Doctoral   **Business**

2008-09-01

Mediators of Meaning: a Critically Reflexive Study of the Encoding of Irish Advertising

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Recommended Citation

Mediators of Meaning: A Critically Reflexive Study of the Encoding of Irish Advertising

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Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Faculty of Business

September 2008

Abstract

This thesis explores the socially constructed process through which advertising agencies and practitioners encode advertisements. It draws from an interdisciplinary theoretical framework, and the study is positioned within the critical marketing studies literature. The literature review explores the relationship between advertising and the theory of ideology, the interaction between advertising and the cultural world and the role of advertising agencies as "cultural intermediaries" within consumer culture. An ethnographic study of an Irish advertising agency was conducted, during which primary data was collected in the form of internal agency meetings, agency documentation, interviews with advertising practitioners and participant observations. The study incorporated a discourse analysis approach to talk and text generated during the inquiry, which has become a popular way of exploring advertising and marketing phenomenon. The data analysis is presented in the form of an ethnographic narrative of preparations for key campaigns in the agency, and central "interpretative repertoires" that Irish advertising practitioners drew upon in interviews to describe their work. The data analysis illustrates how advertising practitioners draw symbolic resonance from culture and society to construct advertising meaning, and the findings reveal a striking power dynamic between the agency and the client, where ownership and control of the creative development process is widely contested between social actors. The findings suggest that rather than being seen as ideology producers, advertising agencies should be conceptualised as mediators between multiple meaning systems within consumer culture. The thesis concludes by outlining the main contributions of the research to theory and practice, and offers some suggestions for future studies of advertising production.

Declaration Page

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of **Doctor of Philosophy** is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

This thesis was prepared according to the regulations for postgraduate study by research of the Dublin Institute of Technology and has not been submitted in whole or in part for an award in any other institute or university.

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Signature _Aidan Kelly_   Date _14. 11. 2008_

           Candidate

Acknowledgements

While a Ph.D. thesis is solo-authored, like the creation of an advertisement, it is never the work of one person. I am indebted to the following people for their help and support during the completion of my doctoral journey:

I would like to sincerely thank my primary supervisor Dr. Katrina Lawlor for her intellectual and moral support throughout the Ph.D. process. Katrina has been extraordinarily kind and generous to me as both an undergraduate and postgraduate student, and I am indebted to her for life for her efforts throughout my education. This thesis would simply not have been completed without her help and sage guidance. I am truly grateful for this.

I would also like to sincerely thank my advisory supervisor Dr. Stephanie O'Donohoe of The University of Edinburgh for her intellectual advice and genuine support throughout the process. Stephanie has been an inspiring advisor to me, and her input into this project was invaluable, giving generously of her time at every asking. I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to her for all her help and enthusiasm along the way.

My academic colleagues in DIT have been a bedrock of support for me since the very beginning. I would like to thank Laura Cuddihy for her valued friendship, and keeping me sane with conversations about the GAA Football Championship. Brendan O'Rourke and Olivia Freeman of the Discourse Analysis Group have been incredibly supportive and helpful with my research, and provided an open forum to present ideas for papers, they are truly wonderful colleagues and great friends. I would also like to thank Dr. Bernie Casey, Stacey McCarthy, Tom Fennell, Joe Dennehy, Dr. Eddie Rohan, Paul O'Sullivan, and Dr. Paddy Dolan for their help and support throughout the years.

The library staff in DIT were fantastically helpful in sourcing books and articles during my research. I'd like to thank them sincerely for all their efforts on my behalf.

My fellow research students, past and present, have been a source of both inspiration and support throughout the years. I would like to thank Tara Rooney, Fawzi Abusalama, Dr. Alan Bradshaw, Dr. Bruno Zelic, Dr. Kevina Cody, Daire Hooper, Dr. Norah Campbell and Mary-Ann O'Donovan for their intellectual input into my work, and their help at various times during my studies.

Several international colleagues have offered helpful advice and support during my doctoral research at various conferences, and the academic marketing community have been incredibly generous to me throughout. I would like to specifically thank Professor Pauline Maclaren (University of London), Professor Chris Hackley (University of London), Professor Mark Ritson (University of Melbourne), Professor Linda Scott (University of Oxford), Professor Craig Thompson (University of Madison-Wisconsin), Professor Margaret Wetherell (Open University), Professor Stephen Brown (University

Table of Contents

Table of Figures and Tables

1 Chapter 1: Introductory Chapter

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a brief introduction to the thesis. The origins of the research question are discussed, and the key events which shaped the research focus are explained. The theoretical and methodological frameworks used to study advertising production are then broadly outlined, and the fieldwork site for the research is described. The chapter concludes with a broad outline of the structure of the chapters for the thesis.

1.2 Origins of the Research Question

This study explores the production of advertising meaning within an Irish advertising agency. The origins of the research question for this thesis possibly extend back to my days as a Leaving Certificate student at St. Fintans High School in Sutton, County Dublin. Our then English teacher, Barry O'Doherty (a truly inspiring educator), showed us a video in class of Noam Chomsky's "Manufacturing Consent", and the functioning of mass media institutions in America. This early exposure to the critical analysis of mass media always fascinated me, and this interest carried into my later career as an academic researcher in a business school. As I began reading for my Ph.D. research, I was captivated by a paper by Elliott and Ritson (1997) which explored the relationship between advertising, discourse and ideology. I was particularly interested in how they analysed advertising as a communicative system, an ideology which surpassed all other ideological institutions such as media, religion, education or politics. This paper seemed to offer enormous potential to explore advertising critically as a form of mass communication, and appealed to my instinct as someone who was interested in critical approaches to marketing and advertising.

An initial appraisal of the marketing and advertising literature seemed to suggest that while there had been excellent textual analysis studies of advertising, and explorations of advertising consumption, there had been far less research on advertising production, particularly from a critical perspective. Armed with this information, I decided to write a paper for the 2002 Academy of Marketing Conference, calling for an exploration of the production of advertising meaning in academic research. While this working paper was accepted, I was advised by a reviewer to consult a paper providing a critical analysis of the role of advertising agencies in consumer culture (Hackley, 2002), and I also read a previous study by the same author on the discursive practices of advertising agency professionals (Hackley, 2000). This introduction to critical approaches on advertising agencies really helped to focus my research and I decided that I wanted to explore how advertising agencies encoded ideological meanings into advertisements for my Ph.D. study. This would entail exploring the social construction of advertising meaning within an agency, which would build upon the previous work of Hackley (2000), Kover (1995) and Alvesson (1994) amongst others in the business literature. I now had a Ph.D. topic which I felt was relatively novel, and could potentially make an interesting contribution to the advertising agency practice literature.

1.3 Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks

This thesis draws from an interdisciplinary theoretical framework to study advertising production. The primary field for the literature review is the advertising, marketing and consumer research literature, and explores the production and consumption of advertising within consumer culture. Following the completion of the primary fieldwork in an advertising agency, further insights were also drawn from the related fields of

2

philosophy, sociology, cultural studies and anthropology to provide a useful way of theorising the Irish advertising development process. The study benefits from this interdisciplinary focus, which allowed relevant research work from different intellectual traditions to be incorporated into the theoretical framework.

The literature clearly indicated that there was a lack of production focus in the advertising literature, and there seemed to be much scope for a study which ethnographically explored the production of advertising. I was also quite influenced by Hackley's (1999b; 2000) social constructionist exploration of agency practices using discourse analysis, which had become a popular methodology amongst advertising researchers (Alvesson, 1994; Elliott et al., 1995; Ritson and Elliott, 1999). I felt it would be useful to try to combine ethnographic exploration of an advertising agency with discourse analysis to critically analyse advertising agency practice, and gain access to "naturally occurring" data which discourse analysts claim is essential to study social processes and practices (Wood and Kroger, 2000). The adoption of these methodological approaches raised two important issues which had to be addressed within the study. The first concerned the combining of multiple sources of data generated within the agency from interviews, documents, observations, and internal meetings within a coherent analytical framework. The second concerned the exploration of macro concepts, such as ideology, through the micro level data generated during the study of advertising agency practice. Alvesson and Skoldberg's (2000) "reflexive methodology" text proved extremely useful for providing advice on incorporating multiple data sources, and offered a helpful analytical framework for conducting critical organisational research, which was adopted in the research methodology for the thesis.

1.4 Research Site

I managed to negotiate research access to a full-service advertising agency in Dublin, Ireland in the summer of 2003. I made a contact with the account planning director, who also had an interest in discourse analysis through academic work he was completing on a Master of Arts degree programme at the Open University. I was able to obtain six weeks access to the agency as a non-participant observer, as I was interested in collecting "naturally occurring" interactions which were not researcher instigated. I was allowed access to internal agency meetings, agency planning and creative documents, informal interactions and interviews with key members of the creative and account planning teams, who were pivotal to the research question of the study. While six weeks access is considered quite a short period of immersion by ethnographic or anthropological standards (Moeran, 2005a), it was ideal in terms of the amount of the discursive data generated for data analysis, which favoured comparably with similar discourse analytical studies of advertising production (Hackley, 2000). This discursive data forms the main primary data to address the research question of the thesis.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured into four main parts. The first part presents a literature review, with chapter two exploring the relationship between advertising and ideology, chapter three examining the interaction between advertising and the cultural world and chapter four theorising the role of advertising agencies as "cultural intermediaries" within consumer culture. The second part presents the research methodology with chapter five, detailing the research programme for the thesis, the rationale for a critical analysis of advertising production, and the specific methods used to generate, analyse and interpret the data collected during the ethnographic study. The third part presents the primary data

4

analysis, which is divided into two separate chapters. Chapter six analyses the ethnographic story of my time in the advertising agency, which is communicated through a confessional narrative (Van Maanen, 1988). Chapter seven analyses interview data collected with account planners and creative teams in order to understand the role of these key cultural intermediaries within the advertising development process. This chapter identifies central "interpretative repertoires" that account planners and creative practitioners drew upon to account for their role and work within the advertising agency. The final part, chapter eight, concludes the thesis argument by outlining the main contributions of the research to advertising theory, research methods, and policymaking, and also provides recommendations for future research projects in the area of advertising production.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the scope of the thesis, and has offered an overview of the main content of each chapter. It has also provided the reader with key signposts for the study, and developed a rationale for the key decisions made during the doctoral research process. The thesis will now begin by developing the theoretical framework within the literature review.

2 Chapter 2: Advertising and Ideology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the relationship between advertising and the theory of ideology. The chapter has three main components which help to conceptualise this relationship. The origins and key philosophical contributors to the concept of ideology are first reviewed, to help understand how it emerged as a theoretical and scientific concern. The debates surrounding ideology and the emergence of a "consumer society" are then examined, which trace the history of the criticism of consumerism, and also explore contemporary perspectives on the topic. The ideological role of advertising within consumer society is then considered, from both macro and micro analytical perspectives. Together these three components provide an overview of the nature of ideology, and linkages between this theoretical concept and the role of advertising as a social communication system.

2.2 The Concept of Ideology

This section explores the origins of the concept of ideology, and the key philosophers whose ideas contributed to its evolution. It also examines divergent conceptions of ideology within marketing and consumer research, and considers the contemporary relevancy of the ideology concept.

2.2.1 Origins of the Term

The term "ideology" was first coined by French philosopher Antoine Destutt De Tracy in 1796, who was the leader of the Institut de France which was established to spread the ideas of the enlightenment (McLellan, 1995). In his four-volume text *Elements d'Ideologie*, De Tracy proposed a new "science of ideas", idea-logy, which outlined the

6

systematic analysis of ideas and sensations and their generation, combination and

consequences (Thompson, 1990b). De Tracy's vision for ideology was a scientific

approach to ideas and sensations, and the insights of the Institut and De Tracy were

initially utilised by Napolean Bonaparte, in devising a new constitution for France in

1799. However, Napolean was also deeply sceptical of the "science" of ideology, which

he felt was at odds with the reality of the function of political power. By 1812, with the

attempt to establish a French empire failing, Napolean further outlined his opposition to

the science of ideas, blaming the "ideologues" for the French retreat from Moscow:

> We must lay the blame for the ills which our fair France has suffered on ideology,
> that shadowy metaphysics which subtly searches for first causes on which to base
> the legislation of peoples, rather than making use of the laws know to the human
> heart and the lessons of history. These errors must inevitably and did in fact lead to
> the rule of bloodthirsty men (Napolean Bonaparte, 1812, cited in Hawkes, 2003:
> 59)

Napolean's criticism of ideology seemed to imply that as a "science", it was somehow

blind to intuition and disconnected from the patterns of history. With Napolean's

abdication in April 1814, Destutt De Tracy and the science of ideas once again gained

prominence within French political life as a basis for scientific knowledge to develop an

understanding of society (Thompson, 1990b). The work of the Institut and the political

lessons of the French revolution also had an impact in Germany, and upon the work of

German philosophers, where the science of ideas and the concept of ideology was further

developed through the theories of Karl Marx.

2.2.2 Marxist Heritage

While the concept of ideology can be traced and linked to a variety of different

philosophers, perhaps the most pre-eminent theorist of ideology was Karl Marx, whose

ideas feature heavily in texts devoted to the topic (Eagleton, 2000; Larrain, 1994;

Thompson, 1990b). Originally a student of Hegel, Marx's work was wide ranging, and focused primarily upon the structure of economic and social relations. His contribution to the concept of ideology was developed through his analysis of the alienation of human labour, the determination of human consciousness through class position and the market system of economic commodity production. The work of Marx provided a theoretical base for the foundation of the concept of ideology, and was enormously influential on how economies and societies were analysed and explained by subsequent ideology theorists.

Much of Marx's work was concerned with the uneven distribution of resources and power within society (McLellan, 1995). This was reflected in his early writings, which discussed the distribution of wealth and the processes of human labour. In *"Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts"*, Marx described how ordinary workers were exploited by the system of economic production, which concentrated wealth in the hands of the ruling classes:

> Using the very words of political economy we have demonstrated that the worker is degraded to the most miserable sort of commodity; that the misery of the worker is in inverse proportion to the power and size of his production; that the necessary result of competition is the accumulation of capital in a few hands, and thus a more terrible restoration of monopoly; and that finally the distinction between capitalist and landlord, and that between peasant and industrial worker disappears and the whole society must fall apart into the two classes of the property owners and the propertyless workers (Marx, 1977b: 77).

As a result of this system, workers became alienated from the products of their own labour, which benefited those who controlled this capitalist system rather than those who worked to produce goods. For Marx, this objectified human labour and created economic inequity in society, which he expressed in an oft-quoted passage:

> The worker becomes poorer the richer is his production, the more it increases in power and scope. The worker becomes a commodity that is all the cheaper the more commodities he creates. The depreciation of the human world progresses in direct proportion to the increase in value of the world of things. Labour does not only produce commodities; it produces itself and the labourer as a commodity and that to the extent to which it produces commodities in general. What this fact expresses is merely this: the object that labour produces, its product, confronts it as an alien being, as a power independent of the producer. The product of labour is labour that has solidified itself into an object, made itself into a thing, the objectification of labour. The realisation of labour is its objectification. In political economy this realisation of labour appears as a loss of reality for the worker, objectification as a loss of the object or slavery to it, and appropriation as alienation, or externalisation (Marx, 1977b: 78).

The objectification of labour and the alienation of workers to the products of their labour was a theme that featured prominently in Marx's work. It highlighted the inequalities of the economic system, and the exploitation of the working classes at the hands of the capitalist ruling class.

The system of social and economic relations created a superstructure where the ruling classes reined supreme and exercised control over their subordinates. To Marx and Engels, the ruling classes within a society provided ideas which determined the existence and consciousness of the working classes, and this was how their ideology prevailed within society. In accounting for this situation, Marx and Engels wrote:

> The ides of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it (Marx and Engels, 1977: 176).

Thus for Marx and Engels, individuals who controlled material production also controlled the dominant systems of ideas, or ideology, in society too, and promulgated this control over the consciousness of the masses. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx distinguished between two groups in society, the ruling classes (the bourgeoisie) and the working

9

classes (the proletariat), and argued that it was the bourgeoisie who determined the

consciousness and social existence of the proletariat. In this relationship, the bourgeoisie

controlled the modes of production which bolstered their control over the proletariat:

> The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby, the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind (Marx, 1977c: 224).

While Marx never used the phrase "false consciousness", he did imply that individuals in

society were deceived as to their "real" conditions of existence, and that through the

ideology of the ruling classes' reality was presented in an illusory way to working

classes, who were unable to recognise their exploitation. This illustrated how the system

of economic production and the class system conspired to keep the ideas of the ruling

classes the dominant ones in a society, and demonstrated the operation of ideology at a

macro level.

Another famous ideological analysis conducted by Marx was of the commodity form. For

Marx, commodities had use value (the value of a good to an individual in terms of its

practical uses), and exchange value (the value of a good in terms of how what it could be

exchanged for), and these values were not in any way equivalent. Marx (1977a: 45)

described how 'the exchange value of commodities is evidently an act characterised by a

total abstraction from use value', and this expressed how the ideology of the commodity

form eclipsed use value with exchange value. Commodities also appeared as abstractions to the workers who made them, who became alienated from their own production:

> A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves but between the products of their labour. This is the reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses (Marx, 1977a: 77).

Marx's analysis of the commodity form exposed the abstraction that was inherent in the economy of goods, and how this alienated workers from the products of their labour. This theory highlighted the ideology of the market economy, and how the labour of the working classes was appropriated and utilised by the capitalist system.

The contribution of Marx's analysis of economic and social relations exposed systems of power and domination, and how the systems of ideas, values and beliefs of ruling classes gained acceptance. This work exposed how ideology operated, and was enormously influential and theorists who followed exploring issues of power, inequality and the origins of ideas within society.

2.2.3 Post-Marxist Theorists

A number of influential theorists developed upon the original ideas of Marx and further developed his concepts. Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci made a significant contribution to the theory of ideology. Imprisoned for his beliefs, Gramsci developed the concept of "hegemony" to describe the ideological power and control of the capitalist state in Italy over its inhabitants. For Gramsci, this hegemony operated on two levels, through "consent" and "coercion", which he outlined in his writings:

11

The intellectuals are the dominant group's "deputies" exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government. These comprise:
1. The "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.
2. The apparatus of state coercive power which "legally" enforces discipline on those groups who do not "consent" either actively or passively. The apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed (Gramsci, 1971: 12).

Gramsci presented the state as a centre of ideological formation, and having an oppressive relationship with society through the dissemination of its ruling ideology. The process of hegemony was a continual one, where the ruling classes won and re-won consent. Gramsci's theory of hegemony extended Marx's analysis of ideology to the power of the state, and like Marx, Gramsci linked this state power to the system of economic production and the dominance of the ruling classes. While Gramsci did not agree with all Marxist ideological concepts, his work did expose the working of ideology at a national level and the systems of institutional state meaning that imposed themselves upon social relations.

Another influential theorist in the Marxist tradition of ideology was Louis Althusser. Like Marx, Althusser believed that forces of economic production led to the exploitation of the proletariat, and that the success of ideology hinged on reproduction of such conditions of production. He similarly believed that power in society was linked to an economic base, or superstructure, in a Marxist sense. Althusser also shared Gramsci's view that the capitalist state was an oppressive force which sought to dominate thinking in a society, and similarly identified both coercive and consensual ways in which this took place.

Althusser described two different ways in which states' promulgated their ideology; one was through what Althusser labelled 'Repressive State Apparatuses', such as the army and the police, who functioned 'by violence'; another was through 'Ideological State Apparatuses' such as churches, schools, families, legal, political, trade union, communications and cultural, who functioned 'by ideology' (Althusser, 1971: 145), which had echoes of Gramsci's original formulation. It was these 'Ideological State Apparatuses' that Althusser (1971: 185) claimed were the most powerful instruments of state oppression, which bound the proletariat by systems of ideas which were made to appear natural, and achieved consent to a dominant order:

> The ideology of the ruling class does not become the ruling ideology by the grace of God, nor even by virtue of the seizure of State power alone. It is by the installation of the ISA's in which this ideology is realised and realises itself as the ruling ideology.

Like Marx, Althusser recognised that ideology was a system of ideas that distorted the consciousness of the working classes for the benefit of the capitalist rulers. In a classic quotation, Althusser (1971: 162) described ideology as '…the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence'. Althusser, like most ideology theorists, claimed to be able to recognise such "real" and "exploitative" conditions that ordinary people could not see. According to Althusser, the ideology of the state worked through a process of 'hailing' people as individual 'subjects':

> I shall then suggest that ideology "acts" or "functions" in such a way that it "recruits" subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or "transforms" the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: "Hey, you there! (Althusser, 1971: 174).

13

Perhaps the best contemporary example of such a process of "interpellation" is the iconic US Army recruitment poster, featuring a representation of Uncle Sam with the words "I WANT YOU", which hailed potential army recruits to sign up for duty. For Althusser, ideology was successful by addressing people interpersonally as individuals, and appealing to their sense of social and national identity. Althusser's theory of ideology provided a comprehensive synthesis of the interaction between the economy and the state, and highlighted the key overt and subtle ways in which ideology functions within a society. These ideology theorists adopted a Marxist framework to the analysis of economic, social and state relations, and their work is indicative of the influence of Marx's original work on the concept of ideology.

2.2.4 Contemporary Conceptions of Ideology

The concept of ideology is one which has multiple meanings and interpretations, and is widely contested in sociology, cultural studies, and consumer research (Crockett and Wallendorf, 2004). Indeed, one of the foremost writers and experts on the concept, Terry Eagleton (2000), has identified at least 16 definitions of ideology, indicating the polysemic nature of the term. Due to the difficulty of providing a concise and agreed upon definition of ideology, it may be helpful for the purposes of introduction to first delineate amongst divergent conceptions of the term. Marion (2006) has outlined two different dimensions of ideology, Marxist conceptions and cultural conceptions, and it is important to distinguish between these different ideological traditions.

The Marxist conception of ideology is necessarily critical, and explores systems of ideas, values and beliefs that emanate from and promulgate the worldview and interests of dominant groups or ruling classes in society (Hirschman, 1993). According to Marion

(2006: 246), in the Marxist tradition 'ideology means a set of illusory beliefs and a false consciousness by which the ruling class maintains dominance over the working class'. Through ideology, dominant groups and ruling classes make these systems of ideas, values and beliefs seem self-evident and promote them in ways which benefit their interests at the expense of the working and subordinated classes, who are unable to recognise their exploitation. From a Marxist perspective then, ideology concerns how certain social groups sustain power and control over other sections of society through the promulgation of systems of ideas, values and beliefs which are convenient to them, and Thompson (1990b: 56) argues that 'to study ideology is to study the ways in which meaning serves to establish and sustain relations of domination'. This critical conception of ideology has been recently identified as a key aspect in the study of consumer culture theory research, with Arnould and Thompson (2005: 874) defining consumer ideology as 'systems of meaning that tend to channel and reproduce consumers thoughts and actions in such a way as to defend dominant interests in society'. While critical theory studies are somewhat in the minority within the marketing literature (Burton, 2000), the Marxist conception of ideology has found expression in marketing and consumer research. Notable examples include Hirschman's (1993) study of masculine ideology in consumer research, Hackley's (2003e) reading of ideological rhetoric and control in marketing textbooks, and Elliott and Ritson's (1997) analysis of advertising's ideological strategies. The "cultural conception" of ideology proposed by Marion (2006) is similarly concerned with systems of ideas, values and beliefs, but focuses more upon how these are shared amongst members of a society and integrated into social institutions as opposed to attributing their origins and coherence to the interests of a dominant or ruling class. This

15

more benign conception of ideology does not seek to uncover power differentials or relations of domination, and places emphasis upon shared cultural and social practices within a society. The cultural conception of ideology has recently been explored in research work in marketing, most notably in Crockett and Wallendorf's (2004) study of the "political ideology" of African-American shoppers, Thompson and Tambyah's (1999) inquiry into expatriate cosmopolitan identity construction and Holt's (2004) research on how American consumer brands incorporate social and cultural ideologies to construct iconic myths. Cultural ideologies are thus lived social and cultural systems of ideas, values and beliefs that reside a society and do not necessarily reflect dominant class interests. While this dual conception of ideology is admittedly over-simplistic (particularly when one considers the vast range of ideological theories, see Larrain (1994) for a review), it does provide a useful basis on which to begin to understand what ideology is and the diversity of its meanings in the context of marketing and consumer research studies.

2.2.5 The End of Ideology?

The debate surrounding the end of ideology has found a voice within the literature on postmodernism, which strongly advocates the dissolution of social class, the elimination of structural hierarchies and the erosion grand meta-narratives within a society (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995). Two philosophers who have expressed doubts over the validity of the concept of ideology are Michel Foucault and Jean Baudrillard, whose theories are often associated with the postmodern movement.

Foucault (1980) rejected the "class" determinism associated with the Marxist conception of ideology, which reduced all discussion of ideology to class relations. He did not deny

that class was important in society, but challenged the suggestion that it was the central feature of ideological power. Foucault also rejected the notion of "false consciousness", as it implied that there was a possibility of a "true" consciousness. For Foucault (1980: 133), notions of "truth" were produced through discourse (sets of statements, writing and speech) which constructed a particular conception of "truth" from power systems:

> Truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A "regime of truth". This regime is not merely ideological or superstructural; it was a condition of the formation and development of capitalism.

So for Foucault, "discourses" were more prevalent than "ideology", which formed what he described as 'clusters of relations' (Foucault, 1980: 194), and as an "anti-structuralist" he did not believe that all power relations were administered in the "top-down" class-based way which classical Marxism posited. Ideology in Foucault's universe was more about how certain sets of discourses collaborated and collided to form distinct "discursive formations" and created power relations within a society, but these power relations were not necessarily super-structural. Power had a more bi-directional flow in society for Foucault, and in describing these power relations he explained how '...in order for there to be a movement from above to below there has to be a capillary from below to above at the same time' (Foucault, 1980: 198). Foucault's theory exposed how power operated on a micro level between individuals and groups, and he questioned the simplicity of the macro top-down Marxist conception of ideology.

Baudrillard (1966) originally based his work around Marxian ideological theory, but his later work problematised the theory of ideology. He questioned the ideological basis of ascribing "use" and "exchange" value to commodities, and explored the ways in which

signification processes operated in society (Baudrillard, 1988a). For Baudrillard (1988b: 172), the concept of ideology with its concern for identifying the "real" situation of the economy and society was based on a fallacy of what constitutes "the real". He replaced the concept of ideology with "simulacra" and "hyper-reality", to describe a world in which "real" concepts had no objective basis of existence:

> It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology), but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle.

This questioning of the existence of an objective and tangible reality has earned Baudrillard many critics (Eagleton, 2000), but his work does question the basis on which the notion of the "real" can be understood, particularly in a society where the simulation of reality is so prevalent. Indeed, Baudrillard stated his belief that ideology was theoretically redundant as a concept, describing how there was 'no more ideology, only simulacra' (Baudrillard, 1993, cited in Hawkes, 2003: 148). From this perspective, the "real" cannot be identified as what passes for the real is in itself as simulation, or hyper-reality.

While postmodern theorists question the concept of ideology, some writers have argued that they 'reintroduce it through the back door' (Larrain, 1994: 111) through the theories they replace it with. This criticism centres on the accusation that postmodernists simply pick and choose the theories which they believe account better for culture, economy and society, and thus replace an old ideological theory with another new one, such as Foucault's focus on "discourse" or Baudrillard's analysis of "hyperreality". Although this is undoubtedly a harsh assessment of the work of these theorists, as much as they seek to

18

distance their work from Marx's original concepts it is still undoubtedly influenced by his ideas.

Another facet of the "end of ideology" thesis is that people are too reflexive to be outmanoeuvred by any dominant ideology or set of ruling ideas. The argument suggests that people are active agents, and are well aware of the operation of ideology, so even if ideology does exist, it is not necessarily successful. For Eagleton (2000: 42), this is not born out within social reality:

> Taken as a whole...this end-of-ideology thesis is vastly implausible. If it were true, it would be hard to know why so many individuals in these societies still flock to church, wrangle over politics in the pubs, care about what their children are being taught in school and lose sleep over the steady erosion of social services.

The question of whether there is indeed a "dominant ideology" is certainly debatable in a society at any given time, but the pervasive influence that ideological state apparatuses such as churches, schools, governments and cultural institutions have within global culture does indicate that ideologies are still omnipotent systems of meaning. It can be argued that ideology is not always successful in converting people to its ideas (the recent backlash against the war in Iraq is a pertinent case in point), but ideology is still ever-present, and to suggest that it is at an end perhaps understates the role that these systems of meaning have within our everyday social existence.

2.3 Ideology and the Market System

This section considers the role of the market system within societies, and the critique of ideology that has been applied to marketing as an activity. It evaluates historical and contemporary critical perspectives on the rise of the "consumer society". Finally, it considers this criticism in terms of counter-criticism from academic commentators, or a 'critique of the critique' as Scott (2007: 14) has suggested.

19

2.3.1 Marketing and Ideology

Ideological analysis has historically focused upon how particular systems of meaning create economic and social class relations that benefit such dominant groups or classes through the exploitation of the consciousness of wider society. Marx's work in particular exposed the workings of the labour and commodity production processes, and it is perhaps unsurprising that the tradition of ideology critique continues to be applied in a macro sense to economic activity and to the marketing system in particular.

As a system of meaning which promotes the interests of large corporations to the masses, the marketing system provides a rich site to study ideology. Brown (2005: 66) has even suggested that 'marketing is the dominant ideology of our time'. This particular section will consider marketing ideology from the negative perspective which often finds expression in critical texts (Klein, 2000). From this view, marketing is seen as a monolithic force that constructs a "consumer society", which O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy (2002: 525) define as 'one directed largely by the accumulation and consumption of material goods'. The channelling of materialism and the inculcation of a culture of consumption by marketing ideology is a charge that has historically been levelled against the corporate world. The evolution of this criticism is first considered to set this debate within an historical context.

2.3.2 Historical Criticism of the Consumer Society

The criticism of consumerism has a long history within literature on the role of goods and services within modern cultures and societies, and the literature on this topic is vast to say the least. One of the most famous early critiques was Thorstein Veblen's book *Theory of the Leisure Class* first published in 1899, which highlighted the consumption patterns of the wealthy bourgeoisie. Veblen first coined the phrase "conspicuous consumption" to

20

account for the rise of the culture of consumerism, and he discussed the wastefulness of such modes of consumption:

> Throughout the entire evolution of conspicuous expenditure, whether of goods or of services or human life, runs the obvious implication that in order to effectually mend the consumer's good fame it must be an expenditure of superfluities. In order to be reputable it must be wasteful. No merit would accrue from the consumption of the bare necessities of life, except by comparison with the abjectly poor who fall short even of subsistence minimum; and no standard of expenditure could result from such a comparison, except the most prosaic and unattractive level of decency (Veblen, [1899] 2000: 202).

This strain of early criticism of consumer culture was later perpetuated in J.K. Galbraith's (1958) *The Affluent Society*, which discussed the inequality created by the system of economic production, and how the new consumption society led to the creation of "artificial" needs and wants amongst ordinary people and an alarming increase in materialism. These and other early critiques expressed some concern about the overly materialist direction in which society was moving, and how the system of economic production privileged the interests of the wealthy classes.

The consumer society also began to attract the attention of prominent philosophers in the first half of the 20th century. The work of the Institute for Social Research in Germany, or "Frankfurt School" as they became known, provided a critical Marxist analysis of the ideology of consumerism. Two prominent members of the Frankfurt School, Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno ([1944] 1972) launched a polemical attack upon the system of economic production, and the "culture industry" which resulted from it. They criticised the process through which cultural products, such as art, music, literature and film, became commoditised through the application of business ideologies. Horkheimer and Adorno ([1944] 1972) blamed the system of economic production for this dystopian state of affairs, and they were critical of the "barbarity" of capitalist system. The Marxist

concepts of "use value" and "exchange value" also featured in Horkheimer's and Adorno's ([1944] 1972: 158) writing on the systematic production of mass culture to describe the fetishism of artistic commodities:

> What might be called use value in reception of cultural commodities is replaced by exchange value; in place of enjoyment there are gallery-visiting and factual knowledge: the prestige of the worker replaces the connoisseur. The consumer becomes the ideology of the pleasure industry, whose institutions he cannot escape...Everything is looked at from only one aspect: that it can be used for something else, however vague the notion of the use may be. No object has an inherent value; it is valuable only to the extent that it can be exchanged. The use value of art, its mode of being, is treated as a fetish; and the fetish, the work's social rating (misinterpreted as its artistic status) becomes its use value – the only quality which is enjoyed.

Commodity fetishism was a central feature of the deception of mass culture, and Horkheimer and Adorno sought to highlight the reification created by the culture industry. Horkheimer and Adorno are often accused of being overly pessimistic about the nature "culture industry", and underestimating consumers' ability to resist the market forces of cultural and economic production (du Gay, 1997). While these criticisms are certainly justified, their work in many ways extended Marxist theories of society and economy, and raised concern over the emerging mass culture and consumer society which they witnessed in their time in the United States in exile from Nazi Germany.

Another scholar associated with the Frankfurt School was Herbert Marcuse. Like Horkheimer and Adorno, Marcuse (1964) developed a robust critique of the ideology of modern industrial society, which he claimed integrated people into the capitalist system of production, and constructed an uneasy conformity of needs and thinking amongst individuals. Within this conception, modern industrial society and the economic production process were dominant ideological forces within society:

This absorbtion of ideology into reality does not, however, signify the "end of ideology". On the contrary, in a specific sense advanced industrial culture is *more* ideological than its predecessor, inasmuch as today the ideology is in the process of production itself. In a provocative form, this proposition reveals the political aspects of the prevailing technological rationality. The productive apparatus and the goods and services which it produces "sell" or impose the social system as a whole (Marcuse, 1964: 11-12).

Much like Marx, Marcuse saw this ideology as enslaving people to the logic of capitalism. Society had become "one dimensional", through the advancement of technological rationality in industrial processes, and this was having a negative impact upon society as a whole (Marcuse, 1964). Together with Horkheimer and Adorno, Marcuse provided one of the earliest philosophical critiques of the emergence of mass consumer culture, and how the ideology of the system of economic production impacted upon the lives of ordinary people.

Early criticism of consumerism also surfaced within French social philosophy in the 1960s, and the work of the so-called "Situationists". Guy Debord's (1967) work in particular criticised the "society of the spectacle", in which commodities had become the dominant ideology. Debord (1967: 26) also incorporated Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism to describe the rise of this culture of consumerism in France:

> The world the spectacle holds up to view is at once here and elsewhere; it is the world of the commodity ruling over all lived experience. The commodity world is thus shown *as it really is,* for its logic is one with men's estrangement from one another the sum total of what they produce.

Debord highlighted the rise of commodity culture, and the onset of the capitalist mode of production in French society. This work was developed further by Baudrillard (1973), who analysed the consumer society as a semiotic system of meaning which constructed abstract signification (or exchange value) for commodities. From the perspective of Baudrillard, commodity culture created a regime of signification, in which objects were

23

validated by their value as signs. Within this process, consumers were subsumed within a society absorbed with meaning, in which the codes of consumption were practically inescapable.

The work of these philosophers (admittedly purposively selected) on consumer society were amongst the earliest critiques of the capitalist market system and the position of consumers within this system. Much of this writing was developed using the classic Marxist concept of ideology, which was central to the intellectual penetration of this criticism. This critical tradition has evolved into contemporary perspectives on consumer society, which are now considered in detail.

2.3.3 Contemporary Critical Perspectives on Consumption

Since the 1990s, there has been a wave of critical books on the state of modern consumer society, many of which have landed on bestseller lists worldwide (Brown, 2003b). The topics covered in these texts include the insipid nature of marketing and branding practices in non-commercial contexts (Klein, 2000; Twitchell, 2004), the culture of fast food consumption and its negative impact upon society (Ritzer, 2000; Schlosser, 2002), the relationship marketing companies have with young people (Quart, 2003), and texts critically analysing the social consequences of consumer culture (Lasn, 2000). Satirical popular culture texts on consumer society have also grown hugely in popularity, such as Alex Shakar's (2001) *The Savage Girl*, a contemporary novel set within a "trendspotter" agency called Tomorrow Inc. These texts have been supplemented by a range of popular documentaries on the theme of consumer society, such as *The Corporation, Supersize*

Me, The Take, and most recently Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*[1], which provides some

indication of the prevalence of the topic in social criticism.

Scholarly academic books have also addressed the subject of consumption from a critical

perspective[2]. One of the most famous is Stuart Ewen's *Captains of Consciousness,* which

adopts a Marxist critique of the emergence of consumer culture. Other historical accounts

of consumerism such as that of Frank (1997) analyse how capitalist institutions co-opted

counter cultural movements to construct a cool image for American corporations. This

strategy of cultural co-optation has led to consumption becoming a "hip" activity from

which consumers can express social distinction (Heath, 2001). Recently, sociologists

have turned their attention to the culture of company branding, and the role these logos

have within culture and the economy (Arvidsson, 2006; Lury, 2004). Much of this

academic work is developed within the Marxist and Post-Marxist traditions, and it

articulates broad social concerns about the nature of consumerism within the

contemporary world.

2.3.4 Critiquing the Critique: A Question of Morality?

These critiques of consumer society have in turn received criticism from members of the

academic community. Firstly, the idea that marketers can manufacture consumer needs

and wants can be seen as highly suspect (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2002).

According to Heath (2001: 6) 'no matter how nefarious corporations may be, they are

nevertheless incapable of forcing people to consume their goods'. The conceptualisation

of corporations as hegemonic institutions also implies that they have unremitting power

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[1] While Gore's documentary is technically about global warming and its consequences, the film does have
the consumption of resources within society as a key element.
[2] It should be noted that text's like George Ritzer's "McDonaldisation of Society" and James Twitchell's
"Brand Nation" are also academic books, but have found popularity in mainstream book markets.

over consumers to make them engage in consumption. However, Dolan (2002) has posited that power is embodied within social relations, and is not in the exclusive possession of any one social group, but rather is fleeting in its operation.

The polemically "critical" nature of some consumer society literature has also been questioned. Linda Scott (2005c) has argued that it is much more intellectually difficult for people to conceive a positive philosophy of consumption and markets, and much easier to be published in certain academic journals or with publishers adopting a critical perspective. She has called upon academics to embrace this positive philosophy, as it is something the world needs in the current climate of negativity. This more positive philosophy of markets is something which others have called upon consumer researchers to embrace (Miller, 2001), and may be an important aspect of informed scholarship on consumption practices.

Another major criticism of consumer society literature is the apparent hypocrisy of some of the writers. Naomi Klein (2000), for instance, in *No Logo*, lambastes capitalist corporations and marketers for the commercial practices they engage in. However, Klein herself is a multi-million selling author, publishing her book with "Flamingo" (a subsidiary of the Rupert Murdoch media empire), and having criticised the activities of marketers practiced some brand management of her own by registering *"No Logo"* as a trademark (Brown, 2003b). As Higgins and Tadajewski (2000: 367) note, authors like Klein '…lay themselves open to criticism because they utilise precisely what they critique', and in this sense it is impossible for these writers to stand above or outside of the forces of market activity which they so stringently attack.

A final criticism would be the "moralistic" tone of the critical writing on consumer

society, which Miller (2001: 226) has observed:

> ...this flood of writings may only amount to a trickle of insights into the nature of
> consumption, consumers and consumer culture. The discrepancy between the
> quantity and the quality of research is largely a result of the central role taken by
> morality within consumption research which has led to this branch of studies
> becoming largely a site where academics can demonstrate their stance toward the
> world, rather than a place where the world stands as a potential empirical critique
> of our assumptions about it.

According to Miller (2001), these critiques of consumer culture are usually written by US

academics, who are themselves well-off, moralising to ordinary people about the dangers

of too much consumption. Much as Marx was historically criticised for being part of the

bourgeoisie establishment, these critical writers on consumer society are also criticised

for being part of the wealthy elite. In his paper, Miller (2001) also takes issue with other

strands of consumer society critique. Materialism and consumption are often construed as

inherently bad and destructive forces within the critical consumer society literature.

However, this is at odds with sociological and anthropological studies of society, which

have found materialism and consumption to be key traits of human cultures (Douglas and

Isherwood, 1979; Mauss, 1990). While Miller (2001) does not argue that consumption is

an inherently good activity either, he takes issue with the assumption that consumption is

intrinsically bad. He points out that consumption is essential for human survival, and is

crucial for improving standards of living, eliminating disease and enhancing humanity,

which is often overlooked in moralistic and critical writing. Miller (2001) criticises these

writers for not doing enough academic fieldwork with actual consumers, and instead

engaging in an ivory tower form of scholarship. His call for more research on actual

consumption practice is also echoed by Dolan (2002), who has encouraged researchers to

study consumer culture historically as a social process embodied between networks of cooperating actors. These critiques do highlight the lack of academic fieldwork and evidence for much consumer society and marketing criticism, and emphasise the importance of grounded academic research to provide empirical explanations of consumption behaviours.

2.4 Ideology and the Advertising System

This final section of the chapter considers the relationship between ideology and the advertising system. It first explores macro critiques of advertising's role in society, and examines the views of critical scholars in the area. It then evaluates how ideologies are manifested within the micro context of advertisements through textual signification practices. Finally, the work of semiotic textual analysts is reviewed and critiqued from the perspective of leading academic commentators, which highlight some of the shortcomings of these studies.

2.4.1 Advertising as Capitalist Ideology

As the preceding section has argued, critical writers have been quick to see links between ideology in the Marxist sense and the production and consumption of goods within societies. This ideology critique is often applied to commercial advertising, which is regarded as 'the iconographic signifier of multinational capitalism' (Nava, 1997: 34), and possibly the most visible capitalist feature within contemporary cityscapes (Cronin, 2005). As a mass system of meaning which promotes the interests of large corporations, the relationship between advertising and ideology is very compelling to many academics (Kemper, 2003; Williamson, 1978), and consequently advertising is the subject of much critical work on the rise of the consumerism generally (Corrigan, 1997).

Advertising has long been identified by critical theorists as a malevolent shaper of human consciousness. In their early critique of the "culture industry", Horkheimer and Adorno ([1944] 1972: 163) dismissed advertising as a form of mass propaganda which manipulated consumers:

> Advertising and the culture industry merge technically as well as economically. In both cases the same thing can be seen in innumerable places, and the mechanical repetition of the same culture product has come to be the same as that of the propaganda slogan. In both cases the insistent demand for effectiveness makes technology into psycho-technology, into a procedure for manipulating men [sic]. In both cases the standards are the striking yet familiar, the easy yet catchy, the skilful yet simple; the object is to overpower the customer, who is conceived as absent-minded or resistant.

Indeed for Horkheimer and Adorno ([1944] 1972: 167), advertising was the key component of the "culture industry" which lulled consumers through its communicative power:

> The triumph of advertising in the culture industry is that consumers feel compelled to buy and use its products even through they see through them.

The notion that ordinary people recognise ideology as false yet do not modify their thinking or behaviour accordingly is central to how such dominant meaning systems operate successfully (Eagleton, 2000), and it was this ideological feature of advertising which Horkheimer and Adorno originally identified in terms of commodity consumption. Marcuse (1964: 4-5) claimed that advertising promoted "false" needs amongst consumers for the trivial things in life:

> We may distinguish between both true and false needs. "False" needs are those which are superimposed upon the individual by the particular social interests in his repression: the needs which perpetuate toil, aggressiveness, misery and injustice. Their satisfaction might be most gratifying to the individual, but this happiness is not a condition which has to be maintained and protected if it serves to arrest the development of the ability (his own and others) to recognise the disease of the whole and grasp the chances of curing the disease. The result then is euphoria in unhappiness. Most of the prevailing needs to relax, to have fun, to

behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements, to love and hate what others love and hate, belong to this category of false needs.

This attribution of advertising to stimulating "false" needs was also prominent in Galbraith's (1958) criticism of the "affluent society". The general suspicion of advertising culminated in the publication of Vance Packard's (1957) *The Hidden Persuaders*, which highlighted how advertisers were supposedly using Freudian depth psychology research techniques to manipulate consumers into buying products. This book was not an ideology critique of advertising per se, but it did highlight the potential power of advertising as a communication medium, and the book generated much public controversy, eventually becoming an international best seller (Nelson, 2008). This criticism of advertising is perpetuated within contemporary popular and scholarly literature about its persuasive power. Anti-capitalist commentators such as Noam Chomsky (2005: 11-12) regard advertising as a deceptive force that creates "wants" amongst consumers, and as a corporate discourse which constitutes an attack on democracy itself:

> The faith in the power of deceit is shared in the places that matter, in policymaking centers, in particular in the business world. We all know that corporations spend hundreds of billions of dollars a year in advertising, which is not an effort to inform but an effort to deceive, as we all know. If you want to find out the characteristics of, say, the cars that Ford is going to produce next year, or of drugs or other commodities, you don't turn on the television to see ads. The goal of the ads, hundreds of billions of dollars, is to project imagery, first of all, to create artificial wants, and secondly, to delude you into satisfying those created wants with one commodity rather than another more or less identical one. The commitment to deceive is pursued with real fanaticism. That's demonstrated not only by the scale, literally hundreds of billions a year, but also in other ways...The main purpose of advertising is to undermine markets. If you go to graduate school and you take a course in economics, you learn that markets are systems in which informed consumers make rational choices. That's what's so wonderful about it. But that's the last

thing that the state corporate system wants. It is spending huge sums to prevent that, which brings us back to the viability of American democracy.

Chomsky's diatribe against advertising in many ways mirrors Marcuse's (1964) assertion about advertising promoting "false" needs amongst consumers. He also links the power of corporate advertising to "state" power, and advertising from this perspective can be seen as an 'ideological state apparatus' in the Althusserian sense (Althusser, 1971). For others such as Jhally (2005: 14), advertising is responsible for the potential destruction of the planet and threatens the survival of human kind:

> To the extent that it pushes us toward material things for satisfaction and away from the construction of social relationships, it pushes us down the road to economic production that is driving the coming environmental catastrophe. To the extent that it talks about our individual and private needs, it pushes discussion about collective issues to the margins. To the extent that it talks about the present only, it makes thinking about the future difficult. To the extent that it does all of these things, then advertising becomes one of the major obstacles to our survival as a species.

While this could be regarded as somewhat hysterical, the tone of this criticism is indicative of the strength of some academic opinion toward advertising as a meaning system, and the potentially negative consequences it has within society. The general suspicion about the manipulative power of advertising remains a key feature of anti-capitalist discourse (Klein, 2000; Lasn, 2000), and many of the critical narratives about advertising of the 1960's first propounded by people like J.K. Galbraith and Vance Packard reproduce themselves in contemporary texts.

The ideological power of advertising has also been the subject of much scholarly debate within the discipline itself. Schudson (1993) has argued that advertising is a form of 'capitalist realism', which like the art of the former communist dictatorship of the Soviet Union, presents a picture of reality as it should be, and is a powerful form of social

31

communication. Lee and Murray (1995: 141) have applied Marx's classic 'base-superstructure' metaphor to advertising, and have identified striking parallels with this theory. Wernick (1991: 31) has argued that advertising in whatever guise is an inherently ideological form of communication:

> All advertising, even the most informational and rationalistic, is ideological, if only in the formal sense that it places its audience in the role of buyer/consumer, and seeks to dispose that audience favourably towards what is for sale. But ads...which infuse their products with cultural and psychological appeal, also impinge on more particular dimensions of their addressees' sense of identity, orientation and purpose. The commodity they project as the object of desire is simultaneously presented as a cultural symbol charged with social significance; and the ego they seek to engage as the subject of desire is induced to adopt the socio-cultural identity attributed to those who already use the product. Such advertising is thus ideological in a concrete sense as well.

Elliott and Ritson (1997: 201) have gone slightly further in their analysis of advertising as ideology, claiming that it represents the most potent form of ideology in today's society. From this perspective, advertising represents an ideology that surpasses even more traditionally recognised ideological state apparatuses, such as churches, schools, and government institutions. These perspectives on advertising as ideology from both outside and within scholarly literature on the subject trace a genealogy of social and cultural criticism about its role within society. Many of these writers are strongly influenced by Marxist theories and philosophy, and as a system of meaning which serves the interests of dominant corporate groups, advertising can be seen to have a close relationship with ideology from a critical perspective.

2.4.1.1 The Hidden Persuaders? Advertising as Capitalist Propaganda

Advertising as an industry has historically had a tarnished image as a dubious trade, not least because of the notorious "patent medicine" salesmen of the late 1800s and early 1900s such as P.T. Barnum who used early advertising techniques to deceive the public

(Lears, 1994). This image was further damaged in later years by claims that advertising agencies used depth psychology research techniques, and advertising practitioners were cast as the "hidden persuaders" who made people buy products they otherwise wouldn't have (Packard, 1957). This view of advertising as some sort of black art with a hidden arsenal of psychological tools to engineer consumption has been widely criticised. One of the most famous advertising practitioners in history, Rosser Reeves (1961: 72), described such furore as a 'Freudian hoax', and dismissed Packard's assertions as 'the sheerest nonsense'. 'Advertising works openly' Reeves (1961: 72) claimed, 'in the bare and pitiless sunlight'. Similarly, advertising historian Stephen Fox (1997: 330) has also cast doubt on the "hidden persuaders" thesis, claiming that all advertising practitioners do is produce particular manifestations of social life, and did not use hidden Freudian analysis techniques. Indeed, historical research has shown that psychological research did not gain any wide acceptance within the advertising industry (Kreshel, 1990), and Marchand's (1985) work found little evidence of scientific/academic research infiltrating advertising agency practice in the early to mid 1900s. Reeves (1961) countered that the idea of there being hidden persuaders served the purpose of selling books for Vance Packard, and the slew of best selling books in a similar vein that followed would seem to somewhat validate this claim. While it is certainly interesting to consider advertisers as "hidden persuaders" in terms of the social role of advertising, the historical record of advertising agency practice demonstrates little support for this thesis.

The accusation that advertising acts as a mass "propaganda" system that manufactures consumer "wants" has also been treated with academic circumspection. According to

O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy (2002: 542), consumer "wants" pre-exist any attempt by advertisers to persuade them to buy:

> The claim that wants can be created, we have argued earlier, assumes that consumers are motivationally empty until injected by marketers with wants created by advertising. This is nonsense. We simply come to see what some product might do to enrich our lives. In other words, consumers have latent wants which can be activated.

The idea that advertisers have Machiavellian powers to manipulate consumers into buying products has been described as a 'myth' in itself by Fanning (2006a: 265). In responding to this debate in 1977, Carl Ally (an advertising agent) commented that 'Advertising doesn't manipulate society. Society manipulates advertising. Advertising responds to social trends. Agencies respond to advertisers. It's that simple' (cited in Fox, 1997: 327). The mass manipulation thesis does not seem to grant consumers much agency in their dealings with advertising or marketing (Arnould, 2007), and critics claim that the power of advertising is grossly overstated within these accounts (Scott, 2005a).

The creation of "artificial" wants by advertising (as Chomsky asserts) also seems to be something of a moral value judgement (Miller, 2001). Like many critical theorists, Chomsky (2005) seems to have the unique ability to distinguish "artificial" from "genuine" wants, the designation of which seems to be unquestioned, and it does seem a value-laden suggestion to assume that some wants are genuine while others are artificial. Chomsky (2005) also claims that within markets, consumers would make "rational" choices were it not for the pervading influence of advertising. However, research has shown that people consume for non-rational experiential reasons too, such as the pursuit of fantasies, feelings and fun (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982), or to fulfil hedonistic desires (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2002), and the view that consumers would

34

act rationally were it not for advertising does not seem to be supported within contemporary consumption research and expert opinion on the subject (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979).

2.4.2 Ideology in Action: Advertising as a Signification System

It is fair to surmise that the ideological theories reviewed thus far have a "macro" orientation, in that they relate to how advertising ideology functions and operates in society as a whole, and speculate about the effects and consequences it has. Ideology in advertising also operates on a micro level too, in terms of the meaning it generates within specific consumption texts, and the ways in which advertisements channel consumers toward certain preferred interpretations (Thompson, 2004). This section considers this micro operation of ideology within advertising texts, and reviews theories which explain how ideology "works" in the context of specific commercials.

2.4.2.1 The Structure of Meaning: Semiotics and Advertising

Semiotics is concerned with the study of the structure of meaning in verbal and non-verbal communication systems, and the ways in which different elements combine to produce meaning within such systems (McFall, 2004; Mick, 1986). The semiotic approach is often associated with structuralism, as it seeks to unpack the structure of meaning in language and social texts. As a research methodology, it is often applied to study the structure of marketing communications and advertisements (Hirschman, 2003; Williamson, 1978), and is helpful for our present purposes as 'semiotics explains how ideology works' (McFall, 2004: 17). While a full review of all of the various facets of semiotic theory is available to consult elsewhere (Mick et al., 2004), the main

philosophies and theories underpinning semiotics are considered to provide an explanation of how advertising operates as a meaning system.

Both Mick (1986) and Desmond (2003) have written detailed accounts of the philosophy underlying semiotics. One of the founders of semiotics was Swiss linguist Ferdinand De Saussure (1915), who developed a science called "semiology", namely the study of signs and the laws that command them. De Saussure proposed that within language, signs were composed of two dyadic elements; the signifier (spoken words, such as DOG) and the signified (the mental concept which is evoked by the signifier, such as the animal DOG), and the relationship between them was entirely arbitrary. As there was no natural relationship between signifier and signified, the meaning of linguistic signs was determined by social convention and how they differed from other linguistic signs within a system.

Another influential theorist was Charles Saunders Pierce (1931-1958), who developed a conception of semiotics which was more focussed upon how signs interacted with the real world, rather than their internal structural coherence. Pierce outlined a triadic model of "semiosis" that comprised of a sign, which stands for something (its object) to somebody within a particular social context (its interpretant). This triadic model is outlined in figure 1:

Figure 1: Pierce's Triadic Model of Semiotics

Sign

Object   **Interpretant**
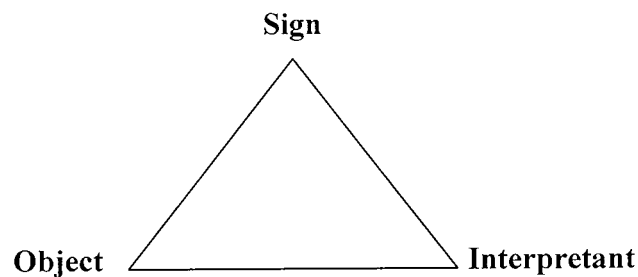
Source: Mick, D. G. (1986). Consumer research and semiotics: Exploring the morphology of signs, symbols and significance. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 19(December): 158

According to Desmond (2003), Pierce was mostly concerned with "object-sign" relations, and developed a categorization of three types of signs: icons, indexes and symbols. Iconic signs are those which imitate or resemble an object, such as the way a photograph of David Beckham resembles him. Indexical signs indicate a causal relationship between signs, such as the way a wet pavement signals that it has rained. Symbolic signs are those which represent an object in an entirely conventional way, and require an interpreter to make a connection between the symbol and the everyday world, such as the way a red and white striped pole signifies a barber shop. Much like De Saussure, Pierce's semiotics emphasizes the arbitrary meanings of language, and the role of social convention in determining the meaning of signs.

Advertising meaning is also developed through a process of signification (Lawlor, 1995). The advertising sign is composed of two elements; the signifier (the material object represented within an advertisement) and a signified concept (the meaning of the object in the context of the advertisement). According to Williamson (1978: 26), advertising signification works by drawing meanings from 'referent systems' that exist externally to

the product, and construct a new meaning for the product through meaning transfer (McCracken, 1989). For example, the use of Michael Jordan (a sporting referent system) in Nike commercials in the 1990s helped the company to draw upon his meaning as a sports star within the advertisements and in turn transfer his sign value to the Nike brand (Goldman and Papson, 1998). In this way, companies exploit the relationship between signifier and signified to develop a new social signification for their advertising campaigns. Semiotics then, and the process of signification between signifiers and signified concepts, is crucial to explaining how advertisements construct social meaning.

2.4.2.2 Post-Structuralism: The Shimmy of Signifiers in Advertising

The semiotic theories of De Saussure and Pierce are often associated with structuralism, where language is seen to exist as a structural system through which meanings are created by differences between signs. This theory was later challenged by the Post-structuralist movement, most associated with philosophers such as Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes. Post-structuralism posited that meaning was not created through the internal structures of language but through an ever-changing 'webs of signs' within social life, and signs would signify based upon their place within this web (Scott, 1992: 597). From a post-structuralist perspective, signification depends on relationships with other signs, and each signification generated by a sign is influenced by previous significations. Signs shimmy off one another in different contexts, and create what Scott (1992: 597) describes as a 'freeplay of the signifiers', where the signification is never a complete process, and meaning is deferred to another 'chain of signifiers'. The meaning of signs within post-structuralism then is in a constant state of flux, with signifiers continually brushing off each other, and creating new links in the chain of signified meaning. These reassembled

words and images that signify through previous fragments of meaning are referred to as 'bricolage' by Derrida, who described the continual deferral of meaning as 'difference', in a play on De Saussure's theory of meaning created through differences between signs (Scott, 1992: 597).

Advertising texts combine signifiers and signified meanings abundantly to generate new signification, as Goldman and Papson (1998: 25) note:

> Consumer advertising works by removing meanings from context, and then recontextualising those meanings within the framework of the ad itself. When viewers decipher ads they routinely accept the premise that signifiers and signifieds can be decontextualised, split up, and replaced arbitrarily with other signifiers and signifieds, similarly abstracted from their context. Contemporary advertising traffics endlessly in decontextualised, free-floating signifiers, combining them and recombining them without limit...In the digital age, this process of slicing, dicing, and remixing signifiers and signifieds has not only accelerated, it has become the primary axis for commodity culture.

In this way, advertisements can be seen as post-structural texts, as they place different signifiers and signified meanings together, and these elements play and shimmy off each other. Scott (1992) has provided a particularly vivid analysis of how advertisers borrow such meanings from other texts to create a free play between images and words, and develop new sets of meaning for the advertised product. Post-structuralism in an advertising context helps us to theorise how advertisers combine different sets of texts, signifiers, signifieds and codes together, and the ways in which new meanings can emerge from this mixing of different styles and sign systems.

2.4.2.3 The Role of Myth: Denotation and Connotation

While the interplay between signifier and signified in the process of signification does explain how texts generate meaning, it does not explain the operation of ideology within specific texts. The work of Roland Barthes provided an insightful account of the subtle

ways in which texts construct ideologically charged meanings. Barthes (1972: 114) acknowledged De Saussure's dyadic relationship between the signifier and signified in linguistic signs, however he saw signs as having a 'second order' of meaning which was deeper than the conventional structural relationship between signifier and signified. He labelled this second order of meaning "myth", which is illustrated in figure 2:

Figure 2: Barthes Model of Myth

Language	1. Signifier	2. Signified	
	3. Sign I SIGNIFIER		II SIGNIFIED
MYTH	III SIGN		

Source: Barthes, R. (1972). *Mythologies* (A. Lavers, Trans.). London: Vintage: 115

For Barthes (1972: 115), there were two semiological systems in operation in this model, the linguistic system of De Saussure which constructed the 'language-object' relationship between signifier and signified, and a second system called myth, which constructed a "metalanguage" that spoke about the linguistic relationship but created a new level of ideological meaning. He used the example of a photograph of a black man in military uniform saluting the French flag to exemplify how myth worked in texts. At a basic linguistic level of signification, this was a photograph of a soldier saluting the French flag. However at the second level of mythic signification, this photograph was a sign of 'French imperiality' (Barthes, 1972: 125), and had a deeper cultural meaning than was conveyed at a purely linguistic level. In this way, at the level of myth the signifier

assumed a new signified, and the sign conveyed a completely different meaning that

became "naturalised" (Barthes, 1972: 129) through this second order signification.

Barthes (1972) distinguished between two levels of interpretation of a sign; **denotation**,

which was the basic linguistic meaning of a sign, and **connotation**, which was the second

order mythic meaning that drew upon implicit cultural codes to create a new level of

interpretation. And it was at this second level of connotation that ideological meanings

operated, as Barthes (1977b: 49) explained:

> The common domain of the signifieds of connotation is that of *ideology*, which
> cannot but be single for a given society and history; no matter what signifiers of
> connotation it may use...These signifiers will be called connotators and the set of
> connotators a rhetoric thus appearing as a signifying aspect of ideology.

So for Barthes (1972), it was at the second order meaning of connotation that ideologies

were conveyed. However the idea that connotation was purely ideological or naturalised

meaning was challenged by Baudrillard (1988a: 89), who asserted that because of the

arbitrariness of the relationship between signifiers and signified meaning, the level of

denotation was equally ideological:

> ...we can return to the process of denotation in order to show that it differs in no
> way from connotation: the denoted Sd (signified), this objective "reality", is itself
> nothing more than a coded form (code of perception, "psychological" code, code
> of "realistic" values, etc.) In other words, ideology is as rife with the denotative as
> with the connotative process, and in sum, denotation is never really anything more
> than the most attractive and subtle of connotations.

Although Baudrillard makes a valid point about the ideology of denotation (particularly

considering De Saussure's contention regarding the arbitrary relationship between

signifier and signified), it is the second level of connotation, and the working of myth,

that has particular relevance to advertising ideology. For instance, Barthes (1977b)

studied an advertising image for Panzani which featured a photograph of a range of

Italian food products spilling out of a string bag. At the level of denotation, this photograph is a signifier for food. However, at the level of connotation, this advertisement signifies 'Italianicity' (Barthes, 1977b: 35) and the culture of Italian food, and in this sense the advertisement conveys an ideological message to the reader. It is at the level of myth that most advertisements acquire social meaning, as they juxtapose signifiers and signifieds to create a second order signification for the advertising sign. To use the Nike example once more, when Nike advertisements used the signifier of Michael Jordan, his signified meanings as a sports star of achievement and success were transferred to the brand, and created a new level of signification, or myth, in Nike advertising. These are essentially marketplace myths constructed for Nike advertisements that serve the ideological agenda of the corporate sponsor (Thompson, 2004).

The incorporation of myths into advertisements has been the subject of much research into advertising texts. Leymore's (1975) classic study adopted a structuralist approach to explore how advertisements embodied certain binary myths, such as opposition between good and evil in washing powder ads. Stern (1995) has explored how advertisements utilise classic mythic plots, such as romance, comedy, irony and tragedy, while Thompson (2004) illustrates how health supplement advertisements incorporate the myths of the natural world to generate resonant signification with consumers. The operation of myths at the connotative level helps to explain how advertisements construct certain ideological appeals.

2.4.2.4 Ideology and Meaning in Advertising: Textual Analysis Studies

The study of ideology and meaning in advertising has been conducted by researchers using semiotic and structuralist methodologies for analysing texts, often inspired by

Marxist theoretical frameworks (Goldman, 1992; Jhally, 1987; Williamson, 1978). The

function of these textual analysis studies is to unpack the hidden ideologies and codes in

the 'structures of meaning' of advertisements (Williamson, 1978: 12), and critique how

these texts embody the logic of capitalist social relations and reinforce particular the

ruling ideas of corporations (McFall, 2004). Studies such as those of Williamson (1978),

Goldman (1992), and Goldman and Papson (1996) have explored in detail how these

ideological meanings are produced within advertising texts.

According to Raymond Williams (1980: 185), advertising constitutes a 'magic system'

which validates mass-produced commodities for consumers:

> A washing machine would be a useful machine to wash clothes, rather than an
> indication that we are forward looking or an object of envy to our neighbours. But
> if these associations sell beer and washing machines, as some of the evidence
> suggests, it is clear that we have a cultural pattern in which the objects are not
> enough and must be validated, if only in fantasy, by association with social and
> personal meanings which in a different cultural pattern might be more directly
> available...The short description of the pattern we have is *magic,* a highly
> organised and professional system of magic inducements and satisfactions,
> functionally very similar to magic systems in simpler societies, but rather
> strangely coexistent with a highly developed scientific technology.

The 'magic system' of advertising then helps to construct new patterns of meaning for the

commodity through association with other cultural forms. According to critical theorists,

advertising ideology operates by conferring symbolic/cultural values upon products that

they do not intrinsically possess. Williamson (1978) claims that the appropriation of

meaning by advertisements is a "false" process, which is a crucial part of ideology

production. She argues that the ideological role of advertising is to subvert 'real' object-

sign relations, and create new regimes of signification:

> Advertisements, in their production of exchangeable images of nature, provide a
> "currency" that may work round and round this circuit – which of course is never
> static – a currency which we may use, and thus perpetuate certain ideas about the

status of nature and culture. These ideas...involve culturally determined misrecognition of the real relationship between the two – in other words, an ideology (Williamson: 1978: 135).

In this quotation, Williamson adopts an orthodox Marxist orientation, in identifying the 'real' basis of meaning, and recognising how advertising ideology distorts these relationships. This, in her view, constitutes an ideology, as people misperceive the "real" meaning of images and attribute these meanings to the products of capitalism. While this logic is questionable, not least if one considers the post-structuralist assertion that the meaning of signifiers is in constant transition, it does illustrate how critical writers perceive the relationship between advertising and ideology, and the work it does for capitalist institutions in transforming product meanings.

According to Williamson (1978), advertising addresses consumers in the same way that Althusser (1971) proposed ideology operated, through a process of "interpellation" and "hailing" people as unique individuals. So for instance when a Loreal campaign uses the copy line "Because *you're* worth it", this speaks to consumers individually, and hails them to the benefits of the product. Williamson (1978: 50) described the work of ideology in a similar advertising campaign for Chanel No. 5:

> In constituting you as part of a group, advertisements must nevertheless address you as an individual. "People like you are changing to No. 5"...This appellation itself involves an exchange between you as an individual, and the imaginary subject addressed by the ad. For this is not "you" inherently; there is no logical reason to suppose that the advertisement had "you" in mind all along.

Advertising addresses people as 'subjects' within the text, who recognise themselves as "hailed" within the commercial (Williamson, 1978: 44). So like ideology, advertising for Williamson (1978) constructs imaginary relationships between individual people and products, which benefit the ruling power of the corporation. In incorporating these

product meanings into their lives, consumers enter into relationships with 'discourses of power' which are promulgated by these advertisements (Thompson, 2004: 170).

Critical textual analysis studies of advertising provide a framework for understanding the role of signification practices in constructing advertising meaning, and how these processes are related to the concept of ideology (Fairclough, 2001; Goldman, 1992; Goldman and Papson, 1996; Wernick, 1991; Williamson, 1978). This stream of research enables us to gain an insight into the way the advertisements construct naturalised product meanings which benefit their corporate sponsors, and how these advertisements hail consumers as unique individuals. From a critical perspective then, advertising has much in common with the Marxist conception of ideology.

2.4.2.5 Ideological to Whom? Evaluating Textual Analysis

Textual studies of ideology in advertising such as those of Williamson (1978) and Goldman (1992) have also encountered strong academic criticism. The analyst in these studies is elevated to a "privileged" position, who is somehow capable of identifying ideologies that ordinary people cannot see, which some critics find problematic (McFall, 2004: 23; Mick et al., 2004: 59). These authors also claim to be able to identify the "real" structures of meaning that advertising borrows from. While the identification of "real" situations or conditions is quite consistent with a Marxist approach (Althusser, 1971), what constitutes "real" seems to be based entirely upon the personal judgement of the analyst, with advertisements continually (and perhaps unfairly) judged to be "unreal" texts (Cook, 1992: 208).

The role of a critical consumer of advertising is also not considered within these textual analysis studies, and as Scott (2005a: 319) notes 'power belongs to the critic, not the

reader'. The consumer is conceived as someone who is hapless and gullible, and unable to recognise the ideologies inherent in advertising. It is fair to say that these studies are not based upon any analysis of consumer interpretation of advertising, and are restricted to the ability of the analyst to identify the "true" meaning of the text. No quarter is given in textual analysis studies either to the authorial intent of the advertiser, which is something that critical writers claim both Williamson (1978) and Goldman (1992) neglect in their respective approaches (see Soar, 2000). Recently, Mick et al. (2004: 30) have called upon semiotic researchers to combine textual analysis with data from advertisers and consumers to understand the social construction of advertising meaning, and studies of this kind could certainly address the criticism of the sole-authored semiotic reading approach to advertising texts.

Finally, there are also methodological concerns about textual analysis studies of advertising. Leiss et al. (2005: 165) claim that such research is dependent upon the creative skills of an individual analyst, and hence little consistency or replicability can be established across semiotic studies. Also, advertising researchers such as Cook (1992) have highlighted how Williamson in particular draws from multiple theoretical and methodological paradigms, claiming to be a Saussurean, a Freudian and a Marxist (all at the same time), and this "pick and mix" approach to textual methodology raises issues about the rigour and reliability of the findings of such research.

These criticisms of textual studies of ideology do highlight some ontological, epistemological and methodological concerns with semiotic approaches to advertising, and some of the potential shortcomings of these studies. While semiotic analysis is certainly a useful critique of advertising discourse, it is not impervious to scrutiny or

academic refutation, and these criticisms emphasise some of the questions raised about these forms of analysis. They do not necessarily prove that authors like Williamson or Goldman are "wrong" (although some of the critics contend that they are), but they do challenge the view that ideology simply exists in texts and is waiting to be discovered by a gifted or privileged analyst.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the relationship between advertising and the theory of ideology, and has incorporated both criticism of advertising and the academic evaluation of the foundations of such criticisms. As Hackley has argued (2005), to acknowledge advertising as ideology does not necessarily imply an anti-advertising stance, and thorough intellectual appraisals of advertising need to consider its ideological role in society. To borrow Arnould and Thompson (2005) definition of ideology, advertising is certainly a system of meaning that seeks to channel consumer thoughts and actions as a way of defending dominant interests (i.e. those of corporations). However what is not so certain is how successful advertising as an ideology is, and whether it has the ideological power that some critics maintain. As the academic contribution to the argument has demonstrated, many critical accounts are deliberately polemical, and often contain unsubstantiated or unproven assertions about the social role of advertising. So advertising is an ideology in a theoretical sense, but the extent of its influence on society is difficult to ascertain.

A key criticism of textual accounts of advertising (as in, those that study ideology in practice within consumption texts) is that they often neglect the role of the consumer, and the ways in which advertising interacts with both culture and society. It is in considering

this issue that the next chapter will address, which reviews the latest thinking in the interaction between advertising and consumer culture.

3 Chapter 3: Advertising and Consumer Culture

3.1 Introduction

This third chapter considers the interaction between consumer culture and advertising. Theories of "modern" and "postmodern" consumer culture are first reviewed. The chapter then examines the role of advertising within consumer culture, and theorises how advertisements construct signification from the cultural world. The chapter concludes with a review of published research on how consumers interpret advertising meaning, and the ways in which consumers interact with advertising in the context of everyday life.

3.2 Theories of Consumer Culture

This opening section explores theories of both modern and postmodern consumer culture, and compares and contrasts these respective theories. More attention is given to the "postmodern" turn, as this theoretical tradition has been extremely influential in framing contemporary marketing and advertising theory, since at least the early 1990's (Brown, 1993, 1995; Firat and Venkatesh, 1991). The elements of the postmodern condition are discussed, and the relevance of this theory to consumption practice is examined.

3.2.1 Consumer Culture and Modernity

Societies have historically been bound by "traditional" social narratives such as religion, family, history and work, which provided citizens with certain values and ideals to live by (Bouchet, 1994). The social narratives of the "traditional" society were slowly eroded and replaced by the project of modernity, which was a philosophical and social movement which emerged after "The Enlightenment" period of Western society, beginning in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995). The central aim of the project of modernity was to create a new progressive

49

society through intellectual advances in philosophy, science, and technology, which would ultimately further the interests of human kind. Firat and Venkatesh (1995: 240) have identified six conditions associated with modernity:

(1) The rule of reason and the establishment of rational order.

(2) The emergence of the cognitive subject.

(3) The rise of science and an emphasis on material progress through the application of scientific technologies.

(4) Realism, representation and the unity of purpose in art and architecture.

(5) The emergence of industrial capitalism.

(6) The separation of the sphere of production, which is institutionally controlled and public, from the sphere of consumption, which is domestic and private.

The aims of the project of modernity were both ambitious and unifying, as they bound society as a whole to the ideology of creating a better future through these philosophical, scientific and technological advances (Firat, 2004). Indeed, the central motif of the modernist era could be summarised as "progress" (Brown, 1995). Naturally, as a key element of the system of industrial capitalism, consumer culture was (and still is, some would argue[3]) bound up with the project of modernity (Slater, 1997). Indeed within historical accounts of commercial practices, business people were regarded as the 'apostles of modernity' (Marchand, 1985: 13), spreading the ideas of the modernist project and incorporating these philosophical, scientific and technological advances into their work regimes and new product offerings (Lears, 1994). The modernist ideal of creating a better future through such advances still exists to a large extent in the

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[3] Slater (1997:9) argues that consumer culture is still to this day inextricably bound to the project of modernity.

narratives of today's society (and by implication, it could be argued that we still live within the structures of modernity) (Bouchet, 1994). However the tenets of the project of modernity have come under attack from intellectual forces that have expressed dissatisfaction with its all-encompassing ideology and have questioned its foundational assumptions.

3.2.2 Consumer Culture and Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a social, theoretical and philosophical movement which has influenced a variety of professional and human science fields such as art, literature, architecture, sociology and marketing, to name but a few (Brown, 1995). At its essence, postmodernism represents a critical response to the conditions of modernity, and challenges the orthodoxy of modernist thought. Early critics of modernity such Marx, Adorno, and Marcuse expressed misgivings about the negative role of economic processes in social and cultural life, however the criticism of postmodernists differs somewhat from these theorists as it is more expansive in its aims. The postmodern movement posits that the project of modernity, in terms of its post-enlightenment philosophical focus on reason, science, cognitive subjects and technology, has run its course (Firat and Dholakia, 2006). Modernism is seen to have a narrow, homogenous goal that is overly restrictive to the individual citizens of a society. In its place, postmodernists argue that society should no longer strive toward committing to any single grand project or future, as there can never be any broad agreement amongst members of a society as to what these should be, and there should instead be tolerance toward a range of diverse projects and futures that are determined by individuals.

51

Postmodernism is often conceptualised as 'incredulity toward meta-narratives' (Lyotard, 1978: XXIV), a critical appraisal of grand modernist narratives such as reason, realism, cognitive subjects, science, capitalism, and technology, and a rethinking of how these narratives can be conceptualised. For instance, while science is often regarded as a discipline that uncovers impartial and universal truths, postmodern theorists such as Foucault (1980) claim that science actually produces "regimes of truth" that are institutionally embedded within the discourses of the institutions that produce them, and the idea of an uncontaminated truth outside of such institutional frameworks is highly suspect. Kuhn (1962) in his landmark study of the structure of scientific revolutions discussed the secret political motivations of scientific researchers who were strongly committed to their paradigms and theoretical constructs, and strenuously resisted challenges to the orthodoxy of particular scientific paradigms. A key conclusion from a postmodern perspective is that far from being an infallible meta-narrative which produces universal truth, science is an institution that produces particular constructions of truth, which can be open to academic refutation and reflexive critical scrutiny[4]. Postmodernism recognises that modernist meta-narratives are produced through language, discourse, and practices of social institutions, and therefore claims that many of these meta-narratives are ideological constructions which are linked to power systems (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995) (or "incredulous", to borrow Lyotard's (1984) original phrase). Therefore, within postmodernity, such meta-narratives are subject to circumspect questioning and revisionism.

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[4] At the "Can Consumers Escape the Market?" Conference in Wolverhampton on June 24th, 2005, Craig Thompson claimed that Lyotard's definition of postmodernism as "incredulity toward meta-narratives" was not a helpful one, and perhaps could be understood as scepticism or reflexive doubt toward meta-narratives.

A key criticism of the project of modernity by postmodernists is that while its aims to produce a better future and society through philosophical, scientific and technological advances are certainly virtuous, it has failed to achieve them; social problems such as homelessness, famine, terminal illness and international terrorism persist unabated. Postmodernists see modernism as a wrong-headed attempt to create a unified better future, which is impossible to achieve a broad social consensus on (Firat, 2004). Also, it has been argued that the achievements of the project of modernity, such as automobiles, aeroplanes, industrial technology and nuclear power amongst others, have come with an enormous social and environmental cost (Brown, 1995). While the claim can be made that the benefits of such modernist advances far outweigh the costs (for instance, cars allow people to commute to work in order to feed their families), environmental movements have started high profile campaigns to make people aware of how their use of such modernist technologies can have a lasting impact on the environment. The environmental movement, then, can be seen in some ways as a postmodern critique of the modernist ideal of incorporating high performing technologies into our lives to achieve efficiency by questioning the social and environmental consequences of such products, and encouraging citizens to consider eco-friendly alternatives. Postmodernism encourages people to engage critically with modernist impulses and consider their impact.

Postmodern theory has made a profound impact upon theories of consumer culture (Brown, 1995; Featherstone, 1991; Firat and Dholakia, 2006; Firat et al., 1995; Firat and Venkatesh, 1991; Firat and Shultz, 1997). Within modernist conceptions, consumption is regarded as a purely economic activity, undertaken by "rational" consumers to maximise

utilitarian needs. Postmodernism argues that consumption is a social and cultural activity which is engaged in by experience-seeking consumers to satisfy a variety of needs (social, psychological, hedonic), and has both liberatory and emancipatory potential (Featherstone, 1991; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995). From this perspective, consumption is not regarded as something that dupes consumers into a false consciousness, but gives them opportunities to engage in reciprocal social relationships with others (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979). The modernist conception of markets as systems of economic production is replaced within postmodernity by understanding them as sites of social and cultural consumption.

3.2.3 Conditions of Postmodern Consumer Culture

In landmark papers within the marketing literature, Firat and Venkatesh (1991; 1995) have identified five conditions of postmodern consumer culture. While these conditions are associated with postmodernity, the authors recognise that some or all of these conditions may have been present within the modernist era. The conditions help to establish a clear differentiation between "modern" and "postmodern" consumption conditions.

3.2.3.1 Hyperreality

The concept of hyperreality draws heavily from Baudrillard's (1988b) theory of simulacra to describe a world where simulated reality has usurped or replaced reality itself, and the once clear distinction between fantasy and reality becomes decidedly blurred. A good example of hyperreality is consumer participation in virtual online communities, such as the social networking websites "Bebo"® and "Myspace"®, or living virtual lives on the internet through the website "Second Life"® where consumers

can even start virtual families and buy virtual property within this simulated electronic environment[5]. In these online communities, consumers live out "real" existences within a virtual world, where reality and fantasy are almost simultaneously experienced, and make websites like "Second Life" the archetypal hyperreal spaces on the internet. Similarly, physical themed spaces such as Las Vegas and Disneyland are a favourite for postmodern analysis, as they also blur the boundaries between reality and fantasy (Firat and Dholakia, 2006). These postmodern spaces offer consumers physical environments where fantasies can become realities and (if only fleetingly and experientially in the context of consumption) blur the boundaries between them.

Hyperreality also refers to the idea that consumer culture is a symbolic culture, where commodities are translated into linguistic signs that convey meaning to consumers (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Goldman, 1992). Through this process of "hypersignification" (Goldman and Papson, 1996), products are forged with symbolic meanings through advertising and marketing processes, which construct a sign value for these commodities. For example, Nike's incorporation of top athletes into their advertising creates signification values of achievement and performance for the brand, which is communicated through the synonymous "Swoosh" logo (Firat and Dholakia, 2006). In postmodern consumer culture, hyperreality is a post-structuralist world where signifiers become decoupled or detached from signifieds, and the meaning of signifiers incorporated into advertisements from external meaning systems is continually deferred (Scott, 1992; Williamson, 1978). Commodity products therefore make industrious use of "free floating" signifiers to generate brand meanings (Firat and Shultz, 1997: 192).

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[5] Indeed, marketers have even recognised the selling opportunities that exist in hyperreal websites like "Second Life", and have even gone so far as to buy advertising space within this simulated electronic reality.

Hyperreality helps to explain how consumer products become transformed into commodity signs, and the role of signification practices in creating these symbolic commodity meanings within consumer culture.

3.2.3.2 Fragmentation

Fragmentation refers to the breaking up of modernist meta-narratives, and the end of the dominance of any single "regime of truth" (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995). Within postmodernity, multiple realities and ways of being are both recognised and tolerated, and there is a lack of commitment toward one grand project or future. Fragmentation also acknowledges that consumers are extremely complex, and have multiple modes of existence (Firat and Shultz, 1997). For example, a consumer can be a mother, a college lecturer, an avid fan of rock music, a wine connoisseur, a reader of crime stories and a lover of romantic films, all at the same time. Fragmentation recognises the complexity of consumer lifestyles (sometimes known as "rhizomatic" lifestyles[6]), and conceptualises the consumer as a "bricoleur" of a range of different materials from which he/she assembles his/her life and self identity (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995). The consumer is not limited to any single meta-narrative or way of being, and can adopt multiple lifestyles and products, juxtaposing often different or contradictory consumer choices. Fragmentation acknowledges that consumers are free from any single meta-narrative or mode of existence, and can construct multiple realities and combine a variety of choices and identities simultaneously.

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[6] Firat, A. F. and Dholakia, N. (2006). Theoretical and Philosophical Implications of Postmodern Debates: Some Challenges to Modern Marketing. *Marketing Theory*, 6(2): 129.

3.2.3.3 Reversal of Production and Consumption

The reversal of production and consumption challenges the modernist conception that the process of production is somehow distinct from consumption (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995). For postmodernists, production and consumption occur in a cycle as opposed to a linear process, and acts of production occur simultaneously with acts of consumption. The separation of production from consumption is another example of an outdated modernist dualism, which privileges one term (production) as somehow more significant or important than another (consumption). For example, in the on-line auction website "EBay", consumers can perform the role of buyers and sellers simultaneously, and blur the lines between production and consumption (Firat and Dholakia, 2006). Postmodernists seek to shatter the myth of the production meta-narrative, and recognise consumption as integral a part of the economic system as production.

3.2.3.4 Decentred Subject

The idea of a "decentred subject" is central to postmodern conceptions of consumer culture (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995). The Cartesian subject has dominated modernist thought, which is that the person is a subject, who acts upon others such as nature and objects (Firat, 1991). For postmodernists, this represents an outdated subject-object dualism, which is not helpful in accounting for contemporary consumption. For instance, Appadurai (1986) has argued that commodities, like persons, have social lives, and are not necessarily acted upon by consumers. Similarly, as Firat and Venkatesh (1991: 236, citing Baudrillard, 1983) have argued, rather than consumers controlling their own circumstances and processes when interacting with objects, it is often the objects that determine the conditions and procedures for consumption. For example, in getting to know how to use a computer properly, consumers often follow the instructions of the

object to determine the correct way of doing things. Another pertinent example of the redundancy of the subject-object dualism is the ways in which consumers have objectified themselves through practices such as plastic surgery, customising body parts to their own specific specifications (Firat and Venkatesh, 1991). Consumers therefore have a very intricate and complex relationship with objects and possessions (Belk, 1988), and the modernist subject-object dualism fails to capture the full richness of these interactions. Postmodernists claim that a decentred view of the consumer (i.e., the consumer is not sole active agent) can help us to better theorise consumption and the relationship between consumers and objects without imposing any a-priori modernist framework to this social understanding.

3.2.3.5 Juxtaposition of Opposites

Juxtaposition of opposites describes the paradoxes that exist within postmodern consumer culture, and recognises that there are contradictory aspects of consumer lifestyles (Firat and Dholakia, 2006). From this perspective, consumers playfully experiment with different products or modes of being, some of which can be completely opposed to each other. For example, a consumer may be a member of a gymnasium (a healthy activity), but may also enjoy eating fast food or takeaways on a regular basis (often considered an unhealthy food option), and postmodernism recognises that consumers often juxtapose oppositional elements in their lifestyles and consumption habits. Juxtaposition of opposites proffers that consumers are not restricted to any one unilateral course of action, and often engage in multiple modes of consumption, which can be paradoxical or uncomplimentary to each other.

3.3 Advertising and Consumer Culture

The previous sections have addressed the conditions of both modern and postmodern consumer culture, and have provided alternative perspectives on the role of consumption in the lives of individuals. This section explores the role of advertising within consumer culture, and the ways in which advertising both interacts and intersects with the culturally constituted world. It considers how advertising borrows significance from existing cultural meaning systems, and the role of myth and counter cultural ideologies in the construction of advertising authenticity. It also examines the relationship between advertising and postmodern theory, to provide some linkage to the previous sections on postmodernism.

3.3.1 Advertising and the Culturally Constituted World

Advertising and marketing communications rely heavily upon the cultural world for symbolic resonance (Mick, 1986; Venkatesh and Meamber, 2006), and draw cultural signifiers from external referent systems to generate product meaning (Leiss et al., 2005; Williamson, 1978). For McFall (2004: 4), the incorporation of existing cultural meaning systems into commercial messages is at the heart of advertising's ideological role:

> Advertising plays around with meanings drawn from a pre-existing culture to make objects seem more significant, more desirable, and more personal than they really are. In the process a sort of reconfiguration of otherwise more stable relations occurs between meaning and reality, subjects and objects, culture and economy. Advertising is thus cast in a transformative historical role, where its evolutionary advances are turned to the changing structures and organisation of the epoch.

The drawing of symbolic meanings from a common cultural pool is certainly a feature of commercial advertising (O'Donohoe, 1997b; Scott, 1990; Wernick, 1991), and there are structural theories to explain exactly how advertising incorporates external cultural meanings. One of the most cited in the marketing and advertising literature is

59

McCracken's (1986) seminal "movement of meaning" model, which is illustrated in figure 3:

Figure 3: Movement of Meaning Model
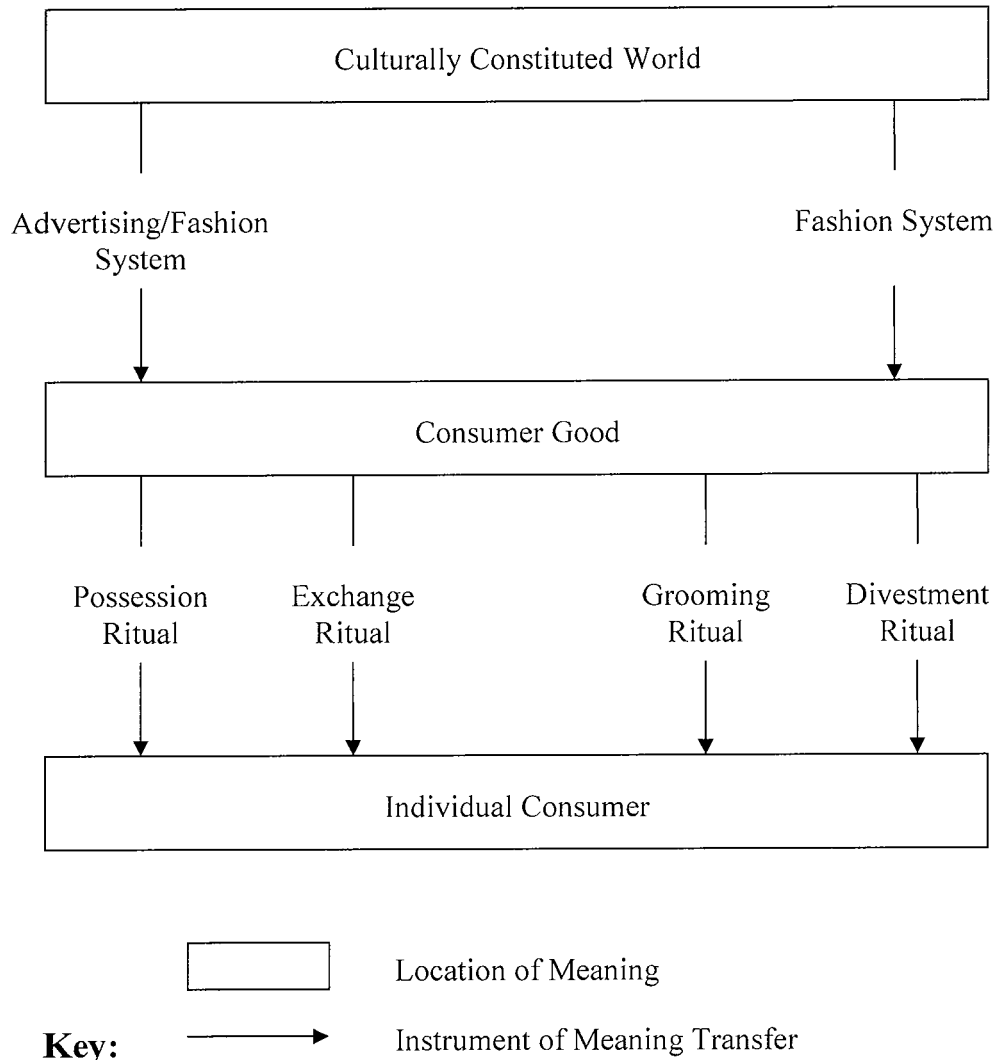
Source: McCracken, G. (1986) 'Culture and Consumption: A Theoretical Account of the Structure and Movement of the Cultural Meaning of Consumer Goods', *Journal of Consumer Research* 13(1): 72.

According to McCracken (1986: 74), 'advertising works as a potential method of meaning transfer by bringing the consumer good and a representation of the culturally constituted world together within the frame of a particular advertisement'. In the

movement of meaning process, meanings are transferred from culture to consumer good, and through various rituals from goods to individual consumers. While the model is certainly useful in helping conceptualise how ads draw from culture to construct meanings, it has certain limitations and inaccuracies that some scholars have highlighted. Venkatesh and Meamber (2006) argue that the model does not adequately problematise the meaning generation process, as it fails to question the ideological basis of the meaning system, or why certain meanings are preferred over others. Tharp and Scott (1990) and Otnes and Scott (1996) meanwhile have critiqued the one-way flow of meaning that McCracken's (1986) model proposes between advertising and culture, and claim that there is much more of a two-way interactive flow between advertising and culture than the model represents. An alternative flow of meaning between marketing institutions such as advertising and culture proposed by Tharp and Scott (1990) is represented in figure 4:

Figure 4: The Dialectic between Culture and Marketing Institutions

Marketing Institutions
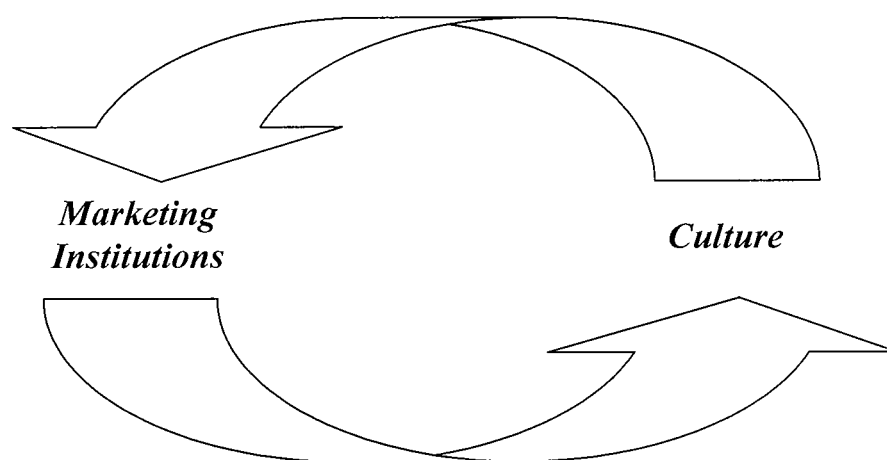
Culture

Source: Tharp, M. and Scott, L. M. (1990) 'The Role of Marketing Processes in Creating Cultural Meaning', *Journal of Macromarketing* 10(2): 49.

The argument that advertising has an interactive relationship with culture as opposed to merely taking influences from it seems to be supported by scholarly evidence. Elliott (1997) for instance claims that advertisements can be seen as legitimate cultural products in their own right. Also, as Gibbons (2005) has eloquently shown, producers of cultural products such as artists have taken a variety of influences from commercial advertising in their work, and advertising clearly has a very interdependent role with the culturally constituted world. These studies highlight that the relationship between advertising and culture is much more dynamic than the simple one-way transfer of meaning that McCracken's (1986) model suggests. It must be stressed that these critiques do not suggest that McCracken (1986) is wrong in his assertion that advertising draws from the culturally constituted world, just that the process of meaning generation within culture is possibly richer and more complicated than the simplicity of his original model indicated. As the meaning of advertisements is constructed through engagement with the culturally constituted world, advertising texts have points of contact with a variety of other cultural discourse types such as music, movies, novels, poems, plays, art and politics, to name but a few (Cook, 1992). In referring to texts in literature, Barthes (1977a: 146) has noted how 'the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture', and likewise advertising texts are constructed through association and explication of a variety of cultural sources (Stern, 1988). The concept of "intertextuality" helps to explain how cultural texts are interdependent on each other (Hirschman, 2000; O'Donohoe, 1997a), and how advertising draws symbolic meanings from other cultural forms (Leiss et al., 2005). For example, Apple Computers "Big Brother" commercial in 1984 was clearly

influenced by George Orwell's novel *1984*, and in this way the advertisement and the book had an intertextual relationship with each other.

Advertisements incorporate a variety of discourse types, which Cook (1992) has distinguished as **"intra-discoural"** and **"inter-discoursal"**. **"Intra-discoural"** advertisements contain voices from the same discourse type, such as when an ad evokes the knowledge of another ad, while **"inter-discoural"** advertisements contain voices from another discourse type, such as when an ad evokes knowledge from a film, book, or music. According to Cook (1992), advertisements are bandit discourses that raid the borders of any available discourses to generate new meanings, and are highly dependent upon other cultural discursive forms. However, much as Tharp and Scott (1990) and Gibbons (1995) suggest, the relationship between advertising and other cultural institutions is interdependent as both sets of texts shimmer off each other. The concept of intertextuality enables us to theorise how advertising texts embody fragments of already existing discourse types, and construct new chains of signification through engagement with external cultural forms (Scott, 1992).

3.3.2 Advertising as Mythic Appropriator

Advertising has been theorised as a form of text that constructs myths that are convenient to itself (Goldman, 1992; Leymore, 1975; Williamson, 1978), however advertising texts also draw heavily upon existing social and cultural mythology to generate meanings that will have social significance for consumer audiences (Stevens and Maclaran, 2007; Wernick, 1991). One of the most prominent recent treatments of myths in advertising and marketing has been the work of Holt (2003; 2004; 2005; 2006), who explores how brands incorporate cultural mythology to create brand symbolism. He shows how brands tap into

available national ideologies, stories, and myths, and exploit cultural contradictions to develop symbolic associations with the brand. According to Holt (2004), brands work within "myth markets" and appropriate available myths in order to construct stories that will develop new mythology for brands. The structure of such myth markets, as outlined by Holt (2004: 58), is presented below in figure 5:

Figure 5: The Structure of a Myth Market
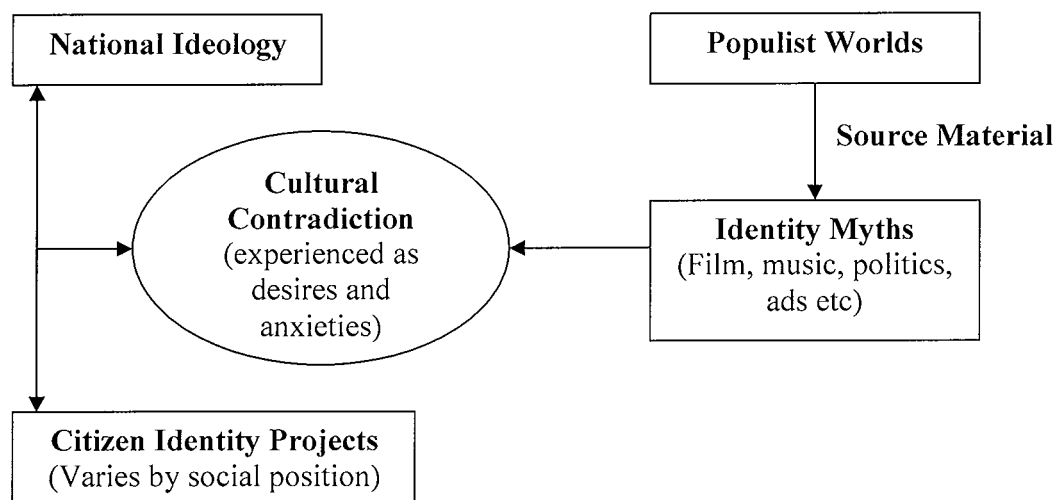
Source: Holt, D. B. (2004). *How Brands Become Icons: The Principles of Cultural Branding.* Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation: 58

Holt (2004) provides examples of a variety of brands and the mythology they appropriate, such as Nike's appropriation of the "individual achievement" myth, Mountain Dew's appropriation of the "slacker" myth, Budweiser's appropriation of the myth of "hard working masculinity", and Harley Davidson's appropriation of the "outlaw" myth. These brands develop mythic associations with national ideologies and existing cultural material in the form of movies, music, novels, etc. which are the source material for many of these myths. As Holt's (2006: 374) work demonstrates, only in rare cases do advertisements or

brands ever lead cultural movements, more often they are "ideological parasites" that

draw from existing myths, and tend to "ride the coattails" of other more potent cultural

movements. It is through the work of advertising agency creative departments, and their

knowledge of such cultural and social movements, that companies are able to tap into and

exploit these myths and develop associations between them and the advertised product.

Advertising then has a key role in appropriating existing cultural mythology and forging

links between myths and commercial products to create iconic consumer brands (Holt,

2004).

3.3.3 Advertising and the Cooptation of Countercultures

The advertising industry has historically been influenced by countercultural movements,

and incorporated them into advertising for mass produced commodities. Frank's (1997:

119) insightful study documents how American advertising agencies co-opted the spirit

of the 1960s counterculture as it provided a rich source of material from which to develop

advertising:

> The counterculture seemed to have it all: the unconnectedness which would allow
> consumers to indulge transitory whims; the irreverence that would allow them to
> defy moral puritanism; and the contempt for established social rules that would
> free them from the slow-moving, buttoned-down conformity of their abstemious
> ancestors. In the counterculture, admen believed they had found the perfect model
> for consumer subjectivity, intelligent and at war with the conformist past, and a
> cultural machine for turning disgust with consumerism into the very fuel by which
> consumerism might be accelerated.

According to Frank (1997), the 1960s counterculture had two prevalent influences on the

American advertising industry. Firstly, it brought about the "creative revolution" which

challenged the conventional "scientific" approaches to advertising production with a

more creative and artistic approach. Secondly, it impacted upon the style of advertising

produced at the time, as many advertising agencies tapped into the revolutionary spirit of

the age and incorporated it into advertising. Agencies such as Doyle Dane Bernbach produced campaigns for clients like Volkswagen and Avis that were a form of mass society critique, poking gentle fun at the perceived conformity created by mass consumption, and even adopted self-deprecating humour toward the clients concerned (Jackall and Hirota, 2000). These commercials took enormous influence from the 1960's counterculture, and effectively sold the spirit of the revolution back to American consumers in the form of capitalist advertising. Similarly, Arvidsson (2001) explores how the Vespa motor scooter company co-opted Italian countercultures around the same time using motivation research techniques, and incorporated these oppositional meanings into the discourse of its advertising. Countercultures remain a rich source of meaning for contemporary advertising agencies. Heiman (2001) argues that companies such as Levi's are co-opting the "slacker" counterculture into their advertising strategies, while Botterill's (2007) study of contemporary jean and sneaker advertisements illustrates how they draw from youth countercultural movements to construct cultural authenticity for brands. The subversive spirit of countercultures then in a rather ironic way have provided advertising agencies with signifiers for mainstream commercial advertising which continue to be tapped for inspiration within contemporary advertising campaigns.

3.3.4 Spectacular Vernacular: Advertising and Postmodernism

Advertising is an inherent part of commercial cultural discourse, or the "spectacular vernacular" as Scott (1993) has described it. There is an assumption however that because advertising fulfils a commercial purpose of selling products, it is a form of "capitalist" art that is somehow distinct from "genuine" art within culture (O'Barr, 2006; Schudson, 1993). This implicit boundary between art and commerce has recently been

criticised by Scott (2005b) and Twitchell (2005) who have both argued that it is essentially a false separation. Firstly, the assumption that art exists independently of the world of commerce seems at odds with the history of art (Scott, 2005b). Various historical studies have shown that the production of art has always been an inherently commercial enterprise, and romantic myths that place art and artists as somehow existing above or outside of the market system are not supported by these histories (Bogart, 1995; Brown and Patterson, 2000; Gibbons, 2005; Schroeder, 2005, 2006). Secondly, there is a belief that advertising serves the ideological agendas of large corporations, while art serves a purely artistic agenda and is produced "for its own sake" (Scott, 2005b). The historical analysis of Twitchell (2005) and Scott (2005) clearly shows that art has always served the ideological agendas of the patrons who paid for it, namely churches, governments and monarchs, and even corporations themselves have often sponsored art galleries and the independent work of artists (Bogart, 1995). Thirdly, since advertising is created by an advertising agency at the behest of a corporate client, people who work in advertising agencies are believed to have less creative control over their work than so-called independent artists (Gibbons, 2005). This may well be the case in some instances, but studies have shown that many independent artists also work within the tight guidelines of their own patrons, and even permit changes to their work upon the patron's request (Bogart, 1995; Twitchell, 2005). Finally, many famous artists such as Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, Georgia O'Keefe, Andy Warhol, Alan Parker and Ridley Scott have either worked directly in advertising agencies or were commissioned by corporations to produce art for advertisements, and the interaction between the art and advertising worlds has been particularly fluid within history (Lears, 1994; O'Barr, 2006; Ogilvy, 1963;

67

Twitchell, 2005). Given these rather striking parallels between advertising and art, and their mutual dependence upon both the market system and corporate sponsorship, Scott (2005) argues that the boundary between them is purely based upon a class ideology that elevates art above the realm of commerce. This ideology is perpetuated within a cultural hierarchy which ascribes advertising as "low" culture, and art and literature as "high" culture, despite the similar market processes at work in each cultural form (O'Barr, 2006; Twitchell, 2005).

The challenge of postmodernism however has eroded the modernist boundaries between high and low culture, and made such ideological categorisations largely redundant (Brown, 1995). Art is increasingly adopting mass-market principles, as the work of Thomas Kinkade, Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst exemplifies (Brown and Patterson, 2000; Gibbons, 2005; Schroeder, 2006), and commercial advertising is often the subject of exhibitions in "high" culture art galleries, theatre shows and arts festivals (Brown, 1995; Holbrook, 1987; O'Donohoe, 1997b; Twitchell, 2005). From a postmodern perspective, advertising is increasingly part of the aesthetic of everyday life (Featherstone, 1991), and the once clear boundary between art and commerce has become blurred by postmodernism (Brown, 1995).

Advertising is for many theorists an archetypal postmodern text which exhibits many of the features of the postmodern condition (Brown et al., 1999; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Goldman and Papson, 1996; Proctor et al., 2002; Scott, 1992). It borrows heavily from external signification systems, appropriating "free-floating" signifiers at will and associating them with commodity products (Firat and Venkatesh, 1991: 230). These signification practices contribute to the construction of commodity sign values, which

68

within a postmodern economy take precedence over the functional or utilitarian qualities of the product (Goldman, 1992; Goldman and Papson, 2006; Jhally, 1987). As image is the primary product within postmodern consumer culture (Firat et al., 1995), advertising is the primary signification vehicle through which image is created, and thus has a pivotal role as a postmodern communication text (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Goldman and Papson, 1998).

As an allusive discourse, advertising feeds off other cultural forms for meaning (Scott, 1994b), and often takes the form of a "pastiche" or "parody" of culture, which is an inherent part of postmodernity (Brown, 1995; Firat and Dholakia, 2006). For example, a recent advertisement for "Revels" sweets copied a scene directly from the film "The Deer Hunter", while another Budweiser advertisement than ran in Ireland drew extensively from the American TV show "Baywatch" to highlight the contrast between American and Irish culture. Advertisements also copy the style of soap operas in a form of pastiche, as the love story of the "Gold Blend" advertising campaign from the 1990s illustrated (Brown, 1995). This allusive borrowing of style and meaning is particularly evident within postmodern advertising, and countless contemporary advertising campaigns exhibit the features of parody and pastiche in consumer culture.

Another feature of postmodern advertising is its reflexivity toward its own ideology (Goldman and Papson, 1996). In the 1960s, Bill Bernbach used the public scepticism and mistrust toward advertising as a strategy in itself, and created humorous campaigns which critiqued the perceived persuasive intent of consumer advertising (Frank, 1997). Many contemporary advertising campaigns also use this reflexivity in a similar way, such as the Sprite Campaign of the 1990s which informed consumers that "Image is nothing, thirst is

everything", despite the advertisement constructing an image for the brand! Another campaign in the 1990s for Diesel Jeans critiqued the marketing system that suggested that brands could make people more attractive, and featured a line of toned male models in a variety of deliberately exaggerated poses ironically thanking Diesel for making them beautiful (see figure 6).

Figure 6: Diesel Advertising
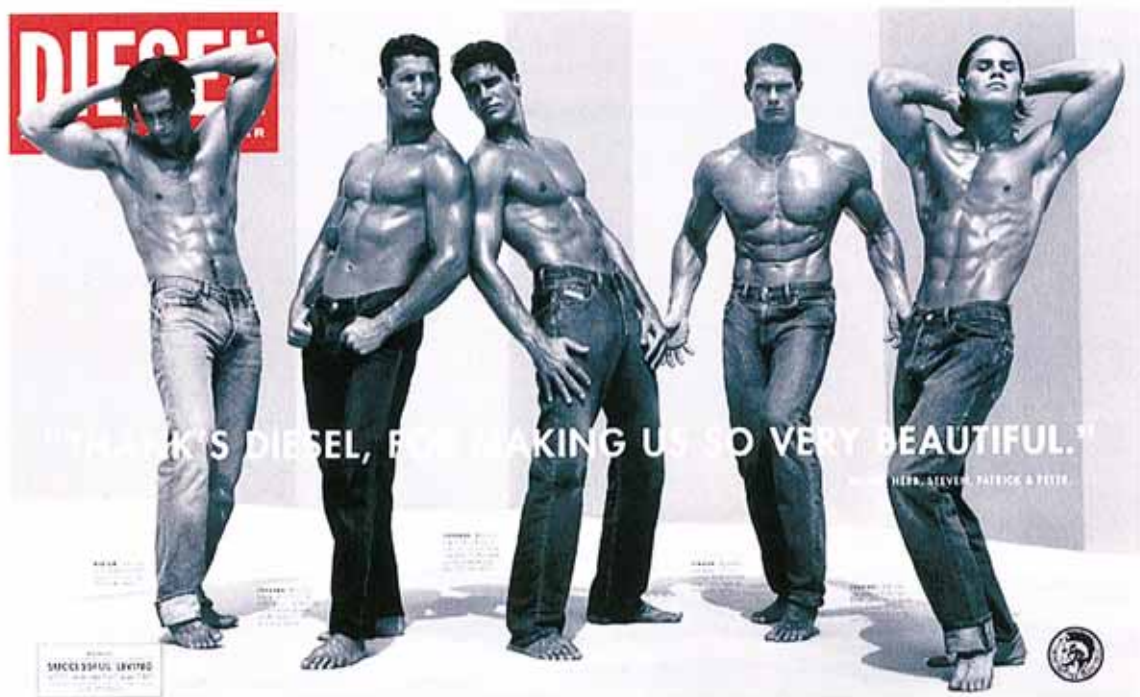
Source: Grigorian, V. and Chandon, P. (2001). *"Diesel for Successful Living: Branding Strategies for an Up-market Line Extension in the Fashion Industry"*. Insead 2001: European Case Clearing House Case Study

This sort of ironic, "knowing wink" contained within these campaigns is the playful exchange that much postmodern advertising engages in with consumers, who are invited to identify the contradictions and take part in the joke (Goldman and Papson, 1996, 1998). Irony is an implicit part of postmodernism (Brown, 1993), and the campaigns discussed above incorporate it into their strategy to appeal to marketing savvy consumers

(Brown, 2003a). Advertising then has much in common with the postmodern condition (Venkatesh and Meamber, 2006), and it is perhaps unsurprising that it is the focus of much postmodern-orientated analysis within advertising literature (Brown et al., 1999; Domazl and Kernan, 1993; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Goldman and Papson, 1996; Stern, 1993).

3.4 Advertising and the Consumer: Strategies of Interpretation

This final section reviews theories of how consumers engage with and interpret advertising messages within the social and cultural world. Traditional theories of advertising communication, known as the "ancestral theories" (Buttle, 1995), are first considered to understand how this process has been conceptualised historically within advertising literature. Following Scott's (2005a) critique of textual analysis studies, the role of the critical reader of advertising is then appraised, and landmark research on consumers' interpretation of advertising messages is reviewed to set the debate within an empirical context. Consumer uses and gratifications from advertising are then explored, and studies relating to how consumers respond to ideologies in advertising texts are examined. The section concludes with a review of literature on consumer resistance to advertising within subcultures, and in this vein the subject of "culture jamming" is discussed.

3.4.1 Ancestral Theories of Advertising Communication

There are two "ancestral theories" that have been particularly influential in how the advertising communication process has been conceptualised within textbooks and journal articles on the subject. The first is the traditional linear communications models of Shannon and Weaver and Schramm, which outline how messages are communicated

between senders and receivers and have been used to explain advertising communication

(Buttle, 1995; Lawlor, 1995). These models are linear as the process is believed to take

place in a sequential manner between advertisers and consumers (Hackley, 2005), as

illustrated in figure 7:

Figure 7: A Linear Model of Advertising Communication
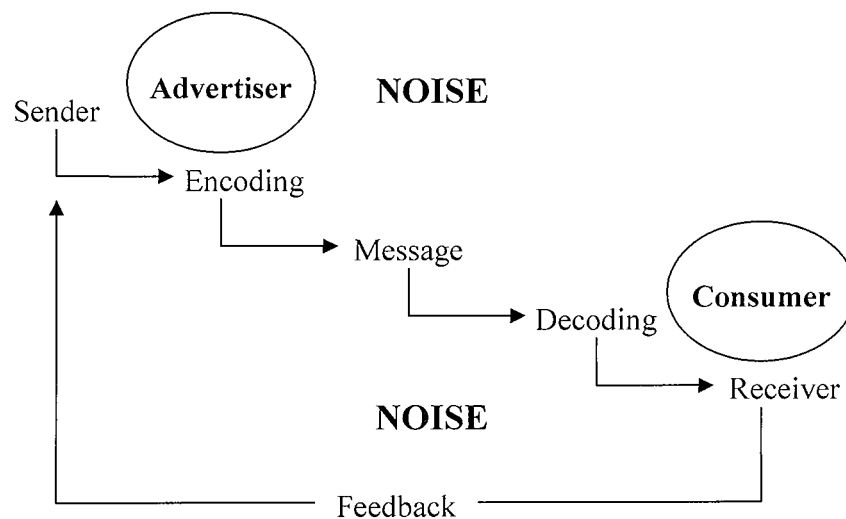
Adapted Source: Hackley, C. (2005). *Advertising and Promotion: Communicating Brands.* London: Sage Publications: 30

This model represents a "bullet theory" of communication (Lawlor, 1995: 30), where the

source of the message who determines the meaning through encoding, and consumers are

seen to decode the advertisement in a relatively uniform fashion (Buttle, 1995). The

model allows for the distortion of the message by noise, and usually contains a feedback

loop between the consumer and the advertiser who can ascertain whether consumers have

interpreted the message correctly.

The second influential theory is the "hierarchy-of-effects" models of *AIDA* (Attention,

Interest, Desire, Action) and *DAGMAR* (Defining Advertising Goals for Measured

Advertising Results), which are graphic representations of how consumers supposedly

interpret advertising messages and are heavily influenced by Pavlov's "stimulus response" theory (Lawlor, 1995). The assumption is that consumers go through these various stages having seen or read an advertisement, in that they cognitively process the advertising message, which has an affect on their attitude, and they eventually act or behave on this attitude through the consumption of a product or service.

Although the linear communication and hierarchy-of-effects models have informed much academic advertising research of the past 30 years (Vakratsas and Ambler, 1999), these theories have been strongly criticised by scholars within the field. Firstly, they are both textual and conceptual models, and have limitations in terms of how they can represent the complexity of advertising communication (Hackley, 2005). The linear communication model is regarded as overly simplistic, as it relegates consumers to a passive role in the interpretation of advertising meaning, and assumes that the communication process takes place in a linear and relatively unproblematic fashion (Buttle, 1995; Lawlor, 1995). The hierarchy-of-effects has also been critiqued by Vakratsas and Ambler (1999: 34-35), who in their review of over 250 advertising books and articles claim that there is 'no evidence that consumers process information in a hierarchical fashion', and they conclude that the hierarchy-of-effects model is 'deeply flawed'. Vakratsas and Ambler's (1999) paper also casts severe doubt on whether cognition and affect really do have an impact upon consumer behaviour. Finally, as Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) have argued within consumer research, the mechanical view of consumers as information processors is problematic, as it assumes that people behave in the same uniform way as computers, and does not account for individual interpretive strategies. While leading scholars do not deny that consumers cognitively

engage with advertisements on some level (McQuarrie et al., 2005), the assumption that they process advertising meaning in a singularly unified fashion is certainly highly questionable.

3.4.2 Countervailing Power of the Advertising Reader

The unidirectional ancestral models of advertising communication assume that authorial intent determines the meaning of a message (Buttle, 1995), but insights from other disciplinary fields have been important in challenging this theory. Within literary theory, Barthes (1977a: 148) contended that it is the reader of a text who ultimately ascribes meaning to it:

> The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination.

Barthes's (1977a) "Death of the Author" thesis downgraded the importance of the source of a text, and instead recognised the countervailing power of the reader in the social construction of meaning. This countervailing power has also been recognised within the cultural studies field by Hall (1980), who studied the processes of encoding and decoding mass communication, and created a classic model to define of the structural relationship between producers and receivers of text:

Figure 8: Model of Encoding and Decoding

Encoding

Programme as "meaningful" discourse

Decoding

Meaning structures 1

Meaning structures 2

Frameworks of knowledge

Frameworks of knowledge

Relations of production

Relations of production

Technical infrastructure

Technical infrastructure
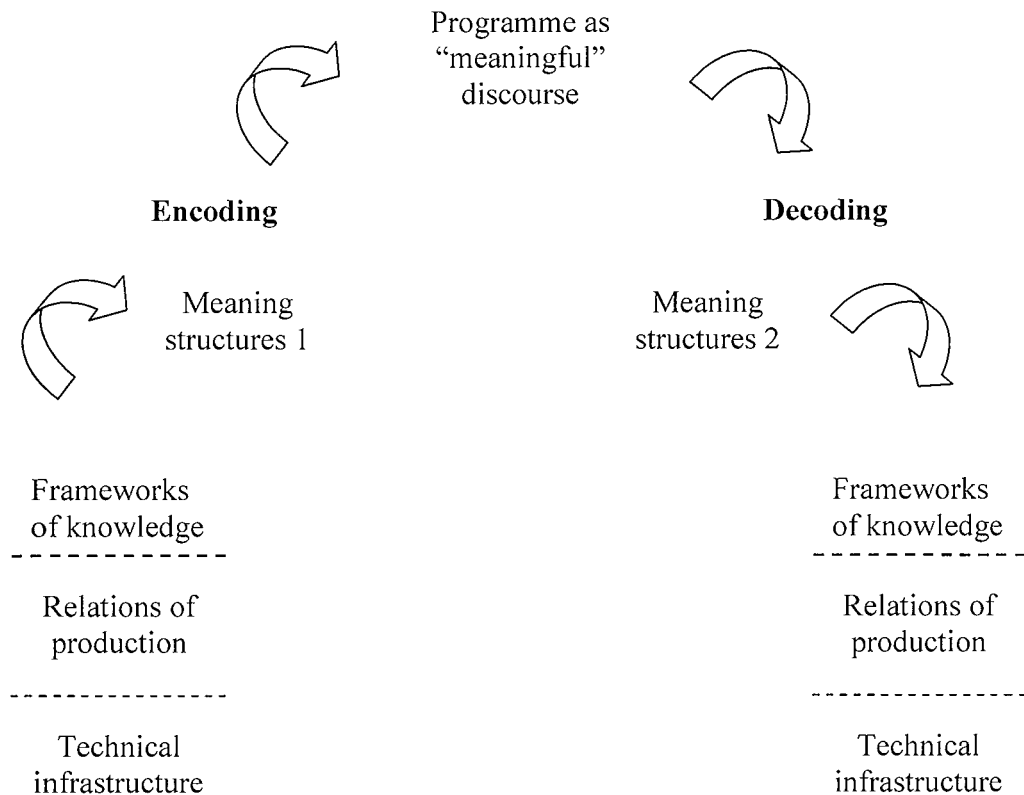
Source: Hall, S. (1980). Encoding/Decoding. In S. Hall (Ed.), *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies 1972-79*. London: Routledge: 130

For Hall (1980: 131), both producers and consumers of texts had meaning structures through which messages were both encoded and decoded, and there had to be certain "relations of equivalence" between these meaning structures for effective communication to take place. Hall (1980: 136-138) identified three hypothetical positions that receivers of mass communication can adopt. The first is the **"dominant-hegemonic position"**, where the receiver decodes the message within the dominant code through which it was encoded, as in the intended meaning of the communication from the sender. Most linear models of advertising communication assume that advertising works in a "dominant-hegemonic" fashion (Hackley, 2005). The second is the **"negotiated code or position"**

where the receiver adapts certain elements of the dominant code, but also constructs oppositional interpretations of the mass communication that are not intended by the sender. The third is the **"oppositional code"** where the receiver recognises an ideological motive within the communication, decoding and rejecting it within some alternative frame of reference to the sender's. These three decoding positions grant receivers more than simply a passive role within the communication process, and Hall's (1980) model recognises the countervailing power of the reader of communication.

In advertising research, there has been much criticism of studies that adopt "information processing" and "hierarchy-of-effects" approaches to how consumers interpret advertising texts. According to Scott (1994a: 463), who advocates the application of "reader-response" theory to explore how consumers individually read and engage with advertising texts, by creating information processing models 'we are truncating the process that leads to response in a way that seriously distorts our view of both advertising and the mind that reads it'. Buttle (1991: 97) is critical of advertising research that focuses upon the "effects" of advertising on individual consumers (such as the "hierarchy-of-effects"), which 'appear to conceive of individuals as islands of cognitive and affective responses, unconnected to a social world, detached from culture, removed from history and biography'. According to Buttle (1991), studies of individual effects unrealistically divorce consumers from the social, cultural and historical context within which advertising is consumed and interpreted. While information processing and "hierarchy-of-effects" models implicitly assume that advertising "does things" to consumers, interpretive researchers in advertising have long argued that consumers "do things" with advertising, and are both a critical and active audience of interpretation who

are highly literate in the language of advertising (Buttle, 1991; Lannon and Cooper, 1983; O'Donohoe and Tynan, 1998). Thus, the meaning of advertising is not solely created by advertisers as linear communication models propose, but rather is shared or co-constructed between advertisers and active consumers (O'Donohoe, 2001; Tharp and Scott, 1990), much as Hall's (1980) model of audience reception suggests. In a paper reviewing the "imbroglio" of advertising theory, Shankar (1999) has proposed that instead of linear communication models, the production and consumption of advertising in culture can be seen as a fluid network of discursive interactions and relationships between advertisers, clients, consumers and advertisements, which is illustrated in figure 9:

Figure 9: Network of Relationships in the Production and Consumption of Advertising
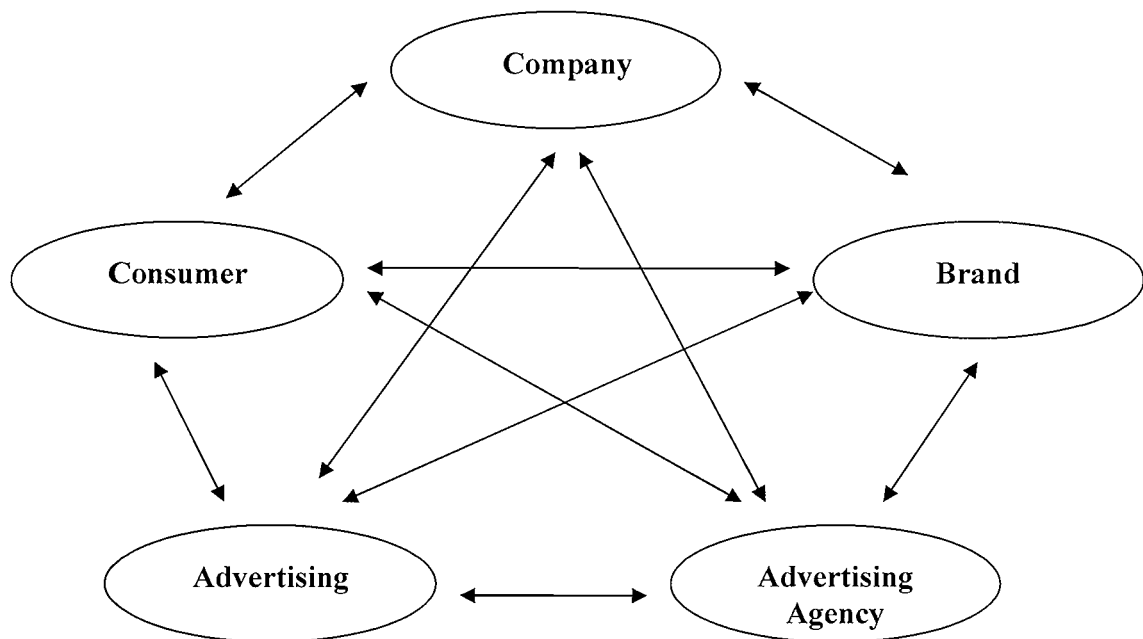
Source: Shankar, A. (1999). Advertising's Imbroglio. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 5(1): 9.

Shankar's (1999) network model emphasises the socially constructed nature of advertising communication (Hackley, 1998), and gives consumers an active and participative role in the construction of advertising meaning. As a contribution to the literature, it highlights a move away from the unidirectional structure of ancestral theories of advertising, and engages more with the complexity of social relations in the production and consumption of advertising. Shankar (1999) does acknowledge however that much advertising research and practice has been generally been quite slow to conceive the advertising communication process differently to the ancestral theories of the field, and continues to view consumers as information processors.

78

The conception of readers as active and participative interpreters raises interesting questions about the ideological power of advertising to manipulate consumers or control individual consciousness. McLaughlin (1998) argues that consumers have "street smarts", or "vernacular theories" in their reading of popular culture texts such as advertising, and critical theorists who portray consumers as hapless cultural dupes subsumed by ideology such as Horkheimer and Adorno ([1944] 1972) do not take into account the innate ability of consumers to resist or reject ideologies and create their own individual interpretations of culture. The analysis of McLaughlin (1998: 207) demonstrates that ordinary people have enormous critical capacities, even if they have not been educated within a particular theoretical tradition, and possess what Foucault described as "subjugated knowledges", which are implicit understandings of how various social institutions work (such as advertising).

In the advertising field, this implicit critical capacity of consumers has been described as the "schemer schema" (Wright, 1986), which is consumer's intuitive understanding of advertising's influence tactics and their ability to critically interpret various rhetorical messages. Brown (2004: 62) claims that consumers have an in-built "marketing reflex", and are not only wise to advertising's persuasions but look behind advertising campaigns to see what the advertiser is actually up to. Today's consumers have been brought up on advertising and marketing campaigns, and are part of what Brown (2003b) describes as "Generation®", the most marketing savvy and cynical generation in history. These theories of active, advertising literate consumers' challenge the critical theory view of consumers as passive victims of the marketing system, and offer an alternative socially grounded understanding of how people interpret advertising messages.

3.4.3 Advertising Polysemy and Idiosyncratic Interpretive Strategies

Advertising polysemy refers to 'the occurrence of multiple meanings for the same advertising message across the members of an audience' (Puntoni et al., 2006: 2). As a theoretical concept, polysemy recognises that advertisements contain a variety of connoted meanings which individual consumers will interpret in idiosyncratic ways. It has been argued that consumers engage with advertising to consume meaning as well as product information (McCracken, 1987), and polysemy offers a useful way of theorising how consumers' interpret advertising (Puntoni et al., 2006). Polysemy has been discovered in numerous studies of advertising consumption. Mick and Politi (1989) explored Umberto Eco's concept of "open" (a text readily decipherable by a reader) and "closed" (paradoxically "open" to multiple interpretations) texts to investigate how consumers respond to advertising visuals. They found very little agreement amongst participants on the meaning of any of the advertisements, which calls into question the notion that any advertising text can be readily "open" to a reader. Like Baudrillard (1988a), Mick and Politi (1989: 89) claim that the separation of "denotation" and "connotation" within semiotics is flawed, as they found no evidence of a common level of "denotation" meaning in how consumers interpret advertising visuals. Studies of gender responses to advertising images by Elliott et al. (1993; 1995) did find slightly more agreement in how consumers interpret advertising texts, with some participants reportedly more willing to read the advertisements like an "open" text, however these studies also noted a marked variation in how consumers responded to similar images. Grier and Brumbaugh (1999) discovered a marked contrast in how "target" consumers for an advertisement interpret the text when compared with "non-target" consumers. From a tutored perspective, the study by Brown et al. (1999) demonstrated how three academic

readers arrived at different interpretations of the same advertisement for Moet and Chandon, despite all the analysts using a similar "Bakhtinian" theoretical framework to deconstruct the meaning of the advertising text. These studies clearly show the "polysemic" nature of advertising texts, and the range of diversity in consumer interpretation of advertising meaning.

A key concern of recent consumer research has been to investigate the range of interpretive strategies that consumers use to make sense of advertising, and the factors which shape how they read and engage with these texts (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Some common patterns have emerged within this research agenda. A landmark study by Mick and Buhl (1992) explored how three Danish brothers interpreted advertising meanings based upon various life themes and life projects that were ongoing in their respective lives, and they created a "meaning-based" model of advertising experiences, which is illustrated in figure 10:

Figure 10: A Meaning-Based Model of Advertising Experiences

A MEANING-BASED MODEL OF ADVERTISING EXPERIENCES

SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT

National Life Projects involve meanings associated with nationalities and internationality.
Community Life Projects involve meanings associated with residential areas, peer groups and careers.
Family Life Projects involve meanings associated with family members, including parents, siblings, spouse, and children.
The Private Self Life Project involves meanings associated with being an individuated human being, including personal activities and interests.

A pervasive Life Theme such as being active versus being passive.

Source: Mick, D. G. and Buhl, C. (1992) 'A Meaning Based Model of Advertising Experience', *Journal of Consumer Research* 19(3):319

This model outlines the range of personal life concerns which shape consumer interpretation of advertising meanings, and is an example of what Mick and Buhl (1992: 335) describe as 'eisegesis, defined as interpretation that reveals the interpreters viewpoint'. The findings of Mick and Buhl (1992) were subsequently supported by Parker (1998), who explored how college students interpreted myths in alcohol advertisements, and found that life themes and life projects heavily influenced consumer interpretation of these texts. The personal experiences of consumers have a profound impact on the strategies they use to read and interpret advertising.

such as Photoshop®, yet still aspire to attain the standards of beauty presented to them in advertising, a true sign of ideology at work (Kates and Shaw-Garlock, 1999; Thompson and Haytko, 1997). This is a very serious issue facing society, especially in the wake of controversies over "size zero" models and eating disorders, with many blaming advertising for contributing to such social problems and feelings of low self-esteem, particularly amongst women (Wolf, 1991). Indeed a recent campaign by Dove addressed this issue by calling for images of "real" beauty to be used by advertisers.

There are some important issues to address within such criticism of advertising imagery. These "idealised" images are criticised for not portraying "reality" accurately, yet as Scott (2005b) has argued, the idea that advertising is supposed to be "real" is out of touch with the history of the genre. Many other cultural forms like literature, movies and music are not always faithful to any social reality, often operating within the realm of fantasy, and advertising in this sense is no different. Also, studies such as those of Richins (1991) and Gulas and McKeage (2000) adopt experimental information processing methodologies which assume that the all consumers interpret these advertising images in a uniform fashion that creates dissatisfaction with personal appearance. Interpretive advertising research has demonstrated that individual consumers negotiate advertising meanings in an idiosyncratic fashion (Mick and Buhl, 1992; O'Donohoe, 1994; Ritson and Elliott, 1999). Indeed, consumers will often reject certain dominant meanings of advertising (Hirschman and Thompson, 1997), sometimes denying that advertising imagery in any way affects their self-image or self-esteem, as was the case in a recent study by Elliott and Elliott (2005) on male response to idealized images. There is certainly a theme within interpretive advertising research which suggests that some

women interpret "idealised" images in a negative way (Kates and Shaw-Garlock, 1999;

Thompson and Haytko, 1997), but because advertising meanings are individually

interpreted and negotiated it would be a mistake to assume that all women (or indeed

men) interpret these images in a uniform fashion (Elliott and Elliott, 2005). Advertising

imagery, then, may contribute to some feelings of self-dissatisfaction amongst

consumers, and more interpretive advertising research is required, particularly from a

reader-response perspective (Scott, 1994a), to investigate how individual consumers

interpret these advertisements and the feelings they express toward the imagery within

the texts.

3.4.6 Subcultural Resistance to Advertising: Culture Jamming

Consumer subcultures have historically appropriated mass market symbols for their own

uses and purposes (Hebdige, 1979), and advertising meanings have been subverted by

subcultures in ways which are completely unintended by their creators. This is quite

common in the ways in which people interpret texts, as De Certeau (1984: 169) noted:

> The reader takes neither the position of the author nor an author's position. He
> invents in texts something different to what they "intended". He detaches them
> from their (lost or accessory) origin. He combines their fragments and creates
> something un-known in the space organised by their capacity for allowing an
> indefinite plurality of meanings.

Elliott and Ritson (1997) provide an example of how anti-heroin advertisements run by

the government of the United Kingdom entitled "Heroin screws you up" were actually

used as posters by heroin users, and the meanings of the campaign were re-negotiated by

members of the subculture. In a study of lesbian subcultures, Ritson et al. (1996)

discovered that group members appropriated commodity meanings from the "Ikea"

brand, and used these meanings to bolster their group identity, naming their subculture

"Dikea". Consumer subcultures have the power to play with mass consumption meanings and commodity signs, and as bricoleurs re-arrange them in any way that serves their individual purposes (Hebdige, 1979; Levi-Strauss, 1966). The research examples quoted provide vivid examples of this process as work, and the ways in which consumers construct oppositional interpretations of mass-media communications (Hall, 1980).

Some social groups resist the influence of advertising to the point of defacing billboards and creating parody advertising campaigns that mock other commercials in a practice known as "culture jamming" (Carducci, 2006; Klein, 2000; Rumbo, 2002). Culture jammers take influences from French Situationist philosophers such as Guy Debord (1967), and rally against the insidious nature of advertising communication. This movement spawned the creation of the left-wing magazine "Adbusters", which provides a platform for anti-advertising campaigns, and offers citizens advice on ways in which they can resist corporate advertising in everyday life by protesting and even running advertising campaigns to counter the claims made in mainstream advertisements (Lasn, 2000). The emergence of the "culture jamming" movement is in some ways indicative of some consumer's ambivalence and weariness toward advertising, and their willingness to subvert advertising messages to show society that resistance is not futile (Klein, 2000).

There is also cause to be sceptical toward the "culture jamming" movement however. Some left-wing commentators such as Edward Herman (co-author of "Manufacturing Consent" with Noam Chomsky) have described the Adbusters agenda as 'intellectually and programmatically pitiful' (Rumbo, 2002: 142), citing the lack of academic weight added to their capitalist critique. It is also possibly redundant to point out that adbusters are very much a part of the capitalist system they decry, as the magazine is available for

sale in all major bookstores, and has a wide readership (Brown, 2003b). And finally, in a rather ironic twist of fate, many advertising agencies have appropriated the "parody" advertising style of culture jamming for corporate advertisements (for clients such as Sprite, Nike and Diesel) (Klein, 2000), much as advertisers in the 1960s co-opted the rebellious spirit of the 1960s (Frank, 1997). This is not necessarily the fault of the culture jamming movement per se, but it is interesting that the tactics of resistance to mass advertising became the very tools to create more corporate advertising and sell corporate wares. Culture jamming is certainly a useful critique, as it offers consumers an alternative voice in an advertising cluttered landscape, but such critiques cannot stand outside of the system they admonish, however hard they try.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored theories of consumer culture, and examined the role of advertising within this context. The review of the literature has argued that advertising represents a cultural product within postmodern consumer culture, and that consumers have a vast range of interpretive strategies to decode advertising meanings. A key implication of this review is that advertising has a reciprocal relationship with the cultural world, incorporating cultural signification to construct advertising meaning, and contributing to social interaction in everyday life. Interpretive advertising research also clearly indicates that consumers have a more empowered relationship with advertising than critical theory or textual analysis studies have portrayed (Goldman, 1992; Williamson, 1978). The next and final chapter of the literature review will consider the role of advertising agencies as cultural producers, and explores contemporary theories of advertising agency practice.

4 Chapter 4: Advertising Agencies as Cultural Intermediaries

4.1 Introduction

This final chapter of the literature review explores the role of advertising agencies within consumer culture. The interaction between advertising agencies and the cultural world is first developed, and the characterisation of advertising practitioners as "cultural intermediaries" is examined. The chapter then considers the ideological role of advertising agencies in consumer culture, and evaluates the interface between knowledge and power in advertising practice. Finally, the internal process of advertising development is reviewed, and the key practitioner roles within an advertising agency are theorised.

4.2 Advertising Agencies and the Cultural World

This first section explores the relations between culture and economy in the practice of advertising, and considers academic critiques which suggest that the boundaries between the two fields are based on academic rather than substantive differences. The role of cultural knowledge in advertising work is then examined, and how advertising agencies utilise this knowledge in the development of a campaign is theorised. Finally, the conception of advertising practitioners as "new cultural intermediaries" is explored, and the role of these occupations within postmodern consumer culture is addressed.

4.2.1 Hybridisation of Culture and Economy

The categories of culture and economy are problematic in the sense that as constructs they are notoriously difficult to define, yet are described in a self-evident fashion within certain accounts of the creative industries (McFall, 2004). In the marketing literature, the realm of "culture" is typically separated from that of the "economy", particularly within

structural models of the movement of meanings from culture to consumer goods (McCracken, 1986, 1989; Tharp and Scott, 1990). These accounts, while theoretically robust and insightful, do present a separation, implicitly demarcating one form as "culture" (such as a celebrity endorser), and another form as "economy" (the consumer good).

Recent writings on the relationship between culture and economic practices have argued that the boundaries between them should be collapsed, and that the separation is not meaningful (du Gay, 1997; du Gay and Pryke, 2002; McFall, 2002b; Warde, 2002). For example, in their study of the creation of the Sony Walkman, Du Gay et al. (1997) clearly show how the development of the product was dependent upon economic and cultural practices which were integrated to make it a commercial success. The separation of culture from economy has also been criticised by McFall (2002b: 154-155) in relation to the production of advertising:

> The separation of culture from economy, it can be argued, is a convenient but artificial analytical abstraction...In deploying a broader definition of culture, advertising, rather than acting as an instrument of capital to "devalue" authentic culture, emerges as a practice which is neither cultural nor economic in essence. Rather, advertising is a constituent practice, consisting inescapably of both cultural and economic elements.

In later work, McFall (2004) describes advertising as a form of "hybrid" which mixes elements of the cultural and the economic together, which is consistent with other accounts of the advertising creative process within cultural studies and sociology (Leiss et al., 2005; Mort, 1996; Nixon, 1997). It would appear that the ascription of one form of practice as "economic" and another "cultural" is a matter of ideological boundaries rather than immutable differences, as organisations can have internal cultures which are as potent as the external world (Malefyt and Moeran, 2003), and the implicit boundary may

not be helpful in accounting for how creative organisations like advertising agencies operate. The practice of advertising contains elements of what can be considered "economic" and "cultural", and fuses these in the campaign development process, so the 'hybridisation of culture and economy' that McFall (2004: 61) has eloquently described provides a useful conception of the work of advertising agencies.

4.2.2 Advertising and Cultural Knowledge

In describing the social process through which advertisements are written, Scott (1994a: 468) notes how 'ads are crafted by people who share a social milieu with the audience, and thus reflect collective cultural knowledge and imply the probability of response'. It is the "culturally shared knowledge" (Thompson et al., 1994: 433) between producers and consumers of texts that forms the basis of mutual understanding in advertising communication, and facilitates consumer comprehension of advertising messages. As Hackley (2002: 211) has argued, 'advertising agencies must tap into the cultural knowledge of consumers in order to design advertising that has the potential to resonate with meaning for potential consumer cultural communities'. For advertising agencies and practitioners, this cultural knowledge is essential for both interaction and persuasion with consumer audiences (Scott, 1994b).

Advertising and branding histories provide potent examples of how advertising draws from these shared cultural resources to construct symbolic product meaning. It is often informal cultural knowledge that is not contained in market research or ethnographies of consumers that provides the most value for advertising agencies in developing creative strategies (Nixon, 2003). Cultural knowledge is a much overlooked facet of advertising development, especially in business schools where it is regarded as secondary to "harder"

statistical market research (Holt, 2004), and is the essential communicative glue between

the moments of encoding and decoding commercial texts (Hall, 1980).

4.2.3 Advertising Practitioners as "New Cultural Intermediaries"

The conception of advertising practitioners as "new cultural intermediaries" stems from

the work of Bourdieu (1984: 359-360), who identified those individuals who were

involved in the provision of "symbolic" products:

> The new petite bourgeoisie comes into its own in all the occupations involving
> presentation and representation (sales, marketing, advertising, public relations,
> fashion, decoration and so forth) and in all the institutions providing symbolic
> goods and services...Those members of the new petite bourgeoisie who originate
> from the upper class and who, for lack (most often) of educational capital, have
> had to reconvert into the new occupations such as cultural intermediary or art
> craftsman have had fewer years of schooling than the average for their class of
> origin but more than the average for the middle classes, they therefore possess a
> very great cultural capital of familiarity and a social capital of "connections".

For Bourdieu (1984), it was the "cultural capital" (or "cultural knowledge", in terms of

how it is described in contemporary advertising literature[7]) of intermediary middle class

professions that enabled them to effectively perform their roles, which was acquired

through their assimilated knowledge of culture and aesthetics. This knowledge was drawn

upon to develop symbolic goods and services such as advertisements, and encapsulates

the role of advertising practitioners quite well in empirical studies (Soar, 2000). In an

update of Bourdieu's theory, Featherstone (1991: 35) describes the work of cultural

intermediaries as follows:

> The expansion of the "new cultural intermediaries"...has involved a widening of
> the range of legitimate cultural goods and the breaking down of some old
> symbolic hierarchies. The new tastemakers, constantly on the look out for new
> cultural goods and experiences, are also engaged in the production of popular
> pedagogies and guides to living and lifestyle. They encourage an inflation of
> cultural goods, constantly draw upon artistic and intellectual trends for

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[7] McFall, L. (2004). *Advertising: A Cultural Economy*. London: Sage

93

inspiration, and help to create new conditions of artistic and intellectual production by working alongside them. The new cultural intermediaries can be found in market-oriented consumer cultural occupations – the media, advertising, design, fashion, etc. – and in state funded and private helping professions, counselling, educational and therapy occupations.

Featherstone's (1991) account theorises advertising practitioners as bricoleurs, ransacking other forms of cultural and aesthetic discourse to construct symbolic meanings for commodities. This equating of the work of cultural intermediaries with postmodernism may be considered antithetical to Bourdieu's (1984) original project, not least because he equated cultural intermediary occupations with social class (while postmodernism largely rejects such modernist class distinctions), but in terms of the way advertising practitioners incorporate cultural signifiers into advertising messages, the theory of postmodernism is helpful in conceptualising their work (Goldman and Papson, 1996; Scott, 1992). As cultural intermediaries, advertising practitioners also collapse traditional boundaries between "high" and "low" culture by combining elements of both in advertising campaigns (O'Barr, 2006), and their work can be considered a form of postmodern practice in action.

The theory of "new cultural intermediaries" has received its fair share of criticism within academic discourse. Cronin (2000: 49) has argued that Featherstone's account of the new middle class is 'wide-ranging and speculative', and not specific enough to any particular social group. Nixon and Du Gay (2002) cite the lack of empirical evidence used by Featherstone to adequately theorise the work of cultural intermediaries. Negus (2002) claims that the middle class positioning of cultural intermediaries may actually create distance, rather than bridging the gap, between production and consumption of products

and services. Kemper (2003: 37) made a similar observation about cultural intermediary positions in Sri Lankan advertising agencies:

> ...whatever their ethnic origins, advertising executives are cosmopolitan people, keeping them at a remove from most Sri Lankans. The social distance that separates the people of the advertising profession from their public may be no greater in Sri Lanka than in many postcolonial countries, but that distance reinscribes in their everyday lives the distinctions between foreign and local, the modern and the traditional that figure predominantly in advertising texts.

Negus (2002) is also critical of how theorists routinely define the "creative" roles as cultural intermediaries (such as record company talent scouts, or advertising creative teams), yet ignore those involved in more administrative roles (such as accountants), who may in fact exert an important role as intermediary gatekeepers within creative processes. McFall (2002a) argues that Boudieu's title of "new" cultural intermediaries is a-historical, as it ignores the work that advertising practitioners had been conducting for centuries in agencies. Finally, Hesmondhalgh (2006) claims that Nixon (1997) has essentially misunderstood the meaning of cultural intermediaries, which in his view refers to cultural critics rather than cultural producers. These critiques of the theory of "new cultural intermediaries" do help us to reconsider the work of advertising practitioners, and highlight some anomalies with the theory. However the work of Bourdieu (1984) and Featherstone (1991) provides an interesting theorisation of advertising practice as an intermediary role, and one that has been used extensively in studying the work of advertising professionals (Cronin, 2004b; Hackley and Kover, 2007; Nixon, 2003; Soar, 2000). In this sense, the theory is useful in considering the intervening role of advertising agencies and advertising practitioners within the cultural and social world.

4.3 The Ideological Role of Advertising Agencies

This section considers the work of advertising agencies in consumer culture critically. First, the "panoptic" role of advertising agencies is explored, and the role of research and cultural knowledge in the development of advertising campaigns is examined in terms of critical theories of advertising production. The relationship between power and knowledge in advertising is then considered, which draws upon advertising perspectives from the field of sociology and cultural studies. Finally, the academic-practitioner interface is explored from a critical perspective, with an examination of the prevalence of cultural anthropology and academic research in the practitioner domain.

4.3.1 The Panoptic Metaphor

Advertising has been portrayed as a form of "super-ideology" within critical literature (Elliott and Ritson, 1997: 201). For some writers, evidence of this ideology is manifest within the consumption texts themselves, and studies such as Williamson (1978), Goldman (1992) and Jhally (1987) have demonstrated how signification works to construct ideological meanings. The work of advertising agencies in encoding these meanings is given less attention in these studies, and is something which needs to be considered to develop a fuller understanding of ideology in advertising (Soar, 2000).

The role of advertising agencies in consumer culture has been portrayed as one of "panoptic" observation by Hackley (2002), who explored agency practices from a Foucauldian perspective. The "panopticon" was a circular design for a prison, originally credited to Jeremy Bentham, which enabled officers to observe activity in all prison cells at once from a central location to discipline inmates. Foucault (1979: 204), who examined correctional institutions in his own work, took the panoptic metaphor to have

wider societal implications also. He explained the relationship between the panopticon and power:

> The panopticon functions as a kind of laboratory of power. Thanks to its mechanisms of observation, it gains efficiency and in the ability to penetrate into men's behaviour; knowledge follows the advances of power; discovering new objects of knowledge over all the surfaces on which power is exercised.

Hackley (2002) argues that advertising agencies function in this way, observing society through the methods of psychological and consumer research to enable them to develop strategies of power over consumers. The surveillance metaphor has also been applied within sociological studies by Slater (1989), Miller and Rose (1997) and Thornton (1999) to account for the ways in which agencies use consumer research to develop advertising. These critiques do have an Orwellian tone, portraying advertising agencies as a "big brother" organisation in society, tracking and tracing the movements of consumers, but they offer a critical conception of advertising agency practices, which is sorely lacking in the mainstream advertising literature (Hackley, 2000).

The cultural knowledge collated by advertising agencies and their practitioners through research is regarded as 'a significant dynamic driving advertising's ideological force' (Hackley, 2002: 213). This cultural knowledge is gathered in a variety of both formal and informal ways. The traditional research approaches of conducting focus groups and depth interviews have been replaced in some agencies by ethnographic research methods. Arvidsson (2006) provides examples of how corporations use ethnography to gather cultural knowledge, exploring young consumers' closets, music collections, and even attending social gatherings with them to understand their culture. Olsen (2003) meanwhile vividly shows how cultural knowledge obtained through ethnographic in-situ

97

observations of consumers was instrumental in developing an advertising and merchandising strategy for the Warner's brassiere campaign in the 1980s in America.

A more recent phenomenon in advertising practitioner research is that of "cool hunting", where companies employ researchers to discover "cool" trends within consumer culture. This approach is designed to develop cultural knowledge in order to construct an authenticity for the brand amongst the target consumer group, much as Levis did for their "Red" line of clothes in the 1990s (Nancarrow et al., 2001). For marketers in America, the source of authentic cool for brands has been in the poor black neighbourhoods, as Klein (2000: 73-74) notes:

> Over the past decade, young black men in American inner cities have been the market most aggressively mined by the brandmasters as a source of borrowed "meaning" and identity. This was the key to the success of Nike and Tommy Hilfiger, both of which were catapulted to brand superstardom in no small part by poor kids who incorporated Nike and Hilfiger into hip-hop style at the very moment when rap was being thrust into the expanding youth culture limelight by MTV and Vibe...Just as the history of cool in America is really (as many have argued) a history of African-American culture – from jazz and blues to rock and roll to rap – for many of the superbrands, cool hunting simply means black-culture hunting. Which is why cool hunters' first stop was the basketball courts of America's poorest neighbourhoods.

Klein's (2000) assertion about black culture as a source of signified meaning for cool was recently discussed by Belk (2006), who argues that white culture has historically appropriated elements of cool from black and African cultures, and incorporated it into white cultural repertoires. This cool hunting approach is a good example of Hackley's (2002) "panoptic" metaphor in action, as market researchers collect cultural knowledge about black communities through observation and research, and strategically recontextualise this knowledge into advertising campaigns.

As well as formal research methods, advertising practitioners also rely upon informal cultural knowledge, or cultural capital, to develop advertisements (Bourdieu, 1984; Nancarrow et al., 2001; Nixon, 2003). Practitioners' tend to 'understand consumer culture from an insider perspective' (Hackley, 2002: 222), and this implicit cultural understanding forms part of the panoptic mechanism of advertising agencies. These practitioners occupy what Soar (2000: 434) has described as 'front row seats' in both the production and consumption, and the encoding and decoding, of advertisements, and this informal knowledge plays an important and often understated role in the development of advertising campaigns (Nixon, 1996).

4.3.2 Power-Knowledge in Advertising Production

Advertising is a field which is often analysed in terms of power and knowledge relationships. Examples include Williamson's (1978) semiotic approach to the power of advertising meaning, Thompson's (2004) exploration of the "discourses of power" of advertising texts which channel consumer identities, and Hackley's (2002) analysis of advertising agencies as centres of ideology and power within consumer culture. As insightful and interesting as these studies are, they do not often unpack the interface of the power-knowledge relationship between advertisers and consumers, something which has been of interest to sociology scholars in particular (Cronin, 2004c).

Slater (1989: 122) has argued that advertising is 'saturated with discourses about power', as it must sell its services to clients within a competitive marketplace to appear to be powerful, and incorporates different formations of power in advertising practice. For Cronin (2004a; 2004c), such claims to power are part of the self-promotional rhetoric used by advertising agencies to position themselves as experts in the field of

99

consumption. Lury and Warde (1997) similarly found that advertising agencies claim scientific expertise about consumer culture to help reduce the uncertainties that clients face in developing products and advertisements, and win their business in the process. From a Foucauldian perspective, power is circular in its motion, and forms 'regimes of truth' which are not super-structural or ideological per se (Foucault, 1980: 133). Examples of these circular power relations are seen in a variety of aspects of advertising practice. The effects and workings of advertising for example are often ambiguous and difficult to determine (Cronin, 2004a), yet agencies still sell their expertise to clients on the basis that they alone can eliminate these ambiguities, which is part of the embodied power relations between agencies and clients. Critics of advertising like Klein (2000) lambaste market researchers for practices such as "cool hunting", yet for brand theorists such as Holt (2004: 85), '...a hunt for cool is a contradiction in terms. The genesis of cool is to lead culture as part of an artistic vanguard. If you have to hunt it, you're not cool. Cool hunting is a parasitic strategy'. If Holt's (2004) assertions are considered, it may not be as simple to suggest that marketers have power over consumers because they engage in "cool hunting" practices, as consumers can easily choose to reject mass mediated consumption advertisements if they so choose (Hirschman and Thompson, 1997). "Cool hunting" then is not actually a strategy of power for advertisers, but rather a case of embodied power relations between actors within a market system. Finally, Hackley's (2002) contention that advertising is "panoptic" system which creates power for agencies has been challenged by Cronin (2004b), who argues that anyone can operate such panoptic techniques, and this does not guarantee the agency an advantage in promoting their skill to clients. This may well be the case, however just because anyone

can operate such techniques, does not necessarily mean that they will all do so to the same standard, or with the same efficacy, which is why certain agencies can promote their talents in this domain above others.

It is perhaps a good point that the "panoptic" metaphor may somewhat overstate the power of agencies in consumer culture, particularly if we subscribe to the Foucauldian view that power is not a possession of any one individual group (Dolan, 2002). Cronin (2004a: 74) claims that advertising knowledge is constituted through "circuits of belief" that flow between agencies, clients, consumers, academics and regulators, which are "complexly interwoven". This more encompassing perspective on advertising may account for the multiple regimes of mediation between stakeholder groups in society (Cronin, 2004b), rather than reducing the advertising-society relationship to a zero-sum game between advertising producers and consumers. The relationship between power and knowledge in advertising is a complex issue, which is constantly negotiated between different constituent groups in society. This is not to suggest that certain groups do not have more power at certain times (Dolan, 2002), but it is important for studies of advertising to be aware of this negotiated process of power relations, and study the operations of power within particular social contexts rather than making sweeping pronouncements on the general possession of power.

4.3.3 Cultural Anthropology: An Unproblematic Role in Advertising Practice?

In advertising practice, the use of anthropological research has become extremely popular. In a recent paper, Denny and Sunderland (2003) extol the benefits of anthropology over psychology, a discipline which has tended to dominate modern marketing thought (Cova and Cova, 2002), and highlight how anthropology can help

marketers to understand the cultural meanings of consumption. Kozinets (2006) has also argued for the use of "netnography" in advertising development, which is the application of anthropological and ethnographic research principles to consumers' online interactions. These papers are certainly more focussed on the practical application of qualitative research in advertising rather than considering its ideological or social role. Cronin (2004c: 356) claims that there is an issue with regard to the politics of the academic-practitioner research relationship that is not often addressed, which concerns the 'access to knowledge' that practitioners sometimes have about consumption. Indeed, this very issue was a topic in the film "The Corporation", where researchers used information from diaries kept by parents on "nagging" to help toy corporations develop advertising strategies directed toward helping children nag for products more effectively. It may be the case that knowledge does not equate to power in every situation, but there are aspects of the academic-practitioner interface which should be considered critically, particularly in relation to the use of academic knowledge in commercial practices. For example, is it in the public interest (as academia is supposed to be) to have academic staff conducting consumer research for private corporations, without examining the ethical dimensions of such interactions? It is important for marketing academics to consider the social and ethical implications of engaging in research with consumers, and ensure that such projects do not end in the exploitation of vulnerable consumer groups, something which is of concern to the recently established "transformative" consumer research agenda (Mick, 2006). In this sense, Cronin's (2004c) call for more examination of the politics of the academic-practitioner relationship should be given closer scrutiny within the business education field as a whole.

4.4 The Production of Advertising: An Intra-Agency Perspective

This final section introduces an intra-agency perspective on the production of advertising. The social constructionist ontology in advertising development is examined, and the culture of an advertising agency is explored. The key practitioner roles in an advertising agency are then outlined, with contemporary literature insights into advertising work practices explored. The section concludes with an examination of the relationship between advertising agencies and their clients, and the role of market research within the intra-agency advertising development process.

4.4.1 Advertising Practice and Social Construction

The creation of an advertisement has sometimes been portrayed as the work of a lone creative genius (most often a copywriter or art director), who develop advertising independently of internal influences or social processes within the agency (Johar et al., 2001; Kover, 1995; Soar, 2000). This view of the lone creative has been challenged within empirical explorations of advertising agency practice, which have documented the processes of advertising development and argue that the creativity is socially rather than individually constructed (Hackley, 1999b; Malefyt and Moeran, 2003; Moeran, 2005a; Vanden Bergh and Stuhlfaut, 2006). The theorisation of creative processes as socially constructed is quite consistent with other creative fields, where art works are generally produced through cooperative and collaborative social relationships between key participants within the commercial market system (Becker, 1984). Moeran's (2005a) ethnography of a Japanese advertising agency examines how advertising production is structured through interactive social networks within the agency (account managers, account planners, creative teams), and extra-agency relationships with clients, media channels and other forms of cultural and informational intermediaries. Cook (1992)

103

claims that advertising texts are "heteroglossic", and contain the voices of the varied array of senders who are involved in the creation of a campaign, such as agency practitioners, camera crews, and actors. In arguing the case for a social constructionist understanding of the creative process in advertising, Hackley (2001) also shows how the production of advertising within agencies is constructed through a variety of inputs from agencies, clients and consumers, and is a telling case of social construction. This body of research clearly demonstrates that the production of an advertising campaign is a socially collective process (Solomon and Greenberg, 1993), and needs to be examined through research methods which account for this process.

This socially constructed process is constituted through the language use and discourse of key participants in the advertising development process (Hackley, 1998). As discourse analysis is a methodology which views social worlds are largely constructed through talk and text (Wood and Kroger, 2000), advertising development provides an interesting context to explore social construction at work, as Hackley (1999a: 161) notes:

> On the social constructionist viewpoint nothing in the advertising process is hidden: it is open to examination through the discourse and cognitive processes of creatives, planners, etc., are realised through intra-agency discourse.

Hackley's (2000) research into British advertising agencies identified key discourses, or "ways of talking", that advertising professionals drew upon to describe their work, and his approach highlights the advantages of exploring advertising development as a discursive accomplishment. Malefyt's (2003) reflexive ethnography of agency practice found that classic psychological models such as Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs" facilitated discursive collaboration between agencies and clients, and were a resource around which key campaign decisions could be discussed. His social constructionist

approach to advertising development also identified a strong prevalence of military discourse used by practitioners in the creative process, while a recent paper by Svensson (2007) found that violence was a feature of talk in an internal meeting within a Swedish advertising agency for a campaign about a lawnmower. These papers indicate the value of exploring the social construction of advertising through discourse analytical methods, and language use provides a rich data source for researchers interested in the social process of advertising development.

The creation of an advertising campaign is also subject to negotiation and tensions between participants in the process. Hirshman (1989) and Moeran (1996) detail these struggles in their studies of advertising agency practice, and how negotiations are conducted between key players, which are often mediated through creative compromises. The negotiations and tensions are an important part of the social construction of advertising, as these interactions can have a profound impact upon the final version of the advertising text that is created by the agency (Moeran, 2005a). A social constructionist approach thus provides us with a rich analytical lens to explore advertising development, and is the key philosophy underpinning interpretive studies of advertising agencies (Alvesson, 1994; Hackley, 2000; Hirschman, 1989; Malefyt and Moeran, 2003; Moeran, 2005a).

4.4.2 The Culture of an Advertising Agency

Advertising agencies have been historically characterised as anti-bureaucratic organisations which resist traditional business rationality and are enclaves for bohemian artists and writers (Jackall and Hirota, 2000). It is the bourgeois bohemian lifestyles of cultural intermediaries which enable them to identify cultural trends and ideological

currents, as Holt's (2004) analysis of iconic branding illustrates. Advertising practitioners are often regarded as "cool" and "hip", and tuned into youth cultures, music, classic literature and popular tastes (Frank, 1997).

There are generally considered to be "two cultures" within an advertising agency, the "suits", who are account planners, account managers and media buyers that tend to wear formal business attire in their work, and the "creatives", who are the writers and artists in an advertising agency, and dress informally in jeans, t-shirts and runners (Hackley, 2000; Nixon and Crewe, 2004). Dress, it seems, matters deeply in how advertising practitioners construct their organisational identities and differentiate themselves culturally from other groups in an agency (Mort, 1996; Nixon, 1996).

As a creative field, advertising agencies have informal work environments that openly tolerate (and even encourage) eccentricity and non-conformity amongst employees, which Nixon and Crewe (2004) found in their research of creative advertising departments. This working environment of advertising has sometimes been portrayed as having undertones of heavy drinking and illegal drug abuse, as Thornton (1999: 61) recalled in her job interview with one particular UK advertising agency:

> Our interview seemed to go into slow motion and I took in his office for the first time. It was utter chaos. Mountains, hills, valleys of white loose-leaf paper – not even piles of files. He'd been rolling around on his swivel chair, but had just come to rest in the centre of the room. I looked up and couldn't quite believe my eyes. There were four gargoyles looking in from each corner. It was 3.30 on a Tuesday afternoon and my potential employer was high as a kite. Somehow I back-pedalled and managed to withdraw my confession, not because I didn't mean it, nor because I had any interest in working for him, but because I didn't want to walk out of his office there and then. The interview continued along a personal vein, discussing husbands, wives, nannies and holidays. Later I commented on the gargoyles, "I guess they ward off evil spirits". He seemed astonished, then touched, that I'd appreciated one of his personal eccentricities. Incredibly I was invited back to that agency for two more interviews. I went along

to them even though I knew that this oddly amiable madhatter and the agency's corporate culture were not for me.

It would be a mistake to assume that the agency discussed in Thornton's (1999) account is typical of all advertising agency cultures, but the culture of drinking and drugs has been an implicit part of historical accounts of agency practice (Fox, 1997; Frank, 1997; Nixon and Crewe, 2004), and it is important to recognise the documentation of this facet of agency life as it has characterised agency practice.

The youthful nature of the advertising work is also well established. In his early ethnography of advertising practice, Turnstall (1964: 17) referred to advertising as a 'young man's [sic] business'. Similarly, in describing the experiences of a middle-aged woman who decided to pursue an advertising career, Sennett (1998: 79) noted how 'in the advertising agency...middle aged people like her are treated like deadwood, their accumulated experience is taken to be of little value'. Clarkin's (2005: 58) study of Irish advertising professionals discovered that 'staying young' was crucial for them to survive in the industry, and he documented the feelings of ambivalence that they expressed toward the inevitable process of aging. While these studies do have academic merit, as advertising is often considered to be a career for the young, Fox's (1997) history details how advertising practitioners such as Bill Bernbach, Leo Burnett and David Ogilvy continued to write advertisements well into their 60s, so the cult of youth in advertising may be somewhat overstated in certain research accounts.

The issue of gender has also been prominent in research accounts of advertising agencies. Studies by Nixon (2003), Nixon and Crewe (2004) and Alvesson (1998) found the presence of male gender ideologies within the agencies they studied, and a general atmosphere of masculinity in advertising work. Indeed, many of the most famous

advertising practitioners in history, such as Rosser Reeves, David Ogilvy, Bill Bernbach and Leo Burnett, were male, and advertising agencies were largely populated by men, particularly in the early 1900's (Marchand, 1985). However, women like Helen Resor and Mary Wells made a significant impact on the advertising industry in America (Fox, 1997), and advertising agencies have generally been staffed by a large percentage of female employees, particularly in contemporary times. In his critique of gender advertising research, Clarkin (2005) found class and gender to be a less significant issue in creative teams within Irish advertising agencies. Gender is certainly an interesting aspect of advertising research, but to characterise advertising work as predominantly "male" or "female" seems to ignore the historical evidence that both genders have played a significant role in the evolution of advertising agency culture (Fox, 1997).

One thing common to accounts of advertising agencies is the hard work ethic of the practitioners involved in the creation of a campaign. Consider Fox's (1997: 224) description of the working life of Leo Burnett:

> Burnett drove his people hard, but so ingenuously that he disarmed all but his most aggravated employees...Nobody worked harder than he did. During the years when he was building the agency he kept two secretaries busy: up at five o'clock, to his study for several hours before breakfast, then the 8.13 to his office, work through the day and night, home after midnight by taxi with papers under his arm; on his weekends he buried himself in his study...According to agency folklore, Burnett's only holiday was Christmas. He watched TV and read magazines and newspapers, but mainly to monitor the ads. He had no small talk, no serious interests outside of advertising.

The hard work ethic of advertising is something that seems part and parcel of the business. In describing the working atmosphere of British advertising agencies, Hackley (2000: 245) noted that '...underlying the easygoing culture was an understanding that deadlines had to be met, work had to be produced on time and the clients' interests had to be served'. The hard-working culture of agencies retains a mythic status in advertising

literature, and is an intricate part of advertising cultures and work practices in contemporary agencies (Fox, 1997).

4.4.3 Account Team Roles

The development of advertising within an agency is often structured around three account functions – account management, account planning and creative teams. In this section, the academic literature surrounding each respective account role is examined, and the role of each function in the creative process is explained.

4.4.3.1 Account Management

The role of account management is to liaise between the advertising agency and the client in the development of a campaign, and manage the relationship successfully. As one account executive in Turnstall's (1964: 45) study described it, 'my job is to represent the agency to the client, and to represent the interest of the client to the agency'. As they have to represent dual interests, they often encounter hostility from other account team members, and Moeran (1996: 53) notes how they are sometimes described as the 'industry's brown nosers'. The role of mediating between agency and client interests is a boundary spanning one, which can often create role conflict and ambiguity for those who are charged with the task (Haytko, 2004).

As they manage the axis of the agency-client relationship, social and interpersonal relationships play a vital part in the work of account management (Moeran, 1996). A recent study by Haytko (2004) documented the ways in which account managers form personal relationships with client representatives, which are based around norms of reciprocity and self-disclosure (also see Geiger and Turley, 2005). These personal relationships are vital in the development of a campaign, and for the maintenance of

agency-client relations. Account managers often develop networks of interpersonal contacts in the industry which are drawn upon to generate new agency business and enhance personal career prospects (Moeran, 2005a). As the practitioners on the frontline of the agency-client relationship, account managers play a pivotal role in supervising the process of campaign development, and dually representing agency and client concerns for respective mutual benefits.

4.4.3.2 Account Planning

The forefathers of account planning were Stephen King of J. Walter Thompson (JWT) and Stanley Pollitt of Boase Massimi Pollitt (BMP) advertising agencies, and the term "account planning" was apparently coined by Tony Stead at a JWT away day in 1968 (Baskin and Pickton, 2003: 417). The role of the account planner was to integrate consumer research into the process of advertising development, and to embrace consumers as key partners within this process (Collin, 2003; Steel, 1998). The role was created to use consumer research more effectively, and not over-burden account management with the tasks of managing both client relationships and research, which they were hitherto responsible for in advertising agencies (Fox, 1997). Account planning is an ethos which was strongly embedded within the advertising agencies in the United Kingdom and United States studied by Hackley (2003a), and the role is generally regarded as integral to the development of advertising strategy (Hackley, 2000; Punyapiroje et al., 2002). According to Crosier et al. (2003: 1), the rationale for account planning is to 'temper intuition with analysis', and to represent the consumer within the agency through research findings. The account planner's job description is most often associated with Stanley Pollitt's original conceptualisation as a 'voice of the consumer'

110

within the advertising agency (Pollitt, 1979), although in recent times this role has been conceived somewhat more widely by academic commentators. Hackley (2003g: 449) ascribes a quasi-creative role to account planners in advertising, describing them as the "midwives to creativity", and he cites examples from his data collection of account planners who provided critical input into the central creative concepts behind advertising campaigns. Baskin and Pickton (2003: 419) argue for a much broadened perspective on account planning, describing their role as the "voice of the market" as opposed to just narrowly representing consumer interests. Hackley (2003g: 449) also cites practitioner descriptions the account planning role as one of "brand custodian" for the client, which he claims is nebulous and lacks specific clarity on what the job actually entails. Either way, the account planning function is an important one in advertising agency practice, and has a critical role in incorporating research insights into creative campaigns (Hackley, 2000).

As the researchers within the advertising agency, account planners often have educational backgrounds within the social sciences, and are skilled in the analysis and interpretation of qualitative and quantitative data (Hackley, 2003a). Consumer research in the form of ethnography, anthropology and semiotics is also increasingly part of the account planner's repertoire of analytical skills (Malefyt and Moeran, 2003). As well as relying upon consumer research in the development of advertising strategy, informal knowledge, intuition and lived experiences of consumption are also brought to bear in the account planning process (Hackley, 2003d; Nixon, 1996), and cultural knowledge is also central to how advertising strategies are conceived, particularly in European advertising agencies as the work of Taylor et al. (1996) illustrated. Hackley (2000) found that account

planners relied on intuitive rather than academic forms of qualitative data analysis and interpretation, however Lury and Warde (1997) gave examples of UK advertising agencies who would analyse focus group discussions using critical discourse analytical techniques. This information is incorporated into a creative brief, which is then delivered to the creative team in the advertising agency, and through the actual process of "briefing" the creatives can develop new insights for the campaign (Steel, 1998). Indeed at a recent account planning conference in Dublin, Smith (2006) warned advertising practitioners against the dangers of "framing" the creative brief, arguing that many insights for campaigns were developed from information not strictly contained within the creative brief (also see Nixon, 1997).

As the account planning role is quite broad and often unspecified, account planners are often racked with uncertainty and their role remains somewhat enigmatic within advertising agencies (Hackley, 2003a). There can be resistance to the role of account planning within advertising circles, with John Fanning (2006b) sarcastically remarking that the account planner in advertising had a meteoric rise from 'the voice of the consumer to the voice of God in 30 years in advertising". It is, however, a fundamentally interesting role within an agency, particularly in terms of exploring how advertising strategies are created, and how consumer research is integrated within the advertising development process.

4.4.3.3 Creative

The creative teams are the copywriters and art directors of an advertising agency, sometimes colloquially referred to as the "creatives" in the advertising business. Within advertising history, battle-hardened practitioners such as Claude Hopkins, Rosser Reeves

and David Ogilvy developed sets of rules and principles for writing and creating advertisements (Hopkins, [1923] 1998; Ogilvy, 1963; Reeves, 1961), which became axiomatic approaches to advertising development in certain agencies (Fox, 1997). Despite the prevalence of these discourses on "how to" create advertisements in the industry, professions like advertising and marketing remain activities that are constructed through tacit rather than explicit knowledge (Hackley, 1999c). In Kover's (1995) empirical exploration of copywriters approaches to developing advertising, he discovered that they relied upon "implicit theories" honed through informal theoretical frameworks rather than formal rules and principles. The performance of creativity in advertising by practitioners still remains under-researched, particularly from an experimental perspective (Johar et al., 2001), although it does seem clear that it is a practice that is governed by implicit rather than explicit knowledge (Hackley, 2003d).

As the producers of image and text in advertisements, creatives draw influence and inspiration from the cultural and social world. As Jackall and Hirota (2000: 101) note:

> Creatives...[are] endlessly searching for fresh ways to take the raw stuff of their culture and society and organise it into internally coherent messages, little stories in which "products are heroes", even as they provide a backdrop of convincing realism. In large and small agencies, those known for hard-sell advertising as well as those with more creative reputations, art directors and writers see themselves as writing little stories, scenarios that cast products as heroes, protecting and rescuing men, women and children from unwarranted fates, messy situations, tangled relationships, and even from dull careers and all-to-mundane lives.

In constructing these commercial narratives, advertising creative practitioners have a wide and varied image source from which to appropriate cultural and social influences (Leiss et al., 2005; Wernick, 1991). For example, advertising copywriters have been known to draw from their own personal consumption experiences as opposed to commissioned consumer research (Vanden Bergh and Stuhlfaut, 2006), and legendary

copywriter David Ogilvy once opined '...I have a theory that the best ads come from personal experience. Some of the good ones I have done have really come out of the real experience of my life, and somehow this has come over as true and valid and persuasive' (Higgins, 2003: 85). This drawing of personal cultural and social experiences leads Jackall and Hirota (2000: 99) to the conclusion that copywriters and art directors are the "commercial ethnographers" in advertising agencies.

Cultural discourses also provide a stock of resources for creative practitioners to incorporate into advertisements, with music, books and film references often used as source material to develop commercial messages (Cronin, 2004b; Soar, 2000). This intertextual referencing sometimes enhances consumers individual experiences of advertising, as they enjoy decoding the origin of the cultural referents used in the commercials (O'Donohoe, 1997a). Studies by Miller (1997) and Turnstall (1964) discovered that creative teams would also take inspiration from other commercials used in different cultures as the basis for creative executions, thus incorporating intra-textual elements into advertisements (Cook, 1992). As advertising draws voraciously from these existing cultural orders of discourse, Moeran (1996: 138) has argued that '...there is no such thing as originality in creative work', and instead compares the work of advertising creativity as one of "bricolage" (Levi-Strauss, 1966), drawing inspiration from various existing centres of culture and combining them creatively. In his study of Irish advertising production, Clarkin (2005: 70) similarly concluded that 'they [advertising creatives] are cultural synthesisers more than cultural innovators, magpies searching the popular undergrowth for raw material with which to support the brands they seek to promote'. While this could be considered uncreative, rearranging existing cultural

influences is a creative act in itself as it requires practitioners to make creative connections between culture.

As the artists in the advertising business, copywriters and art directors have sometimes led a precarious existence in advertising agencies (Fox, 1997). While the established links between the advertising industry and art world are well documented (Gibbons, 2005), artists often found the commercial demands of the advertising trade very much at odds with their educational training in art schools which instilled the values of the romantic freedom and individuality of the artist (Bogart, 1995). Indeed, famous American advertising practitioners such as Claude Hopkins and Rosser Reeves were outwardly suspicious of the role of artists in advertising, and claimed that fine art often detracted from the main purpose of advertising, which was the generation of product sales (Hopkins, [1923] 1998; Reeves, 1961). These suspicions have a long genealogy in advertising history, and the battles between artistic and commercial interests in advertising agencies are legendary within the trade (Fox, 1997; Frank, 1997).

The creative position is often a lauded one within an advertising agency (Hackley, 2000), and an informal star system for copywriters and art directors is often built into advertising agency social hierarchies (Turnstall, 1964). Creatives are sometimes portrayed as narcissistic within advertising literature, having little interest in the commercial success of the advertisements they create, and placing more emphasis upon the winning of creative awards[8] (Nixon, 2006; Soar, 2000). A study by Van Wijk (2006) found that Dutch copywriters and art directors harboured the romantic ideologies of art schools, and craved independence for their work. Hackley and Kover (2007) argue that the resultant

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[8] This was one reason Rosser Reeves was suspicious of artists in advertising agencies. According to advertising history, he once half-jokingly threatened to fire anyone who won a creative award at the "Ted Bates" advertising agency he worked for (see Fox, 1997: 265).

struggle between artistic and commercial values can be both a source of insecurity and potential fulfilment for copywriters and art directors, and this contributes to creative identity construction in advertising agencies.

Gilmore (2005) documents the "creative marriage" between copywriter and art directors, and the supportive ways in which they develop advertisements in partnership with each other, offering comfort in times of turbulence. In this relationship, the established roles of copywriter and art director are often interchangeable, and the central task of the team is to develop a creative concept for the advertisement (Jackall and Hirota, 2000). This process is often negotiated through the internal agency documentation of the creative brief and agency planning documents, which Hackley (2005: 95) has described as 'the handrails for advertising development', and guide the creative team as to the type of advertising that is required. While some accounts privilege the role of the creative in ascribing product meanings (Nixon, 2003; Soar, 2000), empirical accounts show that the creative process tends to be a product of multiple inputs within the agency (Hackley, 1999b; Vanden Bergh and Stuhlfaut, 2006). The creative teams do however contribute key aspects of image and text to campaigns, and have a critical role in the cultural and social constitution of advertising signification within advertising agencies.

4.4.3.4 Account Team Conflict

The conflict between account team members in advertising agencies is well established within the history of advertising (Fox, 1997), with the divisions between account managers and creative teams a particular feature of ethnographic research into advertising production (Jackall and Hirota, 2000). Hirschman (1989) explored the mistrust that can exist between account managers and creative teams, and how creative practitioners were

suspiciously perceived as being more interested in getting work on their "reel" than in achieving product sales for their clients. Kover and Goldberg (1995) concluded that there was a distinct lack of shared values and language between account managers and creative teams in America, which explained their conflict-driven relationship, and these authors went so far as to recommend increased separation between the two functions within advertising agencies.

Hackley's (2000) research documented the internal power struggles within advertising agencies, where the ownership and control of the creative process was contested between account managers, account planners and creative teams, a finding which was also central to Kover and Goldberg's (1995) work. Hirschman (1989) discovered that the "authorship" of creative work was reserved for those who created an idea rather than those who managed it, and the issue of the ownership of creative work seems pivotal to how conflicts develop between account team members in an advertising agency.

Another reason for the account team conflict, discussed by Hackley (2003a), is the divergent educational backgrounds of account team members. Account managers tend to have M.B.A styled qualifications, while account planners often came from liberal arts and social sciences, and creative teams from humanities, philosophy and English literature (Hackley, 2000). As a result, account team members have very different interpretations of the creative process, and work with divergent epistemological models of the consumer, which can also lead to account team conflicts (Hackley, 2003d).

It could be legitimately asked whether in fact account team conflict is actually such a bad thing in the advertising process. Crosier et al. (2003) found that while conflict existed between creative teams and account planners, it could be a positive tension if it was

channelled appropriately and occurred within a trusting environment. This may well be the case, as the creative process in advertising is often characterised by conflicts (Hirschman, 1989). It really depends on where one is positioned within the creative process to assess whether this conflict is either positive or negative for advertising agency practitioners and their clients.

4.4.4 Agency-Client Relations

It is widely theorised in academic literature that clients enjoy an asymmetry of power in their relationship with advertising agencies, primarily because client organisations control the purse strings of an account (Cronin, 2004a; Lury and Warde, 1997). Turnstall (1964: 50) has argued that 'the client pays and thus calls the tune', and studies of advertising practice have highlighted the existence of this economic power relationship (Clarkin, 2005; Moeran, 1996). The axis of the relationship between agencies and their clients was challenged during the "creative revolution" in advertising in the 1950s and 1960s in America, where advertisers like Doyle Dane Bernbach refused to allow their clients to control the creative process. Bill Bernbach described his agency's approach to negotiating with clients as follows:

> We don't permit any client to give us ground rules. We think it's bad for the client. Look, let me put it this way. We think we will never know as much about a product as a client. After all, he sleeps and breathes his product. He built it. He's lived with it most of his life. We couldn't possibly know as much about it as he does. By the same token, we firmly believe that he can't know as much about advertising. Because we live and breathe that all day long. And the fact that we're handling the same product has nothing to do with that...As a matter of fact, I can tell you a very big prospect once said to me, "What would you say, Bill, if you were told exactly where to put the logo and what size it would be". I had over $10,000,000 riding on my answer, and I said, "I would say we are the wrong agency for you". (Higgins, 2003: 15-23).

118

It should be noted that not all agencies at the time of the creative revolution agreed with

Bernbach's stance toward clients. Rosser Reeves for instance regarded it as the right of

the client to interfere with the creative process, stating that 'we are agents and not

principals" (Higgins, 2003: 107). Bernbach's approach was revolutionary within the

industry, and there are agencies such as Weiden and Kennedy who to this day adopt the

DDB approach to agency-client relationships, often refusing to permit client changes to

creative work[9] (Steel, 1998).

Perhaps a fact overlooked in the blanket assumption that clients have an asymmetry of

power relates to the size of the client. Creative practitioners like Bill Bernbach and David

Ogilvy often did their most spectacular creative work for clients who were small (at that

particular time), and thus permitted the agency more creative freedom (Fox, 1997). The

nature of the agency-client relationship is very much dependent upon the size of the

agency and client in question, and indeed the national culture in which the advertising is

produced within (Punyapiroje et al., 2002). So the assumption that there is a power

asymmetry between clients and agencies is both culturally and situationally dependent.

In some studies, advertising agencies position themselves as experts in consumer

communications, and are often highly critical of their clients understanding of the

creative process and knowledge of advertising in general (Alvesson, 1994; Hogg and

Scoggins, 2001). A recent study by Devinney et al. (2005) found that agencies and clients

had different implicit models for evaluating advertising, which could lead to conflicts of

opinion about the merits of creative work. This divergence in outlook may explain some

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[9] Wieden and Kennedy is an agency which founded itself on Bill Bernbach's advertising philosophy, and in some ways recreate the spirit of the creative revolution and the advertising of the DDB agency in particular (See Steel, 1998).

of the tensions between agency and client representatives in the campaign development process.

The conflicts between aesthetics and commerce and agencies and clients are embedded within the social structure of the advertising industry (Lien, 1997). These conflicts often concern the ownership and control of creative output, and constitute a struggle between the symbolic capital of creative teams and the economic capital of clients (Moeran, 2005a). Creative practitioners are sometimes portrayed as rallying against the restrictive corporate ideologies of their more conservative clients, and as artists trapped within a commercial dystopia (Nixon, 2006). These struggles between art and commerce have characterised the nature of creative work in advertising agencies for at least a century (Fox, 1997; Jackall and Hirota, 2000; Moeran, 1996)

Moeran's (2005b: 921) anthropological account of the creative process in Japan discovered that it was performed through the "impression management" of the agency which 'has virtually nothing to do with the consumers at which the client's advertising campaign will be directed, and everything to do with the client company itself, and its representatives'. His research provided a critical insight into the way in which the creative advertising development process can be structured within agencies, and his account of the agencies preparation for a presentation is one of the richest ethnographic accounts of internal advertising production. Koslow et al. (2006: 99) found that clients retained control of advertising strategy, resource allocation and evaluations, and received 'the advertising they deserve' in terms of their working relationship with their agency[10]. In recent times, there has been a shift toward more of a partnering approach between

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[10] This statement is in fact an aphorism of David Ogilvy (1963: 100), who once claimed that "clients get the advertising they deserve".

agencies and clients, as the recent campaign work of Weiden and Kennedy and Honda in the UK exemplified (Smith, 2006). However as the power dynamic between agencies and clients has been an historical feature of advertising practice (Fox, 1997), this conflict is likely to remain a live issue within the production of advertising.

4.4.5 The Role of Advertising Research

The incorporation of market research into the advertising development process has been a controversial issue in agencies for well over a century (Fox, 1997). The application of research in advertising practice, particularly in the form of positivistic copy testing, is often regarded as a form of scientific analysis of an artistic process (Tasgal, 2003), and the conflict between science and aesthetics is a central aspect of creative work in advertising agencies (Hackley and Kover, 2007). Both art and science have a long genealogy in advertising practice, and led to the establishment of two distinctive advertising traditions – the "claim" and "image" schools (Fox, 1997). In considering the role of research in advertising, it is useful to briefly consider the evolution of these divergent traditions in advertising philosophy, and examine how issues relating to the use of marketing research play out within contemporary advertising agencies.

The "claim" tradition is associated with advertising practitioners like Albert Lasker, John Kennedy, Claude Hopkins and Rosser Reeves (Fox, 1997; Hopkins, [1923] 1998; Reeves, 1961). For Lasker and Kennedy, advertising was "salesmanship in print" (Fox, 1997: 51), and they developed a style of advertising copy known as the "claim" approach, in which advertisements had to communicate specific tangible benefits about the product to the consumer. This approach to advertising development was based on rules and principles for writing copy and creating advertisements, which were largely formulated

by these practitioners. Claude Hopkins "Scientific Advertising" detailed prescriptive approaches for developing copy and claims (Hopkins, 1998 [1923]), while Rosser Reeves "Reality in Advertising" famously renamed the claim as the "unique selling proposition", and offered a related set of advertising theories (Reeves, 1961). For practitioners in this tradition, advertising was a science which followed central laws and basic principles. Advertising men like Hopkins and Reeves were not actually trained academics or schooled in the methods of science, but they used scientific rhetoric freely to describe their work and their trade (Kreshel, 1993). By the 1950s in America at least, science has become a dominant theme in advertising practice (Frank, 1997). The style of advertising was based on the repetition of claims or unique selling propositions in messages, which typically downgraded the intelligence of the consumer (Fox, 1997).

Practitioners in the "claim" tradition had little respect for the role of artists in advertising agencies or art in advertising generally, and Reeves (1961: 112) in particular warned against the dangers of the word "originality" in advertising agencies. Perhaps most importantly, the "claim" tradition placed a lot of emphasis on the use of market research in campaigns in the form of statistical surveys, copy testing advertisements (which had become popular in advertising agencies), and other forms of social scientific analysis. The "claim" tradition purported to measure the effect of the advertising through statistical market research results, as Reeves (1961: 21-24) in his chapter entitled "The Penetrated People" chapter sought to demonstrate, and the scientific emphasis of the claim approach gained huge credence with many advertising practitioners and clients. The practice of incorporating social scientific research into advertising development has its roots in this advertising tradition.

The "image" tradition is associated with practitioners like Earnest Elmo Calkins, Theodore McManus, Leo Burnett and Bill Bernbach (Fox, 1997). The image approach was based around developing a visual image for the product through the advertising as opposed to making a specific "claim", and it emphasised the artistic aspects of advertising production. Practitioners of the creative revolution like Bill Bernbach and Leo Burnett disdained the rules of the "claim" tradition, and emphasised the importance of intuition, imagination and artistry in developing advertisements (Fox, 1997; Jackall and Hirota, 2000). The advertising style was artistic and impressionistic, and incorporated gentle humour and candour, as Bernbach's famous advertisements for Volkswagen in the 1960s illustrated. At the heart of the image tradition was a deep respect for the intelligence of the consumer, and the advertisements developed in this tradition engaged the public imagination, becoming an intrinsic part of the cultural world (Frank, 1997). Artists took centre stage in the image tradition, particularly in the creative revolution, and the ownership and control of advertising work was ceded to creative teams rather than clients. While practitioners in the "image" tradition incorporated market research into their advertising approaches, they resisted over-reliance on it in creating advertisements, as Bernbach noted in one of his many remarks on the subject:

> ...one of the disadvantages of doing everything mathematically, by research and by mandate, is that after a while everybody does it in the same way. Because you go out and find out the same things – and if you take the attitude, as many people do, that once you've found out what to say, your job is done, then what you're doing is saying it the same way as everybody is saying it, and then you've lost impact completely (Higgins, 2003: 15).

During the creative revolution, the scientific approach to developing advertisements was challenged by "image" practitioners, and the use of market research was treated with scepticism (Fox, 1997). Like Reeves, image practitioners like Bernbach and Burnett were

also able to demonstrate that their approach to advertising was also effective in terms of sales, and they developed some famously successful campaigns for Avis, Volkswagen, and Marlboro amongst many others. The American advertising industry has traditionally oscillated between these two schools of advertising philosophy (Fox, 1997), and the divergence between them, particularly on the use of marketing research, has implications for contemporary agency practice.

The debate surrounding the role of marketing research in advertising continues, with the "art-science" divide showing little sign of easing in the industry (Steel, 1998). Marketing research is clearly an important part of advertising development, as Hackley (2005) has illustrated in his text on the subject. There is, however, a divergence of opinion on the role of positivistic copy testing of advertisements through market research. Briggs and Stuart (2006) argue that copy testing is an essential aspect of the advertising development process, and that all clients should demand that agencies test creative work to demonstrate its potential effectiveness with target consumers. Hedges (1997), on the other hand, claims that market research is helpful at the creative development stage, but is unhelpful when it is used to "test" creative advertisements in a laboratory setting (in fact, Hedges has suggested that the word "test" to be deleted from the advertising lexicon). Others, such as Broadbent (2004), argue that advertising pre-testing research is obsolete, and may actually destroy creative work for agencies and clients who use it. There are many agencies like Wieden and Kennedy, for example, who refuse to allow creative work to go through copy testing procedures at all (Steel, 1998). These research practices are extremely common in the advertising field however, with a paper by Tasgal (2003: 133) criticising the mechanistic research approaches used in advertising evaluation,

which he claims is based upon a "physics envy" within the field of advertising and marketing practice as a whole.

In advertising agencies, the use of market research is typically resisted by copywriters and art directors, who argue that it is detrimental to creativity (Chong, 2006; Kover, 1996; Soar, 2000). A paper by Hackley (2003d) found that while creative development research (as in, research contained in a creative briefing document) was accepted by creative teams, the experimental copy testing of commercials was vigorously opposed. Indeed, 'the use and interpretation of research in advertising development is seen as a major site of intra-account team conflict' (Hackley, 2003d: 318). For client representatives, advertising research is incorporated to reduce risk and uncertainty associated with investment in an advertising campaign (Buchanan and Basu, 1989; Lien, 1997; Lury and Warde, 1997), and is used to make agencies accountable to their clients, a situation which Tasgal (2003) claims is having a negative impact upon creative industries generally. One practitioner in the Saatchi and Saatchi advertising agency in London described the use of market research as 'just a fucking joke...a load of client-serving bollocks paying lip service to objectivity' (Fretten, 1992: 27, cited in Nava, 1997: 42). The incorporation of market research into advertising clearly remains a contentious issue in many agencies.

4.5 Conclusion

This final literature review chapter has explored the interaction between advertising practitioners and the cultural world, and their conceptualisation within the literature as "cultural intermediaries". It has considered the ideological role of advertising in consumer culture, and how power and knowledge relationships are negotiated between

125

agencies, clients and consumers within advertising communications processes. Finally, the chapter has evaluated the internal production of an advertising campaign from an academic literature perspective, and outlined the key social actors who contribute to the social construction of advertising meaning. The following chapter will now detail the methodology used in this study of advertising development, and outline the research question, objectives and methodology for the study.

5 Chapter 5: Research Methodology

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology of the study. It first provides an overview of the research question and objectives for the study, and locates the research within the critical marketing tradition. It then details the ethnographic approach employed in the study, and documents the sources of data generated within the advertising agency. It finally explains how the discourse analytic approach is incorporated into the research, and outlines the organisation of the findings in the proceeding chapters of the thesis.

5.2 The Research Programme

This section presents a brief assessment of the advertising literature, and identifies three key gaps in the current body of knowledge. It also details the research question and objectives for the study.

5.2.1 Assessment of the Literature

The review of the advertising literature revealed three striking gaps within the current body of knowledge. Firstly, while studies of advertising texts and advertising consumption are well represented in the business literature, there are a relatively small number of studies which focus on the production of advertising. As Hackley (2005: 227) has argued, 'considering the importance much academic research attributes to advertising there are surprisingly few studies of how advertising is actually developed in agencies', and this omission in the literature provides much scope for a study of advertising agency practice. Secondly, qualitative studies of marketing and advertising organisations remain rare in the business literature (Brownlie et al., 1994), despite the interest that cultural anthropologists have shown in the everyday performance of advertising and marketing

work (Dewaal Malefyt and Moeran, 2003; Lien, 1997; Miller, 1997; Moeran, 2005a). The paucity of qualitative perspectives into advertising production presents an opportunity to contribute to an interpretive understanding of how advertising is developed in an Irish agency context. Finally, there is a lack of studies in the business literature which incorporate critical interdisciplinary theoretical approaches to advertising, exploring issues of ideology in an organisational context. Although scholars have called for cross-disciplinary research in marketing and advertising (Wells, 1993), such approaches are still very much in the minority in the current business literature, and there is a need for more research which explores advertising from a critical perspective. These gaps in the current body of knowledge highlight the potential for a study of advertising production, and how this study could contribute to the current academic discourse on advertising agencies.

5.2.2 Research Question and Objectives

The research question for the study was developed through engagement with the critical literature on advertising production (Alvesson, 1994; Elliott and Ritson, 1997; Hackley, 2000, 2002). To cite an influential quotation which inspired the fieldwork for this study:

> Ad agencies can be seen to be operating in the engine room of a panoptic marketing system. What they do and how they do it is worthy of proper examination (Hackley, 2000: 246).

The research adopted a critical focus on advertising production, and the research question asked **how do advertising agencies encode ideological meanings into commercial messages?** The question seeks to understand how advertising is developed as a system of meaning within an advertising agency, and explore the social process through which this occurs. The research question was supplemented by a number of specific research

objectives for the project, which were formed through a reading of the advertising literature.

The first research objective was to provide insights into the socially constructed process through which advertising agencies encode commercial advertisements. The process of advertising development had been theorised as socially constructed (Hackley, 1999b), yet few empirical studies had explored this socially constructed process in action (See Alvesson, 1994; Malefyt and Moeran, 2003; Moeran, 1996 for exceptions). This research objective sought to explore this social process, and understand how advertising agencies encode commercial advertisements.

The second research objective was to understand the role of advertising practitioners as "cultural intermediaries" within the creative development process. Advertising workers had been theorised as "cultural intermediaries" (Bourdieu, 1984), yet few studies have focussed upon how they actually perform their roles within agencies (See Crosier et al., 2003; Hackley, 2003a; Kover, 1995; Soar, 2000 for exceptions). This objective focussed upon the work practices of account planners, copywriters and art directors within the advertising agency, as these roles are responsible for the use and interpretation of consumer research and the incorporation of cultural meanings into advertisements, which were considered central to the encoding of commercial advertising. As account executives were responsible for the day-to-day management of the agency-client relationship, they were not included within this particular study, although their role is a fundamentally interesting one in terms of the managing of personal and social relationships in the advertising development process, as Haytko's (2004) recent study illustrated. The role of account managers was also addressed in

previous studies of advertising production (Hackley, 2000, 2003d; Hirschman, 1989), and it was felt that a detailed focus on account planning and creativity was more specific to the research question which the study posed. This objective explored the educational backgrounds and training of these cultural intermediaries, their role in the advertising agency, how they approached their work, and their personal accounts of the advertising development process in an Irish agency.

The third research objective sought to explore the ways in which formal consumer research and informal cultural knowledge enter the process of advertising development, and how this knowledge was drawn upon by advertising practitioners' in the performance of their work. This objective was drawn from the work of Nixon (1997) and Hackley (2002), who both theorised how advertising practitioners utilise such knowledge in the creative process. This objective examined how this formal and informal knowledge was incorporated by Irish advertising practitioners into the advertising development process, and the role it had in the encoding of commercial advertising meanings. It also explored the impact of the "cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1984) resources of advertising practitioners on the advertising development process.

The fourth research objective sought to understand the role of the corporate client in the Irish advertising development process. Studies by Hirschman (1989) and Alvesson (1994) have documented the difficult and often fractious relationship between advertising agencies and their clients, while Thompson and Haytko (1997: 36) have argued that the institutional relationship between cultural intermediaries and corporate stakeholders needs to be considered by critical theorists who uniformly present advertising as an oppressive ideology. The objective explored the role of the client in the

process of encoding advertisements in order to draw comparisons to previous studies of advertising production, and theorise the institutional relationship between cultural intermediaries and their corporate clients.

This research question and research objectives detail the key aims of the research programme. The study is now located within a methodological tradition in marketing, and a rationale for the adopted research approach is explained.

5.3 Locating the Research Approach

This section briefly reviews the roots of the positivist and interpretive paradigms in marketing, and considers the contribution of critical theory to marketing research. It finally locates the methodological approach for the study within an interpretive tradition in the advertising literature, and offers justification for the use of this method.

5.3.1 Positivist Vs Interpretive Paradigms in Marketing

The concept of a paradigm refers to 'a set of linked assumptions about the world which is shared by a community of scientists investigating that world' (Deshpande, 1983: 101). It is the basic "taken for granted" views about the world that separate a group of theorists in a very fundamental way from those working in different or competing paradigms (Burrell and Morgan, 1978: 23). According to Kuhn (1962: 10-11) 'men [sic] whose research is based on shared paradigms are committed to the same rules and standards for scientific practice'. So theorists located within particular paradigms have shared assumptions about the nature of the world (ontological beliefs), and common research approaches on how to develop knowledge and communicate it to fellow scientists (epistemological beliefs). In the marketing discipline as a whole, there have been two central research paradigms which have distinguished the research of theorists in the field, namely the "positivist" and "interpretive" paradigms, which are briefly explained.

The positivist paradigm adopts a "realist" ontological view of the world, which assumes that reality has an objective, concrete existence independently of its being perceived, and that the role of science is to develop genuine knowledge about this reality (Hunt, 1990). Science is regarded as an objective enterprise which creates value-free knowledge, and discovers universal laws which are generally applicable in any cultural or social context (Peter and Olson, 1983). For positivists, the goal of scientific research is to develop truth about the world, and all knowledge claims must be tested and evaluated to determine the extent to which they correspond to the world (Hunt, 1990), in a procedure known as "sophisticated falsificationist methodology" (Calder and Tybout, 1987: 137). In the positivist paradigm, there are specific rules for assessing scientific validity, and falsification represents a preferred approach for positivistic scientists. Epistemologically, positivists seek "nomothetic" knowledge, which is based upon the use of systematic protocol and techniques incorporating the methods of the natural sciences to test hypothesis in accordance with scientific rigour (Burrell and Morgan, 1978). They emphasise the importance of separation between the researcher and participants in order for the scientist to have a privileged point of observation of social phenomena (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). The axiological (overriding) goal of positivist research is the prediction, measurement and control of events, which is in-keeping with the natural science model. The positivist paradigm is therefore based on a deductive approach to knowledge development, and the testing of a priori theory. While positivists can work with qualitative and quantitative data (Hunt, 1994), the positivistic paradigm in marketing is often associated with the quantitative research tradition (Deshpande, 1983).

132

The interpretive paradigm adopt a relativist ontological view of the world, which sees reality as socially constructed and multiple in nature (Berger and Luckman, 1966; Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). While interpretive researchers do not deny the existence of the external world, they reject the assumption that there is a single reality waiting to be discovered via *the* scientific method (Anderson, 1986: 157), and take the relativist position that 'no interpretation of that world can be made independently of human sensations, perceptions, information processing, feelings and actions' (Peter, 1992: 74). The interpretive paradigm recognises science as a social process which cannot be understood without considering social, cultural, political and economic factors, much as Tadajewski's (2006) research on the influence of the Cold War on academic marketing research has recently documented. Knowledge developed within interpretive research is regarded as context specific, and claims to "truth" are not considered valid as truth is seen as a subjective evaluation (Peter and Olson, 1983). Interpretive researchers recognise that there are many ways of assessing scientific validity, and they reject falsification as a methodology for assessing knowledge contributions to the discipline (Anderson, 1989). Epistemologically, interpretivists seek to develop ideographic knowledge, which is based upon subjective accounts of the life world and involving oneself in the flow of everyday life (Burrell and Morgan, 1978). This approach to knowledge development recognises an interactive and cooperative relationship between a researcher and participants, and does not provide a privileged point of observation for the researcher (Hirschman, 1986). The axiological goal of interpretive research is "understanding" of the social world, which is based upon inductive approach to research and the generation of emergent theories. Interpretive researchers generally work with qualitative data, although quantitative data

can also be used as part of an interpretive study to develop further insights or test research propositions (McAlexander et al., 2002).

The divisions between scholars in the positivist and interpretive paradigms in marketing are well established, and led to some sharp philosophical exchanges. Hunt and Anderson had a long-running debate on the appropriateness of realist and relativist philosophy to research in marketing. For Hunt (1989; 1990; 1994), relativism was a self-refuting philosophy that would lead to scientific irrelevancy for the marketing and consumer research disciplines, while Anderson (1983; 1986) claimed that the positivist philosophy and search for "objective" knowledge had long been abandoned by other academic disciplines. Calder and Tybout (1987) advocated the use of falsification for the verification of marketing and consumer research knowledge which was rejected by Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy (1988), who argued that because consumer behaviour was a social and not natural science, a more interpretive approach to knowledge development was required. Hunt (1989) and Calder and Tybout (1989) both called for interpretive researchers to develop specific criteria to evaluate research and develop trustworthiness for research findings, however consumer researchers like Thompson (1990a) and Holt (1991) riposted that such systematic procedures would apply rigid positivistic standards to interpretive consumer research which were inappropriate to the paradigm.

The debate between the positivist and interpretive paradigm was certainly useful, as it did much to raise the standard of scholarship in the marketing field (Brown, 2001b). However, the debate has also become tired and repetitive, as the same old arguments tend to oscillate between the respective research paradigms (Kavanagh, 1994), and it may have served its purpose as an academic discussion. While positivism is largely regarded

as the dominant research paradigm in the marketing field (Hirschman, 1993; Ozanne and Hudson, 1989), interpretive perspectives in marketing have become much more common, and do represent a significant portion of knowledge created in the discipline. In recent times, postmodern perspectives on marketing and consumption, rooted within the relativist ontological and epistemological positions, have also rose to prominence within the marketing academy (Brown, 1995, 2006; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Scott, 1992). The methodological pluralism in the marketing literature is a healthy development, and has allowed the emergence of alternative perspectives on marketing and consumption phenomena, which is positive for the entire field.

5.3.2 Critical Marketing Research

Critical theory approaches to marketing have gained popularity in recent years, and have emerged as an alternative paradigm for knowledge development in the marketing discipline (Burton, 2000; Saren et al., 2007). Critical theory draws on the works of Marx (1977a), Gramsci (1971), and is particularly associated with Frankfurt School theorists such as Horkheimer and Adorno ([1944] 1972), Marcuse (1964) and Habermas (1984). Murray and Ozanne (1991), in a pioneering contribution to the marketing literature, synthesised these contributions and provided a framework for research which incorporates critical social theory. Ontologically, critical theory is concerned with the "force field" between subjects (meanings) and objects (social structures), and views reality as created through social interaction. Epistemologically, critical theory favours a reflective process for knowledge generation, and an unmasking of social relations between individuals and market institutions. Like the interpretive paradigm, critical theory emphasises an interactive and cooperative relationship between the researcher and

participants, as these cannot be meaningfully separated in the process of knowledge generation. The axiological goal of critical theory research is the emancipation of the human being, in order to create better conditions of existence for those participants of the research.

Critical theory approaches have also influenced organisational research and exploring issues of ideology and power, as Alvesson and Wilmott (1991: 8) have explained:

> In sum, critical management studies have an agenda for research, teaching and (indirectly) organisational practice that understands management as a political, cultural, and ideological phenomenon, and that gives a voice to managers not only as managers but as persons, and also other social groups (subordinates, customers, clients, men and women, citizens in other capacities) whose lives are more or less directly affected by the activities and ideologies of management.

Alvesson and Wilmott (1991: 11) describe critical theory as proceeding from a "non-objectivist" ontology and epistemology, which places it in direct contrast with the critical realism of Hunt (1990). The use of critical theory has been incorporated into a variety of studies in the marketing discipline, in areas such as marketing rhetoric (Hackley, 2003e; Marion, 2006; Morgan, 1992), consumption practices (Crockett and Wallendorf, 2004; Holt, 2002; Kozinets, 2002), advertising texts (Lee and Murray, 1995; Stern, 1993; Thompson, 2004), and advertising and marketing practices within organisations (Alvesson, 1994, 1998; Cronin, 2004a; Hackley, 2000; Svensson, 2007). A recent contribution by Saren et al. (2007) has mapped the diversity of approaches to critical theory research, and the emergent traditions of scholarship within the critical marketing field. This growing body of work leaves much scope for contributions to the marketing and advertising literature inspired by critical theory, and provides alternative theoretical and methodological possibilities for aspiring academic marketing researchers.

5.3.3 Methodological Stance of the Study

As the study addresses issues of ideology in advertising production, it is positioned within the critical interpretive literature on advertising practice (Alvesson, 1994; Cronin, 2004a; Hackley, 2000; Slater, 1989). An interpretive approach was deemed the most appropriate to the research question, as previous studies in the literature adopted an interpretive approach to advertising agencies. Ontologically, the study takes the position that 'reality is socially constructed and that the sociology of knowledge must analyse the process in which this occurs' (Berger and Luckman, 1966:13). Epistemologically, the study seeks ideographic knowledge of the process of advertising development, and recognises that there must be an interactive and cooperative relationship between the researcher and participants in the advertising development process. The axiological goal of the research is to develop understanding of the social process through which advertisements are encoded by an advertising agency.

The business literature indicated that there was a lack of ethnographic studies of advertising agency practices and processes, and it was decided that an ethnographic approach would be most suitable to the research question and objectives of the study. In the advertising practice literature, Hackley (2001: 44-45) had illustrated the potential insights that discourse analysis could provide into the advertising development process:

> Advertising seems especially ripe for discourse analytic exploration since it is constructed through the linguistic negotiation of several parties. These are the client, the account manager, the account planner, and the creative team, circumscribed by, on the one hand, the agency and its priorities and conventions and, on the other, consumers (in the form of planners' research findings). These parties undergo protracted discussion, argument and debate in order to establish the path of advertising development through its various stages...Advertising can therefore be seen to be a social construction in a very telling way. Language and ideas are the primary resource of advertising professionals, especially at the conceptual or developmental stage of brand or campaign planning.

Studies by Hackley (2000) and Alvesson (1994; 1998) of advertising agencies incorporated discourse analytical techniques to develop critical interpretations of advertising practice, and this method offered much potential to explore advertising production. Discourse analytic researchers have argued for the collection of "naturally occurring" data (Wood and Kroger, 2000) (as in, data not provoked by a researcher), and it was felt that a combination of ethnography and discourse analysis would develop insights into the social construction of advertising meaning. Alvesson and Skoldberg's (2000) "reflexive methodology" offered a compelling framework to combine ethnographic and discursive data, and develop critical interpretations of advertising practice. This framework was adopted for the study, as it provides guidelines for researchers to combine multiple sources of data within a critical organisational study.

It may also be helpful to determine exactly what is meant by the term "critical" in the context of this study, as the word connotes different meanings in different academic circles (Scott, 2007). This study incorporates critical theories of advertising, but seeks to explore the Irish advertising development process in way that is informed by the data collected. It considers critical theory in the literature review, but the data collection is not driven by these theories in attempt to test or disprove them (which is more akin to a positivistic approach), rather to evaluate the data which is collected against these critical theories, which is an intrinsic part of the methodological framework offered by Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) in the organisational literature. This means that the research approach cannot be specifically labelled as "Adornoian" or "Foucauldian" per se, and is instead located within the critical marketing studies literature, which has an established tradition in business scholarship (Alvesson, 1994; Brownlie, 1997; Hackley, 2000).

138

5.4 The Ethnographic Study

This section provides an overview of the ethnographic method, and details how research access was negotiated with the advertising agency. It also explains how data was collected in the advertising agency, and provides rationale for the methodological choices made during the inquiry. Finally, it details how data was stored and transcribed for analysis and interpretation. Where appropriate, and in-keeping with the reflexive ethnographic tradition (Bettany, 2007; Malefyt and Moeran, 2003), some accounts of the ethnographic study are written in the first person as this expresses how relationships were formed with the practitioners who participated in the study. All names of the advertising agency and practitioners have been disguised with pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the research participants and advertising agency.

5.4.1 Ethnographies of Work and the Work of Ethnographers

Ethnography is a research method which has gained prominence within the social sciences (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995), and has also been adapted for the study of marketing and consumption phenomena (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994). As a methodology, ethnography was originally developed by anthropologists in their studies of indigenous populations (Hackley, 2003c). The ethnographic method has been adapted for social sciences, and its use was pioneered by the Chicago school of the 1920s and 1930s who encouraged students to put down their textbooks and use their eyes and their ears to study real world phenomenon such as homelessness and deviancy in the city, known as the "sociology of urban life" (Silverman, 2001; Van Maanen, 1988). For the purposes of social scientific research, ethnography has been defined as:

> ...an ongoing attempt to place specific encounters, events and understandings into a fuller, more meaningful context...As a result, it combines research design, fieldwork, and various methods of inquiry to produce historically, politically and

personally situated accounts, descriptions, interpretations and representations of human lives...A key assumption of ethnography is that by entering into close and relatively prolonged interaction with people (one's own or other) in their everyday lives, ethnographers can better understand the beliefs, motivations, and behaviours of their subjects than they can using any other approach (Tedlock, 2000:455-456).

From an ethnographic perspective, spending time and interacting with people in their everyday lives can unlock insights and develop understandings of their behaviour. Arnould and Wallendorf (1994: 485) have identified four distinctive features which guide ethnographic research practice. Firstly, ethnography gives primacy to systematic data collection methods and recording naturally occurring human behaviour; secondly, ethnographic research involves extended participation by a researcher in a specific cultural context; thirdly, ethnography produces interpretations that the intended audience and the participants find credible; and fourthly, ethnography involves incorporating multiple sources of data, such as fieldnotes, interviews and observations which are used in the development of ethnographic interpretations. Although traditionally ethnographies of particular cultures are conducted over periods of months and years, Elliott and Jankel-Elliott (2003) have illustrated the use of "quasi-ethnography" in commercial research, which involves shorter and more intense periods of data gathering with consumers, and other interpretive researchers have emphasised the value of shorter periods of concentrated immersion within the field (Hirschman, 1986).

Ethnography has also been utilised by anthropologists who have an interest in the daily lives of workers in a range of business settings such as factories (Schwartzman, 1993), marketing organisations (Brownlie, 1997; Lien, 1997), and advertising agencies (Alvesson, 1998; Malefyt and Moeran, 2003; Moeran, 1996). Smith (2001: 221) has

emphasised the contribution that ethnographic research has made to the understanding of everyday work practices:

> Researchers have used ethnographic methods to dissect how workers do their jobs...Observing workers and their interactions with co-workers, managers and clients over extended periods of time; talking endlessly with workers about how they make decisions about what they do; and actually working in order to experience the organisational arrangements of and social relations in work that shape lived experience and construct workers' interests, are just some of the ways that ethnographers have advanced social science knowledge about work.

Although ethnography as a methodology has the potential to unlock rich and deep insights into everyday social worlds, the method has generally not been widely embraced by marketing and consumer researchers. Indeed, Brownlie et al. (1994: 9) have suggested that there is a 'need to undertake more in-depth ethnographic studies of what marketers in different contexts actually do'. This study seeks to address this imbalance, and provide interpretive insights into the everyday nature of Irish advertising production.

5.4.2 Social Networks: Making Connections

The importance of relationship networks and connections of people has been emphasised by Moeran (2005a), who illustrated how exploiting networks of individuals can be vital to gaining research access to particular people and organisations. He argues that networks and connections are crucial to providing access to particular kinds of information:

> At the heart of connections is the need to get access to, and the opportunity to pass on, information of one sort or another. Everyone is processing information. Everyone is calculating who might find a particular piece of information useful. And everyone wants to get access to information that he or she hasn't had the time or opportunity to process him or herself. Networking and networks, then, are concerned with access to information, the timing of its dissemination (the early bird catches the worm), and the naming of people therein who might be able to help with another's problem. In this respect, networks are "an important screening device". They filter information about others to you, as well as about you to others (Moeran, 2005a:110-111).

Networks are an important concept to grasp, as culture and society are structured through networks of individuals, and it is through various established personal networks that make gaining research access to organisations possible. The story of how personal networks are utilised is important to set the context for how and under what conditions permission was granted to conduct the research. Following consultation with my supervisor in September 2002, it was decided we should try and narrow down the choice of agency for the study. We consulted the IAPI website (Irish Association of Advertising Practitioners) and my supervisor suggested that we should approach Irish Advertising Limited[11], with a proposal to carry out some ethnographic fieldwork within the agency. My supervisor had recognised one of the contacts given for the agency from a professional academic capacity. My supervisor called the advertising agency on my behalf, and managed to speak to Edward, the group planning director, who said he would be happy to meet me to discuss my proposal. I went to meet with Edward later that week, who told me that he had huge admiration for my supervisor's work on advertising and semiotics, and would be willing to provide some level of research access for the study. This was a good example of how existing personal networks were used to develop an initial contact with an advertising professional, and how this contact became crucial for ultimately negotiating research access within the advertising agency.

5.4.3 Negotiating Access

Schwartzman (1993: 48) has argued that 'access issues (i.e. the process of seeking permission and approval for research) and first encounters provide researchers with a rich source of data'. The process of negotiating research access was a difficult task despite

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[11] This is a pseudonym for the advertising agency that participated in the study.

having gained a fortuitous introduction through the professional network of my supervisor. I had written a brief proposal for the advertising agency, which detailed the main research questions and objectives for the study. In my proposal, I outlined my interest in exploring how advertising ideology was encoded by advertising agencies and practitioners using a combination of ethnography and discourse analysis, and that I was interested in following the campaign development process as a non-participant observer in order to collect "naturally occurring" discursive data. I mentioned that the research would have benefits for the advertising agency, in terms of reflection for the development of future campaigns and the use of research in the advertising process, and I also agreed to be bound by any prior confidentiality agreement.

I met Edward in Irish Advertising Limited. in September 2002 to explain my proposal to him. Edward informed me that he was undertaking an M.A. degree by night from the Open University in Cultural and Media Studies, which touched upon issues of ideology and advertising, and while he thought the project would be extremely difficult to undertake, he thought the idea itself was quite interesting. He understood that I would like to have a "fly on the wall" type access to the campaign development process as a non-participant observer, and as a student of the Open University he was very familiar with discourse analysis, and particularly with the work of Margaret Wetherell. He told me he would read my proposal, and would get in touch with some clients to see if they would be interested in having me sit in on a campaign.

In February 2003 I arranged to meet with Edward again, and this time I wrote a much shorter, one page proposal of the access that I was seeking. The following week he sent an e-mail which I was copied on to the product manager in a client company, stating my

research interest and my agreement to be confidential regarding the data I generated. This access would have led to me being allowed to attend some of the meetings on the client side also. However, the product manager felt that this level of access would be too intrusive, and the information on the campaign would be too commercially sensitive. Edward called me at home to break the news to me, although he assured me that he would ultimately fulfil my request for research access.

I contacted Edward in April 2003, and he asked me how long my fieldwork would take. I told him that ideally I would like to stay for two months to observe the daily life of an advertising agency, and that as a budding ethnographer I was 'willing or even eager to sample the mundane, the routine, or perhaps the boring aspects of everyday life' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:66). Edward told me that two months would be "a little too distracting" to have a researcher just "hanging around", so we compromised and he agreed that I could stay within the agency for a period of six weeks. I was eventually granted research access, after some more negotiations with Edward, on April 30th 2003. I was given a desk in the planning department from which to base myself from, and all the staff in the planning department were instructed to bring me along to any internal meetings that took place while I was in the advertising agency. The negotiations were difficult in parts, but Edward was generally supportive of the project and felt that a study like this was needed particularly as research on cultural production had "gone out of fashion" as he put it.

5.4.4 Gaining Access to Conduct Research: "The Art of the Possible"

According to Buchanan et al. (1988: 53 -55) researchers should adopt an opportunistic in approaching organisations to conduct fieldwork, and they argue that 'the practice of field

research is the art of the possible'. Although it may have been desirable to have been granted a longer period of access to the advertising agency than six weeks, and other ethnographic studies have enjoyed much longer periods of immersion in the field (Lien, 1997; Moeran, 1996), as a researcher I had to work within the boundaries of what was possible and what was granted to me by Edward, the research gatekeeper within the organisation. However, there is also a strong argument against a longer period immersion in the field for this particular study. The study explores the encoding of advertising by practitioners, and focuses upon analysing the discourse used by advertising agency practitioners in meetings, interviews and agency documentation through discourse analysis. As the discursive approach favours the intensive analysis of limited and manageable data sets which allow detailed exploration of research questions through social texts (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Silverman, 2000a; Taylor, 2001), this justifies a shorter period of ethnographic immersion to collect relevant research data for analysis. Also, as the research gatekeeper was sympathetic to my cause in wanting to conduct a discursive study, I was granted permission to fully record meeting interaction and was allowed access to agency documentation and to interview participants involved on various campaigns. The study has quite unique approach within advertising research and I was granted a privileged level of research access, particularly for a discursively-orientated research study (Hackley, 2003f). For these reasons I believe the approach to the study offers theoretically and methodologically rigorous benefits which outweigh the relatively short period of immersion within the field from an ethnographic perspective.

5.4.5 Research Ethics

Although Edward did not insist on me signing any confidentiality agreements or clauses,

I agreed in my research proposal that any commercially sensitive information that I

received during my research in the agency would be treated with confidence. I also

agreed not to mention either the advertising agency or their clients in any publications

that would result from the Ph.D. thesis. This was particularly important, as it created a

bond of trust between Edward and myself at the beginning of the research. It also meant

that when I was introduced at meetings, the practitioners knew I was could be trusted

with commercially sensitive information, as I had made my stance on confidentiality

clear from the outset of the project.

5.4.6 Reflexive Considerations

There are certainly reflexivity issues that have to be considered in gaining access to

conduct research within the advertising agency. Reflexivity implies that 'serious attention

is paid to the way different kinds of linguistic, social, political and theoretical elements

are woven together in the process of knowledge development, during which empirical

material is constructed, interpreted and written' (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: 5). It is

important to acknowledge the crucial role of the gatekeeper and how this can impact

upon what can be known about a phenomenon by the researcher. Brownlie (1997: 270)

provided a particularly vivid example of how a gatekeeper in his research with marketing

managers was misleading him about his everyday practices:

> One Friday night in the pub, after a particularly gruelling ten hours shadowing,
> the marketing director shot off home, the weekly ritual of socializing with his
> troops duly discharged. I was left with his marketing manager, advertising
> manager, market research manager, new products manager, a secretary and a new
> member of the brand management team. After a few drinks they started speaking
> to me and with me. It suddenly dawned on me that they were feeling sorry for me,
> even if they were feigning this to influence me in some way. They told me tales of

the director and how he had carefully orchestrated his diary for my visit. He was doing things while I was there that he never did, except perhaps when the board or his wife were visiting. The mode of operating I was seeing was not, by their accounts, his normal mode. They told me how, before my arrival, he had tried to revisit his 1972 version of Kotler's (1967) *Marketing Management* to get some ideas about what I was expecting to see; for he was worried about what I would eventually say in my report and how I would write it all up – to get the access I required. Was I being seen as a spy? Anyway, the director's antics had inspired much mocking hilarity among his staff. They told me that he was having important meetings with senior staff that he was not telling me about; that my visit was putting him under incredible stress because he was trying to operate in two modes simultaneously – one was apparent and meant for my consumption; the other was covert and more akin to his normal mode of operating and was not meant for my eyes.

The reflexive and epistemological concerns for the project were whether what I would be given access to within the agency was an accurate portrayal of working life, as well as which meetings I would be invited along to, and what employees I would be allowed to interview. Also, as Edward had knowledge of the theoretical framework for the project, this had the potential for him to steer me in certain directions, and to introduce potential biases in the data collection. Edward had given me assurances prior to conducting the research that I would be allowed access to internal meetings and to interview all employees I wished within the agency. I was not invited to all the meetings which took place within the building for logistical as well as confidentiality reasons (particularly concerning the agency's clients), and at times it was difficult for me to know which meetings I may have missed out on, and which ones were more important than others. It was also difficult for me to assess how much impact my presence in the field had upon what took place in particular situations or internal meetings.

There are two important points to be made here. Firstly, in-keeping with the philosophy of interpretive inquiry, I recognised that I could not be meaningfully separated from the phenomenon under study, something which Hirschman (1986) has stressed. So

interpretive researchers cannot study the social world without being a part of it in some way (Tedlock, 2000), even if they are adopting a critical approach, and it is important to acknowledge the role of the researcher in collecting and generating the data. Secondly, as a discourse analytic approach was incorporated into the study, less emphasis was placed upon the "truth" or "falsity" of practitioner descriptions, but rather on the process through which social realities and truths are constructed by informants within discourse in the agency (Wetherell et al., 2001b: 16). The key objective of the fieldwork was to collect "naturally occurring" discursive data for the project, from which critical interpretations of the encoding process within the agency could be formed. Indeed, other studies of advertising practice had also relied upon similar data collection methods within an advertising agency (Alvesson, 1998). Edward had provided research access for this, but it was also important for me as the researcher to use my own reflexivity throughout the research process, as Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) have recommended.

5.4.7 Researcher Position: The Vantage Point of the Non-Participant Observer

Previous ethnographic studies of advertising production have usually involved researchers directly participating in some way within the processes of the advertising agency, using the "participant observation" method (Mazzarella, 2003; Moeran, 1996; Olsen, 2003; Thornton, 1999). Some qualitative researchers argue that participant observation studies are based upon researchers providing accounts of their 'observation of participation' within a particular research context (Angrosino and Mays de Pwewz, 2000; Tedlock, 2000), and 'sitting around, watching and listening to what is going on around them' (Malefyt and Moeran, 2003: 10). Indeed, in advocating observation as an appropriate methodological tactic for research practice, Hackley (2003c: 85) has noted

how 'observation is something that we cannot fail to do as people: we are all expert observers. It makes perfect sense to utilise this social skill as researchers'.

This study utilised the non-participant observation method, whereby 'the researcher observes and records naturalistic behaviour but does not become a part of unfolding events' (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994: 487). This non-participant observation role was adopted for three main reasons. Firstly, as a researcher who had no previous experience of working in the advertising industry, I did not feel I had the requisite skills, experience or qualifications to work as a participant on a campaign. Secondly, I was interested in critical issues of ideology in advertising production, and while I recognised that I could not be meaningfully separated from the research process, I also did not want to have too much direct involvement with the advertising development processes which I was observing. Thirdly, as the study incorporated a discourse analysis approach, it was important to obtain "naturally occurring" interaction between participants within the advertising development process. As a non-participant in the advertising agency, I felt that it was more appropriate to record interaction as an outsider who was not involved in a work-related role rather than to be working on a campaign as a participant, where such recording may have been disruptive or distracting to the specific work task. While I recognise that my presence at particular meetings as a non-participant may have potentially impacted upon the content of what was discussed, I had obtained rare discursive interaction between advertising practitioners working on live campaigns, which was particularly appropriate for discourse analytic research.

Edward agreed to provide me with a desk within the planning department, and instructed his colleagues to invite me along to internal meetings within the agency, whenever and

wherever it was deemed appropriate. As a non-participant within the planning department, I was able to listen to account planners interact with other practitioners within the advertising agency, and observe the ways in which advertising planners within the advertising agency actually conducted their everyday work. I was also free to explore other departments of the advertising agency, and to talk to other practitioners in the agency in an informal or interview capacity. Non-participant observation studies are certainly rare in the organisational and marketing literature, but this approach provided an opportunity to contribute an alternative perspective to current advertising research.

While I was officially a "non-participant in the agency, I was inevitably brought into some campaign preparations. For instance, I was asked to collect case studies by one account planner, and to conduct research on the Irish tourist market by another. These interactions were indicative of how difficult it was to remain a "non-participant" within an organisational context, as the researcher is inevitably asked to make some sort of a contribution to everyday working life. For the most part though, I was left to my own devices and allowed to conduct my research in any way I saw fit.

5.4.8 Generating the Data

Four primary sources of data were generated through the inquiry; from informal observations, internal meetings, agency documents and personal interviews with advertising practitioners. In this section a brief description is provided of how these data sources were collected and some issues involved in recording and gaining access to them.

5.4.8.1 Informal Observations

As I was located within the planning department for the duration of the ethnography, I spent much of my time at my desk within the department, watching and listening to the

ways in which the advertising practitioners conducted their work. Listening to the discourse that the practitioners used to describe work on certain campaigns was interesting as it gave me an understanding of how particular types of language were used to discuss advertising strategy development. It did feel awkward at times, which Mason (2002) had warned about some ethnographic research, but sometimes it was necessary to literally "hang around" and wait to be invited to an interesting meeting or interaction in the agency.

5.4.8.2 Internal meetings

Moeran (1996: 92) has drawn an anthropological insight to describe presentations which advertising agencies do for clients as "tournaments of value" in which advertising agencies demonstrate their power and potential value to prospective clients. As a non-participant observer, I attended internal meetings as a spectator. I was invited along to client briefings, creative briefings, agency pitches, brainstorming sessions, promotional strategy meetings, and advertising evaluation sessions. I was generally welcomed along as one of the team, and on only one occasion did an agency employee question the appropriateness of me being present and recording a particular meeting. As a non-participant at this type of meeting, it allowed me to audio record the proceedings and provided a source of data for the analysis and interpretation process.

5.4.8.3 Agency Documents

Documents were also collected as part of the ethnographic data. These documents were internal to the advertising agency, and included client activity briefs, creative briefs and target market and demographic information on particular market segments. These documents were also analysed discursively, and included as part of the interpretation of

151

the ethnographic data. Internal documents provide a rich source of intra agency practice

and for this reason they are a particularly relevant source of data for the analysis of the

encoding of ideology within the advertising development process.

5.4.8.4 Practitioner Interviews

The process of conducting interviews with respondents for research projects has been

characterised as one of "asking, listening and interpreting" in which qualitative

researchers engage (Mason, 2004). The interviews were conducted for the study using

McCracken's (1988) research framework. The process of conducting long interviews has

four stages. In stage one the literature review is conducted to establish the domain which

the interview will explore. McCracken (1988: 31) notes how 'the good literature review

is a critical process that makes the investigator the master, not the captive, or previous

scholarship'. Interview questions were developed in consultation with the advertising

literature on account planning and creativity (Hackley, 2003a; Kover, 1995; Soar, 2000;

Taylor et al., 1996), and the interview guides are provided in appendix 7 and 8. Creative

practitioners were asked how they went about developing advertisements, how they

related to their audiences, how much freedom they had to create advertisements, their

relationships with other practitioners and clients and the process through which

advertising was evaluated by the client. Account planners were asked how they went

about creating advertising strategies, how they used research insights in the development

of advertising, their relationship with other practitioners and clients and how

advertisements were evaluated by the agency. These interview guides were modified

during the course of the research process as different issues started to emerge as more

important, and the same structure was not followed slavishly for each interview. In stage

two, the researcher uses his/her cultural knowledge to formulate questions and asks what

he/she should be looking for in the responses of the participants. Such knowledge was

added to the interview guides in the form of "floating prompts" under each theme which

McCracken (1988) recommends. In stage three, respondents are asked a number of

"grand tour" questions are asked to give them room to tell their stories in their own terms

(Spradley, 1979). The interviewees were asked broad questions about the advertising

development process, and allowed to answer them with little intervention from me as the

researcher. In stage four, interviews are transcribed verbatim and categories, relationships

and assumptions are developed from the interview transcripts which form the basis of the

data interpretation. The analysis and interpretation aspects were guided by a discourse

analysis framework, with the "interpretative repertoire" as a central analytical unit for the

data (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). These four stages were followed in conducting the

interviews with account planners, copywriters and art directors in the agency, which were

broadly in-keeping with the discourse analytical tradition.

5.4.8.5 Sampling and Selection

The study focuses specifically upon the work of advertising planners and creatives, and

these groups were chosen as informants for the interview stage of the ethnography. The

interviews were conducted after four weeks in the field, during which time I began to get

acquainted with everyday working life within the advertising agency and developed some

additional framing for the interview questions. The study adopted a purposive sampling

procedure which manipulates data generation, analysis, theory and sampling activities

interactively during the research process (Mason, 2002: 137). Informants for the study

were recruited with the help of some of the practitioners within the advertising agency.

153

While this sampling approach could raise some epistemological problems in terms of who was sampled for the study, it helped me to identify some potential informants who had a lot of experience within the advertising field.

As I was located within the planning department for the majority of the ethnographic fieldwork, I interviewed all five members of the planning team to get their perspectives on the practices and processes in which they engaged. These five interviews consisted of individual, one-on-one interviews which were conducted in offices and meeting rooms within the advertising agency. Edward was particularly helpful in identifying members of the creative teams to interview. He suggested as a "methodological twist" I should try to interview the creative teams in pairs, as they worked together in pairs developing concepts for advertising campaigns. He gave me the names of three teams, whom he suggested were the best working teams within the advertising agency, and he also offered some other names of people that I may consider approaching to interview. I sampled three creative teams, who worked together on the campaign development process, and I interviewed one copywriter and one art director separately. A total of five interviews were conducted overall with creative team members. These interviews were conducted in meeting rooms and at the desks of the creative teams. Of the planner interviews, I interviewed three females and two males who comprised the full staff of the planning department, and of the creative interviews, I interviewed seven males and one female. The three creative teams I interviewed were of males-only composition.

The key issue in terms of sampling informants for interviews is how many should be sampled, although the answer seems to always depend on the nature of the subject matter and the research questions of the study (Hackley, 2003c; Mason, 2002). Discourse

analytic studies tend to rely on small samples for data analysis (Hackley, 1999b; Potter and Wetherell, 1987), and the interviews were used in addition to observational, meeting data and agency documentation. While ten interviews may seem like quite an arbitrary and conveniently round number of interviews to conduct, these interviews yielded sufficient data on the production of advertising to develop empirical answers to the "intellectual puzzle" of the research question (Mason, 2002: 18).

5.4.9 Taking Fieldnotes

Taking fieldnotes is an intrinsic part of ethnographic inquiry (Emerson et al., 1995; Moeran, 2005a), and is 'the traditional means in ethnography for recording observational data' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 176). During my time in the field, I kept two sets of fieldnotes. I kept small diaries with me, and took quick notes of either specific features of meetings or informal observations from the field. In the evenings I would then write these fieldnotes into a more detailed set of written notes. I developed this diary into a "methodological log" which 'kept detailed and time sequenced notes on the investigative techniques used during the inquiry with special attention to biases or distortions a given technique may have introduced' (Hirschman, 1986: 242). Keeping detailed written fieldnotes was particularly important for recording informal conversations, which either I had with other informants or which informants may have had between themselves, and became an important way of keeping some notational structure during the course of the ethnography.

5.4.10   Transcription Issues

Transcribing the data from meetings and interviews conducted within the advertising agency was a long and difficult process, and it took ten months to complete. However, as

transcription is an important part of the process of data analysis (Hackley, 1999b; McCracken, 1988; Silverman, 2001), this enabled me to listen to the data numerous times and get very familiar with the meeting and interview texts. I attended a total of nine internal meetings within the advertising agency, which amounted to just under 70,000 words of text. While in the meetings, I would take note of how many people were present, and try as much as possible to get peoples name's so I could differentiate them from each other when listening to the tapes. I would also re-listen to the tapes a couple of times and ascribe a letter to a particular speaker, in order to figure out which speaker was speaking at each time and transcribe the data as accurately as possible. The practitioner interviews were of between 35 and 75 minutes duration, which were also fully transcribed into 83,000 words of text for analysis.

Discourse analysts tend to favour the phonetic transcription of data, where analysts transcribe interactions in a systematised format, such as the method developed by Gail Jefferson (Wood and Kroger, 2000: 84), in which pauses and intonations within the text are all recorded and timed, and words are spelled out as they are used phonetically by participants. Orthographic transcriptions are transcribed in a more conventional way. The orthographic approach to data transcription was chosen for this study for three main reasons. Firstly, phonetic data transcription is incredibly time consuming, and is generally applied when projects have very small amounts of data which are analysed for specific interactive features, such as in conversation analysis (Wetherell et al., 2001a), or critical discourse analysis (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). Secondly, as the research is being conducted within the marketing discipline, it was decided that phonetic transcription could alienate much of the audience for the research within the advertising and marketing

communities, and would potentially limit the publication scope for the study. Finally, there have been several successful discourse analytical studies which used traditional orthographic transcriptions (Alvesson, 1994; Elliott et al., 1995; Hackley, 2000), and it was decided that this approach would be sufficient for the Ph.D. study.

5.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

This section provides an overview of the discourse analytic method, and explains how it was incorporated into the ethnographic fieldwork in the agency. It also details how the critical concept of ideology is explored through the data analysis. Finally, it explains how the findings of the thesis are organised and presented.

5.5.1 Discourse Analysis: The Close Study of Language

The interest in exploring language and talk as a central feature of research projects has been marked by the rise of the "linguistic turn" within marketing and consumer research studies (Brownlie, 1997; Elliott et al., 1995; Hackley, 2000). Discourse analysis is a multi-disciplinary theoretical development within social psychology which draws from semiotics, post-structuralism and ethnomethodology to explore how people use language to make sense of their social world (Elliott, 1996). Discourse in this sense is defined as all spoken and written forms of talk and text, which are viewed as social practice (Fairclough, 1992; Wood and Kroger, 2000). Discourse analysts see social worlds as largely constructed through discourse.

The discourse analysis perspective is particularly interested in exploring patterns in language use (Taylor, 2001). Discourse analysts are interested in what talk and language is doing and achieving, and language is seen as an action-orientated medium which people use to construct accounts and versions of the social world (Elliott et al., 1995;

Wood and Kroger, 2000). The relationship between language and meaning in discourse analysis is not unitary or fixed, and the emphasis is on the construction of the account within the discourse itself (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000). For instance, Potter and Wetherell (1987) have questioned traditional attitude research which conceptualises people's attitudes as static entities, and have argued that attitudes are conveyed and constructed through discourse and language which is context specific and cannot be regarded as stable. As the development of advertising is socially constructed through discourse (Hackley, 1999b), exploring this process through discourse analysis offers rich analytical potential.

5.5.1.1 The DASP Tradition

The discourse analysis in social psychology (DASP) approach to talk and text is micro in focus and draws from conversation analysis, ethnomethodology and post-structuralism (Wood and Kroger, 2000). This form of discourse analysis explores the ways in which people construct reality through language in interaction (Hackley, 2003c). It is particularly concerned with analysing social texts for their construction (how they are built and the building blocks used for the construction of social texts), their function (the rhetorical function that particular accounts serve) and their variation (the different ways in which people talk about the topic) (Hackley, 2003c; Maclaren, 2002). This approach was pioneered by Potter and Wetherell (1987), particularly in their study of how racism was discursively constructed by New Zealand nationals.

This analytical approach is particularly useful when applied to advertising agency practice for two reasons. Firstly, it provides a methodology to analyse naturally occurring discourse in internal meetings and agency documentation and explore the ways in which

158

advertising is socially constructed by advertising practitioners within discourse. Secondly, it allows the analyst to examine the different ways in which advertising practitioners talk in interviews about the practices in which they engage and identify recurring patterns within the discourse, which is helpful in drawing some comparisons with previous discursive studies of the advertising profession (Alvesson, 1994; Dewaal Malefyt and Moeran, 2003; Hackley, 2000). It also accounts for variation in and across practitioner discourse, something which other qualitative methods tend not to acknowledge or attribute to deviant cases within the data (Wood and Kroger, 2000).

5.5.1.2 The "Interpretative Repertoire": Metaphors in Speech Acts

Interpretative repertoires are the ways in which people construct and talk about particular topics within discourse. Potter and Wetherell (1987: 138) define an interpretative repertoire as follows:

> The interpretative repertoire is basically a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterise and evaluate actions or events.

In seeking interpretative repertoires in the language use of participants, discourse researchers are looking for the structured systems of terms, figures of speech and metaphors that people use to describe and account for actions, events and ideas (Wood and Kroger, 2000). Interpretative repertoires are powerful rhetorical devices, and metaphors used in speech acts provide rich resources for analysts to make meaningful interpretations of participant's descriptions and accounts of concepts within discourse. While seeking interpretative repertoires, metaphors and patterns in language are most closely associated with discourse analysis (Wetherell et al., 2001a), marketing and consumer researchers similarly explore consumption narratives for symbolic metaphors and recurring patterns in language use (Ritson and Elliott, 1999; Spiggle, 1994;

159

Thompson, 1997; Thompson et al., 1989; Thompson et al., 1994), and there is much overlap and similarity between linguistic methodologies in discourse analysis and marketing and consumer research (Hackley, 2003c).

Interpretative repertoires are particularly helpful in analysing how advertising professionals metaphorically describe and talk about their work (Hackley, 1999b), and also for interpreting how certain discourses are drawn upon in meetings and agency documentation to construct advertisements. Wetherell (1986: 93) has offered some helpful strategies for identifying interpretative repertoires in the analysis of discourse:

> Finally, we should note that many of the repertoires identified through this kind of process will appear mundane and obvious. This is not surprising given that the aim is to examine the structure of everyday thought. But it is precisely at these points that society is reproduced and justified as people rationalise and make sense of their apparent place within it. By making the banal and commonsensical strange through analysis, it is possible to see in a new way something of how ideologies operate. This takes place at the level of individual understanding and explanation that social psychologists must consider their prime domain.

Interpretative repertoires therefore offer a useful analytic framework for exploring how advertising practitioners describe their work and the processes through which advertising ideologies are socially constructed by practitioners within advertising agencies. The analysis considered metaphors and terms used in meetings, documents and interviews, which helped to form interpretations of advertising practice.

5.5.1.3 Seeking Participants Categories

An important aspect of the discourse analytical approach is to explore and analyse the categories of participants as they orient to them within the text rather than applying the pre-conceived categories of the analyst onto the text (Wood and Kroger, 2000). In the interviews conducted within this study, while I did construct the interview guides based upon my reading of the advertising literature, I followed guidelines within consumer

research (McCracken, 1988; Spiggle, 1994; Thompson, 1997), and bracketed my knowledge of these practices as best I could in conducting the interviews to increase my understanding of what the participants described. I also conducted the interviews in a conversational style so as to allow the categories to emerge naturally from the participants perspective during the course of the interview (Thompson et al., 1989). In analysing and interpreting the interview texts, I was also extremely conscious of uncovering the "emic" categories of the participants as they oriented to them within the interview, rather than interpreting the interview from my own perspective as the analyst (Belk et al., 1988). While as a reflexive interview researcher I recognise that I have an integral role to play in generating the interview data, I was specifically interested in how the participants account for and describe their work practices within advertising, and how they construct particular categories within their own discourse (Mason, 2002). Exploring, analysing and interpreting the categories of participants is extremely important as it helps the analyst to build interpretations from the bottom up.

5.5.2 Reflexive Interpretation

The research approach faced two challenges in terms of data analysis. Firstly, as the data collection for the study incorporated elements of discursive data and contextual ethnographic observations, the key question was how both of these various sources could be successfully merged into the analysis to construct empirically grounded interpretations. Secondly, as the research approach is located within a critical marketing studies literature, the key question was how critical theories of advertising as ideology could be incorporated within the analytical framework. Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) have developed a research approach which they call "reflexive methodology" which

guides critical researchers as they move from collecting micro empirical material to

developing more macro critical analysis of organisational phenomenon through four

levels of interpretive data analysis:

Table 1: Levels of Interpretation in Reflexive Methodology

Aspect / Level	Focus
Interaction with empirical material	Accounts in interviews, observations of situations and other empirical materials
Interpretation	Underlying meanings.
Critical Interpretation	Ideology, power, social reproduction
Reflection on text production and language use.	Own text, claims to authority, selectivity of voices represented in the text

Source: Alvesson, M. and Skoldberg, K. (2000). *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications: 250

This reflexive approach was particularly helpful in the context of the current study. As a

framework it provides researchers working with empirical data a discursive ladder for

developing analysis and interpretations of micro discursive data. The approach of Potter

and Wetherell (1987) is used to develop analysis and interpretations of discursive data

collected during the ethnography for levels one and two, and in level three these

interpretations are then critiqued and evaluated in terms of more critical theories of

advertising. The fourth level of interpretation involves the researcher being self-critical

about claims to authority and how particular voices come to be represented within the

analytical text. This approach involves interaction between these four levels of

interpretation for the development of data analysis, and figure 11 has been adapted from

Alvesson and Skoldberg's (2000) framework to show how these four levels are applied

and developed within the analytical framework for this study:

Figure 11: Interaction between Levels of Interpretation for the Analytical Framework

Empirical material / Construction of data	⟶	Data collection stage. Multiple interpretations of data are possible. Interpretive and reflective themes within the data. Common patterns emerge.
↕		
Interpretation	⟶	Social texts explored through **DASP** for construction, function and variation. Interpretative repertoires identified from the texts. Certain interpretations dominate.
↕		
Critical Interpretation	⟶	Interpretations of data explored in light of critical theories of mass consumer culture and advertising as ideology and power. New theories emerge of how the work of advertising agencies and practitioners can be conceived.
↕		
Self-critical and linguistic reflection.	⟶	Self critical reflection on dominant interpretations and the representation of various voices within the text.

Adapted Source: Alvesson, M. and Skoldberg, K. (2000). *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research.* London: Sage Publications: 255

This framework illustrates how empirical data moves through construction, interpretation, critical interpretation and linguistic reflection, although these stages are not always mutually exclusive, and Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) note how qualitative researchers can incorporate more than one level in conducting stages of analysis and interpretation of empirical data. The framework encourages qualitative researchers to be

creative in their interpretations, and to be reflective in moving through and between various levels and layers of data interpretation. The research methodology for this study incorporates this approach in design, and provides a platform from which critical theories of advertising as ideology can be considered within the analytical approach.

5.5.3 Trustworthiness and Reliability

Marketing scholars such as Hunt (1991) have called upon interpretive researchers to build trustworthiness into their inquiries so that future researchers can rely upon their findings. Others, such as Spiggle (1994), have offered guidelines for those conducting qualitative research to proceed systematically through interpretive inquiry. This study generated data through a variety of sources, including fieldnotes, diaries, agency documentation, internal meetings and interviews. The data was categorised and sorted, and texts were interpreted against the background of a discourse analytic perspective (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). While there are no specific "rules" for generating data analysis (Wood and Kroger, 2000), the texts and diaries were read through numerous times, and the interpretations were grounded within the discourse that was collected. The data analysis also seeks to show how particular interpretations were arrived at, by providing extracts that exemplify certain repertoires or themes in the analysis. As the research and data analysis was conducted in a systematic fashion recommended by Spiggle (1994), it should be considered trustworthy and rigorous in its claims. This does not exclude the possibility that the analysis could be challenged or refuted by future academic studies, but it does demonstrate that the research has been produced with standards for qualitative trustworthiness and reliability firmly in mind.

5.5.4 Organisation of Findings

The findings of the study are organised in two separate chapters. The first chapter presents an analysis of the "ethnographic" story, which details my time in the agency and integrates a discourse analysis of the meetings and documents collected during the study. This chapter is represented using a "confessional" ethnographic style, which Van Maanen fieldwork (1988: 91) describes:

> The confessional [tale] attempts to represent the fieldworker's participative presence in the studied scene, the fieldworker's rapport and sensitive contact with others in the world described, and something of the concrete cultural particulars that baffle the fieldworker while he learns to live in the setting. It is a necessarily blurred account, combining a partial description of the culture alongside an equally partial description of the fieldwork experience itself. Since the authors are writing of their own sightings, hearings, and interpretations, the soft subjectivity of the fieldwork experience begins to slip into the fieldwork confessions in a way it does not in realist versions of a culture. Missing data, incompleteness, blind spots, and various other obscurities are admitted into the account. The avowed purpose, of course, is to lift the veil of public secrecy surrounding.

This confessional style was chosen as it seemed to offer much analytical potential in telling the story of the fieldwork from the reflexive perspective of the researcher(Bettany, 2007). In the chapter, details are provided of campaign preparations for some of the agency's major clients, as well as informal observations made in the field. The meeting data and agency documents are explored for specific features of the discourse such as terms and metaphors that were used, and discursive interpretations are offered as to how advertising is socially constructed within the agency.

The interviews with creative teams and account planners are then presented as an integrated chapter. This chapter explores the central "interpretative repertoires" that these practitioners use to describe their work, and theorises how these descriptions enhance our understanding of the role of advertising practitioners as cultural intermediaries. Detailed extracts from practitioner interviews are also provided within this chapter.

The thesis then draws to a close with the conclusions chapter, which following Alvesson and Skoldberg's (2003) framework examines the findings of the study in terms of critical theories of advertising as ideology. This chapter examines how our understanding of advertising production is enhanced by the fieldwork, and what the findings contribute to advertising theory.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the research questions and objectives for the study, and has theoretically positioned the thesis within the critical marketing studies literature. It has detailed the ethnographic data collection methods used for the study, and explained the data analysis and interpretative traditions incorporated into the research approach. Finally, it has explained how the findings of the thesis are organised and presented. The thesis now presents the first chapter of the data analysis, which is a confessional account of the ethnographic research conducted within the Irish agency.

6 Chapter 6: The Ethnographic Story

6.1 Introduction

This chapter develops an analysis of the ethnographic data collected within Irish Advertising Limited. In the chapter, I reflexively tell the research story of my fieldwork experience within the agency (Moeran, 2005a), and develop an analysis of my informal interactions, formal non-participant observation of internal agency meetings and accompanying documentation using a discursively inspired approach by exploring talk and text in interaction (Hackley, 2000; Potter, 1997; Potter and Wetherell, 1987). The ethnographic and discursive approaches are combined within the chapter using reflexive methodology (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000). The meetings provide insights into the language used in an advertising agency, and these interactions are theorised with observations from the advertising literature. Finally, some conclusions and implications from the data analysis in terms of current theories of advertising development and production are offered. All names of the clients and practitioners in the chapter are disguised for the purposes of anonymity.

6.2 An Academic in Adland

I began my academic fieldwork in Irish Advertising Limited in Dublin on Wednesday April 30th 2003. I had finalised this access with Edward the previous day, and although he had informed me that he would be away on business until Monday of the following week, he told his colleagues to expect me on the Wednesday morning. I was interested in being immersed within the field and in watching and recording advertising agency processes as they unfolded naturally through the meetings and practices I would hopefully be privy to as a non-participant observer.

I was very curious to discover how my actual experience of conducting fieldwork within an advertising agency would relate to the literature on ethnographic inquiry, and how much disparity I would find between the theory and the practice of "doing" an ethnography (Silverman, 2000b). While I had consulted the academic literature on advertising production prior to my excursions in the field (Alvesson, 1994; Hackley, 2000; Kover, 1995), the world of advertising would be completely new to me, and although I had visited Edward on two previous occasions in the agency to negotiate research access for the project, I had very little previous experience of an advertising agency environment or with people who worked in the advertising business. I was quite nervous, as I had no frame of reference or previous personal experience to draw from in this situation, and in many ways I was entering the unknown, which from an ethnographic perspective offered an exciting opportunity to explore advertising agency processes and practices.

I arrived at 10am to the advertising agency, and I was greeted in the lobby of the agency by Rose, a senior account planner in the agency, who showed me to my desk in the planning department and introduced me to two other account planners in the agency, Michael and Carol. Rose told me that she had been informed by Edward that I was interested in studying the "semantics and language of advertising", and while there were no agency meetings scheduled for that day, I was welcome to make myself comfortable at my desk and listen to any phone calls or other informal interactions that took place within the agency that day.

I got myself organised in the planning department with a desk and some space for my computer to prepare for my ethnographic journey. As I was a non-participant observer, I

decided to sit at my desk and adjust to the new surroundings I found myself immersed within, and hope that I would be treated as a friend and a confident by my newfound colleagues, as opposed to some investigative reporter or untrustworthy researcher (Moeran, 2005a).[12] My initial meeting with the account planners was extremely cordial and friendly, and they seemed to appreciate that I was a bone fide researcher (most likely because Edward had briefed them prior to my arrival) who had a genuine interest in advertising and what happened within advertising agencies from an academic perspective. At times later in the ethnography, I was even treated by some of the other agency personnel and some of the planners as an expert in language and was regarded as a linguist of sorts (which clearly, I wasn't!), and would sometimes be consulted for my view on alternative phrasing suggestions for words and sentences in the creative briefs that people were writing at the time. I always pitched in my comments or thoughts whenever I could, and although being regarded as a linguist or expert on language use may not have been an absolutely accurate reflection of my own personal abilities and expertise (I am interested in discourse analysis, but I'm not a linguist in the purist sense of the word), it did allow me to build credibility into my reputation and also to gain a good rapport with my informants. This helped me to achieve some level of acceptance within the agency with the practitioners, which from my own point of view was an extremely helpful introduction into a previously uncharted environment.

6.3 Military and Spiritual Metaphors

I noticed Rose later on in the day having a telephone conversation regarding Beer X advertising, and she discussed the "cultural" nature of the campaign. She uses language

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[12] See Moeran (2005) for a detailed analysis of how distrust felt amongst the native community studied can potentially alienate an ethnographer from his/her informants and lead to him/her being alienated from the group during the conducting of fieldwork.

in her conversation which describes the "mantra" of the campaign idea, and how it was important to "galvanise the troops" around this idea, which illustrated to me how spiritual and military rhetoric is appropriated by advertising practitioners in describing the development of advertising strategies and in articulating advertising practices (Lien, 1997; Malefyt, 2003). She uses terms to describe Beer X advertising, such as how it expresses "individuality", and she comments upon how consumers are much less interested in Beer X advertising than the internal people to the campaign are. Steel (1998) has noted how advertising clients are often so enthused and passionate about their company's products and the advertising associated with them that they often do not understand that their consumers do not necessarily feel the same way they do, and in this situation it seemed that the internal practitioners of Beer X were considering their advertising to be much more important to the consumer than Rose considered it to be.

6.4 Clients get what Clients Want

As the planners worked in an Irish context, I was very interested in exploring how they did their work, and how they developed advertising strategies for clients, particularly as a previous study of planning had indicated that American planners were more research focussed and client driven in developing creative advertising strategies, while French planners took a more intuitive approach which relied much more upon their creative instincts and intimate knowledge of culture in the development of creative strategies for clients (Taylor et al., 1996). I got to talk to Michael informally when the first working day of my ethnography was nearly finished about how the advertising process worked in the agency and how ideas and concepts eventually became advertising commercials. Michael mentioned that the advertising process in general was very much driven by what

the client wanted, but at the level of planning the key issue for the planners was to obtain insights into consumers, which came mostly from quantitative research, but also from qualitative research. He told me that as a planner he had to do a lot of "running around" between the planning department and creative department to make sure the ideas were on track and on brief, and in his view the target audience was the most important thing in developing advertising campaigns. This informal interaction was particularly interesting in providing insights of how the advertising process worked in general and the role of advertising planning within this process. His account seemed to indicate that clients were in control of the process. His description of how the target audience was the "most important thing" in developing advertising campaigns implied that the planning department sought to represent the consumer, something which previous studies of advertising planning have argued to be the pivotal function of the planning department in advertising agencies (Hackley, 2003a; Steel, 1998).

6.5 Lack of Formality

At the end of the first day of the ethnography, my initial impressions of the agency environment were of a hard working atmosphere, where people worked diligently at their desks but for the most part were left to their own devices. One of the things I noticed at my desk was a phone listing where everybody's name was printed alphabetically by their Christian name with no mention of their surname, which indicated to me that there was a lack of formality in the structure of the agency, and the fact that the majority of the agency staff I encountered on my first day were by and large dressed quite casually seemed to confirm this. While I had been aware that advertising agencies were generally found by academics to be places which were anti-bureaucratic and unbounded by formal

structures or normative organisational rules (Alvesson, 1994; Hackley, 2000), it was interesting to witness this lack of formality for myself within the agency as it helped me to draw some comparisons with previous studies of advertising agencies.

6.6 Bank Y Business Banking: The Creative Brief

The first internal meeting I attended within the agency was a creative briefing for Bank Y Business Banking. This meeting was attended by Rose (account planner), James (account director), and a creative team Ken (copywriter) and Alan (art director) who were briefed on the proposed advertising campaign for the client. During this session, Rose presented the brief to the creative team, and the other participants in the meeting interjected to add comments related to the development of a campaign concept and to clarify issues that emerged from the creative brief (see appendix 1).

The brief begins with a statement of the purpose of the advertising campaign, and the reason new advertising is required by the client. The brief describes how Bank Y's customers regard the bank as a great clearing system, but look elsewhere for "big deals" or "big loans". Bank Y has the intention of becoming the number one business bank by 2004/2005. To achieve this, the bank has "transformed" the role of relationship managers, who are the key point of contact for business customers, to make them more "accessible", more "constant" and more "empowered" in their dealings. The opening paragraph of the brief explicitly states the purpose of the advertising campaign, the problems faced by the bank in relation to its corporate customers and how the bank can achieve its goal of being the number one business bank through the empowerment of relationship managers.

The second paragraph of the creative brief asks "Which media do we need executions for?", and the use of the word "executions" in the brief underlines the military and strategic nature of the advertising campaign development process (Malefyt, 2003). The campaign will be executed through outdoor, press and radio channels. The brief states that the campaign needs to incorporate "announcement advertising" for the appointment of relationship managers within particular regions of the country, and advertising is regarded by the client as the primary vehicle to make this announcement to the community of business banking consumers.

The heading in paragraph three begins by asking "Who are we after?", "What are they like?" and "What does it feel like to be them". The language of the first line of this heading has connotations of the advertising agency as a kind of hunter, seeking a description of their consumers for the production of the campaign idea. The second and third line of the heading illustrate how the advertising agency seek to understand the target audience for the campaign from an ideographic/ethnographic perspective (Burrell and Morgan, 1978). In this brief, the consumption community are described as owner managers of medium sized companies with lending requirements above €65,000.

The description of the target consumer draws examples from recognised personalities of the world of Irish business, describing these managers as allying themselves more closely to "Michael O'Leary" than "Michael Smurfit", and then utilises metaphors of religiosity by describing the target consumers as "entrepreneurial spirits". Paragraph five of the brief explores how these consumers currently relate to the Bank Y brand. The brief states that there is currently a "big gap" between the world of business and the world of banking. Business consumers seem to regard the bank as "bureaucratic" and "inflexible", and do

not seem to believe that the bank employees are "open-minded risk takers" like them. The sixth paragraph of the creative brief introduces a new feature into the discourse of the creative brief which is one of control. The paragraph begins with the heading "How do we want them to see this brand?" The brief describes how the advertising should personify the bank, in that consumers should see Bank Y as "one of them", "human", "hungry for business" and "capable of delivering on their objectives". The literature on branding has emphasised how brands can imbue the features of human personalities (Aaker, 1991; Fournier, 1998; Kapferer, 2001), and in this case the brief seeks to construct some human qualities for the image of the bank through the advertising campaign. The brief also states that the advertising needs to "dramatise" the role of the relationship manager in the bank and what these people do for the consumer. Drama is a contingent feature of contemporary advertising (Escalas and Stern, 2003), and in this brief the team are asked to dramatise the role and purpose of the relationship managers for business banking consumers.

The language of control is employed again in paragraph seven of the brief, where the headline asks "What's the one thing we want them to remember?" This line of the brief emphasises how the advertising seeks to channel consumer's interpretation of the advertising and what they remember from the message through a 'dominant-hegemonic' encoding strategy (Hall, 1980: 136). The brief suggests that the one piece of information which the consumer should remember from the advertising is that "Bank Y treats each business individually". The notion of individuality seems to be a key feature of the discourse of the creative brief and of the primary message which the advertising should communicate to the consumer community. The eighth paragraph of the creative brief is

about building credibility for the message, and begins with the headline "Why should they believe us?" The brief then explains the role of the relationship managers who manage "people rather than paperwork", and the description of this role emphasises phrases such as "individual customer", "approach every problem with an open mind", "pick the right product for your particular needs" and that they "make the most relevant and effective recommendations". These sentences and paragraphs ground the claims for truth of the advertising agency about the product within the current banking practices of relationship managers within Bank Y (Foucault, 1980), and build credibility for any of the claims that the agency may make about the role of the relationship managers through its advertising. The ninth paragraph of the brief personifies the advertising itself, and asks "How should the advertising speak or behave?" This question is answered within the brief by stating that the advertising should speak in terms of "Why settle for less?" and should be "straight-talking, provocative, confident but with a sense of humour". In this paragraph, the discourse of the brief constructs human characteristics for the proposed message, and provides some everyday personality reference points for the creative team to construct the advertising. The brief states that consumers should "connect" and "empathise" with the advertising who should take a "fresh" look at Bank Y to consider them when they are looking for a business loan. This statement underlies the purpose of developing the advertising campaign, and the action which the agency and the client hope the consumer will take as a result of engaging with the advertisement.

6.6.1 Bank Y: The Creative Briefing

The briefing session, during which the creative brief is presented by the account director and account planner to the creative teams, provides insights into how the brief was

constructed by the planning team, and also of what is expected of the creative team in developing an ideational concept for the campaign. At the beginning of the meeting, James (the account director) discusses with the creative team some ideas that they had previously developed for the client, and some of the propositions that had been researched with business people by a Dublin market research agency on behalf of Bank Y.

6.6.2 Reeling in the Customer and Making a Statement

The focus for the bank in this transformation was on "being there for the customer" and empowering the relationship managers to deal with customer's loan applications, and this is a new venture which was being heavily supported internally by the bank. Rose then describes some of the main objectives of the bank in developing the advertising campaign for the creative team, and the purpose which the advertising will serve:

> *Rose: So they are quite ambitious, they want to be the number one business bank and they feel that they can if they can solve the two problems. One is the speed of processing and this is something that has happened later down the line, but this thing about relationship managers is really exciting to them because nobody else came up with this, because they had recruited so many new relationship managers and because they had changed the roles so drastically even though it is such a big organisation it can actually offer much more now than the small guys because it now has the right teacher-pupil ratio.*
> *Alan: Right.*
> *Rose: Right, yet you still have the full range of services which you wouldn't have in the smaller banks, where, you know, you have "one to one" contact but not across all your business banking needs, and the problem for a business like Bank Y is that they have all these current account customers, so this is really about reeling in customers for loans and that's where the battle is being fought.*

Rose describes how the campaign is really about "reeling in customers for loans", a metaphor which constructs the advertising agency as a kind of fisherman, the customer as a fish and the advertising as the bait to allow one to attract the other. This metaphor allows her to express to the creative team the purpose of the advertising campaign for the

client, and she describes how this is where "the battle is being fought" which draws upon military vocabulary to describe the market situation for banking customers (Malefyt, 2003). The role of the advertising campaign is to announce the recruitment of these relationship managers. Alan asks which media will be used for the campaign, and James describes how there was a discussion as to whether it should be regional, press or outdoor advertising. James feels that the local bank managers see regional press as the "fabric" of the town, and that these local managers would favour an advertising approach within this medium. Outdoor advertising is also regarded by the client as a possibility, because it is very public and "makes a statement" which is what the client wants to achieve for the campaign in announcing the recruitment of relationship managers. Rose describes how €40 million is a "big splash" and "40 times more" than most other clients spend, and the bank was looking for "stature" and to make this announcement to the general public.

6.6.3 Relationship Managers and the Concept of Individuality

Rose discusses the research which had been conducted, and one of the main issues that "came out" of the findings was that business customers were not aware of the existence of relationship managers or what they did, and there was a "job to be done" in getting these consumers to understand the role of the relationship manager in the bank (Rose uses a reference borrowed from the film "Our man in Havana" to describe how the relationship manager would be "Your man in Havana" for business customers), and that regional press advertising should support this message. The target consumer is described as per the brief, owner managers of medium sized companies with lending requirements of over €65,000 who are more aligned to Michael O'Leary than Michael Smurfit. These consumers have entrepreneurial zeal, but are currently frustrated when they go the bank

because of the hours of processing and "red tape" which they have to deal with. Rose describes how this consumer group do not want advice, to be "patronised" or to be told what is right for them and Rose mentions how "that just doesn't wash with them", indicating that this consumer community will not find this a credible or authentic approach from the bank. They own their own businesses, but "don't get many pats on the back" as Rose describes it and she explains how a competitor bank has made an effort incorporate entertainment to make these customers feel important, which is where the concept of "individuality" described on the creative brief originates from:

> *Rose: Ultimately the "being treated as an individual" comes from, it's kind of "you're not going to be treated almost like as a number and you are not going to be subjected to the processes of "the system", that there is actually, sufficiently, a number of, there is enough relationship managers who are sufficiently free and engaged to actually approach your particular problem like it was a blank sheet of paper and actually work with you to say: "Right, well this is actually the right solution", but working with you as opposed to prescribing it.*

Rose in this passage constructs this consumer community as a privileged group, who will not be treated "as a number" or subjected to the processes of "the system", and relationships managers will work with the consumer to work out a solution to their individual problems as opposed to prescribing solutions to consumers who do not necessarily value the advice of the bank. Rose describes how the concept of individuality was researched with consumers as a "dot in the crowd" with umbrellas where one umbrella is different to the others accompanied with the headline "we treat each business individually". The client was concerned that this could result in the advertising being clichéd or obvious, and Rose describes how it is important to convey individuality through the advertising "in a way that Bank Y can really own", and that if this could be "dramatised" in a "creatively compelling way" then the agency would be "laughing".

James mentions to the creative team to remember that Bank Y are conservative in choosing customers and have the luxury of turning down customers, and would probably never do business with Michael O'Leary or with "maverick" business people, which is contradictory to the creative brief's description of the target consumer as more aligned to Michael O'Leary in terms of commercial acumen. This presents a challenge to the advertising creatives to convey the message of individuality to the consumer in a uniquely compelling way to business consumers in a way not previously conceived by competing financial institutions.

6.6.4 Building Credibility and Authenticity for the Message of Individuality

Rose describes to the creative team how the target consumers currently relate to Bank Y in terms of seeing banks in general as "bureaucratic" and "inflexible", and once again stresses to the creative team the importance of highlighting "individuality" in the campaign and of "dramatising the proposition". Rose also mentions how it is important for the advertising to build momentum into something that is very "staid and bureaucratic" from the banks perspective. Rose warns the team away from the use of "bland corporate assertions" in the advertising message, and tells the team it is important that the consumer will conclude that they will be "treated as an individual" as opposed to stating this explicitly to consumers through the advertising, thereby avoiding the cliché and building credibility and authenticity for the message.

Rose also mentions some the competitor advertising, and how each bank is "trying to go with their own little personal image" such as "Yes Yes Yes with the EBS", referring to a famous campaign slogan used by the EBS building society in previous years, and to become customer friendly in a way that the bank can "own". The discussion illustrated

how advertising campaign ideas are constructed and thought about in terms of ideas previous campaigns have adopted, so previous campaigns intertextually influence the campaign development process for future campaigns (Cook, 1992; O'Donohoe, 1994). In the summation of the creative brief, both Rose and James describe to the creative team what is required for the development of the campaign:

> *James: This again it's, this is not like selling insurance.*
> *Alan: Yeah.*
> *James: This is not "Phone now for your business loan", this is a considered...*
> *Alan and Ken: Yeah, Yeah*
> *James: A sort of a shift in perception over time, that's what this is aimed to do, this is not aimed to scream off the page and get them to choose Bank Y over Bank X today because I need a bank loan. Now it might do that but it's about shifting the perception.*
> *Rose: As I said the way I see it is that the outdoor should make people in this market just take a really fresh look at Bank Y and just get the individuality straight away and then impress and maybe...*
> *Alan: Back it up*
> *Rose: And that they should be really convinced about why they will be treated as an individual*
> *Alan: Yeah*
> *Rose: And it's not just guff, and that's the difference between the two.*

In this passage, J argues that this advertising campaign is "not like selling insurance" and that the goal of the advertising should be to "shift" the consumer's perception of Bank Y. He also introduces the language of control into the discourse, describing how the advertising is not meant to "get them to choose Bank Y over Bank X", but to "shift perception", implying that the advertising can "get them" (i.e. the consumer) to do something. Rose also introduces this language of control and mentions how it is important that the advertising campaign "makes" consumers in this market take a "fresh" look at Bank Y and that the idea of individuality should become immediately apparent to the consumer which convinces the consumer that the claim of the advertising message is

180

not "just guff" but has substance to it and is grounded in the reality of banking practices within Bank Y.

6.6.5 Acknowledging the Researcher and Ridiculing Client Rhetoric

The meeting concludes by discussing how long it will take the creative team to develop a concept for the campaign, and some of the work that the team are currently doing for other clients. At the end of the meeting, Ken acknowledges my presence in the meeting:

> **Ken:** *And obviously the usual touch base, there's some jargon for you.*
> *[All laugh]*
> **Rose:** *Tissue meeting.*
> **James:** *What?*
> **Rise:** *That's what they call them in Beer X.*
> **James:** *Tissue meetings?*
> **Ken:** *Yeah, actually there, if really want to hear jargon used you should go up there, they'll give you loads.*
> **James:** *They'll give you a dictionary!*
> **Ken:** *There's no shagging spin in this.*
> **James:** *What are tissue meetings about?*
> **Ken:** *Tissue meetings?*
> **Rose:** *Tissue meetings is basic concepts.*
> **Ken:** *Yeah.*
> **Rose:** *Broad concepts.*
> **Ken:** *Exactly.*
> **Rose:** *So rather than paper it's tissue.*
> **Ken:** *It's tissue!*
> *[All laugh]*

As I had been introduced by Rose as interested in the "semantics" of advertising, Ken contributes by adding some "jargon" which he feels will be helpful to my study of advertising. This discourse was produced in a humorous way, which ended in the Beer X client being mocked and ridiculed with much laughter. At the end of the meeting, James restates the purpose of the advertising, which is that the bank wants to make a "public statement" in order to "show the market that they've changed", which provides a summation of the discussion about the creative brief.

This campaign had at its core the notion of "hailing" the consumer as an individual, something which Williamson (1978) claims is central to the ideology of advertising. While the campaign was addressed at a mass audience of entrepreneurs, it was designed to appeal to the consumers' sense of individually. The image of these consumers was constructed from market research, and famous business figures from the mass media such as Michael Smurfit and Michael O'Leary were used as key figures to visualise the consumer. The language of control was used in describing the customer, and how they would engage with the advertising. Military metaphors such as "battling" were also drawn upon to describe the market situation to the creative team. This meeting provided an interesting example of how a creative brief was delivered to a team, and the ways in which insights for campaigns were formed.

6.7 Beer X: Evaluating Advertising Work

The next meeting I was invited to sit-in on was later that afternoon with Rose from the account planning department. Once again I was introduced to the participants as an academic researcher interested in the "semantics of advertising" and that my research interest was the types of language used in the meeting rather than specific brand or client content. This meeting was attended by Seamus (account director), Rose (account planner), Barry (account handler) and Ursala (account handler). The meeting was convened to discuss a recently developed advertising campaign for Beer X, the flagship brand of the X Corporation. The advertising campaign for Beer X had been researched quantitatively through copytesting procedures by independent market research agency MR1, and the agency was awaiting news from the client as to how the commercial had performed in these tests.

The commercial had been aired publicly on Irish television prior to this research being conducted, and the MR1 "Link-Test" (Copy testing procedure) was being used to measure how consumers were currently responding to the advertising. The agency was waiting for a call from the client to announce the results of the link-test. The meeting began on an ominous note, and the agency employees were not optimistic about receiving the results of the MR 1 link test:

> **Barry:** *We're just waiting for results, link-test results for the new big Beer X ads, they were link-tested.*
> **Seamus:** *So if it's not good, we're fucked, and if it is?*
> **Barry:** *We're all fucked anyway.*
> **Rose:** *We're all fucked anyway.*

This segment occurred very early in the meeting and indicated a certain desperation and hopelessness in the agency position, in that irrespective of how the advertisement performed in the link-test, the agency would be "fucked". The advertising campaign for Beer X was a part of a series of integrated marketing communications designed to emphasise the "quality" of the Beer X brand. The commercial featured two men sat in a bar discussing Beer X, reminiscing over the day that the founder of the Beer X company had died.

6.7.1 The Rhetoric and the Client

One feature of the meeting at the beginning was the use of the rhetoric of the client in the language of the advertising agency meeting. First Seamus, an account director with Irish Advertising Limited, described how the KBB (key brand benefit) for the brand was eventually going to change, an acronym which originated from the lexicon of the X Corporation client for identifying the key benefit which the brand offered to consumers. This process was developed and constructed through the toolkits, systems and procedures

183

of the X Corporation, which provide a framework for the advertising agency and the client to work together to produce a discourse and establish a KBB for a brand. Seamus mentions in the meeting that there was so much to learn about the process, but conceded that 'at least I know X Corporation speak, so that makes life a whole lot easier'. The client rhetoric of the X Corporation seems to play a facilitative and structuring role for the discourse of the meeting and acts as a framing device to discuss the development of an advertising campaign for this client (Moeran, 2005a). Seamus's comments also imply that certain clients produce a language all of their own, which is spoken by the members of the organisation when developing campaigns.

6.7.2 Early Warning Signs

While the advertisements for Beer X had thus far performed well in link-testing, Barry (the account handler for Beer X) described how there were some issues that had "come out" of the research and needed some more discussion. Barry also discussed how there were new scripts for actors which were in the process of being developed for new commercials for the Beer X brand, which needed some "things" to "feed into them". Barry holds aloft an e-mail which he has received from the client in relation to some test scores from the previous round of link-tests which had been conducted with the advertising, and asks Seamus if he has read it yet. Seamus has not, so Barry reads the e-mail aloud to the group to bring them up to date on the client's current position regarding the testing of the advertising campaign:

> *Barry: "Well done on some staggering creative"*
> *Seamus: I read that bit and I didn't read any more!*
> *Barry: In particular A1, very well done. So kind of looking for a warning sign there. Challenges going forward specifically I'm surprised enjoyment is so low, how can we improve this? What is missing? Some of the best active/passive scores I've ever seen, brilliant. Brand appeal for new target market which is 30 to 60*

adorers is below average in Ireland, therefore not actually top right hand corner, should we do something about this? Please share with me plans to edit reviews appropriate or advise if you're planning to do nothing, generally how is the campaign going to move on whilst another brand for freshness, consistency, etcetera? All of this will need to be addressed; I want to know what we can do to push brand appeal through the roof. Important, please reflect on this, quality scores have plateaued, starting to decline, next ads must address this, all the ads are implicit. I think its time to get explicit.

While the client has congratulated the agency on some "staggering creative"[13], Barry interprets this as a "warning sign" that there is bad news on the way. The e-mail describes some of the challenges "moving forward" for the brand, and asks why the consumer enjoyment of the advertising is low, so the client while beginning the e-mail with a compliment reprises this with a challenge to the agency in terms of the current advertising campaign. The client commends the agency on some of the "active/passive" scores the advertising has achieved, but is concerned that brand appeal is down amongst 30 to 60 year old "adorers" (of the brand), and not "top right hand corner"[14].

The client then challenges the agency in the e-mail, asking what should be done about the low brand appeal amongst this consumer group, and how the agency proposes that the campaign can "move on". The client then draws upon a metaphor, asking the agency how brand appeal can be pushed "through the roof", and suggests that the advertising agency should "reflect" on this. Sharp metaphors like "through the roof" are used to express the goals of the advertising campaign.

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[13] "Creative" is a term sometimes used to describe creative work in an advertising agency.

[14] I later discovered that Beer X advertising is evaluated through copytesting research and is plotted on a Matrix style grid with an X and a Y axis, and advertising has to score in the "top right hand corner" quadrant of the matrix to satisfy the criteria of the client, and the results described in the client's e-mail were not satisfactory in terms of this "client ideology" (Hirschman, 1989).

6.7.3 Disaster Strikes: The Client Pulls the Plug

Seamus receives a phone call from the client during the meeting regarding the results

from the link-tests of the campaign, and some of the worst fears of the agency

practitioners materialise with the news:

> **Seamus:** *(Telephone conversation) Hello, Hi Sheila, good, oh dear. How? Yeah, oh God, is it a communications problem or what we're saying? We don't know yet, look lets have a look at that note. Can you send a copy to Barry as well? Yeah, ok, thanks, bye, bye. Shite.*
> **Barry:** *We're fucked?*
> **Seamus:** *Yeah.*
> **Barry:** *Totally?*
> **Seamus:** *Yeah.*
> **Barry:** *Excellent.*
> **Seamus:** *Bottom left, which is bad as it gets.*
> **Rose:** *You can't get any further than bottom left.*
> **Seamus:** *And big money, worst still secretive.*
> **Barry:** *Jesus.*
> **Ursula:** *That's bad.*
> **Barry:** *Oh well.*
> **Seamus:** *It's not a matter of tweaking them?*
> **Barry:** *Re-scripts?*
> **Seamus:** *Yeah.*
> **Barry:** *Re-scripts? All of them? New idea or?*
> **Rose:** *I wonder is it the vehicle or is it just the execution?*
> **Seamus:** *Well, what she was saying is that the problem seems to be that the narrator, the protagonists, did not hear, didn't really see the difference, the connection between the two. Yeah they talk about two parallels throughout, they didn't see the interrelationship of the two.*

Seamus finishes the phone call with Sheila, a representative of the client, and says

"shite", indicating that the news is bad. Barry asks if "we're fucked?" and Seamus

confirms to him that they are, to which Barry replies "excellent", which once again

indicates a certain hopelessness in the advertising agency position and that somehow this

bad news is a favourable outcome. Seamus informs the group that the ads have scored in

the "bottom left hand corner" of the client's research quadrant, which is the worst

possible score for the advertising campaign in terms of the client ideology. Immense

frustration can be sensed at the meeting, and Barry describes how this results in "the last few months work down the toilet". Barry argues to the group that the primary purpose of the advertising campaign was to deliver a quality message, and that the campaign is not about enjoyment in the same way that a campaign for Beer Y did (which is another brand of the X Corporation), and should not be judged according to the same measures or criteria. His views are endorsed by Rose, who interjects during his statement to add her approval to his assessment of the testing of the advertisements.

6.7.4 Questioning Commercial Research Findings

The group then discuss the X and the Y axes of the grid for the tests conducted with the advertisements, and look at the question posed in the research which asked "How did the ad make you feel about Beer X?" which received a negative response within the research. Barry asks the group for a possible reason as to why this should be, and whether there is anything that the agency can do to improve on this score. However, Rose questions the sampling methodology of this study, arguing that the researched audience were 30 to 60 year old "engrained adorers" of Beer X, so the advertising could not positively affect them or make them like the brand any more than they already did. She also mentions how qualitative research had illustrated how this consumer group are people that pride themselves on being "impervious to advertising", so the bluntness of the question posed by the research was bound to receive a negative response from the consumer. Barry agrees, and suggests that it would be helpful to talk to MR1 to suggest that there "wasn't any headroom" with this particular audience.

The question posed within the research is measured on a five point scale and Rose points out that while it measures the degree to which the advertising makes Beer X more

appealing, the research does not record why the participants choose the ratings they do. Rose also argues that there is no research available that has been previously conducted with 30 to 60 year old consumers, and therefore there isn't any benchmark to compare these test scores against. Barry however disagrees, and feels that this will not be a good enough response for the client, and sounds like "the advertising agency's response to any issue". Rose concedes that the sample used within the research is probably "reasonably robust", but argues that the agency should ask the client which proportion of the sample were 30 to 40 year olds, because if the sample was comprised mostly of 50 to 60 year olds they would probably be much more engrained adorers of Beer X than 30 to 40 year olds. In this exchange, the employees of the advertising agency were refuting the findings of the MR1 link test and the conclusions of the client about the advertising campaign. Barry asks if there are any other brands that have older adorers with whom research had been conducted for the purposes of drawing comparison for arguing that there is a pattern in this finding amongst the older beer adorers in this market. The group discuss other alcohol brands that have older adorers with which a meaningful comparison could be drawn. Barry argues for why this comparison is important for the position of the advertising agency:

> **Barry:** I mean I think the thing to say is, this is a real, like Mark has really pulled this out, and if it's because there isn't any headroom because this audience think they know Beer X as well as they, or they love it as much as they're going to love it, we need another brand to really stand behind that, confirm that that's their opinion as well.

Barry in this statement is trying to bolster the position of the advertising agency in relation to the client and find evidence to "stand behind" which can possibly refute the research claims of the client regarding evaluation of the advertising campaign. Rose

makes the point that while the research indicated the consumer group did respond positively to the advertising, they regard Beer X as "their brand" and advertising is not going to move them any further "up the scale" in terms of liking the brand. Rose also raises concerns about the way in which the questions in the research were posed and the phrasing of the words in the sentences, further challenging the legitimacy of the client to scrap the advertising campaign based upon these results.

6.7.5 The Local Treasure: Waterford's Masonic Pint Bottle Drinkers

The participants in the meeting then discuss the development of a new advertising campaign for the Pint Bottle of Beer X. Before Beer X was available on draft in public houses, it was sold as a bottled product to consumers, and this format was still extremely popular in County Waterford in Ireland. Barry describes how the agency had just received a brief from Beer X for the Pint Bottle with a view to developing an advertising campaign for the product, and he was going to send some of the creative staff to Waterford on a "recci" (for recreation) to understand the area and the target market for the product. Sales of the product had started to fall recently, and Barry suggests that this was because older people in the area were dying and "Beer X just clearly doesn't give a shit about this product anymore".

The client identified through consumer research that 30 to 60 year old adorers of Beer X Pint Bottles felt that their loyalty was not appreciated by the company, so Beer X have requested a localised campaign in Waterford for the product that "demonstrates the values of Beer X adorers" and "reinforces the values of the brand they adore". Barry asks how this can be achieved, and describes to the group how he had a conversation with the client and the perception of the Beer X Bottle was that it was "Real Beer X for real men",

even though the alcohol content was the same for the draft version of Beer X. Seamus argues that Beer X from the bottle has a "nasty" and "bitter" taste, and that people drink Beer X because it "proves you're a real man", so drinking the Beer X bottle which has a nastier taste proves that you were "even harder to drink it". Rose suggests that the Beer X bottle is a "sign of virility" for the male Beer X bottle drinker.

Barry argues that it is important to bring in the "locality" aspect of the product, which is regarded as a "local treasure". He feels it's important for the advertising to "announce" to the people of Waterford that Beer X "knows this treasure has been in the locality for a long time" and that the advertising should "affirm the future as well as the past" of the Beer X Pint Bottle as it is a product with a "rich heritage", so it is important to introduce the "localness" of the product and the fact it is regarded as a "well-regarded secret" that has "passed through the generations". Seamus describes how this product is a "little secret" with "local heritage", and that the people of Waterford would be "suitably flattered" to have a major brand advertising to them.

Seamus suggests that the consumption community for the Beer X Pint Bottle are a "masonic" consumer group who have specialised cultural knowledge about the product, which is a "secret handshake" amongst this community. He summarises by suggesting that the advertising campaign for this brand is about the "Free masonry of Pint Bottle drinkers" in Waterford, which may hold the key as to how an idea for the campaign could be developed. Seamus suggests that there could be a "play value" attached to the bottle of Beer X, and being able to pour the bottle of Beer X correctly into a glass to a "perfect inch high" signalled expertise and that the person was "all right" because of the way he poured his bottle into the glass. Rose felt that there was a "craft" attached to pouring your

own bottle of Beer X, which could be a nice angle for the advertising campaign. Barry

then describes some of the sales trends for the Beer X brand, and some of the local

cultural and historical attachments to the Beer X Pint Bottle:

> **Barry:** *One interesting thing that goes on here is their sales kind of go pretty flat and they peak at Christmas but they also peak very sharply in August then they go back down right away, which they can't figure out. Ruari thinks it's something to do with the Harvest and I've asked him through their sales people to try to get intelligence on why that should be so. I thought the creative team go down for the night with the sales rep and go talk to the locals and ask them, I'm gonna ask them to try and figure this out because it just seems to me if we're talking about a secret, or a bit of kind of secret heritage that must have originated somewhere, it must have been because something happened around the Harvest time Beer X supplied the free bottles or whatever, which might be a nice angle you know because if the locals know that, nobody else will know that, you know?*

Barry mentions how this "secret heritage" must have emerged historically from "harvest

time" when Beer X supplied free bottles, and this might be a good angle for the campaign

as "if the locals know that…nobody else will know that", implying that the agency could

uncover unique cultural knowledge relating to the consumption of the product. Seamus

agrees that there is a "local tradition" attached to the consumption of the product. The

Beer X Pint Bottle clearly had a local cultural and historical heritage within Waterford,

and to develop an idea for the campaign the advertising agency had to be cognisant of

these local cultural and historical connections, which illustrates the importance of both

contextual historical knowledge and local cultural knowledge to the campaign

development process for certain types of product (Hackley, 2005; Holt, 2004; Marchand,

1985; Scott, 1994b). The use of framing metaphors within the meeting to describe the

product ("local treasure") and the consumption community ("masons") were pivotal as

they helped the agency practitioners to articulate the cultural meanings and consumption

rituals attached to the Beer X Pint Bottle in ways that facilitated discussion about how to approach the campaign.

This meeting illustrated some of the existing tensions and conflicts between the agency and the client, particularly over the use of research in the advertising development process. The rhetoric of the client was also drawn upon extensively in the meeting (such as the "Key Brand Benefit), and the ideology of the client seemed particularly prevalent in this interaction. There was also a "panoptic" element to the meeting (Hackley, 2002), in the agency "gathering intelligence" on the Brand X pint bottle consumer community, and the metaphorical descriptions used by the practitioners helped them to conceptualise this audience for the product.

6.8 Serendipitous Research

I noticed an interesting way in which the planners did some consumer research serendipitously within the planning department one day in the agency. While I was based in the planning department a secondary school student called Janice who was on work experience for "Transition Year"[15] came to spend three days in the office to help with light administrative tasks. Rose was working with Carol on developing a creative brief for the student banking campaign for Bank Y, and asked Janice what factors would attract her to open a bank account, and also which factors would potentially make her switch bank accounts. She also requested Janice to rank a number of competing banks on a ten point scale to see how she evaluates each institution, and later on that day Rose asked Janice to search for case studies on the internet that were related specifically to student banking. The next day, Carol asked Janice about some of the clothes brands that

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[15] "Transition year" is a year that some Irish secondary school students spend following the completion of their Junior Certificate that is a "gap year" between the junior and leaving certificate. It involves students gaining practical work experience, and has more of an applied focus than other years in secondary school.

192

she preferred, and later spent time flicking through magazines to look at advertisements, brands and pictures of celebrities to understand what appealed to Janice. Janice selected Justin Timberlake as a celebrity who was "funny" and "kind of cute" from the magazine session, and discussed the image of celebrity which most appealed to her with Carol.

In this practice, Carol and Rose were conducting very informal market research with a transition year student in the office to develop an understanding of brands and celebrities that appealed to this age group, and incorporating this informal knowledge into the development of the creative brief for the Bank Y Student Banking campaign (Nixon, 2003). My observation of these practices illustrated how consumer research conducted within advertising agencies was not always formally commissioned, and that serendipitous cultural knowledge can be constituted within the creative brief through the informal consumer research conducted by account planners working on the development of the campaign.

6.9 Beer X Craftsmen: Paying Homage to the Pint

I heard Rose on a telephone call discussing a campaign which was in the process of being developed for Beer X. Rose describes how the campaign should "emphasise the craftsmanship" of the work of the barman in pulling a pint of Beer X. The purpose of the campaign seems to be to emphasise the quality of the Beer X product, and to "pay homage to the beauty of the pint" as Rose herself described it in the telephone conversation, which drew from a religious-type discourse. Rose discusses how consumer research has suggested consumers believe that the consistency of a pint of Beer X varies from pub to pub, and the purpose of the campaign was to demonstrate to the consumer that Beer X were "dedicated to providing quality and consistency". I later observed Rose

having a conversation with Sinead, a member of the account team for Beer X, and Rose explains to Sinead that while Beer X cannot guarantee a perfect pint every time, the advertising should demonstrate Beer X's commitment to quality, and that the concept of the craftsmanship of the barman in delivering the quality product was "a good myth" as Rose put it. Rose describes how it is important for the advertising to "tell a story" to the consumer of how the barmen were the "masters of the craft". The concept behind the campaign seemed to have emerged from a concern through the research conducted by the client, and emphasising the craft of the barman was a means though which Rose felt the advertising could convey this quality message. The role of myth has been highlighted as a key provider of signification for advertising campaigns (Barthes, 1972; Holt, 2004), and in the case of Beer X, Rose was seeking to construct a mythological narrative about the craft of the barman in pulling a pint of beer.

6.10 Beer Y: The Historicisation of the Brand

I had been in the advertising agency for nine days, and Edward was conscious that I should get to attend some good meetings as my period of time with the agency was relatively short. The previous day he invited me along to a meeting where the agency would be discussing the development of campaign work for the Beer Y brand, another beer product in the portfolio of the X Corporation. This was an internal meeting within the agency that was not attended by any representatives from the client organisation. This meeting took place in the "Below the Line" building of the advertising agency, as the core idea for the advertising campaign would also be communicated through the below the line medium[16].

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[16] "Below the line" is not traditional advertising that appears in print media, on television or on the radio, but is advertising expenditure on trade promotions, direct mail, consumer promotions, in-store media and

I was introduced to the group as a researcher interested in "the internal workings of a piece of communication" by Edward, and although one of the participants at the meeting initially expressed some misgivings about me recording the interaction, Edward assured him that what I recorded would not be leaked to the outside world or to competitors. Before the meeting began, each participant including myself was given a copy of a X Corporation Activity Brief which stated the purpose of the advertising campaign and some key insights into the target audience and an "Idea Understanding Tool" which is a form provided by the X organisation client that the agency practitioners had to complete to explain the origins of the development of an advertising idea how this idea conformed to the particular specifications of the client.

I was immediately struck by the way in which the practices of the agency were framed in terms of the discourse of the X Corporation client, as these activity briefs and idea understanding tools are designed to structure the development of the discourse about the campaign in such a way that it conformed to the guidelines and sense checks established by the client (Hackley, 2005). So for the X Corporation at least, the ideologies of the client played a prevalent role in the development of ideas for advertising campaigns and the framing of the internal discourse within the advertising agency.

6.10.1   X Corporation Activity Brief

The X corporation activity brief (see appendix 2) begins with a statement of the **Consumer Goal**, which is to "Grow adoration amongst LDA (legal drinking age) – 34 year olds from 36% - 37%". The **Activity Goal** then follows the consumer goal, that states that the goal of the campaign which is to grow Beer Y's quality perception

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event sponsorship. See Leiss et al. (2005: 395-397) for a more detailed explanation of "Below the Line" promotions.

amongst LDA – 34 year old Beer Y adorers through agreement with the statement that "Beer Y is a consistently high quality product" from 40% to 42%. The metaphor of "growing" is used to emphasise how the client wanted to develop the adoration of the product amongst this consumer community and alter current consumer perceptions of the quality of the product.

The next section of the activity brief is the **Target Consumer Understanding**, which provides a focussed and detailed description of the target audience for the advertising campaign. The consumer (described as a "creative bullseye" in the activity brief) is a 27 year old male, who wants to be seen as grounded but has not lost a sense of adventure and spontaneity. The creative brief uses language of military precision, describing the "target" audience and the "bullsye" consumer (Malefyt, 2003), and constructs the consumer as a hedonist, seeking the fantasies, feelings and fun of life experience (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). This consumer group are seen as in a transitional life stage, moving from the "carefree single lifestyle" toward the "responsibilities of adulthood", and prefer to drink in "social local outlets" as "big brash bars" represent "superficiality". As these consumers are experiencing a "period of flux" in their lives, they relate to brands that are "true to themselves", and have a "need to let go and live life to the full". Beer and socialising is regarded as the "hero" in the lives of this consumer group, advertising is a critically important determinant of brand choice, and they will only buy a brand that "mirrors/reflects" their own outlook on life. It's not clear from the activity brief if these consumer characteristics are developed from the consumer research or from the intuition of practitioners from the agency and the client. The brand consciousness of the consumer is deemed to be important in the target description, as

consumers only buy brands that reflect their personal worldview which form part of their symbolic identity (Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998), so the task for the agency is to align the values of the brand with those of the consumer community.

The next section of the activity brief presents an **Insight** into the target consumer, and describes how as consumers "move on" in life, they need serious beer credentials as a sign of personal maturity and discernment. The metaphor "moving on" emphasises the transitional phase of this consumer's life stage, and beer is regarded by the agency as a signifier of the maturity and discernment that the consumer requires to connote this life stage transition (Barthes, 1972). The next section of the brief has three boxes which read from left to right on the activity brief. The first box on the left hand side of the brief asks **"What our target customers think and / or do now?"**, which provides a panoptic snapshot of current consumer perceptions of the Beer Y Brand (Hackley, 2002). There seems to be considerable inconsistency in how consumers perceive the quality of the Beer Y brand, and the brief offers some sentences to represent the consumer perspective ("Beer Y is not a great quality beer" / "I'm never sure what Beer Y will taste or look like when I buy it on draught"), which presents a consumer perception problem for the advertising agency to address and alter through the development of an advertising campaign.

The middle boxes of the brief then state the **Conversion Barrier**, which is that Beer Y is considered less mature and discerning choice than other lagers by this consumer group, and as they mature in life they switch to other more discerning drinks as a sign of their personal discernment and maturing taste as advancing adults. The **Conversion Driver** outlines the task of the advertising activity which needs to reaffirm the quality credentials

197

and authenticity of Beer Y for these consumers in order to discourage them from seeking another brand of beer as they move into this transitional life stage. The box on the far right of the brief states **"What do we want them to think and/or do as a result of this activity?"**, and presents the desired outcome of the campaign and some proposed consumer statements such as "Beer Y is a great quality beer" and "Beer Y on draught is always a consistently great tasting and looking pint no matter which pub I'm drinking in". This type of language implies that the agency has the ability to control consumers' thoughts and interpretations of the brand, and incorporates this poweful rhetoric. In these three boxes from left to right, the client has outlined consumers current perceptions of Beer Y and the transformational role that advertising must play in constructing authenticity and credibility for the brand and legitimising Beer Y for the consumer (Elliott and Ritson, 1997; McFall, 2004; Moeran, 2005b).

The next section of the activity brief describes the **Brand Personality** of Beer Y, which has "substance and depth" and is "grounded, youthful, quietly confident and comfortable with itself". In this description, it appears that the Beer Y brand image has appropriated some of the researched personality characteristics of the target consumer group, and these brand personality characteristics are juxtaposed with what Beer Y is not ("Flighty, superficial, arrogant, showy or juvenile"), character traits that appear to be rejected by this consumer community. The fact these brand personality characteristics are so similar to the consumer descriptions indicates that they are reified from market research and transferred by the client and the agency to the characteristics of the brand (Goldman, 1992).

6.10.2 Idea Understanding Tool

The IUT (Idea Understanding Tool) (see appendix 3) is a document devised by the X Corporation to structure the discourse of ideas about an advertising campaign in terms of the criteria established by the client. This document is designed to help agency practitioners to explain the origins of the development of an advertising idea to the client. The IUT first has a section outlining the activity and the goal of the activity, as well as the brand and the date on which the IUT is filled out by the agency practitioners. The IUT then has five interrelated sections at the top half of the document; the **Consumer Insight** which will detail the key insights into the relevant consumer community; the **Key Brand Benefit** which is the main benefit which the brand offers to the consumer; the **Barrier to Conversion** which is the perceptual "barrier" which is currently blocking the target consumers from choosing the brand/product; the **Conversion Insight** which is the key insight into the product or the consumer market to overcome the barrier to conversion; and finally the **Conversion Driver** which details how the conversion insight can be utilised in a campaign idea to convert consumers to the brand/product. The client ideologies are ever present in this document (such as the key brand benefit), and the use of metaphorical language in the brief like "conversion" illustrates the transformational role that the advertising campaign has to play to legitimise the brand/product and convert consumers to choosing it above competing alternatives (Elliott and Ritson, 1997).

6.10.3 Beer Y Powwow

The meeting convened to discuss the proposed advertising campaign for Beer Y was attended by Edward (Account Director), Gavin, Louise, Ron and Eoin (Account Handling Department) and Trish and Lauren (Creative Department), during which the idea understanding tool was used to develop a discourse of ideas about the campaign. The

199

conversation began with Edward stating the activity goal as it was described in the X Corporation activity brief (to grow quality perception among Beer Y adopters and adorers). Edward then defines the key consumer insight as it is expressed in the X Corporation activity brief:

> **Edward:** *As consumers move on in life they increasingly need serious beer credentials as a sign of personal maturity and discernment. You'll never guess Lauren who was the insightful one who came up with that insight!*

In this statement, Edward claims the credit for identifying the pivotal insight into the consumer community that will inform the development of an advertising idea for Beer Y, and playfully asserts some authority as the account planning director to the group. Gavin elaborates to the group about how Beer Y is perceived as less mature than other beers among the target audience, and as soon as they reach the age of 27 they move onto other beers such as Heineken. This presents a problem for the group to discuss, and consider how to develop a solution through the proposed advertising campaign.

6.10.4 The Agency Knows Best: Mythical America and the Diluted Gospel

As the group further discuss the conversion insight, two members of the creative team, Tara and Sheila, join the meeting. Gavin explains to them the purpose of the meeting, acknowledging that they have "been through" this before and that as a group they have to sense check the core idea to make sure that it "stacks up" for their presentation to the client the following week. While Beer Y is an American product and is intricately associated with American culture, Gavin mentions how the agency has been told by the client that the image of America is "not where Beer Y wants to be". The reasons for not wanting to be associated with America could be numerous in terms of the brand image, however the United States had invaded Iraq on March 20th of this year in an unpopular

war that had brought about mass protest in Ireland and around the world that had fuelled

global anti-American sentiment, and this may have explained the client's unwillingness

to be associated with the image of America. Edward explains to the group how the client

has misinterpreted the image of America that the Beer Y brand would be associated with:

> *Edward: I even think it's that contemporary America is not where Beer Y wants to be, real America is not where Beer Y wants to be, but the whole essence of Beer Y's success for the past 15 years has been our success in creating a mythical America, which is a different thing completely.*
> *Eoin: Right.*
> *Edward: Listen, what's actually happening with this thing, very quickly just to rewind, is last September we went into them and told them there was a problem they didn't even know it existed, and consistently all the way along since last September we've told them what the answer is. But what's happening is it's filtering down through the various people in Beer Y and they're getting successively more diluted versions of the gospel. So when you hear somebody say something like America is not where Beer Y needs to be, somebody said to them contemporary America is not where Beer Y wants to be.*
> *Gavin: Contemporary's being missed.*
> *Edward: And contemporary's being missed and they're saying: "America's not where Beer Y needs to be", by the time it gets through Eoin Gannon[17] and then to the promotions people, the mantra is being lost.*

In this passage, Edward describes how the agency, not the client, had created the success

for the Beer Y brand, asserting the authority of the agency to his fellow employees. He

describes how the advertising agency had informed the client of a problem which "they

didn't know existed", and how they have "consistently all the way along" told the client

the answer but as this answer had "filtered down" through the people in Beer Y they have

gotten "successively more diluted versions of the gospel". This positions the advertising

agency as experts in market knowledge who provided the client with "*the gospel*", and

then identifies how this gospel had been distorted through the various layers in the client

organisation. Edward appropriates religious discourse in metaphorically in describing the

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[17] This is a pseudonym.

agency position as "the gospel" and how this "mantra" is being lost within the client

organisation, which constructs the agency as an intellectual superior to the client. The

passage highlights some of the communication and inter-organisational problems that can

exist between an agency and its clients in the campaign development process, which

Alvesson's (1994) study documented.

6.10.5 Socially Constructing Provenance and Heritage

The group then discuss how Beer Y is perceived as less mature and less discerning

amongst the target audience, and Edward describes how if Beer Y can be "shown" to

have provenance and heritage as a brand of beer that people would be "more likely" to

believe that it was a mature and discerning choice. In order to make a "link" between

Beer Y and provenance and heritage, Edward feels that it is important to "emphasise the

brand's provenance and heritage", and that "announcing" this to the consumer

community will give the beer a "standing" in the eyes of the drinker. This seems to

exemplify how advertising appropriates external "structures of meaning" (Williamson,

1978: 12) to construct brand signification for consumers.

Edward seeks some confirmation as to whether this is the idea that the group agree on,

and asks the group if "That's what we're hanging our hats on...isn't it?" Gavin questions

the idea, and Eoin discusses one of the "take-outs" from the previous meeting, during

which the idea of using the Battle of Little Big Horn in the advertising campaign had

been raised, and he suggests to the group that the image of the Empire State Building and

the Golden Gate Bridge could be used to emphasise the provenance and heritage of the

brand. Edward responds by arguing how the core of the idea is to "frame" Beer Y against

American history, which corresponds well with Moeran's (2005a) account of the role of framing in the Japanese advertising development processes.

Gavin describes how Beer X had picked 1759 as a "moment of truth" in their advertising campaign, and asks the group if framing Beer Y against American history will put it in "the same space" as Beer X. Sheila responds to Gavin's concern by assuring him that the year is not important to Beer Y, and the campaign was about comparing Beer Y to other "American icons". Eoin once again makes reference to the Golden Gate Bridge as an iconic American image, and Edward informs him that the bridge was built in 1927. Eoin describes how depicting that Beer Y brewery was established in 1876, and emphasising in the advertising campaign how Beer Y had to ship their product across the river without the use of a bridge will emphasise the provenance and heritage of the brand as the image of the Golden Gate Bridge is an iconic American image. Eoin further argues that the Beer Y brand doesn't have much heritage or provenance, and the only way in which the brand can have "credibility" is against "iconic things that aren't as old from its own nation". The group acknowledge the role that historical narratives play in the construction of brand image for the consumer audience, and how brands borrow from this iconography in advertising campaigns (Holt, 2004).

Edward suggests that provenance and heritage was "one route" to make the beer appear more mature and discerning, and that the advertising could also focus on the drinker or on the ingredients to tell a "hops and yeast story" which the brand has portrayed in the past. However Eoin rejects this and feels that hops and yeast look like "Brussels Sprouts", and he asks the group if the perception of a 27 year old male will be "altered" if the agency "hammer home" that it is a beer grounded within a long tradition. The use of terms such

as "hammer home" is reminiscent of the violence of marketing discourse that Svensson's

(2007) study recently identified.

Edward argues to the group that the main way which people decide if someone knows

how to do something is if they've been doing it for a long time, and emphasises the

importance of making comparisons between Beer Y's age and the age of leading

American icons. The group then discuss exactly what the idea is for the advertising

campaign, during which time Edward provides a discursive "frame" for the idea (Moeran,

2005a):

> *Edward: Right that's so we just need to get that framed now, which is to place Beer Y's age in context. The idea, yeah that's it, the idea is to place Beer Y's age in context by comparing it with the age of leading American iconography, isn't that right? Sorry if this all sounds like an intellectual thing, this is the piece that they need to be sure about and you see just look at the sequence here right, the conversion insight like what we're trying to do first of all give Beer Y serious beer credentials. The insight, if people believe that people have been brewing beer for a long time they're more likely to believe that it's a discerning beer for a mature drinker. Right, so what are we doing now, we're saying right, so we need to emphasise just how long Beer Y's brewing tradition is. How do we do that? Well fuck it it's a young country, so what we'll do is we'll put its age in context relative to other things in that country, and we said: "If you thought the Empire State Building was around forever, well actually Beer Y was before the Empire State", ergo, Beer Y was around forever, ergo its been around forever there must be serious brewing credentials". That's the sequence, right, well that's what they're asking us to do on this form. Now, it says here is the idea dependent on understanding the relevant insight? Well if the insight is that age equals discernment and heritage, well the idea then is to place Beer Y's age in context. isn't that it? So that's how it's dependent on the insight.*

In this passage, Edward emphasises the importance of framing Beer Y's age "in context"

with the age of leading American iconography in order to transfer the meaning to Beer Y

and develop a new signification value for the brand (Goldman, 1992; Goldman and

Papson, 1996; McCracken, 1986; Williamson, 1978). Edward apologises to the group if

his words sound too "intellectual", but qualifies his analysis by stating that the idea is the

piece that the client "need to be sure about". It may in this case be useful to recognise my reflexive role as the researcher, and my presence at this meeting (Brownlie, 1997). Edward seems to be faced with two audiences in making this presentation to the group, his colleagues, and me as a non-participant, and this dialogue may be constructed in this fashion for my benefit as an academic outsider, particularly in apologising for sounding "too intellectual".

He describes the task of the agency which is to "give" Beer Y serious beer credentials, and that if people believe that Beer Y have been brewing beer for a long time they are more likely to believe it's a discerning beer for a mature drinker. This seems to slightly over-state the power of the agency in ascribing product meaning through the advertising, although it is said to position Edward as an authority to the group. Edward describes how the idea hinges on the insight that age equals to discernment, and that age and discernment can be transferred to the product through this meaning association with leading American iconography (Goldman and Papson, 1998; McCracken, 1986). Edward provides a summary of the origins of the advertising idea for Beer Y, and how historical American iconography is drawn upon to provide a product with meanings from a signification system that exists outside of the consumer good and equate them to the Beer Y brand (Leymore, 1975; McFall, 2004; Wernick, 1991; Williamson, 1978).

The group then discuss how the idea is dependent upon the relevant insight and the 5 I's (Issue, Information, Insight, Implication, Implementation) of the client ideology. Edward describes how the idea places Beer Y in a context which "makes it appear" that it's been around for a long time, and articulates to the group that the reason the client "makes them" do this (fill out the form and answer its requirements) is to make sure everyone

around the table believes that the idea "stacks up" and makes sense. The choice of words by Edward in describing how the client "makes them" fill out this form emphasises how the ideology of the client is enforced upon the agency (Hirschman, 1989), and how advertising practitioners have to work within the structures of clients in order to develop ideas for advertising campaigns.

Edward mentions how it is crucial for the campaign development that the client believes that age equals discernment, and Gavin agrees that it will be important to have a meeting in the client premises the following Monday with the head of the client team to make sure that the agency are on the "right track" with the idea. Edward then describes how the idea which the agency has developed will "connect" with the target consumer:

> **Edward:** *So how will the idea connect with the target consumer? Remember this is a 27 year old male driven primarily by transitional life stage toward the responsibility of adulthood right? So suppose we were to say here that as the maturing male is developing a longer time horizon, so they come to have respect for things that have been around a long time, so that's where the idea will connect with the target consumer. So, if we cast our minds back chaps to when we were 27, and I realise that in my case it was really quite a long time ago, but that's what you're thinking isn't it? When you're 25 or something, or even 23, your furthest time horizon is 12 months away. If somebody comes along and tries to sell you a pension you'll laugh at them because you're never going to be 65. I hope I die before I get old. But when you're 27 suddenly you realise there's a longer time horizon and suddenly as you realise there's a longer future ahead of you so you've more respect for things that have a longer past, that's the truth isn't it? Now which brand or product truths does the idea draw on? It draws on the story, the Beer Y brewing story from the States, all the stuff about the brewery, the fact that it's actually been around since 18...*
> **Tara:** *I don't think it's a brewing story though is it?*
> **Edward:** *A brewery story, it's not a brewing story.*
> **Tara:** *Ok.*
> **Edward:** *So that's what we're talking about.*

This part of the extract illustrated how advertising practitioners reflect upon periods in their own lives and experiences which they have personally had to develop meaning associations in advertisements that will have resonance for the target consumer

community (Hirota, 1995; Soar, 2000). Edward then asks the group which "product truths" the idea draws upon, and answers this by stating the idea draws on the Beer Y brewing story and the fact that the brewery had been in existence since the 1876. This product truth allows the agency to relate the idea back to the product and ground the advertising claim within some basis of truth that is inherent to the product. Edward describes to the group that all the agency have to do to ground the truth claims about the product in some basis of fact is to "prove" that there has been a Beer Y brewery since 1876 to demonstrate that the product has history and provenance. Edward's account also emphasises the existing narratives which the advertising campaign will draw upon for the consumer audience.

The group discuss what makes the idea "ownable" by the Beer Y brand, and conclude that it is the only brand of American beer that has such a provenance and history. The group then discuss how the idea "reflects/reinforces" the KBB ("Beer Y helps me celebrate my independence"), and Eoin and Edward argue that the idea recognises and celebrates the advancing maturity and respect for tradition that these consumers have developed through the transitional stage in their lives. Edward further suggests that the idea gives these consumers "icons" to "hold on to" in their transitional life stage. Edward is encouraged that the creative team are happy with the structure of the completed IUT, and explains to them how the work "comes out" of the idea should "speak these insights". This particular exchange illustrated how advertising agency practitioners such as Edward have an intimate knowledge of history and culture, which is drawn upon to develop ideas and insights for creative starting points in advertising campaigns (Elliott, 1999; Frank, 1997; Goldman and Papson, 1996; Hackley, 2002; Holt, 2004; Soar, 2000).

207

6.10.6   The Plan B: Beer Y as the "Gold Standard" in the Market

Following on from the discussion about providing the Beer Y brand with provenance and heritage, Eoin argues to Edward that if the advertising campaign "makes a statement" that they've been brewing beer for 150 years they could potentially get themselves "in a knot", and there needed to be a story about the Golden Gate Bridge. Eoin was conscious that whatever idea emerged from this meeting may not be acceptable to the client, and that the agency practitioners would emerge from the meeting on Monday like "scalded cats" as he put it. He asks the group if there was any quality inherent in the product that could be "turned on its head", and because the product is a light golden colour Eoin suggests as a "plan B" that Beer Y could be associated with the attributes of Gold.

Sheila argues that she doesn't think that Beer Y is very golden in colour, and Edward agrees that the product looks "a bit yellow". Eoin however disputes this and suggests that a piece of gold "could bloody well look like the colour of Beer Y", and nobody else in the "territory" is "owning gold" at the moment. Edward suggests to the group that they draw up a separate IUT for Beer Y as a gold standard for beer. Edward defines the new consumer insight as "people drink with their eyes" and decode a product by its appearance, and the conversion driver is to persuade people that the appearance of Beer Y represents the "Gold Standard" for beer. Eoin mentions how the word gold fits nicely with the tagline for Beer Y as the "King of Beers", drawing equivalences between the signifiers of "Gold" and "King". Edward then once again summarises the sequence of the idea for the group, which is that if Beer Y represents the "gold standard for beer", people will conclude that it is a "quality authentic beer". Gavin argues that constructing this authenticity for Beer Y would present a "big challenge" for the advertising campaign, and Edward unpacks his thinking behind the "Gold Standard" idea:

> *Edward:* What struck me was, look, before Heineken launched, Harp was the standard for beer, right? And because people endorsed Heineken, they made themselves like the taste of it. It's like what Mary Cassidy[18] used to say about Coca Cola, she hated Diet Coke and she said she made herself like the taste of it because she liked the ads so much. That was one of her favourite lines, she said I hated Diet Coke, I made myself like the taste of it, but that's what people did with Heineken and once they made themselves like the taste of Heineken suddenly all other beers suddenly tasted different. So that's all we want them to do with Beer Y we want them to look at it and think something different to what they think already. Right now they look at it and they think it's piss[19], that's the word they use in research, it's yellow, it's bubbly, what we want them to do is look at it and say no it's not yellow it's golden and it represents the gold standard.

In this passage, Edward draws from his own life experiences of observing the consumption patterns and motivations of former colleagues in developing a research insight for the formation of advertising strategy (Hirota, 1995; Olsen, 2003; Soar, 2000), and although the insight is drawn from the consumption of a product in a different category to Beer Y (in this case a soft drink), Edward feels that this insight is as applicable to the alcohol market. Edward describes how consumers use the word "piss" in research to describe the appearance of the product, and the agency through the advertising campaign want the consumer to look at the product as golden and as representing the "gold standard" in beer.

Edward later describes the core of the idea which is "to match the properties of gold and goldenness to Beer Y" which is dependent upon the consumer insight he developed. Eoin mentions how the understanding that gold equals to quality is "ubiquitous", and by drawing this association from the cultural world and attaching it to the consumer good the agency will construct golden connotations for Beer Y (Barthes, 1972). As the agency had developed two possible directions for the advertising campaign, Eoin and Edward discuss

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[18] This is a pseudonym.
[19] This is a word used to describe urine.

209

the possibility of the account manager at the DGO client rejecting the heritage and provenance idea toward the end of the meeting:

> **Eoin:** *If she kicks idea number one out, I don't think it will be because of the heritage piece I think it will be because of the American piece, and that may well be because of her version of the Chinese whisper, is that moves you to the point where she goes "America no thank you", we may be able to argue it back.*
> **Edward:** *I'd say wherever we refer to America we put the word mythical in front of it, I think that will help because there's a heck of a difference between the America cowboys and wide open spaces and the America of the downtown streets of South Boston, you know?*

In this exchange, Eoin points out to Edward that if the client does reject the idea, it will be because of the association with "America" and the problem of the "Chinese whispers" through the layers of the organisation which lead to the advertising idea being misinterpreted by the client. Edward explains to Eoin that placing the word "mythical" in front of America will help avoid the client making this misinterpretation. This passage emphasises the difficult discursive negotiations between the agency and the client in terms of the communication of "the Chinese whisper" and the response of the agency in "arguing it back" to the client through the campaign development process.

The interactions on the Beer Y campaign provided some interesting insights into the campaign development process within the agency. Firstly, they exemplified the potency of the client ideology in terms of how the practitioners discussed and developed ideas for the advertising campaigns. Secondly, they showed how advertising practitioners draw from various currents of external meaning to construct legitimate and authentic brand meanings for consumer audiences, and how some informal consumption experiences are recontextualised for research insights within the campaign. Finally, Edward's own "performance of authenticity" within the meeting was interesting, as he seemed to perform for his colleagues as the account planning director, and for my own benefit as an

academic observer at the meeting (Moeran, 2005b). This illustrated how the role of "non-participant" observer within the agency was difficult to negotiate and manage in this organisational context, particularly given the knowledge that Edward had of my own theoretical interests in the advertising development process, and he did have the power to direct the research in particular ways. However, the fact that the meeting was attended by several employees and the content was discussed in a serious manner does provide a degree of legitimacy for the insights from the interaction, and vividly demonstrates of the social construction of advertising in action.

6.11 Irish Government Department Client Pitch Rehearsal

Edward invited me along to a rehearsal for a pitch for new business that Irish Advertising Limited and Company A Public Relations were jointly making to an Irish Government Department. The rehearsal would consist of a mock presentation that the consortium would later deliver to the Department in a tender for a new advertising account, a national waste management advertising campaign, and Irish Advertising and Company A would be competing with other advertising agencies and consortia in pitching for this new business. The meeting was attended by Edward (Account Director), Mark (Creative Director), and Amanda, Bernard, Ciaran and Daniel (Account Handling Team) from Irish Advertising Limited, Tristan and Peter from Company A Public Relations firm, John, a technical expert in waste management from Company B Technologies and myself. This team of individuals had been assembled to attend the client pitch, however Tristan, Edward, Mark and Peter were the four individuals selected to present on behalf of the group as the pitch had a twenty minute time limit.

211

Tristan and Edward discuss some aspects of the waste management campaign prior to rehearsing the pitch. Edward describes the core idea of the advertising campaign as "Waste Management: It's Everyone's Job", and the purpose of this campaign was to develop "a national rallying call" which emphasised the responsibility upon Irish citizens to dispose of their waste in an environmentally friendly way. Edward mentions that TV is the most effective to transmit this message to the general public. The agency have developed two possible routes for the advertising campaign, one of which is intended to be shocking to provoke consumers into action, and another which is much more "seductive" in its approach, however the agency is recommending the more seductive approach to the client. Irish Advertising Limited are the first agency to pitch for the account, and Edward suggests to the group that they can "set the agenda" for everybody else, and provide the client with questions to ask competing agencies and consortia (particularly in relation to the use of "shock tactics") in order to undermine their proposed routes. The agency practitioners then begin the mock client pitch, with Tristan providing an introduction to the proposed communication campaign.

6.11.1   Interlocking Strands of Communication

Tristan starts the pitch by thanking the department for the invitation to tender for the account, and by sending in material for the proposed advertising campaign the consortium had made a "statement of intent" of how important the client's business was to them. He introduces the individuals in the group to the client, and he describes the communications strategy that the agency has developed which deals with the single issue of waste management. Tristan describes advertising as the "glue" which will consolidate these communicative strands, and he highlights the importance of the "political buy-in"

212

and "political commitment" to the communications campaign. The presentation will explain the rationale behind the communications campaign and how it will work in practice, and Tristan then introduces Edward who explains the development of the advertising strategy for the campaign.

6.11.2 "Seduce" or "Compel"?

Edward begins the advertising pitch by explaining the consumer insights which have informed the development of the advertising campaign strategy for waste management:

> *Edward: The advertising campaign we've developed has a very simple objective, but the fact that it's simple shouldn't blind us to its difficulty. Public surveys have shown that the prosperity this society has enjoyed in the last ten years hasn't come without a perceived price, several of those perceived prices have included a sense of time pressure, a sense of a certain chaos in our infrastructure, a feeling of unease about the level of crime that there is in our streets, but really quite far down the agenda has come any concern for the environment, and it would be wrong of us to say that environmental concerns predominate when people debate the downside as well as the upside of the Celtic tiger[20]. So that's the job that this campaign has is to raise public awareness of the environmental consequences of growth and of their personal responsibility to becoming involved in insuring that the environment is, and specifically waste management, is a personal responsibility of theirs.*

In this passage, Edward describes how environmental concerns are "down the agenda" for consumers in terms of their importance, and the role of the advertising campaign is to raise public awareness of the environmental consequences of growth and prosperity, and emphasize the responsibility that Irish citizens have to the environment. The advertising campaign seems to have a positive social role in this regard, in seeking to encourage consumers to be more environmentally aware in their behaviour. Edward describes how the advertising is divided into two tracks, the first of which is a "wake-up call" for consumers to alert them to the importance of waste management to the environment. One

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[20] The "Celtic Tiger" refers to the unprecedented prosperity and growth which the Irish economy enjoyed in the 1990s and 2000s. The phrase was originally used by British economist Kevin Gardiner in a 1994 report on the Irish economy for stockbrokers Morgan Stanley.

proposed route for the advertising campaign is to adopt so-called "shock tactics" similar to those used in road safety campaigns, however Edward argues that waste management is an issue of a "different character" and is a behaviour that people choose to adopt and are generally not compelled by law to do, so it is better to "seduce" consumers than it is to "compel" them. The use of terms such as "seduce" and "compel" implies to the Government client that the advertising agency actually has this sort of power over consumers, which ties into Slater's (1989: 122) observation that advertising industry "is saturated with discourses about power".

Edward mentions that while a shock tactics approach would receive much media coverage, people's instant reaction is to turn away from shocking images, and the route which the agency recommended was to develop a campaign message which was "highly impactful" but delivered the message about waste management in a "good humoured way". Edward summarises the creative strategy, arguing that in order to "break through public consciousness", the advertising had to "engage" with people as opposed to "provoking" them through the use of shock tactics. His description of "breaking through public consciousness" has much resonance with how copywriters develop campaign appeals for consumer audiences (Kover, 1995). Edward then directs the presentation to Mark, who describes the creative strands of the advertising campaign.

6.11.3   Salience Phase

Mark, the creative director, defines the copy line for the campaign as "Waste Management: It's Everybody's Job", and describes how it refers to the fact that there is no "Garbage fairy" and everyone in society needs to "pull together" and "do their bit" for the environment. He explains how the direction for the campaign is populist and uses

214

well known Irish celebrities from the world of sport and music to talk about waste

management issues. Mark describes the first phase of ads as the "salience" phase to

create awareness of the waste management problem, and illustrates with the use of story

boards an advertisement featuring the then Dublin Senior Gaelic football Manager

Tommy Lyons and the then Kerry Senior Gaelic football Paudi O'Sé. The advertisement

has not been produced, but the agency has developed the story boards and the dialogue to

give the client an insight into the substance behind the advertising idea. Mark narrates the

proposed advertisement to the group:

> **Mark:** *In this commercial we open in Croke Park we see Paudi O' Sé walking across the pitch and as he does so he talks to camera he says: "Every week in Ireland we produce enough waste to fill 10 Croke Parks and unless we start to manage that waste better filling Croke Park with that waste might become an option". We see Croke Park at this stage full to the roof of the stands with rubbish and Paudi is now standing on top of this rubbish heap: "This is how big the problem is". We cut back to Paudi walking across the pitch, he continues: "It's an absolute nightmare scenario, I can't think of anything worse". Paudi looks off into the distance as he tries to imagine something worse. We see what's in his minds eye, we see Tommy Lyons, lifting the Sam Maguire, cut back to Paudi, there's a look of terror on his face. Paudi is snapped out of his nightmare vision by a slap on the back from Tommy Lyons who is now standing beside him on the pitch. Tommy then speaks to camera: "Better management is the answer to Ireland's waste problem", and Paudi concludes by saying: "And that's everyone's job". We title the Government of Ireland logo on the screen and the line "Waste management, it's everyone's job".*

The advertisement draws upon both the meaning of Paudi and Tommy as a celebrity

endorsers from the culturally constituted world (McCracken, 1986, 1989), and the Irish

symbolism and historical associations attached to Croke Park[21] as a sporting venue to

construct meaning and resonance for the advertisement. Here, the advertisement taps into

the historical rivalry between the Dublin and Kerry Gaelic football teams, perpetuating

the mythology of great football battles fought between these two counties and the

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[21] Croke Park is the official headquarters and stadium of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) which is located on the north side of Dublin.

traditional competitiveness that exists between the managers of competing counties. The advertisement cleverly portrays these two traditional rivals joining forces, as Tommy "slaps" his adversary Paudi on the back to remove him from his nightmare, and they then unite for the common good of waste management. Mark then narrates the second commercial in the salience phase, which features a well known celebrity from the world of music:

> *Mark: The second commercial in that phase is also forty seconds and uses Louis Walsh, I probably should say off Pop Stars and manager of...*
> *Edward: Oh you should say, some of them may not know*
> *Mark: Manager of Samantha Mumba, Westlife and Boyzone. This television commercial opens with Louis Walsh walking around the Point Depot, rubbish is striven around the floor of the hall, this is obviously after a gig. As Louis walks through the debris he speaks to camera: "Every week in Ireland we produce enough rubbish to fill the point depot 10 times over. At this point we see the point depot filling with refuse and then an aerial shot of the Point with huge piles of rubbish around it. We then cut and see O'Connell Street full of rubbish with just half of the millennium spire visible over the top of the big rubbish heap. We cut back to Louis at the Point, he looks to camera and says very seriously: "Ireland's waste problem is out of hand". With that a guy who is busy sweeping up the rubbish stops beside Louie and says with typical Dublin cutting wit: "In fairness Louis, you've filled the place with rubbish yourself a few times". Louis smiles but then says. "Better management is the answer to Ireland's waste problem and that's everybody's job". Waste management it's everybody's job.*

In this passage, Mark describes an advertisement with Louis Walsh, the manager of Westlife and Samantha Mumba, and asks the group if he should say that Louis is "off "Popstars"[22], and Edward confirms that some members of the client team may not be aware of who Louis Walsh is and may not have the knowledge to understand the cultural reference points. This advertisement contains implicit cultural knowledge about Louis Walsh as a music manager, which requires cultural knowledge on the part of the consumer to interpret the cultural codes within the advertisement (Hackley, 2005; Scott,

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[22] This refers to "You're a Star", a singing competition which sought to discover a singing act for the Irish entry to the Eurovision song contest, on which Louis Walsh was a talent judge.

1994b). It highlights for consumers the seriousness of the waste management issue, although does so through the use of humour.

6.11.4   Call to Action Phase

The "call to action" phase is the second aspect of the waste management campaign. The phrase "call to action" implies once again to the potential client that the agency have the ability to instil this within consumers. The first advertisement in the "call to action" phase uses the then manager of the then Irish International Soccer Team Brian Kerr to communicate the importance of waste management:

> *Mark: In this we use the managers. Brian Kerr the Ireland manager, and this commercial remember is to capitalise on the increased awareness from the first phase and dramatises the need for sustainable lifestyle. This commercial opens with a shot of a football team kicking off. It's a game between two very amateur teams the players are not exactly pictures of health, and their football ability is clearly limited. We see two players from the team running into each other, and then we hear the groans from the disgruntled manager from the sidelines. We then see that that manager is in fact Brian Kerr, he turns to camera: "It's not easy managing rubbish, but unless we start to get a grip of the waste problem in this country we'll all be dropped". We see one of the players missing an open goal from two yards, Brian throws his hands up in despair, we cut and it's now halftime, the players are eating orange segments and they're drinking from plastic water bottles. Brian picks up a discarded orange peel and water bottle and says: "But by recycling plastics and composting food waste we can make a difference". Brian turns to a really overweight player and says: "You're on for the second half". The overweight guy runs onto the pitch his jersey is on back to front, both numbers at the front. Brian shakes his head in disbelief and concludes by saying: "Better management is the answer to Ireland's waste problem, and that's everyone's job".*

In this advertisement, Kerr draws an equivalence between rubbish and the football ability of the players depicted in the match (Leymore, 1975; Williamson, 1978), and tells consumers that Ireland needs to "get a grip" on the waste problem or we will all be "dropped", a word drawn from the discourse of soccer to describe when a player is not selected for a team performance (Cook, 1992). The advertisement also reinforces a cultural stereotype of overweight people being incompetent and careless (Bristor et al.,

1995; Pollay, 1986; Wolf, 1991), although this seems to be presented in a firmly tongue-in-cheek advertising fashion by the advertising agency.

Mark then describes the second advertisement in the "call to action" phase of the campaign:

> *Mark: Second in the call to action phase is Louis Walsh again. In this commercial we see him sitting beside the desk in his home, the desk is covered with a mountain of tapes CD cases and letters from hopeful bands. Louie picks up one of the CD cases and while holding it, says to camera: "You wouldn't believe some of the rubbish I get sent, and this mountain of rubbish is just the tip of an enormous iceberg". We cut and see Louis standing on top of a pile of huge rubbish, he says: "We need to think about the rubbish we produce". Cut back to his office and he lifts up his bin and he takes out a CD case, and a band biography which is a number of pages stapled together and he says: "by recycling stuff like plastic and paper we can really make a difference". We then hear his doorbell ringing he opens the front door and there's a wannabe boy band there singing on his doorstep. They are awful. Louis concludes by saying: "Better management isn't the answer to everything, but it is the answer to Ireland's waste problem, and that's everybody's job". Waste management it's everybody's job.*

In this passage of the discourse, Mark describes the advertisement featuring Louis Walsh this time with a mountain of tapes and CD's, and he turns to the camera and says "You wouldn't believe the rubbish I get sent", once again drawing an equivalence between rubbish and the music of the hopeful bands that send him their demos (Leymore, 1975). The advertisement again draws upon the celebrity meaning of Louis Walsh to construct cultural resonance for the advertisement (McCracken, 1989). The advertisement places the onus for waste management with every consumer citizen, in describing how it is "everybody's job" to address this problem. Mark then introduces Peter, who will explain the media relations aspects of the communications campaign.

6.11.5   Organs of the National Media

Peter introduces the next phase of the communications campaign, which is the development of a media relations strategy. He describes how the campaign can "pick up"

editorial coverage in the national media and local newspapers through the influence of public relations, and a launch day in a national venue is detailed with the Minister for the Environment in the company of managers such as Brian Kerr and Louie Walsh to add their "Stamp of Ownership" to the campaign. In this event the minister will be associated with these managers, and their positive characteristics as management experts at the top of their respective fields. Peter outlines the press and radio coverage that the waste management campaign will receive, with pre-arranged coverage on Ireland's most popular daily radio programme the Gerry Ryan show, and he highlights the experience of the agency in working with current clients such as Bank Y. Peter describes how the agency will engage with the media to articulate the key message of the communications campaign:

> **Peter:** *We have to engage with the major organs of the national media at the highest level, with the owners and the editors to impact on their sense of responsibility. The minister himself has to be involved behind the scenes, he and you, the senior people, will have to meet those few key people, owners and editors, so that it can be outlined to them the commitment that now exists to tackling the waste issue at governmental level, and the critical role of responsible communications in making that happen.*

In this passage, Peter constructs the media as a living organism by drawing on the discourse of the human body and emphasising that the campaign has to engage with the "major organs" of the national media. Peter also places onus upon the members of the government department to support the initiative of the advertising campaign, highlights the role of communications in developing this campaign. Peter explains how an educational program will be set up to provide seminars and workshops on waste management to challenge the assumptions of "cultural journalists" and inform the working media of the purpose of the campaign. Peter then describes how a press office

219

will be set up to provide the public with a "reservoir of published information and images". The press office will be staffed by a panel of "experts", who will continually monitor media coverage of the communications campaign, correct inaccuracies and "feed" correct media on an on-going basis.

6.11.6   Integration and Social Networks

Tristan concludes the presentation, and sums the pitch up with the word "integration" for the client. He describes how the consortium's approach has interlocking elements from different disciplines with advertising, design, print and media relations activity all part of the overall communications campaign strategy, and he highlights that the team have experience in working on waste management related issues. He emphasises how Irish Advertising Limited and Company A will work together on the account to bring "new blood" and "fresh thinking", and he mentions how between them both groups have an established social networks and personal connections that will be invaluable to the development of the overall campaign (Moeran, 2005a). Tristan also highlights how the Environment Department has worked well with the consortium in the past, emphasising the close "links" between the personnel in the two organisations.

The waste management account pitch provided some interesting insights into advertising agency practice. It illustrated how the agency presented itself in the pitching process, and how it differentiated itself within this "tournament of value" from competitors (Appadurai, 1986). In this process, the agency used much rhetoric of power and control about the likely effect that the advertising would have on consumers, in positioning themselves as experts in communication (Alvesson, 1994: 543). The campaign strategy itself showed how campaigns are integrated across many diverse media channels to

communicate a message to consumers, and how these were interlocked by the agency through their social networks and connections (Moeran, 2005a). Finally, the use of well known celebrities to draw metaphorical connections between culture and advertising issues was interesting, as it showed how these equivalence metaphors are encoded within commercial messages (Morgan and Reichart, 1999).

6.12 Bank Y Student Banking: The Conquest of Cool?

Once the pitch rehearsal for the Environment Department had finished, Edward instructed me to the first floor meeting room of the advertising agency, where Irish Advertising Limited were presenting to the Bank Y client, this time with members of the client organisation present. Carol, the account planner, had been told to expect me at the meeting, and the presentation was of creative briefs that she had written for the proposed Bank Y student banking advertising campaign, which earlier that week I had observed her working on and conducting some informal preparatory research for. The purpose of this presentation was to obtain feedback from the client representatives on the composition of the creative briefs and the direction advertising strategy developed by the agency in consultation with the client, in order to seek approval to begin creative work on the Bank Y student banking campaign. The presentation was attended by Carol (account planner), James (account director), Gavin and Fionnula (account handling), Thomas and Karla, the representatives from Irish Bank Organisation, and myself as a non-participant observer.

6.12.1   Student Banking Creative Brief

Before the meeting began, Carol gave each participant a copy of three creative briefs based on the student banking campaign, one for the student banking brand, one for

second level students and one for third level students, which all drew upon very similar knowledge and themes. The Banking Brand brief is presented to provide some insights into the campaign strategy for the Bank Y student banking campaign.

The structure of the brand creative brief (see appendix 3) for the Bank Y Student Banking Campaign is identical in structure to the Bank Y Business Banking creative brief, and begins by stating the reason that has prompted the request for a new advertising campaign. Bank Y wants to be the first "port of call" for students looking to open their first bank account, with the metaphor of a "port" being utilised to emphasise the role of the financial institution. The brief states that Bank Y needs an "image alteration" and needs to be more "youthful", invoking the characteristics of a personality. Interestingly, the brief describes how Bank Y cannot be "cool" or "irresponsible" like an alcohol drinks brand, however Bank Y could be "street smart" and "savvy" and had a "licence" to talk to the youth market, the metaphor of a licence indicated that the bank could communicate with the youth market in an authentic way.

The "creative platform" for the advertisement will be "manifest" through a television "execution", but the idea developed in the campaign will inform other marketing activity. The target market for the campaign are described as students in second and third year who are "ahead of the posse", and impatient to acquire and flaunt the "badges of adulthood". The description indicates that this class of students are progressive in their worldview, and by acquiring signifiers of adulthood these young consumers seek to construct a mature self identity through consumption (Belk, 1988; Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998).

222

Male students require money and status to impress girls, while girls need money in the pursuit of fashion and beauty, although it's unclear in the brief where this consumer insight emerged from. They currently see Bank Y as a bank they'd associate with their parents, and the agency want consumers to view it as a bank for people "like me" who want the "inside track" on everything and for people who want to "get ahead" in life. The agency substantiate the truth claims of the advertising by providing students with a "competitive financial package", including ATM cards, mobile phones, credit balances and loans, which are designed to reinforce the authenticity of the advertising message. The brief asks how this "one credible thing" can be expressed more compellingly, and offers some suggested copy lines for the campaign such as "This makes sense" and "Think ahead, get ahead, stay ahead", drawing once again on the perceived progressiveness of the target audience. The brief claims that the advertising should be "savvy" and "straight talking" but should not be "trying too hard", and should be seen as a "breath of fresh air" by this consumer group. Finally the brief warns the advertising against "patronising" students in order to have credibility amongst the target audience.

6.12.2   Student Banking Presentation

The presentation was given by Carol, although James did interact with her to clarify some points for the client. Although a hard copy of the presentation was not provided by Carol to any of the participants, after the meeting I requested a printed copy, which Carol was happy to provide me with. What follows is an analysis of the discourse of the Bank Y student banking presentation (see appendix 5) to provide an illustration of how consumers are young consumers were constituted within the advertising process for Bank Y student banking (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992), and how the advertising strategy for

223

the Bank Y brand was developed by the account planning team. The purpose of the presentation was to investigate the youth market and create a brand positioning to communicate to wide numbers of students.

6.12.2.1 The Youth Market

On page one of the presentation, Carol provides some clues about the origins of the research insights into the target audience. She summarises the research as coming from Bank Y's own research, the Decode consortium, Irish Advertising Limited's own research and "culture trawls", which turned out to be searches for images on the internet, informal analysis of magazines and informal research with consumers in the target audience, such as the research Carol conducted with Janice identified earlier in the study. A collage of brand imagery (Adidas, Heineken, Carlsberg), celebrities (Eminem, Johnny Knoxville, Keanu Reeves), and imagery of young people is depicted, which is deemed to be representative of the youth market styles and tastes. A picture of then popular youth comic Ali G is presented, with a quotation from advertising practitioner journal "Admap", which details how the youth generation are "overstretching" themselves between college work and part-time jobs, and that sleep deprivation is a "badge of honour" amongst this consumer group. The use of metaphors such as those highlighted help to presentation to emphasise the lifestyle trends of this group (Malefyt, 2003), and the consumer rituals attached to being a member of the youth tribe (Cova and Cova, 2002).

Second and third level students are detailed in page three of the presentation. For second level students, girls are seen as more "mature and confident" while boys are "busy enjoying themselves and lazing about", and the presentation states that 47% of second

level students do not have a bank account. The lives of third level students "go into orbit" as they get involved in college life", and "fun" is the priority. Students are constructed as drinkers, who go out to gigs and watch football matches, or have a night "in with de tins", which refers to drinking at home.

The presentation then presents a profile of what students weekly spend is for items such as clothes, mobile phones, alcohol, cigarettes, music, transport, restaurants and food. The first few slides provide an illustration of how consumers are constructed and constituted within the advertising process through the panopticon of marketing and consumer research (Hackley, 2002; Miller and Rose, 1997), and how personal opinions and intuitions of advertising planners play a role in the development of understanding about the behaviour and motivation of consumers. The visual montage which Carol had assembled from Google Images also played an important role in providing visual reference points from youth culture that participants in the presentation could identify and relate to in order the visualise the target consumer group.

6.12.2.2   What is Cool?

The presentation at the end of page four asks which brands constitute "cool" within society. A number of brands are presented to represent a "cool" image, such as Nike, Apple, Adidas, Smirnoff, The Slate[23], MTV and Heineken. The presentation then elaborates on what the word "cool" actually means in society, and develops some rhetorically robust statements such as "zig when others zag" and "No style without Substance" to define the word cool. Advertising agencies and marketers have traditionally sought to define and conquer the meaning of cool (Frank, 1997), and here

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[23] The Slate was a subversive counter cultural magazine that was an insider's guide to the Dublin music, pub and club scenes.

Carol seeks to provide both visual and textual examples of what constitutes and comprises "cool" within consumer culture. The presentation also details some of the "trends" of youth culture, such as confidence, anger, cynical, paranoid, demanding, cost conscious and common sense, which define the meaning of cool from the agency perspective.

6.12.2.3 Marketing Literacy: Literate Consumers and Circuits of Belief

In a previous conversation with Carol (see section 6.3), she had mentioned how she had completed an M.Sc. dissertation on advertising literacy and young consumers, and had read the work of Stephanie O'Donohoe on young people's "uses and gratifications" of advertising (O'Donohoe, 1994). In page six of the presentation, Carol put some of these constructs from the world of academic advertising research to use, describing the "marketing literacy" of youth consumers, who "speak" marketing and advertising slogans in everyday life and perform rituals of understanding cool and humorous ads which they then share and exchange with their friends. These findings and insights had been developed through a mixture of Carol's own dissertation research, and the research of advertising scholars whose academic knowledge had emphasised the role of the consumer in interpreting advertising meanings (Buttle, 1991; Lannon, 1993; O'Donohoe, 1999; Ritson and Elliott, 1999). Here, Carol has linked the findings of academic advertising work directly to managerial implications for marketing and advertising strategies to the youth market, illustrating how academic knowledge is constituted through the "circuits of belief" that flow and circulate through discourse within advertising agencies and between advertising practitioners and their clients (Cronin, 2004a).

6.12.2.4 Strategic Focus: Smarter Products for Smarter Consumers

The presentation then explores the "strategic focus" of the advertising campaign, and some of the strategic possibilities for the campaign such as recruitment, retention, cross-selling and up-selling, underlying the strategic marketing interests underlying the development of the creative advertisement. The presentation states that the recruitment strategy should focus on the "right type" of consumer, and that customer retention was achieved through "reinforcing the relationship", further reifying the concept of tangible relationships between individuals and corporate financial institutions. The presentation outlines how these relationships can be reinforced, through providing good customer service levels and developing products that are relevant, desirable and timely to the consumer, perhaps ignoring the fact that many consumers do not actually desire a relationship with marketing institutions at all (Brown, 2001a). In terms of the communication focus, the presentation emphasises the longer-term "smarter" view espoused in the creative brief, and the importance of deepening the "relationship" in order to attract "sensible" consumers.

The bank is then constructed as an anatomy in page nine of the presentation that needs to find its "cool bone", and highlights the need to Bank Y to be cool "on its own terms" in order to have credibility in the eyes of consumers, and summarises the creative strategy as "Smarter banks with smarter products and smarter promotions, attract smarter customers". Here, Carol outlines how the concept of "cool" can be constructed with authenticity and credibility for Bank Y through the advertising and communications campaign (Frank, 1997), and attracting progressive "smart" customers and developing reified "relationships" with these consumers seems to be key to sustaining this strategy in the long term for Bank Y. The communications strategy in page nine also shows how the

227

brand positioning strategy is linked to the attractive and tactical offers to second the third level students, emphasising the strategic and military precision with which the discourse about the campaign is constructed (Malefyt, 2003; Miller, 2003).

6.12.3 Student Banking Client Presentation: Facing the Music

The client presentation was first introduced by James, who described the purpose of the presentation which was to provide an insight into how the student market was perceived by the advertising agency, and to seek feedback from the client on the creative briefs so that they could enter the creative process with client approval. James suggested to Thomas and Karla that the advertising campaign, which was to be developed for the student market in the Irish Republic, could also be used in Northern Ireland for the student market to create "synergies" and "greater bang for your buck", as the Northern Branches could contribute to the cost of the advertising campaign and the student market was "pretty much the same" up North. Thomas described how the student market in Northern Ireland was still "incentive driven"[24], and there was a danger that if these incentives were removed there would be a "knee-jerk reaction" and consumers would move away from Bank Y to competing financial institutions. While the Northern market was different to the Republic market in this sense, James highlights the benefits of the two divisions working from the same brief, which Thomas agrees to. Carol then introduces the main part of the presentation.

6.12.3.1 The Reservoir of Cultural Knowledge

Carol shares with the group the sources of the knowledge for the presentation, from research agencies, databases, "cultural trawls" and she even mentions the role that

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[24] "Incentives", such as free mobile phones or loan and overdraft facilities, are offered by banks to student consumers to open a bank account with a financial institution.

transition year student Janice played as a student in going through magazines and in

providing the agency with intelligence on this youth market. James qualifies the agency

as experts on the youth market by outlining the other clients with youth brands that Irish

Advertising have done work for throughout the years, and summarises by stating that the

presentation insights as the total of "all of that knowledge". Carol then presents some

insights into the lives of third level students, outlines the spending patterns of young

people, and presents some of the "cool" brands represented in the presentation. When

Carol presents the slide on page 5 explaining the meaning of the word "cool", Thomas is

immediately impressed with her explanation of the "cool" concept:

> *Thomas: You could make money out of that, I've been at about three conferences,*
> *two in the UK, and they asked us to define what cool is, and I'm talking about*
> *Nike, Vodafone, all the top brands where there, and no-one could come up with*
> *something like that, so you could make money out of that*
> *(Gavin laughs, Carol laughs)*
> *Carol: I'm giving it away!*

Here, Thomas commends Carol on her attempts to define the meaning of "cool", telling

her she could gain financially from her work, and he gives some insights into the

advertising industry's infatuation with the concept of "cool" (Frank, 1997). Carol

describes how the youth market are "harder", "angrier" and "tougher" than their

predecessors, and the group describe the example of rapper Eminem as an example of

this new aggression in youth culture, with James pointing out that the youth market had

said Eminem had "popularized" himself because he didn't curse as much anymore. Carol

mentions that many young people were more paranoid, and carried around pocket knives

because it made them feel safer. Gavin adds how Corporation X had noticed a trend of

young people avoiding "buzz brash venues" in the city centre (as described in the

Activity Brief for Beer Y), and were drinking in local venues in the suburbs of Dublin, as research insights from other brands were drawn upon in the Bank Y presentation.

Carol highlights the marketing literacy of the Irish consumers, and the importance of entertainment and advertising campaigns that were relevant to the everyday lives of this audience. She also outlines the importance of "deepening" and "reinforcing" relationships to attract and keep young consumers however she emphasizes to the client that "if you act like a tart, you'll attract tarts". James explains how the Northern branch of Bank Y had referred to some consumers as "tarts" and "messers", consumers who take incentives from a variety of banks to open an account, but don't end up staying with Bank Y in the end. Carol explains to the group how Bank Y needs to find its "cool" bone, and highlights her proposition about Bank Y being a "smart" bank for "smart" consumers.

Thomas questions how Bank Y can be "cool", and Carol outlines the importance of Bank Y having the "confidence" to be cool. James interjects, and explains the purpose of the advertising is to "shift" consumer's perception of Bank Y, particularly relative to their nearest rivals, and construct a "cool" and "smart" image for Bank Y through an advertising campaign that would resonate well with the youth market. James also describes qualitative research which explored the proposition of Bank Y as a "trusted guide", and he argues that Bank Y could be a trusted guide for young consumer's life stages as everyone needed a trusted guide at some stage in their life. The metaphor of a "trusted guide" helps James to articulate to the group the potential role that the bank could play in these consumers' life journeys. Carol continues her presentation on the creative briefs, describing the main aim of the advertising campaign which is to "shove"

230

consumers away from "thinking just today", and highlight that Bank Y's product offerings made sense in the longer term. When the creative briefs are finished, Thomas invites the agency to be innovative in the creative work which they develop for the campaign:

> **Thomas:** The only one I would say is just from the creative brief. I would say to the guys, there's a lot of words in there like conservative and that which we are, like I think we've said them to Kevin already but what I would ask the crew is to be, you know stretch the boundaries. We are a younger, the more youthful end of the market, now I don't know how you kind of bring that into the creative brief, but certainly to say don't be afraid to push the boundaries. We'll tell you when you've gone too far, kind of thing, like don't be constrained. When you're in the overall brand work, I think you're dealing with some of the other product areas you'll find you are in a safe, secure territory and it's just to just to be conscious to not get bogged down in that when your dealing with A bank, in that you will get away with a lot more at the younger end of the market and I think it's just to make sure they push the boundaries as well.

In this passage, Thomas describes how the agency should "push the boundaries" in the advertising and reflect the spirit of the youth market which the advertising campaign is produced for. He provides assurances to the agency that as the client they will inform the agency "when you've gone too far", indicating that the client will exercise restrictions on the campaign if the boundaries are "stretched" and "pushed" too much. Here, Thomas is giving the agency a license for creativity and expression as this is an advertisement directed at a youthful audience, but is also clearly stating the authority of the client in being able to veto the creative work that they feel exceeds the boundaries of this tacit agreement.

6.12.3.2   Student Officers: At the Coalface of Student Interaction
Toward the end of the meeting, Gavin enquires whether students had a dedicated "relationship manager", similar to the business banking customers of Bank Y, and Thomas tells them that there is a dedicated "student officer" in every branch. James

suggests to Thomas that it might be a good idea for the agency to meet the student

officers at some point in the future:

> *James: Would it make sense for us at some stage for us to touch base with some of the student officers. Carol was saying this to me earlier on it's worked quite well for us in business banking, where just talk to some of the people who are actually out in the field.*
> *Thomas: We've some very good ones even in Dublin if you want?*
> *Gavin: It's good to see what's happening on the ground, get a feeling off them.*
> *(And later on)*
> *James: We mightn't get anything from it, this morning we met emmm.*
> *Gavin: They can be a sounding board sometimes.*
> *James: We met a man who is a financial adviser from the Ballsbridge branch about eight weeks ago myself and some of the creative teams working on the brand, and it just, that person just said one or two things that led to someone thinking something else, interpreting something there because they're at the coalface.*

In this passage, James explains the reason for the agency "touching base" with the

student officers "in the field", as this had been done with relationship managers for the

Bank Y business banking campaign. Gavin mentions how it was good for the agency to

get a feel for what was happening "on the ground" and later describes these people as

"sounding boards" for creative ideas. James then gives the example of how creative

teams met with managers in the past which led to the development of creative ideas, and

he describes these people "at the coalface" of the operation. From this interaction, it

seems that advertising practitioners in Irish Advertising Limited conduct informal

ethnographies of field workers (Hirota, 1995), and subsequently develop ideas from this

limited engagement with the field of practice which are then decontextualised from this

social realm and manifested into the development of advertising campaigns (Goldman,

1992).

The preparations and meeting for Bank Y Student Banking provided some interesting

insights into the campaign development process in Irish Advertising Limited. The

concept of "cool" seemed to be sold as a promotional gambit to the client (Cronin, 2004c), and rather than being based upon rigorous consumer research, it appeared that the agency was managing its own impression with the client (Moeran, 2005b). Indeed, the lack of research which went into the formation of the "cool" concept is fascinating in itself, Carol largely formed the presentation on her own personal intuition, web searches and insights from a "sample of one" transition year student who happened to be on work experience in the agency. Finally, toward the end of the meeting, Thomas while granting the agency a licence to be creative, firmly establishes the boundaries within which this could take place, which indicated the nature of the power relationship between the client and the agency in the creative development process.

6.13 Bank Y GAA Creative Briefing

I heard Michael and James discussing a meeting they were going to attend to brief the creative department on the Bank Y sponsorship of the GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) Football Championship. I asked James directly if I could attend as a non-participant, and he kindly allowed me to sit-in on the meeting. The meeting was attended by James (account director), Michael (account planner), Ailish (account handler) and Ken and Alan (copywriting and art directing team), and myself as a non-participant observer.

6.13.1 Bank Y GAA Creative Brief

The creative brief (see appendix 6) begins with an explanation of what is required by the advertising campaign, and states that the agency must review the current advertising campaign, and develop a "recommendation" for a new advertising campaign to run on television, outdoor and radio. Bank Y is currently in the ninth year of sponsorship of the GAA Championship, and is the best known sponsorship in Ireland, however there is

currently a gap between consumer awareness of the ads and knowledge of the sponsor. The advertising had to "forge a link" between the Bank and the GAA Championship, the metaphor of "forging" emphasising how the advertising had to develop a more potent cultural association between the corporate Bank and the sporting institution of the GAA (Cronin, 2004c; McCracken, 1986). The agency had to consider if they were going to "revitalise" the current advertising campaign with some new creative, or develop a new advertising campaign idea entirely.

The brief asks what insights the agency had about the target audience and what they know about their "needs, behaviour, beliefs and media consumption", information that will enable the practitioners to develop advertising to appeal directly to this consumer group. The brief describes how people are passionate about sport, and the GAA football championship "holds appeal" for both GAA fans and non-GAA fans. These fans have a "real sense of identity" with their home counties, and go to "extraordinary lengths" to demonstrate this. Here, the brief identifies how intertwined the GAA is with Irish national identity (Fanning, 2005; Holt, 2004), and also highlights the fanatical consumption of Irish GAA supporters.

Television is identified in the creative brief as the most effective medium to communicate with these consumers, and outdoor advertising is also effective because the football championship takes place during the summer. The brief then employs the language of control, asking what "effect" the advertising should have on the consumer. The brief states that the advertising should "surprise", "amuse" and "be the topic of conversation amongst friends", indicating that the agency want the advertising to be used ritualistically

as a social resource in people's everyday discourse (O'Donohoe, 2001; Ritson and Elliott, 1999).

The brief personifies the brand, describing the key consumer benefit as the "brand persona" and "user image", and outlines the importance of this personality being "unique" and more importantly "powerful". The use of this type of language in the creative brief outlines how agencies and clients seek to construct human personality characteristics for mass marketed product and brands (Kapferer, 2001), which are reified through advertising communication and enable consumers to relate and identify with these products. The bank is described as "part" of the championship rather than simply associated with it through the advertising campaign, and this is the message which the advertising should communicate to the consumer.

The brief asks which "signifiers" are currently "owned" by the Bank Y brand, and it details the current advertising campaign, which is a play on John F. Kennedy's classic speech "Ask not what your country can do for you". The choice of the word "ownership" indicates that the advertising had to construct distinct signification for the brand in order to be perceived as a different campaign from that of competitors.

6.13.2 Bank Y GAA Creative Briefing

The briefing session begins with James explaining to the group how the client had conducted "tracking research" on the advertising campaign currently being run by Bank Y in sponsorship of the GAA Championship. While the campaign had high awareness and was very effective in promoting Gaelic Games, the bank logo was "stuck on" the advertising and the agency had to try and forge a stronger signification link between the values of the GAA and the values of the Bank Y brand through the advertising campaign.

They discuss the current Bank Y GAA advertising campaigns, which are shown to the creatives, and James explains to the creative team that they are "tied" to the current advertising slogan "Ask not what your County can do for you but what you can do for your County". These current advertisements dramatise the lengths which GAA fans will go to demonstrate support for their county, and feature among others two working class Dublin fans who risk arrest by repainting the chimneys of the Poolbeg ESB (Electricity Supply Board) Power Station in Dublin[25] blue and navy to represent the colours of the Dublin football team (the chimneys are normally a red and white colour), and a young girl wearing an orange communion dress in a class photo while all her classmates wear white to demonstrate her support for the Armagh football team. Michael then presents the creative brief to the group, and highlights how the link developed between the GAA and Bank Y through the advertising campaign thus far had been "tenuous". Creating a stronger "link" between the GAA and the Bank Y presented a substantial challenge to the creative team, and as this was an interim campaign and they had to work within the structures and boundaries of the current advertising campaign concepts and slogans.

6.13.2.1   Finding the "Link" between the Bank Y and the GAA

Michael begins deconstructing the brief for the creative team, and he outlines the insights into the fanatical consumption of GAA supporters that have informed the creative work on the current Bank Y GAA Football Championship advertising campaign:

> *Michael: It's quite an emotional thing, the GAA, so the Irish have a passion for many things in life, albeit nearly all recreational. However the following of sport is best described as fanatical, when it comes to their native game, football and hurling, the level of pride, enthusiasm, shared emotion to their particular teams and counties is unsurpassed. The often fair or wild expressions of the supporters caught on camera at any football match would bewilder any possible, and*

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[25] The chimneys of the ESB Power Station in Poolbeg are a major landmark on the skyline of Dublin city.

possibly scare any other fan base from around the world. These supporters come from all walks of life, even non-GAA supporters are soon converted once their county starts to progress throughout the championship. Their support of their home counties is expressed in many ways, at times going to the extraordinary lengths to express this allegiance, that's really what I suppose this is all about, each match brands an excuse to shut up shop for a few hours and depending on their county's success, it could be at least a week before the keys come back from the lock and their lives return to normality for another year. So it's really just the passion they have, involving them.

Here, Michael explains the emotional attachment of being a GAA supporter in a metaphorical discourse that translates to the creative team the fanatical consumption and experiential commitment of this consumer group to their native Counties in the Football Championship. James interjects, and tells the creative team that there was a "rural pattern" to this fanatical ritualistic consumption which did not exist to the same extent amongst GAA supporters in Dublin. He describes how the Dublin GAA team would have to win the Football Championship to generate the same level of fanatical consumption as that which exists amongst rural supporters, and he explains how the "back door system"[26] generates "concentric circles" of support as a County progress through the rounds of the championship. Alan agrees with James assessment, and describes the GAA as a "parish" thing which was a "badge of honour" in rural areas. Michael then explains to the creative team the effect that the advertising should have on the consumer:

> **Michael:** *What effect should the advertising have on the consumer? It should make them feel that one cannot exist without the other, that Bank Y and the GAA football championship are intrinsically linked.*

Michael outlines how the consumer should be made to feel having seen the advertising that Bank Y and GAA are interdependent entities and intrinsically linked by association. The advertising campaign should make this association appear true and natural (Barthes,

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[26] The "back door system" in Gaelic Football occurs when teams are eliminated from their respective county football championship, but allowed return into the competition for the inter-county all Ireland championship.

1977b; Williamson, 1978), and while there is a corporate sponsorship arrangement in place between Bank Y and the GAA in terms of real financial support, the advertising campaign should construct a signification relationship between the sporting institution and the corporate sponsor. Michael describes how Irish people can take pride in the fact the Bank Y and the GAA are "championing the local community", however Alan questions whether it is credible to "equate" the corporate bank with the idea of community. James qualifies this insight to the creative team, and explains an unusual paradox in consumer's interpretation of the Bank Y, particularly in rural areas. While Bank Y was generally regarded by consumers as a "corporate monolith" as James described it, and there was a negative reaction from consumers to the bank as a corporation, the attitude of consumers to the local branches in the community was completely different to "the company that announces profits of three million Euros a day" through the national media. He explains to the creative team how in local rural communities, Bank Y was very much "part of the community", however in a large city like Dublin this idea would be treated with "cynicism" by consumers.

The group then discuss how credibility can be constructed for the idea of associating Bank Y with local communities:

> *Michael: But it's a difficult one, it's a difficult one without, one of the hardest things is just throwing in the bank.*
> *Alan: What's hard to do is, and hard to do it, and to make it look credible.*
> *Michael: And positive.*
> *Alan: Make it credible, yeah.*
> *Michael: The credibility is the hardest part.*
> *Alan: Where as these.*
> *Michael You can do it yeah.*
> *James: We have to fit, I think it's the community thing, I think it's the commitment.*

In this passage, Michael describes how it is difficult to "throw" Bank Y into the advertising campaign and associate it with the values of local communities and the GAA, and Alan acknowledges that it is difficult to "make it look credible". Michael concedes to the creative team that constructing "credibility" for the association through the advertising would be the "hardest part" of developing the campaign, and James states that "community" and "commitment" were integral to the advertising idea. James explains how Beer X were successfully able to make the "link" between their brand and the GAA, and he cites the "tone" and the "art" in the advertising that were particular to Beer X as a brand that made this link more credible to the consumer. Both Michael and Alan agree that the current advertisements promote the GAA well, but do not link the bank into the equation of the advertising meaning, and this is the key problem which the next advertising campaign must address.

6.13.2.2 Struggling with the Brief

Ken, who had remained quiet for most of the meeting, tells Michael that he is struggling with the creative brief as it stands. Ken apologises to Michael in a cordial and friendly way (I'm sorry man"), and Michael acknowledges the difficulty of solving the brief and creating a "legitimate" link between Bank Y and the community. He explains to Ken how he had consulted the current creative brief for Beer X to look for "similarities" between the two campaigns, and consulted with other colleagues in the agency, but concedes to Ken that the creative brief is "very tricky". Ken and Michael then try to develop a further understanding of the creative starting points for the new advertising campaign:

> *Ken: And give us your starting points again.*
> *Michael: OK, extraordinary but credible things that people will do to show their allegiance to their county. There's a photograph here, because grass roots support is what really counts, ok. So the GAA and the local towns, so you've GAA*

239

and the local Bank Y branch keeping local communities local is the idea that the Bank Y is not coming in and overtaking a town and putting a stamp of corporateness over it. It's actually taking on, the actual locality of a town and actually keeping it that way. So it's not changing it, and then it's the little things. It's the idea of going back to whether they're the local bank manager's actually giving money to little sort of teams", and you know the idea that the local bank manager is the father of the guys they're sponsoring.

Alan: Like society, yeah.

James: Would another creative starting point be something like "we're in this together"?

In this passage, Michael explains how the campaign focuses upon the "extraordinary but credible" things that GAA fans do to show allegiance to their counties. Michael describes the importance of "grass roots" support to the communities involved in the GAA, and he emphasises how Bank Y are not trying to "overtake a town and put a stamp of corporateness over it", but as a financial institution they were in-keeping with the local ethos of communities. Michael cites how local bank managers would sponsor local GAA teams, and James suggests another creative starting point for the team which is "we're in this together", emphasising the intertwining of economic and social relations between the GAA and Bank Y. James points out to the group how Bank Y is a part of the community and community life through their branches, however Alan argues that the difficulty was "drawing a parallel between how the GAA is seen as a part of the community and how the bank is seen as a part of the community and to do it in a credible way".

Both Ken and Alan feel the task of forcing the opposites of corporate culture (Bank Y) and community culture (GAA) together within the interim campaign is a difficult task. James acknowledges the creative team will need some time to "digest" the brief more fully, and that the campaign is a "big ask". James suggests to the rest of the group that it might be a good idea to e-mail the brief to Edward (account planner) and Mark (creative director) to get their input into the campaign development process, illustrating the

socially constructed nature of advertising production (Hackley, 2001; Malefyt, 2003). James also acknowledges the difficulties working on a campaign within this sort of remit, and he tells the rest of the group how the worst thing they could do was develop a campaign that "forces" the bank into the advertisement and places it completely out of context with the GAA.

The campaign preparation for the advertising of the Bank Y sponsorship of the GAA illustrated how advertising practitioners seek to construct credible signification links between economic entities (such as a financial institution) and cultural entities (such as the GAA). This link had to appear as authentic to the consumer, and needed to convey the spirit of community which embodies the GAA, with James's telling use of the phrase "we're in this together" really underlining how the advertising could potentially achieve this. It showed how advertising signification works at the everyday level of advertising practice.

6.14 Socially Constructing Needs: The Need States Brainstorm

The last meeting I was invited to was a brainstorming session for Bank Y. The purpose of the session was to discuss consumer "need states", and then relate these various need states to financial products that were offered by the Bank Y. The session was attended by Michael, Karen, Carol, Edward, and myself as a non-participant observer. The meeting took place in Edward's office, and was based upon developing an informal interaction between the practitioners in one hour that would identify financial need states that the client had not already thought of in the client brief provided to the advertising agency. As an interaction, this brainstorming session provided an interesting example of how consumer "needs" and ideas about consumption were socially constructed by

241

practitioners through the intra-agency discourse that took place in the advertising process (Hackley, 1999b, 2001; Malefyt, 2003). While no explicit reference was made to formal models of human needs such as Maslow "Hierarchy of Needs", the discourse of the meeting was constructed around a list of human needs that Carol had prepared prior to the meeting. The advertising practitioners through this meeting were socially constructing their own version of the needs hierarchy as they related to the products of Bank Y.

6.14.1 Financial Need States: Mapping Human Needs onto Banking Needs

The session begins with Carol asserting some authority on the control of the discourse of the meeting, and defining a "need state" for the group as a complex web of considerations for people which are physical, emotional, pathological, rational, and influenced by mood. Edward summarises need states as a "basket of considerations" for consumers which are rational and emotional, however later on in the meeting he develops a more concise definition of what constitutes a financial "need state" for consumers:

> **Edward:** It's a simple thing which is the reasons why people need money, is a need state, right? That's what a need state is in this context be it for Beer X right? It's the reasons why people drink alcohol, release, affiliation, la la la, so this is quite simply the reasons why people need money.

Although Edward defined a need state for the group almost half-way through the meeting, the definition he used here encapsulates what the group were constructing through the discourse of the meeting. He draws on some of the campaign thinking from the Beer X client to apply this to the financial need states of consumers. The group then consider these need states in terms of their knowledge of financial products.

6.14.2   Securing my Future

The group first discuss the need to "set up home" and "looking after my family", and then they talk about financial security, which Edward and Carol refer to as "securing my future". Karen reflects on her own experiences of security in relation to her own bank account, articulating what financial security means to her:

> *Karen: It's like in my family we have a bit basic threshold of even in a working account, you never go below the certain amount that's in your bank account and it's almost like its not set aside as I'm saving for a holiday or a car, it's just to have a bit much buffer almost.*
> *Carol: Buffer, yeah.*
> *Edward: So what's the need it's serving? Having the buffer serves what need?*
> *Carol: Control.*
> *Karen: Just in case yeah it's or...*
> *Edward: Being in control great well let's have that.*
> *Carol: Control.*
> *Michael: Control's is a big stage*
> *Carol: Control is definitely a big one.*
> *Edward: Controlling my what?*
> *Carol: Life.*

In this passage, Karen discusses her own family experiences of having a "basic threshold" of a balance in her bank account as a "buffer". Although Karen is an Australian national living and working in Ireland, her consumption experiences are valuable to the team and form the basis of discussion about the "securing my future" need. Edward asks what need the "buffer" served for Karen, and Carol interjects by identifying this need as "control". Carol had at the beginning of the meeting asserted her own authority over the development of the discourse by offering to the group to read out a list of human needs, and here she once again tries to assert a dominant position within the discussion. Karen refers to this "buffer" in her bank account as funds that are there "just in case", and Michael identifies control as an important need state for consumers for their financial security.

6.14.3   Living a Fuller Life

Edward identifies a need for consumers to "live day to day" in their lives, and explains

how people need money to "live an existence". He then describes a need for living a

"fuller life", and explains the difference between these two consumer need states:

> **Edward:** *All right here's another one which is living a fuller life is the difference between so living a fuller life is quite distinct.*
> **Karen:** *Today.*
> **Edward:** *Yeah, it's different from just living from day to day. Living a fuller life means living, look it's a 20% extra free, go to Salzburg instead of spending the weekend here.*
> **Michael:** *Yeah it's more enjoyment isn't it?*
> **Edward:** *It's going to Barcelona for the weekend, it's going out for a meal in a brilliant restaurant once a month, it's just living a better life.*

In this passage, Edward draws the distinction between living a day to day and living a

better life, and reflects upon his own experiences of "going to Salzburg" and "going out

for a meal in a brilliant restaurant". Michael mentions how "living a fuller life" could

correspond to going on a better holiday, and Edward suggests that this human need could

be matched to a credit card, as this product could enable consumers to live a fuller life.

Karen then articulates her own consumption experience and what "living a better life"

means to her:

> **Karen:** *Living from day to day is seeing how to take your groceries on laser*
> **Edward:** *Correct.*
> **Karen:** *Giving your pin out at an ATM machine or whatever, living a better life is about...*
> **Carol:** *Credit card...*
> **Karen:** *Yeah, anything you need to lead a life a little less ordinary.*
> **Edward:** *That's beautifully put can we write that down somewhere?*

In this passage, Karen juxtaposes living day to day as paying for groceries, while living a

fuller life as "living a life less ordinary". Later in the discussion, Edward differentiates

between these two need states as "living a happy life" and "living a better life".

244

6.14.4 Establishing my Independence

Michael mentions how being "treated as an individual" was a key finding that "came out" of a banking study conducted on another Bank Y product, and Edward suggests to the group that "becoming an individual" and "establishing my independence" are legitimate human need states. He describes to the group how "individuality" is an important need state to consumers. Karen agrees that "independence and freedom" are need states that can be satisfied through financial products, and the group also discuss having status which is perceived as being intertwined with being treated as an individual. Edward then suggests to the group that they explore the consumer need states which the bank had come up with through their own internal brainstorming sessions, and compare them to some of the need states they had already developed to construct some new need states based upon the combination of these lists.

6.14.5 Dealing with the Unexpected Immediate

Edward suggests that the "link" between the human need and money must be obvious to the group, otherwise it would be "too abstract" to be related to financial products. He mentions "control" as a need state that is related to finances, and Karen constructs the idea of financial control further for the group based on her own consumption:

> **Karen:** *To me it's almost like I need to be able to handle the unexpected expenses of life.*
> **Edward:** *Is much better than being in control.*
> **Karen:** *But seeing more about, it's the unpredictable nature of your life, which is...*
> **Michael:** *It's getting stuck at the airport and having to get another flight.*
> **Karen:** *Exactly, or getting a 380 Euro phone bill that you weren't expecting.*
> **Edward:** *So.*
> **Michael:** *Unexpected.*
> **Edward:** *So dealing with unexpected events.*
> **Michael:** *Yeah.*
> **Edward:** *Dealing with the unexpected immediate.*
> **Michael:** *Hmmm...*

> *Karen: Dealing with the unexpected immediate.*
> *Edward: And Aidan, that is a personal quote, that appears in the Ph.D.! I want a quote!*

In this passage, Karen suggests to the group that being in control is about being able to handle the "unexpected expenses" of life, and Edward concurs with her that this is a much better phrase than "being in control". Edward suggests that this need state can be labelled as "dealing with the unexpected immediate", which Karen also endorses, and Edward acknowledges my presence as the researcher and tells me that this need state phrase is a "personal quote", and that he wanted to be attributed with this quote within the Ph.D. thesis. Later in the session, Edward once again provides a ringing endorsement of "dealing with the unexpected immediate" as a need state, and both he and Michael provide examples of how this need state related to consumers' need for finances:

> *Edward: I think that dealing with the unexpected immediate is a brilliant need state. I think there's a thing in all of us that says whether your earning 300 grand a year or 3 grand a year there is something in your life stage if you earn 300 grand a year your boat can sink. You know and you've probably got some stupid boat in the Caribbean or something but it can still sink couldn't it?*
> *Karen: Hmmm...*
> *Edward: Whereas if you're earning 3 grand a year, a disaster could be thirteen Euros in size but it's still a disaster. So you need to deal with the unexpected immediate. I think that's definitely something they haven't captured here which they need to capture as a need state.*

(and later)

> *Michael: There's so many examples of that. I mean you could be in a restaurant, which happened lately, there was six of us in the restaurant and one of the guys' credit cards didn't work and someone had to use their credit card to pay for it.*
> *Edward: Exactly*
> *Michael: You know those things.*

In the first passage, Edward provides the group with an endorsement of the need state which he personally had labelled and identified and he claims credit for this insight amongst the group. He describes how there was a "thing in all of us" which is prepared to

246

deal with disaster. He first gives the example someone who earns three hundred thousand Euro a year, whose boat could sink, and he expresses some disdain for this affluent lifestyle, describing it as "some stupid boat" in the Caribbean. Edward mentions how the client had "not captured" this particular need state in the list they had provided, which could provide the agency with an advantage in their negotiations with the client. Michael tells the group there are so many examples of "dealing with the unexpected immediate", and recounts one of his own personal experiences in a restaurant where a credit card didn't work and one of his friends had to step into the breach to pay for the meal. As a piece of interaction, it showed how Edward endorsed his own position in the meeting by suggesting to the group that "dealing with the unexpected immediate" was a "brilliant need state".

6.14.6 Risk Taking and Thrill Seeking

The group discusses one of the first need states identified as safeguarding the future, and Michael suggests that consumers also engage in a certain degree of financial risk taking through their consumption activities. Karen explains to the group how she feels young male consumers engage in financial risk-taking through their own consumption:

> **Karen:** So yeah, I'm not sure if it captures what I was talking about when I was trying to capture it was the idea that people use their money almost to have small thrills, almost in a risk-taking element.
> **Michael:** Gambling.
> **Karen:** Well it's almost like a form of gambling. I think young men are really if I look at...
> **Michael:** That's the Paddy Power.
> **Karen:** Your age stream.
> **Michael:** Yes.
> **Karen:** It's like every morning logging on checking the share market prices, and it's like, they may only put aside a couple of grand but it's their source of thrill.

In this passage, Karen explains how young male consumers engage in risk-taking and thrill-seeking behaviour, and Michael suggests that consumption of Paddy Power[27] bookmakers is indicative of the level of risk taking engaged in by consumers. Carol gives further examples of how young males check share prices, and argues that young men may put aside a couple of thousand Euros as a "source of thrill" for their risk-taking consumption. Michael later describes how this form of consumption is like "having a flutter", and Edward asks the group for some examples of thrill-seeking behaviour. He describes how everyone in their lives needs some form of thrill-seeking, and the group discusses thrill-seeking consumption activities:

> **Michael:** *Yeah it's the Vegas effect.*
> **Karen:** *Some people use finances as a form of thrill-seeking.*
> **Michael:** *The Vegas effect.*
> **Edward:** *And other people use finance to finance it. Like for example Mary's (Edward's wife) thrill-seeking is that she got into the six foot of the swimming pool, she was terrified but she can swim now and she needed to be able, like if you want to be really basic about it she needed to pay for a swimming instructor, so, you know, it's the biggest kick she's gotten this year, being able to swim in the six foot.*

In this passage, Michael describes thrill seeking consumption as the "Vegas effect", indicating it is a risk-taking activity associated with the gambling culture of Las Vegas. Edward gives an example of his own wife's thrill-seeking consumption, where she learned to swim in the six-foot section of the local swimming pool, and describes it as "the biggest kick she's gotten this year". Although thrill-seeking is sometimes equated with high octane consumption {Hirschman, 1982 #516;Celsi, 1993 #867}, Edward provides the group with some micro-examples of thrill-seeking from his own familial experience that are not necessarily related to high octane consumption pursuits:

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[27] Paddy Power is a well known Irish Bookmakers which trades online as well as in physical locations.

Edward: Like these people, do you know something, it's particularly true in the affluent society. I think there's plenty of people who are so bored.
Michael: Well that's where Paddy Power and where Ladbrokes.com, that's where they're making their money, it's that point. So there's more.
Edward: Do you know what I mean Carol? When you read the word thrill seeking, you'd think it means jumping out of an aircraft. Well it does for a very small number of people, but for a large number of people it's skybet.com, they're watching a football match and they're bored with it and they put 50 quid on Leicester, just to give them some interest in it.

Here, Edward was explaining to Karen the difference between the etic and emic meanings of "thrill seeking" consumption as it was embedded within consumption practice (Belk et al., 1988), and articulating how consumers need for thrill-seeking did not necessarily mean they engaged in hedonic consumption pursuits (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). This part of the session illustrated how the advertising practitioners related to personal and familial consumption to construct consumer need states for experiential consumption, and the role of their personal intuition in discussing risk-taking and thrill-seeking consumption behaviours.

6.14.7   Setting up Home

The basic physiological need for shelter and a home, as defined in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, was also touched upon in the need states brainstorming session. The client had defined this consumer need state as "putting a roof overhead", which was finding a place to live, and another need state was identified in "setting up home", which was decorating and improving the home of the consumer. These basic human needs were then translated into requirements for banking products that could financially enable the consumer to satisfy these needs, thus creating a credible link between the need state and the financial product for the consumer. Edward mentions to the group that the representatives internally within the client organization had not constructed the need states already

developed in the client brief "any more formally" than the agency practitioners were currently developing them.

6.14.8   Recognition of Status

The group had earlier identified "having status" as a need state for consumers, and Edward identified people getting *American Express Gold Cards* as a prime example of status as a need that consumers had to fulfil. Edward further developed this notion for the group, and defined this need state as "recognition of status", and explains how being recognised as someone with status for the most part required a person to have money.

Edward reflects describes his own interpretation the need for status recognition:

> **Edward:** *Independence means being recognized, achieving societal status in society as an individual, being recognized in society as an individual.*
> **Michael:** *OK, and the status bit?*
> **Edward:** *Recognition of status is...ehhh...Karen? Recognition?*
> **Karen:** *Being recognized as somebody of...*
> **Edward:** *Value and worth.*
> **Karen:** *Yeah.*
> **Michael:** *Worth.*
> **Karen:** *Yeah.*
> **Edward:** *Being recognized as someone of substance, and I think they're big things with money. The whole thing with an awful lot of people is that they need to have, if I may so, I am the opposite thing to recognition of status. I am quite comfortably off and I'm determined nobody will even know it, so I actually operate in the only way to relate to these things is independently, personally. I actually go the reverse of recognition of status, I refuse to carry, or be seen to stand out from the crowd, but there are a bunch of people who don't, there's bunch of people who go out of their way to stand out.*

In this passage, Edward equates "independence" to being "recognized with status", and he describes recognition of status as being identified as an individual of "value" and "worth", which Karen and Michael concur with. Edward then reflects on his own financial position and he constructs himself as the "opposite" of recognition of status, sharing with the group that he is "quite comfortably off" but refuses to "stand out from

the crowd" to be recognized as an individual of status. He juxtaposes himself in this passage against the people who "go out of their way" to be recognized as having status, and positions himself as a smarter and superior individual to those consumers who are outwardly flamboyant with their financial wealth. The agency practitioners had identified the recognition of status as a legitimate need state amongst consumers, and while Edward reflexively identified how he resisted this cultural ideology through his own consumption practices, there was agreement amongst the group that the recognition of status was a need state that was particularly relevant to financial products.

6.14.9   A Suitably Cryptic Response

Toward the end of the meeting, the group discuss which need states they will leave in and which they will leave out, as the outcomes of this internal brainstorming session will be presented to the client for approval. However Edward makes an argument for all need state suggestions to be left in, and explains his reasons to the other participants:

> **Edward:** Now, the final test. Sorry Carol it's just I would argue strenuously for stuff to be kept in, much more strongly then I would argue for stuff to be thrown out, do you know what I mean? I don't mind to be honest, if there's a germ of an idea in it, because they'll, believe me there'll be plenty of people in Bank Y who'll say well listen it shouldn't be in there you know what I mean?
> **Carol:** Yeah.
> **Edward:** Plus I'm anxious to send him back, remember Brian Neery[28] comes from an FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) background, and I'm anxious to send him back a couple of things which remind him that advertising agencies are frankly off the wall, do you know what I mean?

Edward then describes how Brian Neery comes from an FMCG background, and how he was "anxious" to "send him back a couple of things which remind him that advertising agencies are frankly off the wall". In this statement, it appeared Edward wanted to confound the client representative somewhat and live up to the reputation of advertising

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[28] This is a pseudonym.

251

agencies as unorthodox and maverick in their thinking, in order to assert the creative identity for the agency with the client in this relationship.

6.14.10   Matching Need States to the Bank Y Product Portfolio

The last task of the agency practitioners was to match the need states identified in the meeting to Bank Y products, however toward the end of the session the tape in my Dictaphone ran out so I only managed to record some of the need states that were matched up to products by the practitioners. For dealing with the unexpected immediate, Edward matched a credit card, an insurance policy and travel insurance as products that were related to this human need. For risk taking, Edward identifies that share dealing is a risk-taking activity which the Bank Y facilitate, as well as entrepreneurial loans for people setting up a new business and tracker bonds. For independence, Carol identified student banking, and Edward identified motor insurance as products that helped people to satisfy the need for independence. Finally for recognition of status, Michael identified a Platinum Gold card as an example, and Edward identified private banking for preferential customers.

While this meeting was an interim campaign meeting, it illustrated how advertising practitioners construct need states based upon their own frames of personal and familial experience (Hirota, 1995; Moeran, 2005a), and how these discursive constructions are then mapped onto financial products for Bank Y in order to develop advertising campaign ideas for the client (Malefyt, 2003). As a collection of naturally occurring discourse, the brainstorming session provided some useful insights into how campaign ideas are thought about and developed by advertising practitioners through everyday agency practice. It also showed how broad academic concepts such as "need states" are

appropriated by advertising practitioners, and put to use in quite a loose fashion to develop new ideas about a campaign.

6.15 Lunch Invitation

On the last week of my ethnography of the advertising agency, the planners asked me along to a lunchtime meal to mark my departure from the field, and Edward and Michael were both going on holidays on the Friday of that week. Edward confronted me at the lunch, asking aggressively "So what have you found Aidan?" which I felt was a challenge to my credibility as an academic researcher. I explained to the group that I would have to transcribe all of the data and write it up in accordance with criteria for interpretative academic research, although I felt that Edward's questioning at this lunch was more a of a challenge to my academic credentials than out of any real interest in my findings. The group were aware that I was interviewing the creative teams over the past couple of weeks, and I had already conducted my interviews with all members of the planning team. Rose jokes with me by suggesting that the creative team were "probably giving out about those fucking planners" in the interviews that I had conducted, and while this comment is offered in a humorous fashion, I feel it highlights some of the underlying tensions that exist within the advertising development process, although I had not encountered any open hostility between the different departments in the advertising agency. Overall, I was pleased to be invited to lunch, as I felt my invitation was an indication that I had been accepted as an individual in the field.

6.16 Conclusion

This chapter has provided some insights into the everyday nature of advertising practice. It has shown the potency of client ideologies in the Irish advertising development

process, particularly in the case of the X Corporation, and how these structure the creative process in the agency. The tense and fraught nature of the negotiations between the agency and the client was very apparent, and the power relations were manifested within the internal discourse and informal observations of advertising practice.

The campaign preparations illustrated how informal knowledge enters the creative process, with advertising practitioners continually drawing upon their own experiences to develop insights for advertisements. This could often border on solipsism, as consumer research insights were utilised a lot less than their own reflections on consumption, and it could be questioned how grounded the subsequent advertising strategies were within genuine consumer research. Academic concepts, such as advertising "Uses and Gratifications" theory were incorporated into advertising practices, but were utilised in a very loose and informal way by the practitioners.

What was interesting from an ideological perspective was how the practitioners sought to manipulate relationships between meaning systems, which is central to how ideology is produced (O'Reilly, 2006; Williamson, 1978). This was evident in the case of Beer Y, where images of American iconography were to be borrowed to generate second order signification for the brand, and in the case of the GAA and Bank Y sponsorship, where semiotic links were to be forged between the corporate entity and the concept of community. Advertising draws meaning from external cultural and social systems, as Williamson's (1978) analysis highlighted, and these campaign preparations provided some examples of how advertising practitioners potentially rework these meaning systems for the benefit of their clients.

Finally, the ethnographic story highlighted the socially constructed character of advertising practice, which Hackley (1999b) has described. It illustrated how practitioners negotiate the advertising development process within language, and the insights that studying this socially construction in action can provide. The final chapter of the data analysis focus on the role of account planning and creative teams in the advertising creative process within the agency.

7 Chapter 7: Interviews with Irish Advertising Professionals

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discourse analysis of the qualitative interviews conducted with account planners and creative teams in Irish Advertising Limited. The analysis identified nine central "interpretative repertoires" from the data, which are outlined at the beginning of the chapter. The chapter first explores the educational backgrounds of these "cultural intermediaries", and considers how these intellectual resources are drawn upon by advertising practitioners in the performance of their respective roles. It then unpacks the nine interpretative repertoires, and examines sub-themes within each category which reveal insights into Irish advertising practice. These findings of these interviews are intended to build upon some of the broad themes identified in the ethnographic data analysis of chapter six. The chapter concludes by considering how these interpretative repertoires contribute to a better understanding of the everyday nature of advertising work.

7.2 The "Interpretative Repertoire" Categories

The interviews conducted with creative teams and account planners were grouped together, and explored for construction, function and variation in accordance with the principles of discourse analytical research (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Wood and Kroger, 2000). The texts were read through numerous times against the background of a discourse analysis perspective, and central analytical categories were developed. Common patterns within the texts were identified, and key terms and metaphors were coded as "interpretative repertoires", which were the "ways of talking" about advertising production that were drawn upon by Irish practitioners (Hackley, 2003c: 153). Some of

these repertoires build upon Hackley's (2000) seminal analysis of the interpretative repertoires used by British advertising professionals. A total of nine interpretative repertoires were developed from the interview texts, which are listed below:

Table 2: Central Interpretative Repertoires

> 1. *"Mapmakers of Creativity"*
> 2. *"Two Heads are Better than One"*
> 3. *"Consumer Empathy"*
> 4. *"Feeding from Culture"*
> 5. *"Knowledge of the Product"*
> 6. *"Distilling Insights"*
> 7. *"The Client Way"*
> 8. *"The Appliance of Science"*
> 9. *"Commercial Imperative"*

The chapter will illustrate how the interview participants orientated to these repertoires within the study, and will provide quotations which highlight particular themes and issues. It will also unpack these repertoires with the development of sub-categories within the analysis, and relate these back to themes previously identified within the literature review. It first explores the educational backgrounds of these "cultural intermediaries", and examines the intellectual resources which they draw upon in the performance of their roles within the advertising agency.

7.3 Background of Cultural Intermediaries

A key objective of the research was to explore the educational backgrounds of the profession known in advertising literature as "new cultural intermediaries" (Bourdieu, 1994; Featherstone, 1991). Both creative and account planning team members were asked to discuss their education, and how they had arrived in an advertising career. The creative practitioners tended to have been schooled in the art, design and humanities traditions.

Paul had completed a degree in communications and design prior to beginning work as an

art director:

> **Paul (Art Director):** *I'm Paul, art director, again I was right side of the city, the north side, did the Leaving Cert in St. Kevin's, and then from there went to Mountjoy Square, The College of Marketing and Design, and I did an advanced Diploma which is now I think a degree course in four years in Visual Communications and Design, and from there literally went into advertising directly in sort of 1992.*

Both Paul and his copywriting partner Malcolm were keen to emphasise their upbringing

on the North side of Dublin, which is generally regarded as the more working class part

of the city. They worked exclusively on the Beer X product (of which they were avid

consumers), and generally spent a lot of time socialising with each other outside of the

agency environment. Paul's background in the communications and design field was

typical of many of the art directors interviewed in the agency. Copywriters tended to have

more literary educational schooling, as Raymond explained in his interview:

> **Raymond (Copywriter):** *I went to Wesley College, Dublin, it sounds really posh when I say that, in Dundrum and I left there in 95, and then having fucked up my Leaving Certificate I went to do another one in St. Thomas's in Bray, and then I went to Trinity and studied pure philosophy for a degree called mental and moral science, just cause I felt, you know, I had no idea what I wanted to do, I always figured that I wanted to be a copywriter but I didn't really know how you did it or what you did so I figured I'd just get a degree. So I went and did a degree in philosophy in Trinity, qualified fairly well, there for four years and then decided I was going to write, so I wrote a TV show that hardly went anywhere, sent it away to the States, spent about six months on that, I just decided, I was just writing a TV show with this other guy, that's what I was going to do with this other guy, set up a company and it did ok like, it did all right, we got ourselves an agent and blah blah blah, obviously it didn't get made. And then decided I wanted to work, kind of decided I needed a job if this was going to happen in the meantime so I phoned my second cousin, Fiona Slattery, who works in McConnell's and lectures in DIT and she brought me into McConnell's and what she did was she booked this kind of room like this and sent down somebody down from each department to tell me what they did for about like an hour, it was great and then a guy from planning came down, an account handler came down, blah blah blah, and I'd always figured I wanted to be a copywriter anyway, the copywriter came down and she just seemed to have the best job out of all of them, seemed to be the best fun, and, you know, she*

said, I'm trying to remember what she actually said, I think she said "it was a little bit business, and a little bit rock and roll", which is a terrible quote, and it isn't like that at all but at the time I went: "Deadly, a little bit Rock and Roll, cool why not". So I got a job as an account handler in a below the line agency called Marketing Network, I fucking hated it, Jesus, it was God awful. I spent three months as an account handler being miserable, meanwhile I did a portfolio at night, kind of on my own, and went around to all the agencies and eventually got a job in Euro RCG as a writer and they took a chance on an unknown kid and got head hunted to Ogilvy and then got head hunted here. So straight through, I was a bit lucky.

Raymond's account betrays a certain middle to upper class positioning in his discourse, as he describes his secondary school education in Wesley college, a private fee-paying school on Dublin's South side, although he does acknowledge this in his description. His educational background was in Philosophy, but he expresses his underlying career desire to work as a copywriter in the advertising business. He shares an interest in all aspects of cultural goods as an intermediary (Featherstone, 1991), and describes his initial foray after university into making a television show. While this was ultimately unsuccessful, it seems to have been an aside to a career that would ultimately end up in advertising, as he later once again asserts that he "always" wanted to work as a copywriter. Through the "social capital of connections" (Bourdieu, 1994: 360), he obtained an introduction to the advertising business, which confirmed his ambition to work as a copywriter in an agency, however in his account he seems to dispel any romantic mythologies about working in the advertising business as somehow glamorous and "rock and roll" in firmly expressing that the industry is not really like this. Raymond seems to share the creative hatred of account management positions (Kover and Goldberg, 1995), in discussing how miserable this position made him when he worked in it, but then gaining fortuitous employment with Ogilvy and Mather. His tale is one of underlying goals and serendipitous introductions, and he acknowledges the role that good fortune played in his career

development. The creative practitioners all had backgrounds in these artistic and literary pedagogical traditions, which other studies have also documented (Hackley, 2003), and these provided resources which they drew upon (however provisionally) in the performance of the role in the agency.

The account planners meanwhile had educational backgrounds mostly in the business school tradition. Karen was originally an Australian national who had immigrated to Ireland, and had completed a broad business degree prior to entering the employment field:

> *Karen (Account Planner): Yeah, so after I finished school I went straight into a Bachelor of Business management degree in Australia, so that's a broad business degree with, you know, accounting and commerce and, what else did we have? Like introduction to law and, it's sort of very broad, then I took a marketing stream within that so I ended up being, doing a major in marketing.*

Karen was the newest member of the account planning department, having previously worked for a major food multinational, and had found the transition to agency life rather difficult, particularly in her relationship with some of the creative teams. Her background in the social sciences such as business seemed a common career path for account planners. Michael, whose father was a famous advertising practitioner in Ireland, had arrived in the advertising business by initially undertaking a psychology degree:

> *Michael (Account Planner): I went to Blackrock College, Dublin. I went on and did psychology out in UCD, I went on and did law then in Aungier Street actually. Then I went on and did Blackhall, which I did half the entrance exams and then went into Marketing after that, and ended up using actually what I do now which is psychology more than anything else, which I didn't expect actually when I was doing psychology at the time that I'd end up actually using that as one of the main things for my career, but anyway, so I've got a bit of a hybrid background having done law and psychology it's sort of a funny mix to get into marketing, but there you go, that's where I am.*

Like Raymond in the creative interviews, Michael also shares the private fee-paying school background of Blackrock College, which does imply a certain upper-to-middle class positioning of the cultural intermediary profession (Bourdieu, 1994). While he had initially undertaken a psychology degree, he then opted for a legal career (in taking the "Blackhall Place" exams, which are for those entering the legal profession), and then a marketing role. His description of psychology as "what I do" implies a kind of psycho-social marketing role which Cova and Cova (2002) claim has tended to dominate marketing thinking and practice. The account planners were responsible for consumer research and the writing of creative briefs (Steel, 1998), and it was the social science background which seemed to provide the educational capital for this particular role in the agency.

While there were only ten interviews conducted in the agency, the backgrounds of the creative and planning practitioners seemed to tally with previous studies of agency practitioners (Hackley, 2000; Nixon, 1997). The creative teams were schooled in the liberal arts and literary traditions, while account planners generally took the social science route to an advertising career. These educational backgrounds did provide a springboard into the advertising business, although most were keen to stress that they formed their knowledge base for an advertising career through the social practice of the role rather than their educational training.

7.4 Mapmakers of Creativity

The "mapmakers of creativity" repertoire was owned by members of the account planning team, who positioned themselves as the master developers of advertising strategy within the agency. The role of account planning has sometimes been conceived

as a "midwife to creativity" (Hackley, 2003g: 452), but the Irish account planners discussed their role as more fundamental to the process of creativity. Rose articulated this "mapmaker" function quite vividly in her interview:

> **Rose (Account Planner):** *We write a good brief and we get good creative, but sometimes you have to post-rationalise the creative into the strategy, because what we generally do is identify an area in which the creatives dig for treasure if you like. So we're the map-makers, and the creatives go and they know where to dig, but what they find may be different to what we thought they might find, so we'll be right in the general area, but we'll probably need to fine-tune the strategy as a result of the creative.*

Rose expresses a certain instrumentality to the advertising process, in describing the output of the agency as "good creative". She highlights the role that post-rationalisation of research insights into campaigns plays from an account planning perspective, something which Moeran (2005) discovered to be central to how the advertising development process worked in a Japanese context. Rose positions the account planners as cartographers of the social within the agency, identifying places where advertising creatives can mine to develop commercial appeals, or "dig for treasure" as she puts it. From an ideological perspective, the account planners have a pivotal role in discovering aspects of the social world which can be mined by creative teams, and utilised within the structure of a campaign narrative (Jackall and Hirota, 2000). They also must amend the advertising strategy in order for the client to see the coherence in the agency's campaign, and the creative teams acknowledged the work of the account planners in this process of "post-rationalisation". Rose's account and use of the mapmaker metaphor was a particularly vivid illustration of the work of account planning within the Irish agency.

7.4.1 Grand Strategists

The strategic role of account planning is well documented within the practice advertising

literature (King, 1989; Taylor et al., 1996), and the Irish account planners also articulated

this strategic imperative in terms of their role in the advertising agency. They were at the

heart of the development of communications within the agency, and their descriptions of

their work drew upon this grand strategist discourse. Karen explained her role in the

agency as follows:

> ***Karen (Account Planner):*** *I think that account planners have the most difficult job in actually telling people what they do (laughs), but I'll give it my best shot. I guess what I think my role is and I'll try not to be hypothetical but in reality, it's probably to take a more strategic approach to the communication planning of brands, so for me while advertising is one component of the communications mix, it is just that we would offer expertise and advice on, I guess, an integrated communication programme where we look at brands and even sort of prior to that I think I personally in the last couple of months have been involved a lot in sort of the pre-work, positioning the brands and it seems at the moment quite a few of my brands are looking at re-positioning, so a lot is through, you know, the success of the brand has meant that they've had to re-look at the way they're been seen in the consumer's mind and how to keep it fresh successful and strong and a leading innovative brand.*

Karen describes a certain ambiguity in defining her role, but positions herself as a grand

strategist in the agency. She expresses how she acts as a sort of advisor or consigliore to

the client, in offering her expertise, and she articulates her role as one of an "expert of

communication" within the agency (Alvesson, 1994). She also stakes a claim for

ownership of the brands she works with, in describing them as "my" brands, and her

account is illustrative of the contest for ownership and control between advertising

agencies and client representatives (Hackley, 2003a). Karen discusses the role of product

positioning in the advertising process, and how to keep brands fresh "in the consumer's

mind". According the Holt (2004), this "mind-share" philosophy has tended to dominate

contemporary marketing and advertising thought, and Karen draws upon this particular

263

idea in her description of account planning. The discourse of the grand strategist seemed to articulate how account planners accounted for the role in the agency.

As well as being strategists, the account planning team members also saw their role as one of having some level of involvement in creativity processes, as Rose explained:

> **Rose (Account Planner):** *I'd lend it to how easy would I find it to write an ad to this brief, and if I can nearly think of really crappy ads because that's, I'm creative but I'm not creative in the way creatives would be, I'm creative in terms of how I express things but I wouldn't be able to make that big leap that they make to bring it to advertising, but if I can at least visualise a crappy planner ad in my head then I know it's a good brief, so immediately I can kind of start seeing things, you know? I would never give a creative a brief that I couldn't imagine solving myself, because then I know I haven't given them enough, I haven't defined the problem tightly enough and I haven't identified what the switch is that's worth pressing, you know?*

In this extract, Rose describes how she develops visualisations of bad advertisements, which seems to resonate strongly with an account planner in Hackley's (2003a: 238) research, who stated how "I like to write the first ad, the bad ad". While she posits that she is creative in her role, her account places strict boundaries on the limits of this creativity, and readily acknowledges that she cannot make the "big leap" in the creative ways that copywriters and art directors do. As an account planner, she seems in a collegiate fashion to place herself in the role of the creative team in trying to solve a brief, and be considerate in terms of the task she sets them. Her account also constructs a certain level of instrumentality in describing the consumer, in explaining how she has to identify "the switch that's worth pressing", and this controlling rhetoric was also a feature of some of the creative and planning documents analysed from the agency in chapter 6. The quasi-creative role of account planners is something which previous studies have highlighted (Hackley, 2003g), and this was also a way in which Irish account planners discussed their role in the agency.

7.4.2 Ideological Translators

A key aspect of account planning is interpreting the language and discourse of the client, and translating this into a creative brief from which to develop advertising (Hackley, 1999). The account planners thus act as a sort of mediator of discourse between the client and the agency, and have a crucial role in creating verbal linkages between client and advertising language. Carol in particular highlighted her role as a translator in the creative process:

> *Carol (Account Planner): The client would write a client brief and then we would turn the marketing brief into an advertising brief, because there are marketing objectives and there are advertising objectives, and there is a difference between the two. I suppose we'd see it as our expertise to differentiate between the two and also to write an advertising brief and then to bring the clients through it shows them that you understand what they want and that you translate it into a brief that uses your experience in advertising and it will give what they need from you. There are other areas of marketing that they, you know, may need to do things like maybe a marketing brief from the client and you may actually have suggestions for it: "listen, you know, advertising is going to be important but you really need to get your distribution sorted out, you know look at that research, or you know tells us that it's actually your distribution that's kind of the most important thing and you need to get your advertising and your distribution dovetailing".*

Carol expresses a certain justification for the account planning role, in describing it as "our expertise" to differentiate between client and advertising objectives. In some ways, the account planners act as internal ideological intermediaries, channelling corporate objectives into the creative process and translating these for use by creative teams within the agency. She also positions the agency as a voice of truth in the evaluation of client operations, as she explains how the agency will provide advice on all aspects of a client's business which extend beyond the planning or communications function. This internal role of the account planner is important from a critical perspective, as they provide a discursive bridge between the processes of the client and the agency, and filter this

through to creative teams in the form of research and creative briefs within the advertising development process.

7.4.3 Breadth of the Planning Task

A distinctive aspect of account planning in an Irish context was the sheer breadth of the accounts that Irish planners worked on, and the amount of industries they were familiar with. Rose used a metaphor that Edward also drew upon to describe the planning task within the agency:

> *Rose (Account Planner): It's very diverse, and you never get bored because they say that a planner's brain is about 40 miles long and about half an inch deep, because you're just stretched across so many different areas and, I guess you just become as proficient as you can become in a given area the time flow is another business, but hopefully you are able to select the bits that are really relevant.*

Rose's description of account planning being "40 miles long and half an inch deep" was indicative of the range of brands and companies that Irish account planners worked with. Rose, in any one day, could work on four to five different clients, conducting research and writing various creative briefs. Her expression of how she tries to "select the bits that are relevant" seems apt, as the account planners had to develop insights from minute snapshots of consumer behaviour or informal observations on consumption, as evidenced in the ethnographic chapter of the thesis. This could be contrasted with the experience of account planners in London who worked in a more focussed way, as Michael commented upon in his interview:

> *Michael (Account Planner): I remember whenever I'm over in London or whatever, even on you know on business like you go over and you, you've say worked on Pharmacia which is Regaine products and things like that, even this was about a year ago and I remember on the way over we met the agency in London who handle it as well, and I met there were two planners there and they only work on Regaine. It's amazing, so basically I work in Dublin, I work probably on about 15 to 20 you know different products, there's one guys so I try to tell him about the Dublin market, the Irish market and Regaine the hair loss*

and our research and this type of stuff, and there's a guy there and he's got access to how many books on alopecia and hair loss that I've ever seen in my life. I think all he does is he spends his time just reading novels about hair loss and things and that's all he does for the whole year, he just researches hair loss, and I just found it so fascinating. We're such a tiny market, there's two planners who just spend their whole time doing that, and we come over and in fairness what we had to say was just on the money as well as they had, but then they have so much more time to do it, and then I remember thinking like they have about 40 to 50 planners in an agency, and I remember just thinking that is amazing, you know, and that's only one agency, it's just bizarre.

Michael discusses the almost fanatical pursuit of consumption knowledge by British account planners, and contrasts this with the smaller scale of working in the Irish advertising market. This level of information gathering is certainly analogous to Hackley's (2002) application of the "panoptic" metaphor to advertising agency practice. While he concedes that British account planners have more time and resources to devote to particular accounts, he justifies the Irish approach by suggesting that what Irish account planners had to say was "just on the money" as their British counterparts. Michael's description certainly highlights the difference of scale between Irish and British advertising agencies, and the numbers of employees devoted to each task in the creative process. However, for Irish account planners, the diversity of accounts was one of the enjoyable and challenging aspects of working in advertising, and one which they seemed comfortable with in their respective roles.

7.4.4 Antipathy toward Account Planning

Previous studies of advertising practice such as Hackley (2003a) and Kover and Goldberg (1995) have highlighted some of the tensions that exist between account management, account planning and creative teams, and the participants in the study were asked to describe their relationships within the agency. Edward, who was the account planning

director, was particularly dismissive of the idea of conflict between account planners and creative practitioners:

> *Edward (Account Planner): Look ultimately the thing that we've got to do is quite tricky. It's a difficult thing to get right at the best of times, and most people in ad agencies recognise that in each other and engage in a kind of a collective rolling maul to try and arrive at some solution that we're all happy with. So the atmosphere is much more collaborative than it is confrontational. There was a time a few years ago when this agency went through a rough economic patch, and the creative department were the loudest people to say that that the last people to be let go should be the planners, because they recognise that what planners do is give them start points, and give them raw material from which to start to produce their ads, in my experience the relationship between planners and creatives is one of a shared desire to get the thing right. I don't experience any tension and I don't think any of the others do either.*

In this extract, Edward displays some hostility toward the form of questioning in the interview. In previous informal encounters, Edward felt that much academic work lacked practical application, and he was particularly defensive about the idea of conflict within the agency as highlighted in previous studies. He uses rugby-orientated metaphors in describing the creative process as a "collective rolling maul" where all participants push toward the same end goal. He even positions the planners as the saviours of creativity in the agency, and as the gatherers of social "raw materials" from which creative teams could develop advertising campaigns. This seemed to articulate the planning role in the agency rather succinctly, and highlights the market research and informal knowledge inputs which can constitute the creative development process. He is also quite emphatic about the shared values between account planners and creative teams, which contrasts with the findings of Kover and Goldberg (1995) somewhat.

Some of the creative teams had quite a positive assessment of the role of account planning in the creative process, as Ralph explained:

268

> *Ralph (Art Director): They would give us the insight and the brief, hopefully they have that insight. I'd imagine they work under the same virtues as we do. They've a week to come up with the brief, so they have to go looking for that insight. They're great to have at least, a lot of the time with an idea before you maybe go to Mark our creative director or go to the account people, they can be quite a nice little go-between to go sometimes to the planner if you want to see another point of view and they'd know what the brief was because they did all the background so they can kind of give you a couple of nice interesting steers because I always think planners are sort of semi-creative so from that point of view they can be quite helpful.*

Here, Ralph expresses the virtues of the industry, and the shared work ethos between account planners and creative teams. A key role of the account planning teams was the development of relevant consumer insights (Fanning, 2006; Steel, 1998), which Ralph acknowledges as essential to the advertising development process. He constructs the account planning role as one of mediating between the creative director and account management functions, and he seems to accept the quasi-creative role of account planning within the agency. There was some variation in how this account planning role was described by the creative practitioners however, which is a feature of discourse analytical studies (Hackley, 1999). Ralph's account could be contrasted for variation with Raymond, who had a more negative construction of account planning in his interview:

> *Raymond (Copywriter): To a certain extent yeah they (account planners) start off being very involved in the process, ideally they shouldn't be involved. I mean there's this old gag that "The planners shall inherit the earth", because planning is like, taking over, it's growing like wildfire, it's hilarious everybody's something in planning, suddenly you find yourself presenting work to planners and you have no idea why because it's nothing to do with them, you know what I mean? Like they aren't the arbitrators of what's good or not, so that's quite difficult, although I do have kind of respect for what they do they just should be involved I would have thought early in the process as in they talk about how the brief gets set, they talk about the research, and then they shouldn't be involved again.*

While Raymond concedes that account planners are involved in the creative process, he reprises this by suggesting they should not really be involved at all after a certain point.

He draws upon strong metaphors to describe how account planning is "taking over" and "growing like wildfire", which indicates a certain hostility toward the ideology of planning within the Irish advertising agency. He grudgingly expresses a "kind of" respect for their role, but constructs a clear boundary in terms of what he feels their involvement within the creative process should be. There was also some evidence of antipathy from account planners toward the creative teams, as Karen described:

> *Karen (Account Planning):* I would say it can be quite volatile at times, like I think within the creative teams, I know we're all very proud of our work but to me I sometimes feel like the creatives are quite sensitive, cause then like it's a personal insult if we sort of scrap their work and I think sometimes the creative director doesn't help the situation. He doesn't like telling people that their work's being knocked back or whatever. I think we just need to remember at the end of the day this is subjective, we can try to be as objective as we like but it is a subjective process, and people have different interpretations of it. So yeah I think the creative briefing and development process could be a lot better internally for us. I just got into a big bitching session there!

Karen describes a more conflict-laden relationship between account planning and creative team members, and while she claims that everyone is proud of their work, she constructs the creative teams as having quite fragile egos. She also highlights the subjectivity which is inherent in the creative development process that makes objective assessments of creative work difficult. These accounts suggest variation in the ways in which relationships between account planners and creative teams are described. While there was evidence of some level of conflict in the practitioner discourse, it did not seem as severe or divisive as previous studies of agency practice have documented (Kover and Goldberg, 1995; Hackley, 2000). In a social process such as advertising development, there is bound to some level of disagreement in terms of campaign direction and strategic decisions (Moeran, 1996), but the overall relations between practitioners seemed more collaborative than outwardly confrontational.

270

7.5 Two Heads are Better than One

The "two heads are better than one" repertoire was primarily used by the creative teams in describing how they would develop particular ideas for campaigns. It expressed how creative ideas were not a product of a sole individual, and very much embedded within the working dynamic of the creative team. Paul described his working relationship with Malcolm using this particular term:

> **Paul (Art Director):** *I suppose on my end technically a bit like Malcolm, you know, a copywriter technically is all about the words. I'm all about visually whatever you see, whether that's, you know, type or it's a photograph or an illustration, technically that's my responsibility. But as Malcolm was saying at the early stages we would close the door there, we have a brief, and there's a bit of "two heads are better than one", you know, we would have independent thoughts but in the early days when we just sort of fire those thoughts at each other, you know, and ones that I would have thought were, you know, really good, Mark would sort of, because we know each other over a period of time we are able to criticise each other without the other getting upset about it, you know what I mean like it's a very practical thing at the early stages where you sort of, you're brainstorming, you're throwing out everything that's literally in your head about a particular topic, so you can get down to a bed that's maybe covering areas that haven't been explored by similar beer companies.*

Paul's description of "firing thoughts" at each other was also discovered in Hirota's (1995: 334) study of creative teams in America, who would 'bounce ideas around' and 'play ideas off' each other. His account also emphasises the importance of trust in the creative working relationship, and having the licence to be critical of each other's ideas. The working dynamic between copywriters and art directors, who generally work in paired teams, was itself a fascinating relationship in the creative process. Raymond explained the importance of this working partnership in his interview:

> **Raymond (Copywriter):** *Well it works in, ideally it should be you and your partner. I always think I like working in partnership quite a lot and I find it difficult to work outside of it, because you definitely need a kind of objective eye, or a quality check, because you don't know, I mean half the time when you are sitting around coming up with ideas usually the first part of the sentence is "this is really bad" but "what if we had this" or "this is a bad example of a good idea*

271

but what if it's a guy, you know what I mean, in his swimming trunks, swimming with dolphins", or whatever it happens to be, and you do need someone there who will take that idea and make something good with it or help you decipher that idea. A lot of the time it's kind of like your man is like a therapist-patient role where you both play the therapist and you both play the patient as in you need somebody to interpret what you are saying.

Raymond's use of the "therapist-patient" term seems a particularly apt description of the ways in which creative teams interact in the development of ideas. Like Paul, he also underlines the importance of the partnership, and the role of trust and understanding in the creative team. This partnership was pivotal to how conceptual ideas for campaigns were created in the agency, although few studies of advertising creativity have adequately addressed the nature of the relationship between copywriters and art directors (See Gillmore, 2005; Hirota, 1995; Nixon, 2003 for exceptions). The creative teams recognised the importance of this relationship dynamic to the advertising development process.

7.5.1 Interchangeable Roles

While the jobs of "copywriter" and "art director" might seem like tightly defined roles in the creative team partnership, they were described as quite interchangeable in this relationship. The creative teams recognised that in the context of the team, strict lines of demarcation between respective roles were not always helpful or conducive to the development of advertising ideas. Malcolm highlighted the core responsibility of the creative team in the early stages of actually developing an idea for a campaign:

Malcolm (Copywriter): Well I'm a copywriter which in theory means that I'm kind of responsible for the words. I mean it doesn't quite work that way these days in that, you know you have creative teams and the first responsibility of the creative team is to come up with an idea and that could be word heavy or have none at all but it's the responsibility of the team to come up with something that's an idea, and that's very much a dual function of copywriter and art director working together.

The interchangeable nature of the copywriting and art directing roles seemed to be crucial in establishing a working relationship between the creative team. The key responsibility of the creative team was the development of an idea or concept, and then they could bring their respective skills to bear upon the creative process. The creative teams did describe how once an idea was actually agreed upon, there would be more "separation" between the skills of copywriter and art director in developing text and imagery for an advertisement, but this interchangeable relationship seemed particularly important for the beginning of the creative process. Trust was clearly crucial in the creative team, as they needed to develop a strong friendship as well as a working partnership. This sort of team solidarity is an important part of the relationship between copywriters and art directors (Gillmore, 2005), and the creative teams recognised how central it was to develop a fluid working relationship in the creative team.

7.5.2 Socially Constructed Creativity

Advertising theorists have suggested that the creative process in advertising agencies is socially as opposed to individually constructed (Hackley, 1999b; Moeran, 2005b; Svensson, 2007; Vanden Bergh and Stuhlfaut, 2006), and the ethnographic fieldwork chapter emphasised this socially constructed character of advertising work. The creative teams also acknowledged the input of other practitioners in the advertising agency to the development of advertising ideas:

> ***Paul (Art Director):*** *Mark is our group head I suppose on Beer X, so constantly we'd be running by scripts by Mark, and he'd be the third eye I suppose with his experience he'd be looking through the script and be able to spot something that we, you know, gap in the process of being so absorbed on it we might missed, or he might have ideas on maybe improving a script that we might get bogged down on and we might feel, oh we're about to dump this and he might come to us and say: "There's something in this maybe stick with it a bit". On the photography*

end of things, because he's an art director as well, I'd show him you know various stages and he might have suggestions on little problems that might occur or little improvements that have to be made in the retouching end of things or that sort of thing, so it's always sort of good to have that. The other team Ralph and Carl work on Beer X as well, so we'd be competing with them on some stuff, more in the beginning then actually now, just it's so busy now that, you know, actually if everybody was to work on the same briefs, you'd only get half the work done, so they work an awful lot on the can at the moment, true quality thing, we're going to be competing with them on the master brand end of things, they were working on the Rugby up to now, the Six Nations stuff, so again you know we would chat to them and throw stuff by them and get their thoughts, we're working on the same accounts so they're obviously as absorbed, but sometimes again it's no harm to see how the rest are doing because you can get sort of isolated on stuff, you know?

Paul's metaphorical descriptions of "running scripts by Mark" and "throw stuff by them" illustrate the socially constructed nature of advertising work, as ideas are socially formed in consultation with other practitioners in the agency. While some studies suggest that creative teams are the sole inscribers of advertising meaning (Kover, 1995; Soar, 2000), the Irish advertising practitioners acknowledged the role and input that other practitioners had in the campaign development process. In Paul's description, he seems to warn against the dangers of becoming isolated in the creative process, and his account is littered with metaphors which express this socially constructed process. Other teams recognised the roles of account planners and account managers in the development of ideas, and the spirit of social construction was shared amongst the interview accounts of Irish advertising professionals.

7.5.3 Myopia and the Creative Marriage

A recent study by Gillmore (2005) highlighted the relevance of the "marriage" metaphor to the relationship between copywriters and art directors. Indeed, this metaphor is sometimes used in a positive way to highlight the close bond between copywriting and art directing teams (Nixon, 2003), and teams in the agency like Malcolm and Paul did share

this bond in both a personal and professional context. Only one of the creative team members drew upon this marriage metaphor to describe the working relationship, however her use of it was more pejorative than positive:

> ***Aine (Art Director):*** *It's very much a team thing, I mean we have set groups within this agency so it means that I don't necessarily get to work with certain writers, which is a good and a bad thing, but within the groups there's a couple of writers so at least you're not working with the same writer all the time because I think there are agencies where teams just work together and they just work exclusively with each other and no one else and I think that has plusses and it has minuses as well which are sort of obvious you know in that you can similarly to not pushing yourself the team can not push themselves either because they get used to each other it's a bit like a marriage, you're so in-tuned with each other that you intuitively know what the other person is going to do and you sort of behave and act and produce a certain thing each time. Whereas if you're suddenly working with someone who's quite different to you and you're not that used to working with them, you know it can be really surprising and really interesting, what you come up with and you find yourself thinking in a different way as well, so it's very good from a personal point of view.*

Aine's description suggests that some creative partnerships can become myopic and routine after some time, and she highlights the benefits of working with different partners in creative teams. Her account illustrates that the "marriage" metaphor is not without its potential drawbacks for copywriters and art directors, and that working with alternating team partners could also have benefits for creativity in an advertising agency. It may be that a creative partnership may suffer some of the same relationship problems as a real marriage, and her extract expresses a slightly darker side of the marriage metaphor as applied to creative teams.

7.6 Consumer Empathy

Both account planning and creative practitioners discussed their work in terms of having a certain empathy with consumer audiences, and stressed the importance of understanding their life worlds. In American advertising history, Leo Burnett once

commented how was essential to get a picture in his mind of the people he was trying to sell to in his advertisements (Higgins, 2003: 43), and this perspective seemed to be shared by the Irish advertising practitioners too. For Malcolm, this involved seeing the world from the perspective of the consumer in an "eisegesic" fashion (Mick and Buhl, 1992: 335):

> ***Malcolm (Copywriter):*** *I think good ad people are, that's one of the essential skills you should have to be a decent ad person is the ability to actually put yourself in the head of somebody else, and you know say well OK what do they want from this? How do they feel about this? Are they going to reach and pick this off the shelf? What's important to them? And obviously that's where good briefing comes in as well, good research and all that other information that kind of helps inform you, but I think what separates average ad people from really good ad people are the people who are able to get themselves inside the heads of other people and instinctively come up with something, a notion, that is motivating.*

Malcolm's use of terms such as "putting yourself in the head of someone else" expresses this consumer empathy repertoire quite well. While this may have certain psychological connotations, the creative and account planning team members discussed this in an implicit theoretical fashion that was not based upon formal academic frameworks (Kover, 1995). The idea of having empathy with the consumer was also shared by account planners, whose role in the agency was to embrace consumers as partners in the creative development process (Steel, 1998). Rose once again drew upon the "map" metaphor in describing how she would try to engage with the consumer viewpoint:

> ***Rose (Account Planner):*** *I suppose the map isn't the territory, so the example I always use is that if you have a map of the tube station or the tube under the underground in London, you try and use that to navigate the streets you'll get lost because it's a brilliant representation of the tube but it's not a good representation of London, it's still a map but it's not, and so in order to understand consumers you have to understand how they see things, how they see the world, not how you see it. So if the consumers are saying to you: "Well I find that product really good" you'd say: "Well what do you mean by good? What does good mean? How do you evaluate good, better than what? In what way?" As*

opposed to saying: "Oh good all right" and you're immediately thinking: "Well good means this to me". So half the trick with planning is to try and build a model of the people that you're trying to understand, and not impose your way of thinking or seeing the world on what they're telling you because otherwise you don't get it. You're analysing it from your own point of view so even if they say something really interesting you're not going to really understand what they're saying.

Rose discusses how as an account planner she builds implicit models of the consumer audiences she seeks to engage with, and her account expresses an eisegisic spirit of account planning. There are some characterisations of advertising practitioners as narcissistic and only interested in producing advertisements for themselves (Nixon, 2006; Soar, 2000), however the Irish practitioners seemed to really try and engage with the consumer's ideographic perspective. This empathetic "way of talking" about the consumer seemed to be a crucial part of both the creative and account planning roles, and was a common pattern in the ways in which both sets of practitioners talked about their work.

7.6.1 Voice of the Consumer

The role of the account planner has been described as the "voice of the consumer" within the agency (Crosier et al., 2003; Hackley, 2003a; Pollitt, 1979), and this metaphor was also used by Irish account planners in accounting for their role in the agency. This positioned account planners as the experts on consumer knowledge within the advertising agency. Rose described her role in the agency as follows:

> ***Rose (Account Planner):*** *I suppose another way of looking at the planner, it's kind of a Marketing Director's role but it's a marketing director who's really close to consumers. So you're nearly like the voice of the consumer in the agency as well as for the client. So when you're evaluating the work that creatives have done you're not just looking at it with a view to whether it's on brief, you're actually looking to it with a view is it really going to resonate with the people I know it's going to have to be aimed at? So again sitting in on research groups and reading research would help you to get closer to the people that you're after*

who generally speaking aren't in your immediate target group so if it's housewives it would be outside of my area or children, so it's not enough to just use yourself as a reference point, rely on others, on your friends or, you need to try and get inside their shoes. And know what it's like to be them.

Rose's account betrays a slightly more instrumental and controlling view of the consumer, in describing how the advertising will be "aimed at" the target, and how the agency "after" the consumer, using very hunting-orientated terms which were also a feature of the creative briefing documents in chapter 6. She explains how the account planners needed to rely on other people to understand consumers, such as friends, although the extent to which an account planner's friends can accurately represent the consumer's perspective is debatable. Indeed, during the course of the ethnographic study, it was apparent that account planners would draw insights from anywhere conveniently available, and the advertising strategies were not always based upon exhaustive or rigorous market research.

Formal consumer research did play a role in how account planners did their work however. Carol described some of the sources of research knowledge drawn upon within the agency:

> ***Carol (Account Planner):*** *I do a lot of different things, I do research so I do qualitative research where I conduct interviews, some ethnography, focus groups, I do a lot of focus groups. So that's qualitative research, quantitatively I commission omnibus surveys, or ad-hoc surveys, I'd also work with a computer package with quantitative information, and I'd be privy to quantitative results whereby I'd have to be au fait numerically and be able to read the figures and say what they mean. So that's what I do in terms of research, as well as just reading articles, reading newspapers, reading magazines, and just getting information from all possible resources.*

In participant observation, Carol would draw knowledge from internet searches, trade articles, and recently commissioned research studies from clients or the advertising agency. Hackley (2003a) has argued that account planners rely very much on qualitative

research to develop consumer insights for campaigns, and this was also the case with Irish account planners. Rose used an interesting term to describe its role in her own work practices:

> **Rose (Account Planner):** *I find qualitative research the best, so ideally if I'm working on a new pitch or whatever I would love a qualitative research report that was done relatively recently on the brand that gives me an idea of what the brand's about, who buys it, why they buy it, why they don't, what they think of other brands, and they do in-depth stuff, like they do projections and, you know evaluation of current advertising, what works and what doesn't work, so a qualitative report is nirvana for me.*

So qualitative research could in some instances play a vital role in the campaign development process. There was also a crucial role for the "informal" knowledge that account planners generated through their own working and personal lives (Nixon, 1996), and practitioner intuition was extremely important as a source of knowledge for account planners (Punyapiroje et al., 2002). Carol explained the role that this informal knowledge had in the advertising process within the agency:

> **Carol (Account Planner):** *I think you know you can't underestimate your personal experience and just kind of seeing what's going on in the world and the way that you know it's in the last couple of weeks that it's blown up in Ireland we're the most expensive country. That's beginning to annoy people, back in January I was upstairs telling the guys this happening this is happening this is happening, and that was just from personal experience of how I felt about Ireland and the economy and just talking to different people and getting a sense from different sources that you couldn't even name. So I don't think you can underestimate your own intuition, like your own intuition is based on your experience, I mean experience can be another word for research. If you believe that research is ethnography, observation is experience the line between intuition and experience and research fades.*

So intuition and experience for Carol qualified as legitimate sources of research knowledge in developing consumer insights. There were also instances where account planners would engage in informal observational research to gain knowledge about the

consumer. Rose described how she would go to the supermarket and observe people

shopping:

> *Rose (Account Planner): I just go down to the supermarket and just have a wander and just see how people purchase, stand in front of the fixture you're trying to understand and maybe even talk to the odd person. Why do you buy that? Or you know what were you thinking about or just observe how people operate. Do they whiz past or do they kind of what are they checking for? It's just stuff like that, it's just observation really.*

Rose's account seems to resonate well with the "panoptic" role of advertising agencies,

and the covert ways in which advertising practitioners gather cultural knowledge about

consumption (Hackley, 2002; Olsen, 2003). Similarly, the creative practitioners would

describe how they would "hang around" hair salons to watch how people get their hair

cut if they were doing ads for a hairdresser. This sort of informal cultural knowledge was

incorporated into the advertising development process through the personal reflexivity of

advertising practitioners, and was not part of the formal research mechanisms of the

agency. It did seem to have an important role in how account planners and creative teams

did their work, and provided key insights in the production of advertising campaigns for

clients.

7.6.2 Divergent Ways of Talking about the Consumer

There was variation between the creative teams and account planners in how they talked

about the consumer, which Hackley's (2003d) research also discovered. Some of the

creative practitioners described their role in an altruistic fashion, and how they created

advertising narratives for the benefit of consumers. Carl and Ralph articulated this

altruistic theme quite well:

> *Carl (Copywriter): You know people kind of look at when you tell people you work in advertising, they think you spend your time sitting down working out ways*

to bamboozle people into parting with their money, but as far as we're concerned...

Ralph (Art Director): *Which is true Carl!*

Carl (Copywriter): *You know, (Ralph and Carl laugh), well maybe it is true for the more evil members of us, but generally, you know we're trying to, you know the stuff is going to get sold anyway. And we want to sell it and convince them that they should be entertaining people or they should be making people think or do something that sort of improves somebody's day. I mean I don't want to make it seem like we're bloody Robin Hood here but it is nice to attach something of kind of cultural interest to a message that is purely commercial.*

Here, Carl and Ralph engage in a playful exchange, in describing the impression of advertising practitioners as trying to "bamboozle" people. Carl's construction of a "Robin Hood" styled role for the creative team and his quest to infuse culture into a commercial message positioned them as cultural saviours within a commercially-orientated process. There is also an altruistic theme in trying to improve the day of the consumer in some way through the advertising they created. There was some variance in how creative teams and account planners described the consumer in the data. While the account planners did seek to engage with the consumer perspective, Rose used more controlling language in how she talked about the consumer:

> **Rose (Account Planner):** *A good creative brief for me is a brief that at the end of the briefing session the creatives can nearly say in a sentence what they have to do. So it's get these people to do this, or think this, by telling them this or showing them that. Now if they can leave saying: "Right we want to make tea sexy to young aspiring graduates by telling them that Brand W makes them more attractive", or whatever it is, that they kind of walk away and they just know exactly what they have to do.*

This account does not suggest that account planners had malevolent motives toward the consumer, but it does demonstrate a divergence in how the consumer was described by account planners and creative teams. It may be that the nature of the two roles and the divergent educational backgrounds means that each group will describe the consumer in a slightly different way, which was a key finding in Hackley's (2003d) study of divergent

account team beliefs, and would be supported by the findings of this study also. An important element of discourse analysis is to account for variation across and between texts (Potter and Wetherell, 1987), and this variation between the creative and account planning perspectives provides some interesting insights about how the consumer was considered about by each agency function.

7.6.3 Divergent Views on Mass Media Representations of the Consumer

Another area of variation in the interviews was in terms of what qualified as a legitimate source of knowledge about the consumer. For copywriters such as Raymond, the mass media provided a reliable source of information about consumers, and the cultural reference points that would resonate with these audiences:

> *Raymond (Copywriter): The age groupings and the target markets do help because it does give you, it does help you put yourself in that position. So in the position of walking around a supermarket with two screaming kids, and what may take your mind off it and what you might find funny. It works for references as well if you're advertising to, you know, 23 year old women then you know 23 year old women watch "Sex and the City", like "Friends", watch this film, read that book, you know, associate with these characters, listen to this music, and once you know that then gives you, kind of, you know what they are going to react to and you know what they are not going to react to, and you know what references they are going to recognise and what ones are going to go straight over their heads.*

Account planners also drew knowledge from the discourse of the mass media, as Carol's presentation for Bank Y student banking illustrated in chapter 6. They were, however, a little more guarded in how much knowledge mass media publications could generate about the consumer, and worked with different epistemological models of the consumer to creative teams (Hackley, 2003d). Michael's account provides a good illustration of this variation in views about consumer knowledge:

> *Michael (Account Planner): I think that helps when you're talking about advertising because I think it is such a funny area because you're talking about*

trying to deal with how consumers react to things. I think your feelings may have been totally off the mark. So therefore I think you have to, particularly if you're working on a product that might be more female focussed and suddenly you actually think you know, from reading "New Woman" or "Vogue" that you have an idea as to what way 18 to 24 year old girls think, and you don't have a clue. So you'd be very foolish not to actually ask someone else's opinion, particularly when we have three girls on our team.

This variation in constructions of the consumer may be attributed to the educational training of each group. Account planners tended to have studied the social sciences of business, economics and marketing, while creative teams had more design and humanities educations, and this could impact upon what sources of knowledge were regarded as legitimate by each group (Hackley, 2003d). Each group did draw upon the discourse of the mass media for knowledge about consumers, however the legitimacy of the insights of this discourse was interpreted very differently by each practitioner group.

7.7 Feeding From Culture

The reciprocity between advertising and culture is something that has been noted by marketing and linguistic theorists (Cook, 1992; McCracken, 1986; Otnes and Scott, 1996; Sherry, 1987; Venkatesh and Meamber, 2006), and the creative practitioners provided some insightful explanations of how they incorporated this cultural influence into the advertisements they created. The "feeding" metaphor was used by quite a few of the creative teams to describe how they would draw from existing cultural texts, as Malcolm's account illustrates:

> **Malcolm (Copywriter):** *I'd watch, not as many movies as I'd like to really but definitely watch as many as I can and listen to music and just try and not necessarily stay on the edge of things you know or like relevant or keep up to date with what's kind of happening but just kind of try and keep feeding that kind of creative part of your brain with kind of new stuff and new kind of innovative movies and good music. I mean often I'd just locate and I'd hear a piece of music that I just think has the right atmosphere or something you know if I'm working on something like a brief and I'm not really getting anywhere with it and I hear a*

piece of music that to me just has the right atmosphere, I think, well I don't even know what the commercial is going to be or I don't have the idea but I just think that piece of music somehow seems to, has the right tone for that product and what we're trying to do with it and sit in a room and listen to it and try and put images to it and see if that helps you kind of think of something you know what I mean? So definitely yeah other areas of creative work can help you know? And again it's like I was saying about whether it's research material of whatever it's all information to feed your brain with that, you know, will hopefully help you to produce something.

Malcolm displays a voracious appetite for cultural products which typically characterises the intermediary professions (Clarkin, 2005). It was interesting that as a copywriter, Malcolm took inspiration from music and put images to it in order to develop literary ideas. He also acknowledges the role of creative development research in the process, and many of the other creative teams had quite a positive assessment of research that was contained in creative briefs that helped them to create the campaigns. For Aine, the cultural world was a "pool" of inspiration from which creative teams could extract ideas:

Aine (Art Director): Movies and music and you name it, that's the nice thing about this job is that it is so broad and you can just get inspiration from absolutely anything and everything, and the more you're exposed to the better, you know what I mean? You actually do need to watch quite a bit of TV and you do need to watch movies and you do need to listen to music, it all enriches the pool from which you can which you can draw, not that you're going along cogging stuff, but that your just aware of what's out there and you know, I suppose it's a meeting of creativity from all other areas basically.

Theorists have noted how advertising texts has an inter-textual composition (Cook, 1992; O'Donohoe, 1997a), and the drawing of creative influence from other areas of culture seems an important way through which this intertextuality is encoded into advertisements. Both Malcolm and Aine's descriptions emphasise the importance of keeping ones finger on the cultural pulse, and engaging with other areas of creative work. The everyday social world also provided "fuel" for advertising creativity, as Raymond explained:

Raymond (Copywriter): It's all the stuff you bring to it about whether from your, like, I was about to say childhood experiences but I didn't really mean that but from like whatever you ate for breakfast that morning or whoever you were talking to last night or whatever, you use all that stuff as fuel to what you're trying to think of but yeah you try to process all these thoughts through a brief, maybe that isn't the way you are supposed to do it you probably should just start with the brief but a lot of the time you bring quite a lot of baggage to it.

The creative brief seemed to be a key document in Raymond's account in structuring his creative thoughts, and the "baggage" one brings to an advertising idea through personal and social experiences. The actual source of creative ideas was often unknown to the practitioners, and they often could not pin-point exactly where ideas originated from (Soar, 2000). Creativity seemed to be an on-going process, and ideas could emerge through spontaneity and serendipity, as Ralph explained:

Ralph (Art Director): I think an idea can come from anywhere. I've often wondered where the fuck that came from?! But it can absolutely come from anywhere, you could be flipping walking out to the car and it could jump in there. So I always think it's somewhere you set you brain up to think, you've got to understand the brief first, you've got to know kind of where your client's coming from, you've got to know the brief inside out before you can really get your brain working and then see what the problem is and then you start thinking of solutions.

In both Raymond and Ralph's account, they acknowledge the role of the creative brief in helping them to develop ideas for a campaign. The cultural and social world provided creative teams with textual and imagistic inspiration to develop ideas, and they would feed from this inspiration to develop commercial advertisements. While this form of cultural borrowing is also used by artists who appropriate commercial texts for inspiration in paintings and sculpture (Gibbons, 2005), it was interesting to hear how advertising creatives constituted elements of culture and society in the service of their own commercial work.

7.7.1 Striving for Originality

Creative teams did draw inspiration from other cultural texts, but they were also keen to stress that they sought to create something original through this intertextual engagement. The creation of original advertisements was always a goal of advertising legends such as Bill Bernbach and Leo Burnett (Fox, 1997), and was also important to the Irish creative teams. Paul provided a good example in this extract of how he strove for originality in his work:

> **Paul (Art Director):** *You need to be all the time, trying sort of to be critical of yourself because we are all influenced by stuff we've seen whether it be TV, cinema, the net, music, you know? You're with so many images and you're getting stimulus from so many areas, whether it be even CD covers, you know? You don't want all your ideas to be based on all these stimulus, you want to come up with something original at the same time, you know what I mean? So you're striving for this originality, this clever and un-thought of way of coming at this idea. Ultimately that's what you want, so yeah when you have an idea which could be started with a line and then you build a picture on it and you build some headlines on it, or you build a script around it, before you know it you have a campaign.*

The notion of "being critical" or "hard" on themselves was something that both creative and account planning practitioners drew upon in describing their work, and it seemed to be a character trait of those who worked in the advertising business (Fox, 1997). From the creative perspective, they did borrow from other cultural texts, but also sought to create something that was original and different to their creative predecessors. In this sense, they were "bricoleurs" of cultural texts (Levi-Strauss, 1966), weaving various elements of the cultural and social together within a commercial advertising tapestry. As creative workers, they consumed and appreciated other elements of creativity, but the notion of being original was also deeply embedded within the creative identity (Hackley and Kover, 2007). Their accounts provided some interesting clues as to how they did this in the performance of their roles.

286

7.7.2 The Illegitimacy of Intra-Textual Borrowing

The borrowing of inter-textual references was deemed as acceptable by the creative teams, but the incorporation of intratextual references (from other advertisements) was described in a different fashion. Raymond described how the use of intra-textual references was an illegitimate form of borrowing amongst the creative advertising communities:

> *Raymond (Copywriter): It's quite dangerous, there's a very fine line between "inspired by" and "stolen by" and it's always something you have to watch out for. I think people are often too serious about it because at the end of the day it doesn't really matter, I'd never rob anything else, you know, I'd never rob anybody else's ad but when people go, like that Honda Accord ad that came out with the cogs and the bits of the car, it's an amazing ad and it came out all over the papers that it was done by an artist in 1997 as part of his show, whatever his name was, and to me that doesn't matter, a shit like, it doesn't make any difference because people who sit down like when I sat down and watched the ad I didn't care that it was ripped off it was just entertaining and it just got the right message across and everyone who talks about it just thinks it's entertaining and if they took it from something else it's far better than another crap ad you know, a car driving through the scenery in Seville or something down the mountains before he gets home to have an affair with his wife, or you know what I mean? So yeah I think I would be, I read a lot of magazines, there's a lot of magazines around, I watch "Shots" which is the kind of, that month's best ads worldwide, I'd read "Creative Review", I'd read "Listeners Archive", I'd read, like "Vanity Fair", "Wallpaper", "The Face, "Car", "GQ", "Esquire", the papers, I read loads of books, watch films, like film references are great, you look at any, like those Doctor Pepper "What's the worst that can happen" ads, like two of them are robbed directly from a five minute sequence of "There's Something About Mary" and they both happen freely, and you can tell they were all sitting down watching "There's Something About Mary" and when they got the brief they just went "Do you know what's really funny...maybe we should watch "There's Something About Mary" and I don't think that there is anything wrong with that, like they're really funny ads. So people do steal a lot, especially from the Farrelly brothers, but I think that once it's not from another ad then it seems to be deemed as acceptable. I mean like that Deerhunter Revels ad everybody thinks it's great, if you wrote another one then everybody wouldn't think it was great anymore people would just thing it was robbed and they would kind of be right.*

Raymond seems to present an ethical dilemma, in stating he'd never "rob" anybody's ad, yet sees nothing wrong with advertisers appropriating influences from other areas of

culture for commercial use. This form of borrowing seems to be legitimate once it is intertextual, as intratextual ads are tantamount to stealing fellow peers' original advertising ideas. Perhaps Guy Cook's (1992: 32) observation that '...the best ads are successful bandits, raiding the borders of their accompanying discourses, but with the sense not to stay too long', is particularly apt in the case of using intratextual cultural referents in commercial advertisements. Like Malcolm and Aine, he displays an acute cultural reflexivity, and incorporates influences from a variety of centres of culture in his work (Barthes, 1977a).

7.8 Knowledge of the Product

Having knowledge of the client's product was essential in the development of advertising campaigns. Indeed, Bill Bernbach once opined in an interview that '...if I gave any advice to anybody, it's to know his [sic] product inside out before he starts working' (Higgins, 2003: 17). This "way of talking" was used by Irish advertising practitioners in describing how they would develop ideas for an advertisement through their personal knowledge of a product. Daniel articulated this well in his interview:

> **Daniel (Copywriter):** *It always helps to know what you're selling, what you're trying to push on people, definitely, though I mean in so many instances the product is really just the same as all the other products out there isn't it though? I mean there will usually be something that distinguishes it but sometimes it's not strictly in the product it's more in the brand or in the history of the product, so it might be a particular beer that's brewed a certain way and from a certain place and has a history behind it or a whiskey that's, you know, a Jack Daniels or something and has a great history behind it, but really sitting down and tasting it probably wouldn't fill you in on all that and people do, I mean there's no doubt people buy a brand as much as they buy a product, you know what I mean? A lot of Whiskey's and beers, they're not buying, they're not buying the taste, they're buying the experience. So I mean it's important that as well as familiarising yourself with the product you familiarise yourself with that experience as well.*

Here, Daniel highlights the importance of copywriters being acquainted with the history of a particular product, which Fanning (2006a) claims is vital for developing culturally grounded advertising. His account also has a rhetoric of power and control over consumers, in describing how he "pushes" products on people. Daniel acknowledges the experiential dimensions of product consumption, and how copywriters must acquaint themselves with the consumption experience as well as the features and benefits of a product, which is a central contention of experience marketing theorists (Schmitt, 1999). Having this contextual knowledge of the product and the experience of consumption was crucial in developing advertising ideas, and was discussed by both account planners and creative teams in terms of how they approached their work to develop campaigns.

7.8.1 The Product Truth

The idea that there was an inherent "truth" associated with a product was a common pattern across the interviews, with many products described as having something central to their design from around which an advertising campaign could be created. Creative teams are sometimes credited as the individuals who arrive at the core advertising ideas (Soar, 2000), but other authors have shown that some creative ideas for campaigns have come from account planners and account managers in advertising agencies (Hackley, 2003g; Steel, 1998). Rose provided a telling example of this, and how she had identified a product "truth" associated with a particular orange drink:

> *Rose (Account Planner): In terms of kind of a product truth that was very powerful, an example of that would probably be Brand Z Orange and what I knew about Brand Z Orange. This wasn't research this was just knowing it from drinking it, it's got more orangey bits than any other orange soft drink so and that first kind of, when you knock it back you get this kind of really orangey, cold fizzy hit at the back of your mouth, and I thought it was quite interesting that the product was called Brand Z Orange, and yet you had this kind of, loads of orange bits that gave you this real kind of hit. The proposition was as orangey as orangey*

289

gets, sorry as orangey as orange gets, and the notion was as in it's like a slap on the face, it's like a bang, just one of the starting points was think about the link between brand and the hit you get from the thing, and then we came up with the ad what came out of it was the one you've probably seen it have you? "SMASH THOSE BITS UP". You know you can see that they just dramatised how the bits get into the orange, you know, so that was very powerful, now the way it was done was obviously, you know, incredibly inspirational and appealed to the target the target that we were after, but it all stemmed from a product truth.

Rose's account emphasises the role of the personal consumption experiences of the account planners in forming a creative direction for a campaign. The key selling point was intrinsic in the product itself, and as the account planner Rose explicated this product truth for the creative brief. She also explains how the "drama" of the product was brought to life through the creative idea that was developed for the client. Leo Burnett and Bill Bernbach told advertising practitioners of the importance of telling stories about the product itself (Higgins, 2003), and for Irish practitioners this old axiom of advertising was particularly important in how they planned and created advertisements.

7.8.2 Vicarious Consumer Experiences

While having personal knowledge of the product was helpful in most instances, there were times where due to the nature of the product copywriters and art directors could not directly experience the product use. Paul explained how creative teams manoeuvred around such issues in developing advertising ideas:

> **Paul (Art Director):** *The beer, I mean the beer thing is kind of nice in that we're big beer drinkers. I suppose we've all worked on products, I mean I've worked on products for period pains and stuff in the past and, you know (Laughs), you're never going to experience that, so you do have to sort of, you know you either talk to people, read up on the target market and the audience and stuff like that and you, you try as much as possible to see if you can get your head into their body a little bit as much as you can, especially when it comes to advertising products where maybe you don't have a huge amount of experience in. There's an awful lot of art directors and copywriters who don't drive, yet they've worked on hundreds of car accounts and they're able to tell all about, you know in the copy and the*

detail, the feeling you get when your behind the Mazda 626 you know what I mean?

Paul describes how copywriters draw upon informal knowledge resources to gain consumer empathy, and vicariously experience product consumption to create insights for campaigns (Nixon, 2003). This requires an ability to understand consumers from an ideographic perspective, and "get their head inside their body", which was a term used by some of the other creative teams in accounting for this process. Where knowledge of the product was not directly available, creative teams had the ability to improvise and generate insights from a variety of other potential knowledge sources.

7.9 Distilling Insights

The metaphor of "distilling" information into a "single-minded proposition" was used by account planners and creative teams to describe how they would develop campaigns internally within the agency. The concept of the "unique selling proposition" from Rosser Reeves (1961) cast a long shadow in the practices of the Irish agency, and was used as a method of generating ideas. Carol described how this single-mindedness had to be part of the creative brief:

> **Carol (Account Planner):** *Well it's our area of expertise, do you know? Our briefs tend to be preferred by creatives because that's our expertise, we clarify them, we focus them, briefs should be single-minded, that's the best way to get advertising.*

Carol describes planning as "our area of expertise", which implies a certain ideology of the ethos of account planners within the agency (Hackley, 2003a). The idea of a single-minded proposition was also helpful from the creative perspective too, as it allowed them to narrow their ideational focus for an advertising campaign. Aine explained this distillation and simplification process in her interview:

Aine (Art Director): Well at the end of the day in a lot cases you are in the target audience for a lot of the stuff your flogging, or trying to flog. It pays to bear that in mind too, like you know sometimes research and planning and all of that can, you know, can lead to almost pieces of consumer behaviour and consumer pattern and a lot of the time you've got to wade through a lot of it and simplify it and distil it down to one simple thought. I think that's the trick of using research correctly, and distil it down to a single thought. I think that's the trick because the best ads and the best work comes from a single thought, the problem with research is that sometimes people just want all those things and they don't want to leave any of it out and it's confusing, single-minded it's really about bringing everything back to the basics, you know what I mean? You'll find that the best ads and the best ideas are one single idea and one single thought and one single thing, you know, so it's really important I think.

For some creative teams, even distilling the creative brief down to a single word was helpful, as it brought everything about the product and the client down to its core components. For many advertising people, this "single-minded" description of how advertising developed may seem obvious or common sense, but it is precisely its everyday use by advertising practitioner in accounting for their work which enables discourse analysts to examine the structure of everyday thought (Wetherell, 1986). In this case, the ghost of Rosser Reeves's (1961) "unique selling proposition" remained a powerful ideology in terms of how advertising ideas were developed within the Irish advertising agency.

7.9.1 Single-Minded Proposition as Client Defence

It appeared on reading the interview texts that the single-minded proposition also served as an agency defence against clients who insisted on more than one creative direction for a campaign. Some of the creative teams described their frustration at working on multiple ideas for a single client, and how this tied up the agency's time and resources. In these cases, the idea of a "single-minded" approach seemed to provide the agency with a

legitimate bargaining tool in their negotiations with clients. Ralph described this single-minded defence through the analogy of throwing tennis balls:

> **Ralph (Art Director):** The hardest bit, it's going back to that single-minded kind of thinking, cause a lot of clients want everything in there but the fucking kitchen sink you know? It was only today wasn't it? Edward was sort of saying there's an analogy where, like say I was to throw six or seven tennis balls at you, how many could you catch at one time?
>
> **Interviewer:** Maybe two if I was lucky?
>
> **Ralph (Art Director):** If you were, yeah, very lucky, more than likely one, and that's the same thing with ads. If I chuck seven things at you, how many are you going to retain? If I come back to you and ask you in two months time: "Do you remember that ad? What do you remember?" And if I told you seven, the chances are you probably won't remember any of them. If I tell you one thing and do it really well you're going to remember it, and that pretty much sorts the client out a lot of the time. When you say that, and yeah, I can't really argue can I, and it's so true like it's so obvious like, and that's why all the good ads are just so single-minded and simple. It makes all the difference.

This "single-minded" approach is common in much advertising practice, where agencies are encouraged to create advertisements based upon simple approaches that tie back to some product or brand truth (Steel, 1998). It was remarkable how potent this line of thinking was in the agency, and how old school principles of the advertising world continue to reappear in various forms, which is a key contention of Fox's (1997) history of the trade. The "distilling" and "single-minded" metaphors were central to how advertising ideas were thought about and developed by advertising practitioners in Irish Advertising Limited.

7.10 The Client Way

The "client way" referred to the potency of client ideologies in the Irish agency, which was a feature of the ethnographic data analysis in chapter 6. This was expressed quite strongly by account planners and creatives, particularly in terms of larger clients' "ways

of doing things", which the agency had to comply to. Paul described the "X Corporation

Way" in his interview:

> *Paul (Art Director): There's various tests, there's lots of research, qualitative and these link-tests that the X Corporation do and you know sometimes there's physical and sometimes there's mental box ticking happening all the time you know what I mean? And for a big company like the X Corporation that's sort of the way they work globally because there's so many brands, you know? And you've got to roll with that and you get to know the process, you know sometimes it can be frustrating because you have a really interesting piece of work that doesn't tick absolutely every box but where it goes is really incredibly strong in the particular areas, and it mightn't get through because of the process, the X Corporation way, you've just got to live with that.*

In advertising research, clients are known for controlling the creative process in terms of setting directions, resource allocations and directions (Koslow et al., 2006), and for the X Corporation this certainly appeared to be the case in their relationship with the agency. For larger clients like the X Corporation, there were particular organisational practices such as idea checking sheets (seen in chapter 6 and appendix 3) which the agency had to use in the development of a creative idea. While Paul does express some dismay at this situation, he recognises this is the commercial reality of working in the advertising business, and a process that must be negotiated by creative teams in the development of a campaign.

7.10.1 Economic Capital

The economic power relationship between agencies and clients is well documented, as clients often retain an asymmetry of power due to their superior size (Cronin, 2004a; Lury and Warde, 1997). This economic power dimension was recognised by the Irish advertising practitioners in their interviews, as Edward explained:

> *Edward (Account Planner): Clients pay the bills, this is not an art. It's not an art in the sense that it's commercially directed, it's a commercial activity. Clients get what clients want and we work to the end that the clients determine.*

Edward was keen to strictly demarcate advertising from the art world in his interview. While the theoretical logic of his argument is questionable, as artists also create their work within the confines of the commercial market system (Gibbons, 2005; Scott, 2005b), Edward stresses the economic power of the client in directing the advertising development process. Moeran's (2005a) analysis of Japanese advertising practice has suggested that there are struggles between the economic capital of clients (to develop advertising that is commercially effective) and the symbolic capital of agencies (to develop advertising that is creatively prestigious). While the clients did have the power of economic capital in the Irish advertising development process, the agency did retain some symbolic capital in terms of how they would deliver their commercial creativity. Edward uttered a subtle nuance later in his interview which was quite telling of the symbolic capital that the advertising agency retained:

> **Edward (Account Planner):** *Ultimately great clients get the advertising they deserve, and crap clients get crap advertising. That's no accident. Advertising agencies are very keenly attuned towards giving the clients what they want, that's how the keep their accounts.*

This suggested that as a repository of commercial creativity, the advertising agency had the power to give clients good or bad advertising, and thus had some symbolic capital to negotiate in the agency-client relationship. The idea of clients getting the advertising they deserve was a key contention of David Ogilvy's (1963), and was also a conclusion reached in a recent study of agency-client relations by Koslow et al. (2006). In a study of a Swedish advertising agency, Alvesson (1994: 549) found that advertising practitioners were often quite critical of some clients, and were more than happy to "get rid" of clients who were annoying or troublesome for the agency. It was clear that the agency did retain

a certain amount of power in the agency-client axis, even in their dealings with larger

clients.

The economic capital of clients was particularly powerful however, and was a continual

pattern across the creative and planning interviews:

> *Raymond (Copywriter): Well there's always like tales of the golden years of*
> *advertising where advertisers had a say and they'd more money and you know*
> *you hear tales of agencies in London who still do it like: "If you don't like what*
> *we're saying then go somewhere else", you know what I mean? Saatchi's used to*
> *do it like: "We're right and if you don't think we're right then fuck off because*
> *this is what we do best". And there's a certain amount of that with clients as well*
> *you'd like to think: "Look we don't tell you how to run your bank or what interest*
> *rates to cut so don't tell us how to write ads". But you have to understand it's*
> *their money, they're the ones in control and they're the ones who say yes or no.*

Here, Raymond expresses extremely similar sentiments to those of Bill Bernbach, who

argued that advertising agencies knew the most about advertising, and should not be

restricted in their work by clients (Higgins, 2003). He yearns for the "golden years"

where the agency-client relationship favoured the advertising agencies, but accepts that

the economic capital of the clients (as in, "it's their money") means that they retain a vast

amount of control of the creative process. This economic capital seemed to be a crucial

aspect of structuring the relationship between the agency and the client, and was

recognised by Irish practitioners as a pivotal influence on the advertising development

process.

7.10.2   Client Ideologies

There were implicit and explicit client meaning systems that Irish advertising

practitioners had to negotiate in the advertising development process. Some client's

involvement in campaigns amount to an outright coercion of the creative process, as

Karen explained:

> *Karen (Account Planner): We just had an incident on Beer Y recently where they basically became art directors to the point where they were at the shoot telling people to put their feet on the table, to move the camera to the left and to the right. They changed the creative idea, they changed executional elements which ended up I think detracting from the core idea to a point now where they've actually decided to take everything down. There was outdoor media and they spent 40 grand on it and now they're spending 40 grand to rip it all down because they think it now looks shit. That is very disappointing because we are supposed to be, creative specialists, and to a certain point you want to make sure that you're engaging with consumer, that you're delivering the right message, the client needs to stand back at a certain creative point and let us sort of do our job.*

Here, Karen positions the agency as "experts in communication" (Alvesson, 1994: 543), and pleads for the client to give the agency creative space to do their work. It was interesting that the Beer Y client had actually insisted upon changes to the campaign on the actual set, and it tallied with a previous encounter during the ethnography where a creative director on this particular account had resigned in protest over the client's continual interference in the advertising development process.

Creative teams also had to negotiate informal client evaluation systems of their work, such as when a client would show an advertisement to a spouse of family member to gauge their reaction to the campaign:

> *Carl (Copywriter): I mean it doesn't happen too often, you have to respect clients enough to know they do often know what they're talking about you know. They're not normally as stupid as that but it does happen, you will get certain clients who take things home to their wife at the weekend, or their husband, or their son. Particularly if you're working on a youth brand, if they've got a son who's like 15, they'll think that he's a genius and he knows everything, he's totally switched on. I remember when I was 15 there was certain things I really knew about and certain things I didn't know about, and that's always risky cause, you know, clients think: "Oh yeah this person represents our audience", and they don't. Even focus groups don't always represent the audience.*

This represented a situation sometimes colloquially referred to as the "Chairman's Wife Syndrome" (Bogan, 2006) where advertisers would reject creative work based upon what their spouses thought of an idea, which has historically been a feature of the advertising

process (Marchand, 1985). It was an implicit client ideology that could impact upon the creative process, and the creative teams had to negotiate this in terms of their dealings with clients.

There were also issues internally within the client organisation relating to the "accountability" of client representatives that creative teams had to contend with. Malcolm provided a good example of how creative teams engaged in metaphorical battles with client representatives to gain acceptance for campaign work:

> **Malcolm (Copywriter):** *From a creative point of view you should be looking to try to, not do an award winning ad every time cause you'd just drive yourself bonkers then but to always try and make sure there's something in that ad you think: "Well that's quite good, that's a different way of looking at it, there's some element of originality in there", and the best ad people are all the time pushing themselves kind of for that which then hopefully carries all the way through because if you do believe this piece of work is good then you kind of fight for it along the way. There is in this game a lot of fighting for your work, as I said other people have other priorities, and in some ways they'd like the easy answer, because the Marketing Manager's got the Marketing Director to answer to who's got an MD to answer to, and if they do something kind of different they might have to go up and explain themselves and they mightn't want to, or they mightn't feel comfortable about doing that. But often the best ideas are the ones your not entirely comfortable with, so you have to be prepared to kind of go and do battle for your work.*

Lien (1997) has noted how conflicts between creative teams and clients are embedded within the social structure of the advertising industry, and Malcolm's use of conflict metaphors suggests that this was also the case in Ireland. His resistance toward the internal "accountability" of client representatives is a common theme within the creative industries (Tasgal, 2003). There was also a sense in talking to some creative teams that advertising would often become sterile as a result of protracted negotiations with clients over the direction of creative work. Raymond drew upon this particular pattern in his description of the creative process within the agency:

Raymond (Copywriter): Every time I look at a good ad and I'd say that most of the creatives in here are the same, I don't look at it and go: "Jesus, I wish I'd thought of that", I look at it and go: "How the hell did they manage to sell that?!" you know what I mean? I mean like the top 90% of the ads I've ever written, I could collect 100 ads that I've written, I'd say the best 90 of them have never been made, and that's the same with everybody as in it becomes the lowest common denominator, everything becomes the lowest common denominator. Because even if you took Des in here he'd tell you that his best 90 ads have never been written, if you took Daniel in here he would tell you the same thing, if you took Brian in, and it's kind of true as in the stuff that's in my portfolio that gets me a job, it isn't the stuff that's necessarily gone up, because usually a client's gone: "You know what, I don't really like that line" and you go: "Look, that's the idea" and they go: "I don't know", and the advertising industry would say I'm right, but the client wouldn't, and hopefully the public would say I'm right, but you never know, maybe I mean sometimes you can be wrong, a lot of the time you can be wrong, but that's always the battle.

Raymond's description of how 90% of his best work had been rejected was also shared by informants in Hackley and Kover's (2007) study of creative identity. He raises an interesting issue regarding the creative portfolio or "reel", as some account managers feel that creative teams are more focussed on getting creative work on their reels than in producing appropriate advertising for their clients (Hirschman, 1989). This may create a potential conflict of interest within advertising agencies between different account team members. Raymond also draws upon some of the conflict metaphors that Malcolm used in accounting for the creative process in the agency. He did, however, feel that the balance of power completely favoured the client in their dealings with the agency:

Raymond (Copywriter): The reality is that it really doesn't matter if it gets made or not because you know it won't get made the way you want it to get made, but then again we are not paid to be a writer or an artist or anything else. We just get paid to write stuff and I'm writing stuff. Unfortunately I'm writing stuff for the client rather than for the consumer, and maybe that's the frustrating bit. It's like making a chair for the chair salesman rather than for the person who is going to sit in it, and that never really works.

Here, Raymond dispels any romantic notion of being an "independent" artist, and indeed many of the other practitioners demarcated themselves from other types of artists, who were regarded as having more creative control over the content of their work (Gibbons, 2005). His account uses the metaphor of a chair maker, and resonates with Moeran's (2005) theory of "impression management" where campaigns have virtually nothing to do with consumers and everything to do with the client organisation and its representatives. The ideologies of clients were a reality of the advertising development process in the agency, and had to be negotiated by both account planners and creative teams in order to achieve the best possible outcome for the advertising they produced.

7.10.3   Smaller Clients and Creative Freedoms

There was some variation in how larger and smaller clients were described, particularly by the creative teams. Advertising legends like David Ogilvy and Bill Bernbach often did their most spectacular creative work for smaller clients (Fox, 1997), and the Irish practitioners described smaller clients as having less creative restrictions. Aine articulated this in her interview:

> *Aine (Art Director): Someone can turn around and want something incredibly small for a very small client, and you get great fun out of it and great mileage out of it and those jobs tend to come through with sort of less people, less baggage attached, and in lots of cases they can be more rewarding than when you have the big brands and there's lots of rules and regulations and it's probably a little bit more restricting in terms of what you can do, a little less creative from that point of view. That's the way a lot of it is going at the moment is, you know, big corporations owning lots of smaller brands so it's nice if you can just break away and do your own thing within that.*

This pattern was also repeated by Daniel, who described how smaller clients would "push the boat out" more than larger clients:

> *Daniel (Copywriter): It's always easier to sell, well it's not always easier but it's usually easier to sell very original ideas to smaller clients because I mean for two reasons. One because there's far fewer people involved, so therefore you get*

straight to the person who has the power to say yes rather than having to go through five people who have the power to say no, and also smaller companies are the ones who are to use that horrible cliché are very "hungry for success". You know a bigger company will often be happy to stay where it is, so it doesn't necessarily want to push the boat out in its advertising, whereas a smaller company will want to make a big splash and will want to do something that may not cost a lot but just creates a big impact.

In a recent study, El Murad and West (2003: 665) have suggested that 'creatives feel freer to take creative risks when dealing with less important clients, and of course the corollary to this is that larger clients probably receive less creative advertising'. Similarly, the Irish creative teams described smaller clients as providing more licence for originality in advertising campaigns, with less creative restrictions and management bureaucracy. It may be that larger clients do receive less creative advertising as a consequence of the layers of management evaluation that advertisements must undergo, and it certainly has been historically supported that smaller clients have received some of the most creative and effective advertising campaigns, such as David Ogilvy's work for *Hathaway Shirts* or Bill Bernbach's campaign's for *Volkswagen* and *Avis*. There were key differences between the advertising development process for larger and smaller clients in the Irish advertising agency, and Aine and Daniel's account's emphasise how these differences were evaluated from the creative perspective.

7.11 The Appliance of Science

The "appliance of science" repertoire was used by creative and account planning practitioners to account for the role of copytesting research in the advertising development process. This form of research is often strongly resisted by advertising practitioners, and its interpretation in the creative process can be a source of conflict

within advertising agencies (Chong, 2006; Hackley, 2003d; Kover, 1996). Aine used the "machine" metaphor to describe how clients researched advertising campaigns:

> *Aine (Art Director): There are clients, there are bigger clients who I suppose have basically more money at stake and more to loose if something is wrong, people like X Corporation and stuff who will, I mean you'll get to the stage where something is approved and you will then get into a stage where it's sent off and it goes into this enormous machine and is researched by groups and things through fairly scientific means, and I mean again that is a good thing if it's used constructively and used to ward off or signal any problems or any kind of concerns or just anything that might be a potential problem. But, again if it's taken to an extreme it then starts to write the ads and it starts to produce the work.*

The investment of economic capital in a campaign seemed to be a major factor in employing this research evaluation of advertisements in order to reduce risk, as Aine's account highlights. There was a sense in both sets of interviews that this was a conflict between art (advertising) and science (research), which has historically been a feature of advertising agency practice (Fox, 1997). Rose constructed this art-science conflict quite vividly in her interview:

> *Rose (Account Planner): I think what X Corporation are doing and all that ever goes on is that people find it hard, particularly clients where they're spending big budgets, they find it hard to accept the fact that they're spending all this money on something that's intangible and very like art and that's [Copytesting research] like science. So it's almost like they're just trying to put a comfort factor on this big investment that they're making, and because it's such a subjective decision some people don't feel comfortable evaluating ads, and it's actually quite difficult as a client, you know you're sitting there and you've got like ten people from the agency sitting around and they're all kind of selling you two or three concepts and it's actually very difficult to evaluate it to give very good feedback on creative in a short space of time. So what it does is it tries to systemise it, and create this kind of aura of comfort around making decisions and standardising it, which is not possible to do, but it helps people in the X Corporation and it certainly gives them a guideline as to what they should be looking out for, as to whether it's you know ranked one to five. I think all that's really about is saying you know, does it feel kind of right, right, or really right, that's all the numbers are really saying, and the bit that they don't have is, is this brilliant advertising? They have does it reinforce the key brand benefit, is it based on an insight? But there's nothing quantitatively that can say it would make your hair stand on end. Would it give*

you goose pimples? Is it the kind of advertising that will go down in history? There's nothing on the form that says that, that's just a personal call and not everybody can make that.

Rose constructs a binary between the subjectivity of advertising interpretation and the apparent objectivity of copytesting research. She expresses some sympathy for the client in having to make such judgements of advertising, and describes how research creates an "aura of comfort" for decision makers on the client side, which was something Miller (1997) discovered in his ethnographic study of a Trinidadian advertising agency. Her account emphasises how copytesting research cannot account for some experiential dimensions of advertising consumption, although she does exhibit more understanding toward the use of such research techniques by the client than some of the creative team members. This evaluation of agency work through copytesting research was a divisive issue in the agency, and one which potentially put creative teams in conflict with clients in the advertising development process.

7.11.1   The Mediocrity of Research

For some creative team members, there was a view that research led to the creation of mediocre advertising, which is also a contention of critics of current advertising research methodologies (Broadbent, 2004; Tasgal, 2003). Raymond was particularly scathing in his assessment of the role of copytesting testing research in perpetuating the "lowest common denominator":

> ***Raymond (Copywriter):*** *I think that copytesting is the worst thing in the world. I don't like research and I don't like copytesting just because it creates nothing and nothing will ever come out of it that's any good. They used to do the same thing with cars, they used to have those "Consumer Clips" and if you look at the best, you name the top 100 cars in the world or the best 5 cars the only thing that it will ever create is a Vauxhall Vectra or a Ford Mondeo, and that's what all the clients do, you know what I mean? You'll never come out with a Ferrari, you'll never come out with a E-Type Jag. You'll never come out with anything that's worth*

303

anything because it just gets eaten away at and eaten away at and eaten away at, and eventually everything's the lowest common denominator, and that's why the ads that I admire are the ones that got away with that.

The copywriters and art directors interviewed had a more positive assessment of creative development research, which was regarded as helpful for developing ideas, but copytesting research was seen as detrimental to creativity. Ralph provided the creative perspective on how the application of scientific research created mediocrity in the advertising development process:

> **Ralph (Art Director):** *A mountain of research comes back about that thick on what they thought of your commercial, and it's even got a joystick thing, like where pull back when you think it's really good, which part of it you think is crap, so you get a graph. Now that is just taking research to the point of, it's just, God like, does anybody believe in their gut anymore? It's not a science, it's advertising. Clients would like to think there is some way you can process it and turn it into a science but if you were to do that where would the creativity go? I think the danger with a lot of research to my mind and I can't really find anybody who can disprove it to me is you end up doing middle of the road stuff to keep everybody happy, and that's the danger of research, and creatives I think all over the world are pretty scared of research because, what's it going to do to our ad?*

Here, Ralph constructs the "art-science" advertising conflict that Rose had described in her interview. In his account, he claims ownership of the advertisement for the creative team, which illustrates how this issue is contested between practitioners in an advertising agency (Hackley, 2003d; Hirschman, 1989). The concern over the mediocrity which research created was largely shared amongst the creative teams, who possibly had a larger personal stake invested in a campaign than account planners, as they were the ultimate producers of the creative work. The divisions over the use of research seemed as potent as ever within the interview accounts of Irish advertising practitioners.

304

7.11.2   The Political Dimensions of Using Research

The creative and planning practitioners alluded to a political role that the use of research played in terms of how clients evaluated creative work. For Karen, research was used as a "crutch" by some client representatives:

> **Karen (Account Planner):** *I believe that research is used as a crutch. It's sort of, it's something you can blame if something goes wrong, well we'll research it and if it tells us it's OK then no-one can get into trouble, which I think is a sad way of doing it. I mean you want to make sure you get the right answer obviously and you want to make sure you do it right, but I just think there's plenty of instances where advertising is over-researched and it wastes a lot of time and money.*

In his book on account planning, Steel (1998) has argued that market research can be used as a support mechanism by clients in order to bolster campaign decisions, and Karen's account seems to resonate with this argument. The issue of the internal "accountability", which was discussed in relation to the "client way" of doing things, also seemed to be a factor in how and why client representatives used copytesting research. Michael provided a good example of this accountability theme:

> **Michael (Account Planner):** *I think from a client perspective more and more what's happening is that they have to be able to cover their asses more. We're talking about a lot of money involved in this, so you're talking about a TV ad it's a lot a lot of money, so in order for them to justify it, they have to say OK we're putting this into testing, and they put it into testing and if one route gets favoured over the other they'll go with that route, because they can say that Company B Market Research said that that was good, that route will definitely work. So therefore when they're giving it to the bosses and suddenly a year down the line the sales have dropped, well listen, as you know, I got the right indicator and went with it. So it's a tricky enough system.*

Michael's use of the term "cover their asses" to describe how client representatives use research highlights the issue of organisational accountability in the creative process. This is currently a hotly debated topic in the business literature, with Tasgal (2003: 145) suggesting that '...the obsession with accountability has now become a destructive force in the marketing and research industries'. Others, such as Broadbent (2004), argue that

research is often used solely to sell advertising up the line to bosses within a client organisation. These political dimensions of the use of research were identified by Irish practitioners as having influence upon client representatives' decision making on advertising campaigns, and could impact upon the advertising texts that the agency would ultimately produce.

7.11.3   Divergent Views on Copytesting

There was some variation in how account planners and creative teams accounted for the role of copytesting research in the creative process, which Hackley's (2003d) work also discovered. Carol, for example, had quite a positive assessment of the research evaluation of advertising campaigns:

> **Carol (Account Planner):** Evaluating advertising in terms of strategy alone is narrow. Evaluating advertising, is good, I don't think it can do any harm. I mean you can find a night when it's not a great group and sometimes you have to override what two focus groups had said, but in general they are helpful, at the very least they are helpful. Evaluating advertising is good, depending on how you evaluate it. If you evaluate it purely ticking boxes for strategy then I think you end up with kind of boring ad, but if consideration is taken for creativity and spark and enjoyment then that is a more successful way to evaluate. I do think evaluating is a good idea though.

Implicit in Carol's account is that evaluation is a necessary part of the creative process, and she does not appear to regard it as particularly detrimental to the advertisement produced. This could be contrasted for variation with Raymond's view on copytesting research:

> **Raymond (Copywriter):** I mean good things aren't created by research, not that it's literature, but the best novels haven't been, you know, copytested! Not that it's poetry, but the best poems haven't been either. Not that it's that serious or that artistic, but the best films don't go through cop testing. The only films that go through those things are when they make "Daredevil" or some heap of shit that they have to re-write the ending of five times and it becomes a crap movie, and when you rewrite the end of an ad five times it becomes a crap ad, and that happens. That's happening in here at the moment with stuff, I mean, it's nobody's

fault in here, it's just because of the position of the agency has slipped, and the power is no longer with the agency there is nothing we can do about it, other than go: "Yeah ok, yeah yeah yeah, we'll let you "matrix" that".

Here, Raymond issues a "disclaimer" in suggesting that advertising is not as "serious" as literature or art to suggest that only the worst forms of creative work are copytested, and he expresses some helplessness for the position of the agency in this situation, particularly as the axis of power currently favours the client. It may be that creative practitioners like Raymond have "more to lose" from the research evaluation of campaigns, and this could explain their more militant views toward the use of research by clients to evaluate creative work when compared to those of account planners. There were certainly divergent views on the use of copytesting research, depending on where practitioners were positioned within the creative process.

7.11.4   Client Conciliation

There is sometimes a perception of creative teams that they can be quite militant toward their clients, and dislike compromising creative work (Hirschman, 1989). Some of the creative teams interviewed displayed a lot of commercial responsibility toward their clients, and a willingness to accommodate the client's perspective. Daniel expressed this conciliatory tone in his interview:

> **Daniel (Copywriter):** *I suppose there's a bit of halfway that needs to be done because I mean its not good enough for one of us to say to the client: "Listen, no, that's it like that's the ad there now and we love it and you have to love it too and we wont talk about why it works or how it will appeal to a certain demographic or anything". I mean we do have to enter into that discussion, but at the same time the client can't analyze it in strictly scientific terms and expect it to be correct or incorrect, because ultimately most ads are stories of one sort or another which are invented in order to connect a product to a consumer, you know, it's a story so it's sort of hard to analyse it. It's like you know trying to find what the best novel in the world is or whatever, you can't do it objectively.*

Daniel's use of the metaphor "a bit of halfway" implies that the creative team should

engage with the client perspective, and explain how creative work will fulfil the client's

business objectives. However, he constructs the "art-science" conflict in describing how

ads are aesthetics that cannot be analysed via scientific means (Hirschman, 1983), and the

division between aesthetic subjectivity and scientific objectivity is inherent in his

account. Creative teams may be willing to meet the client "halfway", but they were still

resistant toward the incorporation of "scientific" forms of research by clients within the

advertising development process.

7.12 Commercial Imperative

The final repertoire identified from the interview texts was the "commercial imperative",

which expressed the importance of the commercial role of advertising. Some advertising

writers have discussed the "creativity and effectiveness" divide in advertising practice

(Hackley, 2003d; Kover et al., 1995), and this issue was raised during the interviews to

gain an Irish practitioner's perspective. The commercial role of advertising seemed to

take precedence for practitioners, as Edward explained:

> **Edward (Account Planner):** *Well we have a conception about whether it's great work or not so what we're asking really is: Is this a great piece of work? A great piece of work is work that's on brief so it achieves a commercial purpose for which it is intended, and then we're asking creative questions. Is it new? Is it different? Is it really striking? So you're hoping that every time you get a piece of work that it's going to be a great piece of work, and great in the artistic world is a great piece of art. Is this a great piece of commercial work? Is it going to fulfil the commercial purposes it was intended for? And by the way commercial success and creative success generally go hand-in-hand.*

Edward, as in his previous extract, constructs a high boundary between art and

advertising, and emphasises the commercial rationale of advertising. His account is very

reminiscent of Rosser Reeves (1961), who argued that advertising had a commercial goal

which had to be a priority for practitioners within an agency. Creative teams are sometimes portrayed as narcissistic, and having little interest in the commercial effectiveness of the advertising they produce (Nixon, 2006). The Irish creative teams did not exhibit this individual narcissism in the interviews, and were very focussed on the commercial role of advertising:

> *Brian (Art Director): We never produce art, we produce.*
> *Daniel (Copywriter): Appropriate advertising.*
> *Brian (Art Director): Appropriate advertising, if art were appropriate we'd produce art.*
> *Daniel (Copywriter): I mean often what people want most in an ad break or on a 48 sheet billboard is something to brighten up their day, and therefore it's sort of art in a way, or you know something to entertain them and something to take them away for thirty seconds, or whatever. So therefore it is often entertainment and it is often art but it always will be our job will be to sell something.*

Daniel highlights the advertising practitioner's commercial role in always having to "sell something", which David Ogilvy (1963) claimed was central to a copywriters' existence. While Raymond had been quite critical of some clients and the role of research in the advertising process, he too described commercial effectiveness as an imperative of the work he produced:

> *Raymond (Copywriter): I think advertising has to be effective, I don't believe in that kind of "just for entertainment" value. I think all ads should be entertaining, I think it's really insulting if they're not, and I think if you dumb anything down, if anybody insults my intelligence, like I used to have kind of clients say to me: "Yeah but the general public are stupid", and it's just the most annoying thing to hear. No, you're the general public and you might be stupid but I'm also the general public and I'm not, or all my mates are going to read this, and they're not stupid, and my mates' mates are going to read this and they're not stupid, and my gardener and my builder are going to read this and they're not stupid. There's a certain amount of that kind of negates the effectiveness of the advertising, but I think advertising has to be effective rather than for it to be creative.*

These accounts express a different side to the creative identity in an advertising agency. The creative teams interviewed did not appear as self-serving or self-absorbed as those in

309

Nixon's (2006) study, and took the commercial responsibilities of their work extremely seriously. They sought to produce creative work that would be well received amongst their peers, but the commercial imperative was of critical importance for their agency and its clients, and this seemed to be the underlying purpose for developing an advertising campaign.

7.12.1   Creative or Effectiveness Awards?

The winning of awards is a key marker of creative acumen within the advertising industry (Polonsky and Waller, 1995), and these awards serve to raise the profile of creative practitioners who receive them (Hackley and Kover, 2007). The creative teams recognised the importance of the awards industry, as Ralph explained:

> **Ralph (Art Director):** *I think what tends to be the thing about the advertising industry—it keeps going up and down and up and down, and you have to try ride those lows and highs, and the portfolio is the one thing that just drives you on to just producing better and more original ads, and then there's the whole awards industry as well, which if you can possibly grab a few of those along the way then you start to get a bit of respect.*

Explicit in Ralph's account is the accumulation of respect that creative practitioners' gain for the winning of such creative accolades. The pursuit of creative awards can sometimes lead to conflicts between account managers and creative team members within agencies (Hirschman, 1989). However, for some creative team members like Brian, the winning of "effectiveness" awards were better than "creative" awards, as they provided commercial vindication of a job well done:

> **Brian (Copywriter):** *We also have the advertising effectiveness awards, and when we win those, I love when we win those because that means we've done our job properly. We haven't just produced a creative piece of shit. I mean we could walk out on the street there now and find some clients, like some guy who wants to sell parking meters because we think we can do some very creative ads and do those ads and put them into a creative award show and win creative awards, but it may not help them sell parking meters, and ultimately if he doesn't sell his parking*

meter he wont keep us as his agency. So the advertising effectiveness awards for me are the best ones to get, and some we've won have shown that our advertising has been effective for periods of five years or more, which is terrific, as opposed to just a one-off ad that maybe appear once in the middle of the night. I think creativity is grand, and yes you do need creativity in advertising, but it also needs to be effective and creative, or else.

Brian really expresses the commercial imperative at the end of this account, in describing how advertising had to be effective as well as creative. In accounting for the creative and effectiveness divide, the Irish practitioners seemed to be more focussed upon the commercial effectiveness of the work they produced. Advertising needed to be creative, but this creativity had to have a bottom-line purpose, and the commercial rationale of advertising was an imperative for practitioners within this Irish agency.

7.13 Conclusion

This chapter has identified some of the central "ways of talking" that Irish advertising practitioners drew upon to describe their work practices. The account planning function had a pivotal role in the formulation of advertising strategies, and in translating corporate ideologies for the creative teams. There was some evidence of antipathy toward this role from copywriters and art directors, however the conflict did not appear as severe as some previous studies have indicated (Hackley, 2000; Kover and Goldberg, 1995). The partnership between copywriters and art directors was crucial to how they performed their roles within the agency, and building upon the insights from chapter six it was clear that advertising meanings were socially as opposed to individually constructed (Hackley, 1999a; Vanden Bergh and Stuhlfaut, 2006). There were different ways of talking about the consumer drawn upon by each members of the account planning and creative teams, ranging from empathetic to controlling, and it was apparent that practitioners often relied upon their own consumption experiences in order to develop insights for campaigns. The

311

chapter illustrated how these practitioners drew upon social and cultural knowledge frameworks to develop advertising ideas, and their accounts provided some indications as to how this formal and informal knowledge was fed into the campaign development process. The power relationship between the agency and the client, which was a feature of the ethnographic data analysis, was also extremely prominent in the practitioner interviews. While this agency-client relationship was described differently for larger and smaller clients, it was clear that larger clients had quite a controlling influence upon how the agency conducted its work internally. Finally, the age-old battle between aesthetics and science in advertising agencies was a site of conflict in the interviews in terms of how clients used marketing research to evaluate campaign work, although there was some variation in how this influence was described by account planners and creative teams. Ownership and control of the creative process was also contested between practitioners within the agency, and was a feature of the conflict metaphors that they used to describe the creative process. The next and final chapter considers the main findings of the study in terms of critical theories of advertising's ideological role, and draws some conclusions for both advertising theory and practice.

8 Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

This final chapter draws the thesis to a close. It first theorises the main findings of the study, and evaluates these against critical theories of advertising as ideology. It outlines the main contributions of the study to advertising theory, research methods and advertising policy making. It then presents a "self-critical" analysis of the study, and addresses some of the limitations of the research. Finally, some recommendations for future studies of advertising production are offered to build upon the findings of this research project.

8.2 Theorising the Findings

This section considers the key findings of the study, and evaluates them in terms of critical theories of advertising as ideology, outlined in Alvesson and Skoldberg's (2000) "reflexive methodology" framework. It theorises the ideological role of advertising agencies within consumer culture, and how advertising practitioners incorporate cultural and social meanings into commercial messages. It evaluates the power relationship between the advertising agency and the client within the study, and considers the conflicts over ownership and control of the creative process in the agency. It concludes with observations on whether advertising agencies can be considered manipulators of society, or manipulated intermediaries of the wider capitalist system.

8.2.1 Mediators of Meaning: Ideology and Advertising Agencies

This study has explored how advertising agencies internally develop campaigns, and the role of account planning and creative practitioners in constructing advertising meaning. Critical accounts of advertising sometimes portray it as a centre of ideology formation

313

within consumer culture (Elliott and Ritson, 1997), but in light of this study it can be argued that advertising agencies mediate between cultural, economic and social meaning systems, and thus act more as ideological brokers than producers. These multiple ideologies are mediated in the form of client interactions, consumer research and advertising practitioners' engagement with the wider cultural and social world, which are all constituted in the development of a campaign. The work of advertising practitioners could certainly be conceived as "panoptic" (Hackley, 2002; Olsen, 2003), as cultural knowledge is generated through a wide variety of both formal and informal processes. The fieldwork provided some examples of how these different forms of knowledge are drawn upon in the creative process and the ways in which advertising agencies mediate between multiple and competing ideologies.

The advertising agency also seemed to have an anthropomorphic role of endowing brands with certain "personalities", or providing advertising campaigns with a "tone of voice", thereby encoding human characteristics into consumption objects. The conception of advertising agencies as "cultural intermediaries" could perhaps be broadened to that of "ideological intermediaries", as they mediate between a variety of meaning systems through their knowledge and work practices. They perform the role of channelling and directing meanings in ways that will benefit their corporate clients, and generating social and cultural narratives for brands, as the campaign preparation work for Beer Y in particular exemplified.

In terms of the "advertising as ideology" debate, there are two main ways in which the work of advertising agencies can be theorised. From a critical perspective, advertising can be seen as obscuring "real" cultural and social meanings in the ideological service of

314

capitalism, and thus of fetishising consumer commodities (Goldman, 1992; Jhally, 1987; Wernick, 1991; Williamson, 1978). Such a perspective assumes that advertising constructs inherently "false" relationships between the cultural world and consumer goods. A more benign view of advertising and branding work has recently been offered by Fanning (2006a: 16), who has compared such practices to that of an "Irish Mammy"[29], who turn out corporations nicely for society, and tell interesting stories about the brand. It could certainly be argued that as a well established and long-serving advertising practitioner himself, Fanning has a vested interest in presenting a positive account of his industry, and even the process of "turning out" a corporation to society is inherently ideological, as it involves the production and manipulation of meaning (O'Reilly, 2006). But to recognise advertising as an "ideology" does not necessarily imply that one is morally opposed to advertising, which tends to be a tone of the more critical writings on the subject (Miller, 2001; Scott, 2005a).

When I initially began this project, I had quite a critical (and indeed sceptical) view of advertising, but having reflected upon my fieldwork and analysis, I tend to more and more find myself in agreement with Fanning's (2006) benign conception of advertising. The idea of a "real" cultural meaning that advertising supposedly "colonises" (McFall, 2004: 9) is deeply problematic, as it seems rooted in the value judgement of the textual analyst in terms of what constitutes the "real". Advertising meanings are culturally and socially drawn, as the interviews with the Irish practitioners illustrated, but advertising texts are no less "real" than other forms of cultural discourse such as art, music, film or literature.

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[29] The concept of the "Irish Mammy" refers to the role that mothers have traditionally played in Irish society, training and guiding their children into the world and helping them to give a good account of themselves to others. See Fanning (2006: 16) for more detail.

The theory of ideology is often rooted in the idea of "class" based ruling ideas, but advertising is a communicative system that does not necessarily reflect a dominant "class" interest, and the fit between advertising and traditional ideology may not be as close as critical writers posit (Williamson, 1978). Elliot and Ritson (1997: 201) argue that advertising is '*the* ideological force of late capitalism, a super-ideology that surpasses any other ideological force from this or any other historical period'. As academically robust as their critique of advertising is, it seems to grossly overstate its power as a mass meaning system. Advertising ideology competes with other forms of ideology, such as political, religious, educational and even national ideologies, and to elevate advertising above these more historically engrained ideological forms is exaggerated, not to mention the fact that they offer no evidence to substantiate this particular claim (which can be a problem of critical writing generally, see Scott (2005a) for a review of feminist literature).

Finally, from a postmodern perspective, advertisements can be regarded as a legitimate part of the cultural world, rather than a monolithic discourse of capitalism (Venkatesh and Meamber, 2006). Indeed, advertisements are engaged with by consumers as much for enjoyment and pleasure as anything else (O'Donohoe, 1994), and they do form part of the aesthetic of everyday life which Featherstone (1991) has described. While this argument may seem an unnecessarily positive conclusion to reach about advertising and the work of advertising agencies, it may be as Scott (2005c) has suggested that as researchers and consumers, we should try to envisage a more positive philosophy of markets and marketing activity generally, rather than continually critiquing advertising with the same blunt Marxist instruments. There is certainly merit in this way of thinking, particularly in

a post 9/11 world where negativity seems so rife. This does not mean we should ignore the ethically questionable things that advertising agencies, marketers or indeed corporations may do, because as a society we need to make sure that business people behave in a socially responsible manner, but the other extreme of critiquing the very logic of the capitalist system seems an even worse extreme, because it ignores the fact that as human beings we need consumption for survival (Miller, 2001). Perhaps what we require from an academic perspective is a more dialectical approach and consider both the positive and negative aspects of capitalism and develop theories about consumer culture on this basis, which Holt's (2002) recent contribution to the brand literature has eloquently demonstrated.

These criticisms are not to invalidate the work or intellectual contributions of Williamson (1978), Jhally (1987) and Goldman (1992) in analysing advertising texts, which have been enormously beneficial for the advertising field, but merely point out that there is a richer cultural and social interaction around the production and consumption of advertisements than their studies seem to give credit for (Leiss et al., 2005). I suppose my suggestion is that advertising research needs to "move beyond" these critiques, and incorporate innovative methodologies to study advertising production and consumption processes (ethnography, grounded theory, discourse analysis and reader-response analysis all offer great potential, see Moeran (2005a), O'Donohoe (1994), Ritson and Elliott (1999), Hackley (2000), Scott (1994a) and Mick et al. (2004) for published examples of this work). Advertising agencies are certainly ideological mediators, but they are not omnipotent masters who can stand outside of the social world to construct a uniquely capitalist ideology, they merely draw upon existing ideological currents and channel them

in a creative fashion. The fieldwork provided some insights into how advertising agencies and practitioners do this, and the ways in which they draw upon the cultural and social world for inspiration. They do not have power over consumers (Dolan, 2002), rather they engage in negotiated relationships with clients and consumers, which form part of the everyday exchanges of advertising practice. The study has provided insights into how agencies mediate between multiple ideologies, and develop campaigns through a negotiation of these in the creative process.

8.2.2 The Practice of Cultural Creativity

The study provided some interesting insights into how cultural creativity is practiced within an advertising agency. The findings revealed the socially constructed character of advertising development, and how campaigns are developed through team meetings, internal documentation, consultations and compromises. Exploring this socially constructed process is essential to understanding how advertising agencies encode advertisements (Hackley, 1999b), and this study has contributed an understanding of how this process occurs through the interactions and inputs of a variety of social actors. The creative teams and account planners appropriated cultural and social meanings which were then recontextualised in the form of an advertising campaign. In this sense, advertising practitioners are recyclers of mass media discourses and consumption experiences, incorporating influences in true postmodern "bricoleur" fashion from wherever they happen to be available and rearranging them within the framework of the commercial narrative of an advertisement (Levi-Strauss, 1966). The creative practitioners in particular were keen to stress that while they did engage with other cultural forms for influence, they also strove to create something original, and there was a big investment in

symbolic capital in the development of a campaign by copywriters and art directors (Moeran, 2005a).

There also seemed to be an element of "gift giving" in the process of creating an advertisement. Carl's use of the "Robin Hood" metaphor to describe his role in "attaching" cultural meaning to commercial messages, and brightening up someone's day in the process, pointed to a humanistic aspect of creating an advertising campaign. These creative practitioners clearly did visualise consumer audiences as Kover (1995) has suggested, and sought to entertain and amuse in some cases. The creative practitioners positioned themselves as cultural ambassadors within the capitalist advertising system, and of developing narratives that consumers' would enjoy in their everyday lives.

The creative teams interviewed also did not seem to harbour the ideologies of independent "artists" as a recent study has suggested (Van Wijk, 2006). As creative practitioners, they clearly understood the commercial nature of the business they worked in, and regarded commercial success in the form of product sales as validation of a job well done. They did not appear as narcissistic or self-absorbed as some sociological accounts have portrayed them (Nixon, 2006; Soar, 2000), and were very much focussed upon achieving the commercial goals of their clients, as well as creating advertising which would further their personal careers. These findings contribute a new understanding of advertising practitioners' role as ideological intermediaries, and the ways in which different forms of knowledge are utilised within the creative development process.

8.2.3 Power Dynamic between Agency and Client

A striking feature of the ethnographic and interview findings was the power relationship between the larger clients and the advertising agency. For clients such as the "X Corporation", the creative ideation process was largely structured through and around ideologies which were specified by the client (such as the "X Corporation Way of Brand Building"). This power relationship was underpinned by the economic capital of the client, and the agency was very much subservient in their negotiations with these larger clients. In reading the interview and ethnographic data, it seemed that the agency had to engage in a form of "impression management", and structure the creative process entirely around what client representatives rather than consumers wanted to see in an advertisement (Moeran, 2005b). This created extremely stressful situations for practitioners within the agency, and the conflict metaphors used to describe this relationship were indicative of the difficulty of client negotiations for the agency.

The antipathy toward the client was palpable in the agency, with Rose even keeping documents of past client failures for "posterity" reasons. Such client criticism was also a feature of Alvesson's (1994) study of a Swedish advertising agency, and it was interesting to see such similar animosity directed toward the larger client in an Irish context. The struggles and skirmishes in the development of a campaign could be carried into the structure of the advertisements that the agency would produce (Moeran, 2005a), and this power dynamic seemed to be present in the agency's campaign preparations. The ideologies of larger clients then were certainly dominant within the agency, and the practitioners had to work within the frameworks and boundaries specified by larger clients within the creative process.

8.2.4 Ownership and Control of Creativity: Intra-Agency Conflicts

The findings indicated that the ownership and control of the creative process was contested within the agency. There was some evidence of conflict between account planners and creative teams although overall the relations seemed more cordial and cooperative between them than some studies have reported (Hackley, 2003a). The professional struggles between the creative teams and client representatives were evident within the data and the use and interpretation of copytesting research was a key issue which caused conflict in the creative process. The creative practitioners expressed some of the insecurities and anxieties in discussing the influence of this research which Hackley and Kover (2007) have recently documented. There was creative resistance toward the perceived "mediocrity" created by research, and the old narratives of the "art-science" divide in advertising agencies seemed to reproduce themselves quite vividly in the interview accounts of creative teams (Fox, 1997). The appropriateness of the use of "scientific" testing of advertising creativity was a key point of contention for creative teams especially, and they provided expert critiques of the shortcomings of copytesting methodologies which resonated well with current practitioner views and commentary (Broadbent, 2004; Tasgal, 2003).

The "battles" for ownership and control of the creative process are indicative of some of the conflicts and struggles which seem to characterise the nature of everyday life within an advertising agency. It would seem inevitable that there would be some degree of conflict in a creative process such as advertising development, not least because parties may have different priorities and agendas (such as the accountability agenda, which was discussed in the interview accounts). The study has documented some of these

professional struggles, and highlighted the ways in which creative and planning practitioners negotiate such conflicts.

8.2.5 Manipulators or Manipulated? Recasting the Role of the Advertiser

The first literature review chapter outlined some of the critical sentiment directed toward advertising, and how advertising has historically been characterised as a "manipulative" practice. The study identified various instances of "control" rhetoric used by practitioners to describe consumers, which could be interpreted as quite manipulative in content. However the use of such rhetoric is just that, as advertisers do not have the power to "get" consumers to do anything they would not engage in through their own volition (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2002). The findings show how advertising agencies are merely mediators of a larger capitalist system, and the power in this relationship lay firmly with their corporate clients. In this case, it appeared that the "institutional forces and stakeholder interests" (Thompson and Haytko, 1997: 36) of the clients largely dictated the nature of their relationship with the ideological intermediary.

As I reflected on the data and theory in a critical way, I felt that the advertising agency was more manipulated by their clients rather than manipulating on their behalf. The power relationship between the advertising agency and the client at times seemed to be quite oppressive, and I actually started to feel some sympathy for my informants toward the end of the fieldwork for the stressful situations they sometimes found themselves in. Having conducted observation in an advertising agency, I would conclude that advertising is a fundamentally social practice of human persuasion, with no hidden arsenal of psychological tools to manipulate consumers into buying. Advertising agencies have to negotiate the capitalist system, and as ideological intermediaries they appeared to

322

be as much at the mercy of this system as other stakeholders in society. While they are aligned with the capitalist ideology by association, it is important for informed analysis to consider the relationship between intermediaries and stakeholder interests, which Thompson and Haytko (1997) have highlighted. The power relationship between the client and the agency seemed to loom large on every aspect of Irish creative advertising practice.

8.3 Contributions of the Research

This section outlines the specific contributions of the research conducted in this study. The contributions to advertising theory, research methods and future advertising policy making are all examined.

8.3.1 Advertising Theory

This study has made a number of contributions to existing advertising theory. It has provided a producer perspective on the encoding of advertising meaning, which is quite rare within the current advertising literature (Hackley, 2005), and particularly from an Irish perspective. The study has shown how the socially constructed process of developing a campaign works within an agency, and the exchanges and negotiations which are inherent within the creative process. It has illustrated how formal research and informal cultural knowledge is drawn upon by advertising practitioners in the conduct of their work, and how this knowledge can impact upon the development of a campaign. The interviews with advertising professionals offer insights into their individual roles as ideological intermediaries, in terms of how account planners develop advertising strategies within an agency, and the ways in which creative teams craft cultural concepts for commercial advertisements. The study provided some insights into the nature of the

agency-client interactions in an Irish context, and the institutional relationships that exist between intermediaries and their corporate sponsors (Thompson and Haytko, 1997). The findings highlight some of the conflicts that exist in the creative process, between practitioners within an agency and between advertising practitioners and client representatives who battle for ownership and control of the creative process. This conflict was particularly apparent over the use and interpretation of copytesting research by clients, which was a key source of tension. Finally, the study has offered a critically reflexive perspective on the ideological role of advertising agencies within consumer culture, which contributes to the critical marketing studies literature on advertising production (Alvesson, 1994; Alvesson and Willmott, 1991; Hackley, 2000, 2002). The study has provided readers a "behind the scenes" insight into the everyday social world of advertising production, and the ways in which advertising agencies and practitioners work to construct campaigns for consumer audiences. Overall, these contributions provide much needed insights into how advertising agencies encode meaning in advertisements, and the role of advertising practitioners as ideological intermediaries within this productive process.

8.3.2 Research Methods

The study made some contributions to the area of research methods in marketing. It has illustrated the value of an inter-disciplinary theoretical framework applied to the study of advertising, and how the incorporation of these theories can contribute to a better understanding of advertising agency practice. It has highlighted some of the difficulties in negotiating access to an ethnographic fieldwork site, and the crucial role that organisational gatekeepers play in what researchers are ultimately allowed to see in the

field. The study has hopefully underlined the benefits of shorter periods of ethnographic immersion within organisational contexts, and the more focussed collection of a limited amount of qualitative data, something which Silverman (2001) has argued strongly for in the social science field. Finally, the study has demonstrated how a discourse analytic lens can provide insights into the socially constructed character of "marketing work", which has become a topical issue in the organisational studies literature (Hackley, 1998; Svensson, 2007). Taken together, it is hoped that these contributions will provide impetus for future studies of advertising and marketing work from an interpretive perspective.

8.3.3 Advertising Policy Making

While the goal of the study was not to develop advertising policy recommendations, there were some issues which arose during the study which could be investigated from a policy making perspective. It was apparent during the study that the account planners did draw, however loosely, upon some academic concepts in their work. Much as Cronin (2004c) has suggested, more attention needs to be paid to the academic-practitioner interface, and in particular upon how academic research is utilised within a practitioner context. This does not necessarily mean that consumers are put in a more vulnerable position because academic research is incorporated into advertising practice, but there should be more investigation into how the findings of academic research are disseminated within practitioner communities and subsequently incorporated into advertising practice.

The findings of qualitative and quantitative research were used in the development of advertising campaigns for so-called "dangerous" commodities like alcohol within the agency. More attention should be paid on how such research is conducted by market research companies, and how the findings of qualitative research are used in the

325

development of advertising campaigns. This may also have implications in terms of ethical guidelines for conducting marketing research with consumers. Finally, one of the account planners in an interview described how he would secretly "get a little kick" out of responding to consumer complaints to advertising, even though he personally agreed with some of the criticisms. More academic attention should be paid to the discourse between advertisers and consumers on complaints about advertising, which may have implications for the development of future advertising regulations. These recommendations could provide useful starting points for advertising policy formulation.

8.4 Self-Critical Reflection: Limitations of the Study

In their framework for organisational research, Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) highlight the importance of self-critical reflection in qualitative inquiry, and this process allows for acknowledgement of some of the limitations of the study. While the data generated during the ethnography of the advertising agency was rich, and the level of access granted to agency practices and processes quite privileged, the study does have the limitation of a relatively short period of immersion in the advertising field in comparison with anthropological studies of advertising production (Moeran, 1996). As an interpretive researcher, I was very much at the mercy of my gatekeeper within the advertising organisation, and had to work with what was both practical and possible from the agency's perspective. This limitation was of course traded off against the quality of discursive data generated in the agency, but it is important to recognise that the study does not benefit from the "thick descriptive" ethnographic inquiries of eight to twelve months in the field which cultural anthropologists typically undertake (Lien, 1997).

The study focuses upon a qualitative study of one advertising agency within a specific cultural context, and the findings do lack the generalisability of quantitative studies of agency practice (Koslow et al., 2006). Although the focus upon account planning and creative teams was justified in terms of the research question posed by the study, this focus may be considered quite narrow in terms of the roles of other practitioners in the agency, such as account managers, account executives and creative directors, and the omission of these other agency roles is a limitation of the findings. As I had negotiated access with one gatekeeper within the organisation, he could control what and who I had access to in the field, and it is important in the spirit of reflexivity to acknowledge the role of organisational members in shaping the course of fieldwork (Brownlie, 1997).

As a non-participant my presence was certainly noted in the field, particularly in internal meetings within the agency, and it could be questioned how "naturally occurring" the interactions I observed actually were, and difficult to know if they would have turned out differently if I had not been present. The acknowledgement of this limitations is not an attempt to "sink the findings" before the thesis is complete, but merely to recognise the weaknesses in the project (and indeed, all research projects suffer from some level of limitation). In terms of the level of access and amount of data collected, the study compares well with similar studies of advertising agency practice (Alvesson, 1998; Hackley, 2000; Svensson, 2007), and does make a new contribution to our understanding of the process of advertising production within an agency.

It is also useful to comment on one's experience as a researcher within the field of practice. While I was treated well by the advertising agency practitioners, I did feel somewhat "on show" as a representative of academia, and was constantly called upon for

what academic knowledge I could contribute to particular campaigns. I also felt uneasy at certain times during the study, particularly in the moments where I was literally "hanging around" waiting to attend a meeting or presentation. This experience highlights the difficulty faced by researchers in remaining a "non-participant" in a practice-orientated setting like an advertising agency, and some of the challenges in conducting ethnographic fieldwork. These are by no means insurmountable to a future ethnographer, but acknowledging their presence should hopefully serve as a practical tip for those considering engaging in organisational research projects.

8.5 Recommendations for Future Research

There are a variety of recommendations for future research which could be undertaken following this study.

1. The marketing academy remains quite slow to embrace ethnographic methods of inquiry (Brownlie et al., 1994), and there is clearly scope for more ethnographic explorations of advertising and marketing practice, with protracted periods of engagement in the field. Such work could build upon the findings of cultural anthropologists, who have turned their analytical lenses upon the socially constructed world of marketing (Lien, 1997; Malefyt and Moeran, 2003; Miller, 1997; Moeran, 2005a).

2. While they were considered outside of the sampling frame for this study, there is more understanding required of the role of advertising account managers as "boundary spanners" between the agency and the client, particularly from a quantitative perspective to test the propositions developed in a recent paper on the topic (Haytko, 2004).

3. Future studies could explore the role of external "cultural intermediaries" to the agency in the encoding of commercial advertisements, such as photographers, film directors and freelance scriptwriters, who have a key role in the production of certain campaigns.

4. A new area within the advertising literature which offers enormous potential for future research is the construction of practitioner identity in agencies, which has recently been explored from the perspective of creative teams by Hackley and Kover (2007). We know almost nothing about how advertising practitioners construct their personal identities within advertising agencies, and future research could take Nixon's (2003) and Hackley and Kover's (2007) studies as starting points to address this question.

5. The dynamic between the agency and the client in this study was interesting, yet this relationship was not investigated from the perspective of the clients themselves. Future research could explore the agency-client interface from the client's position, and investigate their live interactions with advertising agencies in the creative development process.

6. There is also scope for studies which incorporate multiple forms of data, investigating how and why advertisers construct certain advertisements, and combing these insights with textual analysis of the advertising campaigns themselves and investigations of consumer interpretive strategies, as Mick et al. (2004: 30) have recently called for.

7. Finally, a future area of research could explore advertising practices and processes cross-culturally for the purposes of developing comparisons and contrasts across

nations, as few studies currently explore advertising production from a cross-cultural viewpoint (See Hackley, 2003a; Taylor et al., 1996 for exceptions). These suggestions provide avenues to explore in the wake of this study, and develop future contributions to advertising production research.

8.6 Conclusion

This thesis has explored how advertising agencies encode advertisements, and critically studied agency practices. An observation of textual analysis studies by Williamson (1978), Goldman (1992) and Jhally (1987) is that they tend to write about advertising as if it overpowers and deceives the hapless consumer (a strain of criticism that has existed at least since Horkheimer and Adorno's ([1944] 1972) critique of the "culture industry" in the 1940's). Having studied how an advertising agency operates internally, I would tend to side more with Malefyt (2003: 139) who describes advertising as a 'human...socially constructed...hot-blooded activity performed by a range of people'. Advertising is socially developed, and advertisements are ultimately produced by people engaged in a social practice, rather than omnipotent ideological producers, which can be the impression left by semiotic and textual readings of advertising (Williamson, 1978). Advertising agencies do certainly channel cultural and social meanings in ways which reflect the dominant interests of their client paymasters, but it is the consumer who will ultimately choose to accept or reject these meanings, and this role of a critical reader is typically neglected in textual readings of advertisements (Scott, 2005a). This study has provided some insight into the social process through which advertising agencies create these commercial narratives, and the role of agencies and advertising practitioners as ideological intermediaries within consumer culture.

330

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Academic Achievements

List of Publications and Successful Funding Applications

Journal Articles

1. Kelly, Aidan, Lawlor, Katrina, and O'Donohoe, Stephanie (Manuscript in press, November 2008) 'A Fateful Triangle? Tales of Art, Commerce and Science in the Irish Advertising Field', *Advertising and Society Review* (Published online by Project Muse).

2. Kelly, Aidan, Lawlor, Katrina and O'Donohoe, Stephanie (2005), 'Encoding Advertisements: The Creative Perspective', *Journal of Marketing Management,* 21, (5/6), 505-528.

Conference Proceedings

1. Kelly, Aidan, Lawlor, Katrina, and O'Donohoe, Stephanie (2007) 'Aesthetic Advertisements and Scientific Evaluations: Divergent Philosophies in Advertising Production' in Fitzsimons, Gavan and Morwitz, Vicki (Eds.), *Advances in Consumer Research,* Vol 34, 81-82.

2. Kelly, Aidan, Lawlor, Katrina and O'Donohoe, Stephanie (2005), 'Encoding Advertisements: The Creative Perspective', in O'Driscoll, Aidan, McDonagh, Pierre, Lawlor, Margaret-Ann (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Annual Conference, Dublin Institute of Technology, Aungier Street, Dublin 2, Republic of Ireland,* July 5th – July 7th.

3. Kelly, Aidan, Lawlor, Katrina and O'Donohoe, Stephanie (2005) 'Advertising Ideology and the Encoding of Advertising Meaning: An Ethnographic and Discursive Approach', in Menon, Geeta and Rao, Akshay (Eds.), *Advances in Consumer Research,* Vol 32, 645-646.

4. Kelly, Aidan, Lawlor, Katrina and O'Donohoe, Stephanie (2004) "Advertising Ideology and the Encoding of Advertising Meaning" Proceedings of the Annual Irish Marketing Teachers Association Conference, May 13th, Dublin Institute of Technology, Aungier Street, Dublin 2.

5. Kelly, Aidan and Lawlor, Katrina (2003) 'Advertising Ideology and the Encoding of Advertising Meaning: Toward a Methodological Framework for the Study of the Social Construction of Advertising' in Wilson, J (Ed.), *"Marketing in a Dynamic Global Environment", Proceedings of the Atlantic Marketing Association Nineteenth Annual Conference, Portland, Maine, USA,* October 1st – October 4th, 247-254.

6. Kelly, Aidan (2002) 'The Ideology of the Advertising Process: An Exploration of the Generation and Creation of Advertising Meanings and Values', in Tynan, A.C., Ennew, C.T., Winklhofer, H, O'Malley, L, McKenchnie, S, Mitussis, D, Patterson, M and Liao, M-N (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Annual Conference, Nottingham University Business School, United Kingdom,* July 2nd- July 5th.

Research Awards

"Best Paper" award at the Irish Marketing Teachers Association Doctoral Colloquium on May 13th 2004.

"Best Paper" award in the Marketing Communications track for the Biannual Academy of Marketing and American Marketing Association Conference which took place in Dublin Institute of Technology in July 2005. This paper was co-authored with my Ph.D.

supervisors and was selected to appear in a Special Conference Issue of the Journal of Marketing Management (July, 2005).

Funding Proposals

I have co-written four Ph.D. research proposals with Dr. Katrina Lawlor of Dublin Institute of Technology ("Strand 1" funded projects) which have secured Irish Government funding, three of which been ranked within the top 3 national Ph.D. proposals in the Republic of Ireland:

1. *2008: 'Life Themes and Life Projects: Identity in Consumer Research'* (Value: €42,000)
2. *2007: 'Images of Transformational Capital: A Genealogy of Irish Advertising 1985-2005'* (Value: €42,000, ranked 1st nationally in the Republic of Ireland)
3. *2006: 'Beyond Marketing Rhetoric: A Participant Ethnography of Irish Marketing Practice'* (Value: €42,000, ranked 3rd nationally in the Republic of Ireland)
4. *2005: 'The National Game and Irish Society: A Genealogy of the GAA as a Cultural Brand'* (Value: €42,000, ranked 1st nationally in the Republic of Ireland)

Appendices

Appendix 1: Bank Y Business Banking Creative Brief

CREATIVE BRIEF

CLIENT	Bank Y
JOB NUMBER	35314
PRODUCT	Business Banking – loans
BRAND	Bank Y Business Banking
BUDGET	tbc

What has prompted the request for new advertising?
Corporate customers regard Bank Y as a great clearing system bank but when it comes to closing the big deals or securing the big loan, they tend to look elsewhere – AIB, Anglo Irish or Bank of Scotland. This is illustrated by the fact that only 50% of Bank Y Business current account customers borrow with

Bank Y wants to become the no.1 business bank by 2004/5. In order to achieve this it has radically transformed the role of its Relationship Managers - the key point of contact for business customers\ to make them more accessible, more constant and more empowered in their dealings.

Which media do we need executions for?
Outdoor, press and radio.
Campaign needs to incorporate announcement advertising for RMs appointments within a particular region.

Who are we after? What are they like? What does it feel like to be them?
Owner managers of medium sized companies, from all business sectors, with lending requirements of over €65,000. Many are owner managers, who ally themselves closer to Michael O'Leary than Michael Smurfit – entrepreneurial spirits with real business acumen. They are quick to spot new business opportunities and quick to adapt to a constantly changing environment. They pride themselves on making tough, rational decisions. They don't want advice from their bank. They have financial advisors for that. What they do value though is the personal touch and expect to be recognised by their banks for having a good or long standing financial track record.

How do they currently relate to this brand?
There is currently a big gap between the world of business and the world of banking. Business people see the banks as bureaucratic or inflexible and Bank Y is no exception to this rule. They do not believe that its employees have commercial business acumen, nor do they believe that they are open-minded risk-takers. What they do believe is that Bank of Ireland is very slow to react when it comes to processing new loan applications. They don't seem to be aware of the existence of Relationship Managers and what it is that they can do for them. They have only come across Account Managers in other banks and

How do we want them to see this brand?

We want them to see   Bank Y   as 'one of them' in as much as a bank can be. We want them to see   Bank Y   as human, hungry for business and capable of delivering on their objectives. In order to do this we need them to understand the difference between Account Managers at other banks and Relationship Managers at   Bank Y   . We need to dramatise what it is that these guys do that will make their life easier and their business more profitable.

What's the one thing we want them to remember?

Bank Y   treats every business individually.

Other creative starting points:
Each time a fresh approach.
One size doesn't fit all.
'I'm sold the right product for me.'
'I'm not just a number'

Why should they believe us?

The role of   Bank Y   Relationship Managers (usually called Account Managers in other banks) is to manage relationships, i.e. people rather than paperwork, i.e. systems.

1) They are more accessible to *individual* customers because they spend 70% of their time dealing with customers. This means they work to an *individual* customer's location and schedule

2) Each customer has their own Relationship Manager – a single point of contact for all his or her business banking needs – for the long term

3) They approach every problem with an *open mind* and use their own initiative and judgment — they don't follow set rules or make 'off the shelf' recommendations. Their job is to help you pick the right product for *your particular* needs.

4) They conduct an *independent* financial review for *each customer* to understand each business on its own merits before delving into an individual customer's *specific requirements* so that they can make the *most relevant* and effective recommendations.

How should the advertising speak or behave?

Why settle for less? Straight talking, provocative and confident but with a sense of humour.

How do we want people to react to our advertising?
Connect and empathise with it in terms of what its saying and how it's saying it. Take a fresh look at what makes   Bank Y   offering so unique and compelling. We want them to consider   Bank Y

Are there any practical considerations?
Avoid using marketing jargon, 'fat' words or bland euphemisms like 'dedicated to you',
'going the extra mile', 'wide pool of expertise', 'tailored financial solutions' and 'wide range
of products/services/channels'.
Avoid giving advice — need to recognise that nobody knows a customer's business better than
they do.

Source: Irish Advertising Limited.

355

Appendix 2: Beer Y Activity Brief

| Brand: | Beer Y | Activity: Quality Visibility | Beer Y | Date: 27 Feb 2003 |

Consumer Goal Grow adoration amongst LDA-34 year olds from 36%-37% by F04 Beer Y

Activity Goal Grow Beer Y Quality perception amongst LDA-34 Adopters & Adorers through agreement with the statement 'is a consistently high product' from 40-42% by June F04 (interim measure 40% by Dec F04)

Target Consumer Understanding Creative bullseye is a 27 yr old male. These consumers want to be seen as grounded, but at the same time not to have lost their sense of fun and spontaneity. This is driven primarily by the transitional lifestage they are at, moving from the carefree single lifestyle (with all the freedom it provides) towards the responsibilities of adulthood. They are still looking for spontaneous fun and big nights out in the pub but the social set is changing and becoming more intimate. Additionally the number of big nights out is reducing with consumers now limiting big nights in Buzz Brash city centre outlets & spending more time in social local outlets locally due to the perception that Buzz Brash represents superficiality. As a result of this period of flux in their lives, these guys increasingly relate to people and brands that remain true to themselves. However, they still have to let go & live life to the full. Therefore Beer & socialising tends to be the 'hero' in these consumers lives. Advertising is critically important in terms of determination of brand choice. They will only buy into a brand if they determine that the brand reflects/mirrors their outlook on life.

Insight As consumers move on in life, they increasingly need serious beer credentials as a sign of personal maturity and discernment.

Conversion Barrier: Beer Y is perceived as a less mature and less discerning choice than other lagers, and consumers switch to other more discerning drinks as they mature...

Conversion Driver: Reaffirm for Beer Y Adorers that their beer has all the quality credentials and authenticity they could want in a beer, and that there is no need to look for this in any other beer.

Permission to Believe

Beer Y quality score used to be X% higher than its competitors however this gap has narrowed causing consumers to question Beer Y quality credentials.

What we want them to think and/or do as a result of this activity?
- Beer Y is a great quality beer. Beer Y on draught is always a consistently great tasting and looking pint no matter which pub I'm drinking in
- I drink Beer Y on almost all occasions

What our target consumers think and/or do now?

Beer Y is not a great quality beer
- I'm never sure what I will taste or look like when I buy it on draught
- I almost always drink Beer Y but occasionally I drink Heineken or Coors Lite

Brand Personality

has Substance & depth, is grounded, Youthful, Quietly confident and comfortable with itself is not flighty and superficial. Arrogant, showy or juvenile.

Mandatories
- Must be KBB compliant.
- Must use the 'King of Beers' tagline.
- Strict adherence to Beer Y code of Responsible Marketing

Evaluation Criteria Volume Uplift in 1000 outlets over 6 months

Approvals Client:

Source: Irish Advertising Limited.

356

Appendix 3: X Corporation Idea Understanding Tool

Idea Understanding Tool

Brand/Market: Date:

Activity:

Activity Goal:

Consumer Insight

Key Brand Benefit

Barrier to Conversion

Conversion Insight

Conversion Driver

Response

This Idea brings the Key Brand Benefit to life by.....
(use for Key Brand Benefit-led activity only)

This idea overcomes the barrier to Conversion by.....
(use when addressing barriers to Conversion)

How is this Idea dependent on an understanding of the relevant insight?
(Source: SI's)

Why will this Idea connect with the target consumer?
(Source: Target Consumer Understanding Tool expanded)

Which Brand/Product Truths does this Idea draw on to make it credible?
(Source: Activity Brief)

What makes this Idea ownable only by our brand?

How does this Idea reflect/reinforce the Key Brand Benefit?
(use when addressing barriers to Conversion)

Idea Understanding (Powerpoint)

Source: Irish Advertising Limited.

357

Appendix 4: Bank Y Student Banking Brief

CREATIVE BRIEF

CLIENT	Bank Y
JOB NUMBER	35355
PRODUCT	Student Banking Brand
BRAND	Empathetic, passionate, experienced with expertise
BUDGET	

What has prompted the request for new advertising?

Bank Y wants to be the first port of call for students looking to open their first real bank account.

Bank Y need an image alteration - they need to be more youthful. They are not a drink's brand so they cannot be 'cool' or irresponsible, but they can be street smart, savvy and do have license to talk to the youth market.

Which media do we need executions for?

A creative platform that would primarily manifest itself in a TV execution, but has the ability to inform all marketing activity.

Who are we after? What are they like? What does it feel like to be them?

'Students' who are ahead of the posse in both 2nd and 3rd level. They are impatient to acquire and flaunt the badges of adulthood. Guys need money and status to impress the girls. Girls need money to fund their pursuit of fashion and beauty. Most get jobs during the school holidays. Some continue to work part-time throughout the school year, especially during Transition Year. Once in college, most have no choice but to work to finance a decent social life. Others equally keen to 'get on', enter 'apprenticeship' programmes or choose careers where they can work their way up to the top.

How do they currently relate to this brand?

Bank Y is the bank my parents would use - solid but a bit worthy. It doesn't offer me anything the other banks don't.

How do we want them to see this brand?

Bank Y is the bank for people like me who want to get ahead and have the 'inside track' on everything.

BY

Why should they believe us?

Bank Y provide students with a competitive financial package with products that students need and want.

At 2ⁿᵈ level, account holders get:
- Credit interest on their balances
- The possibility to phone and upgrade their mobile phone
- Reserve deposit account/smartsave so it is easy for them to save
- A personalised ID card

One call and they can check how much money is in their account

You can top up your mobile phone from any ATM across the country

At 3ʳᵈ level they are offered:
- Current account with no transactional fees or charges
- A 365 ATM card and credit interest
- Discounted general loans
- Laser/Maestro/Cirrus
- A Credit card with a €500 (up from €250 last year) limit, no annual fee, no cash advance fee and credit interest
- 9 month interest free Grant Advance Loan
- 6 month interest free ESS Foreign Tax Advance Loan
- 6 month interest free J1 Visa loan
- Freephone banking with B365 (1800 365 000)
- 365 on-line banking.
  However, there is Government stamp duty of €40 for a credit card, €20 for laser and pass card, and €10 for pass cards.

Students are not cherry picked for those that the bank think will be earning more in 5 years time. Bank Y don't just focus on giving you cheap loans, we offer the best financial package.

We know you haven't always got time to drop into a branch — you can do day-to-day banking from a phone or on-line.

We have a dedicated student officer in each branch

Can we express this one credible thing in a more compellingly way?
This makes sense

Think ahead, get ahead, stay ahead

Don't be fooled by gimmicks

How should the advertising speak or behave?
Savvy and straight-talking but not trying too hard

How do we want people to react to our advertising?
See it as a breath of fresh air

Source: Irish Advertising Limited.

One implication from consumer research is that advertising audiences are extremely sophisticated, and do not appear to be "duped" by the commercial rhetoric of advertising. A study of reader-response to television shows by Hirschman (1998) demonstrated how consumers apply "expert" knowledge to their interpretation of cultural products, and demonstrate an acute reflexivity in their reading of the conventions and storylines of films and soap operas. In an advertising context, O'Donohoe and Tynan (1998) note how consumers are sophisticated interpreters of advertising, and were largely aware of the practices of the advertising industry. The participants in this study were described as "surrogate strategists", second guessing the advertising strategies behind various campaigns, and "casual cognoscenti", who knew the story behind the making of advertisements, and even had rough guesstimates as to how much celebrity endorsers were paid to partake in certain commercials.

As well as being sophisticated in the discourse of advertising, advertising research also shows that consumers are not constrained to interpreting texts within the "dominant code" of the advertiser (Hall, 1980). Hirschman and Thompson (1997) illustrate how consumers can form oppositional readings of advertising, and "deconstruct and reject" the meanings of advertising texts. Similarly, Elliott and Elliott (2005) and Elliott et al. (1995) document how consumers emphatically reject the dominant meanings of advertisements, and construct interpretations that are contrary to what the advertiser may have intended. While critical advertising theorists refer to the power of the text to frame consumer experience of advertising (Goldman, 1992; Williamson, 1978), empirical studies of advertising interpretation seem to portray a critically reflexive reader of advertising who is able to resist the latent meaning transfer of advertising texts.

3.4.4 Social Uses of Advertising

Consumers have their own social uses and gratifications for advertising. O'Donohoe (1994) has identified "marketing uses" for advertising, such as the acquisition of product information, choice and quality indicators, and "non-marketing uses" such as structuring time, enjoyment, education and social interaction. Elliott and Ritson (1995) show how a group of young female consumers in the UK incorporated the connoted sexual meanings of a Haagen-Dazs advertising campaign into their group rituals, and use of the product came to symbolise sexual activity for the group members. In a later study, Ritson and Elliott (1999) explored how adolescents used advertising meanings within everyday social practice, and discovered that advertising-based interaction was prevalent, with young people commonly discussing advertisements in group situations, forming interpretive communities around particular campaigns, drawing upon advertising-based discourse (such as taglines or voiceovers) in family life, and performing social rituals which were based around advertising meanings (like re-enacting a scene from an advertisement with a loved one). In this way, Ritson and Elliott (1999) demonstrate how rituals from commercial advertising are fed back into the culturally constituted world through consumer's incorporating their meanings into the practices of everyday life, and they recommend an amendment to McCracken's (1986) original "movement of meaning" model to account for this two-way flow of ritual and meaning transfer (see Otnes and Scott, 1996 also). More recent research on what consumers do during ad-breaks also shows evidence of social interaction in consumer's homes around particular advertising campaigns, during which the meanings of advertising are negotiated amongst family members (Brodin and Ritson, 2004; Ritson, 2003).

It could certainly be argued that these uses and gratifications are a product of the ideological power of advertising (Jhally, 1987; Williamson, 1978), in which social actions and practices are structured through marketing discourses. This is one interpretation of advertising's social role. However, if we subscribe to the view that advertisements are cultural products in themselves (Scott, 2005b; Sherry, 1987), then surely it makes sense to explore how consumers interact with and use these products in everyday life. Also, social scientific studies such as those of O'Donohoe (1994) and Ritson and Elliott (1999) are grounded within empirical evidence from *actual* consumer interaction with advertising, and are not limited to researcher interpretations of advertising texts (Goldman, 1992; Williamson, 1978). These studies grapple with the complexity of studying advertising within social context in which it is consumed, something which Buttle (1991) argues is lacking in much advertising research, and offer a compelling insight into how consumers use advertising within social and cultural life.

3.4.5 Consumer Response to Ideologies in Advertising

A key contention in critical analysis of advertising is that it perpetuates certain ideologies that reinforce false gender and racial stereotypes en masse (Bristor et al., 1995; Paek and Shah, 2003; Wolf, 1991). The issue of the portrayal and male and female body image has been a particularly controversial issue within advertising literature. Studies exploring consumer response to "idealised" images of beauty in advertising claim that consumers do compare themselves to such imagery, and this comparison reduces their level of satisfaction with their own bodies and personal appearance (Gulas and McKeage, 2000; Richins, 1991). Furthermore, some consumers have reported even recognising that some advertising images are manipulated and "airbrushed" using digital computer packages

Appendix 5: Bank Y Student Banking Presentation

Great minds think alike...

Bank Y   CRR

12th May 2003

Agenda

- Investigate Target Audience
Bank Y research, Decode. II research, TGI,
  Culture trawls

- Find a strategic focus

- Create a brand positioning

- Communicate with the widest number of students

- Address the tactical communications for the 2nd and 3rd
  level audiences

Page 1

Target Audience

Youth!

*Recent studies reveal a generation in overdrive,
overstretching themselves between classes,
night jobs, homework and extra-curricular activities,
and routinely getting two hours' less sleep than they
really need.
Sleep deprivation is a badge of honour'*

Charles Dawson: Consumer World: Terrible Teens, Admap June 2000

Page 2

361

Secondary School...15-18 years

- 4ʰ and 5ᵗʰ years get their first part-time job and enjoy spending... on CDs, DVDs, mobile phone, clothes and special occasions ('debs' holidays)

- Girls are more mature and confident, whereas boys are busy enjoying themselves and lazing about

- 47% of second level students have no bank account

- Banks are intimidating and for people with money (not them)..

- ... but understand that there is a sense of maturity in having a bank account and receiving a statement while still young.

College Students...18-23 years

- Our audience are 3ʳᵈ level (current and potential customers) who are keen to get ahead

- Their social life goes into orbit as they get involved in college life

- Fun is the priority! Drinking – out or 'in with de tins', local band gigs and mega concerts, watching a match and clubbing

- Many need to work part-time.. so life is very busy

- She may be more organised but he tends to be more ambitious

- They still feel financially constricted, so left to their own devices, banks are often chosen based on short-term thinking and convenience

Page 3

362

What do they spend on?

	Average Weekly spend
Clothes	€55
Mobile phone	€42
Alcohol	€36
Cigarettes	€29
Music	€22
Transport	€22
Restaurants	€22
Groceries/Snack food	€20

Source: Decode 2002

Which brands are cool?

Adidas	Nike	FCUK	The Slate
Vera Moda	Top Shop/Man	Apple	Diesel
Wagamana	Next	X Box	Ducati
Pot Noodle	Scalectrix	Miss Sixty	MTV
Cosmopolitan	Lonsdale	Vodafone	O'Neill
Rimmel	Heineken	Miller	PS2
Bobby Brown	Ben & Jerry's	Sony	Lynx
The Face	Jack and Jones	Oakley	Smirnoff

Page 4

What does cool mean?

- Do not TRY to be cool... or anything other than yourself

- No one likes a desperado

- Be different, unique - zig when others zag

- No style without substance

- Don't try to be all things to all people

- Be confident, be true to yourself

- Cool is effortless integrity, unafraid to be different

Trends in youth culture

- More confident

- Harder, tougher, angrier

- More cynical and questioning

- More paranoid and solo piloting

- More demanding

- More cost-conscious, less waste

- More common sense

Page 5

364

Marketing literacy among youth

- They don't just understand marketing...

- They speak 'marketing' and use messages and slogans in their everyday life

- They are quick to spot innovation and appreciate it

- Mentioning cool ads to friends, shows you know what's cool

- Males especially love humorous ads that laugh AT someone

- They are cynical about promotions and often forget to enter

- E-mail or Mobile messages are okay when expected

Implications for Youth Communication

- TV advertising is considered to be the most informative and entertaining channel (Decode 2002)

- Entertain or die!

- Create interesting tension

- Allow for a more irreverent approach and an element of conspiracy/exclusivity

- Edgy doesn't have to have sexual connotations

- Make it relevant to their everyday life and priorities

Page 6

Finding a Strategic Focus and Brand Positioning

Strategic Target Audience Possibilities

- Recruitment
  Attracting new customers

- Retention
  Keeping current customers

- Cross Sell
  Selling current customers new/different products, so
  both parties are getting more

- Up Sell
  Moving current customers up to a higher (and more
  profitable) level

Target Audience Strategy

Focus on Recruitment *of the right type of customer*

Retention is done by deepening and reinforcing the relationship...

. by ensuring a good level of service

...by providing products that are relevant, desirable and timely I.e good cross-selling and up-selling

Communications focus

- Take a longer-term 'smarter' view

- Deepening the relationship is the real reward

- This will have implications...

- Bank Y will attract sensible customers who also take a longer-term view

- Bank Y promotional offers will have a 'longer-term' focus *"that's actually a better deal in the long run"*

Page 8

BY Student Banking finds its 'cool bone'

- BY are not a drink's brand so they cannot be irresponsible and crazy cool ...

- ...but BY can be street smart and savvy

- BY can be cool only on its own terms

- BY is the Smarter Bank that is the best way to get ahead for students

- *Smarter banks with smarter products and smarter promotions, attract smarter customers*

Communications Strategy

Brand positioning to the largest audience
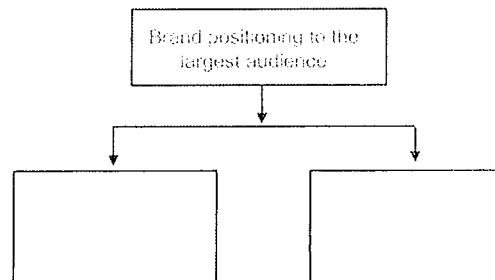
Brand Brief

- BY need to communicate with the largest possible audience

- BY need to alert the youth market to an image that is more youthful and relevant to them

- BY needs to act like a youth market leader

- TV advertising will act as the main creative platform for this communication .

- . . and will inform all other marketing activities

A Smarter bank with smarter products and smarter promotions, will attract smarter customers

Page 10

Source: Irish Advertising Limited.

Appendix 6: Bank Y GAA Creative Brief

CREATIVE BRIEF

What is required? Review existing advertising support campaign and make recommendation to support the 2003   Bank Y   Football Championship.

In what form is the idea to be realised, what lengths, sizes, and formats?
TV, Outdoor and Radio – open to suggestion – opportunity to use some existing creative

Why do we want new advertising?
What has happened to the brand or in the marketplace to prompt the request for new advertising?
Ninth Year of Sponsorship, Best Known Sponsorship in Ireland (45% unprompted awareness, IMS Millward Brown, 2002), However, advertising awareness is at 71% – big gap between awareness of ads and knowledge of sponsor – key question is how to make creative stronger in forging link between the Bank and Championship.

Need to consider if we need new advertising or revitalise existing campaign with some new creative. Obviously Brand roll-out has an impact so we probably need holding position for 2003 that will still allow us achieve our objectives.

What insight do we have about our target audience?
What do we know about their needs, behaviour, beliefs, media consumption, which will help us to create this advertising?

People care passionately about sport. The Championship holds appeal for both GAA fans and non GAA fans depending on the success of their county. People have a real sense of identity with their home counties and will go to extraordinary lengths to demonstrate this.

We also know TV has been the most effective medium for communicating to the audience Outdoor is also very effective given it is a summertime championship.

What effect should the advertising have on the consumer?
Express the advertising objective in terms of its effect on the consumer. Announce, generate response, persuade, promote, make famous, involve?

Make the Bank   Bank Y   Football Championship the most famous sponsorship in Ireland. It should surprise, amuse and be a topic of discussion amongst friends. It should also demonstrate the personality of the Bank.   brand by bringing our brand values to life

What is the key consumer benefit that the advertising should dramatise?

This is the brand's reason to exist, the reason why the consumer should prefer this brand to any competitor. It can be tangible or emotional; it can spring from the product features or performance, the brand persona or the user image. It's brilliant if it's unique, but it's more important that it's powerful.

The Bank truly lives the sponsorship and genuinely understands the passion, loyalty and spirit of being a GAA Football Championship Fan — the Bank is part and parcel of the trip to All Ireland Glory and not just another corporate adding its name to a successful event. We are part of the Championship, rather than simply being associated with it.

What intrinsic qualities of the brand enable it to make this claim?
These are the reasons why the consumer should believe that the brand delivers the benefit just outlined.
- Partnership approach in managing the sponsorship with the GAA
- Commitment of Bank to GAA since 1979, sponsorship renewal until 2007
- Success of campaign to date — we understand the fans and the Irish humour around the Championship

Creative Starting Points
These are some different, interesting ways of expressing the key consumer benefit to kick-start the idea generating process.
Extraordinary (but credible) things that people will do to show their allegiance to their country

Brand Personality
Passion, Fun, Surprising, Imaginative, Empathising

Tone of Voice
Given the brand's personality, how should the advertising speak and behave?
With wit, empathy and feeling

Advertising Property
What images, slogans, jingles or other signifiers are owned by the brand? What advertising property is owned by its competitors?
"Ask not what your county can do for you" — bank slogan

Guinness have Believe campaign & "Not Men but Giants"

AIB have local level club idea — one life, only club — anything is possible

Is there any existing advertising style or reference that might be useful in the creative development process?
In terms of existing advertising, TV programmes, film genre etc
3 TV Ads — G G G Galway, I Love Louth and Dublin Pigeon House
Various outdoor executions

Executional Guidelines
Things to do. Things to avoid.
Need to credit as **Bank Y** Football Championship.

MUST NOT BE PASSED TO CREATIVE DEPARTMENT WITHOUT THE FOLLOWING SIGNATURES.

Signed By   Date

Account Director
Planning

Source: Irish Advertising Limited.

Appendix 7: Creative Practitioner Interview Guide

The Advertising Creation Process Interview Questionnaire for Advertising Creatives

Good Morning / Afternoon _____

My name is Aidan Kelly and I am a Postgraduate Research Student at the Dublin Institute of Technology. I am currently conducting research into the advertising creation process, and I am interested in interviewing individuals who are directly involved in this process. My specific research interest is in participants descriptions of the advertising process and their roles within it as opposed to any specific details of a particular client or brand. With your permission, I would request to be allowed to audiotape this interview. All audio-taped interviews will be transcribed, and these transcriptions will be made available to all participants in the research for validation. The interview itself will last approximately 45 minutes. All the names of the participants and the name of the advertising agency will be changed in the production of this thesis to protect the anonymity of the participants. This research is being conducted for purely scholarly / academic purposes, and no part of this research project will be reproduced for any other purpose without the prior consent of the participants or the participating agency. All information that is received in this interview will be treated with the utmost and strictest confidence and will be subject to the standards of research ethics for academic researchers.

Time:_____

Date:_____

Location:_____

Name:_____

Educational background:_____

Department:_____

Official Job Title:_____

Length of time with the company:_____

Experience in the advertising industry:_____

Example of some campaigns that have been worked on:_____

Interview Guide:

Theme One: Agency life

Question One
Tell me about your background and how you started in the advertising industry.

Floating Prompts:
- Tell me about **your work** and your **job responsibilities?**
- Tell me about **your clients** and the **types of work you do** for them?
- Tell me what you **like** and **dislike** about **your job?**
- How would you **describe** the **workplace atmosphere** within the **advertising agency?**

Theme Two: Creative Message Construction

Question Two
Can you tell me what happens once you get the creative brief?

Floating Prompts:
- Do you tend to work as **individuals** or in **groups?**
- Do you use the **creative brief** as a **creative starting point** for the advertising?
- How important is the **consumer research** contained within the **creative brief?**
- How **important** are your **own experiences** as a consumer?
- Where do you get the **inspiration** for your **advertising?**
- Do you **draw any influence** from other places such as **art, music, film or other advertisements?**
- Can you **remember** of **any time** when you may have **done this?**

Theme Three: Communication with a target audience

Question Three
How do you communicate with your audiences?

Floating Prompts:

- **Which audience** do you have **in mind** when **creating an advertisement?**
- How do you **relate** to **this audience?**
- Do you use any **trained methods** or **communication techniques** when **creating advertising?**

373

Theme Four: Relationships and freedom to create

Question Four:
How would you describe your relationship with account planners?

- Are there ever **disagreements** about the **creative approach to advertising?**
- How are such **differences** usually **resolved?**
- Are many **restrictions** placed over your **creative work?**
- How much **control** does the **client** have over **the creation of advertising?**

Theme Five: Evaluation of Creative Work

Question Five
How is creative work evaluated by the advertising agency and the client?

- How do you feel about the **copytesting of advertising?**
- Is it a **useful indicator** of how **good or bad** an **advertisement** is?
- In your mind, is there a **difference** between "**creative**" or "**effective**" **advertising?**

Appendix 8: Account Planning Practitioner Interview Guide

The Advertising Creation Process Interview Questionnaire for Account Planners

Good Morning / Afternoon _____

My name is Aidan Kelly and I am a Postgraduate Research Student at the Dublin Institute of Technology. I am currently conducting research into the advertising creation process, and I am interested in interviewing individuals who are directly involved in this process. My specific research interest is in participants descriptions of the advertising process and their roles within it as opposed to any specific details of a particular client or brand. With your permission, I would request to be allowed to audiotape this interview. All audio-taped interviews will be transcribed, and these transcriptions will be made available to all participants in the research for validation. The interview itself will last approximately 45 minutes. All the names of the participants and the name of the advertising agency will be changed in the production of this thesis to protect the anonymity of the participants. This research is being conducted for purely scholarly / academic purposes, and no part of this research project will be reproduced for any other purpose without the prior consent of the participants or the participating agency. All information that is received in this interview will be treated with the utmost and strictest confidence and will be subject to the standards of research ethics for academic researchers.

Time:_____

Date:_____

Location:_____

Name:_____

Educational background:_____

Department:_____

Official Job Title:_____

Length of time with the company:_____

Experience in the advertising industry:_____

Example of some campaigns that have been worked on:_____

Interview Guide:

Theme One: Agency Life and the Advertising Process

Question One
Tell me about your background and how you started in the advertising industry.

Floating Prompts:
- Tell me about **your work** and **your job responsibilities.**
- Tell me about **your clients** and the **types of work you do for them?**
- Tell me what you **like** and **dislike** about **your job.**
- How would you **describe** the **workplace atmosphere** within the **advertising agency?**

Theme Two: Developing the Advertising Strategy

Question Two
How do you develop different creative strategies for different clients?

Floating Prompts:
- Is the **strategy** based **strongly based** on **research insights?**
- Who **writes** the **creative brief?** Is this **always** the case?
- Is the **creative brief** strongly based on **research insights?**
- How **important** are the **experiences** of the **advertising planners** in **developing the strategy?**
- Is there a lot of **communication** between your **department** and the **creative department** during this process?
- How much **control** does the **client** have **over the campaign process?**

Theme Three: The Use of Research Insights in the Advertising Process
Question Three
What kinds of research do you use and what kind do you conduct?

Floating Prompts:
- What **types of research** are **most used** by the **agency?** (Qualitative or Quantitative insights?)
- How is such **data gathered?**
- What **methods of analysis** are applied to research data? (**Formal** or informal? Rigid or **impressionistic?**)

- Are there any mechanisms in place to **evaluate the validity of research data?**

Theme Four: Evaluation of Creative Work

Question Four
How is the creative work of the advertising agency evaluated by the advertising agency and the client?

Floating Prompts:
- How are **creative ideas copytested**, and how are **these insights evaluated** by the **planning department** and the **client?**
- In your mind, is there a **difference** between **"creative" or "effective"** advertising?

Theme Five: Relationship between Creatives and Planners

Question Five
How would you describe your relationship with Creative Personnel?

Floating Prompts:
- Are there ever **disagreements** about the **advertising** that should be used and if so, how are such differences usually **resolved?**