Project Title: In the Shadow of the Military: Negotiating Political Openings in Rio de Janeiro’s Pacified Communities

Abstract

Funding is requested to support dissertation research for completion of my PhD in Sociology. My project documents the impact of the militarization of Rio de Janeiro’s favelas, or low-income marginalized communities, on residents’ access to and forms of political engagement. My project employs a mixed-methods approach consisting of a multi-sited ethnography and an online survey. Ethnographic research will take place in three sites: the City of God, a favela community militarized in 2009; social media platforms in which residents mobilize to improve local conditions; and political spaces across the city. Survey research will be conducted through a social media platform with residents of the City of God. This project contributes to scholarship in critical urban theory and studies of conflict and violence in Latin America by documenting (a) how Rio’s military intervention has impacted the local political landscape and (b) how residents of targeted communities negotiate shifting political opportunities and barriers to improve local conditions. This project expands our understanding of how militarization shapes political participation among the urban poor and identifies strategies that policy-makers can employ to promote safety and political access in marginalized urban neighborhoods. Future research will build upon three months of fieldwork conducted in 2014 and 2015, as well as several months of virtual ethnographic data collection beginning in February 2015. I am requesting funding to support additional fieldwork in 2016 and interview transcriptions.
Project Description

Background and Theoretical Framework

In 2008, the state of Rio de Janeiro launched a controversial program to impose control over the city’s many favelas, or marginalized low-income communities, that have been dominated by violent drug traffickers since the 1970s. The intervention deploys Special Operations forces and the military police to invade and occupy these territories, killing or expelling local drug traffickers and establishing permanent policing headquarters known as Pacified Policing Units (known popularly as UPPs). To date, nearly 600,000 of the city’s 1.4 million favela residents now reside in a territory with UPP presence. Although this intervention has placed Rio de Janeiro in the global spotlight, the militarization of urban space is a phenomenon of global proportions. Dozens of cities across Latin America and Africa increasingly rely upon their security apparatus to control poor communities, and in many western countries, civil police forces are employing military weapons and surveillance technologies to govern urban communities. Although a great deal of scholarship exists documenting the myriad forms that the militarization of urban space takes in particular cities, less is known about the impact of these interventions on targeted communities.

The literature on military urbanism broadly suggests that the entrance of the state’s security apparatus into marginalized communities already neglected and repressed by the state’s security apparatus will further exacerbate antagonism between the government and the urban poor. Scholars of violence and conflict in Latin America have further documented the violence and brutality perpetrated by states against the urban poor through authoritarian regimes, repressive police forces, and the implementation of policies that exacerbate poverty and inequality. While these concerns have merit, my preliminary research indicates that the militarization of Rio’s favelas has generated some important political openings, expanding residents’ access to both institutional and non-institutionalized forms of political engagement. I hypothesize that these changes are the result of three factors: (a) the UPP’s ability to subdue violent drug traffickers; (b) the entrance of new public agencies and programs; and (c) residents’ effective negotiation of shifting political opportunities and constraints. Future research will further document the political openings generated by militarization and identify the extent to which these hypotheses help to explain preliminary findings.

Previous Research

My project builds upon ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the summers of 2014 and 2015 in the City of God, a favela of 48,000 inhabitants militarized in 2009, as well as virtual ethnography begun in February 2015 of a Facebook page in which residents of the City of God mobilize to improve neighborhood conditions. With funding from the Sociology Department’s Fellowship for Graduate Research and the Brudnick Center for the Study of Violence and Conflict, I spent a total of three months in the City of God, during which time I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with 32 residents, 12 community leaders, and seven activists and scholars outside the City of God. I also conducted extensive participant-observation in local NGOs, small businesses, homes, and public spaces in the City of God and in three NGOs that operate at the city and national level on issues of militarization. The City of God is an ideal site for this project because it was the second community to be pacified, allowing me to study the long-term consequences of militarization. It has also faced little resistance from drug traffickers, making it easier for outside researchers to safely navigate the field.
Methodology

This study employs a mixed methods approach, including a multi-sited ethnography and a survey. Ethnographic research will take place in three sites: the City of God, two social media platforms, and political spaces across Rio de Janeiro. Ethnographic research in the City of God will continue to document the impact of militarization on the local political landscape and residents’ political engagement, as well as analyze the extent to which my hypotheses, delineated above, help to explain new forms of politics in the City of God. I intend to interview an additional 30 residents and 10-20 non-resident community leaders and public officials operating in the City of God. I also plan to conduct extensive participant-observation in 5-10 community meetings in which strategies for community improvement are discussed, as well as in NGOs, small businesses, and other relevant settings. Research of social media will focus on two platforms: a Facebook page founded by a resident of the City of God with nearly 20,000 followers and approximately ten Whatsapp (text messaging) groups organized by and for local residents to share information. The goal of this is to document how residents use virtual spaces to promote political participation. Ethnographic research will also extend into spaces outside the City of God in which militarization and politics are debated and enacted, including NGOs, universities, political institutions, conferences and meetings. The objective of this is to situate my findings from the City of God within the larger political landscape. Finally, I will create an online survey, to be disseminated through the Facebook page described above, in order to test the representativeness of my ethnographic findings across the City of God and identify themes requiring further exploration.

On-sited fieldwork will be conducted during three additional trips to Rio de Janeiro between January 2016 and March 2017. Ethnographic research of social media platforms will be conducted remotely (from Boston) between January and December 2016, as well as during my time in the field. The online survey will be developed and conducted remotely in the fall of 2016, allowing me time to return to the field in 2017 before completing dissertation research.

Feasibility and Research Significance

The proposed research is highly feasible for several reasons. I am a native Portuguese speaker and have spent extensive time living in and visiting Rio de Janeiro; my linguistic and cultural competence has been critical to navigating the field, building relationship with participants, and developing safety strategies. Furthermore, I have already established strong relationships with dozens of residents within the community and political actors outside the City of God who have many contacts with potential study participants. I have presented my research at several academic conferences, published one article based on my research in a well-known international urban studies journal, and have prepared a second manuscript which I plan to submit for peer-review in December, 2015. Finally, I have developed extensive interview protocols and documentation strategies and have already obtained IRB approval.

This research makes several important contributions. First, it is critical to the completion of my dissertation to obtain a PhD in Sociology, which I intend to defend by December 2017. Second, it contributes an empirical analysis of the impact of militarization on the urban poor. Third, it contributes to critical urban studies by expanding our understanding of how states’ shifting governance strategies affect local political structures and opportunities in cities, particularly in marginalized communities. Finally, my research helps to identify strategies and programs that policy-makers can employ to promote security and political participation among the state’s most vulnerable and historically disenfranchised populations.
## Itemized Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Round-trip airfare to Rio de Janeiro</td>
<td>$800 \times 2 = $1,600</td>
<td>Cost for two trips, to be conducted in 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living expenses in Rio de Janeiro</td>
<td>$150/month for 4 months $600</td>
<td>Cost for two trips, two months each trip; includes food and local travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcription services</td>
<td>$5/hr for 160 hours (20 hrs/week for 8 weeks)</td>
<td>Cost to hire a Brazilian graduate or undergraduate student at the Federal University, Fluminense to complete transcription of approximately 50 interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,000</strong></td>
<td></td>
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References


NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION
RENEWAL APPROVAL

Date: April 15, 2015
IRB #: 14-03-19

Principal Investigator(s): [Redacted]

Department: Sociology and Anthropology
College of Social Sciences and Humanities

Address: 201 Renaissance Park
Northeastern University

Title of Project: Negotiating Power in a Militarized Community in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Approval Status: Project is Ongoing and Open to Enrollment

Participating Sites: N/A

Original Protocol Approved: April 22, 2014

DHHS Review Category: Expedited #6, #7

Informed Consents: One (1) unsigned consent form (English and Portuguese versions)

The requirement for signed consent is being waived as a signed consent document would be the only record linking the subject and the research AND the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. 45CFR46.117c(1).

Monitoring Interval: 12 months

APPROVAL EXPIRATION DATE: APRIL 14, 2016

Investigator’s Responsibilities:

1. The informed consent form bearing the IRB approval stamp must be used when recruiting participants into the study.

2. The investigator must notify IRB immediately of unexpected adverse reactions, or new information that may alter our perception of the benefit-risk ratio.

3. Study procedures and files are subject to audit any time.

4. Any modifications of the protocol or the informed consent as the study progresses must be reviewed and approved by this committee prior to being instituted.

5. Continuing Review Approval for the proposal should be requested at least one month prior to the expiration date above.

6. This approval applies to the protection of human subjects only. It does not apply to any other university approvals that may be necessary.

C. Randall Colvin, Ph.D., Chair
Northeastern University Institutional Review Board

Nan C. Regina, Director
Human Subject Research Protection

Northeastern University FWA #4630
Unsigned Consent Form

Northeastern University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology
Name of Investigator(s): [Redacted]
Title of Project: Negotiating Power in a Militarized Community

Request to Participate in Research

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project. The purpose of this research is to learn about the strategies that residents in the community use to gain and maintain power over their lives and in their community.

You must be at least 18 years old to be in this research project.

The study will take place at a location that is safe, comfortable, and accessible for both you and the researcher. The interview will take about 30-45 minutes. If you decide to take part in this study, I will ask you some questions about the ways in which you feel like you do and do not have control over important aspects of your life and your community and the strategies that you use to deal with that. Some of the questions will be about changes you have experienced since the UPP occupation in 2008 and how you have dealt with them.

The possible risks for participating in this study are minimal. You may feel a little uncomfortable or sad answering these personal and sensitive questions.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study. However, your answers may help us to learn more about the ways that people in militarized communities stand up to the challenges in their lives.

Your part in this study will be handled in a confidential manner. That means that I will not share anything you say with other people, including other members of the community. I will also not disclose to others that you have participated in this study, although you may choose to do so. Any reports or publications based on this research will not identify you and all identifying information will remain confidential. If you are comfortable with being audio recorded, I will tape our discussion. Upon your request, I can stop the tape at any point in time.

The decision to participate in this research project is up to you. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may withdraw at any time.

(If funds allow) You will receive R$20 for participating in the interview.

If you have any questions about this study:

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

You may keep this form for yourself.

Thank you,
Formulário de Consentimento

Northeastern University, Departamento de Sociologia & Antropologia
Nome dos Investigador(es): [REDACTADO]
Título do Projeto: Negociando pelo Poder numa Comunidade Militarizada no Rio de Janeiro

Pedido para Participar na Pesquisa
Eu gostaria de te convidar para participar num projeto de pesquisa. O propósito dessa pesquisa é para aprender mais sobre as estratégias que os residents dessa comunidade pacificada usam para ganhar e manter o poder sobre suas vidas e na comunidade.

Você precisa ter no mínimo 18 anos de idade para participar nessa pesquisa.

Esta entrevista será feita num local que é seguro, confortável e acessível a você e a pesquisadora. Esta entrevista deve demorar entre 30 e 45 minutos. Se você decidir participar nessa pesquisa, eu te farei algumas perguntas sobre as maneiras em que você acha que tem ou não tem controle sobre aspetos importantes da sua vida e da sua comunidade e sobre as estratégias que você usa para se dar com isso. Algumas das perguntas serão sobre mudanças que você tem notado desde ocupação das UPPs e como você tem manejado isso.

Os riscos de participar nessa pesquisa são mínimas. Possivelmente você pode sentir-se um pouco desconfortável ou triste em responder essas perguntas pessoais e sensíveis.

Essa pesquisa não terá nenhum benefício direta para você em participar. Portanto, suas respostas podem nos ajudar a entender mais sobre as maneiras em que pessoas em comunidades pacificadas manobram as dificuldades e restrições nas suas vidas.

Sua participação nessa pesquisa é anônima. Isso quer dizer que eu não compartilharei qualquer coisa que me disse com outras pessoas, incluindo com outros membros da comunidade. Eu também não revelarei sua participação na pesquisa, mas você tem o direito de compartilhar essa informação se quiser. Qualquer reportagens ou publicações baseadas nessa pesquisa manterão sua identidade e qualquer informação que pode revelar sua identidade confidencial.

A decisão de participar nessa pesquisa é completamente voluntária. Você não precisa participar, e pode se recusar a responder qualquer pergunta. Mesmo se começarmos a entrevista, você pode parar a qualquer hora.

(Se houver fundos), você receberá R$20 após completar a entrevista.

Se você tiver qualquer pergunta sobre essa pesquisa,

Se você tiver qualquer pergunta sobre seus direitos nessa pesquisa, entre em contato com Nan C. Regina, Directora, Human Subject Research Protection (Proteção para Participantes Humanos de Pesquisa), 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: (001) 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. Se quiser, você pode ligar anônimamente.

Você tem o direito de ficar com esse formulário.

Muito obrigada pela sua participação!