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# UNFREEZING ETHNICITY AS CULTURE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS: IMMIGRANT IMAGE AND STATIC CATEGORIES IN AN AGE OF LIQUID FEAR

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**Abstract:** The most cited theory in mainstream public relations relevant to ethnicity and race is Geert Hofstede's concept of culture. In this article, we argue for augmenting Hofstede's work for three reasons: to go beyond the limitations of his relatively static theorization; to engage with the reality of rapid social movement around ethnicity and race; and to take account of racism. To expand public relations theory around these issues, we work with Zygmunt Bauman's theorization that fluid boundaries, including swift-shifting emotions, are what characterize contemporary societies. We also deploy Bauman's ideas in the context of media representations of relations with immigrants in Catalonia. In particular, we explore how these representations may help public relations not only to identify, but to realize, its symbolic power in reducing fear and tension by improving relations between dominant, or host, cultures and their ethnically different minorities.

**Key words:** Race, immigration, liquid society, public relations, culture, Zygmunt Bauman.

## 1. RACE, THEORY, AND PUBLIC RELATIONS: A HOFSTEDIAN PERSPECTIVE

Race is a fiction but racism is real. Ignoring, or marginalizing, inequities associated with race, public relations displaces it, firstly, to culture (and how to manage it in functional terms); and, secondly, to ethnicity (and how to market – nationally and internationally – to selected non-mainstream ethnic groups with demographic growth). The second is clearly evident in the «Special Diversity» issue of the main PRSA publication, *The Public Relations Strategist* (2005). In a journal aimed at practitioners, the cover eschews its usual illustration to declare in big, bold letters: «The buying power of blacks, Asians and Native Americans will exceed \$1.7 trillion by 2010, an increase of 268 percent from 1990. Are you ready?» Because of the two displacements public relations has developed very few theoretical resources to address issues of racism in the academy (c.f., Waymer, 2010), in the profession (c.f., Edwards, 2010), and in postcolonial situations (c.f., Munshi, 2005), let alone in such vital arenas as immigration.

Instead, the field stays, with occasional forays into multiculturalism (Banks, 2000), frozen in a static conception of culture. This position makes it increasingly out of touch with the changing ethnic compositions of most major cities and of global business, as well as the rise in race-influenced politics. The field's theoretical influences, with regard to culture, ethnicity, and race, are similarly outdated. The most prominent theorist is Hofstede (1980) and his work has continued to be influential with, for example, 11 citations in Grunig's (1992) early collection, eight in the *Encyclopedia of Public Relations* (Heath, 2005) and 22 in Srirameash and Vercic's (2009) recent global collection.

Early and recent citations of Hofstede focus on his dimensions of culture. Although, the number of Hofstedeian dimensions did, over time, increase from four to five, these categories have remained notoriously static in the three decades since his 1980's research. Nor have his dimensions exhibited much sensitivity to changes in attitudes or the social environment. In short, the interculturalist approach of Hofstede is not by itself able to address such swift-moving change as the post-9/11 passions and growing U.S. fears of Chinese economic dominance. We suggest that Zygmunt Bauman's work offers conceptual approaches better able to encompass sudden shifts in attitudes and behaviors, as well as to engage with inequities linked to ethnicity and race.

## 2. NEW EMOTIONS, OLD FEARS AND REVIVED SPECTERS

Since the last decade of the 20th century, neuroscience researchers have highlighted the limits of reason. Their findings establish that feelings come before thought, or since, in the words of one neuroscientist, «the amygdala has a greater influence on the cortex than the cortex has on the amygdala... emotional arousal [is allowed] to dominate and control thinking» (LeDoux, 1998, p. 303). This poses challenges extending well beyond the restrictive categories of logical interculturalists. Other disciplines, similarly aligned to Enlightenment dreams of rationality, have woken up to the realities of resurgent religious fundamentalism and the swift-spreading illogicalities of racism. In more restrained form in economics, for example, Akerlof and Shiller (2009) revive the Keynesian idea of *Animal Spirits* to argue how it is psychology, rather than rational economic man, that drives the economy and global capitalism.

The feelings that have decentered rational action in relation to race are pithily expressed by Bauman (2003): «A spectre hovers over the planet: the spectre of xenophobia» (p. 119). In addition, Bauman integrates this insight – an insight central to equipping public relations to deal with feelings around race – into his overarching conception of modernity as liquid. He began this line of thought with *Liquid Modernity* (Bauman, 2000), which had an immediate impact not only in sociology and political science, but in other fields. He himself followed up with a range of works that included *Liquid Love* (Bauman, 2003), which is directly related to the idea of the fragility of human bonds and relationships of unconditional interdependence, and, more recently, *Liquid Fear* (Bauman, 2006) and *Liquid Times* (Bauman, 2007), which also address the challenges posed in a fast-changing era of endemic uncertainty.

What are the implications of liquid in contrast to solid in terms of society? For Bauman (2000), solid modernity was concerned about the order of hard capitalism characterized by: industrial production and development; the nation-state; liberal rights and social progress; the Kantian ethics of the categorical imperative; the belief in progress; the invasion of the private sphere by what is public, and so on. Perceiving the reality of later modernity as different, Bauman created a new epistemological framework to understand it. He characterized it as liquid modernity, in which the walls that impede the flow of new global powers are demolished, the barriers of the

traditional State are removed, social services are deregulated/privatized, and the dense networks of social ties of the past are eroded, along with social structures primarily based on territory. In this sort of modernity, social classes remain, but under different criteria and with an unprecedented plasticity.

The new power of liquid modernity is economic, invisible, multinational. It reduces the sovereignty of strong nation-states to local gendarmerie functions and denies the independence of weaker states because territory by itself has lost strategic power. Those former power bases have been absolutely undermined, or seriously diminished, by the new flows of power: «Just as the all-ordering, all-classifying modern states could not suffer 'masterless men' and as the expanding, territory-greedy modern empires could not suffer 'no man's lands – modern markets do not suffer gladly the 'non-market' economy'» (Bauman, 2000, p. 68)... so contemporary modernity spills over into «the kind of life that reproduces itself without money changing hands» (p. 68).

In response, Bauman structures his later works around the *liquefaction* or *desolidification* of the following concepts: emancipation, individuality, space/time, labor, community, and fear. For him, they are interconnected concepts, which feed one another through their own liquefaction. From Bauman's perspective, the notions of space/time, community, and, in particular, fear, influence other sociological categories (e.g., ethnicity and race), and social structures (e.g., immigration), on which the societies of modernity are built.

Bauman's interest in the phenomenon of displaced people and migration has a personal dimension as he himself experienced forced emigration from Poland in 1967 after the anti-Semitic campaign that followed the Six-Day War. In his work (Bauman, 2004; 2007a; 2009), the *stranger* becomes one of the key figures of modern times. Moreover, because we are all potentially *the foreigner* regarding other people, the right attitude is to deal genuinely with this *strangerhood* so that we are enabled to see how our status is uncertain and varies in different situations. Bauman's sociology is centrally relevant to public relations in how it focusses on building an identity projected in different media using different techniques. In these projections the role of public relations, especially as it feeds stories into the media, can be paramount in constructing the image of the stranger, the foreigner, the other.

### 3. IMMIGRATION, LIQUID FEAR, AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

In analyzing the ethnic diversity of a country, it is usual to distinguish national majorities or minorities from communities of immigrants and refugees. The design of new ethnic groups after immigration has much to do with the attempts to overcome the adversities of the new context. Cashmore's (1996) concept of ethnic group, not only as an aggregate of persons or part of the population, but also as a self-conscious people in close connection, or linked by shared experiences – among which he includes deprivation – matter in this kind of designing. Hence, race, culture, and immigration feature prominently in modern ethnicity.

It is very difficult, if not impossible, to ignore the role of ideas about «race» in shaping and determining cities and social relations in economic and political contexts from Arizona to Zimbabwe. Bauman (2003) cites later 20th century research that «a sudden horror of crime lurking in the dark corners of the inner city struck the inhabitants of American metropolitan areas... and led to a 'white flight' from the city centres» (p. 103) and the theme of race remains central in his thinking (e.g., Bauman, 1992; 2000; 2004; 2006; 2009). In Europe, immigration and race relations, play an important role in policy debates (e.g., Sarkozy's administration in France).

Not that the conceptualization of racism has ever been a strictly academic issue. Racism has been intimately linked to problems from the rise of fascism, through the Holocaust, to ethnic cleansing. The analysis of racism cannot be easily separated from the broader historical juncture. Regarding late modernity, a crucial object of study has been the mass media, especially news production. Among them, as the number of journalists fall and the numbers employed in promotional industries rise, the practice of public relations and publicity grows more important. Media shaping of the social images of minorities has been significant in determining how racial perspectives contribute to those image – images that consistently situate them as marginal groups, as obstacles to social cohesion, and as major sources of crime (Van Dijk, 2009). Hence one of the main – even if it fluctuates across targeted groups – fears perceived in liquid society is of different ethnic/ racial groups. Racism, in turn, is further fueled by those fears.

For many scholars and analysts, the key process, which has conditioned debates on «race» and «ethnicity» since the 1950s, has emerged out of international labor migrations. In these «new politics», in France and other Euro-

pean countries, «'immigration' has become the name for meaning and representing race, a new name... that is functionally equivalent to the old designation, thus the term *immigrant* is the central feature that allows individuals to be classified in a racist typology» (Balibar & Wallerstein, 1988, p. 222). That conflation of new politics with new racism remains valid and links with immigration are clearly visible in the New Europe. In conjunction with these economic and social aspects, ideological and cultural transformations also help configure, and reconfigure, policy changes on race and ethnicity. The rise of racist movements, with growing influence on the population and on immigration debates, is inescapable – it resurfaces in every election as immigration issues intersect with electoral politics and with the politics of race (Garcia & Sáez, 1998).

In liquid modernity, the worst off are still the same – the *others*, the strangers. Solid, or liquid, modernity has not been lenient with the different ones. At the start of the 20th century, there were hopes that modernity would be the period when humanity finally left behind fears that threatened the social life of the past. Humans would control their lives and use reason to dominate the unpredictable forces of social and natural world. In contrast, at the start of the 21st century we relive a time of fear – whether of natural and environmental disasters, or of indiscriminate terrorism, or of racially distinct people. Indeed, modernity «turned out and kept on turning out, from the start, huge volumes of human waste» (Bauman, 2003, p. 123) and people still experience constant anxiety about dangers that can strike without warning. Among the dangers a number feature foreigners of «unknown» culture is unknown: «Mixophobia is a highly predictable and widespread reaction to the mind-boggling, spine-chilling and nerve-breaking variety of human types and lifestyles that rub shoulders in the streets of contemporary cities» (Bauman, 2003, pp. 109-110).

#### 4. FREUD, FEAR, AND REPUTATION RISK

Bauman (2007a) refers to Freud's idea of fear as the most unbearable and irritating feeling for human logic, the hopelessness of finiteness of life and to the forces of nature that can not be controlled – the fear of otherness, of the unknown. Fear is, for Bauman (2006), the name given to ignorance, vulnerability, and uncertainty about what to do and what can be – or cannot

be – done to combat them. Organizations are also frightened of factors (e.g., computerization, downsizing, outsourcing) that can lead to their death as economic entities. Indeed, even the loss of that most malleable quality, reputation, features among the top fears of risk managers (Xifra & Ordeix, 2009).

With reputation risk as one of the main organizational risks in the globalized world, then reputation management is an intrinsic phenomenon of liquid society and so the role of public relations is virtually ontological. Indeed, where love has become too fluid, and personal relationships are characterized by their fragility (Bauman, 2003), public relations professionals practice one of the leading roles. As marketization monopolizes all, even relationships come to be evaluated in terms of cost and benefit so co-existence has made way for convenience (Bauman, 2003). This convenience, outside of the utopia of the excellence paradigm, is also very present in today's relationships between organizations and their publics. The liquid perspective on society helps explain instabilities in the practice of public relations because: «the crisis has fueled additional uncertainty to the state of liquid fear in a liquid society of liquid consumption» (Bauman, 2008). It is no coincidence that Bauman is one of the rare European thinkers whose work explicitly refers to public relations and its practitioners.

Indeed, Bauman argues that the practice of public relations – particularly media relations (2007c) and marketing communications (1992, 2006, 2007b, 2007c) – helps form liquid society. Consequently, we argue, public relations may also play an important role in improving the arena of fear and uncertainty that is so shaped by corporate and government communicators. In this domain of promotional culture, the use of celebrities is another field where Bauman (2005, 2007b) connects elements of liquid society and the practices of public relations. This is verified by L'Etang's (2008) judicious assessment that «much of the PR role in celebrity circles is focused on promotion, publicity and media relations, and public relations has received some of its bad press from this association» (p. 223). While Bauman does not so explicitly state cause and effect relationships between the practice of public relations and current consumerism, the bad press identified by L'Etang is present in Baumanian sociology down to the negative effects of celebrities. In fact, public relations in liquid society now transcends professional practice to become a cultural practice that, depending on its deployment, plays a role in strengthening, or reducing, the circulation of liquid fear.



Examining linkages between race and public relations, Bauman (1995) has emphasized how contemporary individuals seek to live experiences while trying to handle the possibility of living others. One problem of identity is to avoid becoming fixed into rigid behavior, without opening the door to too many other possibilities. The fear of being cataloged or labeled is omnipresent in fearing the opinion of others who disagree. That is, if the problem of modern identity was to build an identity and ensure its soundness and stability, the late-modern problem of identity is essentially to avoid attachments and leave options open. As well as negative constructions of false weapons of mass destruction (and deception), this point can be an opportunity for public relations, as both channel for, and creator of, public opinion in matters of prejudices and negative racial stereotypes.

##### 5. BAUMAN'S THEORY AND CATALAN PRACTICE

Scholars observe how Bauman's demonstration of how an «us and them» mentality – fed by prejudices and stereotypes – underlies the construction of a collective identity. Pietsch and Marotta (2009) focus on Bauman's emphasis on the stranger's pivotal role in the process: «This understanding of strangerhood and its relationship to identity construction is first evident in Bauman's early English-language publications» (Pietsch & Marotta, 2009, pp. 188-189). Bauman's discussion of «strangerhood» draws on the relational, or intersubjective, conception of identity, where the self's identity is constituted through its opposition to the other. In this relational approach, public relations plays a critical social role in the construction of the image and, as a result, in the formation of liquid fear.

Bauman also uses «strangerhood» to understand the rise of nationalism. Nationalism seeks unification and homogeneity, and this is achieved through the act of drawing boundaries between natives and aliens (Bauman, 1992, p. 683). For Bauman (1992), the «we-ness» of friends owes its materiality to the «they-ness» of the enemies (p. 678) and this «us and them» mentality reappears within the context of globalization because immigrants are often viewed as strangers. For example, in neoliberal capitalist societies «surplus» (Bauman, 2004, p. 39), or immigrant, populations are the unintended casualties of economic progress. Bauman (2004) goes so far as to argue that political power and governance have become dependent on how Western govern-

ments deal with immigrants, particularly recent arrivals, who can too easily be represented by racist politicians and governments as an ideal «deviant other» (p. 56). The fear of immigrant «strangers» is frequently visible in public spaces. In these locations, immigrants can become the targets of racism; can find their cultural and religious expression suppressed, and can find, as in the planned mosque near the 9/11 memorial, their religious claims on public space are denied or resisted (Pietsch & Marotta, 2009).

Unlike most sociologists of the contemporary, Bauman is often hopeful about the future of humanity (Pietsch & Marotta, 2009). Referring to ethnic minorities, for example, Bauman (2009) states that «if there are human beings who accept and appreciate other human beings and take efforts to talk with them, suddenly cultural differences cease to be *casus belli*» (p. 72). He chooses to focus on the possibility of being different and being together: «We can be different and live together, and we can learn the art of living with the difference, respecting it, safeguarding the self-difference and accepting the difference of the other» (p. 73). Public relations can play a crucial role in achieving these desires that have a basis in his own experiences in Britain. Despite political predictions of rivers of blood in English cities, he observes how some English cities made rootless by urban guerrillas have turned slowly into ordinary neighborhoods: «many people walk down the street and only the color of their skin separates them, but this does not prevent talking amicably and spending time together» (Bauman, 2009, p. 74).

Public relations, with its capacity to create symbolic spaces and dialogical relationships, can have an important role in lessening liquid fear. Indeed, beyond its oversubscribed role as a management function, public relations might help in creating closer, less exotic, and less threatening, images of immigrants. An already existing example of such a social role can be found in Catalonia, a Spanish region/nation where immigration has been the most important social phenomenon of the last twenty years (Garcia, 2004). That immigration, mixed with the rise of nationalism, has characterized the last two decades. Less commonly, it has motivated government policies on improving images of ethnic minorities living in Catalonia to prevent racist and xenophobic views.

In 2002, for example, the professional association of Catalan journalists (Col·legi de Periodistes) adopted a *Manual of Style on Ethnic Minorities* to determine how news (local, national, and international) had to deal with dif-

ferent races and ethnicities to help contribute to a more open and supportive society. This goal, which has also been one of the strategic cores of Catalan public policies of integration of ethnic minorities, resulted in the production of consciously different television programs. These are designed to eradicate racist and xenophobic attitudes against ethnic minorities and enacted through building positive images of immigrants and ethnic communities in Catalonia.

Not having knowledge of the communities and cultures that live with us, contributes to poor relations and yet, it is one of the traits that characterizes our society. This is particularly true at a time when the acceleration of migration and the growth of new settlements in our environment are common phenomena (Guardiola, 2006). The proximity of one to the other, as is commonly done with the experientially unknown, often results in demonization. This is compounded because our knowledge of immigration comes less from personal contacts and more from, with all of its well-documented constructions and biases, the media (Gifreu, 2006).

As Guardiola (2006) argues, TV news programs are the major representations of these types of issues. Yet these types of programs are not the most apt spaces to show the immigration issues from a broad and diverse social point of view. For a start, news programs occupy prime time viewing slots when space is heavily contested by resource rich company and government communicators seeking publicity. In addition, their short duration – approximately thirty minutes – do not allow for a reflexive treatment of each news item. Indeed, since they are also often brief messages, full of images that are repeated redundantly until a new image appears, news items are predisposed to confuse understanding, or over-simplify complex situations.

## **6. MEDIA, MIXOPHILIA, AND MIXOPHOBIA: FORMING RELATIONS WITH OTHER PUBLICS IN CATALONIA.**

While the importance of news programs as primary sources on issues associated with immigration needs to be kept in mind, other genres and formats can deal with these topics in a more plural way. This has been done by some Catalan TV channels and their initiatives suggest prototypes for forming relations with others, and offer guidelines relevant to the theory and practice of progressive public relations in the diverse social settings of Baumanian liquid society.

With this in mind, the following six programs were selected for study: *Karakia* is a production of, Catalan public television (*Televisió de Catalunya*). Through culinary cultures, the program, which began in 2001 and is still being shown, delves into the traditions and customs of the immigrants collective that live in Catalonia.

*Diccionari de la Diversitat* (Dictionary of Diversity) consisted of 26 weekly episodes that were broadcast weekly for a period of six months on 12 local television stations (including the five in the most important Catalan cities). The program set out key concepts for a glossary on diversity with the aim of promoting these values among the audience and the common subject of the 26 generic topics was the shared letters of the alphabet.

*Nyam Nyam* was a series of 20 minute weekly programs, produced and conducted by Clot RTV-Sant Martí, the local station of Barcelona borough called *El Clot*. First broadcast in 2003, it made the most of the cuisine of the different ethnic cultures in Catalonia as a way of getting to know other ways of living and of understanding life.

*Uníson* (All Together) was a series of twelve 10-minute programs shown throughout the Catalan territory on Wednesdays. It sought, using music as universal language, to establish a dialogue through delving into the experiences of different people in Catalonia and was produced by Orfeo Català, Catalonia's most important musical institution.

*Els Nous Catalans* (The New Catalans) is a 30-minute program first shown in 2004 and still transmitted on Catalan public television every Saturday. It portrays, and analyzes, immigration and shows how local citizens and cultures from other parts of the world share space and live together.

*Info Idiomes* (Info Languages) is a production by Lavinia TV for Barcelona TV. It started in 1998 (in four languages) and is still shown (in 18 languages). It began as a weekend informative program with the very special trait of being transmitted in 18 languages and two dialects with the purpose of linking the different linguistic communities living in Barcelona. It is now available online.

## 7. ANALYSIS (1): FORMAT AND TITLES

Each of these diverse programs adopts an unusual (i.e., different to typical news) point of view toward the figure of the other/immigrant (Rodas

2006). They can be analyzed through the main elements of their construction and our comparative analysis of the programs draws from the elements used by Guardiola's (2006) study: 1) the format; 2) the title; 3) the theme; 4) the argument and the structure; 5) the treatment of the differences; 6) the linguistic approach, and 7) the relationship with public space. The data was obtained from the viewing of a sample of the programs, their websites, and from the information given in the press conferences on the day of their public presentation.

In terms of the first element, the format, they differ greatly from news programs. Instead, these programs, by their very diverse nature, make space for multiple perspectives. The need to choose fresh formats evades the easy clichés of older, established ones. For example, outside of news, the story has more time to develop, and can entertain a number of different points of view rather than just one or two. Outside of news, programs can be more relaxed, yet more pedagogical, and the break conventional information structures through special treatment of imaging, of language, and of structure. All this can be done naturally, without forgetting to inform; and, because they do not need to make the same kind of value judgments, and *a priori* assumptions, they can provide better access and understandings of the concerns of ethnic groups.

The second element of analysis, the title, similarly allows us to distinguish between the role given to immigration in the TV news and the role given in these because the «title is the main entrance to that which we will find later on» (Guardiola, 2006, p. 146). *Karakia*, for example, is a Maori word which, in the everyday life of the Maoris in New Zealand and Polynesia, is used as a prayer to open up the earth and to cook, symbolizing the subterranean oven as a way to the Gods' food, and making earth a «great common stove.» Such a title alone introduces the wide perspective on which it is based.

*Diccionari de la Diversitat's* title, with the word *diversity*, automatically leads viewers to expect pluralistic content. Thus it is not boxed into a schematic standards of news TV programs (Rodas 2006). *Nyam Nyam* is a more naïve title – roughly translated as «Yummy, Yummy» – that takes the onomatopoeia related to food and so makes a universal appeal to all human beings that avoids cultural prejudice. The fourth title, *Uníson*, transmits, as well as the theme of the program, an idea of different voices that sing har-

moniously at the same time. *Els Nous Catalans* illustrates a similar intent toward converging cultures and bringing the newcomer closer to the established culture. In effect, it breaks with the binary opposition of *us versus them* in order to emphasize solidarity between all those settling in Catalonia. Finally *Info Idiomes* is the only program that has a news format, but, instead of basing its agenda on hot mainstream issues, it relates to the most relevant facts of the culture speaking the language used on the program.

## 8. ANALYSIS (2): MAIN THEMES, STRUCTURES, AND LANGUAGE

In analyzing their main themes, we seek to establish how all these programs focus attention on the issue of immigration. The main theme of *Karakia* begins with the fact that in all cultures food is a sign of hospitality – we get to know new food (unknown in our lands) and how to cook it. In the case of *Diccionari de la Diversitat*, the main theme, using the letters of the alphabet, presents from different perspectives to link 26 generic topics to diversity. The resulting key concepts of a hypothetical glossary on diversity will, in turn, be promoted amongst the viewers. In the case of *Nyam Nyam*, the cuisine and culture of other ethnic groups and nationalities living in Catalonia are taken into account in ways that make them more familiar. *Uníson* establishes a dialogue between different people in our society using music – that need not be translated – as a common ground.

*Els Nous Catalans*, by showing the main immigration collectives (e.g., with their jobs, how they spend their free time, their culture), reveals what the new citizens are like – in all their diversity – in ways that make the audience more knowledgeable about this diversity. The main theme of *Info Idiomes* is, clearly, that of informing in 18 languages (Japanese, Arabic, Italian, Danish, Finnish, Portuguese, German, Swedish, Norwegian, Amazigh, Occitan, Urdu, French, Chinese, Russian, Tagalo, Bube and Mandink'a, and also Catalan sign language. All of them have Catalan subtitles to help bring the citizens of Barcelona closer to the ethnic groups represented, as well as bringing these collectives closer to Catalan.

The structure or argument of the program is useful when observing the different ways in which each program, uses its own non-transferable structure with the purpose of attaining its objectives (Guardiola, 2006). *Karakia* creates a field of exploration out of the everyday life of cultural immigration

communities. From this daily routine, it teaches about traditional customs. Understanding a culture and its traditions helps to humanize it from the point of view of our own tradition, which, in turn has had to dialogue with other traditions to survive.

*Diccionari de la Diversitat's* aim was to help the population understand the changes caused by immigration and to explain difference from the new cultures as well as common traits. To do this, the program featured scholars from sociology, language, and history. The selection of the 26 topics or themes refers to elements that structure or feed diversity in different ways from language (linguistic diversity), and public space (diversity on the streets), to housing (diversity in living conditions). Each chapter was structured in content blocks, introduced by words that began with the letter. The approximation to each of the topics took place through the intervention of the different «experts» on the matter. They provided, and explained, the more technical concepts alongside «citizens» who offer their opinions and analysis from a life, rather than an academic, perspective.

*Nyam nyam* allows the participants to speak in front of the camera and observes them while they are cooking. At the same time there is a natural surge towards the memory of a whole tradition; the nostalgia of a home left behind or the fear of being able to emotionally conquer a new one. Certainly, this program understands cooking as a visual ceremony and provides a context of knowledge and understanding each other. Moreover, this was one of the pioneering programs to include the term *interculturality* in the description of the basic directives as well as being one of the most immediate objectives of the program.

*Uníson* put together in each chapter two people from different cultural backgrounds for the purpose of dialogue and life experience with music as the common theme. The program reveals the relationship each of the characters have with music (anecdotes, experiences, first contacts, etc.) and how they share in the preparation and final performance of the musical piece they have chosen. All this has the objective of «promoting the knowledge of other ethnic groups as well as mutual understanding between people and diverse culture» (according to the press release), in a declaration that reinforces the idea that television not only portrays *vox populi* matters, but also offers an opening to other fields of interest (Gifreu, 2006).

*Els Nous Catalans* is structured around four TV reports that act as the main backbone. The first five-minute one is of general scope. It deals with such topics as the problems of family grouping, the existence of organized crime groups (mafias), the process of regularization, living in villages or cities with high immigration levels, and the difficulty in finding housing, that affect one or more of the ethnic minorities that exist in Catalonia. The second five-minute report deals with everyday Catalan life. The most popular cultural profiles, such as the Chinese New Year, Ramadan or the Bollywood mania are covered here. There is also a brief interview with popular characters belonging to Catalan society, who, although not born in Catalonia, can be considered as «new Catalans.» Around these pieces of program there are different capsules that complement their contents: a) *Contrapunt*: two people from different cultures explain what has surprised them most of each other; b) *La xifra*: in this area the information from one of the programs is broadened with representative data and statistics; c) *L'objecte*: the phenomena of immigration has brought new objects and tools found in import shops (this section explains their origin and how they are used); d) *Si vas a...*: gives advice related to the countries of origin of the people appearing on the programs; and e) *La dita*: the linguistic reality of each immigrant group is represented in the program in the form of popular sayings that reflect each ethnic community idiosyncrasies.

Although *Info Idiomes* is news that lasts for half an hour, it is not a common news program. In fact it is co-managed with the associations of the ethnic groups that define the contents of the program and its presenter. They define the most appropriate style and give priority to information relevant to that ethnic community. All of this takes place under the supervision of the program coordinator. In effect, the format offers a symbiosis between a news and an education program on languages and foreign cultures. It is innovative in bringing news in a more responsible and plural point of view closer to the immediate reality of the country concerned.

### 9. ANALYSIS (3): DIFFERENCES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND PUBLIC SPACES

The fifth element of Guardiola's (2006) analysis concerns dealing with differences. In these programs, differences are not taken as a reason for discord. Instead, they are situated as adding value toward a necessary mutual



understanding. The list of dishes, beverages, songs, dances, customs, and costumes, which are featured in *Karakia*, is too long to be included. However, the program's team brings their audiences closer to these differences with a desire to enrich Catalan culture. As far as *Diccionari de la Diversitat* is concerned, the immediate objectives of the program include socio-cultural inequalities in diverse societies – the very diversity as a source of inequality that is absent in public relations – and the economic, social and political contexts on which socio-cultural diversity is built (diversity for co-habitation). In accord with the program press book, the team was very clear on the fact that diversity is not only being conscious of the differences, but also shows the discriminatory dynamics that intervene in the social relationships of these differences.

*Uníson* similarly underlines, in ways also consistent with its purpose, the equal treatment of *difference*. It establishes an equity-relevant televisual space by foregrounding dialogue that represents the richness of world cultures and by making different immigration communities visible and valuing their culture. It also promotes co-habitation and tolerance among people of different cultural or ethnic groups. In this way *Uníson* contributes to their integration, respects their different traits and explores their distinctive ways of living, using, and feeling music. In *Info Idiomes*, difference not only defined the editorial line of the program, and developed the information, but had a team, which itself was comprised of people from each culture as assessors (and this was done in 18 languages, including Amazigh, Urdu, Tagalo, Bube or Mandink'a).

The treatment of language is vital. Frequently, in news reports neither the correspondents reporting back from foreign countries nor those transmitting the news related to immigration, understand the languages of those involved in the events covered. This is a recipe for misunderstanding, and creates obstacles to intercultural dialogue (Guardiola, 2006). In contrast, these Catalan programs consciously connect with the *other's* language. For example, in the program dedicated to the Bolivian community in *Karakia*, one of the sections focused on Quítxua, a language relatively unknown in Catalonia but spoken by nine and a half million people. Apart from becoming acquainted with the immigrant's native language, this attention highlights the relationships these immigrants have with the Catalan language, and not just Catalan culture and society. In the case of the *Diccionari de la Diversitat*, lan-

guage actually structures each different chapter. The letter *I* of *Identity*, for example, explores the concept of identity from a personal and collective point of view and relates the theme to cohesion and respect for difference. *Info Idiomes* does serious linguistic work – through the use of the 18 languages and two variant dialects – that helps build bridges between different language communities living in Barcelona, and is reinforced with the introduction of subtitles in Catalan (financed by the Catalan Government).

The relationship with public space is last element of the analysis and the programs' collaboration with public institutions gets the programs to serve the general public interest. In this way, *Diccionari de la Diversitat* is created from *Xarxa de Televisions Locals* and CRID (Local TV Networks and the Consortium of Resources for the Integration of Diversity). Thanks to this, the program is simultaneously providing sources of information for local Town Halls. Similarly, *Nyam, Nyam* is sponsored by CRID, as well as Àrea de Benestar Social de la Diputació de Barcelona (Social Services of Barcelona County) and *Info Idiomes* had the support of the Government of Catalonia. Thus, in addition to their other functions, such programs also contribute to the perception and understanding of all citizens beyond their media origins.

*Uníson* too is part of a wider project belonging to the *Orfeó Català* called «Un món de música» (A world of music), which includes activities such as family and educational worldwide music workshops or the Diversity Week. In this way, *Uníson* is not autonomous, but part of a network of services that Barcelona offers to the citizens. For information on the other programs, you only have to go to the websites of *Karakia* (<http://www.tv3.cat/pprogrames/karakia/krkSeccio.jsp>) or *Els Nous Catalans* (<http://www.rtve.es/television/elsnouscatalans>), to see the documentation, information, education, and entertainment their portals have to offer. These services add to, widen, and further disseminate the contents of the programs themselves.

As noted earlier, the transition from solid modernity to liquid modernity has made greater individualism flourish at the expense of attitudes of solidarity. One consequence has been a propensity to fear social decline and, therefore, generate insecurity (Bauman, 2007a, 2009.) This insecurity is reflected in the fear of social exchange, which Bauman (2009) calls «mixophobia» (p. 71), with new and different groups, especially immigrant minorities in cities. Nevertheless, Bauman continues to be hopeful, even optimistic, about the future, since mixophobic co-exists with «mixophilia» (Bauman, 2009, p. 70),

or the propensity or desire to mix with differences or with those who are different in search of enriching and fresh expectations and encouraging fruitful exchanges. In our view, public institutions have a civic duty to promote mixophilia, by triggering, and, if need be, by regulating, the relations of citizens, and by challenging and changing negative images and perceptions of the ethnically different. This is what has been done, and is still being done, by Catalan public institutions through, among other initiatives, those public television programs.

However, not everything should be analyzed from the perspective of alleviating the liquidity that characterizes our society. Another contemporary characteristic is society's ability to turn anything, even people – for example, celebrities (Bauman, 2005) – into something fungible and consumable. For example, when an artist dies, he turns into an object of consumption: his work into something profitable, his art into business, his name into a brand, and his own self as artist, into capital. The times of liquidity are times of products and merchandising. Even inclusive programs along the lines of those listed above, are not immune from turning a stranger's culture into an object of desire, or love. In Bauman's (2003) terms, if desire wants to consume, love wants «to hold and preserve the beloved object» (p. 9). Despite the commendable aims of these Catalan TV programs, the consumerism of liquid modernity has, at times, left traces. So some shows also end up being merchandising products as when *Karakia's* chapter, which was devoted to the Vietnamese community, focused on a family that owns a Vietnamese restaurant in Barcelona and ended up also being an excellent publicity campaign for this family business.

## 10. CONCLUSIONS

Catalonian news journalism (see Gifreu, 2006, Rodas, 2006, Van Dijk, 2009) still tends – despite the *Manual of Style on Ethnic Minorities* – to create images that promote fear of immigrants. In contrast, other genre programs, along the lines of those analyzed in earlier sections, promote a more open, inclusive, and supportive society. Indeed, in taking immigration as a central theme from the basic foundations of a culture (language, food, music), all the programs perform a civic and public service. Their content prioritizes information, not sensationalism, and works to convey a fairer treatment of their

subjects and topics. They are programs that collaborate with the civil society and public institutions; that combine education with entertainment; that show how to learn in sympathy for, and empathy toward, new cultures with different characters and ideas. Moreover, as the majority work with specific individuals in specific contexts, they give a more human perspective to the figure of immigrants. They are about giving the *other* a body, and a fuller embodiment, with all that those entail (including cognitive, linguistic, and visual elements).

Above all, the immigrants are given the chance – so often denied them – to speak, and to express themselves in their own cultural forms. These programs have tried, and continue to try, to present non-pejorative images of immigrants. In addition, in their removal of distance between the reality they represent and that which is represented – as well as in the absence of censoring filters or judgements – these programs help strengthen the resources for mutual understanding, and, therefore, for fruitful co-existence between newcomers and host society. They offer resources for the transition from the creation of private spaces to a wider public domain, a domain which «should be used for multiple purposes and not hinder the human condition, but facilitate it» (Bauman, 2009, p. 58).

Liquid society seeks to understand its fears in order to do something about them, or to demand that something be done (Bauman, 2006). So, for example, the flow of immigrants – especially those seeking refuge from the threats of persecution – not only frightens, but deeply impresses, host populations. The flow reminds them, almost viscerally, of the fragility of human existence: «A crowd of unknown causes an endemic sensation and incurable feeling that something unexpected can happen. In other words: the unknown are the embodiment of risk» (Bauman, 2009, p. 55). When hosts refuse immigrants and force them to return, the native population may think that those fearsome forces have been shattered, but have to know it is only a kind of symbolic victory in a war they know they cannot really win (Bauman, 2006).

The practice of public relations has potential to eliminate or reduce the misinformation about the different ethnic groups along the lines demonstrated by the joint actions of Catalan civil society and public institution sponsorship and their television promotions. Realizing that potential would give public relations its wider social function (Bentele & Wehmeier, 2007) and act as a reminder that public relations «from the distant past to the online pre-

sent, operates outside of, as well as inside of, the management function» (McKie & Munshi, 2007, p. 13). That kind of realization would similarly fulfil Edwards' (2006) prediction that «the nature of public relations as a form of symbolic production generating symbolic power will be clarified» (p. 231). Indeed, the prediction could be fulfilled in a socially progressive way if public relations were to mobilize its resources to lessen public fear of different racial and ethnic minorities, by not only making them less vague, less elusive, and less difficult to identify, but also by locating them, as Bauman does, as a legitimate part of the neighborhood.

These Catalan television examples illustrate strategies for building ethical relations with others and suggest how public relations can assist in principled assimilation (i.e., assimilation understood in the elevated sense of gathering together as fellow humans without predetermined hierarchies). In this way, public relations would not only enact a social function in the context of ethnicity, it would also abandon its traditional neglect of racism, and illustrate its symbolic capability to support equity and justice.

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