

The Role and Interests of Workers and their Allies

POLS 409A: Special Topics

Labor Rights in the Global Economy

Summer 2015, B Term

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Agenda

- Administrative & Deadlines
 - Tmr: Last Discussion
 - Weds: Discussion and Short Answer Review
 - Thursday: Exam Essay Review
 - Friday is the final exam (online via Canvas) and your policy papers are due
 - When in doubt: **Go to the Writing Center**
- The Role and Interests of Workers

Types of Workers

- Can be delineated by hours and contract status
 - Full time workers with contracts
 - Part time workers with contracts
 - Temp workers with contracts
 - All three types sans contracts
- Hourly workers
- Seasonal workers

Types of Workers

- Can be delineated by skill level of worker
 - High skilled worker
 - Low skilled worker
- Determined by
 - Education level OR
 - Specificity, degree, length of job training

Types of Workers

- Public sector employees
 - Work for a government office
 - Other jobs that serve the public: teachers, police, firemen, etc.
- Private sector employees
 - Private firms and companies

What does type of worker matter?

- Status and categorization of workers can delineate
 - Incentives and interests of the worker groups
 - Rights and benefits conferred to the worker by
 - The government
 - The firm (if private employees)

Interests of All Workers

- All workers share material interests
 - Maximize the pay they get for work they do
- However, even how workers achieve pay can be divisive and different depending on worker type

Example of Salary Negotiation

- Contract workers:
 - Negotiate pay in their contracts via a union or on an individual basis
- Non-contract workers:
 - Pay may be determined by firm or govt set minimum wage rates
 - Typically not union members so almost always negotiated on an individual basis

Example of Salary Negotiation

- Beliefs about entitlement to pay and benefits will differ among groups
 - Contract workers and high skill workers may believe they should be paid more than other workers & enjoy more benefits (pensions, etc.)
 - Without rights to benefits, seasonal, temp and hourly workers may believe that they can only negotiate higher hourly or piece rates

Contentious Politics

- Episodic, not continuous
- Occurs in public space
- Involves interaction between claims makers and others
- Recognized by others as relating to their interests
- Brings in the govt, as a mediator, target, or claimant

Contentious Politics

- Collective political struggle
- Can be within formal institutions or not
- Involve similar causal processes

Social Movements

- A social movement consists of
 - “A sustained challenge to power holders in the name of a population living under the jurisdiction of those power holders by means of public display of that population’s worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment.”

Campaigns

- Sustained, organized public effort making claims on targeted authorities
- Not just a single event
- Links three parties: public, claimants, objects of claim
- Examples:
 - Anti-sweatshop campaign against Nike in 1990s
 - Campaign against Foxconn / Apple now
 - Campaign against conditions in Bangladesh

Properties of Regimes

- Crucial for creating opportunity structures
 - Multiple centers of power
 - Degree of openness or closure to new actors
 - Instability or stability of current alignments
 - Availability of influential allies or supporters
 - Degree of repression or facilitation of collective claim making
 - Decisive changes in these properties

Worker Mobilization Tactics

- Internal mobilization via a Union
 - Recruiting member mobilizers
 - Creating a list of potential and current members
 - Assess likelihood of each members involvement
 - Developing an internal campaign
 - Union meetings
 - Member education
 - What are the rules of the state / local government
 - What are the rights of workers
 - What are the policies of their workplace

Coalition Formation

- Coalitions
 - Collaborative, means-oriented arrangements that permit distinct organizational entities to pool resources in order to effect change
- Helpful and necessary for weak social groups or actors

Worker Mobilization Tactics

- Build coalitions with community organizations
 - Churches
 - Social justice organizations
 - Child welfare organizations
 - Women’s rights organizations
 - Fair trade and ethical consumer organizations
 - Environmental organizations
 - Student organizations (USAS)

Contentious Performances

- Most common is the demonstration
 - Orderly event in / through public space
 - Organized collectively on behalf of some group, claim, issue
 - Riots are therefore not demonstrations
 - Events that are not organized ***collectively*** are not demonstrations

Worker Mobilization Tactics

- Letter writing campaigns
 - Only works if you have representatives
 - Though it can also target firms
- Social media campaigns
 - Get other supporters
 - Spread information
 - Organize rallies, protests, etc

Campaigns

- Examples of campaigns:
 - Anti-sweatshop campaign against Nike in 1990s
 - Campaign against conditions in Bangladesh
 - Other USAS campaigns against specific suppliers for universities
 - A Living Wage Campaign

Repertoires

- Performances that are available
 - Ritual shaming
 - Strikes
 - Slowdowns
 - Lockouts
 - Contract negotiations
 - Grievance hearings
 - 3rd party mediation
- Evoke emotions, memories

Worker Mobilization Tactics

- Work stoppages
 - Happens in the workplace / factory
- Sit-ins
 - Block other workers from entering by using the space
- Rallies & Demonstrations
 - Organized, orderly, not sporadic

Worker Mobilization Tactics

- Protests
 - Planned, organized
 - Sometimes requires a permit / union approval
- Riots
 - Unplanned, not organized in advance
 - Often in response to a specific event or specific grievance
 - Lack of pay / wage arrears
 - Worker death

Riot Police in Cambodia



Source; Tolson (2014)

Singapore Riots by foreign workers



Source: Reuters (2014)

Why do people riot?

- Why not protest?
- Why not use another method?
- This relates not just to worker mobilization, but social mobilization generally

Public self-representation

- **Worthiness**
 - Sober demeanor, neatly clothed, presence of certain types of people
- **Unity**
 - Matching clothes, headbands, costumes, marching together
- **Numbers**
 - Filling the streets, signatures on a petition
- **Commitment**

Political Identity Formation

- Creating an awareness among the people involved about their identity
- Can alter behavior and preferences
 - ILWU / union members
 - USAS students

Democracy & Social Movements

- The same processes that promote democracy also promote social movements
 - Increase numbers and connections among political participants
 - Equalization of resources
 - Insulation of public politics from social inequalities
 - Integration of interpersonal solidarities

Relationship to Political Violence

- Social movements are usually non-violent
- Violence does occur and is often related to struggles with the police
- Or between competing activist groups
- When non-violent and violent factions break up

Worker Allies

- Civil society
 - “consists of sustained, organized social activity that occurs in groups that are formed outside of the state, the market, and the family” (Pharr 2003)
 - It creates a public space outside of the state where groups and individuals can engage in public discourse

Civil Society

- What does this term apply to?
 - Consumer groups
 - Charities, volunteer groups, NGOs
 - Hobby groups, choral societies
 - Think tanks
- Very broad, but a key is that it is non-govt

What Doesn't Count

- Market actors
 - Trade unions
 - Industry associations
 - Professional associations
 - Companies

Civil Society

- Must be self-motivated, voluntaristic
- Cannot be compulsory
- Also should not be monitored by the state

Mass orgs versus Local orgs

- Mass associations and organizations in China often have a monopoly on the representation of various groups
 - But these organizations are well-adapted at evading control and using the relationship with the state to their advantage
- The emergence of smaller, local organizations may begin to play a larger role in identifying social needs of the population

How do we measure social capital or civil society?

- Number of registered NGOs
 - Comparing relative ease of registering NGOs
- Number of churches, synagogues
 - Comparing control and freedom of belief and assembly
- Number of community groups
- Surveys of individuals and their participation in group or club activities

Relationship between civil society and workers rights?