

**Advertising as Public Diplomacy:
Attitude Change Among International Audiences**

Alice Kendrick, Ph.D., Professor
Termerlin Advertising Institute
Southern Methodist University
Dallas, Texas USA 75275-0113
ph. 214/768-2381
fax: 214/768-1155
e-mail: akendric@mail.smu.edu

and

Jami A. Fullerton, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Advertising
School of Journalism and Broadcasting
Oklahoma State University
700 N. Greenwood Ave.
Tulsa, Oklahoma USA 74106
ph. 918/594-8579
fax: 918/594-8281
e-mail: jamia@okstate.edu

The authors wish to thank Amanda Taylor for her assistance with the project and also to acknowledge support from the Richter Foundation, the Southern Methodist University Office of Research and the Oklahoma State University School of Journalism and Broadcasting.

Abstract
Advertising as Public Diplomacy:
Attitude Change Among International Audiences

In October 2002, the U.S. Department of State launched a first-ever public diplomacy campaign featuring television spots promoting the happy lives of American Muslims. The “Shared Values Initiative” advertising campaign ran on a limited schedule throughout the Middle East and Asia through January 2003. This study assesses reactions among international viewers toward the television commercial components of the campaign. International students from various countries who were enrolled at Regents College in London, England in summer 2003 -- participated in a persuasion experiment similar to those found in World War II propaganda literature. The study also used a traditional advertising copy test to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the commercials.

Results revealed that viewing the Shared Values Initiative commercials produced immediate and significant attitude shifts. Overall attitudes toward the U.S. government as well as whether Muslims were treated fairly in the United States improved significantly after the videos were shown. Given that the State Department’s informational goal was to inform and persuade international audiences about the freedom of Muslims to live and practice their faith in the United States, the campaign was successful under the experimental conditions described herein.

Advertising as Public Diplomacy: Attitude Change Among International Audiences

Introduction

In 2002, the U.S. Department of State launched the “Shared Values Initiative,” (heretofore referred to as SVI) which included a series of commercials showing the positive aspects of Muslim life in America. SVI was part of an ongoing U.S. public diplomacy campaign aimed at the Muslim world after the September 11th attacks. The commercials were shown in several countries “to position who America is, not only for ourselves under this kind of attack, but also for the outside world” (quote from Under Secretary of State Charlotte Beers in Teinowitz, 2001).

The SVI campaign, which was estimated to cost U.S. taxpayers \$15 million (Waller, 2003), has been a source of ongoing controversy among diplomats, politicians and those who study propaganda (see Schubert, 2002: Public Diplomacy, 2003; O’Connell, 2003); however, no systematic research regarding the effects of the advertisements has been reported. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to assess the reactions and feelings that international viewers have toward the SVI commercials and to the extent possible, evaluate the effectiveness of the commercials on changing international audiences’ attitudes toward the United States. The study borrows from early propaganda theory and employs a classic pre-post experimental design reminiscent of studies during and after World War II.

Public Diplomacy and Propaganda

Public diplomacy, a government’s effort to influence the attitudes of the general public in a foreign country, is considered a substitute word for propaganda by some scholars (see discussions in Black, 2001, and Wolper, 1993), especially those who equate any persuasive message with propaganda. Whether the Shared Values Initiative campaign was propaganda or not, the purchase of broadcast time on foreign television networks for the purpose of promoting America represented a new chapter in the history of U.S. public diplomacy (Eggspuehler, 2003).

Propaganda, as a form of persuasive communication, has an established history in mass communication theory, research and practice. Jowett and O'Donnell (1999) define propaganda as “the deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.”

The use of propaganda methods by the U.S. government is not new. Social scientists, mass communication practitioners and politicians have long been interested in understanding the power of carefully crafted mass communication messages in moving various audiences toward uniform thought and action. Classic studies dating back to World War II investigated the effects of government films on changing attitudes of Americans toward their enemies and rallying troops to war (Lowery & Defleur, 1995). The U.S. government used radio, film, cartoons, posters and other mass media messages demonizing Hitler during World War II (Becker, 2001). The former United States Information Agency maintained an ongoing propaganda campaign throughout the Cold War with broadcasts into the former Soviet Union over the Voice of America (Krugler, 2000).

Propaganda in the post September 11th era appears to be different from the traditional and often studied communication methods used during WWII and the Cold War, as evidenced by the SVI campaign. Certainly the geo-political world is different. The United States has new enemies who live within dramatically different cultures, and who operate in a world with new global media technologies that stretch beyond geographical boundaries. New propaganda methods, in the new media environment, need to be examined carefully, in this case for the purpose of communicating with skeptical and sometimes hostile audiences abroad.

Background

This study examines the broadcast commercials that were central to the campaign known as the “Shared Values Initiative,” which was conducted by the U.S. Department of State in October 2002 through January 2003. Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and former Madison Avenue executive Charlotte Beers spearheaded SVI.

Called out of retirement at age 66 after a remarkable career in the advertising business (“Diplomat Beers,” 2001), Beers was asked by Secretary of State Colin Powell to head the State Department’s Bureau of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. She was sworn into office only a few weeks after the September 11th attacks and immediately charged with the daunting task of communicating America’s core values to the Muslim world. Beers described her job as “the most elegant brand I’ve ever had to work with” (Kuchment, 2001).

Shortly after joining the State Department, Beers began applying consumer marketing principles and theories to her new work (Beers, 2002). She relied upon opinion research to help understand her audience and formulate the campaign. Specifically, she cited a Roper poll (2002) conducted in 35 countries, which showed vast differences between the United States and predominantly Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia and Indonesia on qualities such as modesty, obedience, duty, perseverance and freedom. The same poll revealed significant agreement among people of these nations regarding the values of faith, family and learning. Additional data presented by Beers showed that the “Western values system” was considered a negative influence by more than half of those polled in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Morocco and Jordan (Beers, 2002).

Armed with these research findings, Beers called on advertising agency McCann-Erickson Worldwide to produce television spots that highlighted the “shared values” of faith, family and education among Americans and Muslims. As a result, the commercials featured testimonials of Muslims happily and cooperatively living in America. Detailed descriptions of the commercials are contained in the Method section below.

According to Beers, the primary target audience for SVI was “the people,” as opposed to international governments (2002). Countries targeted were those with large Muslim populations. Specifically Beers emphasized the importance of reaching women in the target countries – “the mothers and teachers” (Beers, 2002).

The SVI television campaign began October 29, 2002 in Indonesia -- the largest target nation with 80 percent of its 220 million population who are Muslim (Schubert, 2002 CNN) --

followed by what the State Department described as a “sequential rollout” to other Muslim countries. Though Al Jazeera, the Pan Arab station sometimes referred to as “the CNN of the Arab World,” initially said it would consider it “an honor” to accept the U.S. anti-terror message (Koranteng, 2001), the station later refused to air the spots. Department of State spokesperson Richard Boucher said at a press briefing that Al Jazeera “wanted too much money” (DOS, 2002). Egyptian and Jordanian stations also refused the campaign. Beers told PBS anchor Jim Lehrer that the decision to refuse the SVI commercials was probably because they were thought to be “based on propaganda.” Even though Al Jazeera did not carry the spots, a number of state-run media systems did, including those in Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia and Kuwait. Some viewers in other countries were reached by satellite “spillout” coverage in Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (“Public Diplomacy,” 2003).

On January 16 the *Wall Street Journal* (O’Connell, 2003) reported that the SVI ad campaign was discontinued by the State Department because it failed to register with Muslim audiences and had been prevented from being aired by host governments. That same night Beers appeared on CNN and told anchor Aaron Brown that the campaign had not been suspended and would continue. On February 3, 2003 the State Department said that the spots had stopped running in December as planned and that they would be revised to remove mentions of Ramadan before airing again. In early March 2003, Charlotte Beers unexpectedly resigned her post, citing health reasons. This development prompted the French newspaper *Le Monde* (Leser, 2003) to speculate that her resignation was brought on by the enormous difficulties of communicating the U.S. message overseas.

Immediately after the mini-documentaries aired in October 2002, US media reported that the campaign was not well received (Schubert, 2002; “U.S. Muslim ad drive,” 2003). The chief complaint by those who viewed the spots in the targeted countries was that the commentaries did not explain U.S. foreign policy. A 2003 report by a Congressional advisory group headed by former ambassador and White House spokesman Edward Djerejian, though harshly critical of the

State Department's public diplomacy since 9/11, was favorable in its evaluation of SVI except for commenting that future campaigns should proceed on an expedited schedule. The report urged the Bush administration to overhaul its public diplomacy and treat it with "warlike urgency" (Weismann, 2003), ultimately suggesting that a public relations "czar" be appointed to oversee America's image abroad. As Djerejian said, "If America does not define itself to the world, the extremists will do it for us" (LaFranchi, 2003). Neither government nor media commentary about SVI contained reference to any systematic analysis, experimental or otherwise, on the effects of the commercials.

Research Questions

The first U.S. advertising campaign to the Muslim world came and went without much study or evaluation. The following study was conducted in an attempt to learn from this unique case and garner understanding for communicating with new and skeptical audiences in the future.

To evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the Shared Values Initiative commercials on international audiences, the following research questions were examined:

1. Do viewers' attitudes toward the U.S. government change after seeing the SVI commercials?
2. Do viewers' attitudes toward U.S. people change after seeing the SVI commercials?
3. Do viewers' attitudes toward how Muslims are treated in America change after seeing the SVI commercials?
4. Do viewers feel that the SVI commercials are believable?
5. Do viewers believe that it is appropriate and helpful for the U.S. government to air the SVI commercials in Muslim countries?
6. What is the perceived effectiveness of the SVI commercials?
7. How do viewers evaluate the SVI commercials in terms of main message, first impressions, likes and dislikes?

8. Do differences exist among subgroups of viewers (such as gender, nationality, religion, fluency in English, visitation to the United States) regarding their reactions to the SVI commercials?

Method

The study employed elements of classic wartime propaganda experiments as well as a more contemporary advertising copy test, typically used to evaluate television commercials designed to sell consumer goods and services (Haskins and Kendrick, 1993). International students attending classes at Regents College in London, England participated in the study during July 2003. For the experiment, participants completed a written pretest instrument, then viewed the Shared Values Initiative commercials, after which they completed a post-test instrument and the advertising copy test.

The Shared Values Initiative Commercials

SVI consisted of numerous communication elements including speeches by diplomats to international audiences, Internet sites and chat rooms, and various mass media elements (Hayes, 2002). The focus of this paper is the primary mass media element of SVI, namely the five commercial spots, which the State Department called “mini-documentaries.” The commercials were produced in multiple languages and dialects; however, the English versions were used in this study.

The testimonial-style commercials feature “slice-of-life” treatments of happy and prosperous Muslim Americans in various personal and professional roles. Each features Muslim Americans actively practicing their religion and commenting positively on the tolerance Americans have for the Muslim faith. A brief description of each commercial follows:

- “Baker” profiles an average day in a busy family-run bakery/restaurant in Toledo, Ohio owned by a Lebanese family, and highlights the interaction between the Muslim owners and their non-Muslim American clientele.

- “Doctor” showcases the accomplishments of Dr. E. Zerhouni, whom President Bush recently named as Director of the National Institutes of Health. Dr. Zerhouni, who was born in Algeria, describes his life as a successful government official and respected Muslim American.
- “School Teacher” features Rawai Ismail working as a public school teacher in Toledo, Ohio. The spot shows her wearing a hijab while teaching elementary school children and later holding Saturday Koran classes in her home.
- “Journalist” follows an Indonesian journalism student at the University of Missouri through a typical day as a reporter for the school television news show, as a college student and practicing Muslim.
- “Firefighter” shows a young, very-Americanized, Muslim firefighter sharing his experiences since September 11th. In the spot, he describes the closeness he feels to both his non-Muslim co-workers and community around his New York City fire station.

Experimental Design

Participants’ attitudes toward the U.S. government, Americans, and how Muslims are treated in America were measured using a paper-and-pencil pre-test questionnaire with five-point Likert scales before and after viewing the SVI commercials. Participants completed the brief pre-test questionnaire in a waiting room, then were escorted to a viewing room where they were shown all five SVI commercials in succession. Afterward participants completed the post-test questionnaire, which was identical to the pre-test, and also completed the advertising copy test instrument.

Advertising Copy Test

The copy test was patterned after accepted question-writing and measurement practices in the advertising industry (Haskins and Kendrick, 1993). Open-ended questions included first impression of the commercials, main message, and aspects liked most/least about the

commercials. Other questions included scaled items about believability, effectiveness and appropriateness of the commercials, and dichotomous questions about whether the commercials included confusing elements and if the videos affected attitudes toward the United States.

Sample

One hundred and five international students from various countries who were enrolled at Regents College in London, England in July 2003 constituted the sample for this study. Regents College holds summer programs over a variety of liberal arts and business courses, and students typically study for terms from three to five weeks. Because students from around the world attend classes at Regents in the summer, the site was considered appropriate for selecting a convenience sample of international students.

Two U.S. professors and several U.S. students working on the project served as primary recruiters of participants, and they were assisted by non-U.S. faculty from the Regents College international studies program. Students were given an incentive of five British pounds sterling (about eight U.S. dollars) for their participation.

Though the use of non-probability samples, and specifically student samples, is considered questionable and even inappropriate in some studies (Wimmer and Dominick, 2003, p. 87), the student population was deemed an appropriate and important one for the topic being investigated here. The U.S. government and others (Buncombe, 2003; Jaffe, 2002) have determined that the most critical people to reach in fighting the war on terrorism are young men – a group that is often angry and most likely to take action. Although Beers suggested that the target for the SVI campaign was women, it was her hope that through their individual and collective “soft power” that these women would influence their husbands, brothers and sons (Beers, 2002). Although the intended target of the campaign was Muslims, the current study attempted to obtain reaction to the SVI commercials from students of various backgrounds from around the world, in an effort to determine which factors were related to their assessment of the US messages.

Participants represented 25 different countries, with European countries accounting for almost 70% (n=73), 10.5% (n=11) from the Middle East/India, 9.5% (n=10) from East Asia, 5.7% (n=6) from Africa and 3.8% (n=4) from South America. Just more than half of participants were Christian (57.1%, n=60), 5.8% (n=6) were Muslim, 12.4% (n=13) checked “other” as a religious option, 20% (n=21) said they were “not religious,” and five respondents refused to answer. Because of the diversity of the sample, some subgroup analyses were performed with low sample sizes and should be treated with caution.

Findings

Respondent Profile

Slightly more than half of the international students who participated were female (53.8%, n=56), and 46.2% (n=48) were male. Average age of the participants was 22, with a range of 16-41. English was the native language of 7 percent, though 58 percent said they spoke English fluently, and all were studying in English. Four out of five were full-time students, with the remaining 20% part-time.

Asked if they knew anyone in the United States, 67.3% said yes, and 49% said they have regular email contact either with friends, co-workers or relatives in the United States. Forty-one percent said they had visited the United States, and almost all (97.0%) said they would like to visit the United States.

Pre- v. Post-Attitudes Toward the U.S. Government and U.S. People

Before and after viewing the State Department commercials, respondents were asked about their feelings toward the U.S. government and the people of the United States. Attitudes toward the U.S. government and U.S. people were measured on a favorability scale of 1 to 4 (with 4 “very favorable” and 1 “very unfavorable”). A paired samples t-test showed that attitudes toward the U.S. government were significantly more positive after the videos were seen (pre mean = 1.86; post mean = 2.05, $p=.013$, $t=2.54$), although even the higher post-video attitudinal scores were relatively negative. A significant difference in attitude toward the U.S. government was noted

among religious groups after seeing the videos. Christians and “not religious” respondents maintained their negative attitudes (ANOVA $df=3$, $f=3.85$, $p=.012$), while Muslims and “others” showed improved attitudes toward the U.S. government after the videos.

Although a directional change in attitude was noted in pre- and post- attitudes toward the U.S. people, the difference was not statistically significant (pre mean = 2.74; post mean = 2.84). Prior to viewing the videos, women had a more favorable attitude toward U.S. people than men (female mean = 2.88, male mean = 2.52, $t=2.51$, $p=.014$). There was a significant difference in attitude toward the U.S. people both before and after viewing the videos among different geographic groups, with Europeans holding less favorable attitudes toward the people of the United States than other groups (before viewing ANOVA $df=4$, $f=2.75$, $p=.032$; after viewing ANOVA $df=4$, $f=3.51$, $p=.01$).

Attitudes Toward Treatment of Muslims

When responding to the statement about whether Muslims in the United States are treated fairly, respondents agreed significantly more strongly after viewing the videos that “Muslims are treated fairly in the U.S.” (pre mean = 2.82; post mean = 3.14; $t=3.762$; $p<.0001$). This finding indicates that the primary communication objective of the State Department campaign was met among this experimental group.

Believability of Commercials

Fewer than half of those who viewed the State Department videos considered them believable, and an even greater number expressed doubt that the videos would be considered believable or credible by those living in the targeted countries. Among the 64% who found elements of the videos either confusing or hard to believe, the basis of their concern focused on the one-sided nature of the video segments. More than half of those who viewed the videos said they either did not believe the factual content or found them unrealistically positive in light of recent events. Among geographic subgroups, Europeans judged the videos as significantly less believable compared with participants from other countries (ANOVA $df=4$, $f=4.4$, $p=.003$).

Likewise, among religious subgroups, Christians and those “not religious” judged the commercials less believable than other religious groups, including Muslims (ANOVA $df=3$ $f=2.8$, $p=.040$).

Appropriateness of Commercials

Two questions focused on perceived appropriateness of the Shared Values videos. International students were divided on the issue of whether the United States employed “appropriate strategy” with the videos. Almost equal numbers of students said the strategy was appropriate (39.0%) and inappropriate (37.0%), though another 18% pointed out that although they considered the strategic approach appropriate, they believed the content was not true. Another six percent said they were not sure.

More than one-third (38.1%) said they considered it “appropriate and helpful for the U.S. government to run these commercials on television stations in other countries, including Muslim countries.” Subgroup analysis showed that Europeans considered it less appropriate and helpful for the United States to air the videos in Muslim countries than did other groups ($p=.002$). Muslims and those who described their religion as “other” said they felt the use of the videos in Muslim countries was more appropriate and helpful than other groups ($p=.023$).

Perceived Effectiveness of Commercials

Almost half (46.6%) agreed that “the videos are an effective tool in communicating with citizens of Muslim countries about the positive aspects of Muslim life.” Subgroup analysis showed that women agreed more strongly than men that the videos were an effective tool (mean = 3.35 v. 2.88, $t=2.434$, $p=.017$). Additionally, those who had visited the United States ($p=.034$), as well as those who were fluent in English ($p=.021$) were less likely to agree that the videos are an effective tool for communicating about American life for Muslims.

First Impressions

Initial reaction to the videos varied widely among international students. The most frequent first reaction was disbelief and skepticism of such a persuasive set of messages (see Table 1). Almost half (44.8%) reported these types of negative first impressions. Another one-fourth

(28.6%) described their first impressions as focusing on aspects of the United States and its own image – “America on its best behavior,” as one respondent put it. The first impression among another 12 percent of respondents was equivalent to the intended main message of the campaign – how Muslims live and are treated in the United States.

Main Message

The main message taken away by most (61.0%) of those who saw the State Department videos involved the image of the United States (see Table 2), a category which included 16 (15.2%) responses mentioning that Americans “like” or “respect” Muslims. Almost one-third (32.4%) played back a main message about Muslims living freely and happily in the United States. Taken together, the Muslim-related comments constituted almost one-half of the main message registrations.

Elements Liked and Disliked

Though almost one-fourth of those who rated the videos said there was “nothing” they liked about them, various aspects were liked by others, most notably the overall “objective” and “friendly” style and tone (30.5%, see Table 3). Others expressed liking for overall information content (16.2%) as well as specific information about Muslims (16.2%).

By far the most disliked aspect of the videos was their lack of believability, whether they were perceived to be blatantly false or just “biased” or “one-sided” (65.7%, see Table 4). Only ten individuals (9.5%) mentioned that they did not like specific executional elements, such as the “from the American people” ending or the fact that only Muslims were featured.

Discussion

This study, which gauged reaction of international students about a first-of-its-kind U.S. public diplomacy campaign, in part employed some of the original methodological approaches of early propaganda scholars -- the pre-post laboratory experiment (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953). Results revealed that viewing the Shared Values Initiative commercials produced immediate and significant attitude shifts. Overall attitudes toward the U.S. government as well as whether

Muslims were treated fairly in the United States improved significantly after the videos were shown. Given that the State Department's informational goal was to inform and persuade international audiences about the freedom of Muslims to live and practice their faith in the United States, the campaign was a success under the experimental conditions described herein.

Criticisms of the pre-post experimental approach for measuring the effect of a persuasive message on attitude change include the artificial setting of the laboratory versus a real world setting, the effect of a single, isolated message versus the impact of the frequency of a long-term message campaign, and the ability of quantitative scales to measure small, but important shifts in attitude change (Lowery & DeFleur, 1995; Wimmer & Dominick, 1999). These criticisms should be considered when evaluating the findings of the experiment mentioned above; however, the study as a whole was designed to collect diagnostic information in the form of an advertising copy test. Taken together, the experimental and copy test findings provide insight into international reaction to the SVI commercials, as well as identify factors related to that reaction.

To summarize the major findings, favorable attitudes toward the U.S. government were relatively low, though higher, after the videos were viewed. Agreement with the statement "Muslims are treated fairly in the United States" was greater as well, and relatively high. Almost half of those who saw the videos played back a main message in line with State Department objectives. But overall believability of the videos themselves was low, and third-person perception by those who viewed them that they would be believed by those in Muslim countries was lower still. Importantly, the greatest positive attitudinal shifts in the present study were among Muslims, the intended audience for the commercials.

More than half of those who viewed the commercials cited aspects that were confusing or hard to believe, and most of these stemmed from the one-sided approach taken – the videos only included positive comment and content. Disbelief and skepticism were by far the most frequent first impressions. In terms of perceived effectiveness, half considered the videos to be an effective

tool, and respondents were divided as to the appropriateness of a strategy to show the videos in Muslim countries.

Several of the findings point to the presence of a generalized negative and cynical reaction to the videos. “First impressions” among more than half (64.0%) of the respondents characterized the content as not believable. Additionally, there were very few specific tactical or executional elements of the commercials mentioned, another finding which suggests a more “global” reaction to the content on the part of the viewer, rather than an objection to a particular statement or visual as is so often the case with commercial advertising copy tests (Haskins & Kendrick, 1993).

The one-sided nature of the videos appeared to play a large role in the credibility of the overall message. Scene after scene of happy Muslims living freely in the United States was in direct contradiction to memories of news reports of Muslims as the objects of derision and sometimes violence in the aftermath of September 11, and with controversial U.S. policies in the Middle East. It would have been interesting to assess international student evaluation of the videos if the State Department had made the content two-sided, addressing the issues of highly publicized yet relatively isolated incidents of Muslim mistreatment and providing some explanation of U.S. policy regarding Israel and Palestine. Propaganda literature suggests that a two-sided message serves to inoculate the recipient against future counter-arguments and is more likely to persuade an educated audience (Lowery & DeFleur, 1995).

To summarize the subgroup analyses: Muslim students’ attitudes toward the U.S. government moved significantly higher than other groups after seeing the videos. Muslims found the videos more believable, appropriate and helpful for Muslim countries than did Christians. Europeans showed significantly less favorable attitudes toward the US people before and after seeing the videos, judged the videos to be less believable than other groups, and considered the videos to be less “appropriate and helpful” than other nationalities. Those fluent in English and who had visited the United States were more skeptical about the effectiveness of the videos than

were others. Women felt more strongly that the videos represent an effective tool for the United States in its attempts to build bridges with the Muslim world.

Findings of this study indicate that the SVI commercials were most effective against their intended target audience – Muslims and women. At first glance, the differences between Muslims and Christians and those most familiar with the United States appear contrary to what might be expected. Aren't Muslims the ones who represent the "toughest sell" for a US message, and won't Christians, presumably Europeans, be more likely to believe that the United States is sincere in its messages about religious freedom within its borders, and that those messages will have their intended effects? Results showed just the opposite – that those who arguably are most "Westernized" actually were more resistant to the US messages intended for Muslim audiences. Could it be that the advertising, intended for a Muslim audience, indeed contained the "right message" for that group? It is beyond the scope of this study to explain the apparent discrepancy, but results can be considered in light of recent public opinion polls showing global erosion of attitude toward the United States and the American people, (Pew Research Center, 2003), particularly since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003, which was only three months prior to the collection of data for this study.

Women expressed more optimism than men that the SVI videos would accomplish their intended goals. This finding may be indicative of a tendency for women to be more open than men to commercial arguments in general. Norms collected by syndicated companies about advertising effects indicate that women tend to pay more attention to advertising than men and that they are often more receptive to advertising messages (Haskins & Kendrick, 1993). Again, the tonality of the messages might have been more appropriate and therefore effective for women.

The primary limitation of the method is its potential lack of external validity. While laboratory experiments, if conducted properly, boast high internal validity and in the process highlight the differences between experimental stimuli, it is difficult to know if the same results would be found among other groups who might have participated. In the case of the present study,

the first published copy test of SVI commercials, the decision to use a sample of international students living temporarily in London was an attempt to accrue a “worldwide” sample in an efficient manner by selecting participants in a single location. Obviously the international students who participated were not randomly drawn from residents of their respective countries, nor are their numbers large enough in some cases to properly assess subgroup differences. Such precision would have been beyond the budgetary bounds of this study. Nonetheless, to the extent that university students around the world represent the next generation of world leaders in business and government, the findings of this study about receptivity to US public diplomacy messages intended for worldwide distribution takes on a measure of significance.

Table 1
First Impression of Shared Values Commercials*

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS (BASE)	105**	100%
Non-Specific Negative Reactions	47	44.8%
Not true/fake/suspicious/could backfire	19	
Propaganda/public relations/persuasion	13	
Misleading/one-sided	7	
Skeptical/unsure/hopeful	6	
Why were the videos made?	2	
Image of the United States	30	28.6%
Image of United States/"best behavior"	7	
Acceptance/respect of other cultures	6	
Opportunities/freedom	5	
Americans like/accept Muslims	4	
Kind/"Beautiful" people	2	
Efforts to improve image after 9-11	2	
Other image	2	
American people v. government	1	
Americans justifying 'actions'	1	
Muslim Life in the United States	25	23.8%
How Muslims live in the United States	7	
Muslims are accepted/free in America	6	
Muslim life after 9-11	6	
Muslims like the United States	3	
Muslims can practice religion freely	2	
Happy Muslims in the United States	1	
Non-Specific Positive Reactions	9	8.6%
Friendly/good/cool/interesting	8	
Appropriate for situation	1	
Other	7	6.7%
Groups of people	2	
Relationships between people	1	
Ramadan	1	
No category	3	

*Question: "What was the first thing that came to your mind when you viewed these video segments?"

**Percentages are computed on a participant base of 105. Some participants made comments that were included in more than one category. Total number of comments coded was 118.

Table 2
Main Message of Shared Values Commercials*

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS (BASE)	105**	100%
Image of the United States	64	61.0%
Image of United States/"best behavior"	7	
Acceptance/respect of other cultures	22	
Opportunities/freedom	11	
Americans like/accept Muslims	16	
Efforts to improve image after 9-11	3	
Other image	2	
Americans are not fighting against Muslims	2	
American people v. government	1	
Muslim Life in the United States	34	32.4%
How Muslims live in the United States	12	
Muslims are accepted/free in America	11	
Muslims can practice religion freely	6	
Happy Muslims in the United States	5	
Negative Reactions	5	4.8%
Not true/fake/suspicious/could backfire	2	
Misleading/one-sided	1	
Skeptical/unsure/hopeful	2	
Other	4	3.8%
People can live together	1	
Don't know	1	
Miscellaneous	2	

*Question: "In your own words, what is the main message that these video segments are trying to communicate to you?"

**Percentages are computed on a participant base of 105. Some participants made comments that were included in more than one category. Total number of comments coded was 107.

Table 3
Most Liked Elements of Videos*

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS (BASE)	105**	100%
Tone/Point of View/Style	32	30.5%
Friendly/happy/positive	16	
“Normal” people/diverse, different people	9	
Objective/realistic	7	
Overall Concept and Information Content	17	16.2%
Good effort/good faith/good idea/well done	10	
Information/content/learning	6	
The story	1	
Information About Muslims	17	16.2%
About Muslims/positive	6	
Respect for Muslimis	2	
Muslims free/free to practice Islam	6	
Appropriate for Muslim countries	1	
Will help ease Muslim life after 9-11	1	
The teacher	1	
Information About the United States	18	17.1%
U.S.tolerance/respect	7	
Opportunities for other people in US	5	
U.S.opportunities/successes/freedom	4	
U.S.image after 9-11	1	
Changed U.S.image	1	
Negative Comments	25	23.8%
Nothing/’cheesy’/dislike/skeptical	25	

*Question: “What did you like about the videos?”

**Percentages are computed on a participant base of 105. Some participants made comments that were included in more than one category. Total number of comments coded was 109.

Table 4
Most Disliked Elements of Videos*

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS (BASE)	105**	100%
Lack of Believability	69	65.7%
Misleading/false/not real	35	
One-sided/biased	23	
Too positive	6	
Skeptical	5	
Specific Content	10	9.5%
The ending (from American people)	2	
Only about Muslims	2	
Only about religion	2	
Children's hospital	1	
That Americans are friendly	1	
Muslim women with heads covered	1	
U.S.too strong/dominant	1	
Strategy/Approach/Format	7	6.7%
Seems like advertising/propaganda	6	
Why was this (video) done?	1	
"Everything" Disliked	3	2.9%
Nothing Disliked	9	8.6%

*Question: "What did you dislike about the videos?"

**Percentages are computed on a participant base of 105. Total number of comments coded was 98.

References

- Becker, Elizabeth (Nov. 11, 2001). In the war on terrorism, a battle to shape opinion. *New York Times*, p. A1.
- Beers, Charlotte (Dec. 6, 2002). Public lecture at Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.
- Black, Jay (2001). The semantics and ethics of propaganda. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 16, pp. 121-37.
- Buncombe, Andrew (July 18, 2003). Bush launches magazine to teach young Arabs to love America. *The Independent (London)*, p. 12.
- CNN Newsnight with Aaron Brown (Jan. 16, 2003).
- “Diplomat Beers” (Oct. 1, 2001), *Advertising Age*. p. 16.
- Eggspuehler, Cari (March 17, 2003). Personal correspondence via email from the assistant to the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.
- Haskins, Jack and Alice Kendrick (1993). *Successful Advertising Research Methods*. Chicago: NTC Books.
- Hayes, Stephen (Jun 3, 2002). Uncle Sam’s makeover. *The Weekly Standard*, p. 22-25.
- Hovland, Carl I., Irving L. Janis and Harold H. Kelley (1953). *Communication and Persuasion*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Jaffe, Sam (Dec. 27, 2002), Can American pop ease Mideast hatreds?. *Business Week Online*.
- Jowett, Garth and Victoria O’Donnell (1999). *Propaganda and Persuasion*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Koranteng, Juliana (Oct. 22, 2001). Eager for ads. *Advertising Age*, p. 4.
- Krugler, David F. (2000). *The Voice of America and the Domestic Propaganda Battles, 1945-1953*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press.
- Kuchment, Anna (Nov. 26, 2001). Selling the U.S.A.; Old-style propaganda meets Madison Avenue spin as America gears up to reinvent its image in the Muslim world. *Newsweek*, p. 66.
- LaFranchi, H. (2003, October 3). Ways to burnish America's image abroad. *The Christian Science Monitor*. Retrieved from www.csmonitor.com.
- Lowery, Shearon and Melvin DeFleur (1995). *Milestones in Mass Communication Research: Media Effects*, 3rd ed White Plains, NY: Longman.
- O’Connell, Victoria (Jan. 16, 2003). U.S. suspends ad campaign aimed at winning over Muslims. *Wall Street Journal (Eastern edition)*, pg. A.1.

“Public Diplomacy” (Jan. 21, 2003). A NewsHour with Jim Lehrer Transcript. Retrieved from www.pbs.org on February 6, 2003.

Pew Research Center (Jun 3, 2003). Views of a changing world 2003. War with Iraq further divides global publics. Retrieved on October 7, 2003 from <http://people-press.org/reports>.

Roper Organization, survey of 35 countries, 2002, as quoted by Charlotte Beers.

Schubert, Atika (October 31, 2002). U.S. tests charm offensive in Indonesia. From CNN.com retrieved January 16, 2003.

Teinowitz, Ira (Oct. 15, 2001). Gov’t eyes ad attack. *Advertising Age*, p. 1, 49.

U.S. Department of State (Oct. 30, 2002). Shared Values Initiative. Transcript of State Department briefing. Retrieved from www.usembassyjakarta.org on January 30, 2003.

“U.S. Muslim ad drive on Malaysian TV ‘a waste of time’” (Nov. 7, 2002). *The Strait Times*, retrieved from www.ummahnews.com.

Waller, J. Michael (April 1-14, 2003). U.S. message not getting out. *Insight on the News*, p. 26-28.

Weismann, S. (2003, October 1). U.S. must counteract image in Muslim world, panel says. *New York Times*, pg. A.1.

Wimmer, R. & Dominick, J.R. (2003), *Mass Media Research: An Introduction*, 7th ed., Belmont, CA:Wadsworth/Thomas Learning, Inc.

Wolper, Gregg (1993). Wilsonian Public Diplomacy: The Committee on Public Information in Spain. *Diplomatic History*, 17 (1), 17-34.