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SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN LATIN AMERICA:
POLITICAL PROCESS THEORY AND REPERTOIRES OF CONTENTION

By

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*Social Movements in Latin America:
Political Process Theory and the Concept of Repertoires of Contention*

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Honors College Thesis
Spring 2012

Part I: Abstract

This paper seeks to examine three distinct cases of contemporary Latin American social movements, and explain their origins and the effectiveness of their collective action in terms of the political process theory and the concept of repertoires of contention respectively. The three cases in question are the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (The Landless Rural Worker's Movement, MST) in Brazil, the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (Zapatista Army of National Liberation, EZLN) in Mexico and the Caracazo (roughly translated, "the Caracas Smash") in Venezuela. This paper ultimately hopes to prove that all three cases are explained by the political process theory and seeks to answer whether or not the repertoires of contention chosen by each group of citizens were effective.

Part II: *Introduction*

Exploring social movements in Latin America and understanding their origins and effectiveness provides a clear insight into the present system of governance in each respective country. By examining how a social movement took place—where it started, who started it, how they overcame obstacles—one can discern a lot about the culture the movement started from, as well as the political will and position of the people who participate in the movements. Comparing past movements to those in the present, and even understanding whether or not one event was a leading source of inspiration for a movement later on, is important for understanding how and why a specific country has the political system of governance it does.

Social movements can have a variety of different effects on the cultures they are a part of. In some cases it can lead to the transition of a dictatorship or military regime into a democratic government. In other cases the movements can overthrow democratically elected leaders in order to promote a different system of government. Knowing the history of social organizing in different countries can help to shed light on the current political situation as well as the power of the people in the government. Understanding how different movements affected the balance of social and political forces in a nation is crucial in being aware of how much the political systems have shifted and re-accommodated to the demands of different people. It may be that landless workers, unhappy peasants, mistreated indigenous peoples or even university students have particularly strong voices in different societies, and knowing the impact they've had on the past can not only help to look into the future but also explain the present situation.

Understanding the way in which citizens react to times of political duress is crucial to understanding social movements. By examining the way social movements start, whether they are organized by one specific individual or whether they are a combination of ideas from several different ones, we can understand some of the forces contributing to changes in the political structure of a country. Social movements have the capability of influencing the way a government runs, as well as the prospects for governments to take power or stay in power. The purpose of this paper is to examine three separate instances of social movements and explain them in terms of the political process theory, as well as the way in which they organize against the government.

This paper examines social movements in Latin America from the 1980s into the early 1990s. Given the wide range of movements taking place during this time period, this section is devoted explaining a selection of case studies. In order to accurately explain each of the cases, this study is limited to three distinct movements in three separate countries. Each case took place during the 1980s to early 1990s, and they are powerful examples of the capabilities of citizens in each independent country. The three movements, and their respective countries, are as follows: the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (The Landless Rural Workers' Movement, MST) in Brazil, the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (Zapatista Army of National Liberation, EZLN) in Mexico, and the Caracazo in Venezuela.

Before this paper begins to examine the differences and similarities between the movements mentioned above, it is important to provide a historical background of the political situation in each of the countries prior to the movements. Beginning with this perspective we will be able to more accurately explain the movements using political process theory (PPT). As

explained in more detail below, the PPT explains social movements by focusing on the political opportunity structure (POS) presented by the historical context in which they arise.

Section A: *Brazil (1984-Present)*

The MST in Brazil has a long, complex history that reaches back to the early 1960s. The *Golpe de estado no Brasil em 1964* (1964 Brazilian coup d'état) succeeded in overthrowing then President João Goulart. Following the coup, the peasant leagues (*Ligas Camponesas*) and other organizations in Brazil were demolished. The new government was not entirely comfortable with the stirrings of this movement, because they were trying to reassert themselves as unequivocal leaders (Merrick, 1983). Through the elimination of this potential threat by the peasantry, the military dictatorship was able to protect state control of most of the agriculture in the country for large-scale commercial agriculture (especially for export, as the military regime was committed to a neoliberal economic model) and by the mid 1980s over 75% of the available hectares of farmland were held by latifundia, or large estates (Alston, Libecap & Mueller, 1999).

Several thousand families who had been living on land they had previously owned were forcefully evicted when the government displaced them in order to create the latifundias. Because of this, those families banded together and made the move to Brazil's southernmost state: Rio Grande do Sul. While establishing themselves in this new state, these families demanded the military forces expropriate the land nearest to them for use by the landless peasants (Ondetti, 2008). The Constitution of Brazil states in Article 5 that the right of property is guaranteed and shall fulfill its social function (*Constitution of Brazil*, Article 5, 1988, annexed below on page 53)—i.e., balancing the needs of social collectivities such as landless peasants against individual rights to private property--which in turn gave the landless the main basis for

their claim to the land. This historical background and Constitutional framework was the main reason the MST was able to obtain such momentum with the peasantry of Brazil. The MST had the capability to organize itself around local struggles which were very specific to demographic groups such as the indigenous populations (Lamarche & Zanoni, 2001). This made it easier for the people in a specific sector to really work together based on collective identities shaped by a common objective in addition to a common history.

The MST was not the first movement to fight for land reform in Latin America, and it has several other precursory movements (such as the Ligas Camponesas, or the Peasant Leagues and the Movimento dos Agricultoras Sem Terra or Landless Farmers' Movement) (*Friends of the MST*, 2003). The MST known today was established shortly before the demise of the military governance in January of 1984 (Levine, 1999). This military dictatorship, closely affiliated with the interests of the United States, lasted until President Tancredo Neves was elected in 1985. The military dictatorship from 1964-85 had made it next to impossible for such groups to organize freely and without the fear of penalization previously. The shift from a military dictatorship to this more democratic system of government was beneficial for the general populace because it allowed peasant interest groups and other grassroots movements to pursue their interests (Maybury-Lewis, 1994). During the beginnings of the movement, the main objective for a lot of these peasant populations was the return of their land and the redistribution of the latifundias.

As is the case in many Latin American countries, religion is deeply engrained into Brazilian society. Since the rise of Liberation Theology in the 1960s, an alternative current within Latin American Catholicism that identified with the concerns of the poor and social justice, religion has often played a part in the formation of grassroots movements. In Brazil, the

Catholic Church provided a lot of support as well as the initial infrastructure that started the movement (Font, 2003). The MST had one major rival while it was getting its momentum: the National Confederation of Agrarian Workers (Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura, CONTAG). Despite CONTAG's attempt to begin the process of land reform quickly and legally, the more aggressive techniques used by the MST (including nonviolent direct action/civil disobedience) gave it the political support and legitimacy it needed to step in front of CONTAG and gain the support of rural workers (Machado, 2003).

The MST remains active to this day in Brazil, but its techniques have shifted to better accommodate the changing political opportunities and constraints. The MST has been continuously active since 1984 and has challenged the government in various ways. Using the political process theory and the repertoires of contention approach, this paper will seek to explain whether or not this movement has been effective and will continue to be effective in the years to come. The case for Brazil is different from the EZLN in Mexico and the Caracazo in Venezuela because of its ideal goals and the length of time it has been active, respectively.

Section B: *Mexico (1994-Present)*

The EZLN in Mexico is similar to the MST in that it began before the 21st century and continues to persist. It is significantly different, however, in the ideals it upholds and the methods it uses to make its point in its society. The main goals of the MST are to achieve their sought after agrarian reform as well as to establish a more just society (Landertiner, 2008). The basic rights of the people in Brazil were significantly altered during the 1960s when the military dictatorship came into power and began avoiding dealing with the MST. The EZLN on the other hand moves to preserve and protect the communal rights (Boucher, 1999) that had been won in

the Mexican Revolution of 1910 (and written down in the 1917 Constitution) awarded and then revoked in 1992 (with the amendment to Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution). They have no intention of going back to the system they were familiar with before the Zapatistas (EZLN) came into action, because the situation they are striving for proves to be more fair for all of the citizens of Mexico.

Unlike the MST in Brazil, the beginnings of the EZLN shocked those in Mexico as well as outside observers. The most removed, indigenous people in the southernmost state of Mexico (Chiapas) were rising up and demanding the attention of the government (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994). This relatively small state, with its small population and small cities, has precious resources that make the whole of Mexico very rich. Unfortunately, this is also where the main problem of Chiapas comes to light: the profits made by the sales in this small state go immediately to wealthy private interests, while next to none is retained to improve the conditions of those living in Chiapas (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994). Although Chiapas is a state rich in natural resources, its socioeconomic indicators are relatively low.

Perhaps the single most important historical background that led to the creation of the EZLN was the Mexican Revolution of 1910, which resulted in a major change in the country's political structure, reflected in the 1917 Constitution. The constitution was highly progressive for the era during which it was pushed forward, as it called not only for land for peasants, but also an increase in wages, working conditions, and labor organizing rights (Articles 27 & 123 of Mexican Constitution). But like many of the reformed constitutions established during this time in Latin America, this one only established ideals and goals the government should strive to

fulfill without actually specifying a step-by-step plan for the government to follow (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994).

When the political reforms began to sweep the country after the establishment of the 1917 Constitution, Chiapas lagged behind until a significant amount of time after the agrarian reform had reached other states. The reason behind this delay can be attributed to the high density of indigenous people in Chiapas (who were historically marginalized), and the local power of an entrenched oligarchy. It is also important to note that the local, entrenched oligarchy establishing the changes in this state were not particularly keen on having the old systems of social control (such as debt peonage) changed (de León, 1991). Because the government didn't allocate the proper resources, or defend the rights of the indigenous people, many people in Chiapas lack access to a proper education system, and due to this fact many of the population during that time were not empowered to exercise the rights granted to them by the Constitution to own land. The people in Chiapas were shunned by the government, which had historically ignored indigenous peoples and obscured their demands through assimilationist policies, and their requests were pushed to the back of the pile instead of being taken into actual consideration. It wasn't until the 1930s that the peasants in Chiapas became fully aware of their new constitutional rights and began organizing effectively to pressure landlords and political representatives (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994).

One of the most basic techniques of peasant pacification for governments is to keep the promise of land reform or higher wages in the air without actually making any active progress toward changing the status quo. This is what the Mexican government did from the 1930s all the way to the 1990s, which helped keep the people of Chiapas complacent and hopeful that one day

the rules would change. However in 1992, under the leadership of former President Salinas de Gortari (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994), the reform of land for peasants was suspended completely. Former President Salinas even wrote his new mandates into the Constitution, leaving no room for misunderstanding. With this action, President Salinas compromised the peace that had been present in Mexico previously.

The EZLN had been an active presence in the state of Chiapas long before they publicly announced themselves on January 1, 1994. Although the history of the Zapatistas' (EZLN) origins have been slightly murky, some of the interviews conducted with one of their primary leaders—Sub-Comandante Marcos (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994)—indicated that they were active at the very latest in 1983. The group had gone underground to avoid the public eye and to keep the attention of the government off of them for at least a few years. During this time there were a few attempts at peaceful protests which ended up in Mexico City regarding the recuperation of land; however, these demonstrations were either ignored or repressed, so the EZLN resorted to different techniques. When they emerged in 1994 they declared war on the Mexican Government, claiming the government was so out of touch with the people that it was in essence illegitimate. They based their rebellion on Article 39 of the Mexican Constitution, which provides that “The national sovereignty resides essentially and originally in the people. All public power originates in the people and is instituted for their benefit. The people at all times have the inalienable right to alter or modify their form of government” (*Constitution of Mexico, 1917*).

Unlike the MST and the Caracazo, the Zapatista movement rose up in arms (briefly) in the sense that it is commonly referred to as a *guerrilla* movement. This is not to say they were a

power equal or superior to the Mexican federal army, but rather signifies they collected weaponry in order to resist the attacks. The heaviest of the fighting happened early on in the history of the EZLN, although a cease fire was announced 12 days into the uprising, and since then they have used different tactics to achieve their ultimate goal of agrarian reform. This case has been chosen because it exemplifies a different technique, to be later analyzed with the repertoires of contention approach, while also following in the steps of the political process theory. This paper will seek to explain how this movement differs from the other two mentioned and why it succeeded or failed.

Section C: *Venezuela (1989)*

The Caracazo in Venezuela is probably the most different from the other two movements. It has involved the same—if not a greater—level of violence that the Zapatista movement used, but it was compacted into just a few bloody days. Both the Zapatista movement and the MST have remained active since their beginnings, whereas the Caracazo was a brief moment of rapid violence that left a permanent mark on the history of Venezuela. Also unlike the two movements mentioned above, the cause-effect relationship that triggered the response by the citizens in Venezuela was relatively immediate. For both the MST and the Zapatista movement, the causes reached back decades from present day; in the case of the Caracazo the reaction was almost overnight. Because of this immense difference in duration and scale it could be argued the Caracazo was not a movement at all, but only a bloodbath caused by the military repression of the riot by the government. However, this paper seeks to prove the validity of this event in history as a movement by using the political process theory as will be explained later in this paper.

The weekend before the revolts started, there was a 100% increase in the price of oil caused by an economic adjustment by then President Carlos Andrés Pérez (Maya, 2003); he eliminated the subsidies that had helped maintain the domestic prices of oil products at a very low rate in comparison to worldwide prices. It is important to note, however, that these market reforms were imposed under pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Because of the sudden increase in the price of oil, public transportation fares also increased. This by itself might not have been such a problem for the general public, but the Central Unica de Autos Libres y por Puestos (Union of Taxis and Minibuses) decided it would not enforce the ruling of the price increases. This meant that taxi and bus drivers in Caracas and outlying areas had the freedom to charge what they wanted as a fare to their passengers (Maya, 2003).

People in Caracas and neighboring regions, particularly students, were outraged at the increase in cost to get from point A to point B which happened literally overnight. Students in particular were growing as a social and political force as university enrollments expanded since the oil-fueled industrialization. On the 27th of February 1989, the first protests began in some of the sectors in which the union was most prominent. In the early morning it was only in Caracas, but by the late afternoon similar protests had surfaced in cities on across the entire country (Maya, 2003). These students went to the Nuevo Circo inner city terminal, one of the busiest and most used terminals to dispatch taxis and buses for the Caracas area, and demanded to speak with the drivers and managers who were setting the prices in the first place.

Instead of taking the protests straight to government authorities and buildings, the Venezuelan citizens went to foreign-owned stores (because they were perceived to be hoarding supplies), set fire to tires, blocked major roads by sitting in large numbers in the center of

intersections, and other much more violent methods. Most of the damage caused to the cities was restricted to regular, everyday businesses and the headquarters of unions; most of the government offices and buildings were structurally sound.

To this day the number of deaths from the Caracazo movement is unknown. It is important to note that the deaths of civilians during this movement were caused by the government army, who was sent into the streets to fire on the protesters. Although the official government report states that 276 people were killed (*El Caracazo Case*, 1999) some estimate anywhere from 2,000-10,000 people were slaughtered (*Anniversary of the Caracazo*, 2007). This was without a doubt one of the most violent state responses to civilian protest in Latin America. It is important to note that during the time these movements were organized (1983-1994, and slightly before) there were a variety of austerity protests happening all across the world. These “IMF riots” (Walton & Seddon, 1994) were largely related to the austerity measures the IMF suggested to states, but it is inaccurate to say that these were defenseless states or that certain domestic economic and political interests were not sometimes served by these measures (Walton & Seddon, 1994) The repertoires of contention used by the citizens in this country during the short amount of time the protests were active are astounding due to the enormity of the military response.

The MST, EZLN and Caracazo all had very distinct ways of getting their point across, but all were initiated in order to pursue a specific goal. For the MST it was the desire to achieve equal land distribution for the landless peasants and agricultural workers. For the EZLN it was to preserve the communal right of the people, regardless of whether they were indigenous or otherwise; and for the Caracazo, the people revolted violently to the sudden changes established

by the President. The union leaders attempted to enforce the new prices, but because they had increased by 100%, the taxi and bus drivers set their own prices to make as much money as they could.

Part III: *Literature Review*

Throughout history people have risen up against unjust regimes and leaders, and they have fought their way into a clearer future at the risk of their own lives. Social movements have been defined by many scholars, and the definitions change depending on what perspective is being examined. The following definition is the one that will be used throughout the remainder of this paper to define the parameters of the three social movements to be discussed:

“[We define] a social movement as a sustained campaign of claim making, using repeated performances that advertise the claim, based on organizations, networks, traditions, and solidarities that sustain these activities.” (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007)

In order to better understand the definition, each of the sections will be explained independently and again combined as a whole. The first part states that a social movement sustains a campaign of claim making, which means in order for the social movement to constitute as such according to the previous definition it must have an ideal the people participating are striving to obtain. Secondly, it must have a variety of performances that advertise the claim. There are many different repertoires of contention (Tilly, 2006) citizens use to rise against the government including: marches, starting fires, public meetings, rallies, demonstrations and petitions (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007 and Tarrow, 1998).

The third point as defined above is the repeated use of performances. This means the repeated public displays will show unity and numbers as well as the commitment of the populace

to further the cause. Repeated action can even lead to the establishment of a base color for the movement, or lead to the production of a slogan or other symbols (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007). The final point states that social movements draw on organizations, networks, traditions and solidarities already in place in the community in which they reside. As will be shown by this paper in the following sections, there were several examples where the movements that erupted in Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela built on elements of a previously established organization or tradition and used it as momentum to carry the movement forward.

Now that a definition for social movement has been established, we can move on to examine the specific type of social movement theory that explains how a social movement forms, behaves and progresses. There are several theories that aim to explain the behaviors characteristic of social movements (Opp, 2009). Among them are relative deprivation theory, Marxist theory, social strain theory, resource mobilization theory, frame analysis theory, new social movement theory and political process theory. For the purpose of this paper, we will focus exclusively on the political process theory.

Political process theory posits that the success or failure of a social movement is primarily affected by political opportunity (Tarrow, 1998). Political opportunities are not necessarily permanent or national mandates, but they must be consistent aspects of the political struggle that continue to encourage people to engage in collective action. In some situations the population may engage in contentious politics when there is a shift in the pattern of these political opportunities, which in turn leaves them an opening to act with their preferred repertoire of contention (Tarrow, 1998).

Along with the political process theory there is a related concept known as contentious politics (Tilly, 2003). Contentious politics is defined in terms of its two different components as follows: "... *contentious* because participants are making claims that affect each other's interests... *politics* because relations of participants to governments are always at stake." (Tilly, 2003, p. 26). As the very nature of the word contentious implies, the claims made by participants are heated or impassioned and can often be what leads to collective action. A more complete definition of contentious politics states that, "[contentious politics are] interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else's interest, in which governments appear either as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties (Tilly, 2008)." Violence is not a pre-requisite for this type of social action, and at times when there is violence in a movement it is because the government or a separate institution initiates it. The term politics is used because usually when participants gather together to form a cohesive unit under the name of collective action, it is usually directed at a system of government.

According to political process theory (PPT), for a social movement to come into place the system must first be vulnerable, or appear to be vulnerable, to the people rising against it. This vulnerability in the system will invite a challenge by the unhappy population and can be caused by a variety of reasons. In some situations, the shift to a government that doesn't emphasize repression as much can cause social change because a disgruntled group of people see this as an opportunity to express themselves freely after subjugation. This **political opportunity** mentioned before is one of the three components for movement formation under the political process theory. The other two are **insurgent consciousness** (the sense of deprivation and mistreatment by some members of a society that leads to collective injustice conscience, causing

the movement to thrust forward) and **organizational strength** (the movement must have a strong and effective leadership and maintain sufficient resources to push the movement forward effectively) (Meyer, 2004).

In order for PPT to be applicable to cases worldwide, the political climate in the country in question must be taken into account. One of the primary factors of political process theory takes into account the surrounding area and political governance because—as mentioned previously—there must be a political gap in which the people can emerge (Meyer, 2004). In the three cases analyzed in this paper, there is a discernible political context that opens the gate for the political movement; in every case there is something that sets the people off or something that rallies them together, to the point where they rise up with a common goal.

In the three cases to be analyzed in this paper, the populace reacted to a particular instance in time where the government either did or did not do something specific that affected their social wellbeing and sense of justice. Whether or not the collective action or civil disobedience begun by the people is legitimate or merited is an issue hotly debated by philosophers, historians and other scholars (Tilly, 2003). In these three cases there was also clear physical or political retaliation by the government. The debate establishing the difference between force and violence has also been widely discussed, but it has been established that the use of force is often carried out by those who claim legal protection for their actions (Tilly, 2003).

One of the most important similarities between these three cases is the time period during which they were initiated and carried out. All of these movements were brought into the mind of the populace and government during the 1980s, which was a time of significant political change

for Latin America as a region. During this time neoliberalism as an economic philosophy was beginning to rise and gain more attention worldwide. It started with the Pinochet military regime in Chile (1973-88) and was marked by a response to the economic crisis of the 1980s, also referred to as the Third World Debt Crisis which began in Latin America (Williamson, 2006). All across Latin America there were two parallel developments beginning around the 1980s that reshaped the political context in the region: a shift away from the military rule that had prevailed in the previous two decades, as well as a shift toward a greater economic opening to the global market.

One definition of neoliberal ideology states “it is the belief that open, competitive, and unregulated markets, liberated from all forms of state interference, represent the optimal mechanism for economic development” (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). It was said to have come about because of the global recession of the Lost Decade (1970s-1980s in South America), as the people in power sought to repress demand in order to control inflation, and reorient their economies toward generating foreign exchange to pay down the foreign debt. Another definition states that the goal in response to this crisis during the rise of the neoliberals was to slow the state welfare and other such levels of government intervention and therefore return to a “free” economy (Williamson, 2006, p. 68), i.e. attracting global capital by increasing the profit rate at the expense of workers’ wages and public services.

Prior to the 1980s, the dictatorships in power in much of Latin America had long-standing relationships with the United States and were attuned to U.S. interests. During the 1980s the Latin American dictatorships lost their general appeal to the public, and the ideals of neoliberal thinkers became an increasingly contentious element of political ideology. When the

transition from military regime to democratic government came into place, the debt crisis was a major concern and there was a large amount of international pressure to increase or implement austerity measure that would not benefit the poorer classes (such as the measures taken by former President Pérez in Venezuela which led to the Caracazo) (Green, 2003). Shifting away from this regime of unrestrained capitalism was crucial for the new democratic leaders, because of the history of ultra-free market policies that had contributed to external vulnerability and periodic crashes in the Latin American economy.

With their external support waning as U.S. aid declined after the Cold War, and with rising domestic pressure, the dictatorships were unable to remain in power and collapsed in favor of democratic forces in almost all of Latin America (Henales & Edwards, 2002). The neoliberals now faced a new challenge in sustaining democracy within the increasingly unpopular economic policy framework they laid down: market-oriented policies. Because of how high the level of debt was in the region, there was external pressure to continue these neoliberal policies even though domestic opposition was steadily increasing (Henales & Edwards, 2002).

Social movements become active for a variety of reasons and for an equally wide range of purposes. Movements in Latin America during the time period this essay focuses on spawned from similar circumstances at different times. The strong basis of ISI policies adopted in the 1940s and the shift from a military authoritarian regime to a more democratically friendly one had a great significance in the propensity for social movements which grew out from that time period. The emergence of these movements could be attributed to an autonomous expression of interests (O'Toole, 2007, p. 238), or it could be more congruent with the political process theory

in that there was an increased capability to express common interests publicly without the inherent fear of repression (O'Toole, 2007; Tarrow, 1998; Tilly, 1978).

Part IV: *Research Methodology*

The case studies and literature review presented above provide a clear picture of the political situation in each of the different countries, as well as an explanation of political process theory and repertoires of contention. This paper will seek to use both of these concepts in order to better explain how the movements came to be, and how they selected their methods of collective action.

Although all of these movements began in the 1980s, some of the roots of their problems reach back as far as the 1960s. It would be inaccurate to assume only one factor led into the rising of the people against the body of government, however due to the changes in the political and economic nature of Latin America mentioned previously (the shift from military rule to democratic governments and the change to neoliberal economic policies), this paper will focus exclusively on movements established during the late 1980s and early 1990s. The movements were all established in different years (1984- MST; 1983- EZLN; 1989- Caracazo) and they were all active for very different lengths of time. The Caracazo was astonishingly shorter than both the MST and the EZLN, as these two movements are still active in present day Brazil and Mexico.

This paper seeks to prove two separate hypotheses dealing with theoretical aspects of each movement. The first hypothesis deals exclusively with the political process theory and how each movement fits into the outline provided by its most standard definition. Below is a review of the factors necessary to accommodate the political process theory:

Table 1- Political Process Theory Skeleton
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The system must be vulnerable <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) This vulnerability will invite challenges by the unhappy peasantry (or other lower class citizens) and can be caused by a change in the ruling government's use of repression. 2. Insurgent consciousness <ol style="list-style-type: none"> b) This is the inherent sense of deprivation and mistreatment by members of the society who then band together to take collective action against the oppressing force. 3. Organizational strength <ol style="list-style-type: none"> c) This implies the movement must have strong, effective leadership and a steady supply of resources to keep the movement afloat without risking its significance and objective.

Taking into account the political knowledge covered in the sections above, this paper will study each of the movements independently and determine whether or not they can be explained by the political process theory. The hypothesis this paper will seek to prove will be as follows: Because the movements all began in the 1980s during a time of political and economic shift in Latin America, and given their past experience with authoritarian regimes, they will all follow the pattern of the political process theory. All of the movements will exhibit a moment of vulnerability in the political system and movements will begin at the grassroots level. A change will be noticed in the interactions between the government and the participants in the movement.

In order to prove this hypothesis, this paper will take each of the cases individually and compare it against the three major points provided above. There will be a thorough observation of the factors immediately before the act, as well as those following the cessation of the political activity (as was the case in Venezuela) and the adaptation of the movement in the present day. By carefully holding the three movements up against the three points provided above, this paper will seek to prove they all follow the inherent pattern of the political process theory.

The second hypothesis this paper attempts to prove deals with the use of repertoires of contention. As mentioned earlier, “repertoires of contention” is a term coined by Charles Tilly which relates directly to the way in which people begin to form social movements; it examines the actions taken by these people and seeks to explain or examine why these actions in particular were chosen by that specific group of people. Because this concept resides in an abstract setting, much like the concept of the political process theory, this paper will be based on a case study method, drawing on secondary literature on three cases to test the fit of the theory. It is impossible to ascertain with certainty why some techniques work in specific situations and don't in others, and because of this simple fact this paper will not seek to give a definitive voice in the matter but rather a rational debate exploring the possibilities (based on a comparison of three movements that employed distinct tactics in roughly the same time period).

Part V: *Analysis*

This section contains analysis of each of the three cases in depth independently, with commentary regarding the relationship these cases share with one another. After that section is complete there will be an explanation of the repertoires of contention favored by each movement, and hypotheses as to their origins and usage.

Section A-1: *Brazil (1984-Present)*

The Brazilian Congress was hesitant about the powers awarded to a president of their country in the 1946 Constitution, so they decided to amend the Constitution and changed the form of government from a presidential system to a parliamentary system based on the German model in 1961. This significantly limited the power of the president and shifted the way the

system worked until Goulart re-established the former presidential system in 1963. With his re-establishment of the presidential system, he was finally placed in office with full powers and the full might of the military at his back.

During his short rule, former President Goulart exposed several of the long-standing problems with the political system of Brazil. In addition to this, the Cold War framework led the United States to oppose the redistributive policies put forth by Goulart and support the military coup instead. One of Goulart's reform plans was aimed mainly at socializing the profits of larger companies in favor of the well-being of citizens across Brazil. This proved to be problematic for Goulart and was labeled as a socialist threat by the military and sectors of the society, which led to open marches protesting these ideas. One of the main factors that led to this polarization and growing instability was the set of expansionary and redistributive economic policies promoted by populist governments since the early 1940s. The most notable examples of these new policies are Argentina, under Perón, and in Brazil, under Getúlio Dornelles Vargas. These import substitution industrialization (ISI) policies, and the accompanying rapid social mobilization and rising conflict, were the key force leading to a tidal wave of military coups that swept the region in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Collier, 1979).

The military coup of 1964 succeeded in forcing Goulart to leave office and escape Brazil with his family and remain hidden while the new heads of state took over. The new regime, backed by the military forces, suspended the rights and liberties of the Brazilian people when they took office and went about abolishing opposing political parties. Not only did they abolish former parties, they also established a military government party, the Aliança Renovadora

Nacional (National Renewal Alliance Party, ARENA), and admitted one opposition party: the Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (Brazilian Democratic Movement Party, PMDB).

The PMDB was a place holder and had no real authority or power in the new system of government. Brazil was run in large part by the military government's party ARENA, whose rule would prove to be of a hellish nature to Brazilian citizens. This time of military rule was distinctly marked by the brutish practices of the military, which ranged from making prominent figures disappear all the way to torture and even exile of citizens who were not necessarily politically active. During this time in Brazil, one did not have to possess any specific traits or act out in any specific way to face repression: the might of the military was enough to silence any activity into an uneasy submission.

The 1985 transition from this demobilizing regime to the democratically elected Tancredo Neves was particularly welcome among the peasantry in Brazil because they were no longer living in fear that their government would come and kill them without reason; this also gave the peasantry the opportunity to fill the void left by the suppression of institutionalized politics during the time the regime was in power. Neves, elected in 1985, was the first civilian president elected since 1964 and brought about the restoration of the civilian government. Perhaps the most interesting phenomenon regarding the Neves presidency is that the MST was formally established in 1984; a year or so before the actual demise of the military government that had been in power since the 1960s. The Workers Party (PT) took the influence and essence of the MST (and other movements demanding democratization) and used it in order to create its base as a movement party and obtain electoral support. Once the PT won the presidency in the 2000 election, with Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the MST felt that the political shift to becoming an

electoral party in government made the PT more interested in dealing with foreign investors and making compromises rather than its fidelity to its social base (Vanden, 2008). The people who originally formed the MST had actually begun their activity in early 1981; far before the demise of this military regime. Thousands of landless families moved to Brazil's southern-most state and demanded the attention of the military government.

The first of the points presented in Table 1 above regarding the political process theory states that the system must be vulnerable. It is important to note in this situation that the vulnerability of the government was not caused by faulty leadership or unjust rule. In fact, during this particular situation it is the exact opposite: it was the regime change from a military government to a democratically elected one that provided this opening and led to the formation and growth of the MST.

The second of the points implies there must be a sense of insurgent consciousness; the people must be aware of the injustice in the system and use this knowledge to engage in collective action against the offending party. As stated previously, it is unfair and unmerited to question the leadership of Neves and his immediate successors during the first part of the democratically established rule. Consciousness does not have to revolve around pain and misery in the present, but rather it can stem from a troubled past with a harsh system of government that was highly oppressive toward free thought and speech. This previous experience with the highly militarized government and their way of handling social organizing, and the sudden change into a democratic system that restored certain political rights and freedoms, can also be triggers for the increased consciousness.

The last of the points deals with organizational strength and the effectiveness of the leadership of the organization as a whole. The MST was officially established in 1984, as mentioned previously, and is currently the largest social movement in Latin America. The MST has attained land for hundreds of thousands of Brazilian peasants since their beginning, and because of this it continues to grow and achieve more (Vanden, 2008). It took a great deal of courage and conviction from the peasantry to take a stand against military forces (and against the private armed guards of the big landowners) and claim the land no one was using as their own. Although the organizational structure might have taken some time to settle into place, there can be no question that the organizing of these families into vacant land and the persistent dealings with the political offices involved calls for a degree of preparedness and awareness of local and national political conditions.

Section B-1: *Mexico (1994-Present)*

The creation of the EZLN can be traced back to 1917, when the new Constitution was put in place in Mexico during the time of the Mexican Revolution. Mexico has a long history of social movements and organizing, particularly when tied to land reform and equal treatment of minorities. Emiliano Zapata and José Doroteo Arango Arámbula (commonly referred to as Pancho Villa) are both icons in Mexico today, and it was the peasant leader Zapata who became the inspiration for the EZLN even though he was assassinated in 1919. As was mentioned previously, the EZLN made its presence publicly known in 1994 (even though the ideals and the beginnings of the movement started coming together in 1983 when “six idealists from Mexico’s north arrived to join forces with dissident peasants and Indians...”) (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994, pg. 81) with the image of Zapata as their major inspiration.

Using the ideals proposed by the political process theory, this model can be applied to the Zapatista movement. Mexico has long been a country of collective action and social organizing, and the Zapatista movement is the most recent example of this concept in mass proportions. There are so many different events that denote political opportunity regarding this case that its relation to the political process theory is extensively clear. This movement had inspiration from the Revolution of 1910 and the Constitution of 1917, Emiliano Zapata's view on the concept of peasant rights throughout the early 1910s, as well as the continued oppression and mistreatment of the population in Chiapas where the movement started.

Because there are so many factors that influenced the Zapatista movement, it is difficult to draw attention to the single point in history that had the biggest overall effect on the movement as a whole. If one were to inspect the nature of the movement from a purely historical perspective, it could be argued that the most important of events that triggered the formation of the EZLN was the Revolution of 1910 and the Constitution it enabled. Without this momentous shift in political and social structures in Mexico, it is unclear that the EZLN would have formed and gathered such high levels of support. However, it is important to note that the continuous cycle of oil and debt in Mexico during the late 1970s which accelerated the displacement of poor peasants, coupled with frustration at the PRI's assimilation of all independent peasant movements (and repression of those that refused to assimilate), may have also played a crucial part in the stirring of the EZLN into action (Harvey, 1998).

When taking a more objective look at which factors were most immediately pressing during the time when the movement rose from the ground up, it could be debated that the 1991 amendment of the former constitution (with a special focus on Article 27.7 annexed on pages

52-53) was the most significant influence on the creation of the Zapatista movement. It was this apparent betrayal by the Mexican government of the peasantry, and the revoking of the rights previously written in their law, that constituted an immediate trigger for the uprising. Because the political process theory does not state there has to be one specific event, this paper can safely conclude that regardless of the political opportunities available to this movement, there was a definite sense of vulnerability in the system that gave rise to the Zapatista movement.

This differs in part from the Brazilian movement because there was a single, definitive cause of the formation of the MST. In the case of the EZLN, there were a variety of contributing factors that played an important role in the inspiration and advancement of the movement. During the time of the early 1990s when the movement rose in force and started to wage its rebellion against the Mexican government, the indigenous people were angry at the government. The landless rural workers wanted to make changes to the political system and felt the way they had previously been treated by the state merited a drastic change. The unfair politics and discrimination toward the indigenous people had rallied the people long before the changes to the constitution, and in fact has been a recurring cause in Mexico since the early 1900s.

As has been mentioned previously, the Mexican people have long had the capability and motivation to organize themselves in different manners to achieve an objective of social change. They have rallied together before to protest the unjust treatment of the peasant populations (e.g. the movements led by Emiliano Zapata beginning with the 1910 Revolution, and the rebellions of Rubén Jaramillo in Morelos in the 1930s-50s, and Lucio Cabañas and Genaro Vásquez in Guerrero in the 1960s-70s), and have become politically active in the hopes of making the changes they want to see in their country something legal and real. The indigenous majority

residing in the northeast half of Chiapas, where the movement was concentrated, had been marginalized prior to the 1994 struggle and marked as insurgents and rebels by their government for showing support for Zapatista causes. The government had reduced them to something less than human and subsequently ignored their wishes and pleas for a better life.

The second point of the political process theory states the people must experience deprivation and mistreatment, which is the case of the Mexican Zapatista movement. Eastern Chiapas where the movement is headquartered, has experienced the second greatest marginalization of any state in Mexico, preceded by Guerrero since 2000 (*Human Rights Centre "Tlachinollan"*). The living conditions in Chiapas varied from municipality to municipality, but overall they were still below the national average. Lack of sewage disposal, illiteracy and public health services (López, Sánchez-Pérez, Ruíz-Flores & Fuller, 1999) are only some of the problems citizens of this state have faced. These unfortunate circumstances have led them to be further marginalized from the government, because aid does not arrive to their location and the government does not expend energy attempting to establish a new system.

The case of the Mexican Zapatista movement is interesting in that there are several issues that overlap and comprise some of the foundation necessary for the heart of the movement. One of the major issues the EZLN cited was the continuous mistreatment and inherent abandonment by the system of an entire ethnic population, the indigenous in the part of the state in which the rebellion was primarily based (roughly the northeast half of the state of Chiapas, corresponding to the Diocese of San Cristóbal). The other main issue was the changes to Article 27 and the refusal by the government to give the people what they deemed to be a fair share of the land. These two factors often experience high levels of overlap because although the landless included

the indigenous in this region, they were not the only people who felt the same way about the redistribution of land.

The people no longer wanted to sit by as they were abused by the government, and thus decided to band together in an organized fashion to revolt. A revolt can either be violent or it can be based mostly on peaceful demonstrations and gatherings at large public centers. Most of the movements associated with the MST have a relatively non-violent history, although outlying examples certainly exist. The same case is true for the EZLN, who approached the desire for reform with non-violent behaviors initially. The rebellion of 1994, which ended in a ceasefire after 12 days as mentioned previously, sparked protests in Mexico City and other cities against the government's use of military repression in Chiapas. After their initial armed uprising, the Zapatistas strongly advocated the peaceful building of their autonomous collectives (explained further below) and appealing to other Mexican citizens to demand more democratic structures of government (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994). In so doing, they actively rejected the aid of the government as well as its authority; as stated previously, the government was seen as illegitimate in the eyes of the Zapatistas.

There has been one leader who has inspired the movement and kept it heading steadily in the same direction since 1994: Sub-Comandante Marcos (Sub-commander Marcos). The Mexican government states that the real name of Marcos is Rafael Sebastián Guillén Vicente; this has not been proven absolutely, and the family of Guillén Vicente has not supported the claim that their son is in fact Sub-commander Marcos. This young man developed the ideals of liberation during his schooling, and harbored ideas of freeing the oppressed since that time.

A statement could be made that Sub-commander Marcos is as prominent a revolutionary figure as Pancho Villa or Emiliano Zapata before him. The Zapatista rebellion did not call to arms when the indigenous peoples' rights were not recognized (even though the government had signed the San Andrés Accords in 1996 which recognized Indian people's autonomy) (González Casanova, 2005). Instead they created "rebel territories" and "autonomous municipalities" (González Casanova, 2005) which acted essentially like small self-governing communities of their own. People would be elected to fulfill several unpaid positions on a rotating basis (for anywhere from a week to a month), and if they failed to meet the requirements they would be replaced. Sub-commander Marcos is mostly in charge of the military wing, which has given way to the more autonomous communities described previously.

The way in which the autonomous communities cooperate with each other has been essential in the maintenance and expansion of the EZLN over the years; without this network of people and ideas the movement may not have had as strong of an impact on the lives of peasants and indigenous peoples in Chiapas. The third point in the political process theory states that there must be organizational strength in the movement to keep it afloat and keep it moving in the right direction. Members of the EZLN have applied several different tactics of social organizing and movement since their National Democratic Convention in 1994, but since they have adopted these models of autonomous collectives (previously mentioned), the grassroots decision-making process sustains the sense of belonging to an alternative collective political project (Stahler-Sholk, 2007).

Section C-1: *Venezuela (1989)*

When comparing the Caracazo exclusively to the three major points proposed by the PPT, it can be argued that the Caracazo could be considered a social movement. This mass uprising, and riot as it is more commonly known, exhibits similar circumstances and conditions to those shown in the other two movements described in this paper. No other example of collective action in Venezuela has been so violent in such a short amount of time as was the Caracazo of 1989. In a time of relative political stability and progress, the Venezuelan people rose up in large numbers to protest the increased prices in oil in one of the shortest riots in the history of the country. The president in power from 1984 to 1989, Jaime Lusinchi, was popular during the term of his presidency. But his term also had an increase in the external debt, highly populist policies and a rise in corruption and inflation; he was accused of corruption after leaving office and was succeeded by a member of his own party, Carlos Andrés Pérez.

Pérez was not new to the government as this was his second, non-sequential term as President of Venezuela. His first term, 1974-1979 was remarkably popular and was known as a very prosperous period for Venezuela. His second presidency, 1989-1993, was marred by increased inflation, two attempted coups, the Caracazo and his embezzlement of 250 million bolívares (at that time, \$1 = Bs. 37.88 for the month of February, approximately \$6.5 million). During the initial part of his second term in office, Pérez enforced a number of neoliberal, pro-market reforms he had strongly advocated against while he was running for office in 1988.

The apparent deceit of the government and the radical changes that led to the increase in oil prices were very important in the creation of the Caracazo. Although his first presidency had been highly popular with the people, these sudden changes and the fact that he immediately went back on his word regarding the reforms he planned to enforce, gave the people ample cause to

rise up against the government. The first of the three points established by the political process theory has to do with political opportunity: and in the case of Venezuela, the lies of the President and the increase of fuel costs (seen as capitulation to external pressure from the IMF, further delegitimizing the government) opened the gates for social organizing. This bears some semblance to the other two movements, because it was due to the influence of international financing institutions that some of the offending policies had to be enforced. In the cases of the EZLN, the most significant influence (as this paper explains) was the revision made to Article 27.7 of the Mexican Constitution (as part of the pressure to open the economy to the global market in preparation for NAFTA, which was signed in 1992 and took effect on January 1, 1994, the day chosen by the Zapatistas to start their rebellion); and in the case of Brazil's MST, the reforms former President Goulart made at the insistence of these institutions were a primary factor.

In the case of the MST, the regime had shifted from being one highly militarized and oppressive to one of democratic sentiment and ideals. The government that replaced the military rule allowed much more freedom of expression and promised to deal more with the request of the landless. In the case of the EZLN the initial revolution (1910-1917) that spurred change decades later, as well as the amendment to the constitution (Article 27.7) which revoked the rights previously established in the constitution (as part of a drastic shift in the political economy of Mexico in preparation for NAFTA) are both factors contributing to the creation of the EZLN and the timing of the 1994 uprising. The options previously available to the citizens who were attempting to communicate with the government their desire for redistribution of land were taken away, and the government refused further talks with independent peasant organizations. In

Caracas, although the decisions were made by the president of the time, the decisions were forced upon him by authorities that held the future of most economies in the world at that time in their hands: international financial institutions, such as the IMF.

The Caracazo has long been known as the most violent riot in the history of Venezuela, including the riots that have taken place over the last decade or so in opposition to the current system of government. Venezuelan citizens, once again students in particular, were outraged by the changes made to their daily lives by the government. Fuel costs being increased so dramatically overnight without a proper explanation, coupled with the fact that taxi and bus drivers took advantage of this rise by increasing their own costs despite what their unions told them, only further enraged the citizens.

Unlike many other social movements that have the time to sit and think about the injustices in the system before they rise up as a cohesive unit, the Caracazo took place over the course of two days. During the weekend of February 25-26, 1989, oil prices rose exponentially. The time it took for the prices to rise, only a few days, gave the citizens who organized on February 27 enough time to realize something was happening to their government that they did not approve of. They had a matter of days to coordinate what their actions would be, and how they would respond. This sense of injustice and mistreatment was not as powerful in the sense of physical oppression, but it was enough to spark a reaction from the politically aware student population and lower-middle class.

On the morning of February 27 students gathered at the union headquarters for transportation, and protested with the drivers of the cabs directly to request the prices be lowered to what they were only a few short days previously. When the drivers refused the requests of the

students, they worked together as a cohesive unit to block major intersections, burn tires in the middle of the streets and destroy shops owned by foreign shopkeepers. The protesters did not have enough time to spread everything through the newspaper or through radio announcements; everything was by word of mouth and traveled quickly throughout the country. This abrupt, violent reaction by the students as well as the urban middle and lower classes complies with the standards proposed by the political process theory, which state that there must be a sense of mistreatment by the population which then leads to collective action against the oppressive force.

Movements can vary in length from a few short days to years on end, and the three cases presented here are clear examples of this distinction. The MST and EZLN are much more similar in their time constraints because they have both lasted from the 1980s-1990s to the present. Both movements have lobbied for their rights either through specific members of the organization—Sub-commander Marcos, for instance, and Commander Esther in her historic speech to the Mexican Congress in 2001—or through representatives in the government who favor their cause, such as former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil. The MST, however, still interacts with the governments and the policies put down as opposed to creating an autonomous collective who renounces the government altogether and makes decisions based on what is best for the people.

The political interest for many of the rulers and members of the government is to remain in power and make concessions only when necessary. It was understandable for President Rousseff and former President Lula da Silva to seek support from the MST while they are running for office and take a different route once they are placed in power; their support doesn't exclusively stem from the lower-class population, and they must cater to those who provide the

largest amount of revenue for their campaigns while still keeping an open mind to land reform. Presidents are also faced with the challenge of dealing with the pressures of foreign investors and other international financing institutions, which could take funding away from Brazil and lead it to another economic crash. The Caracazo differed greatly in this area because the government didn't have time to negotiate with the people and give them different options and ways to express their displeasure with the government; the Caracazo was aggressive, violent and extremely sudden.

The third point established by the political process theory states there must also be organizational strength. As mentioned briefly above, Venezuelan citizens did not have an abundance of time to gather everyone over time and rally a sense of unity in favor of this movement; and yet the movement succeeded in organizing people all across the country to fight against the government for the sake of a common goal. Not only is this impressive on the scale of mobilizational strength of the people who relayed their stories and information to each other, it also speaks volumes about the sense of urgency everyone experienced. After all, this movement lasted a total of one week, and yet the number of people killed is unknown to this day.

As mentioned previously, both the MST and the EZLN have had a greater amount of time available to prepare themselves and to make their organizations more cohesive and functional. It would be unfair to group the Caracazo in with these two movements because the time available was extremely limited. If the Venezuelan population had been privy to the same amount of time the MST or the EZLN had, perhaps their techniques of collective action would have been less violent and framed in terms of a more coherent political agenda. Regardless of the time spent

putting together each of these organizations, the ways in which they organized and kept their structure are remarkable and unique to each.

The MST on one hand has a wider net with hundreds upon thousands of members in various parts of the country (many trained in the MST's national cadre school for political organizers) who gather after receiving information from a main source, and the EZLN has had time to expand upon their original membership until they created the autonomous communities described above, later organized into municipal and regional structures of self-governance. In the Venezuelan case, the people who participated in the Caracazo had very limited time to rally everyone together. Regardless of this short span of time, the Venezuelan students and other lower-class citizens were able to rise up in a matter of days and produce unprecedented violence to get their point across to the government. This was in part due to the fact that the initial people who started the riots were students and those from the middle class; these were the people most heavily affected by the fluctuation in prices. Aside from the students, there were also unions of taxi and bus workers who were initially to blame (for raising the prices of their fares when the price of oil went up unfairly) who later joined in the riots (Lopez-Maya, 2003).

Section D: *Repertoires of Contention*

At the forefront of research regarding the repertoires of contention is Charles Tilly, who coined the term during his research in the decades before his death. He states that “[my] most general arguments concerning repertoires run like this: in routinely operating regimes with relatively stable governments, strong, flexible repertoires prevail” (Tilly, 2006, pg. 43). With this statement Tilly refers to the foundations already in place in any given society which give rise to particular repertoires of contention. If the people are accustomed to meeting on Sundays at a

local market to barter for goods or to join and play music together, then it is likely they will use the existence of these pre-established meeting places as foundation for their new organizations. This means repertoires of contention are not just cultural in essence, because social protest is highly particular to each culture and their everyday practices, but it is also heavily influenced by the structure already in place in the society (Tilly, 2006).

This paper will not analyze the repertoires of contention as used throughout the entire history of the movement. Rather, it will focus in on one specific instance in each of the movements that proved to be the turning point that would guide action in the future for the people involved. In the cases of the MST and EZLN, the change was made years ago as an adaptation to the political opportunities available. Because the Caracazo was short lived when compared to these two movements, the changes examined during the course of this event took place between the weekend (when the prices first began to shift due to the economic policies implemented) and the first day of the violence.

According to the political process theory, there are three factors that must take place in order for a movement to occur. Among these is the political opportunity available to the movement which allows them to rise and become more prominent in the local political culture. In the case of the MST, the opening for this movement happened during the transition from a military dictatorship under Goulart to a democratically elected government under Neves. In this particular situation (of uncertain political liberalization), the altered political context consisted of the gradual change from a heavily militarized regime which forcefully halted the people from being public with their political opinions, to one that the people had put in power and felt a stronger connection to.

The MST and EZLN were the result of people taking ideas and concepts from organizations they had previously been a part of and joining them in to the foundations of these movements. In the case of the MST specifically, there were at least two movements recognized between the 1950s and 1960s that began the struggle for land in Brazil: the Peasant Leagues and the Landless Farmers' Movement mentioned above. These two movements were predecessors to the MST, and because the MST used a more frontal approach with the government and with the people, they were able to mobilize and gather supporters. As mentioned previously, it was the coalition of movements demanding democratization in the 1980s which ultimately led to the establishment of the PT as a political party. Once the PT won the presidency and put Lula da Silva in power, the relationship between the MST and the PT decreased in strength significantly.

After Lula da Silva was elected in 2002, with 61.27 percent of the vote (Vanden, 2008), he had to pacify the conservative capitalists as well as maintain the interests of the MST and its members in mind. Even though the MST supported Lula and his Workers' Party they did not seek to become part of the government, but rather continued their taking over of unused land and continued to push for a comprehensive program of land reform and wealth distribution (Vanden, 2008). The MST continued to take over unused land from large estates and public lands and construct their encampments in order to draw the attention of the government and additional supporters. The way in which the MST was able to mobilize thousands of people to take over a single area of land at the same time or arrange for hundreds of thousands of people to participate in a national march is a clear example of the organizational capabilities of this organization (Vanden, 2008).

The MST has had a continuous set of techniques it has used over time to keep its ultimate goal of land redistribution alive. They have used these organizational techniques to gather up resources for their families as well as to develop an alternative, sustainable model that puts people and humanity before greed and profit. The repertoires of contention the MST has employed throughout their active time have been immensely successful in this regard, and have proven to be highly motivational for movements in other parts of South America (such as Argentina) (Ward, 2006). This technique known as “Occupy. Produce. Resist.” has been employed widely and in various situations in order to take land that is not used, establish a community that can produce and maintain themselves, and subsequently resist the attempts by the government to force them to leave until a settlement is reached. The MST has also been a lead organization in an international coalition of peasant and small farmer groups called *Vía Campesina*.

Latin American communities have experienced a great deal of religious intervention and influence due to the religious practices of the European colonizers. Liberation theology (since the 1960s) and variations of Christianity have inspired the way movements are organized and put into motion, because religious leaders are held in high respect across a wide variety of communities. The Zapatista movement is heavily inspired by the Christian deacons who tended to communities, because the way they used their authority and status in the community was used to better serve their independent communities instead of beginning rivalries with each other. This led to the creation of a principle which has transferred to the Zapatistas since then: “mandar obedeciendo” (govern by obeying) (Harvey, 1998, pg. 75)

This way of thinking states that the final decision is made by the community as a whole, and not by the religious leaders who have the power to decide how a certain situation will come to pass. These positions the religious leaders of the time were given were not paid, and there was no reward other than helping your fellow citizens (Harvey, 1998), a norm that would influence the structures of governance within the Zapatista movement. It is crucial for a movement to be cohesive in nature in order for it to work properly, because if the citizens are fighting against each other about who gets to be heard and who gets to have the last say, then their pleas and ideas will never make it out of their communities and into the ears of the government (Harvey, 1998). The Zapatistas use these principles—originating partly in 1) the decentralized authority structure of “Christian Base Communities” inspired by Liberation Theology, 2) the self-governing ejido structures of Mexico’s incomplete agrarian reform, 3) indigenous traditions of community service, and 4) the necessities of survival in new communities of settlers on the agricultural frontier with relatively little presence of the state—and applied them to the autonomous communities they were building, in order to inspire both a sense of solidarity and to rally the citizens together under an effective form of participatory decision-making.

This Liberation Theology which influenced religious communities in Mexico and other countries in Latin America were applying since the 1960s called the Church (defined as the entire congregation, not just the hierarchy) into action, instead of the passivity they had historically preached. Liberation Theology in itself refers to the Church re-evaluating their positions and their traditional relationships with social change. This new way of thinking called for the church to play an active role in social change, rather than watching it pass by without interfering. It calls on the Church to help to meet the economic and social needs of the poor as

well as to assist in the liberation of those who are oppressed by a government authority. This was a dangerous position for religious leaders to take, because the military could locate these leaders and take their lives as an example for the rest of the community (Dressler, 2009).

Small groups banding together and squatting on national land while building up a community (with decentralized religious practices and governance structures) has been one of the primary ways the EZLN has protested non-violently. Given this, it would be sensible to assume the EZLN has been using these tactics since they first announced their presence publicly in 1994. However, if one were to examine the history of the Zapatista movement one would notice there is a discrepancy in the way they interact with the government. In the initial phase of their rebellion the EZLN resorted to violence, and had called to arms to make a statement to the Mexican government and the armed forces. When they chose to take up arms it was not with the intention of overthrowing the military, but rather it was to make it known that they were a force to be recognized by the government and they should be communicated with openly.

After this initial call to violence, ending in a ceasefire after 12 days with help and mediation from the Bishop of Chiapas, the Zapatistas formed the autonomous communities as a way to establish themselves more securely and decide what was best for their community. In creating these units, the Zapatistas effectively erased the importance of the government from their minds and acted exclusively on what they believed to be correct. This has to do with the fact that dealing with the government has never been a productive experience for many indigenous people in Chiapas, as they are usually ignored or deceived by the government.

This type of organizing where the government is disregarded is not necessarily new or rare in Latin American movements, and in fact is common when the people realize that dealing

with the government does not lead them in the direction they perceive to be best for them. This type of organizing is different from what movements in Mexico had used in the past (Villa and Zapata were more about overthrowing and replacing the government than dealing with it for change), but because of the changes in political tide the Zapatistas have had to adjust. They choose to maintain these autonomous collectives because they can hold their leaders (members of their own community who are chosen in open assemblies to serve for limited periods) accountable for expressing the views of the commune accurately. This system is much more reliable and efficient because if this person does not accomplish their assigned duties, they can be removed from power without a lengthy election process which may or may not be legitimate.

The EZLN does not engage in violent behaviors to make their point or get their way with the government. They use their autonomous communities as a direct way of resistance by making them their own form of government authority. These communities are self-sufficient because they provide education, security and the chance to have a voice to their members without the back-and-forth ways of the government. The government has reneged on promises made during peace talks with the Zapatistas (promising to give the indigenous populations the rights they were fighting for) time and time again, so the Zapatistas have made their communities their system of authority and governance to counteract this mistreatment. This is also the primary reason why the EZLN has not joined in with any party in specific over the years they have been active: they have forsaken the government and all political parties as unfair and illegitimate. Mexico's political history of 71 years of one-party dominance, followed by continued party corruption and dubious elections, is part of the political context that shaped this choice of movement strategies.

The Caracazo is a special case for a variety of reasons, as has been previously established during the course of this paper. The Caracazo was sudden, explosive and violent in a very short span of time, which makes covering the choice of repertoires of contention slightly more challenging than it is for the MST or the EZLN. However, a closer inspection of the progression of the movement reveals that there is a distinct change in the way the people respond to the government and vice versa. During the course of the weekend (following the economic decisions made by the president of the time) the protesting was mostly localized at the largest union for taxis and buses in central Caracas. However, on February 27th the collective action by the population exploded into the beginnings of the riot.

Students gathered on the streets to block major highways, light tires on fire, smash up privately owned shops and steal merchandise from them. The government did not respond initially, because they were trying to communicate with these “rioters” and assess what it is they could do to resolve the issue without the violence escalating (Maya, 2003). When these peaceful talks did not work with the crowds, the government sent in the military in full force to quiet the rebellion quickly. In this particular case, quieting it quickly also meant violently. The people stood up against the armed forces, but as they were civilians without any sort of weaponry other than what they could make at home, they were killed off by the military.

Rebellion and revolution are not completely foreign concepts to Venezuelan citizens, and the most recent set of protests recorded had taken place in 1935-1936 after the death of former President Juan Vicente Gómez. The Caracazo is not in the same political scale as Brazil and Mexico, in the sense that it is not considered a social movement as much as it is a riot by scholars. However when judging this movement by the three points of the political process

theory, it is clear it complies with all three standards just as the other movements. Although the Caracazo lasted a mere week as opposed to the MST and EZLN, which are still active today, it fits with both the definitions of a social movement and political process theory established above.

For the purpose of this paper it is important to note not only the result of the Caracazo on the people of Venezuela in the immediate aftermath, but also to examine how these repertoires of contention and ideas for uprisings have influenced the nature of social organizing since then. Unlike the MST, where the military government slowly waned and was replaced by a democratic system, the reaction of the government toward the people taking place in the Caracazo was extremely militarized. The President of the time and his system of government authorized soldiers to go into the streets and open fire on innocent civilians in order to quiet the rebellion quickly.

The discontent and distrust of the people toward the government after the Caracazo laid the groundwork for the movement that came shortly after. Taking the suffering and desperation of the people and twisting it to guide them from above against a previous group of governing elites is a standard formula of populist leaders. Such is the case with the two failed coups d'état led by Hugo Chávez in 1992. The discontent of the people was used as a platform for Chávez to launch his two failed coups, and although in most cases having failed your primary objective twice would be discouraging to the population, they relished the thought of someone standing up against a corrupt government and trying to replace it with something different (as evidenced by his subsequent electoral success).

Part VI: *Conclusion*

Social movements have been studied for years with various techniques and theories. Knowing the way in which people react to political opportunities or pressures, changes in government structure and continued mistreatment of a certain population, is crucial for understanding what comes next in each country. Periods of political crisis have given rise to some of the most extreme and long lasting movements in the history of Latin America, and the initial sparks of these movements have impacted the way the societies have adapted.

The purpose of this paper was to determine whether or not each of these three movements complied with the standards set forth by the political process theory, as well as to analyze what types of repertoires of contention were used by each independent movement. The *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (The Landless Rural Worker's Movement, MST) of Brazil accurately contains all three elements required for the fulfillment of the PPT. The MST in the 1980s fit the conditions of a system vulnerable to change (the radical transition from a military government to a democratic government), insurgent consciousness (the joining together of various movements in favor of democratization who then proceeded to pursue their own land reform), and organizational strength (in the way the MST organized hundreds of thousands of people to march into a city square or thousands of people to occupy unused land).

The *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (Zapatista Army of National Liberation, EZLN) in Mexico found several different vulnerabilities in the system which led to the opening the Zapatista movement took with their 1994 uprising. Several different opportunities were discussed in this paper (the Constitution of 1917, the amendment of Article 27 in 1994 and the political economy in the 1970s), and it is still unclear which one of these had the greatest impact

on the EZLN. It was argued during the course of this paper that the single greatest impact came from the amendment of Article 27 in 1994, due to the nature of the amendment and the autonomous communities the EZLN used. There was a high level of insurgent consciousness, since the continuous oppression of the indigenous population in Chiapas allowed for the EZLN to create their autonomous communes and, essentially, ignore the government and their decision-making. The EZLN branded the government as illegitimate, and used their organizational strength (with these communities) to push their movement forward and keep their demands at the forefront.

The Caracazo in Venezuela is the case with the most debate and greatest difference from the other two movements due to the short amount of time it was active (approximately a week). When breaking down the three essential steps of the political process theory as applied to the Caracazo, it was proven that the reforms made by President Carlos Andrés Pérez gave the people the necessary motivation to initiate riots against the increase in prices of oil. There were two different levels of insurgent consciousness during the length of this movement: first during the weekend of February 25-26, 1989 (when the people first rallied relatively nonviolently) and second during February 27-28 (when the government sent in the military to quiet the rebellion and thousands of people were killed on the streets). The level of organizational strength was a little different here, because although the concept of rebellion and the techniques used were relatively similar in most of the cities in Venezuela, there was no time to really plan out a tactical strike; everything was rushed, aggressive and sudden.

Using political process theory, and other social movement explanatory theories, is useful when trying to dissect any given social movement because by using them, one is able to pinpoint

specific events during the history of all of these movements and dissect them. Taking independent points within a movement helps to explain how they came to be, because without knowing the history of the movement and where it originated it is impossible to understand its significance for the society and political culture. In the case of the political process theory, subdividing these movements into three categories (1. Vulnerable system, 2. Insurgent consciousness, 3. Organizational strength) allowed this paper to analyze the fluidity of the movement and how it progressed from its initial stages all the way to the present day.

Because the purpose of this paper was not to ascertain whether or not different types of techniques work in certain situations, what was examined instead was the choices the different social groups made to resist their system of government. Future research would do a more detailed analysis of the way in which different cultures use the experience they have in their past (as well as the influences of other movements in the region) to select the way they protest against the system. An interesting question would be the relationship between the Caracazo and the revolution initiated by Hugo Chávez in Venezuela; the discontent expressed by the people and their abuse at the hands of the government could have been part of what started the fire, so to speak, for the Venezuelan coup in 1992.

Another interesting question that could be addressed with further research would be the discrepancy between the MST and the EZLN in terms of their organizing. The MST and the EZLN have both had negative dealings with the government since they first became active. However, the EZLN has completely renounced the government and claimed it illegitimate, whereas the MST is still technically affiliated with the movement-based PT party (now in power) even though the MST are not a part of the government. The different levels of intensity between

these two movements, and the way they approached similar objectives in completely different directions, would be interesting to analyze and explain. Whether or not there were underlying cultural factors, or whether they took their influence from movements in different countries, is a question further research would seek to answer.

Part VII: *Annexes*

Table 2- Relevant history of Brazil	
1979	General Joao Batista Figueredo began to serve as president and was the last General to rule the dictatorship which ran Brazil; he was responsible for the transition to democracy begun by his predecessor.
1984	Landless Rural Worker's Movement (MST) founded.
1985	Tancredo Neves becomes 1st elected president of Brazil since 1960s.
1986	Brazil began construction at Alcantra which forced 300 local families to move.
1988	New constitution was accepted which protected jobs of public workers and recognized Indian rights to their original lands; this new constitution established almost 600 reserves, although many of them were only ever on paper. It was also at this time that Indians came to be considered wards of the state and were denied full rights.
1989	In order to pressure for agrarian reform, landless farmer-workers stormed a farm.
1990	New plan with the goal of economic reforms and inflation-stabilization established.
1996	Police killed a number of workers who demanded land during a protest which blocked an Amazon highway. During this same time, local landowners also allegedly paid \$85,000 to Col. Pantoja (blamed for the killing of the workers) to eliminate 10 prominent leaders of the MST.
1997	A hidden camera provided evidence of police brutality; during this time 1500 peasants marched to Brasilia and were joined by approximately 25,000 trade-union members to demand land reform.
2005	Thousands of landless farmers organized under the MST swarmed into Brasilia to demand change.
Data retrieved from http://timelines.ws/countries/BRAZIL.HTML	

Table 3- Political Process Theory Skeleton (Brazil)	
1.	The system must be vulnerable a) Radical change from a military government to a democratic system.
2.	Insurgent consciousness b) The shift from oppression and suppression by the military government to a more relaxed democratic one allowed people the space to organize and express their interests.
3.	Organizational strength c) The movement remains active in the present, and has been able to gather thousands of people to organize in city squares and occupy unused land while fighting back when the government refuses to listen to their demands.

Table 4- Relevant history of Mexico	
1910	President Porfirio Diaz proclaimed martial law and arrested hundreds of people which sparked the Revolution of 1910. This revolution later became a Civil War that killed over one million people.
1917	The Constitution of 1917 was put in place.
1919	Emiliano Zapata, the leader of Mexican indigenous people during the time of the revolution, was assassinated. His influence would later lead to the creation of the EZLN.
1994	Due to the signing of NAFTA on January 1st and the edited Constitution (which took the article (27.7) which had promised land reparations to Mexican citizens) 2,000 Zapatista guerrillas under the leadership of one of the most prominent figures of the EZLN (Sub-Comandante Marcos) rose up in Chiapas against the government. The EZLN launched their full-scale rebellion against the Mexican government to demand better living conditions for Indian peasants.
1995	Mexican police fired upon a group of unarmed peasants, killing 17 and wounding 23. Initial reports indicated that the peasants were armed and dangerous, but raw video later released showed that the army had planted weapons on the corpses.
1996	500 protesters heading to an annual Zapata commemoration were fired upon by the police; this same year, Indian Zapatistas took over two radio stations to demand the release of a TV journalist because of his affiliation with the Zapatistas. Later in the year the Zapatista rebellion refused any more peace talks and accused the government of stalling the negotiations.
1997	Zapatista guerrillas were killed in clashes with the police in Chiapas. The police later dislodged hundreds of people squatting on a nearby farm.
1998	The governor of Chiapas ordered a thousand police officers into a small town where 141 people were arrested for conspiring and supporting the Zapatista rebels.
2000	President Vicente Fox is elected and promises to fight corruption and to re-start talks with the Zapatista rebels. Later this year Sub-Comandante Marcos agrees that he will begin talks with the Mexican government in 2001.
2001	100,000 Zapatista rebels fill into Mexico Square as Sub-Comandante Marcos led his 2,000 mile caravan to the city to lobby for Indian Rights. This same year the Zapatista leaders are allowed to speak before the Mexican Congress. However, due to the limited action taken by the government the Zapatista rebels broke off from the government once again.
Data retrieved from http://timelines.ws/countries/MEXICO_C.HTML	

Table 5- Political Process Theory Skeleton (Mexico)	
1.	The system must be vulnerable <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Arguments can be made as to which was the most important factor (The Constitution of 1917, the amendment of article 27 of this constitution in 1994, or the political economy in the 1970s)
2.	Insurgent consciousness <ol style="list-style-type: none"> b) The continuous oppression of the indigenous people in Chiapas and the lack of attention from the government sparked the creation of the Zapatista movement.
3.	Organizational strength <ol style="list-style-type: none"> c) Autonomous communities and Liberation Theology.

Table 6- Relevant history of Venezuela	
1987 - 1989	Venezuelan inflation rises from 16% to 40% during this time period under the rule of Lusinchi. Eventually inflation came to be 100%; this abrupt rise led to the formation of the Caracazo.
1988	Carlos Andrés Pérez is declared the winner of the presidential elections.
1989	President Pérez takes office and brings several reform plans which caused the costs of fuel to rise dramatically and sparked the Caracazo.
Feb. 25-26 1989	Oil prices rise overnight by astonishing numbers, and the transportation unions in Caracas take advantage of the rise in fuel to raise up the cost of fares for buses and taxis.
Feb. 27 1989	The initial stirrs of violence are seen on the streets of Caracas and later in the day the protests moved to cities on opposite ends of the country.
Feb. 28, 1989	The violence increases in larger numbers and spreads to more cities. By this time the protesting is no longer centered on transportation services; rather, by this time it shifts to include shop owners and major highways all over the country.
March 1-2, 1989	The violence persisted despite the Ministry of Interior attempting to communicate with the public the day before. Instead of the angry mobs that were previously attacking shops and institutions, now the crime became more limited to criminal gangs
March 3-4, 1989	During this time the violence slowly died down, and people became more concerned with burying the mass of dead left by the tragedy. Normal businesses opened again and the government began issuing programs to help clean the streets and restore life in the cities.
Data retrieved from http://timelines.ws/countries/VENEZUELA.HTML and Maya, 2003, p. 120-129	

Table 7- Political Process Theory Skeleton [Venezuela]
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The system must be vulnerable <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) The reforms of President Carlos Andrés Pérez and the elimination of subsidies that kept oil prices low provided the proper spark for the movement. 2. Insurgent consciousness <ol style="list-style-type: none"> b) Over the course of the weekend of February 25-26, the people came together and decided to strike on the 27th; this prompt response to the rise in prices was crucial. 3. Organizational strength <ol style="list-style-type: none"> c) People across the entire country gathered together with their fellow citizens and fought violently against the government.

Article 27.7 of the Political Constitution of the Mexican United States (1917 & 1994)

*Article 27, Section 7 of the Political Constitution of the Mexican United States
(Established in 1917, as translated by Dr. Antonio Rafael de la Cova)*

VII. The centers of population which, by law or in fact, possess a communal status shall have legal capacity to enjoy common possession of the lands, forests, and waters belonging to them or which have been or may be restored to them.

All questions, regardless of their origin, concerning the boundaries of communal lands, which are now pending or that may arise hereafter between two or more centers of population, are matters of federal jurisdiction. The Federal Executive shall take cognizance of such controversies and propose a solution to the interested parties. If the latter agree thereto, the proposal of the Executive shall take full effect as a final decision and shall be irrevocable; should they not be in conformity, the party or parties may appeal to the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation, without prejudice to immediate enforcement of the presidential proposal.

The law shall specify the brief procedure to which the settling of such controversies shall conform.

*Article 27, Section 7 of the Political Constitution of the Mexican United States
(Amended in 1994, as translated by Dr. Carlos Perez Vazquez)*

VII. The population of both rural lands and communal lands shall be legally recognized and their property over the lands shall be protected not only as settings for human settlements but also as lands used to perform productive activities.

Statutory law shall preserve the integrity of indigenous people's lands.

The law, having a respectful approach towards communal ways of life within rural lands and communities' shall aim to strengthen such ways of life and shall protect the lands used for human settlement. The law shall also regulate any other use for the lands, forests and communal waters as well as the promotion of any action which is deemed to be necessary in order to raise the population's living standards.

The law, taking into account both owners of rural land's decision and communities' decision on how they will sue their productive resources, shall regulate the way in which community members and owners of small pieces of land will be able to claim property rights over their parcels. Likewise, it shall enforce all due process of law's formalities under which both owners of small rural lands and communities' members can join their efforts with each other, with the State or with others in using their lands; the law shall authorize owners of common rural lands to transfer their property rights to other members of the community; it shall also establish guidelines to be followed in order to allow the Assembly of owners of common land in every single community to recognize an owner's domain over his parcel. The preferential rights to acquire a parcel established by the law shall be taken into account before a commercial transaction is completed.

Rural communities' individual members shall not be authorized to own more than 5% of the total extension of communal lands. Anyway, the individual ownership of parcels within communal lands shall obey the limits established at paragraph XV.

The general assembly-which will be organized and will have powers vested in it by the law-will be the directive organ of the rural or communal population. There will be a commissary of rural land or communal treasury who will be democratically elected under the law and who will both represent the rural land's population and execute the assembly's resolutions.

The devolution of lands, forests and waters to rural populations shall be made under the law.

Article 5.22-5.26 of the Brazilian Constitution (1998)

*Article 27, Section 22-26 of the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil
(Established in 1988, as translated by the staff of the Brazilian Senate)*

XXII. The right of property is guaranteed;

XXIII. Property shall fulfill its social function;

XXIV. The law shall establish the procedure for expropriation for public necessity or use, or for social interest, with fair and previous pecuniary compensation, except for the cases provided in this Constitution;

XXV. In case of imminent public danger, the competent authority may make use of private property, provided that, in case of damage, subsequent compensation is ensured to the owner;

XXVI. The small rural property, as defined by law, provided that it is exploited by the family, shall not be subject to attachment for the payment of debts incurred by reason of its productive activities, and the law shall establish the means to finance its development.

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