

Racial and Ethnic Stereotypes in Brazilian Advertising

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This is a study of the ethnic and racial representations found in contemporary Brazilian television, newspaper and magazine advertising. The paper focuses in particular on advertising associated with the World Cup Soccer championships of 1994 and 1998 because they were moments when advertising worked with the idea of the “nation” placing the Brazilian “people” in scene. The appeal to nationalist sentiments wound up reflecting some cultural stereotypes disseminated in Brazil and especially those that concern the formation of the Brazilian “people”, seen as the harmonic sum of the white and black races which when mixed, produce the mulatta (a stereotype of physical beauty) and the mulatto (a stereotype of physical and mental ability, of the *malandro*). The research found, however, that the prevailing ideology is still that of a racial democracy as developed by Gilberto Freyre, to oppose the racist theories of the 19th century (Gobineau) and the beginning of the 20th century (Nina Rodrigues) while the imaginary of the advertising does not incorporate the later criticisms of the so-called myth of the three races (Fernandes; Da Matta).

However, the research also found that 1994 was a key year in the change of racial and ethnic representation of the black in Brazilian media. Stimulated by a number of factors including the active Afro-Brazilian movement, the growing promotion of ideas favorable to an “affirmative action” policy as in the United States, and by the growth of non-institutional organizations such as those that meet around funk and rap in the south and *axé* music in the northeast, African-Brazilians have come to pay attention to the way in which the media represents them and to act to transform their social stereotypes.

This study begins with the obligatory supposition that advertising has a heuristic importance as a way of studying social imaginaries since what is understood, considered and assumed is that the advertising texts are not only the result of absolute choice but also correspond to the collective imaginary.

In other words, advertising texts are expressions of social/axiological values more than absolutely individual “creations”. In this way, social imaginaries are reflected (and produced) by advertising images.

Keywords: advertising, stereotypes, race, Brazil

Racial and Ethnic Stereotypes in Brazilian Advertising

This article is a study of the ethnic and racial representations¹ found in commercial advertising published in the Brazilian media during two periods: 1994-95 and 1998-2000 and which reflect cultural stereotypes disseminated in Brazil. I analyzed a collection of photographs and commercial television spots accessible to the broad public, that were arbitrarily united in a non-systematic manner during this period. In these advertisements, I sought to verify the styles of behavior related to the races and ethnicities in the advertising imagnetic, or that is, how the races and ethnicities are represented by the advertising discourse and what social roles are attributed to them – which does not imply their true *mise-en-scène*.

The obligatory supposition of this article (although the testing of this supposition is not within the scope of this study) is the admission of the heuristic importance of publicity as a way of understanding social imaginaries and as a necessary condition for this learning, the admission that the advertising texts² are not the result of arbitrary absolutes but correspond to collective imaginaries. Social imaginaries are reflected (and produced) by commercial images. In other words, advertising texts are expressions of social values more than absolutely individual “creations”.

Imaginaries and images – the proximity between these two terms is not merely etymological, it is related to the central role images have in contemporary societies. This becomes more clear if we consider the two possible meanings of the notion of the image. When I say image I am speaking of the analogic representation of some thing³. This is the first meaning of the word. But image also means “mental idea”, the representation that I

¹ Ethnicity here means a set of individuals who are close because of certain common civilizatory traces, notably the community of language and culture, contrary to race which depends on anatomic characteristics. I understand *ethnicity* here as a conceptual and analytic category which refers to the processes of cultural identification between populations, as has been utilized by anthropology, in its criticism of the concept of *race*.

Harrison, Faye ("The persistent power of 'race' in the cultural and political economy of racism" in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1995. n.24:47-74.) offers a good summary of the conceptual course of anthropological theory in this field, even if it points towards a (complicated) contemporary return to the biological concept of *race*.

² *Text* here and throughout this paper is used in the semiotic sense of cultural production broader than the sentence.

³ An icon, in Pierce's terms.

make or have of some thing, of its meaning. In this way, a visual representation image, (as a photo for example) and a mental representation image, are intrinsically linked.

We are permanently bombarded by images through a wide variety of media and text advertising is one of the principal loci of visual images and representations; what we see in it is central, what is heard or read remains secondary⁴.

The advertising images broadcast by television are probably among the images most seen in the contemporary world. This is also true in Brazil where the advertising market totaled US\$ 4.4 billion in 1999 which made it the sixth largest in the world⁵. In Brazil a single advertising spot reaches millions of television viewers if it is broadcast prime time on national television, and these millions may or may not be the same to see the short story of the spot be retold for weeks and months on end. The spot lasts a few seconds on the screen, its broadcasting rarely extends more than six months, although, if the advertisers budget allows, it is repeated exhaustively, a few times a day, for a few straight days, and in the case of “global” spots, in a number of different countries. Its ephemerality is compensated for by the repetition.

It is not in my interest here to discuss the functions of this advertising discourse. I recognize that it has a primordial function - to inform about the qualities of a product - that is increasingly secondary in relation to the others, such as to create an impulse for social adhesion (Baudrillard) or to construct social identities (Kellner). I also am not interested in revealing ideologies behind advertising rhetoric or to point to its evidently manipulative quality⁶.

I propose to sketch a reading of advertising images, reflecting particularly upon the ethnic and racial representations captured in advertising texts broadcast on television in Brazil. The objective is to perceive how Brazilian publicity represents and gives value to different ethnic and racial identities and how it manipulates ethnic and racial images in the construction of an imagetic discourse of national identity.

Methodology

⁴ The advertisers themselves insist on the special emphasis on the visual in relation to the other senses: recently during the world's leading advertising awards ceremonies, O Leão de Cannes, one of the criteria for the choice of winners was the fewest words, oral or written in the advertisements.

⁵See also. Grillo, Cristiana *Jornais e Internet se complementam* in the Folha de São Paulo newspaper , 19/06/2000, A12.

⁶Kellner, D. *Media Culture*. London, Routledge, 1995:105. "Although demystification is part of ideology critique, simply exposing mystification and domination isn't enough: we need to look behind the ideological surface to see the social and historical forces and struggles which generate ideological discourses and to examine the cinematic apparatus and strategies which make ideologies attractive". (apud. Gastaldo, 1999.)

I observed advertising texts broadcast on national television networks between the months of March and September 1994 and between May and July 1995, between May and August of 1998 and during the first half of 2000, at all hours and all channels, but especially during prime time⁷. I used a television with a satellite dish so that local advertising was not considered, for these ads would require considerations about the different regions of the country. This would be a fascinating study, but would require much more extensive work.

The majority of these images were produced by advertising agencies based in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, which may create a regional bias. But although they were produced by advertising agencies with a specific social profile (in terms of class, social origin, education, etc.) they were produced to be read by a broad public and realized in order to be understood and accepted by this public (not even the example of the advertising of *Benneton*, which stirred protests from the black movement, appeared to shock the public in general).

The following examples were chosen:

- 1 testimonial advertising – those which use a famous person (actor, sports star, or other);
2. advertising with themes common to different races/ethnic groups (played by blacks, whites, mulattos and others).
3. advertising with special themes, portrayed exclusively by blacks and mulattos, “Japanese” or others.

An extensive collection of propaganda from different media was organized according to these criteria. Methodologically, Goffman⁸ has pointed to the limits of such a procedure: “the success (of the study) requires only a little perversity and astuteness, and an important batch of photographs”. ‘Purely subjective reaction’, ‘rambling subjectivity’, non-representative sample’, ‘everything that you can read from a collection of images’, ‘a collection of this type does not prove anything about the social’ are criticisms which I

⁷ I complemented this information with national magazine and newspaper advertising as well as outdoor billboards.

⁸Goffman, E. "La ritualiation de la féminité" em Winkin, Y (org) *Les Moments et leurs Hommes*. Paris, Seuil, 1988. trechos de "Gender Advertisements" *Studies in the Anthropologie of Visual Communication*, v.3, n. 2, 1976, p.69-154.

admit to without shame. As such, for what is such research useful? To design hypotheses about how society (I believe more than that portion formed by advertising directors) considers an aspect of social life, or that is, what they think, about the behaviors, practices, lifestyles and the ethnic/racial composition/distribution of individuals in real social life.

Based on these texts, there is little that can be gauged about the behavior, practices, lifestyles and the real composition and distribution of individuals and ethnic groups and much less about the effect that these advertising images may have on Brazilian society. They are pretexts to explore the advantages that advertising images offer research because of the intentionality of their construction (Barthes): by revealing images (in this case, ethnic and racial stereotypes) which correspond to social imaginaries and the dominant models subjacent to the distribution of racial roles in society; to verify how the advertisers create, based on a set of material available in social situations, in order to reach their goals, or that is, to present a verismilar and readable scene.

The random sample of a large number of ads did not seek statistical legitimacy. The fact of having obtained collections of certain themes (the black man /work, the black woman/maternity, blacks/future) does not make them more realistic or their interpretation more persuasive, because I believe that the analysis of a single image can be highly significant. I used various examples of the same theme because I was interested in perceiving the variations in the series (Eco), and, through these subtle variations in the way in which the theme is treated, I sought to detect its slow but perceptible transformation during the period studied.

In addition, different examples of the same theme offer different choreographic contexts to express the same thing, that is, they manifest a single subjacent structure in different scenarios.

Even whiter

I became interested in reflecting upon the way different Brazilian races and ethnicities are represented in advertising after a conversation with a young and promising advertiser who works in the creative sector of MacCanErickson in São Paulo. On that occasion, at the end of the 1980's, I was studying the process of globalization in advertising and I was surprised when he revealed that the principal impediment to the importation of U.S. advertising texts was not legal, but that the U.S. advertisements include blacks at a level that is unacceptable

in Brazil. That is, the presence of blacks required the Brazilian divisions of multinational advertising agencies to adapt the U.S. advertisements so that they correspond to a supposed racist imaginary of the Brazilian consumer.

In fact, as I found at that time, from random observations of television in our two countries, black men and women⁹ only appeared in Brazilian commercials in the role of low paid employees, mostly as maids (drivers, gardeners, cooks). In the United States, to the contrary, black men and women appeared driving their own cars, drinking Coca-Cola, and doing everything that whites do. Evidently, I was facing different ethnic values and it was impossible to not relate them to the rich discussion in recent decades in the United States about the need to redesign the social space by giving voice to minorities (ethnic, sexual, ideological, religious and other). In the United States, the consequences of the multiculturalist movement also had important reflections in advertising, with the passage of legislation that guaranteed quotas for space for blacks in advertising as well as in television programming and in films. A black civil society that is extremely attentive also watches the way they are represented in the media.

The first finding of the more systematic reading of advertising in the first period of this study (1994 – 1995), therefore, was predictable. Native Americans, blacks, mulattos, are excluded from the overwhelming majority of our advertising materials, the texts¹⁰

broadcast by the national media, privilege whites. Young whites appear associated with cars, clothes, appliances, bank agencies, food and any other product – the age group is

⁹I use "negro" [black] in this text as a general and comprehensive category of a continuum of color present in the Brazilian social-racial categorization, which according to the IBGE census, includes more than 200 terms. I use the terms "white", "Indian", [Native America] "young", "old", "Japanese" in the same way to simplify the reading although there is a risk that these terms appear as naturalization of historic-social-cultural categories.

¹⁰ This majority of commercial advertising with white men and women is not proportional to the ethnic demographic distribution in Brazil. As we see in the census data, even though the black population has decreased drastically from the colonial period to today, and the white population has grown, this increase still leaves blacks with a small majority of 0.4% as we can see in the table. The bias of the trend toward "whitening" the numbers is highlighted since the IBGE study is based on the declaration of the person researched.

Composition of the population according to color in Brazil (in thousands)

Year	Black		White		Mulatto	
	Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº.	%
1822	1,930	55	1,043	30	526	15
1940	6,036	14.6	26,172	63.5	8,844	21.2
1980	7,047	5.9	64,540	54.2	46,233	38.8

Source: IBGE data.

significant, in Brazil, the majority of the characters in advertising are young men and women, with the elderly basically limited to advertising for insurance or health plans, or to symbolizing loneliness (as in telephone advertising) and incompetence (they don't know about a new product), contrary to other countries, principally in Europe, where the elderly are fully inserted into daily life ¹¹. The white presence is nearly omnipresent.

Native Americans, moreover, were nearly totally forgotten by Brazilian advertising: only twice did I observe the presence of Native Americans, each time as caricatures. In the first commercial, there is an *indigenous* person (a man and thus with feathers) among the hundreds of people portrayed as coming from various parts of the world. All these people run down a sand dune attracted by the noise of **Adams** chewing gum. In the second advertisement the caricature is even cruder. The Native American is presented as a cannibal, an image that conforms to the conventional pictorials of Native Americans from the sixteenth century: a man with lightly darkened skin, nearly naked and with his entire face painted white, is seen jumping around with his legs open in an arch, with a cauldron in the background, chasing a group of desperate white men and women who ask why they hadn't thought earlier of purchasing **Bamerindus** insurance. Risk is the object of the commercial and, to portray this risk, they utilize stereotypes of an ethnic minority which no longer even appear in Disney films.

Blacks, meanwhile, were represented in similar situations to the *mulattos* in commercials where the *body* is the central value principally as a *labor force* – carriers, drivers, maids. The choice of the black or mulatto thus appears to be determined by the association of the product promoted with *physical labor*: there are no blacks in commercials for automobiles but there is a black in a commercial about tire dealers (he is one of the specialists and appears in mechanics overalls; we found no black women used as models promoting clothing, but they are found cleaning them; there are no black women shopping in supermarkets, but they do appear cooking). In general, we can say that for Brazilian blacks and mulattos the images constructed through popular discourse and literature continue to prevail, where we have the association of the black man (and more frequently, the black woman) with more difficult domestic labor¹².

¹¹ A video by Guita Debret about the presence of old people in Brazilian publicity attests to this fact. It shows, however, some rare examples, such as the commercial of a brand of margarine where the “grandfather” is caught in bed with an unknown and justifies himself saying: “we are going to get married”.

¹²See. Moreira, Diva and Adalberto Sobrinho "O homem negro e a rejeição da mulher negra" in Costa, Albertina de Oliveira and Tina Amada (org) *Alternatives escapees*. SP, Prodder/FCC - RJ: ed. 34, 1994.

We escaped one stereotype to fall into another: a young black woman appears alongside a child in a commercial for a popular savings account offered by a federal government bank (**Poupança Azul, in the Caixa Econômica Federal**), which attests to her condition as mother. *Maternity* is another one of the images traditionally linked to the black woman in Brazil in an imaginary that dates back to the colonial period, to slavery and the use of black women as nurse-maids¹³ for whites, as lovers and or as reproducers of the slave labor force. The same campaign had white women who appeared alone, they did not need a child at their side to determine their dignity.

This imaginary of the superior *body* of the black man or woman and of the mulatto is confirmed in the representation of soccer. In this realm, the black is portrayed as an artist. Soccer in Brazil is black, that is mulatto, as Gilberto Freyre has already maintained:

"An unmistakable Brazilian style of **soccer** has wound up being defined, and this style is one more expression of our **mulatismo** that, to our liking, agilely assimilates, dominates and softens into **dance**, curves or in songs, the more angular European or U.S. techniques: whether they are of the game or in architecture. Because it is our *mulatismo* – psychologically, to be Brazilian is to be mulatto – an enemy of apollonian formalism because his **dionysian** manner – is the great mulatto trait"¹⁴ (emphasis mine).

Soccer, however, requires physical ability, a quality that has been attributed to blacks since the time of the influential racist theory of Gobineau¹⁵. Brazilian soccer is considered in the popular imaginary to be innate – “soccer is not learned in school”, “a star is born that way”, “it’s in the blood”.

In fact, the great majority of the blacks found in advertising appear in testimonial advertising. They are not “blacks” in general but those blacks who are super-

¹³ The *amas-de-leite*, - or nurse maids also common in Europe liberated the mother from nursing, principally so that she could return to sexual activity with her spouse, for it was believed at the time that sperm and milk were incompatible. Françoise Héritier (*Masculin / Féminin - la pensée de la différence*. Paris, Odile Jacob, 1996:159 à 1661), citing the treatise of prof. Antonin Bossu (*Anthropologie ou étude des organes, fonctions, malaadies de l'homme et de la femme, comprenant l'anatomie, la physiologie, l'hygiène, la pathologie et la thérapeutique*. Paris, Baillière, 1849 - 3^a ed.), shows how, symbolically, the sexual system and the nutritional system communicated with each other; sperm having the capacity to corrupt milk or ruin its taste. In relation to the image of the black woman as a nursemaid, Finco approaches the polemic caused by the **Benetton** commercial which exhibits a black woman nursing a white and which was the target of severe criticism from the black movement in Bahia. See Finco, H. *Benetton, exemplo de anti-publicidade*. Master's Dissertation, PPGAS, UFSC, 1996.

¹⁴ Freyre, Gilberto *Sociologia*. RJ, José Olympio 1945:432, vol.1. Apud. Gilson Gil "O drama do "futebol-arte": o debate sobre a seleção nos anos 70" in RBCS n. 25 ano 9 junho de 1994. pp 100-109.

¹⁵ Gobineau, as is known, developed a classification of races according to certain aptitudes in which black men and women appear inferior to white men and women in terms of “intellect” and “moral manifestations”, but are superior to whites in “animal propensities”, which, in contemporary terms refers to greater physical ability.

men; having achieved success, their fame is the principal connotation of their image. The singer Wilson Simonal, contracted by **Shell** at the end of the 1960's was the first black to appear in an advertisement on television in Brazil; Leônidas da Silva was probably the first black and the first soccer player to do advertising in Brazil. In the 1930's he offered his nickname to a brand of chocolate, the *Diamante Negro* (black diamond). I found various soccer players among the texts selected: Pelé (**Antárctica** beer, and **Luvinha da Vitória**) and others broadcast worldwide and various advertisements that used the Brazilian national soccer team (**Brahma**, "*A número 1*") before and during the 1994 World Cup; Ronaldo and Roberto Carlos during the 1998 World Cup.

Racial Democracy on stage: The World Cup

Many of the commercials observed in 1994 – 1998 refer to Brazil's participation in the World Cup. In the years in which there are Cups, an event that is especially good for observing how advertising discourse seeks to connote "the nation" and "Brazilianess", advertising turns to the repertory of signs of national identity including colors, flags, landscapes and music, while reserving a highlighted space for *blacks and mulattos*. In two types of commercials this ethnic/racial presence is especially striking:

1. Testimonial advertising conducted by soccer players
2. Advertising representing the Brazilian people

The first type of advertising is justified by an observable fact: blacks and mulattos are the majority among the best players in Brazilian soccer. The basic structure of the second type of advertising considers the idea of racial democracy defended by Freyre: "Brazil is a harmonic mixture of races". This Brazilian people can thus be portrayed by boys without shirts, playing ball on an empty lot – connoting the unequalled capacity of the Brazilian people to overcome adversities (poverty is expressed by the lack of clothes and the inadequate field ¹⁶). It can be played by a group of people (a mixture of whites, blacks and mulattos) dancing happily in a green and yellow scenery (the national colors). Unlike the multi-ethnic commercials (**Benneton**) where blacks or mulattos appear as a minority, here they prevail and they are within what is ideologically considered their domain – sport, music, dance, drink, food.

¹⁶ The campaign for **Penalty** (sporting goods) in 1995 can be mentioned: it utilized a neo-realist style shot in Brazil's most important soccer stadiums Maracanã, Morumbi and in the Rocinha favela. It shows a black boy in the slum, playing ball and passing the ball to players on a choose-up team, also blacks and mulattos with the slogan "*Penalty, marca do Brasil*" (Penalty, the mark of Brazil).

The commercials for **Rider** sandals are a good example. Filmed in Los Angeles in 1994 and in Paris in 1998, they used as a linguistic message music with the lyrics; “The time has come for this tanned people to show what they’re worth”¹⁷ – tanned is used as a metaphor for black and mulatto. The **Antártica** brewing company also utilized the second type of structure in its campaign “*Antártica, uma paixão nacional*” (Antartica a national passion), which was run before, during and soon after the World Cup of 1994. In this campaign, the Brazilian identity was built through a contrast with an identity of the country that hosted the Cup (the United States and France respectively) through differences in behavior. Brazil is represented by a Brazilian singer, Daniela Mercury, circled by *blacks, mulattos and whites*. The colors yellow and green predominate on the screen; there is the use of official national symbols such as the flag and its colors. The commercial transmits, through the images and the linguistic message, the idea that the beer advertised is as Brazilian as football, the mixture of races, samba and *axé* music. The only novelty in this advertisement by Antártica is the musical track in which samba, traditionally used to signify Brazil, is substituted by *axé*, a musical style from the Brazilian northeast which has come to connote the *national* obeying the same cultural dynamic already pointed out by other Brazilian anthropologists¹⁸. The United States, in turn, appears in the commercial with an association to jazz: the voice is of a black in a tuxedo, Ray Charles, circled by whites.

In another commercial, mega-star Whoppi Goldberg says she is an admirer of Brazilian talent and of Brazilian creativity and thinks of football as the embodiment of this ability. She is able to understand Brazil because, like Ray Charles, she is black, she has Brazilianess in her skin, and because she has one of our talents, humor, as Ray Charles has another, musicality. A white woman, who is pretty, but has no sense of humor, musicality and not even culinary talent, is helplessly distant from the Brazilian *way of being*. This is the case of Kim Bassinger, who in one commercial is found exhausted after spending an entire day trying to execute a cooking recipe. The message is that it is better to accept a Brazil that comes bottled, like **Antártica** beer. Although she is pretty and white the

¹⁷ The rest of the lyrics are significant: “The time has come for this tanned people to show their worth ... Uncle Sam wants to know about our beat. They say the sauce of the Bahian woman improves the dish. They already tried *cuscuz, acarajé* and *abará*. At the White House, they’ve already danced the rhythm of the *ioio* and *iaia*. Brazil, beat your tambourines, light your *terreiros*, because we want to samba. Who sambas differently, in other lands, other people, a killer beat. The beat will unite our values, dancers and singers, an expression that won’t stop.”

¹⁸ Soccer, as Oliven showed, surged at the interior of the country and only became national during the New State, as did other national symbols See also: Oliven, Ruben *A parte e o Todo - diversidade cultural no Brasil-Nação*. Petrópolis, Vozes, 1992. See also; Fry, Peter “Feijoada e soul food”: “Notas sobre a Manipulação de Símbolos Étnicos e Nacionais” in *Para Inglês Ver - Identidade e Política na Cultura Brasileira*. Rio, Zahar, 1982.

actress is required to submit to the superiority of one who has the Brazilian way of being in the *blood*. *Blacks* and *mulattos* also appear mixed with *whites*, in the **Brahma** commercial for the Cup, they are soccer fans, all of them Brazilians, expressing a racial democracy which is not frequently represented in other contexts.

In the Cup of 1998¹⁹, few changes were found concerning the representation of blacks and mulattos: they continue to appear in testimonial advertising (Ronaldo/**Parmalat**; Roberto Carlos/**Pepsi**²⁰). The style “we are all Brazilians” was repeated in the *Paris* campaign by **Rider** in which a group of Brazilians samba around the national flag, in front of Notre-Dame, the Eiffel Tower, The Arch of Triumph and meet typical French people (a grouchy police officer, a cranky old lady) who wind up being seduced by the happiness of the Brazilians (the old lady kicks a ball, the policeman kicks off his shoes and wears sandals).

The great novelty in the Cup of 1998 is the coupling of a black man with a blonde woman which would be repeated from that time on. The text of this spot is interesting: “A Brazilian man likes cars (image of a red **Ferrari**); a Brazilian man likes women (image of Suzana Werner, who at the time was Ronaldo’s girlfriend); a Brazilian man likes soccer (image of Ronaldo); a Brazilian likes **Brahma** guaraná (a traditional soda). Hey, you’re gonna say you don’t like it? I like it” (image of Ronaldo and Suzana Werner drinking guaraná). That is, a white man who incarnates being Brazil can be black, as long as he is a soccer player; not a woman, she is white and preferably blond.

Their constant presence in moments in which nationality is evoked, and the systematic purging of blacks and mulattos from publicity in other moments, appears to show that the Brazil which is confronting others in a sporting, musical or cooking challenge is black white or mulatto. The Brazil that we experience in daily life, when we buy toothpaste, cars and refrigerators, is a nation of whites, who are young, rich and happy and here the place of the blacks and mulattos is much inferior, restricted to manual labor.

In one situation, that of the day-to-day in Brazil, we are confronted with a vision not very different from the racist theories from the beginning of the century, the ferocity of which can be exemplified in the choice of etymology of the word used to designate the

¹⁹Cf. Gastaldo, Édison L. *A Nação e o Anúncio - a representação do "Brasileiro na Publicidade da Copa do Mundo*. Campinas, Doctoral thesis in Multimedia studies, 1999.

²⁰Dadá Maravilha/**Carrefour**; Romário/**Estrela** as well as white players: Bebeto/**Correios**; Leonardo/**Tele-Sena**.

mixture of races (mulatto comes from mule, the hybrid animal incapable of reproducing). In the other situation, we find the Brazil which represents itself, only incorporating the other face of these theories, that is, the mystifying idea of a racial democracy, an idyllic vision of a meeting of races.

In this way the advertising images (analogic representations) are consonant with the racist images (mental concepts) well expressed in a popular cartoon, cited by the anthropologist Gilberto Freyre: "White is for marrying/ mulatta for f...ing/ and black for cooking".²¹

Japanese on the mind

Today as in the past, blacks and mulattos are seen as superior, in terms of the body. But let us leave the domain of the value *body* to go to another extreme, the value of *reason*. Here we find an interesting incidence of ethnicity in publicity - the use of *Japanese* men - Japanese women and children are excluded.

In fact, the Japanese, discovered by advertisers in 1993, have since appeared systematically in commercials connoting high technology and the guarantee of quality in a product. In Brazil²² *Japanese men* connote confidence and technical quality because in the popular imaginary they are seen as persistent workers and as *intelligent* people, an intelligence that does not stem from individual brilliance, or from *malandragens* but from dedication, discipline, effort. Gifted by a command over advanced technologies, especially electronics, the *Japanese* are seen as, concentrated, arduous employees who are capable of repeating the same task thousands of times until it is well done. What the publicity characterizes with the *Japanese* is not *physical* but *intellectual* labor.

Mulattos and *blacks*, always appear dancing or moving their bodies in broad gestures, the Japanese are represented in a near corporal immobility: only the head moves. The commercial for **Sharp** that went on the air in July 1995 is a good example. Five Japanese heads appear on the screen – the rest of their bodies were invisible – the heads praise the brand in different languages, with Portuguese sub-titles.

²¹Freyre, G. *Casa Grande e Senzala*. (23 edição)RJ, José Olympio, 1984:10.

²² In France for example, the Japanese are associated more negatively to the lack of an imagination, to life in a repetitive group, as "ants". An advertisement for **Perrier** is a good example: we see a group of Japanese, in an orderly line, heading toward the entrance of a restaurant. When they leave the restaurant after drinking Perrier, they appear drunk: there is no more line, they jump around and play individually. "Perrier, c'est fou" is the slogan of the campaign, or that is, Perrier is capable of driving even the Japanese crazy.

In addition to the intellectual side, the *Japanese* man is seen as being respectful of ancient traditions (which appear even older, because they are different from the European traditions with which we are more familiar) which connote fidelity and honesty. This is well expressed in the television advertisement where a “false-Japanese”, who appears in the **Semp** commercial of 1995 (with the traits of a mestizo face, wide eyes, wearing a flowered short typical of *malandros* and not the serious suit of other *Japanese* or even the more respectable kimono) offers a television at lower prices because it comes from Paraguay (a place that is a false-United States or a false-Japan because it sells fake products as if they were imports from these countries).

Japanese is synonymous with television and also with “foreign products of guaranteed quality” in general. It is used as such in the commercial for **Petrobrás** where a group of *Japanese* pistons salute the gas station attendant who is surprised when he opens a car hood to examine the motor. Good foreign motors need good domestic oil, capable of handling the high tropical temperatures, affirm the *Japanese* in the advertisement. The *Japanese* who were very present in 1995, decreased their appearances in the following years²³.

Japanese, *blacks/mulattos* thus appear as opposites in the advertising discourse. The black or mulatto is portrayed for his body, a body seen as possessing superior physical capacity to the white body. This physical capacity is expressed either by *work*, by *reproduction* (maternity), or by *eroticism*. The black/dionysian is opposed to the white/apollonian – as Freyre said – and has a disadvantage in a social hierarchy where the higher value is given to reason. For this reason, when the dominant social hierarchy is inverted in ritualistic moments as in the case of the World Cup (or as could be the case during the carnival period which was not included in our research), black men and women and their *bodies* excel.

The future is black in advertising

²³ The Chinese are evoked by Brazilian publicity encompassed in the category of “Japanese” – *Japanese* refers to the *Japanese*, but also to “Brazilians of the second or third generation Japanese origin”²³, and also to “Korean” and “Chinese” or other East Asian immigrants. This same nominal generalization is found for the category “Turk” which in Brazil is commonly used to refer to people born in Turkey but also for Lebanese, Palestinians, Arabs in general, Egyptians and others from the Middle East.

In the period studied, the Chinese were remembered in only one U.S. television commercial dubbed into Portuguese, in the form of a man in an apron, behind the counter of a store. Having difficulty understanding the English of a young tourist who wants a Coca-Cola, he protects his daughter from a badly portrayed sexual approach: or that is, he is represented as not very intelligent and morally conservative.

The year 1995 was a representative mark for blacks in the Brazilian media. Although, alongside commercials that presented new standards of representation, traditional images that reinforced old discriminatory notions continued to be broadcast. This is found in the advertising campaign for **Petrobrás** oil, where the pistons are strong men, predominantly mulattos and blacks, which in a macho way demand “*that oil?, what do you think we are, little women?*”. A black adds “*Sure, look at the size of the piston*”, as a sexual connotation which continues in the final dialogue in which the pistons sing: “*Em cabina pequena, sempre cabe uma morena*”. (In a little cabin, there’s always room for a little brown girl). In the same way, it is brutality and weak intelligence that appear as the main characteristics in the commercial for **Kaiser** beer where a black displaying muscles in a sleeveless jacket confronts a physically fragile white man, in a suit, because the black thinks the white hit him with a plastic hammer – when in reality it was the well-known principal character of this company’s advertising (the *malandro*). The socially inferior position is also shown in two other commercials one by **Bhrama** beer and the other for **Cartão Federal da Caixa**, where blacks appear as drivers for whites, and the blacks have no opportunity to speak. That is, the publicity maintains the traditional way of representing the black: someone who is physically strong, with an exacerbated sexuality and little intelligence.

The shift in this pattern began in 1995 in Brazilian advertising and media in general. Pushed by campaigns and protests²⁴ from an increasingly organized black movement and by young blacks (*rappers, funklers*) who constitute urban landscapes in consonance with a transnational culture, the media began to represent blacks in other roles. Lets see some of the commercials that announced the change:

1) Blacks appear as protagonists in testimonial advertising. The novelty is that they are not only soccer stars (there is an actress in an advertisement for **Uno** and a well known percussionist in a commercial for **Honda**)²⁵.

2) Blacks appear in advertising as consumers but still as secondary characters, who are a minority among whites as in advertising for **Gillette/Sensor**, **Kaiser beer** and **Sadia** poultry and packaged meats.

The advertising in example 1 continues to present famous blacks, or that is they are not exceptions to the rule – particularly in the case of **Honda**, what is highlighted is a

²⁴ The black movement strongly protested against the humiliating way of representing a black personality in a televised dramatic serial (*Pátria Minha*, by Gilberto Braga). The next *telenovela* by the Globo network, (*A próxima vítima*, by Sílvio Abreu), portrayed a “normal” black middle class family.

²⁵ Camila Pitanga (“*Sou Pitanga, não sou laranja*”). Carlinhos Brown/ **Honda**: “*Use capacete*”, singing.

quality that as we have seen historically has been associated to the black in Brazil: natural musicality. The biggest change is seen in the **Gillette** commercial where the black appears being served – even if we do not see the barber who is attending him – and in the ad for **Sadia**, which repeated the consecrated multicultural formula of **Benneton** by exhibiting different races and ethnicities in an egalitarian manner. In the three cases, their appearance is quick, they do not have an opportunity to speak and they appear among a majority of white characters. But it is noted that the black is placed in an identical situation to the whites, and in two cases, the product associated is not the dionysian beer. Thus, the novelty is in portraying the black as one more consumer among the others, as someone associated to the product, who contributes to the construction of the brand image. This trend has been consolidated in recent years.

In summary, among the publicity modes involving blacks since 1995 I observed:

1. Advertising where the blacks connote physical strength. The black appears as a worker (**Nature**/cosmetics, the only black is a worker among white executives; **Vesper**/ as a cook; **Mercure**/ hotel, as a waiter; **Ariel**/clothing detergent).
2. Global advertising produced by international agencies and broadcast in other countries. Blacks are legitimate characters because they are strangers. This type of publicity exists for years usually among sporting products or those secondarily related to sport (a video cassette player is promoted by a black basketball player) but also in products that seek to be connoted as from the United States (**C&A**). This is also the case of the recent spot for **Nike** (Planet Foot) where a group of soccer players, mostly blacks, in a video-game scene, recover a soccer ball from a fort defended by cyborgs. In all of these commercials the black portrayed is not an anonymous individual equal to the spectator on the other side of the television. They are people with exceptional qualities: basketball and soccer players, a *trickster*, dressed in a white suit (**C&A**). In most cases, a *corporal/physical* quality is invoked.
3. Multicultural advertising where a black appears in the company of representatives of other races/ethnic groups, connoting diversity (**Tip/Top** children's clothes, **Carrefour** supermarkets. There are many ads that seek to

represent the regional or national character (**Santa Catarina**²⁶ state government, **Varig**/airlines). In these multicultural ads the black is generally a secondary figure appearing in the midst of a large group of whites.

4. Publicity where the black is the principal figure – the representation differs with the gender. When the product is to have a sexual connotation, the choice falls on the masculine gender (young blacks with shaved heads), and often side by side with a blond woman (**Hering** clothes), couples of black men with blonde women have appeared in the media since the late 1990's as the ideal couple. Traditionally, as we have seen, the body of the mulatta woman was used to suggest the erotic, not the black man. This has changed recently and the black has come to be seen as a sexual symbol, under the influence perhaps of a U.S. imaginary which connotes the black male body as erotic. In fact, this appears to be an increasingly accepted standard in Brazil, as can be seen by the countless number of soccer stars who choose blonde women as partners and the music groups organized around black men and white women, as well as the simple observation of young couples in the street – it is much more rare to find a black woman alongside a blonde man, unless the man is a foreigner. A growing number of journalistic reports indicate the sexual fascination aroused by the black man today²⁷.

In addition to appearing alongside blondes, black men are shown as normal consumers, as in the example of **Credicard** where a young black man appears lying down on a sofa in jeans and a white sports shirt, reading a magazine and holding a credit card, and thus as economically well established.

Meanwhile black women continue to be shown alongside children (maternal value) and we find advertising where black women appear close to the animal world. The advertisement for **Ellus**/clothes is characteristic, black women are shown making feline movements, walking barefoot, among scenery of wildlife. That is they maintain the relationship with nature but in this case it does not

²⁶ In an earlier campaign the idea that Santa Catarina is a multi-ethnic state was established, blacks were excluded, which generated protests from various academic organizations and NGO's.

²⁷ See, for example, *Marie Claire* magazine of março 2000, "Negros Gatos", where the men interviewed said that white women see them as sexual objects, seeking only sexual relationships.

concern sexuality but other animal qualities, the feminine figure is shown as more powerful.

5. Advertisements where blacks are represented positively and appeared connoting the future, in advertising of the multicultural type. Blacks and also East Asians have been frequent characters in publicity for Internet providers such as **Terra**, **Tantofaz**, **BOL** or those that make an allusion to some future scene.

Conclusion

Advertising discourse is extremely rich in investigative possibilities of collective imaginaries and social values. It is clear that none of the authors who have studied the media suggest that the first objective of television is to express values, attitudes, political positions or moral perspectives that challenge the dominant perspective. All recognize the conservative power of television, and thus, of any central system of narration of stories. The fundamental issue appears to me to verify the degree to which we can call the permanent struggle and dialogue concerning meanings, cultural negotiation. This negotiation appears to be a basic and defining characteristic of the media (of culture in general).

The rapid analysis of the way in which they are represented by advertising texts today offers clues about the different values associated to ethnic groups that compose our social scene as well as those related to our imaginary about what it is to be Brazilian. These clues indicate that in the tense negotiation between the social forces involved, blacks have conquered some space. Concerning self-representation, advertising continues to show Brazil as multi-racial and multiethnic; when ads represent products that do not need to connote Brazilianess, the advertising usually utilizes whites, but in recent years has placed blacks as secondary figures and more rarely, central figures. Often, the presence of the black in advertising rhetoric does not contrast, but reinforces racist theories, because the *body* continues to be the element that is highlighted in the representations of black men and women. Nevertheless, advertisements where blacks appear as part of a community of universal intelligence (the Web) are increasingly common. We note, however, two new and opposing trends, locked in battle around the representation of the black in advertising:

the first, which approximates black women with the primitive; the second, which shows blacks as participants in the universal community of intelligence, on the web.

No one disagrees that the media has an important role in giving structure to contemporary identities as one of the factors that contributes to how individuals model their behavior and attitudes. Publicity appears as a factor that currently contributes to the construction of subjective identities: imaginaries and social identities are reflected (and produced) by advertising images. A nation ("imaginative community", as Anderson maintains) is built around shared imaginaries (desires, values, fantasies). Advertising images have contributed decisively to establish certain ethnic imaginaries, with repercussions in the construction of subjective identities and in our construction of national identity.

Even if advertising has positively altered the representation of blacks in recent years, stereotypes are still found. As Goffman recalls "in order to be conscious of a stereotype, for each photograph, one needs only to imagine what would happen if the sexes (in this case race or ethnicity) would be switched"²⁸.

²⁸Goffman, E. "La ritualiation de la féminité" em Winkin, Y (org) *Les Moments et leurs Hommes*. Paris, Seuil, 1988: 156.