



# Pachangas: Borderlands Music, U.S. Politics, and Transnational Marketing

*Margaret E. Dorsey*

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A uniquely Tejano version of the old-fashioned political barbeque, the traditional South Texas pachanga allowed politicians to connect with voters in a relaxed setting where all could enjoy live music and abundant food and drink along with political speeches and dealmaking. Today's pachanga still combines politics, music, and votes—along with a powerful new element. Corporate sponsorships have transformed the pachanga into a major marketing event, replete with celebrity performers and product giveaways, which can be recorded and broadcast on TV or radio to vastly increase the reach of the political—and the commercial—messages.

This book explores the growing convergence of politics, transnational marketing, and borderlands music in the South Texas pachanga. Anthropologist Margaret Dorsey has observed some one hundred pachangas and interviewed promoters, politicians, artists, and local people. She investigates how candidates and corporations market their products to Hispanic consumers, as well as how the use of traditional music for marketing is altering traditional forms such as the corrido. Her multifaceted study also shows clearly that the lines of influence run both ways—while corporate culture is transforming the traditions of the border, Tejano voters/consumers only respond to marketing appeals (whether for politicians or products) that resonate with their values and the realities of their lives. Far from being an example of how transnational marketing homogenizes culture, the pachanga demonstrates that local cultures can exert an equally strong influence on multinational corporations.

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