MULTICULTURALISM FOR THE MASSES: SOCIAL ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY POST-9/11
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The terrorist attacks of 9/11 have brought an old problem into new focus: how to unite a population potentially divided along racial, ethnic and denominational fault lines. In the light of unprovoked and indiscriminate racist attacks on Muslim-looking minorities, multi-media advertising campaigns were mounted in several countries in order to quell racism and sell multiculturalism. This paper examines the use of advertising campaigns as a medium for public diplomacy[1], and focuses on the promotion of national unity out of cultural diversity.

Three recent ad campaigns are selected as case studies: the US Ad Council's "I am an American," the UK Commission for Racial Equality's "The Unique Faces of Britain," and the equivalent Scottish campaign "One Scotland. Many Cultures." These campaigns are compared to "The Family of Man" exhibition of 1955, and to the groundbreaking "United Colors of Benetton" campaign of the last two decades.

Some revealing similarities between social and commercial advertising are discussed, concerning issues such as branding, a-historicism and false advertising. The paper concludes with a call to promote intercultural communication, as opposed to multiculturalism, on the grounds that the former invites much needed debate whereas the latter, as currently advertised, discourages it.

Multiculturalism and Social Ads

Multiculturalism, or cultural pluralism, refers both to a state of affairs and to a goal: the former meaning recognises the co-existence of many cultures within a region or nation; the latter identifies the aim of multiculturalism to promote the equality of different cultures, both in the eyes of the law and in the life of society. Multiculturalism therefore promotes cross-cultural understanding and encourages the active participation of cultural representatives in social, economic and political affairs. It discourages discrimination, isolation, disempowerment, hatred and violence.

There is always a potential for conflict between plurality and cohesion and, in particular, between multiculturalism and national unity. In human affairs, diversity all too often degrades into division, and division into discrim-

ination. Why this should be calls for analyses based on sociology and psychology, but by way of a quick answer, we may draw on a distinction made in sociolinguistics concerning standard language. A standard language serves as a norm against which dialectal variants can be measured. Since these variants are established on empirical grounds including phonological, syntactic and lexical criteria, dialects are therefore *non-standard* by definition. However, what is non-standard on empirical grounds to the linguist very readily becomes *sub-standard* to the speakers of a language, thus acquiring an ideological dimension. In so far as we are all guilty of confusing non-standard with sub-standard (and how many of us can honestly say that we haven't experienced a twinge of prejudice at the sound of certain accents?), we have an insight into why diversity might result in discrimination.

How can one counteract this tendency? An obvious answer is to subsume diverse subcategories within a unified supercategory. Depending on the balance between persuasion and force, one can either *respect* diversity while emphasising unity, as is suggested by President Clinton's maxim "diversity is our strength," or one can *suppress* diversity in order to create or consolidate a superordinate unity, as did President Tito in former Yugoslavia. Advertising is the obvious medium for governments that opt for persuasion.

Social advertising, known as Public Service Advertising (PSA) in America, aims to sell concepts rather than commodities and addresses issues in the public interest, such as health, safety and racial equality. The American Ad Council, which is responsible for PSA, states its aims as follows:

> Our mission is to identify a select number of significant public issues and stimulate action on those issues through communications programs that make a measurable difference in our society.[2]

The "significant public issue" addressed by the three advertising campaigns discussed below is the promotion of a multicultural national identity.

I am an American[3]

This television ad shows individuals of different ages, races, religions and occupations looking at the camera and saying, each in their own distinct accent and intonation, the single sentence: "I am an American." The text at the end spells out the national creed: *E Pluribus Unum* (out of many, one). According to the ad's creators, "the advertising communicates the idea that our differences equal the very foundation and spirit of this nation."[4]

"I am an American" was conceived in the hours following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington by a group of advertising executives determined to respond constructively to the calamity. They decided to create a Public Service Ad that provides a visual rendering of the racial and cultural diversity that characterises America. They explain their aim as follows:

> From the nation's original creed rises a message that has never been more appropriate than now. GSD&M Advertising and the Ad Council have partnered to let the world know that diversity unites America, and that in the wake of this national tragedy, now is the time to embrace and celebrate that diversity instead of letting it divide us.[5]

"I am an American" proved to be hugely popular, as witnessed by the many laudatory responses sent to the Ad Council's "What People are saying" web page.[6] The fact that the ad emphasises being an American, rather than a "hyphenated" American (Hispanic-American, Irish-American etc), was singled out by some as a positive step towards a new, integrated America in which cultural differences are relegated to the nation's history. To others, the range of skin tones and accents spoke more eloquently of cultural diversity than words might have done. Either way, the ad's simplicity was the essence of its strength: a direct appeal for unity in the face of adversity, aimed at a population otherwise divided in a multitude of ways. The appeal, moreover, was based on the nation's founding creed, thus giving the call for unity a historical authorisation and patriotic component. America was built by immigrants and continues to see itself as a nation of immigrants. "I am an American" therefore promoted a national identity based on an emotive vision of multiculturalism as something always destined to be, something already largely achieved, and something to be strongly defended if America is to survive as a nation post-9/11.

The Unique Faces of Britain[7]
This campaign, produced by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), consists of a poster featuring numerous head and shoulder shots of ordinary people on the street. As with the "I am an American" campaign, the individual pictures represent different ages, ethnic groups and in this case, towns of origin. The heading reads: "Britain. We all make it unique." The message adds: "56 million people, over 300 languages and at least 14 faiths make us what we are today."The CRE explains the campaign in the following words:

The unique faces of Britain poster campaign celebrates and encourages recognition of ethnic diversity in this country. It acknowledges modern Britain for what it is — a fascinating multicultural, multiracial, multi-faith nation.[8]

Regional variants of this poster were produced in some cities. The Unique Faces of London poster, for instance, produced in conjunction with the Greater London Authority, "features photographs of men, women and children of different ethnic backgrounds, creating a snap-shot of the many faces of London in 2001." It was produced, says the CRE "in response to fears of a racist backlash against London's Asian communities due to the current international situation," and the message on the poster reads:

Terror respects no one — let's not forget, more than 600 Muslims were killed on September 11th. And Islamophobia and racist attacks create exactly the same climate of fear terrorists want to spread. Let's show that they have no place in London.[9]

Southampton City Council also produced its own equivalent ad. The message, based on a statement made by council leaders of all political groups immediately after the tragic events of 11 September 2001, reads:

Southampton has always been a multi-cultural city and we value the diversity of our local communities. These communities and the individuals within them have always shown understanding for one another. This is one of our city's greatest strengths. By working together we will ensure that the co-operation which exists between all communities in our city is sustained.[10]

Although the impact of the message might seem to be in inverse proportion to its wordiness, the reaction to this campaign was nevertheless very positive: "The response has been great. We've had calls from local people saying it's really made them feel at one with their neighbours — and interestingly those calls haven't just been from minority groups."[11]

One Scotland. Many Cultures[12]
The Scottish anti-racist campaign, which was not conceived solely as a reaction to the racist fallout of the 9/11 attacks, is a more sustained multi-media venture than its English or American equivalents. It consists of an extensive

website which provides information on diverse topics related to the integration of ethnic minorities in Scotland. These include a history of migration, comprehensive statistics on demographic trends, as well as notification of nationwide activities and events related to the campaign, chatlines, teaching resources, useful links and much more besides. The aim of the "One Scotland. Many Cultures" campaign is explained on its website as follows:

> This website is part of a campaign organised by the Scottish Executive to tackle and eliminate racism in our country. We believe that a just society is one free from prejudice and discrimination. Our anti-racism campaign is based on that belief.

Campaign material includes several TV and radio ads. None of these adopt the direct "face-to-camera" approach of the other two campaigns discussed above. The TV ad that might best compare with the Ad Council and CRE equivalents is "Tug of War," in which images of different coloured hands and faces are spliced in quick succession, the hands all pulling a rope. Because of the alternating angles of view, most people on first seeing the ad imagine that two teams are playing a game of tug of war, one coloured, the other white. However, the last shot zooms out to show a single mixed race team pulling together under a huge flag of St Andrews. The opposing team is off-screen, and the campaign motto, "One Scotland. Many Cultures," reinforces the message of unity and strength through diversity.

The significant difference between the Scottish ad and those from the US and UK is that "Tug of War" invites a double-take by setting up an expectation (of two opposing teams of different colours) only to reverse it. In so far as surprise creates awareness, this ad achieves a heightened awareness of the possibility that prejudice may lurk in the shadows of our own psyche. This approach contrasts with the other two ads under discussion, which present multiculturalism as a given. In these cases, the invitation to viewers is not to question their own prejudices, or to enter into discussion or even to find out more about the issues involved, but to join the gallery of multicultural, multiracial and multifaith citizens already on display.

This is not to say that thought provoking anti-racist ads have not been produced in response to 9/11. "We all came over in different ships, but we're in the same boat now" has all the wit and density of meaning as an aphorism. The same can be said of the single line of text printed on the American flag: "Racism can hide in the strangest places. Like behind patriotism." This was an arresting message at a time when the flag was seen as the symbol of patri-

otism and all things good about America (Wal-Mart sold 88,000 American flags on September 11, 2001 compared to 6,400 that same day the previous year). In another powerful ad, "Americans stand united," the twin towers of the World Trade Center are replaced with two columns of text which council against hatred and revenge.[13] Examples of thought provoking pre-9/11 anti-racist ads can be found in *Social Work: Saatchi and Saatchi's Cause-Related Ideas*.[14] Despite ample evidence of clever advertising, the fact remains that the most popular and influential 9/11 social ads were not those that queried the causes of terrorism, but those that emphatically asserted the power of multiculturalism. Since my aim is to evaluate how governments use persuasion in order to promote multiculturalism, these are the ads I shall focus on.

In concluding this part of the discussion, it is worth highlighting the similarities between these three campaigns. All three were developed following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on America, two in direct response to them, and all three appeal to a sense of unity which *encompasses* diversity. They claim that national strength and unity are to be achieved not despite, but because of and by means of ethnic diversity. Finally, all three campaigns proved to be genuinely moving and persuasive, affirming a sense of identity and of belonging which the majority of people, judging from their feedback, were grateful to be reminded of and proud to be a part of. While it is admittedly difficult to measure the influence of such advertising, these three campaigns nevertheless epitomise the attempt to create "communication programs which make a measurable difference in society."

Precedents

One might be justified in asking why, if these campaigns to promote multiculturalism are proving so successful in stimulating patriotism and creating a new sense of belonging, a similar appeal had not been made before? Is a photo campaign all it takes to dispel racial problems once and for all and to replace divisiveness in the world with one big happy family?

"The Family of Man" exhibition of 1955, curated by Edward Steichen for the Museum of Modern Art in New York, was conceived in precisely such a spirit of universal brotherhood. In the words of its curator:

> The Family of Man has been created in a passionate spirit of devoted love and faith in man… It was conceived as a mirror of the essential oneness of mankind throughout the world.[15]

The exhibition, which subsequently toured the world to great acclaim, consisted of 503 photographs from 68 countries, selected from over 2 million submissions, showing men, women and children engaged in the daily activities of sleeping, eating, playing, working, crying, washing, ageing, dieing and more besides. As with the three social ads discussed in the previous section, this exhibition carried emotive appeal for many viewers who were inspired by its assertion of unity across boundaries. As we shall see, however, it also came under attack for abstracting human experience from the historical context of time, place and socio-economic circumstances.

More impactful still than "The Family of Man," have been the United Colors of Benetton ads, mounted by the Benetton Group since 1985. Benetton is an Italian clothing corporation run by the Toscani family, now with over 5,500 shops across 120 countries. Although its primary product is brightly coloured clothes, it has become indelibly associated with images of ethnic diversity and racial harmony as a result of a long-running, groundbreaking and often controversial advertising campaign.

In line with its brand name, United Colors of Benetton ads[16] typically depict different coloured models, male and female, children and adults, working, playing or just posing together. In some ads, cultural icons such as flags and national costumes provide an overt reference to the identity of the individuals depicted. These are often traditional rivals (American and Russian, Israeli and Palestinian) juxtaposed and seemingly reconciled under the Benetton logo. In other cases, the marriage of opposites is communicated through skin colour alone, as in the case of a black woman nursing a white infant (an ad which proved controversial enough to be withdrawn in America because of its allusions to slave wet nurses), or a black wrist handcuffed to a white one. An albino African and a black face sporting one green eye and one brown take the theme of united colours one conceptual step further as they break down not just cultural but biological norms. The final step is achieved in what proved to be one of the most memorable images of the campaign. It shows three human hearts in a row, raw, shiny and massively enlarged, with one of the words "white," "black," and"yellow" printed on top of each. The message is that under the superficial differences of culture and of skin colour, we all have a common human heart. This particular image provides as graphic a statement of universal humanism as one can find: scratch under the surface and we are all alike.

The effect of such images is twofold. First, high street viewers across the world are invited to see not just racial diversity but more importantly, racial *harmony*, as something trendy and progressive - as a sign of today's street culture and evidence of Benetton's street savvy. Second, Benetton shows itself to

be concerned with the social issues of the day. It does not simply sell clothes; it displays an awareness of and sensitivity to - maybe even a solution to - issues of race relations (and, in its other campaigns, of terrorism, war, AIDS, etc.). Buy Benetton, and you buy into multiculturalism, the campaign suggests.

The Benetton ads most similar to the social ads under discussion in this paper are part of its 1997 campaign. In these posters, head and shoulder shots of ethnically diverse children and youth surround selected articles from the Declaration of Human Rights and from the Commission for the Red Cross. The posters in this campaign all sport the logo of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. If the ideology promoted by the Benetton campaigns up until then was open to the charge of being self-proclaimed, this campaign confers on Benetton the blessing of international-al organisations. Benetton was now officially to be seen as a serious contribu-tor to making the world a better place. This claim to status is reinforced with the current (2003) campaign entitled "Hunger," which carries the logo of the World Food Programme and shows head and shoulder shots of children from Afghanistan.

Why might a clothing company become the champion of racial harmony, human rights, hunger relief and many other urgent concerns of our times? The answer is simple: branding, as discussed next.

Branding Multiculturalism

A number of evident similarities between social and commercial advertising have been touched upon above and merit closer attention here. The salient common denominator involves branding, the conventional meaning of which is to mark something with a recognisable label, as one might mark a cow by burning a number on its flank. Today, branding refers to the defining features of a corporation, and includes its logo, look and message. These constitute a brand identity which, when consistently applied across all outlets, ensures a familiarity and reliability known as "brand promise."

In commercial advertising, branding has come to signal the shift from selling products to selling concepts, values, lifestyles and even ideologies. In the world of commercial advertising, to show a product, as Luciano Benetton himself says, is *banal*.[17] By contrast, to associate a product with a concept and picture that connect, is clever marketing. By repeatedly showing photographs of beautiful multi-ethnic models posing harmoniously together, Benetton transfers upon its brand name, and by extension upon all Benetton products,

a sense of happy universal brotherhood and sisterhood. Furthermore, by placing its own logo next to that of international organisations such as the United Nations, the Red Cross and the World Food Programme, Benetton comes to be associated in people's minds with these official players for good in the world. The often-sensational nature of the Benetton ads, by arresting attention and triggering emotions, further ensures that the company's logo is remembered and recognised world wide since Benetton has a global market.

The branding of social issues such as multiculturalism and human rights by a commercial company is not unique to Benetton. Many companies are content just to display multi-ethnic models, whereas others integrate anti-racist text into their ads. Yet others set themselves up as the champion of a cause, such as empowering women, as in the case of Nike, or promoting human rights, as in the case of Reebok. Whereas advertising promotes products, branding promotes the systems of belief and values which define a corporate culture. Brand identity is therefore determined as much, or possibly more, by message as by product: "Standing up for human rights is a Reebok hallmark - as much a part of our corporate culture and identity as our products."[18]

The following questions arise: what is the relationship between ideology and commerce? What force does a political statement have when it is an integral part of an ad selling a product?[19] To what extent, for instance, is Benetton guilty of cynically exploiting the popular appeal of multiculturalism for the sake of financial gain? On the one hand, some believe that multiculturalism is cheapened by being commodified. On the other hand, others feel that Benetton's campaigns have heightened people's awareness of important social issues, and that heightened sales and heightened awareness, far from being in conflict, represent a double benefit. Yet a third approach (and one which must either be admired for its irony, or read with a generous helping of it), is to be found in the recent book *The Benetton Campaigns*. Here Lorella Salvemini claims that Benetton's photographer, Oliviero Toscani, "denounced the traditional strategy of advertising and replaced its hollow promise of success and happiness with an unflinching treatment of difficult subjects such as sex, death and racism."[20] The implication is that whereas traditional advertising is full of empty promises, Benetton's advertising is not. Before evaluating the nature of Benetton's promises, however, we should first consider the presence of branding in social advertising.

Is branding at all relevant to social advertising, the aim of which from the outset is to sell concepts rather than commodities? Evidence suggests that branding in social advertising is achieved by associating the concept with a product, thus providing a mirror image of branding in commercial advertising.

Colin Powell, for instance, on appointing the top brand manager Charlotte Beers to the role of Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, explained his choice by claiming that:

> There is nothing wrong with getting somebody who knows how to sell something. We are selling a product. We need someone who can rebrand foreign policy, rebrand diplomacy.[21]

What exactly is the product being sold here? Not America itself, but, according to Beers' brief, the defining attributes of the American way of life, namely liberty, democracy and diversity. Since these are not products so much as values, it becomes apparent that Powell was speaking metaphorically. Yet it is a rhetorical turn with two serious implications. The first has to do with marketability, the second with brandability.

A product is a physical entity which serves a particular function, whereas values, which are more abstract and complex than products, cannot be so readily "grasped." Since the essential purpose of metaphors is to help us understand abstract concepts by relating them to more familiar, concrete ones, Powell's claim that selling American values is equivalent to selling products helps us to understand what Beers' job is about: the promotion of American *goods*, in both the concrete and abstract senses of the term. The danger of this kind of equation, however, rests in the oversimplification involved. Democracy, for instance, is not a marketable good. You may be able to promote its benefits by example, but you cannot force people to buy it. Aggressive salesmanship policies that coerce other countries to adopt democracy undermine and negate democracy. The danger of equating democracy with goods, therefore, resides in encouraging people at home to believe that the hard sell of democracy is both good for America and for its "clients."

Secondly, the inherent nature of democracy and diversity are inimical to branding. As noted, the hallmark of branding is the promotion of uniformity; yet imposing homogeneity on democracy and diversity once again involves a contradiction in terms. Naomi Klein makes this point forcefully in her article appropriately entitled "America is not a hamburger." America's attempt to brand its own form of democracy has already met with dissent around the world, not least from countries relegated to the status of "rogue nations" for not conforming to the US template. With regard to diversity, Klein points out that:

> Beers may have convinced Colin Powell to buy Uncle Ben's, but the US is not made up of identical grains of rice or hamburgers or Gap

khakis. Its strongest "brand attribute" is its embrace of diversity, a value Ms Beers is now, ironically, attempting to stamp with cookie-cutter uniformity around the world. The task is not only futile but dangerous.[22]

The reason why branding is dangerous is that it does not invite debate or allow dissent, even though "diversity and debate are the lifeblood of liberty:"

> At its core, branding is about rigorously controlled one-way messages, sent out in their glossiest form, then sealed off from those who would turn corporate monologue into social dialogue.[23]

Powell's metaphorical mapping between American values and commercial products invites people to overlook the inherently discursive nature of values such as democracy and diversity, and encourages them to see them in terms of uniformly packaged goods which deliver to the brand promise.

This criticism levied against the branding of America applies equally to the branding of multiculturalism. Cultural and racial issues are far from being resolved, contrary to the image projected by the campaigns under discussion. In both the US and the UK, ethnic minorities are more likely to be stopped and searched, more likely to be prosecuted and to be given longer jail sentences for equivalent crimes, more likely to be executed (in the US), and more likely to hit a glass ceiling than their white counterparts. Such disconcerting evidence of institutional racism is an issue which needs to be urgently and thoroughly addressed, yet the branding of multiculturalism eschews controversial legislative, policy and social issues.

Oversimplifications

Branding also dangerously oversimplifies complex issues. An example is the equivalence made between skin colour and racial-cum-cultural identity. All the campaign ads discussed above are guilty of reducing the notion of cultural identity to simply one of skin colour and costume. Benetton takes this reductive process one step further by suggesting that skin colour is something fashionable, something that, like clothing, can be put on or taken off. Yet cultural identity involves many more complex issues than colour and costume, not least of which are history, traditions, religion, values, language, opportunities

and expectations. Moreover, race and culture do not necessarily coincide and should not be confused.

Another instance of oversimplification is found in the implicit message that people pictured together are indeed united together in some essential and intentional way. Yet it is perfectly possible that some of the Americans filmed asserting their national identity, or some of the British whose mug shots appear on the same poster, are in real life strongly prejudiced against each other. Photographs decontextualise their subjects, and are subject to editorial recontextualisation: "All photographs are ambiguous. All photographs have been taken out of continuity. … Discontinuity always produces ambiguity."[24] The danger is that because we tend to believe in photographic evidence, we come to believe the *inferences* we ourselves have made about the relationship between the individuals represented.

A related issue concerns the dangers of a-historicism and static humanism. "The Family of Man" exhibition was strongly criticised by the French philosopher Roland Barthes precisely on account of its humanist perspective: "Any classic humanism postulates that in scratching the history of men a little... one very quickly reaches the solid rock of a universal human nature."[25] Barthes claimed the exhibition "aims to suppress the determining weight of History," and yet human responsibility resides precisely in those differences which have been obscured: although we are all born, we have more or less control over our destinies; though we all die, some have no choice but to die in infancy from poverty and medical neglect while others die in old age having enjoyed the best medicine man has to offer; though everyone works, the nature, necessity and rewards of work are not individually determined but are subject to all sorts of socio-historical variables.

Since these differences are man-made, to subsume them under the glossy cover of humanism is irresponsible because it elides discussion of - and the possibility of change to - these social determinants: "The final justification of all this Adamism is to give to the immobility of the world the alibi of a 'wisdom' and a 'lyricism,'"says Barthes, "which only make the gestures of man look eternal the better to defuse them." By presenting multiculturalism as an eternal good, these ads deflect attention from the evils suffered at the hands of man, thus "defusing" them of culpability. Ultimately, myth does not so much deny things, as "give them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact."[26] Should anybody feel dissatisfied with his lot on racial or cultural grounds, and should they agitate for change, these ads confront them with the illusion of multiculturalism as already achieved.

A final instance of the expedient and dangerous oversimplification of complex issues to be found in the social ads under discussion (though as we shall see, not commercial ads), involves the concept of nationalism. A number of components combine to make up nationalism: political, cultural, affective and psychological (as expressed in identity politics). Nationalism thus promotes the nation as the central principle of political organisation; it allows cultural diversity to co-exist with national pride; it encourages love of one's country and it endows citizens with a sense of belonging and of collective destiny. To reduce nationalism to patriotism, as has been done in the social ads, is to demote the political and doctrinal in favour of the emotive. Where nationalism is equated with patriotism, to question the policies of the nation is to be unpatriotic. Once again, debate and the potential for constructive change are bypassed, to be replaced in this case with an appeal to an unconsidered and strongly emotive tribal allegiance.

Given this equation between nationalism and patriotism, it is not surprising to find that the national flag figures prominently in social ads that address racial diversity. The massive flag of St Andrew's which flies above the Scottish team is a hyperbolic expression of the nation. In many of the ads released along with "I am an American," as in "Main Street, USA" which was part of the American campaign for freedom, the Stars and Stripes act as the symbol of the nation and the focus of patriotism. Although one exceptional ad ("Racism can hide behind the strangest places; like behind patriotism") goes against the trend, there is no denying that flag waving has always proven more appealing to jingoists than to analysts.

Although this discussion of nationalism comes under the heading of oversimplifications, it does not belong under the larger remit of similarities between social and commercial advertising, since nationalism does not apply to Benetton's campaign, or that of any other global corporation. This essential *difference* is discussed below.

Differences

This paper started out by distinguishing between social and commercial ads based on what was being sold: concepts or products. As noted, however, this initial distinction has become largely blurred under the influence of branding. One might nevertheless argue that even though the goods being promoted by both types of advertising are now the same, namely brand image, the *gain* is different in each case: ideological for one and commercial for the other. Yet this

difference too has been invalidated. On the one hand, evidence of the commercialisation of ideology comes, for instance, from the explicit equation between patriotism and consumerism promoted by the government of America post-9/11 (the more you buy, the more patriotic you are).[27] Similarly, all three governments under discussion have made explicit statements on the need to protect and promote the important economic contribution made by immigrants, revealing a close link between the promotion of multiculturalism and a concern for the national economy.

On the other hand, commercial companies have come to acquire considerable ideological capital through promoting good causes and, although such championship may appear purely commercially driven, ideological pronouncements come at a price, namely the potential loss of customers should the brand prove insincere in its commitment to its cause. This was the experience of Nike, which while championing the empowerment of women through their brand image, was revealed to be grossly exploiting female work forces in third world sweatshops. The politicisation of consumers, largely as a result of branding, is ironically backfiring on those corporations who do not live up to their professed principles, thus forcing what might have started out as cynical commercialism to turn into genuine ideological commitment.

In the light of this diminished distinction between social and commercial ads with regard to both goods and gains, can we at least identify a difference in the sales pitch or in the public's reaction to the message of multiculturalism, depending on the source of the ad? Here, too, differences have been eroded. The sales pitch of social ads tended to adopt a "straight sell" with a strong pedagogical - sometimes thought of as "nannying" - component, whereas commercial ads (especially the more sophisticated and increasingly popular "anti-ads") typically rely on surprise, ambiguity and double-takes. Valuable lessons in stopping page traffic are increasingly jumping the divide from the commercial to the social ad, however, not least because famous advertising agencies are extending their client portfolios to include governments and charities. A quick glance through Saatchi and Saatchi's *Social Work* reveals just how cleverly verbal and visual ambiguity are used in order to win attention and provoke reflection.

The face-to-camera US and UK social ads nevertheless epitomise the traditional straight sell approach in which you hold up a product and praise its merits. Conversely, the Benetton ads that involve head and shoulder shots achieve a different effect. The very fact that it is the brand message and not the product which is being promoted triggers reflection on what the connection might be, and maybe even on its pertinence. The controversy surrounding so many of Benetton's more sensational ads has provided some of the best publicity for the

brand. With regard to sales pitch, therefore, there has been a notable loss of distinction between social and commercial ads. This is symptomatic of a postmodernist age in which the boundaries between commerce, art, news and advertising are much more fluid than was previously the case (or believed to be the case).

What of public reaction? Do people respond differently to an ad promotingmulticulturalism depending on its source? Enthusiasm and cynicism are to be found in people's reactions to *both* types of ads. I have already mentioned the strongly enthusiastic responses to the humanist message of multiculturalism in the social ads discussed, and evidence suggests that Benetton's ads have met with a similarly positive response. On the other hand, a palpable cynicism abounds among the population at large about the commercialisation of all facets of life, including ideology. Naomi Klein's best selling *No Logo* both gave voice to that reaction and encouraged further cynicism towards commercial brands. As her attack on the branding of America suggests, her argument extends beyond commercial corporations. Although any individual's position on the enthusiasm to cynicism spectrum is a matter of individual temperament, it would seem that once again a similarity rather than a difference has gained the upper hand. The general public is much more insistent on integrity and accountability in advertising, and much more strongly critical of false advertising than it ever was before, as evident in the growth of consumer watchdogs and of public complaints.

It is, in fact, with regard to the *false advertising* of multiculturalism that a genuine difference finally emerges between social and commercial advertising, one which involves the target audience. Whereas Benetton's audience is global, the other three ads address a national audience. The concept of a nation presupposes the existence of other nations and the presence of defining differences between them, which include geographical, political, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, religious and other criteria. The bottom line is that an "us versus them" dimension is inherent in the definition of any given nation. The question then arises, where does the "us" stop with regard to multiculturalism? If it is at geographical boundaries, as in the case of national borders, then the nation is no longer being defined culturally or ideologically, and multiculturalism is therefore not central to its identity. This may well be the way in which America is heading, but it is still counter-intuitive to say that the founding creed of America, with its emphasis on cultural diversity, is not important to the definition of America as a nation today. A geographical definition of nation would also imply that there is no population growth through immigration, which we know not to be the case in either the UK or the US. This option is therefore implausible for now.

If, on the other hand, the scope of "us" excludes individuals who are already present *within* national borders, then "multiculturalism" is a misnomer in all those cases where such exclusion is based on cultural or racial grounds. This is because the definition of multiculturalism requires the equality of all citizens in the face of the law. Yet in so far as some citizens are discriminated against, or would-be citizens are denied full citizenship on the grounds of their country and culture of origin, equality has not been achieved, and government promotion of multiculturalism is guilty of false advertising. Institutional racism, discriminatory immigration practices, the deferment of full citizenship and the singling out of particular cultures for differential treatment are all evidence of a discrepancy between the professed policies of governments who promote multiculturalism and their actual practices.

This potential for conflict between the exclusivity of nationhood and the inclusivity of multiculturalism does not affect the commercial advertising of global corporations. Thus, Benetton's promotion of multiculturalism is a *universally inclusive* venture. Even those who cannot afford to purchase Benetton products can nonetheless buy into its message of universal humanism. Evidence of false advertising would be of a different order in the case of Benetton and would have to do with conditions of employment or maybe even with the false promise of a racial and cultural harmony which clearly has not yet been achieved. However, it is not Benetton's responsibility to achieve this idealised image, whereas it *is* the responsibility of governments who promote such an ideal to ensure that their policies and statements are consistent with their advertising.

Conclusion

Although the argument of this article has been largely critical of the promotion of multiculturalism as conducted by Benetton and by the US, UK and Scottish governments, its objections are not directed at multiculturalism itself, which is certainly a desirable objective, but rather at the way in which multiculturalism has been sold to the masses. The problem resides in the effects of branding, and more particularly, in the suppression of dialogue which is the hallmark of branding. Multiculturalism should never be the last word on matters of race, culture and identity. This is because there is no definitive solution to the problem of discrimination; the best that can be hoped for is a dynamic equilibrium driven by enhanced intercultural communication and understanding.

To sell multiculturalism as an irrefutable given, by appealing to patriotic sentiment, rather than as an ideal to be sought through heightened critical

awareness, is to indulge in false advertising verging on propaganda. The fore-going discussion will have served its purpose if it has alerted the reader to the dubious nature of some of the methods of persuasion used in the exercise of public diplomacy.

Endnotes

1   Although the term "public diplomacy" primarily refers to the means by which a state attempts to influence public opinion abroad, it is increasingly being used to encompass domestic public opinion. This paper adopts the broad definition.
2   **http://www.adcouncil.org/about/.**
3   **http://www.adcouncil.org/campaigns/I_am_an_American/.**
4   Ibid.
5   Ibid.
6   **http://www.adcouncil.org/campaigns/mailbag/** and collected in Sandra Silberstein, *War of Words: Language, Politics and 9/11* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).
7   Available in 2003 on the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) website (**http://www.cre.gov.uk**).
8   Ibid.
9   Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 **http://www.onescotland.com**.
13 Reproductions can be found in Silberstein, 2002.
14 *Social Work* (London: 273 Publishers, 2000).
15 *The Family of Man* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1955/83).
16 Lorella P. Salvemini, *United Colors: The Benetton Campaigns* (London: Scriptum Editions, 2002).
17 Ingrid Sischy, "Advertising Taboos: Talking to Luciano Benetton and Olivero Toscani," *Interview* (April 1992), 69.
18 **http://www.reebok.com/x/us/humanRights/home.html**.
19 Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), 276.
20 Salvemini, *United Colors*, inside cover.
21 Cited in Naomi Klein, "America is not a hamburger," *The Guardian*, 14 March 2002, **http://www.guardian.co.uk/print/0,3858,4373814-103677,00.html**.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 John Berger and Jean Mohr, *Another Way of Telling* (New York: Random House, 1982), 91.
25 Roland Barthes, "La grande famille des homes," in *Mythologies* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1957), 173-6.
26 Roland Barthes, "Le mythe, aujourd'hui," in *Mythologies*, 193-247.
27 Margaret Carlson, "Patriotic Splurging," *Time*, 15 October 2001.

Part **IV.**

NEGOTIATION,
CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND
INTERCULTURAL
COMMUNICATION