activities do example, Gordon (2004) and Obach (2004: tial formation of blue-green groups. I am ection life course, including the formation, in blue-green coalitions. Attention to the end growing concern in the literature (Gould, Dyke 2003).

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New Theoretical Directions: Cross-Movement

Forming coalitions is a common strategy to plish political goals. Movement groups that more likely to achieve success than organ (Gamson 1990; Van Dyke 2003). Coalition: opportunity to coordinate resources and a (Koopmans 1993; Lipsky 1970; Tilly 1978). tions and pool resources are able to stage finance larger campaigns, and sustain action increasing the likelihood of success (Gamson Dyke 2003). Although resource pooling sh for organizers of blue-green coalitions, the mental activists at cooperative events is syn

Bringing together labor and environment requires the bridging of key ideological di examined the failure of progressive social m enduring coalitions and generally have co mon collective identity frequently preve 1993). Despite numerous calls for a broad progressive interests, such a sweeping colli emerge.

Social movement theorist Nella Van Dy theorizing of how such a broad-based c by a focus on single-movement coalitions.
Other analyses of blue-green activities do not make this distinction, for example, Gordon (2004) and Obach (2004a), which examine only the initial formation of blue-green groups. I am more interested in the coalition life course, including the formation, maintenance, and dissolution of blue-green coalitions. Attention to the enduring nature of a coalition is a growing concern in the literature (Gould, Lewis, and Roberts 2005; Van Dyke 2003).

I use the term “coalition” to define the linkage of labor, community, and environmental groups in a formal and distinct organization that draws on a joint pool of resources, utilizes a collective identity unique to the coalition, and lasts beyond an initial campaign or goal. While this definition limits the field of potential case studies, my definition offers the greatest potential for an in-depth analysis of the formation and political viability of sustainable coalitions involving labor and environmental organizations.

New Theoretical Directions: Cross-Movement Coalitions

Forming coalitions is a common strategy for groups desiring to accomplish political goals. Movement groups that work in coalitions are typically more likely to achieve success than organizations that work in isolation (Gamson 1990; Van Dyke 2003). Coalitions offer organizations a strategic opportunity to coordinate resources and tactics to achieve a common goal (Koopmans 1993; Lipsky 1970; Tilly 1978). Coalitions that unite organizations and pool resources are able to stage events with more participants, finance larger campaigns, and sustain actions for a longer period of time—increasing the likelihood of success (Gamson 1990; Staggenborg 1986; Van Dyke 2003). Although resource pooling should be an important concern for organizers of blue-green coalitions, the visibility of labor and environmental activists at cooperative events is symbolically important.

Bringing together labor and environmental organizations, however, requires the bridging of key ideological differences. Past studies have examined the failure of progressive social movement organizations to form enduring coalitions and generally have concluded that the lack of a common collective identity frequently prevents collaboration (Aronowitz 1993). Despite numerous calls for a broad coalition of organizations with progressive interests, such a sweeping collaborative movement has yet to emerge.

Social movement theorist Nella Van Dyke (2003) argues that our understanding of how such a broad-based coalition might form is limited by a focus on single-movement coalitions. For example, researchers have
examined the formation of coalitions within numerous social movements, such as the environmental movement (Brulle 2000; Gottlieb 1993; Lichterman 1995; Shaffer 2000), the labor movement (Patmore 1997; Reynolds 1999; Williams 1999), and the civil rights movement (McAdam 1982; Morris 1984). Only a few have dared to explore coalitions between and among movements (Hathaway and Meyer 1993; Staggenborg 1986; Van Dyke 2003) or, as Van Dyke terms them, “cross-movement coalitions.”

There is increasing recognition of a tendency of organizations from various movements to interact and cross traditional boundaries that distinguish one movement from another (Meyer and Whittier 1994; V. Taylor 2000; Van Dyke 2003). Calls for further attention to what McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1996) call a “meso-level” of social interaction have only been partially answered, even though researchers recognize coalition formation as a commonly utilized strategy (Van Dyke 2003). Groups within one particular movement often replicate the strategies of organizations from different movements to learn from past victories and failed campaigns. This type of interaction is characterized by Meyer and Whittier (1994) as “social movement spillover.” However, implied in this conceptualization of movement interaction is a somewhat linear evolution from one movement to the next. Though the significance of this type of movement influence, or what Obach (2004a) calls “organizational learning,” is not to be discounted, my emphasis in this book is on the challenge of managing organizational interaction in cross-movement coalitions that are derived from inherent differences in socioeconomic status, ideologies, and strategies between labor and environmental organizations.

Many of the assumptions guiding our theoretical understanding of the nature of social movement coalitions fall short in explaining why cross-movement coalitions such as blue-green alliances develop. For example, the existing literature on coalitions suggests that because organizations require certain resources in order to mobilize, they are less likely to engage in coalition work during periods of resource scarcity (McAdam 1982; McCarthy and Zald 1977). For cross-movement coalitions, scarcity may actually drive groups to seek nontraditional allies and into collaborative relationships (Clawson 2003; Van Dyke 2003). Resource scarcity in the context of single-movement coalitions fuels competition between similar organizations (Staggenborg 1986), whereas a surplus of resources encourages cooperation (Staggenborg 1986; Williams 1999; Zald and McCarthy 1987). However, in the context of cross-movement interaction, the resource pools drawn from are often different enough to avoid competition between organizations. For example, a decline in charitable grants for environmental work would have little effect to continue drawing on member dues. Dar (2003) argues that the labor movement is j alitions with other progressive movements Thus the blue-green phenomenon necessitates that resource scarcity limits coalition for A second assumption in the social mover able when applied to cross-movement coalitions facilitates the formation of coalitions This assumption is based on research den shifting political opportunities for the grow 1982; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996 research examines both political opportu ture suggests that within-movement coali sponse to direct political threats (Gerhards and Campbell 2002). For example, when a power, groups often come together to fight But in the context of cross-movement coa important. In Obach’s (2002) analysis of st organizations were actually much less lik common political enemy—in this case Re ements. Obach hypothesizes that rather times of limited political opportunity, lab zations compete for whatever limited infl periods of favorable political opportunities organizations are able to expand beyond a and work in coalitions.

The final assumption challenged by ar alitions falls within the framing literatur Though this analysis is of increasing im 2000), there has been little attention to e frame in the context of social movement studies, Croteau and Hicks (2003) propose pyramid” that stresses the interaction of frame pyramid is a useful starting strate framing in forming blue-green co depth. I propose a new model for the study that emphasizes the interaction of these th movement literature.
itions within numerous social movement (Brulle 2000; Gottlieb 1993; labor movement (Patmore 1997; Reynolds 1993; civil rights movement (McAdam 1982; Staggenborg 1986; VanThem, “cross-movement coalitions.”)

1 of a tendency of organizations from cross traditional boundaries that disperse (Meyer and Whittier 1994; V. Taylor richness attention to what McAdam, McRobbie, and Meyer 1993; Staggenborg 1986; Van Them, “cross-movement coalitions.”)

A second assumption in the social movement literature that is questionable when applied to cross-movement coalitions is that a common political enemy facilitates the formation of coalitions of social movement groups. This assumption is based on research demonstrating the importance of shifting political opportunities for the growth of protest groups (McAdam 1982; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; Tarrow 1996). This body of research examines both political opportunities and threats. This literature suggests that within-movement coalitions are likely to form in response to direct political threats (Gerhards and Rucht 1992; McCammon and Campbell 2002). For example, when a particular political party is in power, groups often come together to fight that party as a common enemy. But in the context of cross-movement coalitions, this effect is much less important. In Obach’s (2002) analysis of state-level blue-green coalitions, organizations were actually much less likely to cooperate in response to a common political enemy—in this case Republican-controlled state governments. Obach hypothesizes that rather than working together during times of limited political opportunity, labor and environmental organizations compete for whatever limited influence is available. It is during periods of favorable political opportunities that labor and environmental organizations are able to expand beyond a narrow definition of interests and work in coalitions.

The final assumption challenged by analysis of cross-movement coalitions falls within the framing literature in social movement theory. Though this analysis is of increasing importance (Benford and Snow 2000), there has been little attention to constructing a collective action frame in the context of social movement coalitions. In one of the few studies, Croteau and Hicks (2003) propose a model of a “consonant frame pyramid” that stresses the interaction of collective action frames across individual, organizational, and coalitional levels. Certainly the metaphor of the frame pyramid is a useful starting point for analyzing the role of strategic framing in forming blue-green coalitions, but it lacks theoretical depth. I propose a new model for the study of cross-movement coalitions that emphasizes the interaction of these three traditions within the social movement literature.
Understanding Blue-Green

Calls for the integration of the three perspectives in social movement theory are common, but few true examples exist. Individually, each of these traditions in social movement theory fails to sufficiently explain why cross-movement coalitions form and how they accomplish their goals. An integrated model stresses the interaction between political opportunities and framing and makes it possible to think about the interaction between structural shifts in the political environment and the interpretative work of social movement actors in constructing meaning. Though I place much emphasis on the work of framing, and in particular the role of health, my model recognizes that the strategic use of framing only succeeds at key times and locations within the political environment.

A certain amount of surplus resources are always necessary for coalitions to form. While my analysis calls into question the direction of the effect of resource scarcity, the presence of some organizational resources sufficient to enable the basic operations of a blue-green coalition is required. I argue that the formation of a blue-green coalition also requires some shift in the political opportunity structure—a major event or an issue that serves as the basic motivation for labor and environmental organizations to consider working in collaboration. These shifts in the political climate inspire coalition formation as organizations from various social movements realize that a cross-movement coalition allows them to accomplish things that they may not be able to do on their own. But these shifts require skillful manipulation on the part of coalition leaders through the technique of strategic framing.

Shifts in political opportunity structures, then, can be seen as necessary—but not sufficient—for the formation of blue-green coalitions. As new political opportunities become available for potential mobilization, coalition leaders must actively construct a coalition collective action frame that gives purpose and direction to the blue-green coalition. Otherwise, attempts to form enduring coalitions will fail when the political opportunity shifts. The case of the Turtles and Teamsters alliance is exemplary of this process. Labor and environmental organizations capitalized on a major political opportunity, in this instance the focusing of the media on the widely contested issues of globalization and free trade. Coordinated efforts by progressive leaders in the environmental movement to identify union activists working on issues related to environmental issues resulted in a short-lived coalition between the Sierra Club and the Teamsters union. But within a few years the political opportunity that brought the organizations together shifted while the proposed oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge captured media attention. Enduring coalitions between labor and environmental organizations require more than just favorable political conditions. Political leaders together or gathered around coalitions must actively construct political opportunities to bring the two movements together. What is needed to make blue-green coalitions successful is common ground that unites the two movements, in this case, the shift in political climate which inspired the leaders to address global climate change. But as coalition leaders, they must also be able to frame the new issue in the context of existing coalitions and successful political opportunities.

As a blue-green coalition progresses past formation, political leaders must pay particular attention to the preservation of political opportunity. As with coalition formation, the preservation of political opportunity shifts when new political opportunities open up new spaces in which the organizations can work. This is the strategic role that political leaders play in the articulation of a common problem as they incorporate new issues into the action frame.

The Three Case Studies

Three examples of blue-green coalitions that focus on environmental and health issues make up the core of this book. The case of the Northeast Coalition (NEC), the Alliance for a Healthy Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition (SVTC), and the Teamsters (Gould, Lewis, and Roberts 2007) are explored. The three coalitions are the NEC, the Alliance for a Healthy Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition (SVTC), and the Teamsters (Gould, Lewis, and Roberts 2007).
three perspectives in social movement theory exist. Individually, each of these perspectives fails to sufficiently explain why and how they accomplish their goals. An explanation between political opportunities and the interpretative work of structuring meaning. Though I place much weight on the role of health, my focus on framing only succeeds at key political environment.

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Enduring coalitions between labor and environmental organizations require more than just favorable political conditions and resources. Many attempts to bring the two movements together that were well funded and enjoyed favorable political climates fell apart. The "Turtles and Teamsters" alliance quickly collapsed, as did several attempts to bring together the two movements to address global climate change. It is not enough to bring political leaders together or gather endorsements from both movements. What is needed to make blue-green coalitions last is a joint identity—a common ground that unites the two movements and does away with traditional labels of "worker" and "environmentalist." The successful blue-green coalitions discussed in this book are important examples of identity consolidation, where the old labels are forgotten and replaced by "citizen," "community member," and "human being at risk from toxic substances." A collective identity facilitates a common language through which norms and values become aligned and common ground identified.

As a blue-green coalition progresses past its initial campaign, attention must be paid by coalition leaders to the internal maintenance of the coalition. New political opportunities may arise to drive the coalition in a new direction. This is the strategic role that framing plays in the coalition, as the articulation of a common problem can capture additional political opportunities and open up new spaces in which the coalition might operate. As with coalition formation, the presence of these shifts in political opportunity is a necessary condition, but it requires careful attention to the incorporation of the new issue into the existing coalition's collective action frame.

The Three Case Studies

Three examples of blue-green coalitions that focus on issues related to toxics and health make up the core of this book. Through comparing their origins and their political victories and failures, the complex dynamics of bringing diverse groups from the two movements together are revealed and the potential of such collaboration for eliminating toxic health hazards is explored. The three coalitions are the New Jersey Work Environment Council (WEC), the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow (AHT), and the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition (SVTC). Though each operates in a distinct...
political and cultural setting, many of the same dynamics of identity formation and the importance of health concerns apply to all; each one is a part of the growing phenomenon of labor-environmental coalitions fighting against toxics.

The Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow formed in 2001 as a coalition of scientists, community activists, and public health professionals intent on implementing an alternative regulatory framework for managing toxics substances in Massachusetts. Realizing that a sweeping regulatory reform proposal to protect public health and the environment would likely generate opposition from the chemical industry and unions affiliated with chemical-intense industries, the early leaders of the AHT decided to build bridges to the state’s labor movements to avoid the classic “jobs versus the environment” conflict. In the five years that the AHT has been working to develop a blue-green coalition, it has been moderately successful in attracting progressive elements of the labor movement. Coalition leaders have accomplished this task by modifying the precautionary principle, an alternative approach to making environmental and public health decisions based on taking preventive action even in the face of uncertainty, so that the logic of taking precautionary action to protect human health and the environment becomes more attractive to labor’s interest in job creation.

The New Jersey Work Environment Council is a coalition of labor, community, and environmental activists that came together to implement the nation’s first right-to-know legislation. In doing so, New Jersey became the first state where community members and workers could gain access to information regarding the storage and use of toxic substances. Building on this successful campaign, the WEC became involved in both workplace and environmental politics in the state of New Jersey. It has become the nexus for environmental-labor relations in the region. The Work Environment Council has been successful largely due to its leaders’ emphasis on member education. As the coalition develops new campaigns and strikes out in new directions, it has been careful to maintain internal cohesion within the coalition so as to not alienate its membership. This strategy has proven very effective for the coalition, which continues to advance a progressive agenda for occupational and environmental reform.

The Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition formed in 1982 as a community anti-toxics organization addressing the health concerns associated with pollution from the high-tech industry that dominates California’s Santa Clara County. The SVTC has since built partnerships with workers in a largely nonunion workforce, first responders, and a handful of unions that are also affected by the health hazards associated with the high-tech industry. More than the other organization to incorporate organizations from various and to bring social justice issues into its frame the leading environmental organization in the region. As the STVC has broadened the scope of local union and community-work despite the increasing number of organizations worldwide. Due to this transformation of the New Jersey Work Environment Council and the scarcity of organized labor in the state, the SVTC has succeeded in building a common ground between unions and environmentalists.

Local versus National Coalitions

Coalitions between labor and environment have been established at multiple levels within the strata of social movements, and there have been several examples of successful collaboration between these two movements simultaneously at state and local levels with the AHT. However, the extent to which such coalitions persist past an initial political success or failure depends on which strata it served. For example, at the national level, coalitions such as the Turtles and Team Working Group (a Washington, D.C., coalition focused on climate change), and Employment (EFFE) ultimately failed to meet the challenges of linking environmental and public health concerns with labor’s interest in job creation.

These broad national-level efforts to bring movements closer together relied on top-level policy officials and political campaigns but tend to dissolve when there is a shift in political priorities. National-level coalitions have tended to fail in the face of competition with other priorities. National-level coalitions face difficulties in maintaining internal cohesion within the coalition so as to not alienate its membership. This strategy has proven very effective for the coalition, which continues to advance a progressive agenda for occupational and environmental reform.

In the case of EFFE, cofounder Rich’s demise of the organization to their top-level leaders. A more successful model is the effort to maintain internal cohesion within the coalition so as to not alienate its membership. This strategy has proven very effective for the coalition, which continues to advance a progressive agenda for occupational and environmental reform.

Though EFFE initially sought sound employment opportunities, the coalition has succeeded in building a common ground between unions and environmentalists.
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to incorporate organizations from various ethnic and class backgrounds
and to bring social justice issues into its framework. The SVTC has been
the leading environmental organization in the United States to reveal and
challenge the environmental and public health harms of the electronics
industry. As the SVTC has broadened the scope of its mission, the involve-
ment of local union and community-worker organizations has declined,
despite the increasing number of organizations the SVTC is working with
worldwide. Due to this transformation of the SVTC's collective action
frame and the a scarcity of organized labor in the electronics industry, the
common ground between unions and environmentalists is dissolving.

Local versus National Coalitions

Coalitions between labor and environmental organizations form at mul-
tiple levels within the strata of social movement organizations. Histori-
cally there have been several examples of blue-green coalitions existing
simultaneously at state and local levels within the United States (Gordon
2004). However, the extent to which such cross-movement coalitions per-
sist past an initial political success or failure varies significantly depending
on which strata it served. For example, at the national level the promi-
nent coalitions such as the Turtles and Teamsters alliance, the Blue/Green
Working Group (a Washington, D.C., coalition of labor and environmen-
tal leaders focused on climate change), and the Environmentalists for Full
Employment (EFFE) ultimately failed to maintain their cross-movement
relationships when there was a shift in political opportunity structures.
These broad national-level efforts to bring the labor and environmental
movements closer together relied on top-level officials or representatives
of the movements in which the effort to maintain their relationships com-
peted with other priorities. National-level coalitions are most effective for
political campaigns but tend to dissolve after the election.

In the case of EFFE, cofounder Richard Grossman attributes the
demise of the organization to their top-down approach, saying that
"leadership-dominated coalitions for progressive causes are doomed.
There must instead be significant impetus for and involvement of constitu-
ency group members...what is known as the democratic process" (Gor-
don 2004, 350). Though EFFE initially sought to develop environmentally
sound employment opportunities, the top-down approach to working
with only the bureaucratic leadership of the unions and environmental