What brings about normative change in developing states with histories of corruption and poor governance? Post-nafta Mexico gives us a unique opportunity to study a single norm (rule of law) in two different sectors (environment and labor). Much can be controlled —the timing of new oversight pressures from outside (nafta and the US) as well as inside (courts and freedom of information agency)—. Socialization of rule of law norms is therefore best explained by looking carefully at differences between the relevant agencies. I show that variation in 1) levels of professionalization among agency officials and 2) permeability of domestic agencies to outside influence, explains much of the variation between labor and environmental officials over attitudes to rule of law. Labor agencies were far more constrained by legacies of highly influential vested interests, and this limited their capacity to adapt to new normative pressures. These findings sharpen our understandings of how a pro-rule of law culture can be embedded, because the two sectors were simultaneously subject to the new oversight and spotlighting pressures.

Keywords
Normative socialization, rule of law, governance, NAFTA, environmental politics, labor politics.