

ABSTRACT

Title of Document:

**BRAZILIAN MUSIC IN *THE NEW YORK TIMES*:
SITES FOR THE PRODUCTION OF
REPRESENTATIONS OF U.S. DOMINANCE AND
THE CONSUMPTION OF BRAZILIAN POPULAR
CULTURE**

Paula Botelho, Ph.D., 2008

Directed By:

Doctor Patrice M. McDermott, Department of
American Studies

This qualitative study explores the meanings and uses of representations of Brazil and Brazilian-ness, relying on cultural analysis of music reviews and news in *The New York Times* and other U.S. newspapers published between 2001 and 2006, a time frame that reflects the reordering of the role of the U.S. after 9/11, when it reinforced its position as the dominant global power in the early Twenty-First Century.

The study analyzes how representations resonate within other print media outlets, which illustrates how cultural dominance is disseminated in a reinforcing cycle of production. It examines the multiple meanings related to a hegemonic “American imagination” of Brazil that extends beyond the music domain, and how this relates to the larger theme of American consumption.

The New York Times is understood in this study as a powerful discursive site for the production of U.S. cultural dominance and of representations of other cultures. The political-cultural position of the newspaper and reviewers is particularly important in this dynamic. It contributes to assigning different levels of recognition to Brazilian and American artists. The representations in reviews and news function as subtexts to

criticize Brazilian culture, delegitimizing certain Brazilian cultural products and actors, or legitimizing products that are close to Euro-American forms of culture, founded in categories of race, gender, social class, and social behavior. Representations also serve to label the modernity and cosmopolitanism of the U.S., and to imply the traditionalism of Brazil, except when Brazilian cultural forms resemble American-European models.

The New York Times revitalizes the interest in Brazil and Brazilian popular culture established through the “Good Neighbor Policy.” However, this interest is ambivalent, wherein Euro-American patterns are the dominant point of reference, and the proximity of Brazilian cultural forms to African or to European culture constructs those products as having inferior or superior cultural value. Depending on the location in the hierarchy, Brazilian cultural products and artists either gain recognition or are constructed as culturally excessive and exotic, though still somehow attractive. Beneath this ambivalence resides a Protestant, White, Anglo-Saxon ethic, based on an exclusionary logic, contraposed to a logic of inclusion and complementarity.