

Viewing Brazil: Local audiences and the interpretation of the nation

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The fundamental problem is therefore to produce the people. More exactly, it is to make the people produce itself (sic) continually as national community. Or again, it is, to produce the effect of unity by virtue of which the people will appear, in everyone's eyes 'as a people', that is, as the basis and origin of political power.

Etienne Balibar, 1988/1995, p 93-94

In the movie *Bye Bye Brazil* (1980), the filmmaker Cacá Diegues scripted a scene in which an Indian leader in the Amazon, while drinking a Coca Cola and listening to the national news on the radio, talks about the president of Brazil as the leader of a foreign nation, a nation to which he did not belong. That image, that construction of distance and separation between oneself and the nation to which that person belongs, raises questions regarding what it means to be part of a nation. This representation, a case of a dissonant national identity, where different nations are imagined, poses broader questions about constituting national imagined communities. This mediatic creation poses dilemmas: can a person be part of nation and not share a sense of belonging to that imagined community (Anderson, 1983)? Do people imagine the "same" nation? If not, how does this imagining of difference affect a sense of membership? How does a person's feeling of isolation,

marginalization and disenfranchisement from mediated notions of the nation hinder his or her sense of national identity?

Since the landmark study by Benedict Anderson (1983), several scholars have investigated the relevance of mass media and popular culture to the construction of a nation's identity, and to the imagination of the nation. Recent literature has underscored the importance of mediatic texts to the constitution of the contemporary national identities, many of which are the artificial and forced result of colonization processes and postcolonial struggles to re-define a sense of nationhood in post-independence societies. In Brazil, several scholars have investigated the role of telenovelas, highly popular primetime serial dramas, in the imagining of the nation. Brazil, independent from Portugal since 1822, has a population of 170 millions (Censos XXXX). Close to 50 percent identified themselves of mixed ancestry: Whites, Blacks and Indians. A very small percentage define themselves as Indians (3% ?????), Blacks (12%????) and Whites (40%????), Asians (1%????). The absence of strong pre-colonial cultures has facilitated the construction of a national ideology that permeates 8 millions square kilometers. As Hobsbawn (19XX) notes, the idea of a nation is a historically recent phenomenon dating to the 1830s. Chauí describes the foundation myths and the formation of Brazil's national identity, but she stops short of discussing the role of media and information technologies in the maintenance and reproduction of these myths and the imagining of Brazil's contemporary national identity.

For Bucci (2000), television acts as the main mediator between each Brazilian and his or her imagined national identity. Television undoubtedly mediates Brazilians' national identity, but for some Brazilians, those at the periphery of the urban world

privileged on television's representations, the notion of the nation is fraught with conflictive emotions: patriotism and pride, isolation and rejection. This seems to lead to a fractured national identity, one in which the citizen/TV viewer is aware of his or her Brazilianidad but at the same time s/he feels alienated by the televised construction of the nation. In this paper I question the problematic nature of using dominant mass media to analyze the constitution of a nation's identity. Based on ethnographic work in a rural community in Northeast Brazil, I describe how local residents, aware of the nation and conscious of their political and geographical ties to Brazil, nevertheless felt isolated and pushed away by the dominant media that reinforced, according to local residents, that the Brazil they inhabited and treasured was not the Brazil the rest of the nation inhabited and certainly not the one they felt they belonged to. This schism between the 'local' national identity and the national identity constructed through dominant mediatic texts underscores the problematic nature of contemporary arguments about the constitution of national identities.

Edensor (2002) stresses how national identity is "shaped through shared points of commonality in popular culture and in its grounding in everyday life." If, as I argue in this paper, the points of commonalities are de-emphasized by the dominant media, this shared ideal of a national identity can be fractured. Edensor argues that traditional cultural ingredients of national identity formation carry less weight as part of a mediascape where they "are commodified, or become more diffused amongst competing groups" (p. 9). Discussing Billig's (1995) *Banal Nationalism*, he writes:

The reproduction of national identity ...is grounded in the habitual assumptions about belonging that permeate the media, where the term 'we' is unreflexively

used as a signifier of ‘us’ as members of the nation, by politicians, sports writers and broadcasters, and even academics. [...]. It is assumed that we – the readers or viewers – are part of the nation – ‘*the*’ economy, government, countryside is our economy, government, countryside. This constitutes part of the way in which nations are ‘naturalised’, absorbed into a common-sense view about *the way the world is*, and invested with moral values, which elevate the national over other social groupings.

For Barker (1999, p 5-6; cited in Edensor 2002) television “addresses me in my living room as a part of a nation and situates me in the rhythms of a national calendar.” But does this awareness of the “national calendar,” this naturalization of the nations guarantee a sense of belonging and identification? Does it lead to the imagining of the same nation? Woodward (1997) argues, “the difference between national identities...lies in the different ways they are imagined” (p.18). Consequently, one could argue that even within a nation different national identities, which are differently imagined, co-exist.

In Macambira, in rural Rio Grande do Norte, residents mostly knew about the outside world through television or migration. Many residents had relatives or friends who moved South and became a source of information that sometimes reinforced television and sometimes challenged. A few, mostly males, had lived in the industrial South as temporary migrants. The local residents’ views of the nation were primarily the reflection of the newscast, news magazine shows and fictional programs such as telenovelas.

The most popular newscast was broadcast by Globo Network [the largest Brazilian network and main producer of telenovelas], from Monday to Saturday at 8 pm

between two telenovelas. It was a half hour national news program that focused on national and international politics with inclusion of major events and national and international tragedies. The Northeast of Brazil fared poorly in this newscast. Traditionally undercovered, the region appeared on the newscast when plagued by severe droughts or when a particular political incident took place. The vast expanse of this geographic region, defined as the Northeast within Brazil, also guaranteed that the coverage was primarily focused on the larger costal capitals such as Salvador, Recife and Fortaleza. The rural areas were mostly invisible except for occasional stories of human interest: the suffering of local residents because of severe droughts; religious devotion in celebration of certain events or in hope to overcome the droughts; the economic backwardness; the patriarchal traditionalist values. In recent years the state capitals in the region have attracted larger numbers of tourists for off-season carnivals. The coverage of those events focused on the beautiful beaches and the music, creating a sense of exoticism and easy, relaxed living that reinforced some of the Southern stereotypes of that region: laziness and an unwillingness to work, which are typically used to explain the level of local underdevelopment. Structural factors are rarely used to explain the economic plight of the local population. The larger numbers of migrants that moved to the South throughout the last century were central to the economic development of Brazil's industrial centers, but the Northeastern migrants were normally unwelcome and discriminated against, leading to periodic conflicts and an intensification of a sense of exploitation and marginalization. These experiences traveled back to migrants' communities of origin, mixed with the awe and shock over Southern life styles and news about their economic successes promoted by their labor. These conflictive emotions lead

to a paradoxical state of marginalization/desire: wanting to belong, to benefit from the economic wealth, and to experience the urban lifestyle, but at the same time wanting to avoid the discrimination and loss of traditions associated with migration and assimilation.

The telenovelas in Brazil are mostly set in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, with a few set in fictional locations or other parts of Brazil. The Northeast sometimes is included as a location when the plot develops in an exotic coastal town. Sometimes the fictional locations are stylized rural towns that have many of the traditional, folkloric characteristics associated with rural towns in the Northeast: i.e.: exacerbated patriarchy; *coronelism* – the control of the communities political life by a local boss; mystical events; and religious devotion. Good examples of these types of telenovelas are some of the most popular in the history of the genre: *Roque Santeiro* (1986); *O Bem Amado* (1973); *A Indomada* (1997); *Renascer* (1993), etc. Most telenovelas develop around middle-class, urban characters consequently promoting urban, middle-class values, attitudes, and behaviors. According Fadul and McAnanay (1998), of the Globo telenovelas produced from 1970 to 1995, 81 percent were set in an urban location and only 19 percent were located in rural areas. Most families had either no children or one child.

This limited coverage and representation, perceived as a bias by many residents in Macambira, impacted viewers' imagined nation and their sense of belonging to that idealized community.

Media technology and the promotion of an unified Brazil

In Brazil, since the World War II years, and the Vargas dictatorship (193, radio has been used to promote a Brazilian national identity. Chauí (2000) is discussing the

verdeamarelismo doctrine (green-yellow nationalism), talks about the government's use of *Hora do Brazil*, a radio show aired in the early evenings since the mid-1940s, to promote the integration of Brazilians in rural and remote areas into the national collectivity. In the late 1960s, the military dictatorship that took over in 1964 invested heavily in the telecommunications infrastructure to create a national television system that could be used to promote the national ideology (Mattos, 1980, 2000; Straubhaar, 19XX; Lima, 19XX; 19XX). Television in general, and Globo network in particular, played a central role in this process of disseminating the national ideology through its nightly newscast, as well as through fictional programs such as telenovelas. Interestingly, these melodramatic serial programs also became a point of struggle over the national identity. The nation conveyed in these texts, as Hamburger (1999) argues, is not identified only by political and ideological values but also by social behaviors, consumerist values, and gender attitudes.

Unlike soap operas in the United States, telenovelas last for six to eight months, run Monday through Saturday on primetime, and center around a leading romantic couple and their struggles, normally the result of class differences, to fulfill their love. Unlike some of the other telenovela producing centers in Latin America, such as Mexico or Venezuela, the Brazilian telenovelas have become over the years a central sphere for the discussion of the nation. Hamburger (1999) argues that telenovelas, because they

embody a variety of ideological contents, they construct daily life parameters of a national imagined community [...]. The nation here is not reduced to what institutional discourses and policies define as the nation. The nation as represented in telenovelas does not necessarily correspond to any coherent

ideological project. The nation here is translated into the discussion of ideal models of women, of family, of fashion, slang and music, mixing conventional discourses of various sources. In telenovelas, national representations are continuously updated and actualized in concrete everyday referents. National symbols such as the flag, soccer, *bahianas*, the modernist architecture of Brasilia, the national capital, the Amazon and so on, frame narratives that capture and express ongoing practices and notions about romantic relations, gender roles and family structure (p.42).

Hamburger contends that telenovelas create a shared national repertoire, a “common idiom, a body of production, reception, and audio-visual dramatic conventions that over time have become familiar to an unusually wide segment of viewers that includes Brazilians of different social classes, ages, gender and geographical regions of the country” (pp. 41-42). Through this shared repertoire, the author postulates, Brazilians “in the poor neighborhoods or in isolated villages in the Amazon express their will to learn the necessary repertoire to be included in the national society” (p. 43). The question that I pose in this study is to what extent the desire to learn and participate in this shared repertoire actually implies a sense of belonging to the nation. It seems to me, based on my work in rural communities in Brazil, that this national repertoire creates a sense of unfulfilled desire, a sense that the nation belongs to those in the urban centers who are upper-middle-class and can buy the fashions in the telenovelas and engage in the behaviors seen on screen. The schism, however, remains in the desire to learn this repertoire and the feeling that their own identity and culture is not included, or valued, within this vocabulary that constitute the nation. In this astute analysis of the elements

that constitute the national mediated repertoire, Hamburger does not include references to the poor and isolated communities in rural Brazil. The Amazon of the shared national repertoire is the exotic Amazon of jungles and adorned Indians, noble savages, and exotic fauna. The Northeast's dry, poverty, and traditionalism are not part of this shared repertoire of the modern, urban Brazil imagined in the national media.

Porto (1998), discussing the role of telenovelas in the development of a national political identity, writes that

in responding to the growing political mobilization against the authoritarian regime and a stronger civil society, Globo incorporated new themes and demands in its programming. If the previous emphasis on national integration through the market and consumerism was not abandoned, a more critical view of the process of modernization soon developed. One of the most fundamental aspects of this change was the introduction of discussions about social problems that had tended to be absent from television, including the newscast... There is still a focus on the world of middle class in the telenovelas and the representation of working class continues to be a caricature (p. 21-22).

These representations increase the possibility of a rupture in the identificatory processes between rural and working-class populations and media texts. In interviews conducted in the urban slums of São Paulo, Moreira (2000) described how, spontaneously, residents questioned the possibility of identifying themselves with the image of Brazil constructed by Globo through its telenovelas and newscasts. According to Moreira, the residents found a disjoint between their realities and the realities of the

everyday life of the fictitious communities in the telenovelas. A common critique was that even poor environments on telenovelas looked affluent, clean, and prosperous.

Anderson (1983/1991) proposes that the nation is an imagined political community because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (p. 6). He further asserts that a nation is defined and imagined as limited, sovereign, and as a community. For the purpose of the argument developed here, his notion of the nation as a community is at the core of the challenge posed by mass mediated texts. Anderson writes:

regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each [nation], the nation is always conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imagining (p.7).

Balibar (1988/1995) underscores this notion, arguing that, [i]n the case of national formations, the imaginary which inscribes itself in the real in this way is that of the ‘people.’ It is that of a community which recognizes itself in advance in the institution of the state, which recognizes that state as ‘its own’ in opposition to other states and, in particular, inscribes its political struggles within the horizon of that state” (p. 93).

This notion of recognizing a particular state as ‘its own’ is in accordance with Anderson’s requirement of a sense of national comradeship. However, national communities as deep horizontal comradeship are problematic constructs in an age of

mass mediation. When Brazilians living in the poorest areas of the Northeast see representations of Brazil as urban, modern, wealthy and progressive, and continuously see images of their region and their values under attack either as traditional, primitive, corrupt, or retrograde, the sense of belonging and national unity is put under distress. What needs to be articulated here is, in Balibar's (1988/1995) words, the difference between a mass phenomenon and a phenomenon of individuation, [which] must affect an 'interpellation of individual as subjects' (Althusser) which is much more potent than the mere inculcation of political values..." (p. 94). What needs to be differentiated is also the context in which the sense of belonging and the notion of a national community are considered. Under the distress of war and attack, a situation experienced in the United States since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the sense of cohesion is reinforced because the national community is confronted by international/transnational forces, and few would claim we would ever come to surpass completely the sense of national identity. But in times of peace, particularly prolonged peace, as in the case of Brazil, the threats of foreign aggression and the need to defend the nation, against conquering forces are foreign to the majority of Brazilians. During the last dictatorship [1964-1990], the threat of an attack from Argentina or the United States was inserted in the public discourse, but the idea was never seriously considered. Many times, comedians on late-night TV shows in the 1980s and early 1990s, during severe economic crises, would argue that the best thing that could happen to Brazil would be to be invaded and conquered by the United States.

I am arguing here that the idea of a national identity has to be considered in its fragmented nature. We also need to consider the growing presence and access to

mediated and conflicting notions of the nation that can potentially alienate rather than integrate the members of the nation who are peripheral to the power structures available to middle- and upper-class urban citizens.

The Brazilians from Macambira

Globalized at the periphery of the world

'O mundo está furado'¹

The hollowed or pierced world described by Gidião in the title of this section referred to the incredible changes in his access to consumer goods. He had a VCR, a satellite dish, and a store with a small inventory of imported goods. He sold transistor radio, toys, tools, cups and dishes, pirated tapes of popular music, etc. These were low-end, low-cost products that he sold for a few dollars at most. This access to a variety of goods previously unavailable, a phenomena spreading throughout Brazil since the early 1990s, left many anxious for more. Many television viewers desired the consumer goods and the lifestyle on the screen. With the economic changes occurring in Brazil during the mid 1990s, with the currency stabilized and inflation under control, many in Macambira felt their money would allow a more stable standard of living (this has certainly changed in the last three years with the growing economic crises afflicting Brazil). This economic confidence, associated with the greater availability and visibility of consumer goods through national ads on the stations received through the growing number of satellite dishes, created a desire to have access to the world beyond the local borders, the national and global world as seen on TV.

¹ "O mundo está furado" was an expression used by Gidião frequently when he wanted to talk about globalization. With a degree in economics and a hunger for news, he was quite well informed. He knew about the idea of globalization even if it was not very well articulated. A seller of low-cost imported products from Asia, he was always mesmerized by the idea that he was selling something made in China, on the other side of the world. To end most of his conversations about the future of the world and its economy he would say, "the world is pierced" (hollowed).

Consumption became a marker of social status and identity among the limited upper class in Macambira. Most of the upper class sent their children to a private school in Caicó. For many, their children's education was a way to assure participation in a social network. Nevertheless, going to school in Caicó was not only expensive; it also created demands among the children who wanted to participate in activities unavailable in their local community. The desire to attend parties in Caicó at friends' houses and the need to dress accordingly were all burdens, but at the same time these practices were a source of distinction in Bourdieu's (19XX) sense. In providing educational capital to their children these families were also acquiring social status within the community and ascertaining their status as members of a larger regional and national community defined by class status.

The mayor's daughters' trip to Disneyworld in July of 1996 was the ultimate symbol of class ascension and participation in the global economy. The two older daughters, 15 and 17, spent two weeks at Disney with a group from the state capital. Some of their colleagues from the private school in Caicó went on the same tour. Most locals, who jealously talked about their trip, saw the US\$5000 cost of the package for two as outrageous. Many waited curiously for their return to hear what they had seen. This was the first time that anyone left Macambira to go on an international trip. The daughters of the mayor spent most of their time in their house in Caicó where they belonged to the local elite. In Macambira they were a source of information about fashion, urban lifestyle, and modern life, as well as the target of gossip. They shared their magazines with local friends and spent many hours chatting with other teens.

This participation in the national and global culture, and a sense of belonging, even if fictive, was fragile and normally restricted to a very small number of wealthier locals. Among the majority of the population a gap existed between desire and access, promoting the local population to deal continuously with a sense of alienation from the televised nation.

In the local Macambira school's office, the TV set was normally on. This small room was the main and only office and housed the principal's desk, the teacher's room, the meeting room, and archives. The TV and VCR, hooked to a dish recently sent by the federal government, were also housed there. I lingered in the room often, chatting with faculty, workers, and an occasional student. One of those evenings Gilda and Lucia were watching TV. Prompted by a commercial for toilet paper, Gilda described a news story she had seen in the afternoon newscast about a toilet paper produced in Japan that showed by changing its color the level of acidity in the urine. The story proceeded to compare the quality of toilet paper in different parts of the world, "and as usual the Brazilian one was the worst," she concluded. This awareness about novelties and modernity stressed Brazil's peripheral position in the world order, with a low quality of life and goods. But this sense of being in the periphery of the world is underscored in Macambira by the awareness about its own peripheral position in relation to the urban centers of Brazil. So if Brazil is in the periphery, Macambira is even further out, away from the center of global modern life.

Television seemed to continuously reinforce this position, while allowing viewers to be connected to a broader world, to know about what was going on in other places. As Pace (1993) found in Gurupá, after the arrival of television, people knew more about the outside world and events in Brasilia, the national capital, and other nations, than before. But they also knew more about the 'nation' and the world than they knew about regional and state politics. For people in the remote Gurupá in the Amazon region, the state capital of Belém became more remote and less interesting than the geographically remote urban centers of the South. This was a sensation shared by many in Macambira. A constant complaint was that they knew less about what was going on in Natal, the state capital, than they knew about the South, especially São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. In part this was because local newscasts were underdeveloped and those with the satellite dish could not

access them anyway.² This displacement from the regional level reduced political and economic knowledge about the state capital as well as access to consumption opportunities. While the novelty of television in Gurupá created an intense desire for news and knowledge about the outside world, the long-term relationship with television in Macambira (who had some exposure to the medium since the early 1980s) increases the desire to know more about their own region.

Esquerda, a married, 30 year old avid television viewer, believed that through ads one could find ways to save a lot of money, especially in his case, with relatives in Natal who could buy an item advertised on TV for him. Nevertheless, his feeling of alienation from the regional reality was very clear. “We don’t follow what goes on in the Rio Grande do Norte. We know more about the South than we know about here” (January 17, 1997). This sense of alienation not only from the commercial opportunities but the statewide political, social, and cultural news created a sense of displacement from the regional reality. It created a gulf that several viewers dreaded. Raul, an elementary teacher in a rural school complained that he was tired of knowing so much about the South and not having access to news about the region he lived in. For Raul there also was a bias in the news coverage about the Northeast, not only in quantity but in kind as well. According to him, the content of the national newscast was biased towards the industrial urban centers of the South, and when the Northeast was covered, he argued, it was always negative. It represented the region as backwards and a financial and social burden to the developed, progressive South.

² Television was received in Macambira through a satellite dish that captured the signal direct form the national feed from Rio de Janeiro in the case of *Rede Globo*. This signal came with national advertisements but not local ones that were inserted by the station in the state capital, Natal. Due to the terrain and distance, Macambira could not get a clear signal from Natal. Nevertheless, television provided a source of information about goods and through entertainment provided a source for lifestyles, values, and attitudes. Through language, fashion, mannerisms, style, behaviors and attitudes the characters on television shows, most of which were fictional, provided viewers in Macambira with a sense of what they could be doing if they were in an urban center. In that process TV content created an unmet desire that many strived to achieve, fantasizing about places and behaviors that were perceived to be modern, urban, and fun. Younger viewers more readily engaged in this process, but mature viewers were not immune. What seemed to change were the objects of attention, what were perceived to be important, valued, and desired.

Two teachers, Rosa and Zilvania, were listening to the newscast after lunch while they prepared to go to class. On the *Jornal Hoje*, the afternoon newscast, they were interviewing two of the stars of *Malhação*, a late afternoon soap opera that Globo had broadcast every afternoon at 5 p.m. since 1995. The show revolved around several students and instructors in a fitness and health center in Rio de Janeiro.³ The culture of bodies and exercise served as a venue for many insertions of products targeting the upscale youth market. Those two actors were complaining they were besieged by the fans in the Northeast. Rosa and Zilvania were appalled: “There they go again bad mouthing the Northeast. Now we are *taradas* (*nymphomaniacs*). The Northeast is always the worst in the nation. Any time I hear they [the news media] will have a story about the Northeast, I cringe in my seat because I know it will be bad” (Fieldnotes, June 12, 1996). The two teachers were speaking simultaneously and were clearly irritated.

These were not the only instances in which I was exposed to locals complaining about feeling in the periphery of the Brazil portrayed on the newscast. Throughout my stay, residents complained about this sense of misrepresentation. The national news media, mostly located in the South covered the Northeast with a certain set of preconceived images and biases. The Northeast that they expected to find was the one they came looking for and if they did not find it they seemed intent on recreating it *as it should be*.

This was a concern that many local residents expressed towards my work, fearing that I was going to misrepresent them as many others had done before. This sensation became clear after *Veja* magazine (*Entre a tela e a vida real*, February 12, 1997) came to Macambira to visit the site in which my research was conducted. The idea was to write a long story about the project which was examining the impact of telenovelas on demographic behavior and which my ethnographic research was part of. The problem

³ In 2002 this program was revamped and is now set in a pre-college preparatory school. This is the first attempt by Globo network to develop a soap opera in the English language version of the genre.

was that for many residents the magazine was only interested in misrepresenting them. (I have to admit that wasn't far from the truth. The reporter wanted Macambira to be the isolated community in which viewers would sit on the main square and watch the only TV, the public TV, and would parade on the streets imitating everything from the television.) When the article came out with a large photo of a couple of people sitting on the square watching TV and only two lines saying: "a small town of embroiderers where television is watched at the main square – part of the population is so poor they can not purchase their own TV set" (Entre a tela e a vida real, February 12, 1997), the general feeling was that I was contributing to that kind of representation. It took an article by the *Tribuna do Norte*, a paper from the state capital to redress the reality of the community and voice the view of many locals that they were the target of discrimination. "In the community, the comments are that the magazine opted for the easy way, promoting the preconceived notion that the South has of the Northeast, mixing the traditional ingredients: misery, misinformation and laziness" (Fontes, 1997).

Imagined national identities, but not necessarily the same imagined nation

Debate about the meaning of a nation's past, about the nature of commitments involved in membership of a nation, and about the criteria of membership, are all part of a healthy national culture. The content of a national identity will change as the result of these debates.

(Poole, 2003 p. 278)

In the last two decades, the anti-Northeastern sentiments in the South have been exacerbated. A short lived, and with limited support, separatist movement in the extreme South proposed creating a nation out of the three furthestmost states. The argument of the

leadership of the movement was that the Northeast was draining the resources of the nation and not contributing anything. In the industrial suburbs of São Paulo, where large numbers of recent migrants as well as older generations of Northeasterners have settled and prospered, neo-nazis, skinheads, and other racist groups have attacked people they stereotypically identified, by perceived visual markers of difference, as Northeasterners. Southern towns were sending Northeasterners who arrived at their bus terminals back to their places of origin or other states, saying they were not welcome. While these initiatives by local governments stirred heated national debate about the right of free movement within the nation, in many prosperous small towns of the South and Southeast the practice continued.

I remark about these racist practices in Southern Brazil to underscore that television is not the only force creating a sense of peripheral existence. The news about these events percolates through the system, both mediated as well as interpersonal, to reach interior communities of the Northeast. Local residents would tell me that the only reason they went south was to find a job and save money. Most felt violated by the urban lifestyle and by the discrimination they had to endure. Normally segregation, arguably based on income, was also a de facto racial/identity-based segregation. The realization that you and your 'regional compatriots' are not welcome in other parts of your nation; the continuous absence of images that allowed for local residents to identify with in the mediated nation and the few stereotypical misrepresentations available in the dominant mass media created a sense that the Brazil they lived in was very different than the Brazil the television help them imagined. These conflictive imagined nations; these different communities that permeated their understanding of the nation and their role within it

challenges one of the requirements of Anderson's idea of an imagined national community, that we can perceived a sense of camaraderie, a horizontal integration of all citizens. Somewhere else I have talked about other challenges to national integration do to lack of cultural capital (2001) or political knowledge (forthcoming).

The fissures in the imagined national community that I discussed in this paper, the fractured Brazil of the different populations within Brazil are voiced in the anger of the school teachers in Macambira who resent the representation of Northeastern women as sex starved; it comes out on the resentment towards the dominant media's lack of representations that validate their existence and contributions to the nation; it is voiced in the bitterness towards the stereotypical representations of the people and the region and the discrimination against migrant workers in the South. This distance, however, is not only the result of geographical location; class has a role in it as well. The wealthy daughters of the mayor, in their visit to Disneyworld and their possibility of class and geographical mobility, are part of a small group that sees the nation as an open landscape for their exploration and growth. Unlike most other residents, few saw their lives connected by the mediated texts to those lives of urban youth.

This raises theoretical questions regarding how can we talk about nations and national identities. It seems to me that different levels of imagining and belonging exist. The vicarious identification with the nation needs to be understood in its greater complexity in contemporary mediated societies. How does the war on Iraq, and the war on terrorism in the United States interpellate (Althusser) citizens of middle eastern descent, or muslim devotion? How does it interpellates antiwar protesters? Does this conflict creates a fractured national identity or is this only the result of normal democratic

processes of dissent? Are there macro levels of nation identity and more micro levels that relate to ones personal experience with the imagining of the nation? If so, how do these processes of individual identification and distancing affect the functioning of these citizens in a democratic state? The people from Macambira have limited participation in the democratic making of the nation. They are peripheral even in their own imagining of the nation. They see themselves as disempowered and consequently struggle to even conceptualize of opportunities to be an active force within the nation.