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John L. Hammond

ABSTRACT

For social movements, coverage in the media is a mixed blessing; but like many movements, the Brazilian Landless Farmworkers' Movement (MST) actively seeks it out. Treatment of the MST in the Brazilian media is analyzed here using the concept of frame. That treatment is determined by a complex interaction between media producers and movement activists. The frames adopted by those on each side influence public perception of the movement. This study identifies five such underlying frames (mostly in print media but with attention to a television soap opera based on the MST's activities) and examines the images of the movement that they present. Though the coverage often presents the MST in a favorable light, it does not necessarily encourage the goal of mobilization that the movement seeks to promote.

The Landless Farmworkers' Movement (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*, or MST) has been the most vigorous and prominent social movement in urban or rural Brazil in the last decade. During that time it has garnered significant media attention. Accordingly, it makes a good case study of how the interaction between social movements and the media determines media coverage and thus influences the public perception of the movement itself.

The MST organizes unemployed and landless farmworkers to take over idle, absentee-owned farmland. In pushing for land redistribution, the movement challenges big landowners, traditionally one of the most powerful groups in Brazilian politics, and attempts to provide a livelihood for poor farmworkers and small farmers. The MST emerged from a wave of land occupations in southern Brazil that began under the military dictatorship in the late 1970s. It was formally organized in 1984 and has grown in prominence especially since the mid-1990s.

The MST has sought out media coverage and succeeded in attracting it. Indeed, the two most important events of the movement's recent history can be seen as media events: the 1996 massacre of 19 demonstrating landless farmworkers by the military police in Eldorado do Carajás in the state of Pará, and the telenovela *O rei do gado* (The King of

Cattle), which was the featured telenovela on the TV Globo network for several months during 1996 and 1997.

Calling the Eldorado massacre a media event does not mean to imply that it was in any sense staged for the media; fortuitously, however, it was covered. The demonstrators were blocking a highway, and a television camera crew, caught in the traffic jam, filmed the police firing on them; the videotape was played repeatedly on nationwide television, bringing to this case the national attention that attacks on rural protesters normally do not receive.

The telenovela projected the situation of the landless to an even wider audience, and for a longer time. It was one of the most popular novelas of recent years. Telenovelas are a prominent Brazilian cultural phenomenon, as general accounts and academic analyses have recognized. This novela can be regarded as one of the most significant events in the MST's recent history because it offered a generally sympathetic portrayal (though the movement was not named) and reached well beyond the news-attentive public for several months. These two events and their repercussions are by themselves sufficient to warrant examination of the relationship between the MST and the media.

This paper will discuss several issues in the relationship between social movements and the news media: how a movement gets attention, what determines the way it is pictured, whether the picture presented corresponds to its own understanding of itself, and whether the attention serves the movement's goals. In examining these issues, the concept of frame is useful. This concept has been used to characterize the unarticulated assumptions with which journalists condition their presentation of a social movement and movement leaders' attempts to create a favorable image. The MST's efforts to get media coverage and the frames in which the media have presented it will be examined from this perspective. *O rei do gado*, in particular, is a special case. Although it was a soap opera, the show and the movement's reaction to it illustrated some of the same issues.

Several Brazilian scholars have offered analyses of media treatment of the MST. Most of them describe that treatment as unequivocally hostile—just as one would expect, if media coverage of the land reform movement reflects the common interests of big landowners and big capital (of which the major media are part). Research for this study found, on the contrary, that media treatment has been diverse. Yet even the sympathetic treatment that sometimes emerges does not necessarily present the movement in a light that furthers its political goals. It is not only the explicit content of the coverage that matters but its tone and its effect; news reports can be sympathetic and still fail to encourage the movement's effort to promote desired social change.

This study examines these issues from the standpoint of the movement's goals and tries to determine how much the movement can influence media treatment and secure coverage that will contribute to its efforts to recruit adherents, win over public opinion, and promote its long-term objectives. It should be noted at the outset that this study is limited to the content of media accounts, and makes no direct estimate of their effect on the public.

Media and Movements

Scholars of social movements in the United States have increasingly recognized the importance of media to movements—as have the movements themselves. In the 1990 update of his 1975 classic, *The Strategy of Social Protest*, William Gamson identifies the media as the "central battleground" for challenging groups (1990, 147). They seek coverage because the media can spread a group's message to a target public. That coverage, however, will not always present groups in a way that furthers their purposes. So fighting on the central battleground of the media offers movements both opportunities and dangers.

The "news," rather than being a clearly and previously defined object of which the media present a straightforward, unproblematic transcription, is a construction. It is constituted by its presentation in the media. To be reported as news, actions have to be translated into events, and then into a "story." Recognition of an issue as newsworthy, the selection of specific events and topics, the context explicitly presented or assumed, and the positive or negative judgment implied by a news report all emerge from media coverage rather than being inherent in behavior and reported stenographically.

A journalist writing a news report operates on the basis of background assumptions of knowledge and evaluation. Following Erving Goffman, scholars of the media have referred to that set of assumptions as the frame. Frames are "'schemata of interpretation' that enable individuals 'to locate, perceive, identify, and label' occurrences within their life space and the world at large. By rendering events or occurrences meaningful, frames function to organize experience and guide action" (Snow et al. 1986, 464, quoting Goffman 1974, 21).

Using a frame, a journalist can represent events as part of a coherent larger reality within which readers and viewers can comprehend them. The frame adopted in a media account provides the context and largely determines the way specific details are presented. Media analysis usually presents a frame as taken for granted by journalists, something they adopt relatively unreflectively and assume that their audience shares. The frame is an organizing device for analyzing the media's selectivity and approach to any topic; but its presence is

largely invisible. Even if journalists have criteria of objectivity for representing events,

> news frames are almost entirely implicit and taken for granted. They do not appear to either journalists or audience as social constructions but as primary attributes of events that reporters are merely reflecting. News frames make the world look natural. They determine what is selected, what is excluded, what is emphasized. In short, news presents a packaged world. (Gamson 1985, 618)

Media do a double framing job relevant to the present study: they frame issues and they frame movements. We will return to this point after discussing the role of a movement in framing itself and its issues.

Movements themselves participate in the framing process, offer their own frames, and attempt to influence the frame adopted in the media. The social movements literature generally regards frames as deliberately created, "strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action" (McAdam et al. 1996, 6). While the audiences of social movements (potential recruits, sympathizers, and the general public) are assumed to have preexisting frames within which they interpret the issues and the actions of social movements, movement leaders—as described by analysts of social movements—attempt to construct new frames to define problems and propose solutions, modify frames in the mind of the public, or at least make their message appear consonant with what they believe the dominant frame to be (Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Benford 1988, 199–204; Tarrow 1994, 122–29).

The concept of frames found its way into studies of the media and of social movements separately, though both follow Goffman's formulation. Frames were apparently first applied to the analysis of the news media by Gaye Tuchman (1978; compare Entman 1993; Gitlin 1980; Ryan 1991). The concept was introduced into the social movements literature by Gamson, Bruce Fireman, and Steven Rytina (1982). But social movement scholars adopted it more widely following its use by David Snow and his colleagues (1986; cf. Snow and Benford 1988, 1992; Benford and Snow 2000; Babb 1996; Ellingson 1995; Gerhards and Rucht 1992; Smith 1996; Tarrow 1994).

The two uses have converged as movement scholars have come to recognize the importance of the media to movements. Both media and movements frame the issues they present. They explain (or not) the complexities of an issue; they use language and highlight associations implying interpretations of events that seem to verify or challenge a movement's message; they invoke generally accepted values and portray the movement's message as being in accordance or dissonance with them.

Media and movement scholars usually give the term different emphases, however: for the former, frames are part of the background,

while the latter treat them as the product of active construction. Journalists are portrayed as taking frames for granted; similarly, they believe that their product—a news story in print or on the air—is a reflection of reality rather than a constitutive part. Movement leaders, on the other hand, deliberately attempt to create or alter frames just as they hope to influence the course of events. As Gamson and his colleagues point out, the concept of frame contains a useful tension between structure and agency (Gamson et al. 1992, 384).

Movements and media interact in the production of news about movements, making the media themselves an actor in social struggles (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993). Movements care about media coverage because most people not already active in a movement do not learn about it by direct experience. Many potential recruits and, even more important, potential sympathizers among the public become aware of movements and their issues primarily through the media.[1] Their attitude toward the movement and the issue, and their potential participation, may be determined largely by media presentations. These not only provide the information but create for them the frame within which they perceive and perhaps assimilate the movement's message.

The way the media frame (or ignore) a movement, then, can abet or impede the movement's achievement of its goal. The media will provide a frame both of the movement and of the problem the movement is trying to resolve. Most of the work on frames by movement scholars has addressed the framing of the problem a movement addresses; but as Benford and Snow point out, the first topic researched by scholars using the concept was how the mass media framed 1960s social movements (2000, 626). The distinction is important, because media framing of the issue can support or undercut the legitimacy of the movement's claim by the way it presents the issue, and media framing of the movement's actors can likewise affect the legitimacy of those actors to press the claim. This distinction is especially important in the case of the MST. The Brazilian media often present concentrated land ownership and rural poverty as serious problems while dismissing the movement's struggles to alleviate them.

Constructing the news about a movement and its issue is a process of collaborative, or not so collaborative, interaction between the media and the movement. The relation between the two is determined by their respective interests, which differ significantly. It is also highly asymmetric: movements need the media much more than the media need movements. This puts movements at a disadvantage when they struggle for media attention. Movement activists are an ambivalent partner, angling for coverage even as they condemn the "capitalist press" as a servant of bourgeois hegemony, necessarily distorting coverage.

Media, on the other hand, are under no a priori obligation to cover any given movement or issue, and competition for journalists' attention

is high. Media may appreciate movements because they provide good copy. On the other hand, the media have (or are likely to assume that they have) an obligation to present the official story, sanctioned by high-level public officials and vested sources whose position is assumed to guarantee their credibility (or at least their right to access). The media generally (though not inevitably) conform to official received opinion, seek to maintain an appearance of objectivity, and emphasize spectacle and newsworthiness. The economic interests of owners, reporters' unexamined assumptions, and newsgathering routines relying on official sources and regular contacts all mean that news reports are likely to reinforce viewpoints already taken for granted by public opinion.

By definition, the views that challengers want to promote, and even their demand for attention, go against the prevailing views. The factors governing news frames therefore work to exclude news about challengers and, even more, their views; it is especially unlikely that news stories will be framed in line with their perspectives. Indeed, most treatments of media frames argue that they foster ideological hegemony, distort movement messages, and marginalize or demonize dissent. Activists, therefore, rarely get what they would regard as fair and thorough coverage (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993, 116–17; Gitlin 1980; Ryan 1991; Tuchman 1978).

Still, the media are not impenetrable. They play a double role: agents of the reproduction of culture, they are also the site of symbolic contests over meaning. In the latter respect, they offer movements an opportunity. Like the movements themselves, media are in the business of interpreting events; they are open to contestation, and they offer movements an opportunity to intrude their frame into public discussion (Gamson and Meyer 1996, 287; Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993, 117).

Few movements offering a significant challenge can afford to ignore the media or disdain their attention. A movement seeking to attract the attention of the media, however, faces a difficult choice. Even if it succeeds at getting the media's attention, it has no guarantee that a story will present its own view of its cause or of its activists. News reports center on events and individuals and rarely present the background or structural causes of problems. They often present a movement through portraits of colorful and articulate individuals. Such portrayals can fail to convey the movement's message for at least three reasons: they may make the movement appear smaller than it is, involving only a few people; the more articulate or colorful activists—"media stars"—may not be representative of the constituency the movement claims to mobilize; and an account concentrating on individuals is not likely to address a problem's systemic causes (Ryan 1991, 98–105).

When the media present a new claimant on their attention, they are likely to seek out the bizarre and curious and emphasize the deviant

aspects of movement activity. Indeed, spectacular, disruptive performances are often the easiest way to offer "good copy" and get media attention, but the coverage may well produce hostility rather than sympathy. To challenge a dominant frame through the media, therefore, a movement must overcome an inherent inequality in access and risk frame distortion (Ryan 1991, 67). It faces

> an inescapable dilemma[:] . . . marginality and political irrelevance [or, if] it plays by conventional political rules in order to acquire an image of credibility, . . . its oppositional edge is blunted. (Gitlin 1980, 291)

One could add that marginality and political irrelevance can take two forms: the media may ignore a movement entirely, or they may trivialize it by emphasizing its deviant character rather than taking its action and its issues seriously.

Some movements have succeeded at using the media to convey their sense of injustice and at using disruptive actions to underline their contention that they are denied access to institutional channels. Even sympathetic coverage, however, will not always favor the movement's goal of mobilization of the public for its cause. If an issue gets covered in purely individual terms, or if its "stars" are presented as extraordinary individuals rather than as part of the movement's broad constituency, media accounts may not encourage potential adherents to identify with the cause or believe that it is potentially responsive to mobilization.

Because they are weaker participants in such cultural contests, movements cannot normally expect that their message will be reflected in the media's unquestioned frame, but can only hope that it will be presented at all; at best, they can hope that they will succeed in moving the discourse to a point where their frame is admitted as a contender and the dominant frame is recognized as susceptible to challenge (Ryan 1991, 70).

This summary—and this study—say little about the audience. Discussions of the relation of movements to the media tend to assume that what readers or viewers will take away from a news story can be inferred from the content. In reality, the reception cannot be assumed. Audience members decode messages; their interpretation may not correspond to the intended meaning (Hall 1980). This study of the MST and the media likewise examines only two vertices of the movement-media-audience triad.[2]

The MST: Background

The MST pursues land reform in the country with the second-highest concentration of land ownership in the world. Brazil has never had a significant agrarian reform, and the land question remains a major issue

economically, socially, and politically.[3] Though Brazil today is highly urban, agriculture remains significant, accounting for 40 percent of Brazil's exports and 25 percent of its employment. Living conditions are far worse in rural than in urban areas: 56 percent of the rural population, but 39 percent of the urban population, was below the poverty level in 1990, while the level of schooling averaged 2.6 and 5.9 years, respectively (Valdés and Wiens 1996, 7, 9, 25). The modernization of agriculture promoted by the military government after 1964 deprived many small farmers and agricultural day laborers of their livelihood. Poverty impelled migration to already overcrowded cities. Despite urbanization and industrial development, landowners still exercise enormous political power through control of local political machines, overrepresentation of rural areas in the national congress and state legislatures, and deployment of "goon squads" to intimidate those who challenge the landowners' control.

The 1985 agrarian reform law and the 1988 Constitution provide that farmland that is not being farmed productively can be declared "of social interest" and expropriated. Because the law is not routinely enforced, however, the MST organizes large groups of landless farmworkers to occupy farms and demand their expropriation. The movement also mounts steady pressure for a more general agrarian reform. It was the most consistent and active movement of opposition to the government of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, 1995–2003 (Hammond 1999a).

As the MST has grown in organization and activity since the early 1990s, it has become the most visible social movement in Brazil. Its growing prominence owes much to the weakening of the urban left; but it also coincides with the movement's expansion, beginning in 1995, into the Pontal do Paranapanema, a vast region of western São Paulo State that has been cleared for ranching only since the 1950s. Accelerating occupations in São Paulo, whose capital city is the largest in the country and one of two national media capitals, brought the movement increasing attention.

Though the law provides for expropriation, authorities generally do not decree it unless direct action forces their hand. In pursuit of its strategy to force agrarian reform authorities to expropriate and redistribute farmland, the MST seeks out sites that it believes are eligible for expropriation and recruits and organizes occupiers. An occupation can involve anywhere from 200 to 2,500 families. Some are recruited in the immediate vicinity and others in larger towns and cities. They meet regularly for a period of months, undergoing political education and preparation for the effort.

Once an occupation is decided on, several groups from various localities will be called to join it. Maintaining secrecy while planning

requires considerable effort. The occupation itself is an even more impressive feat, mobilizing thousands of people overnight, some of them from substantial distances, with rented buses and trucks borrowed from sympathetic organizations (*Veja* 1994; Paiero and Damatto 1996).

After an occupation, expropriation usually requires a long legal process. The landowner (or claimant) typically responds to an occupation by petitioning a local court for an order of restoration of possession (*reintegração de posse*).[4] Local courts, where the petition is heard in the first instance, are part of the local governing structure, which is notoriously favorable to landlords. They usually order the eviction of the occupiers, which may be carried out with greater or lesser force depending on negotiations between the occupiers and the police. Evictions can become major political events, in which not only the courts and police but landowners' organizations and politicians supporting each side become involved.

After eviction, the occupiers are sometimes resettled on land other than that which they originally occupied—state-owned or already expropriated for agrarian reform. More often, they erect an encampment of sheds or tents (*barracas*) somewhere in the vicinity, generally on the right-of-way of a public road, state-owned and therefore unlikely to provoke another eviction. Maintaining cohesion during the period of litigation is an essential task. Their occupying presence is crucial to asserting the moral force of their demand to have a particular property expropriated. (They do not always succeed. Some families leave during the occupation period.)

Joining a land occupation entails a high commitment, as occupiers leave their entire life behind and wait to find out whether their gamble will pay off. While camped out, they live on government food subsidies, donations from solidarity committees formed in unions and among other progressive urban dwellers, and their own labor on rented farmland or for wages. They risk waiting for years and getting nothing in the end. They also risk repression. But if they win title to the land, the payoff is high.

Occupiers seek an inspection by the Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) to determine whether a property is expropriable.[5] If it is, compensation (*indenização*) for the owner is set. The owner may then go to court to challenge the expropriation or, more commonly, the value of the compensation. Some owners are happy to be expropriated; they may be able to negotiate a price better than the market value of the land (Petry 1997, 35; SEJUP 1997b).

The MST often wins; that is, occupations usually lead to expropriation, evidently because the MST is careful to occupy land that appears to be eligible under the law. The law establishes that once a property is expropriated, it will be redistributed to people meeting certain criteria of need. Occupiers have no formal standing in the process that deter-

mines whether the property is expropriated; legally that is a matter between the owner and the INCRA. When an occupied property is expropriated, however, it is normally turned over to the occupiers.

Properties thus expropriated and redistributed are known as *assentamentos* (settlements). Once in possession of an *assentamento*, the occupiers turn it into a productive farm, which they usually work by some combination of individual and collective production. They must create not only a farm enterprise but a community. This process begins during the preparation for an occupation and continues in the camps and then in the legalized *assentamentos*. The MST gives high priority to education. The landless are generally poorly educated and often illiterate. The movement is committed to the education of children and adults, and has created schools in many of its camps and *assentamentos*. Its elementary education programs were recognized by UNICEF in 1993 (Caldart 1997; MST n.d.).

Landowners retaliate against occupations. In much of rural Brazil, landowners still enjoy local political monopolies, and they target occupations for violence, contracting paramilitary groups or individual hired guns (*jagunços* and *pistoleiros*) directly, or enlisting the official forces of order. Violence is most likely to be directed against occupiers at the time of initial occupation or eviction.

Violence is pervasive in the life of Brazil's rural poor. The Catholic Church's Pastoral Land Commission reports that 1,190 squatters, land occupiers, farmworkers' union members, and their defenders were killed in occupations and other land conflicts between 1985 and 2000 (Comissão Pastoral da Terra 2000). These attacks rarely get much attention. The worst single incident was the massacre at Eldorado do Carajás. On April 17, 1996, 2,000 farmworkers who were occupying the 5,900-hectare Macaxeira ranch blocked a highway to demand that the government expropriate the farm. Military police fired on them, killing 19. The number of victims and, even more important, the nationwide broadcast of the videotape of the massacre guaranteed public attention. More than 150 military police who had participated in the operation faced charges in the massacre, but the trials were delayed for six years through a complicated series of legal maneuvers, convictions, and reversals. Of the 149 military police eventually tried in 2002, only the two commanding officers were ultimately convicted (Hammond 1999b; Amnesty International 2002).

The Movement's Media Politics

Media ownership in Brazil, like land ownership, is highly concentrated, and big agriculture and big capital have been allied both traditionally and since the military dictatorship. The media are dominated by one

firm, the Globo network, which includes the Globo television network; the country's largest-circulation daily paper, Rio-based *O Globo*; and interests in publishing, finance, insurance, shopping centers, and cattle ranches. TV Globo reaches almost the entire country through its affiliated local stations (some owned by the network, some independent). Roberto Marinho is its principal owner. With the newspaper as a base, Marinho built up the television empire by acquiring station licenses through the favoritism of the military government. The officers' rule coincided with the spread of television, and they saw it as a means to national integration (Amaral and Guimarães 1994; Page 1995, 155–76).

TV Globo has competitors, but none of the other networks has ever had the same political pull or amassed the same number of affiliates. The network has remained by far the most important medium for both news and entertainment, partly because of the high quality of its entertainment programming, especially the telenovelas. Its news coverage is highly influential and unabashedly partisan, usually—though with exceptions—favoring conservative candidates and positions. In the first three presidential elections after democratization (1989, 1994, and 1998), it strongly opposed the progressive candidacy of the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT, Workers' Party). Some observers have found its influence decisive, especially in the first democratic election in 1989 (Amaral and Guimarães 1994; Lima 1993, 102–7; Porto 2001).

This monopoly is reproduced at the state level: in most state capitals, one person owns the leading newspaper and the leading television station (usually affiliated with the Globo network). The owner often is also a dominant local politician (Amaral and Guimarães 1994, 30–32).

It is not surprising that a media system so concentrated in the hands of the wealthy and so tied into the dominant political system often lives up to the stereotype of the capitalist press, hostile to progressive movements from below. Nevertheless, the MST has found some favorable representation in the media. The MST has attempted to cultivate the media and influence the way it is framed; it has a conscious media strategy, which has evolved over the life of the movement. During its first decade, it maintained a certain isolation both from the media and from the rest of the political left. Since the early 1990s, it has reversed itself and more deliberately has sought to establish good relations with the media. It produces many internal publications: its own newspaper and magazine, directed mainly at members; educational materials for use in its schools; and low-power radio stations for the communities it has created on its occupied farms. A 1995 occupation was celebrated as the first to use cell phones and to issue daily reports on the Internet—two important media of internal communication, because occupiers, camped out waiting resolution of their claims, did not always have up-to-date reports on negotiations (Berger 1998, 100).

The MST has also cultivated the mass media. An internal document, "For an MST Communication Policy," of March 1995, demonstrates the movement's concern to mobilize the media to motivate militants and to broadcast to the public its accomplishments, especially in the areas of production and education. Christa Berger, who discusses the document, does not say in what level of the movement it originated, but internal evidence suggests that it is from the state of Rio Grande do Sul.[6] The document envisions providing technical, administrative, and organizational support to the media effort but clearly dictates that it should remain subordinate to political criteria. At the same time, the document recognizes that the MST does not always convey its message successfully, and some militants say that much more must be done for the communication policy to "go beyond being on paper" (Berger 1998, 111–16).

The movement's concern for its relations with the media is also demonstrated by a letter written by MST leader Gilmar Mauro to the national Journalists' Congress, which met a few days after the Eldorado massacre. Mauro acknowledged the importance of journalists' work and congratulated the news team that captured the event on videotape (Berger 1998, 197).

Although the MST consciously attempts to influence the media, the media remain secondary in the movement's overall strategy. The principal weapon in its arsenal remains direct action to occupy farmland, on the assumption that only thereby can it force the government to uphold its own laws and provide land to the landless. Interviewed by a media trade journal about the MST's view of its relation to the media, MST national coordinator João Pedro Stédile said,

> What I can say, honestly, with open heart, is that the MST never does mass actions for the sake of attracting the press. Our goal is to do mass actions to create pressure for concrete measures to resolve the problems. (Imprensa 1998, 23)

Yet Zander Navarro (1997, 120) has suggested that the massive occupation campaign in the Pontal do Paranapanema was undertaken with an eye to the media. The region was a target of opportunity because many ranchers had grabbed huge tracts of land illegally, and their lack of valid titles made them subject to expropriation. But large-scale actions there could also count on major media attention because, even though most of the audience for the São Paulo daily papers and television stations (along with the majority of the state's population) is in or near the city, the media regularly cover the rest of the state with more attention than they would give to events in the hinterland of another state. The movement's rise in public consciousness in the 1990s, as already noted, largely coincides with the wave of occupations in the Pontal.

Most coverage of the MST falls within the newsgatherers' routine of covering the spectacular event. The great majority of news items report land occupations. Because occupations number in the hundreds, however, their news value is minimal unless they have some novel element or the prospect of violence. It is violence, or the possibility of violence, that dominates coverage of the movement, Berger claims, especially if the occupiers can be described as "armed"—which, as Berger shows, usually means that they have armed themselves with shovels and sickles, adopting a "defensive-provocative" stance. According to her study of coverage by the Porto Alegre daily *Zero Hora*,

> For the newspaper, the Movement belongs in the "conflicts" section and therefore should correspond to the principle that it mounts "conflicts at any cost," guaranteeing its place in the [newspaper's] internal news hierarchy. . . . Political conflict does not produce a headline and generates little news; institutional conflict is news and, perhaps, a headline, but it produces few images; armed conflict is guaranteed to be news, headline, front page, and deserves a photograph. (Berger 1998, 120–21)

Movement activists are resentful that the underlying problems—maldistribution of farmland, idle land stockpiled by wealthy owners, and farmworkers' poverty—are never news, and that the media pay scant attention to what the MST regards as its most important accomplishments: production and education.

Even so, the MST's frequent appearances in the media are a sign of its success. So is the frequency with which movement leaders are quoted. Media analysts show that journalists tend to rely on regular sources; and being treated as a creditable source is itself a sign of standing (Ryan 1991; Sigal 1973, 123–28; Tuchman 1978). It is striking to find MST national coordinator Stédile quoted in a *New York Times* article on the privatization of nationally owned Brazilian firms (Rohter 1999, C2), in a story that appeared in the business section and was not about agrarian reform (though, to be sure, it was written just days after a major demonstration in Brasília of which the MST was the chief organizer, though agrarian reform was not its central theme). Stédile was quoted as if he were an ordinary cabinet minister, say, or bank president.

The MST emphasizes the need to win public opinion, and has had some success. MST leaders like to say that the battle for agrarian reform will be won in the cities. According to a poll taken by the Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics (IBOPE) in March 1997, 52 percent of respondents were generally favorable to the MST, and 85 percent approved of land occupations as long as they were not violent (SEJUP 1997a).

The movement has also worked to forge alliances with other movements. It has attracted attention, support, and sometimes full-time mili-

tancy from young activists, urban and, in some cases, university-educated, who staff its offices and even join its occupations. It played a leading role in organizing opposition to the neoliberal policies of the Cardoso government. In 1997, on the first anniversary of the Eldorado massacre, it sponsored a thousand-kilometer march to Brasília from several points around the country and won ample participation from a broad segment of Brazil's left. In 1998 and 1999 it was at the center of organizing major countrywide mobilizations (the March for Brazil and the March of the Excluded) that lasted several weeks, and it swelled the ranks of demonstrations in opposition to the privatization of state firms (notably the telephone system in 1998). It has taken the lead in organizing Brazilian opposition to the cultivation of genetically modified crops, and in 2001 occupied an experimental farm where, the MST charged, the Monsanto Corporation was experimenting with genetically modified seeds.

The MST's centrality in organizing major demonstrations is not the only sign of its leadership role in this array of protest movements. Its very name has become a trope for movements against social exclusion. The name in Portuguese, *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*, means "movement of rural workers without land," and people refer to the movement and its adherents in abbreviated form as *os sem terra*, those without land. The word *sem* (without) has become part of the names of other movements, such as the homeless (*sem teto*, literally, without roof). All these groups, along with the MST, are collectively referred to as *os sem*, "the withouts" (Fernandes 2000, 227; Gohn 2000, 6).

Pursuit of these alliances, however, has sometimes led to the sort of spectacular gesture that gets coverage but may divert attention from the movement's message. Three examples will bear this out. In 1998, a severe drought struck northeast Brazil, the poorest section of the country and one frequently plagued by drought. Many poor people were on the brink of starvation; some looted grocery stores and their delivery trucks for food. While the MST disputed assertions that it was behind the looting, it seems clear that it played some role, and the press tended to blame it completely. In April 2000, the five hundredth anniversary of the Portuguese discovery of Brazil, the MST organized indigenous and other protesters; police kept the demonstrators away from the official commemoration and arrested more than one hundred. In January 2001, the MST organized delegates to the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre for the Monsanto occupation. Foreigners attending the forum joined them, including José Bové, the French farmer and leader of the antiglobalization protest that resulted in the destruction of a McDonald's restaurant in France in 1999.

These incidents drew some of the most consistently negative coverage the MST has received in Brazilian newspapers. Maria da Glória

Gohn argues that the incidents allowed the press to portray the MST as the "source and origin of violence . . . to create fear and insecurity in public opinion" (2000, 24). The temptation to stage spectacular events in order to guarantee coverage and draw in followers from a broad array of social movements can produce reporting that is likely to create an unfavorable image among the public at large.

Framing the MST

This study analyzed the framing of the MST in Brazilian newspapers based on a systematic reading of online editions of two of the country's major dailies, *Estado de São Paulo* and *Folha de São Paulo*, between 1997 and 2001. It also drew on less systematic readings of other newspapers and newsweeklies and on Berger's study of *Zero Hora*, and examined in detail the movement's representation in the telenovela *O rei do gado*. The study relied primarily on print sources because, while television undoubtedly has greater reach and influence among the population at large, this researcher unfortunately had no regular access to either television newscasts or dramas for close analysis.

News reports of a single-issue movement like the MST frame two distinct objects: the movement itself and the issue it addresses. The movement hopes to achieve coverage that will advance its policy goals and ratify its status as the privileged interlocutor for those goals. The MST can reasonably claim that it has won the battle to frame its main issue, the land question, in the Brazilian media. The media (even, sometimes, the provincial press owned by local elites) generally portray agrarian reform as a necessity and the struggle for it as just. They generally acknowledge the concentration of land ownership and the practices that have fostered it. They present landowners as politically reactionary, often violent, and economically inefficient, underproducing on their land and failing to contribute to the national economy. During the 1980s, especially during the writing of the 1988 Constitution, landowners organized in the Rural Democratic Union (UDR) succeeded in cultivating a favorable image of themselves, in league with small farmowners, as "rural producers" (Payne 2000, 140). The perception of the justice of the struggle has been heightened in recent years by two conjunctural factors: the severity of repression (especially the Eldorado massacre) and the 1988 drought in the Northeast.

It is entirely possible, however, to frame the land question by acknowledging the validity of the call for land reform and still dismiss the movement itself. Some sources that acknowledge the justice of the cause nevertheless argue that the means the MST uses invalidate its claim to legitimacy. Marking the end of a widely reported 1993 land occupation in Rio Grande do Sul, *Zero Hora* editorialized,

> There is no one with a minimal level of information who does not support agrarian reform in this country. . . . On the other hand, the simple distribution of land does not represent agrarian reform. . . . It is appropriate that the leaders of the MST leave aside the passion of ideological positions. (Quoted in Berger 1998, 170)

Or as Jarbas Passarinho, former minister of justice, wrote in an opinion column in *Estado de São Paulo*,

> Of course if someone asked me whether I defend agrarian reform, I would answer yes without blinking. But, [if they asked] whether I would approve an invasion, I would not give the same answer. Neither would the respondents [in a survey in which 52 percent said they approved of the MST]. Their support depended on there being no violence. Now, isn't an invasion in itself violent? (Passarinho 1997)

Thus an apparent acceptance of the movement's goals can be turned against the movement itself.

The frames found in the coverage of the MST reflect differing positions on its demand for agrarian reform and the tactics it uses to promote that demand. This study identified five frames in current use for the MST as a movement, each one reflected in media accounts, and some of them also in academic research. These frames were derived inductively and, as noted, primarily from print sources.

Four of these frames can be considered sympathetic in some degree. Though they overlap somewhat, each is relatively homogeneous, and they are relatively distinct. They are targeted to different audiences. Each of them emerges in public discourse, and most are also reflected in academic production about the movement. The first two correspond in some degree to the image the movement presents of itself to internal and external audiences, respectively.[7]

1. "Militant movement." The MST applies the "militant movement" frame to itself for internal consumption. Promoted by the leadership, in movement schools, and in political education in the camps and *assentamentos* is a view of a militant revolutionary movement using a novel strategy. Within this frame, the movement produces T-shirts and posters with images of Che Guevara and invokes a Brazilian past of agrarian resistance in the person of Zumbi, the eighteenth-century leader of the Palmares *quilombo*, a settlement of escaped slaves, and the rural revolts of Canudos and the Contestado at the turn of the twentieth century. Though the MST does not propose armed struggle now or for the future, the presence of these military images is striking. The U.S. sociologist James Petras (1997) presents a similar view of the MST.

2. "Solution to national problems." For public consumption, the movement promotes a pragmatic image of itself: the MST brings idle farmland into production and thereby provides work for large numbers

of unemployed rural workers, increases the food supply, and stems the flow of urban migrants.[8] It gives people the chance to live from their own productive labor; it also works very hard to educate the illiterate peasants and their children. This frame emphasizes the violent repression suffered by land occupiers at the hands of the state and landowners, whose blind self-interest causes them to obstruct the logical and virtually cost-free solution of major social problems.

One might call this the "salt of the earth" frame, because it portrays the rural character as reflecting the cleanliness and wholesomeness of the countryside, in striking contrast to the evils of city life. For public consumption, however, the emphasis is on the outcome: MST *assentamentos* practice low-cost and ecologically sustainable agriculture to produce food instead of export crops and educated children instead of beggars and delinquents. This frame, like the first, appears in the MST's own literature and in the work of supporters, such as photographer Sebastião Salgado (1997a; compare Salgado 1997b), but also in the media addressed to the general public. The (relatively rare) media accounts of the *assentamentos* themselves give a generally favorable picture, selecting for coverage those that are highly productive rather than the many foundering *assentamentos.*

Related to this frame are two interpretations present in the treatment of the MST by many Brazilian social scientists, in terms similar to those used in the analysis of urban social movements: citizenship and identity politics. The idea of citizenship, widely diffused in the contemporary discourse of popular movements in Latin America, entails both benefits and the guarantee that as a matter of right those benefits cannot be taken away; but it also emphasizes the exercise of citizenship by agents to secure recognition of their rights. The MST enables its adherents to exercise citizenship, in this view, by making possible their participation, from which their poverty, illiteracy, and subjection to powerful landlords have excluded them (Navarro 1994; Nunes 1993). Many sources describe the personal transformation of movement activists as a result of their participation. They achieve dignity and claim rights, civil, political, economic, and social (Gaiger 1987; Lisboa 1988; Sorj 1998, 38–39).

Scholars who interpret the MST in terms of identity politics say that it and allied political movements of poor cultivators have labored to construct an identity as "rural worker," superseding the differences that separate the small landowner, tenant, day laborer (*bóia fria*), and agricultural producers with other forms of property relationship (Gaiger 1987, 28; Gohn 2000, 3; Houtzager 1997, 127–30, 1998, 12; Medeiros 2001).

These two academic views can be placed in the "solution to national problems" frame because both portray the MST as serving consensually recognized goals of national institution building and agricultural production, downplaying the conflictual element of the struggle

against landowners to achieve agrarian reform, which is a central element of the MST's self-image.

3. "Pathetic creatures." This frame is sympathetic, but ambiguously. Also addressed to public opinion, it is not found in the discourse of the movement itself. While it applauds the movement for solving the problems of the rural poor, it nevertheless portrays them as backward and ignorant—in a word, hicks. An article in the newsweekly *Veja* introducing the report on the march to Brasília in April 1997, on the first anniversary of the Eldorado massacre, begins this way:

> In the age of the jet plane, they go on foot. When the economy is globalizing, their ideal is a piece of land with a fence, a cow in the pasture, and a vegetable garden behind the house. The world moves at the speed of computers and high technology, and they want to work the land, spade in hand. The kids are dancing to rock, and the anthem of the Movement of Landless Farmworkers, MST, sings of a "workers' and peasants'" homeland. Representing an archaic Brazil, barefoot, rotten teeth, vermin under the skin and little schooling, the landless invade properties, disrespect the law, and confront the police. They have died and killed in these conflicts. They look a bit like the devout followers of the messianic Antônio Conselheiro (Veja 1997, 34).[9]

The pathetic creatures frame suggests that the MST has its heart in the right place but that its concrete programs are inadequate for contemporary Brazilian reality. The frame assumes that in a modern society, where agriculture requires capitalist organization and enterprise to be adequately productive, and for all the MST's good intentions, agrarian reform is not a realistic solution. Francisco Graziano Neto, whom Cardoso appointed president of INCRA, and sociologist Bernardo Sorj make this claim more explicit. Given that there is no real possibility for agrarian reform or for a viable living derived from agrarian property, they argue, those who call for it should instead work to improve their living conditions (Graziano Neto 1998; Sorj 1998).

The implication for agrarian policy is that the issues that need to be addressed are those of employment and "access to citizenship by the unemployed," problems which can best be solved by promoting education, according to Sorj (1998, 39), or with unemployment insurance for rural workers, according to Graziano (1998, 168). This frame implicitly buys into the conservative modernization of Brazilian agriculture promoted by the military dictatorship, which has been expelling peasants from the land since the 1960s. It accepts the claim that only high-input, high-productivity agriculture uses the land appropriately, in contrast to the low-cost agriculture the MST claims to favor. (It of course begs the question of whether the concentration of landholding actually favors high-productivity land use rather than speculation and leaving farmland idle.)

4. "Guerrilla capitalism." The fourth sympathetic frame finds its clearest expression in, of all places, the Latin American edition of *Time* magazine, January 1998. The cover story on the MST features *assentamentos* that are notably successful in business, selling their farm goods to multinational corporations to market under nationwide brand names and diversifying from agriculture to such activities as a clothing factory and a distillery. In "guerrilla capitalism" (the magazine's phrase), revolutionary ideology is watered down, an exercise in nostalgia; the Che posters on display in many *assentamentos* are "mere decor"; and the movement, though "stridently socialist in its public pronouncements, . . . has also become a force for corporate entrepreneurship" (Padgett 1998).[10]

5. "Demonization." The final frame presents the MST as a lawbreaker and provoker of violence that prevents authorities from peacefully carrying out their responsibility to provide land for the landless. The movement is, by definition, lawless. It does not "occupy" land; it "invades" land. The column by former Minister of Justice Passarinho (1997) quoted above is an example.

The demons of this frame are the demons of old left politics: MST leaders, beholden to an outmoded doctrine supporting centralist socialism, struggle for power for themselves under the guise of serving the interests of the poor. An invidious distinction between leaders and landless farmworkers is a common theme in news reports (Voese 1998). MST leader Stédile was shown on the cover of *Veja* in June 1998, against a bright red background, in a photograph that can only be described as Mephistophelean; the caption read, "*A esquerda com raiva*" (the enraged left). The movement plays a "double game," the cover story says, talking moderately for public consumption but presenting views in its private circles that the magazine does not hesitate to qualify as "out of date" (*anacrónico*). The movement refuses to contemplate any decentralization of agrarian reform because that would mean giving land "directly [to] all those who want to enter in the distribution program, without having the MST leadership as intermediaries" (Petry and Oinegue 1998, 47). The article appeared shortly after the wave of looting in response to the drought in the Northeast, which some commentators blamed on the MST.

The demonization frame levels two major accusations: that the movement is simultaneously out of touch with contemporary reality and diabolically clever in its tactics. Though these charges might seem contradictory, they appear side by side in the same accounts. On the one hand, the movement's leaders are captives of an ideology that has been superseded by history; on the other hand, they are clever manipulators of the masses who are their foot soldiers in the battles to conquer land.

There are elements of overlap among the frames. The problem-solving frame and the guerrilla capitalist frame are strikingly similar in

emphasizing the productive potential of *assentamentos*. The demonization frame and the pathetic creatures frame also have much in common: both view the movement's members as objects of pity, vulnerable to manipulation by opportunistic leaders. Both depict the movement as following a hopelessly outdated doctrine and the occupiers as pitiful, if willing, victims of manipulation.

Of the five, the demonization frame appears most frequently, probably accounting for more newspaper reports than the other four combined. It is also, evidently, the most clearly hostile to the movement. The presence of four frames that are, in varying degrees, sympathetic, by contrast, demonstrates that the movement has been able to achieve some coverage favorable to its goals and its methods of operation. But the overlap among the frames shows that frames with similar content can be enlisted to serve different purposes. The same elements can be presented to generate sympathy or hostility.

The degree of sympathy or hostility a frame shows for the movement may not, however, be the most important one for considering the relevance of frames to media goals. What Gamson and Modigliani say about public opinion analysis also applies to the analysis of media accounts: they criticize the methodological tradition of public opinion analysis because it "assumes that the task is to array relevant publics on a pro-con dimension." The proper task, they argue, is

> to make the underlying schemata visible. . . . Only by methods that elicit more of the interpretive process will we be able to see the extent to which different media packages have become part of the public's tool kit in making sense of the world of public affairs. (Gamson and Modigliani 1989, 36)

The differences in these frames' underlying schemata reveal that even those that are ostensibly sympathetic do not necessarily offer interpretations that are likely to promote the movement's goals. Gamson proposes that a successful collective action frame must integrate elements of injustice, agency, and identity (1992, 31–109). To the extent that a frame encourages a movement's potential adherents to feel that they are being treated unjustly, that they have the capacity to better their situation, and that they belong to a collectivity sharing the sense of injustice and agency and opposed to another collectivity that stands in their way, they will mobilize against the injustice.

Some of these five frames clearly are more likely to have these effects than others. The pathetic creatures frame pictures the potential beneficiaries of land occupations as having limited competence; they are objects of pity rather than possessors of rights. The guerrilla capitalism frame implies that movement members' problems are most amenable to market-based solutions rather than political ones. Such

frames will not inspire mobilization. Nor will a frame that is not patronizing but that idealizes the landless, as do the telenovela *O rei do gado* and some of the ostensibly sympathetic coverage.

The MST on the Home Screen

Broadcast on TV Globo in the prime eight o'clock time slot in 1996 and 1997, the telenovela *O rei do gado* presented land occupiers in a highly sympathetic light, which combined elements of the "solution to national problems" and "pathetic creatures" frames. It is a clear example of a treatment that, while favorable, did not entirely project the image the movement holds of itself. The reaction in the movement was ambivalent, although in the end the movement welcomed the show.

The novela illustrates in a peculiar way some of the noteworthy issues in the relation of social movements and the media. Though it was clearly fictional, not a news story, it surely garnered for the MST more attention than any news story (and even, probably, more than all the news coverage during the months in which it ran). In addition, it permitted multiple interpretations, just as do news reports that claim to represent straightforward accounts of reality. The show became a news event in itself, moreover, and its coverage in the media inevitably reflected attitudes toward the movement.

For a topic to be featured as the theme of a telenovela represents the pinnacle of recognition in Brazilian popular culture. The importance of telenovelas in Brazilian politics and everyday life cannot be overestimated. They are the most widely viewed shows on Brazilian television. A typical novela runs nightly for several months. At any time, the current novela is a frequent topic of daily conversation. Many novelas address social themes and ratify the importance of issues. In addition, television actors, writers, and production crews are reputed to be highly progressive, often lending their names to political causes.

Alma Guillermoprieto, former Latin American correspondent for the *New Yorker*, has characterized the presentation of public issues in telenovelas thus:

> On the news, executives are kidnapped and murdered, state enterprises go bankrupt, drug lords wage war in the favelas, and sewer systems erupt in the streets, all of which is to say that in Brazilian terms nothing happens. In the telenovelas, executives are kidnapped and drug lords wage war in the favelas, but the kidnapper is caught, the drug lord meets a nice girl and goes straight, the crooked executive's righteous son inherits the family business, and moral order is restored to the world. Things change. They change in precisely the same fashion in every single novela . . . viewers can fantasize that the real Brazil is not the hopeless swamp of moral

> confusion and economic chaos that it sometimes feels like . . . but a place where family values withstand all assaults, the poor eventually find jobs and always have enough to eat, and even the wicked can be redeemed. (Guillermoprieto 1994, 291. For further discussions of the role of telenovelas in Brazilian life, see La Pastina 1999; Page 1996, 444–65; Oliveira 1993; Porto 1998a, b)

If news reports concentrate on individuals to the detriment of structural analysis, this is all the more true of telenovelas. It is inherent in the medium that social questions, if they are dealt with at all, are treated as individual problems. *O rei do gado* was no exception. The movement (which was not named) faded into the background. The central character was a heroic land occupier; one of the subplots was resolved when a beautiful occupier and a landowner fell in love, perhaps permitting the conclusion that the solution for rural poverty is not land reform but love. The program's image of conflict in the countryside did not necessarily reinforce the MST's position because it tempered the conflict and suggested a peaceful resolution.

The novela was nonetheless important for presenting the issue of land reform in prime time every night for six months, and it undoubtedly drew the attention of millions of people to the plight of the landless. It can be described as alternating between two of the frames found in news reports. Land occupiers are, on the one hand, pathetic creatures, poor and deserving but acting in the shadow of movement leaders and people of higher status; on the other hand, they offer a solution to national problems. The show's picture of the movement certainly could be expected to invoke sympathy (and it presented landowners in such a bad light that some of them threatened to sue the author). Even with sanitized politics, a dramatized story may well affect people more powerfully than an ordinary news report.

It is worth noting that the show appeared at what was probably the movement's highest point of popularity in public opinion: it premiered two months after the Eldorado massacre. (It was already on the drawing board at the time of the massacre, although the scripts for later episodes were completed only during the run of the program.) The media had been drawing daily attention to the movement's Pontal campaign. Brazil, moreover, had enjoyed two years of price stability after a decade of vertiginous inflation, and it may be that the sense of prosperity made urban Brazilians more willing than usual to recognize the plight of the rural poor.[11]

The series itself made news on several occasions. Editorial and opinion columns referred to it; President Cardoso visited the set during taping and was shown on the evening news meeting actors in costume. One of the characters, a senator who defended agrarian reform, was killed, and two real-life PT senators, Benedita da Silva and Eduardo

Suplicy, made cameo appearances as themselves at his funeral. (In the present context, any distinction between a telenovela character and "real-life" senators can only be relative.) Their appearance in itself occasioned a flurry of public comment: while a columnist for *Estado de São Paulo* huffily complained that "taxpayers have a right to believe that the representatives they elect use their time parsimoniously in their benefit," the television critic of the newsweekly *Veja* rejoined that "the Brazil that telejournalism tried to hide winds up appearing in its entirety in the novela. . . . When two senators agree to make an appearance in *O rei do gado*, reality presents itself through the telenovela" (La Pastina et al. 1999; Reis 1997; Bucci 1997).

Teoria & Debate, the PT's theoretical journal, covered the telenovela. In a long interview, MST leader Stédile criticized the show for being "romanticized," for showing "a half-messianic leader who decided by himself" instead of democratically run *assentamentos*, and for trimming its politics under pressure from the network. He nevertheless acknowledged that on the whole, the movement thought that the show had a positive impact because it brought the land question into prime time and presented important themes, such as the farmworkers' encampments and the movement-run schools. Stédile also revealed that movement leaders met with the writer during the show's run and persuaded him to broaden his treatment of the movement. Finally, he said, the novela raised the status of occupying farmworkers in their communities; other viewers treated them with more respect (Azevedo and Sottili 1997, 32–33, 39).

The "coverage" of a movement in fictional representation necessarily departs significantly from its treatment as a news item. Still, the telenovela merits the extended treatment given here because it drew more attention to the movement than news coverage ordinarily attracts. It paralleled straight news reporting of social movements in many respects: it was important simply for garnering attention; it acknowledged—even as it called into question—the movement's standing to speak for itself; it personalized a problem, obscuring its social dimensions; those in the movement regarded it as a distortion of their reality; but even so, it served their purposes at least partially. Of course, it was only a soap opera.[12]

Conclusions

The treatment of the MST in the Brazilian media is diverse, presenting a mixture of sympathy and hostility. The sympathetic coverage itself varies, moreover, in acknowledging the movement's political significance.

Most movement activists and sympathetic media critics who have studied the coverage of the MST, however, argue that such coverage is uniformly hostile (with some exceptions; for example, Berger 1998; Gohn 2000). They see demonization in virtually all coverage, even if

they do not use the term (although Maschio 2000 refers to the "Satanization" of the MST). They do claim to find systematic distortion in media accounts. Maísa Mendonça, for example, analyzes headlines from three hundred articles about the MST in the four major Brazilian dailies (*Estado de São Paulo, Folha de São Paulo, O Globo*, and *Jornal do Brasil*) between April and August 1999. She concludes,

> A large part of these articles characterize the landless as aggressors, potential guerrilla fighters, obsessed [*obsecados*] with the seizure of power or violent. On the other hand, the police are presented as defenders of order, although statistics of violence in the countryside demonstrate the opposite. The government, for its part, is seen as negotiating agent, which supports and invests a large amount of resources in agrarian reform. (Mendonça 2000)

Many other critics point out that reports regularly use the term *invasion* rather than *occupation* and identify an "invasion" ipso facto with violence, without regard for whether people have been injured or property has been damaged. Several Brazilian media critics emphasize that the term *invasion*, found in many media reports, is explicitly condemnatory (Baccega and Citelli 1989; Marambaia and Câmara 2000; Voese 1998).

The coverage is, in reality, more complex. Though the demonization frame is most common, this study has found four other frames, all of which show some sympathy for the MST and its goals. The MST must regard the attention it has enjoyed from the Brazilian media as a mixed blessing. Though the MST has won considerable attention, it has not been able to dictate the content of that attention. Still, the achievement of getting attention itself may be as important as the exact way the movement is framed. The MST has won significant public support and maintained a high level of mobilization, which appears to demonstrate that the movement has, on the whole, benefited, even with the media's mixed treatment. The movement's complaints about that treatment appear to have been balanced by a recognition that even mixed coverage serves it better than none at all.

Notes

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1. Media are more important for appealing to sympathizers than for recruiting active participants because joining a collective action is often deter-

mined at least in part by personal contact with others who are already active (Snow et al. 1980).

2. La Pastina (1999) conducted an original and interesting study of audience response to the telenovela *O rei do gado*, based on participant observation.

3. The term *land question* is used here as it is in Brazil, shorthand for the complex of issues regarding concentration of land ownership, agricultural productivity, and rural poverty and unemployment.

4. Ownership of rural property is often poorly defined, readily permitting fraudulent title claims. James Holston argues that the land grab (*grilagem*) is a normal feature of the Brazilian legal system, not an exceptional violation. The *grileiro* "pretends to have legitimate title to the land through a vast repertoire of deceptions" (Holston 1991, 700). Holston is writing about land grabs on the recently urbanized peripheries of expanding cities, but they are most common in rural areas. New roads and the conversion of huge virgin forests to cultivation or pasture since the 1964 military coup have produced innumerable opportunities for fraudulent property claims (compare Hall 1990, Maybury-Lewis 1994).

5. Between 2000 and 2002, hoping to discourage occupations, the Cardoso government decreed that it would not inspect occupied properties (Ondetti 2002, 175).

6. It refers to *erva mate*, a favorite drink in Rio Grande do Sul (Berger 1998, 112).

7. The labels given to each frame (except the fourth) are the author's, chosen to characterize the frames succinctly without necessarily drawing on the language of those who employ them.

8. There are doubtless some citizens who believe that the movement is keeping potential criminals out of the cities and who therefore support the movement as a form of social cleansing.

9. Antônio Conselheiro was the leader of Canudos, a nineteenth-century community of rural withdrawal that was wiped out by the Brazilian army. Contemporary Brazil learned about Canudos from Euclides da Cunha, whose firsthand account appears in the book translated as *Rebellion in the Backlands* (1944); Mario Vargas Llosa's novel *The War of the End of the World* (1984) is based on the episode. Among the many accounts of Canudos by Brazilians and foreigners, the diversity of interpretations parallels that of other "prepolitical" movements, such as the Luddites; to some, the movement symbolizes fanatical primitive rebellion or a movement of withdrawal attempting to recover a mythical lost past, while for others it is the epitome of rural resistance to the oligarchical power of landed property.

10. This account appears to rely mainly on one of the most successful *assentamentos* in Rio Grande do Sul, the state where *assentamentos* are more prosperous in general than elsewhere in the country.

11. The success of the fight against inflation also won its architect, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, election to the first of two terms as president in 1994.

12. Without apologies to Gamson, who concludes his discussion of the film *The China Syndrome* and the anti–nuclear power movement by saying, "But, of course, it was just a movie" (1988, 234).

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