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Changing Patterns of Gang Behavior in Brazil: An Analysis of a Potential New Social Movement

In the past three years, remarkable activities have been coordinated by the gangs in the major urban areas of Brazil; more remarkable is that these activities were nonviolent in nature, and intended not entirely for retaliation against the state but to call attention to injustices against the *favelados*—the urban poor. After years of crime- and drug-related battles with the state, it appears that the gangs are using their physical power not to further their own needs but to call for social reforms that are much needed but long ignored in Brazil, namely inhumane prison conditions and police brutality against the lower social classes. In this essay, the concept of criminal organizations that reframe themselves into social movements will be explored by utilizing two current case studies in which it occurred. By tracing the rise of these gangs from how they came to power to the situation in which they mobilized, we can use social movement theory in order to best understand whether or not these new gang activities are social movements—or just a new guise for their reactions against the state. After this has been fully explored, the state reaction to these new social movement activities—key in determining both the legitimacy and success of a movement—shall be discussed, in order to suggest the relative success or failure of the gangs as a developing social movement.

Methodology and Research Limitations

Before delving into the thesis question, it is important to first acknowledge the research process—and obstacles—involved in this project. Information on this topic was taken primarily
from recent scholarly essays on gangs in Brazil, but most importantly, information came from primary data sources such as wires from the Associated Press and other news services, and from journal pieces discussing these topics specifically. Because this research is so contemporary, scholarly examinations of gangs as social movements are virtually nonexistent; combined with the idea that giving such legitimacy to such a marginal social group is taboo, the majority of the theory—or the application thereof—in this essay is primarily my own, based upon knowledge of modern social movement theory and how it can be used to explain this unusual pattern of social behavior.

The theory selected for this research is Sidney Tarrow’s theory of New Social Movements (NSMs); it was selected not only because it is one of the most current theories available in understanding modern social mobilizations, but because it also concisely brings together important aspects of other major social movement theories based on social structure, resource mobilization, and identity theory. The social movement theory advocated by Tarrow (2002) has four basic frameworks which must be considered before any organized group activity can be considered a true social movement. These frameworks consist of both cognitive and active processes that the group must advance through within its changing relation to the status quo in society. The combination of these frameworks helps to understand the organization from not only the conflict perspective, but also the symbolic-interactionist (concerning how an individual views his role and place in society) and structural-functionalist (concerning how society functions as an organic whole) analysis.

The first framework Tarrow analyzes is framing contention from within the group. She borrows much of her conceptual work on framing from Goffman (1974), but it is Bert Klandermans who best explains this process as “the transformation of social issues into
collective action ... [It] does not occur by itself. It is a process in which social actors, media, and members of a society jointly interpret, define and redefine states of affairs.” (1997:44) It is in this stage of development that the idea to mobilize for or against an issue first develops within a group; in their process of defining and redefining social affairs, actions that a group may have seen as tolerable or unfortunate can be reframed into actions that are unjust and require immediate reaction.

Tarrow’s second framework calls for an analysis of political opportunities and constraints acting on the group, which may respectively encourage or suppress social movement activity. In this stage, the organization is convinced that there is an issue in society which is in its best interests to resolve through its own action—and it now begins to consider the ramifications of such actions. It is only after this cost-benefit analysis is undergone by the organized group that it will consciously begin working to promote its agenda, providing the benefits outweigh the costs. Social movements are most likely to occur when political opportunities exist to transform social consciousness into actual action. There are five factors most important in this transformation for any group: “(1) the opening of access to participation for new actors; (2) the evidence of political realignment within the polity; (3) the appearance of influential allies; (4) emerging splits within the elite; (5) a decline in the state’s capacity or will to repress dissent” (Tarrow, 2002: 76); while they need not be examined outright in an analysis of an organization’s activities, it is important to keep these factors in mind.

The third framework is that of mobilizing structures and contentious politics. In this phase, the reality of a movement is finally taken into consideration; at this point, a group has not only recognized a problem and decided whether or not it is willing to act on this problem, but it now must feasibly carry out its plans. For those marginal groups in society with little or no direct
political power, this entails efficiently securing financial, human, and material resources in order to organize and sustain group activity until the point that society recognizes the grievance of the group and somehow reacts to it. Important mobilizing structures in NSMs that contribute to the success of a movement are: (1) group segmentation and coalition forming, where sects of a movement are linked together as a mesomobilization: independently-acting groups with specialized contributions for the movement; (2) external resources that ease the economic strain of the movement, and make it financially feasible for some members of the movement to focus on its goals full-time; (3) internal innovations, especially adopting the physical and intellectual characteristics of the dominant society in order to work best within it (Tarrow, 2002: 130-5). With these mobilizing factors secured, the organized group is finally able to carry out contentious actions—those directed towards other members of the state in order to highlight injustices against the group and politically motivate others to work with the group to change the status quo.

The final framework is that of contentious action. This framework is perhaps most vital in determining if a social movement has indeed developed out of a marginal population; without sustained action, the group is merely a collection of dissidents and thus its unsustained actions are seen only as periodic riots and uprisings. Without sustained, well-executed contentious actions, groups lack the credibility that is given to one acknowledged to be a social movement. Society will be less willing to respond to their protests at a structural level, and the status quo is not likely to be changed in their favor. Successful tactics are those which are innovative, multifaceted, and flexible (Tarrow, 2002: 102-4); NSMs that can develop such tactics have a distinct advantage in their challenge of the status quo because the novelty of their tactics will draw the attention of the state, and because those actions were unexpected, the state can not easily retaliate
with immediate, violent repression of the group. As will be demonstrated, these factors are in part what have made the case of Brazilian gangs as social movements so compelling; first, however, it is important to understand how and why these organizations formed within the state.

Introduction: Rise of Gang Activity in Brazil

Modern organized crime in Brazil spans approximately thirty years, first emerging in the 1970s. Prisoners called *o colectivo*¹ and political prisoners² were held in prisons away from the rest of the criminal population, as they were considered the greatest threats to national security (Leeds, 1996). While these two groups were held together in isolated prisons they were bound to interact and an informal alliance system formed between them in which both groups shared information with one another about their own group activities (Tarrow, 2002: 86); the criminals shared thievery tactics with the political prisoners (who committed similar crimes to fund their own activities), and criminals learned from the political prisoners the “principles of political organization and a collective consciousness” that they utilized when they were moved back into the general prison population (Leeds, 1996: 5).

Once transferred back to the general prison population, after the end of the Dirty War and the relaxation of military government in Brazil, *o colectivo* used protest forms learned from the political prisoners such as hunger strikes and writing letters to humanitarian groups to call attention to injustice within the prison system. When that was not effective, they resorted to developing an organized hierarchy within the prisons to gain control of their environment; for example, they began collecting dues from all prisoners to form a financing system for smuggling basic necessities into the prison and planning escapes (Leeds, 1996: 5). While the alliance

¹ These prisoners convicted of crimes without political motivation.
² Those prisoners taken in as subversives during the most aggressive state campaigns in Brazil’s Dirty War.
between the political prisoners and *o colectivo* was short-lived, the lessons of organization and developing a collective consciousness in order to obtain goals in the face of adversity (or in this case, the Brazilian justice system) were reinforced by the success the prisoners saw when they utilized them. In an attempt to undermine this problematic population, state officials split the insurgent prisoners up between several prisons (Leeds, 1996); however, this action only served to spread the collective philosophy and organization throughout the system because the prisoners simply implemented new organizational structures in their new surroundings—rather than solve the problem of insurgency, state officials exponentially increased it.

As these original criminals were released into society their organization within the prisons was firmly established, but a lack of financial resources kept them from mobilizing outside prison walls. This changed in the late 1970s when nations bordering Brazil begin exporting cocaine to industrialized nations, and Brazil’s *favelas*[^1] become a distribution center for the drug (Leeds, 1996; Margolis, 2001; Soca, 2003). *Comando Vermelho* (the Red Command) became one of the first organizations to begin trafficking cocaine; it was perceived to be “a way to maintain high profits without having to provide large police payoffs often required for robbing banks” (Leeds, 1996: 6). From this point forward, sects of organized crime found a way of being self-sufficient and could now afford to organize themselves into factions of the established prison groups—now free of the need for compliance from law enforcement agencies, the opportunity for contention opened for the groups.

Not all major gangs in Brazil were established primarily as a means of profiting from the drug trade. One of the other major urban gangs in Brazil, the *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (Capital’s First Command; PCC) located in the state of São Paulo, was established in 1992 as a response to the massacre of 111 prisoners during a riot in the Carandiru prison (*BBC News*, 15

[^1]: The shums located on the outskirts of major urban areas in Brazil.
September 2002). The massacre is acknowledged as one of the bloodiest and most violent state reactions to a prison uprising in the history of Brazil (Neves, 2001), and in its aftermath the PCC formed as a means of protecting prisoners and fighting for better prison conditions (BBC News, 15 September 2002). Like the Red Command, the PCC funds most of its activity through its involvement in the drug trade, either through international trafficking or direct sales in Brazil.

The economic strength of the gangs has allowed them to establish large budgets for the reinforcement of their groups. Weapons are vital to the activity of organized crime, and economic stability allows the gangs not only to stockpile them but to increase the quality of their munitions. In many cases, the arms held by the gangs are "sometimes newer and better than those of some Latin American armies" (Faiola, 2002: 1). Some of the weapons possessed by the gangs include rocket launchers, grenades, automatic rifles, machine guns, and explosives (The Free Press of Namibia, 2002; ABC Online, 2003; Faiola, 2002; Soca, 2003; Astor, 2002; Margolis, 2001). While these weapons were once used for protection against the state and infighting, the gangs have grown so powerful that the state would have a hard time defeating them in any real firefight (BBC News, 24 February 2003). With the freedom that comes with possession of force (Tarrow, 2002), the gangs can now mobilize these resources, and the manpower needed to command them, for other activities such as protesting against the Brazilian government and its policies.

In addition to reinforcing their own physical and material strength, some of the larger gangs have also been known to give back to their communities through actions and social programs they have designed themselves. Common practices by donos⁴ concerned about their communities include monitoring the basic welfare of the favela, refraining from acts of

⁴ The highest ranking member of a gang.
gratuitous violence, and discouraging drug consumption among the favelados themselves (Leeds, 1996; Arias, 2003). In addition to serving as an informal judicial system, the gangs are also known to operate social welfare and public benefit programs, including academic scholarships for children, paying for medical treatment, weddings, etc., and most notably, the 1995 “gun exchange,” where children in the Zona Norte of Rio were able to exchange their toy guns for crayons and paper (Leeds, 1996: 8).

At first glance, these activities to support community peace and justice may seem suspicious when the standard activities of the gangs are discussed; when one takes into account the segregationist nature of Brazilian society, however, it makes intuitive sense that the gangs could justify violence and the drug trade among other groups while discouraging its presence among its own members. But if the gangs truly want themselves—and the favelas they represent—to be acknowledged by the rest of Brazilian society, they must downplay their hostile stereotypes and find less violent means of making their social issues known in the rest of society. As the following two case studies demonstrate, recent activity by the gangs suggest the donos now realize this and are mobilizing not necessarily to terrorize the upper classes, but to force the Brazilian elites to acknowledge the lower classes and their unique problems—something Brazil has never traditionally done.

_Mobilizing Case Studies: The PCC and the Red Command._

The PCC first established itself in 1992, after the infamous massacre of 111 inmates by military police during a riot in Carandiru (Fitzpatrick, 2003), the largest—and most inhumane—prison in Brazil. Inspired by the massacre and the lack of social attention it received the PCC was formed by a group of prisoners committed to fighting for better prison conditions. (BBC News, 15
September 2002). The gang, now the most powerful prison organization in the entire state of São Paulo, is the largest drug trafficker in the region and consists of a cell-like organization of over 1500 members inside and outside of the twenty-seven major state prisons (BBC News, 2001).

For approximately the first decade of its existence, the PCC was relatively silent on its organizational goal of changing prison conditions; their primary focus was on expanding their economic base and committing minor activities such as funding prison escapes (Leeds, 1996; Neves, 2001). Then, on February 18, 2001, a dono contained in Carandiru launched a simultaneous statewide prison riot among the twenty-nine largest prison complexes in São Paulo, in order to protest relocation of key members of the gang, and inhumane prison conditions (BBC News, 20 February 2001). Within twenty-six hours, the PCC had taken control of twenty-nine prisons in nineteen different cities in the state of São Paulo, and more than 27,000 prisoners took over 10,000 hostages (Neves, 2001). The initial fear of the authorities was that the inmates would stage a mass escape (Neves, 2001); however the intent of the takeover was not to escape, unlike other uprisings (The Economist, 2002). After the riot, the PCC published a document in the Diário Oficial, the state daily that chronicles government acts, explaining its existence to Brazil—and outlining its grievances against the state:

"We need to remain united and organized to avoid the occurrence of a new massacre. We from the command are going to shake the system and force authorities to change this prison practice which is inhumane, filled with injustice, oppression, torture and massacres."

And the text continues: "Together with the Comando Vermelho we will revolutionize this country from inside the prisons. Our armed arm will be the terror of the powerful, the oppressors and tyrants who use the Taubaté annex and Bangu I [high security jails in which prisoners live in isolation] to fabricate monsters, as society’s instrument of revenge." The final statement of the document reminds us of a motto used throughout the world by the left: "We know our strength and the strength of our powerful enemy, but we are prepared and united, and the people will never be defeated" (Neves, 2001: 4)

In a statement released to the media after the riots, the PCC asked that it be seen not as a "party of crime, but as a Union of the Marginalized and Condemned" (Neves, 2001: 4). The PCC
sought to legitimize itself and its struggles by asking that its actions be analyzed as though it were a social movement. For example, throughout its control of São Paulo prisons, banners proclaiming “Peace, Justice and Liberty” were hung on the prisons’ outer walls (Neves, 2001) and written in chalk in the prisons’ meager outdoor exercise fields where they could be easily seen by media helicopters flying overhead (BBC News, 23 February 2001). Despite the immense violence that could have occurred, the “riot” was relatively peaceful when one takes into account the number of places and people involved. The statement made during the São Paulo prison riots was not intended to be violent, but to draw attention to the conditions in which prisoners in Brazil must live. Since then a similar phenomenon has occurred in Rio de Janeiro, where its dominant gang, the Red Command, staged another massive protest against the state against its treatment of the lower classes.

More recently, on September 30, 2002, Red Command took to the streets of Rio de Janeiro and effectively shut down the city. “Black Monday,” as it is called (The New York Times, 2002), caused all aspects of life in Rio de Janeiro, a city with nearly 12 million inhabitants (Faiioa, 2002), to come to a grinding halt. The famed beaches of Copacabana and Ipanema were cleared of tourists, and stores, schools, banks, offices, and markets were ordered to be closed by Red Command, who also burned city buses in order to halt public transportation systems (The Free Press of Namibia, 2002; The New York Times, 2002). To quell the uprising, 40,000 Brazilian police officers were dispatched to the streets of Rio de Janeiro (ABC News Online, 2002), which also limited the efficiency of police forces—because so many officers were out of the offices, virtually all administrative work in the police organizations were stopped as well (The Free Press of Namibia, 2002).
What is especially compelling about this disturbance is that it was choreographed by a dono being held in a Rio jail, Fernandinho Beira-Mar (Faiola, 2002), who commanded via cell phone to a lower ranking member of the organization: “Blackout on the South Side [the area of Rio de Janeiro inhabited by the upper classes], everything has to shut down, all the commerce, everything is going to be paralyzed. We’re going to show them that we’ve got the power and they don’t” (The New York Times, 2002). Despite the fact that the city shutdown was planned and executed by a gang, the movement was surprisingly nonviolent; the only gunshots fired by Red Command were approximately one hundred rounds of ammunition into City Hall early in the morning (Astor, 2002), well before workers would be present. Such an act might signify aggression, but had the members of this gang wished to murder anyone that day, they easily could have.

The true reason for this display of power is debatable but all possible motives are political. Rio de Janeiro state Gov. Benedita da Silva, who has promoted an aggressive stance against organized crime, felt that Red Command was protesting her campaign for reelection—shortly before the election, 1,700 drug related arrests were made (ABC News Online, 2002; The Free Press of Namibia, 2002). Police, however, feel that the uprising was not meant to confound the reelection of da Silva, but that Beira-Mar initiated the shutdown in order to protest against his own incarceration and dislike of prison conditions (Faiola, 2002). Regardless of the actual reason, the importance is that what set the uprisings off was a political motive—either a campaign of sorts against a political leader, or a protest of the prison conditions lower class inmates face. Like the prison riots in São Paulo, shutting down the Rio de Janeiro was not so much an act of violence but a display of power by organized crime, intended to call attention to
the injustices faced by the lower classes in Brazil—and that someone is finally willing to take action.

*Can Brazilian Gangs Mobilize as Social Movements?*

While their contentious mobilizations cannot be deemed a success because they are so new, there is a potential that the PCC and the Red Command can evolve from drug organizations into legitimate social movements. Granted, they have yet to win the sympathy from the majority of the upper classes in Brazil, but there are several factors that may stall the acquisition of this sympathy, including the stigma of being labeled a “gang,” and the socio-historical relations between the upper- and lower-classes. To best understand how these gangs compare to social movements, then, one can compare their actions to Tarrow’s framework for NSMs. Doing so, as demonstrated below, suggests that even if the gangs are not given the status of “social movement” yet by other social groups, their potential to develop as a movement is high.

**Framing Contention.** In this first stage of social movement development, the group must redefine a situation in society from being “unfortunate” to “unjust.” The PCC, in its very existence, has clearly done this; it formed as a last straw response to inhumane prison conditions that led to an overly violent state retaliation that left 111 inmates dead following a small-scale riot in Carandiru. The Red Command, on the other hand, has focused more on street police brutality than actual prison conditions, and staged its “display of threat” in order to call attention to the marked increase in arrests in the favelas. In both of these instances, the gangs had well-articulated, socially-orientated reasons for acting contentiously.

**Political Opportunities/Constraints.** The political opportunities for both gangs rests in the relative disorganization of Brazilian politics coupled with a weak economy and strained budget
which keeps the state from effectively disbanding the gangs. The geographical separation of the *favelados* and the rest of society also make it difficult for the state to respond to the gangs’ uprisings; because they live in the mountainous regions surrounding major urban areas, any state retaliation would literally become an uphill battle, with the gangs having the distinct home turf advantage. Constraints include the inherent illegitimacy of being associated with a “gang.” Society has no incentive to allow such individuals into actual political negotiations, not only because it undermines the historical Brazilian social systems, but also because of the position in the global arena in which it would place Brazil—such action is suggestive that drugs control Brazil, an image of which the entire region is cautious.

**Mobilizing Structures.** With little to lose from attempted social uprisings—for police brutality and unfair prison conditions would exist anyway, the gangs have reason to mobilize, and they possess all factors that make action successful: group segmentation and coalition, external resources, and internal innovations. Both the PCC and the Red Command are segmented into distinct branches, composed of members within the prisons and members within the *favelas*. This segmented system makes it difficult for authorities to apprehend them, nevermind that the gangs have learned to utilize prisons as base commands for their operations. Even if the police could arrest all of the gang members in Brazil, they would have nowhere to put them, save grouping them together in several concentrated areas. Additionally, both gangs have hinted at an alliance between themselves in order to further politicize; but as of yet there has been no proof of such an alliance.

External resources are also readily possessed by both gangs. Because they control both the drug trade and the prison smuggling systems, the gangs are able to generate financial resources to support contentious activity as well as an underground system for transporting
resources from one area to another. The key to the success of the gangs in mobilization above anything else is internal innovations, namely the adoption of the cell phone as a major system of communication. Easily smuggled into and hidden in prisons, cell phones can keep gang leaders in control of their gangs regardless of where they are located in the country. It also allows for fluid movement in the rest of the gang cells; because communication is wireless and entirely mobile, no member of a group outside the prisons is out of the communication system, regardless of his personal location. State authorities have attempted to block satellite usage and cell phone purchasing plans favored by the favelados, but there has been little commercial or social support for these attempts, as many of them were proven technologically unfeasible (BBC News, 23 January 2002; Neves, 2001). Thus, both the PCC and the Red Command have developed truly fluid systems of communication and mobility that cannot, as of yet, be destroyed by the state.

**Contentious Action.** As fully described in the case studies, both the PCC and the Red Command have begun to engage in contentious action based on their dominant geographical regions and the problems in society that most concern them. Respectively, the prison-based PCC has begun to mobilize against prison injustice from within the prisons, and the Red Command has mobilized in the streets of Brazil—more importantly, in sections of Rio where it was unspoken that favelados would never set foot—in order to protest increasing police activity targeted against the poor. In both instances, however, there is also the hidden threat that the masses potentially can rise up against the traditional power structure in Brazil—and have the resources and mindset to do so. Notably, the gangs were both careful to minimize casualty in their activities; this is compelling as gangs are violence-based organizations, composed to a large extent of convicted criminals. Yet here there are two similar cases in which their activities are relatively peaceful—
indicators that the gangs truly are pushing for legitimacy and social change, and not just attempting to punish the state for getting in their way.

Conclusion: After the initial uprisings

Since the PCC’s first statewide prison riot, the group has been relatively quiet. While major government officials have claimed this as a victory against the gangs, lower government employees are more cautious. In fact, one of the Brazilian prison guards unions has been threatening to strike since the occurrence unless safer working conditions for themselves—and in effect better conditions for the prisoners—are put into effect. Nilson de Oliveira, president of the State Correction Workers Union, refuses to accept this inactivity as a measure of success in putting down the revolt: “It was nothing more than a dress rehearsal for a mega-rebellion that can explode at any time.” (BBC News, 21 February 2001).

Over a year later, on September 15, 2002, Brazil closed the Carandiru prison; it was slated to have done so years ago but could never afford to do so. After the recent activities by the PCC, however, state authorities finally moved to close the prison, claiming it was “a symbol of all that has been wrong with Brazil’s prison system;” the 7,000-plus inmates housed there have been divided up among eleven new, smaller jails built in response to the 2001 riot. It is too early to claim victory for either the gang or the state in this instance, as new jails do not ensure a more just prison system, and because of the nature of the gang organization, moving prisoners will not prove effective in destroying their communications systems. The Red Command, too, has also been inactive; in fear of another uprising, the state of Rio was giving national troops to patrol major tourist areas during the last Carnival season. Whether the Red Command’s silence during
this important time for Brazil’s economy is because of their desire not to fully terrorize, or because they were discouraged by military presence, among so many other factors, is debatable.

Quite simply, it is too early to determine whether successful social movements will evolve out of Brazilian gangs. However, it is a distinct possibility; the activities of the PCC and the Red Command fit neatly into Tarrow’s framework for a social movement, and among themselves the gangs are working to reframe their position in society so that others will see them as such as well. A definite answer to the question of whether social movements in Brazil have emerged out of major gangs cannot be had; only time will tell how these groups mobilize in the future, as well as what the state reaction to it will be.

Cited Sources.


Additional Resources


Bibliographic Essay

While this essay sought to explain why political and social factors in the urban Brazilian environment may have sparked the development of a social movement out of an organized crime system, it fails to lay a strong foundation for understanding the political sociology of Brazil itself, and it only offers a basic understanding of social movement theory—two avenues of study that are necessary in order to fully understand the changing nature of events in contemporary Brazil.

Several books have been published that offer an in-depth analysis of politics in Brazil. The following works contribute to a vast historical, political, and social analysis of race and class relations in Brazil. Two books prove most useful for a broad, general overview of these issues as they exist in Brazil. Joseph Page’s The Brazilians (1996), provides a cultural and historical analysis of Brazil by tracing the political evolution of Brazil from a Portuguese colony until its redemocratization in the late 1980s. For a different view on how Brazil developed, and one more multimedia in scope, one should read Robert Levine and John Crocitti’s The Brazil Reader: History, Culture, and Politics. While this book, too, focuses centrally on how politics have shaped the nation, this book provides a multifaceted look at major events by using historical
references from various social classes, as well as using a variety of sources, such as art, diaries, and email correspondence.

Other books, however, offer in-depth analysis of specific issues in Brazil. The nature of democracy in Brazil is a well-studied topic, and several books on the issue are worth reading. Frances Hagopian (1996) wrote a tremendous book on how the contemporary political processes of Brazil came to exist as they do, entitled *Traditional Politics and Regime Change in Brazil*. This book, however, does not provide a sweeping analysis of politics pre-military rule, and for that Kingstone and Power's *Democratic Brazil: Actors, Institutions, and Processes* (2000), which is composed of a dozen essays by different specialists in Brazilian politics and spans from the 1930s (the first democratization of Brazil) to the redemocratization in the late 1980s. A final book worth reading in order to understand democracy in Brazil is Barry Ames' *Deadlock of Democracy in Brazil* (2002). This book does not focus much on the historical context of political activity in Brazil; rather in discusses the contemporary “crisis” of democracy, and seeks to find a solution to these problems in the organizational structure of the Brazilian government and political systems.

Another intellectual dimension not elaborated upon in this essay is that of social movement theory itself. An in-depth understanding of social movement theory, obviously, is essential in truly appreciating the changing gang activities in Brazil. Perhaps the best overview of contemporary social movement theory, offering new developments in this sociological field while synthesizing other general theories on the topic is Sidney Tarrow’s *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (2002, 2nd ed.). The theories utilized in this paper are, for the sake of simplicity, taken entirely from Tarrow’s work, but other books are equally
useful in understanding social movement theory, especially those that examine social movements specifically in Latin America, or in marginal social groups.

Although arguably outdated, the other following studies are important in understanding social movement, as they lay the groundwork for NSM theory, the most modern branch of this sociological analysis. Erving Goffman’s 1974 work *Frame Analysis*, is one of the first major studies to discuss the importance of “framing” in social movements, now seen to be one of the most important activities for a successful organization to undertake. Additionally, David Snow’s work in the late 1980s and early 1990s begins to link framing to actual social movement mobilization, as well as preliminary discussions of how these processes impact the relative success and failure of a movement. Bert Klandermans’ (1997) *The Social Psychology of Protest* is another recent work which looks at the individuals’ motivations for joining or forming a social movement—and is indispensable for understanding theoretical motivations for group organization; in this case, for example, while a law-abiding *favelado* might be motivated to support an illegal organization with which he formally had no real associations.

In addition to these theory-oriented books, there are others that implement a case-study approach that enable one to do a comparative analysis with other social movements, or are simply more easier to comprehend because the theories are illustrated by specific—and often famous—social movements. The works of William Gameson (*The Strategy of Social Protest*, 1990) and Frances Fox-Piven and Richard A. Cloward (*Poor People’s Movements*, 1977), while not concerned with movements in Latin America, are highly useful in developing an understanding of where, when, and why some groups will choose to mobilize. Both of these books center on movements that occurred in the United States, and respectively how the lower classes participated and benefited from those labor-orientated movements. For a more social
analysis of contemporary Brazil, however, it is perhaps best to read Michael Mitchell and Charles Wood’s article in *Social Forces* (1998): “Ironies of Citizenship: Skin Color, Police Brutality, and the Challenge to Democracy in Brazil.” As suggested by the title, this social survey discusses the role of ethnicity, social status, and likelihood of being a victim of police violence in Brazil.

Having a basic understanding of the historical and social development of democracy in Brazil, however, is not enough to understand gang mobilization in Brazil. Additionally, one must appreciate the sociological perspective of social movement theory in order to understand not just that these changes in society occur, but how and why they occur as well. Works with Brazilian themes are perhaps the most appropriate for someone wishing to gain a greater understanding of social movements in this unique nation. Perhaps the most useful of these is Elizabeth Meade’s article “Living Worse and Costing More: Resistance and Riot in Rio de Janeiro, 1890-1917,” which chronicles the earliest noted protests in modern Brazil, along with an analysis of the movement’s successes and failures within the context of Brazilian society. Additionally, the data in Elizabeth Leed’s 1996 article, “Cocaine and Parallel Polities in the Brazilian Urban Periphery: Constraints on Local-level Democratization,” can be used along these lines to see how gangs in Brazil have developed into a unique form of social movements because of the undemocratic nature of “democratic Brazil.” Outside of Brazil, James C. Scott’s *Weapons of the Weak* (1985) is an impressive cross-national analysis of methods of everyday resistance in third world nations throughout the world, providing an understanding of lower class forms of resistance outside of the traditional social movement, stressing the very important point that just because a region is not mobilized against a dominant group does not mean it is not resisting it.
Contemporary information on gang activities and social class injustice are, to date, rather sparse in nature, do to how recent these issues are. Despite this, however, there is some strong analysis on these activities—most of which, unfortunately, is still officially unpublished. Within the next few years, however, Enrique D. Arias will have published several network analyses of gangs in Brazil, explaining how their social order is structured, and how those gangs are related to and connected with other factions in society. For current news coverage of activities in Brazil, one of the best resources for researchers outside of the region is the BBC News Online archive. To search for articles, such as the ones used in this essay, go to their home web site, http://news.bbc.co.uk/, and type in the name of a specific gang or topic in their “Search” command; doing so will retrieve all relevant articles in the past five years.
Bibliographic Essay

While this essay sought to explain why political and social factors in the urban Brazilian environment may have sparked the development of a social movement out of an organized crime system, it fails to lay a strong foundation for understanding the political sociology of Brazil itself, and it only offers a basic understanding of social movement theory—two avenues of study that are necessary in order to fully understand the changing nature of events in contemporary Brazil.

Several books have been published that offer an in-depth analysis of politics in Brazil. The following works contribute to a vast historical, political, and social analysis of race and class relations in Brazil. Two books prove most useful for a broad, general overview of these issues as they exist in Brazil. Joseph Page's *The Brazilians* (1996), provides a cultural and historical analysis of Brazil by tracing the political evolution of Brazil from a Portuguese colony until its redemocratization in the late 1980s. For a different view on how Brazil developed, and one more multimedia in scope, one should read Robert Levine and John Crocitti’s *The Brazil Reader: History, Culture, and Politics*. While this book, too, focuses centrally on how politics have shaped the nation, this book provides a multifaceted look at major events by using historical references from various social classes, as well as using a variety of sources, such as art, diaries, and email correspondence.

Other books, however, offer in-depth analysis of specific issues in Brazil. The nature of democracy in Brazil is a well-studied topic, and several books on the issue are worth reading.
Frances Hagopian (1996) wrote a tremendous book on how the contemporary political processes of Brazil came to exist as they do, entitled *Traditional Politics and Regime Change in Brazil*. This book, however, does not provide a sweeping analysis of politics pre-military rule, and for that Kingstone and Power's *Democratic Brazil: Actors, Institutions, and Processes* (2000), which is composed of a dozen essays by different specialists in Brazilian politics and spans from the 1930s (the first democratization of Brazil) to the redemocratization in the late 1980s. A final book worth reading in order to understand democracy in Brazil is Barry Ames' *Deadlock of Democracy in Brazil* (2002). This book does not focus much on the historical context of political activity in Brazil; rather, it discusses the contemporary "crisis" of democracy, and seeks to find a solution to these problems in the organizational structure of the Brazilian government and political systems.

Another intellectual dimension not elaborated upon in this essay is that of social movement theory itself. An in-depth understanding of social movement theory, obviously, is essential in truly appreciating the changing gang activities in Brazil. Perhaps the best overview of contemporary social movement theory, offering new developments in this sociological field while synthesizing other general theories on the topic is Sidney Tarrow’s *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (2002, 2nd ed.). The theories utilized in this paper are, for the sake of simplicity, taken entirely from Tarrow’s work, but other books are equally useful in understanding social movement theory, especially those that examine social movements specifically in Latin America, or in marginal social groups.

Although arguably outdated, the other following studies are important in understanding social movement, as they lay the groundwork for NSM theory, the most modern branch of this sociological analysis. Erving Goffman’s 1974 work *Frame Analysis*, is one of the first major
studies to discuss the importance of “framing” in social movements, now seen to be one of the most important activities for a successful organization to undertake. Additionally, David Snow’s work in the late 1980s and early 1990s begins to link framing to actual social movement mobilization, as well as preliminary discussions of how these processes impact the relative success and failure of a movement. Bert Klandermans’ (1997) *The Social Psychology of Protest* is another recent work which looks at the individuals’ motivations for joining or forming a social movement—and is indispensable for understanding theoretical motivations for group organization; in this case, for example, while a law-abiding *favelado* might be motivated to support an illegal organization with which he formally had no real associations.

In addition to these theory-oriented books, there are others that implement a case-study approach that enable one to do a comparative analysis with other social movements, or are simply more easier to comprehend because the theories are illustrated by specific—and often famous—social movements. The works of William Gameson (*The Strategy of Social Protest*, 1990) and Frances Fox-Piven and Richard A. Cloward (*Poor People’s Movements*, 1977), while not concerned with movements in Latin America, are highly useful in developing an understanding of where, when, and why some groups will choose to mobilize. Both of these books center on movements that occurred in the United States, and respectively how the lower classes participated and benefited from those labor-orientated movements. For a more social analysis of contemporary Brazil, however, it is perhaps best to read Michael Mitchell and Charles Wood’s article in *Social Forces* (1998): “Ironies of Citizenship: Skin Color, Police Brutality, and the Challenge to Democracy in Brazil.” As suggested by the title, this social survey discusses the role of ethnicity, social status, and likelihood of being a victim of police violence in Brazil.
Having a basic understanding of the historical and social development of democracy in Brazil, however, is not enough to understand gang mobilization in Brazil. Additionally, one must appreciate the sociological perspective of social movement theory in order to understand not just that these changes in society occur, but how and why they occur as well. Works with Brazilian themes are perhaps the most appropriate for someone wishing to gain a greater understanding of social movements in this unique nation. Perhaps the most useful of these is Elizabeth Meade’s article “Living Worse and Costing More: Resistance and Riot in Rio de Janeiro, 1890-1917,” which chronicles the earliest noted protests in modern Brazil, along with an analysis of the movement’s successes and failures within the context of Brazilian society. Additionally, the data in Elizabeth Leed’s 1996 article, “Cocaine and Parallel Polities in the Brazilian Urban Periphery: Constraints on Local-level Democratization,” can be used along these lines to see how gangs in Brazil have developed into a unique form of social movements because of the undemocratic nature of “democratic Brazil.” Outside of Brazil, James C. Scott’s *Weapons of the Weak* (1985) is an impressive cross-national analysis of methods of everyday resistance in third world nations throughout the world, providing an understanding of lower class forms of resistance outside of the traditional social movement, stressing the very important point that just because a region is not mobilized against a dominant group does not mean it is not resisting it.

Contemporary information on gang activities and social class injustice are, to date, rather sparse in nature, do to how recent these issues are. Despite this, however, there is some strong analysis on these activities—most of which, unfortunately, is still officially unpublished. Within the next few years, however, Enrique D. Arias will have published several network analyses of gangs in Brazil, explaining how their social order is structured, and how those gangs are related to and connected with other factions in society. For current news coverage of activities in Brazil,
one of the best resources for researchers outside of the region is the BBC News Online archive. To search for articles, such as the ones used in this essay, go to their home web site, http://news.bbc.co.uk/, and type in the name of a specific gang or topic in their “Search” command; doing so will retrieve all relevant articles in the past five years.