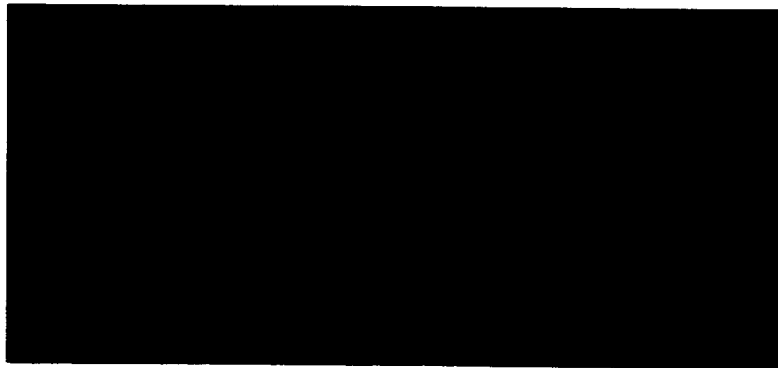




TRANSFORMATIONS
comparative study of social transformations



CSST
WORKING PAPERS
The University of Michigan
Ann Arbor

RESEARCH FELLOWS CONFERENCE
PANEL ON

STRUGGLES, CONFLICT, AND CONSTRAINTS
ON SOCIAL CHANGE

ANNE GORSUCH AND SHARON REITMAN

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RESEARCH FELLOWS CONFERENCE ON SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS

Tuesday, April 25, 1989

Rackham East Conference Room

First Session: The Politics of Social Transformation. 1:15-2:25

Seong Nae Kim, Anthropology:

"Gender and the Discourse of Resistance: Reading the Autobiographical Narratives of Korean Militant Factory Women."

Joanne Goodwin, History:

"State and Single Motherhood: Women on Welfare, Chicago 1910-1930."

Commentator: Kathleen Canning, History

Second Session: Struggles, Conflict, and Constraints on Social Change. 2:25-3:35

Anne Gorsuch, History:

"Soviet Youth Culture and the Struggle for Social Transformation, 1921-1928."

Sharon Reitman, Sociology:

"Class Capacities and Union Political Formation."

Commentator: Geoff Eley, History

Third Session: Subordinate Actors and their Marginalization in Social Theory. 3:45-5:15

Nilufer Isvan, Akos Rona-Tas, Cynthia Buckley:

"Margins of Theory and a Theory of Margins: Underexplored Territories of the World System."

Akos Rona-Tas, Sociology:

"The Second Economy in Hungary."

Theresa Deussen, Sociology:

"Peasantry, State, and Social Theory: Accounting for Agricultural Policy Change in Cuba, 1975-1985."

Commentator: Mayfair Yang, Anthropology and Center for Chinese Studies

Wine and Cheese Reception: 5:15-6:00

Soviet Youth Culture
and the Struggle for Social Transformation, 1921-1928

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The period of the New Economic Policy in the Soviet Union (1921-1928) is commonly understood as one of great social and political transformation. Following the enormous economic and social turmoil of the revolution and civil war, the New Economic Policy was an effort to relax some controls over the economy and to turn away from the military construction of a new socialist state towards the social and educational transformation of society. One of the main areas of struggle for social transformation was in the realm of youth culture. The activities, behavior and values of the first post-revolutionary generation proved to be an important battlefield in the struggle for communist hegemony and socialist transformation during NEP. Youth cultures were sometimes allied with the dominant Bolshevik culture, as in the case of the Communist Youth League, the Komosomol, and sometimes resisted this dominant culture, emphasizing in their behavior, values and customs an unwillingness to accommodate to Bolshevik ideals.

A study of youth cultures is essential to our understanding of both the opportunities and challenges the Bolsheviks faced in trying to create a new unifying culture of communism. Youth appeared to provide an opportunity in so far as the Party saw the younger generation as one of the most active and revolutionary parts of the working class and peasantry. Youth "represents our country's future and is the bearer of that future," Stalin argued in 1924. During and after the revolution, youth served as an important metaphor for social change, symbolizing both the energy and initiative needed to carry out

the revolution, and that group of new socialist men and women who would actually live to see a new world. For the Bolsheviks, youth was in some senses the guarantor of future social hegemony, in so far as the younger generation would be able to replicate and even advance the ideology and culture of the Bolshevik party. This focus on youth was especially understandable if one sees hegemony as a process, or a "moving equilibrium" as Gramsci called it, and not a status quo.

However, youth cultures had the potential to challenge as well as champion the desired cultural consensus of the Bolsheviks. While references to an almost mythical youth of the ideal socialist society predominated in official discourse throughout the decade and a half following the revolution, there was simultaneously very real concern with those elements of youth culture which appeared to threaten this model of the ideal young socialist. There was a constant conflict in the party between appreciation for youth's initiative, energy and ability, and concern to keep control over the wide range of youth cultures which resisted party domination. As a lead article from Pravda stated in 1923:

These young people are our hope. These young people will be the replacement of our old guard. But at the same time it is just these young people who...can much more easily than any other group...be subjected to ideological influences alien to Marxism.

The Bolsheviks implicitly recognized that the struggle for hegemony meant not just overcoming overt political opposition but also influencing the whole range of youths' behavior, values, and ideals. Indeed, entire areas of youths' everyday behavior,

manners, language, dress, and sexual relations were taken out of the private realm and became part of political discourse. The foxtrotting cafe life of bohemian NEP youth was considered counter-revolutionary, associated with decadent sexual behavior, bourgeois wealth and frivolity. Drinking and smoking were criticized as decadent and harmful to the revolution because they threatened youths' health and decreased their energy for work. Even the youthful cult of the popular poet Sergei Esenin was criticized as leading to withdrawn and a-political youth who preferred to read poetry rather than study Marxism. Although these areas of youth culture were not explicitly oppositional in an organized political sense, the implied rebelliousness was considered a threat to communist morality and to the revolution.

Rather than trying to reestablish the party's moral dominance through force, the Bolsheviks largely relied on their ability to create consent through Marxist education and the redirection of leisure activities. The party tried, as Stuart Hall says dominant cultures always do, "to reorganize popular culture; to enclose and confine its definitions and forms within a more inclusive range of dominant forms." ("Notes on Deconstructing the Popular," p. 233.) Bukharin argued that the party must respond to expressions of "hooliganism" and degeneracy with clear rules of behavior and the forceful instruction of youth in proper communist morality. Now that the revolution had been achieved, Bukharin said, and there was nothing left to rebel against, it was inappropriate for youth to continue with undisciplined and negative acts. Trying to extinguish youth

culture in favor of other more accommodating and supportive ones, the party urged the Komsomol to widen its club and educational activities and to emphasize ideals such as honor, cleanliness, comradeship rather than sexuality, and friendly competition.

However, despite these efforts to control youth, nonconforming youth cultures persisted throughout the 1920's. They revealed an enormous division between the ideals of the dominant Bolshevik culture and the reality of youth cultures. The discrepancy between ideals and reality was particularly evident in the area of juvenile criminality and homelessness. The ideal abstractions of a youth thriving in freedom from bourgeois influence were an impossible illusion in a period when millions of homeless and criminal youth had been produced by the combined trials of revolution, war, famine and unemployment. In 1922, there were almost 7 million besprizorniki, or homeless youth, compared with only a quarter of a million members of the Komsomol. The besprizorniki formed an active and independent street culture of their own with their own customs, ritual, jargon, and systems of organization. I'd like to look briefly at two areas of delinquent youth culture--their strong sense of community and their desire for freedom--to reveal more specifically how youth cultures challenged the party's efforts to educate and involve all youth in a new communist society.

Travellers to the Soviet Union in the 1920's often commented on the droves of dirty and poorly-clad youth they saw in the train stations, markets, and streets. Describing his encounter with some besprizorniki in the market, Walter Duranty wrote:

"[s]uddenly there materializes beside you a group of children, 7, 10 and 12 years old. They have gnomelike, filthy faces, childish eyes, shaggy hair, men's old coats, trousers pinned up or cut and ragged. They shuffle together, taking counsel, then swift as swallows make one after another a leap for the counter..."(54) They survived by begging, stealing food and clothing from markets or bags from train stations, picking pockets, practicing prostitution, and for those associated with the adult criminal world, burglarizing stores and apartments. At night they slept grouped together in tar cauldrons (in order to keep warm), in railroad cars, under barges, and in an enormous system of cellars, called the Catacombs, under a large unfinished building right in the center of Moscow. Close to two-thirds of them were fully orphaned, many of their parents having died during the war and famine, or having simply abandoned them in the streets of famine-stricken cities while they searched elsewhere for food. Most of these youth drank and smoked heavily and some were habitual drug users, cocaine and morphine being the most common.

One of the most commonly noted characteristics of the besprizorniki by contemporary Soviet sociologists, was their strong sense of community. They banded together in groups, or "communes" as they sometimes called themselves, which varied in size from 5 or 10 individuals to groups as large as 600. Belonging to a community helped make up for the lack of family as it provided for a modicum of economic and social security; the food, money and clothing that was taken in a day's work on the streets was divided up equally among the group. Collective

action of some kind was also necessary as "working" the bazars, stealing, or running scams at train stations often required the mutual cooperation of at least three besprizorniki. One would attack the vendor, one spill over the wares and the third scoop up the goods. The continued social cohesion of the collective was encouraged by the development of simple organizational structures. Within the larger communes in particular there was ususally a leader who gave out orders and looked after the interets of the group, although he rarely interfered in personal disputes among its members. Various individuals within each large group would carry out his directives and see to different communal functions such as keeping watch at night against the threat of a police raid or serving as messengers to other groups of besprizorniki or to the adult criminal world. Some of the larger groups laid claim to their own parts of the city, with exclusive rights to operate in certain markets and streets. Smaller gangs would protect their sleeping areas, leaving one person behind during the day to defend their rights to a railroad car to a particular tar pit. Violation of these territorial boundaries could result in skirmishes between groups.

The besprizorniki's primary loyalty was to their own collective rather than to the larger socialist community. They resisted all who stood on a different side from them, be they besprizorniki from another gang or adults from the police, Komsomol, or children's homes. In order to protect themselves and their secrets from treachery they used great caution in recruiting new members, often submitting them to physical trials

and tests before they were accepted. These ranged from beatings and insults from older and more powerful members of the collective, to ritual forms of testing such as covering the new members with a pile of smoking and crackling branches on top of which a fire was built. The injunction against informing against the group was very strong, and the rare besprizorniki informer was dealt with harshly. Sometimes they were punished by simply no longer being protected by the group from outside violence or even arrest. At other times they were physically abused or, among the more criminal gangs, even killed, as this popular besprizorniki song about an informer suggests:

Middle of the nighttime-
 The wind it was a howling-
 At the hideout was a meeting of the gang.
 These were desperadoes,
 Hooligans and convicts-
 There to find out who it was that sang.

Hello, oh my Murka! (Name of girl)
 Hello, oh my darling!
 Hello, oh my Murka, and goodbye!
 You squealed, you turned a stooly!
 You sang on us so cruelly!
 So take you bullet now, for you must die!

Was it all that awful-
 Here with us together?
 Were all the rags we gave you still too few?
 So what was it that made you
 Take to that police dog-
 And go and turn us in to the Cheka?...

Hello, oh my Murka!
 Hello, oh my darling...

Some communal customs separated one group of besprizorniki from another, while others separated the entire community from the rest of Soviet society. The latter was particularly true for the use of jargon and ritual acts and phrases. Besprizorniki

jargon was largely the same throughout the Soviet Union, facilitating the frequent migrations of homeless youth from north to south in the summertime. Common words such as girl, train, and ruble were rendered incomprehensible to non-besprizorniki, helping to preserve their separateness. A 10 ruble bill, for example, was called a yosh', or a "louse;" fifty "lice" meant 50 ten ruble bills. Ritual acts and phrases also helped seal the bonds of the besprizorniki community. Two contemporary Soviet sociologists argued that words could sometimes take on the character of actions for the besprizorniki, and in certain cases act as a "living barrier" to violent action or retribution. Normally, for example, a youth who had lost or stolen the belongings of another, such as a pack of cards or a book of matches, would be abused and placed in dependence to the owner's wishes until he had paid that person back. If, however, right at the moment of confrontation the debtor repeated the ritual phrase, "Precisely I, when I want, how I want, where I want, what I want," then he was freed from retribution and allowed to pay back for the item as he desired.

The besprizorniki's sense of an exclusive community was a direct threat to the Bolsheviks' efforts to create a larger, more inclusive, socialist community as the besprizorniki developed their own alternative set of common communal norms, laws, and cultural consciousness which, although not explicitly political, actively resisted the norms and behavior of the rest of Soviet society. While the Bolsheviks emphasized responsibility, work and communist morality, the besprizorniki rejected the

proletarian work ethic and developed instead their own brand of tough, street-smart independence, which explicitly included swearing, smoking, drinking, and sexual promiscuity.

An important part of this besprizorniki culture was the glorification of freedom from authority and responsibility, as compared with the Bolshevik emphasis on solidarity and the surrender of individual desires for the good of the collective. Their desire for freedom, and resistance to Bolshevik norms and efforts to reeducate them, were manifested in their common opposition to any efforts to put them in children's homes or communes. They would scatter all over the streets and into side alleys to avoid capture by groups of Komsomol youth who would periodically try to round them up and take them into orphanages. Many were put in children's homes only to escape to the streets again. These institutions were generally despised as places that restricted one's freedom, and youth who did live there were considered "pretty boys" and "goody-goodies" by those still on the loose. In one carefully researched novel about the besprizorniki, Children of the Street, the group leader Amelka says: "A chap wants to learn a trade and they push a tank with frogs and goldfish in front of him...And they tell him to make toys out of clay...And then there are rules too...We are used to smoking tobacco and eating tasty things. But there it is all different, it's all boring government issue stuff: clubs, pictures, dances. That's nonsense." (114)

Early Soviet criminologists, psychologists, and party figures argued that besprizorniki resistance to education and

their retreat to criminality were desperate responses to economic and environmental hardships left over from the pre-revolutionary era and inflamed by the allied blockade and the Russian civil war. The besprizorniki were seen not as criminals, but as victims, as "sick children, spoilt by an ugly environment and education." This implied that they did not actively choose to be homeless or criminal, but were forced into this kind of behavior out of a need to survive. However, while economic factors clearly did play an overriding role in creating the mass of homeless children in this period, some youth consciously chose this lifestyle as well. Out of 480 criminal and homeless youth arrested in a Transcaucasian town, only 116 accepted the offer to renounce their vagabond lives for a job in a factory or government, the rest preferring to stay on the street. (Zensinov, p. 119) Soviet sociologists themselves described how important the appeal of freedom was to orphan youth already on the street and even to youth from "good," working-class families who would leave their homes and jobs to join the street children in search of adventure and independence. One sociologist argued that these youth believed that the economic difficulty of living on the street was more than compensated for by a feeling of independence and of freedom from authority. He wrote that for the besprizorniki, "the demands of society, their elders, and teachers did not exist; they are their own masters and know only their own morality. (Krasuskii, p. 238) This kind of active resistance by the besprizorniki to Bolshevik authority contributed to the party's ultimate inability to reabsorb and

reeducate the besprizorniki by cultural and educational means alone.

A crucial aspect of the concept of hegemony is that it encourages us to look for relations of power and struggle in whole new areas of social life. As Raymond Williams argues in Marxism and Literature, "[w]hat is decisive is not only the conscious system of ideas and beliefs, but the whole lived social process..." (p. 109) Youth cultures are a vital part of this lived social process and play a central part in the search for hegemony. The Bolsheviki hoped that the cultural development of Soviet youth on every level of their lives--leisure, education, sexuality, family--would contribute to the creation of a communist consensus and a common working-class culture. Instead, the besprizorniki, and other cultures of Soviet youth, resisted Bolshevik efforts to educate them into a singularly socialist consciousness. While the Bolsheviki clearly remained dominant, their constant inability to solve the problem of the besprizorniki throughout the 1920's emphasized the limits of their social control. The search for socialist transformation and communist hegemony would be a long and difficult one--not something that could be achieved in the single revolutionary moment of October 1917, or even in the revolutionary decade following it.

Class Capacities and Union Political Formation

CSST Conference
April 25, 1989

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Despite analogous labor processes, American coal and metal miners developed sharply contrasting union political traditions. Both groups of miners formed militant unions in the 1890's, but where the coal miners' United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) embraced the liberal reform movement of the progressive era, the metal miners' Western Federation of Miners (WFM) advocated socialism; and where the UMWA became one of the strongest affiliates of the American Federation of Labor, the WFM founded the revolutionary syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World. These political differences remained remarkably consistent throughout the twentieth century.

When I began this research I anticipated that the new social history would provide clues about the origins of these distinctive political formations. Dissatisfied with the subordination of rank and file workers to union organizational forms and economic markets in the old institutional labor history, as well as the subordination of workers to technology and processes of capital accumulation in the labor process literature, social historians have placed the variegated cultures and experiences of rank and file workers at the center of their analyses.

Although I have found that traditions and experiences did in fact vary, I have also come to believe that the new social historians have overcompensated for the errors of their predecessors. Where institutional historians and labor process theorists pay little attention to role of rank and file workers in the process of working class formation, social historians

often pay little attention to the role of employers in that process. In a trenchant critique of the new social history, Lawrence McDonnell accuses the influential Herbert Gutman of portraying workers and capitalists as "two civilizations which sometimes squabble but never embrace, as brothers or as deadly enemies" (1984, p.636-637).

Interestingly, it is E.P. Thompson, regarded by many as the principle source of inspiration for social historians, who argues most eloquently against one-sided approaches to political analysis - - be they top-down or bottom-up. According to Thompson:

There is a sense in which rulers and crowd (in nineteenth century England) needed each other, watched each other, performed theater and countertheater in each other's auditorium, moderated each other's political behavior....Is there some deeply embedded, "structural" reciprocity here? (1974 p.402).

That very "structural" reciprocity provides a framework for explaining divergent union political formation in the two mining industries. I argue that coal and metal miners had very different experiences with their employers at the point of production, during strikes, and within their communities and that these divergent experiences explain the marked contrasts in the politics of the UMWA and WFM. These divergent class experiences were not randomly distributed; they were, instead, structured by the nature of relative class capacities in the two industries. Both coal employers and coal miners had weak class capacities, while employers and miners in the metal mining industry had strong class capacities. Divergent relative class capacities were not only shaped by cultural traditions, as the social

historians suggest, but by uneven markets and processes of capital accumulation, as institutional historians and labor process theorists suggest.

Virulent competition was the principle cause of coal employers' weakness. The high demand for coal during the Civil War coupled with low capital requirements motivated hundreds of small capitalists to open mines. The abundance of coal near the earth's surface obliterated the need for expensive deep mining equipment and coal, in addition, required virtually no market preparation.

By the end of the war, however, the productive capacity of the industry far exceeded the demand for coal. Excessive competition and overproduction crippled the coal industry, driving profits down. In the words of one employer, "(t)here are some fundamentals which the employer should know by this time but which many persistently forget....The enemy of labor is capital; the enemy of capital is labor and other capital" (Quoted in Black Diamond August 10, 1910, p.21).

Collective action to raise prices would have minimized coal employers' plight, but employers lacked organizational leadership. It was not a lack of large employers that accounted for the void in leadership, but rather the fact that large size did not count for much in the coal industry. Larger employers were vastly outnumbered by small employers -- 85% of the mines operating in Pennsylvania in 1889 were small "country banks" (EMJ June 13, 1891, p.696) -- and coal deposits varied considerably in quality. Small producers with favorable geological conditions

were quite capable of capturing the markets of their larger competitors.

Despite weak market and organizational capacities, coal employers were militant in their relations with miners. Rather than collectively addressing their disputes with labor, disorganized coal employers sought individual solutions. In particular, they relied on company houses and stores for added profit and as a mechanism of labor control. Approximately two-thirds of all bituminous coal miners lived in company houses in the 1880's and 1890's (Nash 1982, p.43 f.n. 40). Even small employers built inexpensive homes and established credit agreements with independent merchants who were assured of miners' patronage (Magnusson 1920).

Dependence on employers weakened the capacities of miners. With low wages and seasonal employment, most miners experienced chronic debt. Miners relied on credit from employers during lean times and feared that if they struck they would "be both out of work and out of a home" (UMWA Secretary and Treasurer W.C. Pearce, U.S. Industrial Commission 1901, p.98).

Despite the risks, coal miners in Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio, the major coal producing states, participated in 1,705 strikes between 1881 and 1886. Less than one-third of these strikes were successful (See Table I).

Disenchantment with company stores, company homes, and low wages provided the incentive for resistance. According to one miner, by forcing miners to patronize company-dominated institutions and then charging exorbitant prices, employers were

committing a double crime: "It is depriving a man of his liberty, and then punishing him for being a slave" (Black Diamond October 1885, p.9).

But a sense of injustice alone does not explain why coal miners were willing to risk their jobs and homes. American miners were also exposed to union traditions imported by British miners. By 1870, immigrant coal miners from Great Britain accounted for approximately 50% of all miners in the major coal producing states (U.S. Census 1870, p.719-765). British union leaders encouraged miners who had been blacklisted or locked out of mines in Scotland and the North of England to emigrate (Gottlieb 1978). Thus, the United States probably received British miners who had been among the most active in the British miners' union. That union, the Miners' National Association of Great Britain, was strongly influenced by the Chartist movement (Roy 1905; Boston 1971; Fisher and Smethurst 1978).

British union traditions were easily transferred to the United States because competition among British coal employers was excessive and British miners experienced constraints similar to those of their counterparts in the United States. The Miners' National Association of Great Britain advocated a cooperative agreement with employers to collectively raise prices and wages (Fisher and Smethurst 1978). Believing that a similar plan was viable to alleviate poverty among American coal miners, British immigrants, many with close ties to union leaders in Great Britain, organized the first national coal miners' unions in the United States (Roy 1905; Gottlieb 1978). A cooperative union-

employer plan to regulate prices and wages became the foremost goal of organized miners in the United States until the 1930's (UMWJ May 31, 1894 p.2; Wieck Papers Box 15, Knights of Labor-Coal).

For many years, American employers resisted the plan and instead blacklisted known union organizers and members. As a result, British-influenced unions in the United States faltered, driving some coal miners into the competing Knights of Labor. The Knights were no more successful, however, since their utopian vision, cross-class organizing, and commitment to secrecy precluded attention specific trade issues (Coleman 1943).

Coal employers and miners remained locked into a pattern of futile militancy for much of the 1880's. The presence of "free-riders" prevented durable employer organization (U.S. Industrial Commission 1901; Olson 1971; Bowman 1985) and competition between the British-influenced miners' union and the Knights of Labor resulted in numerous failed strikes (Roy 1905).

In desperation, the competing unions began talks of a merger in 1886. This alarmed employers who embarked on a campaign to convince miners that a cohesive union would only exacerbate their poverty. According to an article in the employers' trade journal:

[Miners] are, as a rule, an intelligent and law-abiding class, except when their good sense is subverted by the wild ravings of the so-called "guides." For they know that when it is impossible to get a whole loaf, they had better obtain a half one than have no bread at all (Black Diamond October 15, 1889, p.210).

Coal miners were not convinced by their employers' logic, perhaps because they had little knowledge of that half loaf, and the two unions merged into the UMWA in 1890.

For much of the 1890's, the UMWA was unable to deliver its promises to coal miners. In 1897, however, poverty had reached shocking proportions in the coal fields and the UMWA risked a national wage strike. The UMWA had less than 4,000 members and no strike fund but 150,000 coal miners responded to the strike call and shut down the coal industry in the major coal producing states (UMWJ October 1, 1965, p.11). The national and local presses as well as a legislative commission reported that miners were destitute and their employers dishonest, inhumane, and incapable of managing the affairs of their industry. Faced with a losing battle, employers agreed to organize themselves and to meet with UMWA representatives annually to agree on prices and wages, the very plan British miners had introduced over thirty years earlier.

The success of the plan depended on the UMWA's ability to keep their employers organized in order to prevent price cutting. The UMWA achieved this by discouraging strikes and radical political commitments.

Metal miners had no need or desire to organize their employers. In contrast to the East, the metal mining industry was highly concentrated. In 1902, for instance, just 7% of Colorado's mining companies were responsible for 80% of the state's total hardrock mineral production (Neuschatz 1986, p.50).

Unlike coal mining, metal mining required considerable capitalization. In addition to the cost of developing mines that often reached depths of 1,000 feet or more, precious metals required expensive milling and smelting procedures before they were marketable.

Large employers began organizing almost as soon as they entered the industry. Employers claimed that organization was necessary in order to keep metal miners from "dictating" the affairs of the industry (Idaho Springs News September 11, 1903, p.3). Indeed, one historian claimed that metal mine employers organized as the *only* alternative to turning management entirely over to miners (Wyman 1978, p.53).

Metal miners enjoyed substantial control over their wages, working conditions, and within their communities. Miners had established these traditions prior to 1870 when the industry was dominated by self-employed placer miners. Placer mining required little capital investment and offered incomes that far exceeded those of workers in the East (Paul 1963; Neuschatz 1986).

Since the West was undeveloped prior to the discovery of gold, independent miners created the first western industrial communities (Neuschatz 1986). Miners' courts, originally designed to monitor claim theft, provided one of the few means of organized social control. Metal miners also provided fire protection, law enforcement, libraries, and entertainment (Colorado Bureau of Labor Statistics 1887-88, p.83; Paul 1963).

Even after the placer deposits were exhausted and corporate capital dominated the industry, miners retained their privileged

position in local communities. With the exception of copper mining communities, there were few company towns in the West (Allen 1966; Brown 1979). The lack of pre-existing competition attracted numerous independent businessmen to the West and miners remained the largest single occupational group in communities and the most cohesively organized (Irey 1951, p.85; Jameson 1987, p.518). Moreover, organized employers typically did not live in the communities in which their mines were located (Jameson 1987, p.64-65).

Miners began organizing into local unions with the transition from self-employment to wage labor in the 1880's. Initially, these unions, which sought to preserve high wages and work autonomy, were very successful. For example, in 1889 the average annual earnings of metal miners in five western states were twice as high as the annual earnings of coal miners in the four major coal producing states, even taking into consideration more stable employment in metal mining (See Table II). Moreover, in contrast to the 1,705 coal mining strikes between 1881 and 1886, the U.S. Commissioner of Labor recorded only three metal mining strikes in five states during that time. All three strikes were in protest of a wage reduction and all three were successful (See Table III).

Organized employers attempted to change the prevailing pattern of class relations in the early 1890's. For example, the 1892 strike in Idaho, which inspired the amalgamation of local unions into the WFM, began when employers changed the method of payment for underground work. Miners had traditionally insisted

that all underground workers faced the same dangers and should receive the same compensation for the risks they took. When employers challenged that tradition by lowering the wages of less skilled workers, miners and employers began the first of ten violent and protracted labor wars that dominated the industry until 1904. In all but one of these strikes employers received assistance from state officials while miners received local assistance (Suggs 1968; Wright 1974).

Metal miners and metal mine employers were formidable opponents. Employer-supported state militias engaged in violent combat with miners who were themselves organized into battalions. After twelve years of such battles with no end in sight, employers and the militia in Colorado, where the WFM was headquartered, deported striking miners across state lines. "You better not return," military officials warned the deported men, "for something might happen to you" (Denver Post, June 15, 1904, p.1).

There is little question that experiences like these shaped the politics of the WFM. Within months of the 1904 deportation, metal miners approved by 80% a referendum to organize and affiliate with the IWW, a revolutionary organization that stressed direct action at the point of production.

With very different experiences behind them, coal and metal miners entered the twentieth century with very different political goals. The strike of 1897, for instance, became memorable to coal miners precisely because it broke the pattern of futile militancy that miners and employers had been locked

into for several decades. Similarly, metal miners' affiliation with the IWW represented the culmination of twelve years of intense struggle between well organized employers with access to state political resources and well organized miners with access to political resources within their communities.

But coal and metal miners' sharply contrasting union politics suggests that industrial militancy and political radicalism are not synonymous. Instead, the politics of the UMWA and the WFM were shaped by the experiences of rank and file workers at the point of production, within their communities, and during strikes. These experiences were structured by the relative class capacities of workers and employers.

Implicit in this analysis is a conceptualization of class capacities as the degree and form of interconnectedness within class fractions (Stark 1980). Thus, class capacities encompass both organizational potential and the content of that organizational potential. This interpretation of capacities is only partially consistent with the existing literature on class capacities. Most theorists, either implicitly or explicitly, argue that class capacities are generated from the mode of production; employers derive strength from the process of capital accumulation while workers derive strength from association with one another (Wright 1979; Therborn 1983). There are two problems with this interpretation of capacities. First, employer capacities are often seen as unproblematic and undifferentiated across fractions of employers. Braverman (1974), for instance, assumes that because of their objective position in the class

structure, employers are capable of transforming the relations of production in accordance with the demands of capital accumulation. This view neglects the fact that firms have different organizational forms and operate within different market and political contexts. All of these factors, as well as possible cultural differences among segments of capital, mean that capitalist class organization is variable and, therefore, relations with workers are also variable. A second problem with much work on class capacities is the failure to move beyond organizational potential in order to seriously examine the cultural and experiential components of class organization. While it is certainly true that divergent forms of community organization in the East and in the West gave coal and metal miners different organizational potentials, it is also true that coal and metal miners had very different traditions which shaped the character of their unions; British union traditions were simply not prevalent in the West, for example.

In short, I am suggesting that relative class capacities shape experiences during strikes and during day to day production relations and that these experiences, in turn, influence union politics. I am also suggesting a more encompassing definition of class capacities which recognizes that it is not necessary to neglect the insights of older theoretical traditions in order to address faults in those traditions. More specifically, traditions and patterns of community social organization influence class capacities but uneven markets are also pertinent. Finally, the approach that I am suggesting is neither top-down

nor bottom-up, but more akin to E.P. Thompson's notion of structural reciprocity and his theater-counter-theater analogy.

Table I. Success of Coal Strikes in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania by Cause, 1881-1886.

Cause	Successful	Unsuccessful
Wage-Related	34% (553) ^a	66% (1093)
Working Conditions	27% (12)	73% (33)
Sympathy	29% (4)	71% (10)

^a Includes 89 strikes classified as partially successful.

Source: United States Bureau of Labor. Third Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor, 1887. Strikes and Lockouts (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1888)

Table II: Average Daily Wages, Average Days Worked, Average Annual Earnings by State, 1889; Coal Miners, Gold and Silver Miners.

State	Daily Wages	Days Worked	Annual Earnings
<u>Coal Miners</u>			
Illinois	\$1.95	177	\$345.15
Indiana	\$1.89	175	\$330.75
Ohio	\$1.95	181	\$352.95
Pennsylvania	\$1.93	210	\$405.30
<u>Gold and Silver Miners</u>			
Arizona	\$3.17	215	\$681.55
Colorado	\$3.08	244	\$751.52
Idaho	\$3.59	206	\$739.54
Montana	\$3.48	292	\$1016.16
Nevada	\$3.60	248	\$892.80

Source: United States Census, 1890. Mineral Industries in the United States p.350; 59-60.

Table III. Metal Mining Strikes, 1881-1886.

State	Year	Cause	Successful
Arizona	1884	Against Wage Reduction	Yes
Colorado	1883	Against Wage Reduction	Yes
Colorado	1884	Against Wage Reduction	Yes

Source: United States Bureau of Labor. Third Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor, 1887. Strikes and Lockouts (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1888).

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