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Ellen Hazelkorn
Technological University Dublin, ellen.hazelkorn@tudublin.ie

Nora French
Technological University Dublin

Wolfgang Truetzschler
Technological University Dublin

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All correspondence should be addressed to:
Irish Communications Review,
Department of Communications,
Dublin Institute of Technology,
Aungier St.,
Dublin 2,
Ireland.

For E-mail address to ICR @ DIT.IE
Website address www.icr.dit.ie

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Cultural and Structural Change in Irish Television Drama

Edward Brennan

A dominant ideology in RTÉ?

According to Devereux (1998), RTÉ drama, and RTÉ television in general, excludes society's powerless. This is, in his view, a result of the ideology of RTÉ drama producers. Devereux's research on RTÉ drama concentrates on Glenroe. It states that Glenroe fails to represent adequately those who are marginalised in Irish society. In passing, Devereux mentions some material and organisational constraints which may help to explain why this is so. However, disregarding these constraints, he argues that the ideology of RTÉ producers is the real reason for the exclusion of society's powerless from television drama:

The limitations and possibilities of Glenroe all boil down to the kinds of decisions made amongst the programmers makers. There is no real reason other than perhaps an ideological one which is preventing the series from placing either a traveller or unemployed character at the centre of the programme... (Devereux, 1998: 124).

In his conclusion, the financial difficulties faced by RTÉ merely occupy the background and do not explain the 'ideological decisions' made by RTÉ producers (Devereux, 1998: 146). RTÉ television is described as ideological, that is, it 'facilitates... the continuation of capitalism' (1998:146). It does this, chiefly, by portraying poverty as the plight of feckless or unfortunate individuals. Poverty is, in Marxist terminology, abstracted from its causes in society's economic base. However, Devereux is guilty of a similar sin in his portrayal of RTÉ producers. By describing RTÉ producers as being free to make ideological decisions, he abstracts the occupational culture of RTÉ producers from its social and historical determinants. He provides 'the description of an ideological process, but not an explanation of why or how it takes place, except in tautological terms' (see Garnham, 1986: 17).

Cultures are embodied histories. These living histories, which we carry within us, are moulded by material necessities past and present (Bourdieu, 1990: 53). As such, the occupational culture of RTÉ drama producers can not be understood without addressing RTÉ's history and the numerous constraints that act upon the organisation. Beyond this, each programme department and genre will have its own unique set of historic conditions, and so we can not expect to find a single monolithic culture within RTÉ.

Devereux also infers that the ideas and intentions of drama producers are reflected perfectly in the dramas on which they work. Drama is not shaped ultimately by the occupational culture of drama producers. All television production is an emergent, negotiated process carried out by heterogeneous production teams (see Elliott, 1972; Millington and Nelson, 1986). It is equally shaped by social, economic and technological processes, which are beyond their control. This article looks briefly at the occupational culture of RTÉ drama producers and some of the constraints that affect their work. It attempts to demonstrate that the culture underpinning the professional practices of drama producers is clearly linked to processes in a broader socio-technical environment (see Law, 1991: 9). This piece is based upon preliminary research on RTÉ television drama.

Television drama as the economic world reversed

The immense diversity of television content and culture is seldom recognised (see Newcomb and Alley, 1982). Even when discussing television producers as a group, it is necessary to be aware of the many types of work and culture that exist among them.
Tunstall describes how television producers ‘tend to be locked into a genre-specific world’. Their work, and even leisure time, is often entirely devoted to their particular genre (Tunstall, 1993: 2). Each television genre possesses its own conventions, challenges and rewards.

Television drama, like every other genre, possesses peculiar qualities. It is a particularly interesting genre for study. Firstly, despite its political significance, drama has been understudied in comparison with news and current affairs. Secondly, drama is currently making a transition. In the recent past drama was a non-commercial genre but today it is recognised as one of the greatest potential growth areas in commercial television (The Film Industry Strategic Review Group, 1998: 16).

In the past television drama has come close to Bourdieu’s description of the field of cultural production as the economic world reversed (Bourdieu, 1993: 29). The field of cultural production is chiefly the domain of the ‘dominated fractions of the dominant class’ (Marx, 1845: 303; Garnham and Williams, 1986: 126-7; Bourdieu, 1993: 38). It belongs to those who make their living through the generation of ideas rather than by making an active contribution to material production. Class is a field of struggle, and in this struggle cultural producers often try to undermine the dominant fraction of their class by decrying wealth, which they lack, and extolling the virtues of culture, in which they abound. As a result of this struggle, cultural production is the site of a ‘double hierarchy’ (Bourdieu, 1993: 37-8).

The field of art may serve as an example. Put simplistically, the field is split between those who value, and are valued for, the possession of culture or those who value, and are valued for, the possession of money. To be an artists’ artist one must be loyal to the field of art, producing art for art’s sake, eschewing financial gain and so on. Others may opt for pursuits held to be vulgar in the eyes of purists, most notably the pursuit of money. The field is split between these autonomous and heteronomous principles of hierarchisation. Bourdieu describes the criteria of art purists as ‘degree specific consecration’, i.e., recognition by purist artists, critics, gallery owners and so on. These criteria are peculiar to the field of art. If art were free from considerations of money and power these would be the ultimate criteria for success in the field. Ideally, this is a social field where the loser, in terms of economic capital and political power, wins, thus the field resembles the economic world reversed. Art of course can never be divorced from power or money. Both principles of hierarchisation will continue to coexist, with artists being more or less puritanical, depending on how autonomous they are from the influence of political power and economic pressure.

There is a double hierarchy in television drama. The nature of television largely prevents the creation of ‘art for art’s sake’. Within either commercial or public service broadcasting there must be an audience. Although television drama producers may not make purely interested art there remains a conflict between autonomous and heteronomous principles of hierarchisation. Whitemore who sees a rigid structure of distinction within the genre reflects the autonomous hierarchy of television drama.

At the top are the aristocrats of the single play, then come those who work on prestige serials, followed by the manufacturers of the popular series, with soap opera labourers languishing at the bottom. Somewhere in the middle – the equivalent of skilled plumbers, perhaps or electrical engineers are those who make dramatisations and adaptations (Whitemore in Self, 1984: 1-2).

For purists, the one-off or single play is the flagship of television drama. It is an authored product, the creation of a single producer, allowing the greatest scope for self-expression. The single play is championed as a proving ground for young writers and directors. It is the avant-garde of television drama and as such is seen as a source of innovation in form and content.
As can be seen in figure one, in 1985 RTÉ drama had the highest production costs per hour coupled with the lowest number of output hours. While purist drama may be prestigious, it is highly unprofitable. Commercially, single plays are bad news. Generally, they do not attract large audiences and they do not promote repeat viewing. The interests of purist drama producers are opposed to those of advertising and sales and, sometimes, senior management. As predicted by Bourdieu’s double hierarchy, many drama producers prefer to put artistic values and innovation ahead of profit.

We’ve tried awfully hard but we haven’t been able to save the single play, because everybody who does my job would rather have single plays - that’s where the new series ideas come from - but the Director of Programmes finds it risky, and the Director of Advertising Sales hates them; they’d rather have an ongoing success (BBC executive producer in Tunstall, 1993: 123).

**The producer as artist**

RTÉ drama producers are managers. They manage budgets, cast, crew, directors and so on. In many respects they are like artists (see Newcomb and Alley, 1982: 88). Like many artists, drama producers display a sense that something inexplicable called them to television drama. Their work may be as much of a vocation as a job. The producer of a long-running RTÉ drama series described this.

I got involved [in drama production] simply because I actually like it. I was always interested in it. Forty years I’ve been interested in it. From the time I started working with amateur drama and things like that. I don’t think you can articulate it really. There’s an instinct or there’s something that you feel. I suppose, in a way, it’s like asking a painter why do they like to paint, or asking a poet why do they like poetry. You know, it’s because you have to do it (Producer A).

This sense of a personal calling contributes to a strong, individualist culture among drama producers. The fact that drama production is seen as individual work is an integral part of a producer’s experience of RTÉ. The power possessed and employed by producers, lies with individuals rather than groups. The effectiveness of individual power is heightened by the importance of informal work practices within RTÉ.
Power through informal strategies

Drama has traditionally occupied a weak position within RTÉ because it has generally lacked the financial attractiveness of other genres such as sports or young peoples' programmes. RTÉ drama producers lack power within the organisation. Many producers hold that drama is traditionally the first to suffer in budget cuts. Despite this relative lack of power, drama producers fall back on a number of resources that, occasionally, allow them to realise their intentions in spite of opposition.

Underlining the individualistic and character orientated nature of their work, producers stress how they rely on 'powers of persuasion', 'social skills' or the ability to 'sell' their ideas to department heads. This is an integral part of a producer's job. These struggles to sell or push programme ideas often take place informally. An ex-RTÉ drama producer described some of the informal methods employed in trying to sell a programme.

You would have a pet project that you wanted to do; you would talk to the Head of Drama. You could have a meal with [the Head of Drama] and keep pushing pushing pushing and eventually he might say yes or he might throw you out. And you did an awful lot of that. You did your own pushing if you wanted to do something. And sometimes you'd go over the Head of the Department (Producer B).

Given the historically weak state of public and private revenue possibilities in Ireland, RTÉ has always lacked funds and facilities (Edwards, 1973: 105; Savage, 1996). There is a constant struggle among programme makers for crews, equipment and studio time. Producer B, again, described an incident where he by-passed procedures and authority to win studio time for his dramas. During the 1960s, a drama was refused production due to union difficulties. This resulted in a four-day gap in the studio schedule.

So I would watch the dates and sort of say 'right there's two days down for a studio play' or 'three days' or 'one day'. At one point I found four days and I couldn't believe this... I said 'Terrific! Four-day slot now we can do a big play.' I walked in to the Controller's office and I said 'I'd like to do either Yerma, Hedda Gabler or Richard III.' And he said 'oh let's do Richard III.' And I said 'Great, thanks a lot!' and was out the door. I was in and out in five minutes. I went back to whoever was Head of Drama and I said 'I've got the commission, I've spoken to him (Controller of Programmes). We've got the clearance, we're doing Richard III (Producer B).

It is clear that television programmes are not shaped entirely from the top down; conflict and negotiation mould them. Conflicts arise between producers and crew and also between producers and managers (see Elliott, 1972: 11-12). These conflicts may take place in formal or informal contexts. A central means of resistance for drama producers lies in the use of such informal strategies. Among respected purists, the possession of high levels of cultural capital may allow them to exercise a degree of power by taking an aloof stance as practitioners of a somewhat mystified art.

'Good drama' is socially relevant

Drama has a potential similar to what Mills referred to as the 'sociological imagination' (Mills, 1959: 5). It can link personal experiences and social processes, the everyday and the broad sweep of historical events. Drama may mobilise concern about, and engagement in, social problems by connecting social processes to the personal experiences that they influence. Producers see this as a most important aspect of their work.
Producer C said he would like to see RTÉ drama about the 'existential angst of Irish capitalism, worked out in terms of marriage breakdown'. Producer A cited Arthur Miller's play *All My Sons* as a piece of exemplary drama. The play deals with industrial malpractice, which rebounds devastatingly on the personal life of the man who perpetrates it. *All My Sons* was regarded as a great play, in part, because it linked the personal and the social. Producers see this linkage between individual characters and a broader social whole as a fundamental part of making good drama. This adds an undoubtedly political element to drama production, which producers are well aware of. All drama, according to Producer A, is 'subvertly political'. That is not to say, however, that producers are free to promote their personal politics through their work. I now turn to the type of politics which producers are likely to want to express in that work.

**Producers and social issues**

Generally drama producers have ambitions beyond making money and staying on the right side of those in managerial or political power. 'Good drama' is not seen to depend on political or economic acceptability. A production considered to be a good drama need not have been a financial success. Often drama is admired precisely because it challenges dominant views of society.

Notably, producers cited *Glenroe* as being a quality drama and one that has consistently made sympathetic representations of Irish travellers. Rather than being seen as token characters, travellers in *Glenroe* are seen as an intrinsic part of the show. Producer D commented that *Glenroe* for example has a long tradition of representing travellers which actually extends back to *The Riordans*; it's been a kind of preoccupation. It was generally felt that the representation of travellers was biased, but biased in providing an unrealistically rosy picture of traveller life. It was noted that travellers were far more integrated into village life and were far more numerous, in *Glenroe*, than is typical of an Irish setting. According to Producer A 'If you wanted to take it on the pure figures, the number, I mean to have two traveller families in a cast of about twenty is numerically well above what they should be'.

Despite a small number of complaints from academic researchers concerning negative representations of travellers, the majority of complaints come from the general public and are very different. Producer D explained:

> RTÉ is usually criticised by the public, and certainly in terms of the letters that I get on drama, about our dramas. You know by a margin of 99 times out of 100 the public's complaints are why are travellers represented sympathetically.

Despite criticism from audience members, producers have persisted in maintaining the sympathetic portrayal of travellers. Devereux claims that producers are ideologically motivated in misrepresenting travellers and really only care about entertainment and ratings (Devereux, 1998). If this is so, audience complaints beg the question, why do producers persist in representing travellers at all? They see a value in representing travellers, which goes beyond a populist commercial logic. Producers also spoke of their own concerns about social issues, which were being overlooked in RTÉ drama. They mentioned a number of forms of social exclusion concerning disabled people, women, young people and also xenophobia. They said that such issues should have a stronger presence in television drama.

**Exemplary programmes**

Television programmes are cultural resources. They embody the culture of the society in which they were created and they serve to reproduce this culture (Sewell, 1992: 13). Programmes which are recognised admired and emulated by drama producers, provide an important insight into the occupational culture that underlies the
practice of drama production. The programmes regarded by producers as being exemplary, again, point towards a concern with social issues and individual experiences of them. Among the programmes mentioned most frequently as being exemplary drama productions, were *Strumpet City*, *Family*, *The Ballroom of Romance* and *Fair City*. Both *Strumpet City* and *The Ballroom of Romance* dealt with political and social issues, albeit retrospectively. *Family* was a short drama series co-produced by RTÉ and BBC. It represented the contemporary problems of social exclusion and domestic violence. Despite the fact that the programme deals with uncomfortable social issues, it is a highly valued cultural referent among producers of drama in RTÉ. Producer D commented that *Family*... was very uncompromising. It was a brilliant piece of work and I think it is the one project which I'm proudest that RTÉ, during my period, was associated with.

Producers praised *Fair City* as a show that had improved considerably. It was praised for dealing with issues such as homophobia and marriage breakdown. Producers expressed high regard for a lot of British drama. Alan Bleasdale’s *Boys from the Black Stuff* was frequently mentioned. Producer B described this drama series, which dealt with the plight of the unemployed in Thatcherite Britain, as ‘one of the classics of all time’. Generally the dramas considered to be exemplary dealt with major social issues and their impact upon a group of characters. If these exemplary dramas are regarded as resources which shape the occupational culture and practice of RTÉ drama producers, it is increasingly difficult to support the view that there is an ideological consensus within RTÉ drama which leads to the exclusion of social problems.

**An alliace of position**

It appears that drama producers, in fact, have an interest in representing minority issues. RTÉ drama producers display an active interest in promoting the interests of groups who are pushed to the fringes of society, such as travellers, homosexuals, poor people, refugees and racial minorities. RTÉ is Ireland’s dominant media organisation. Drama producers are a dominated fraction within the organisation. The way RTÉ producers see and understand the role of good television drama suggests an alliance of position between these dominated cultural producers and subordinate groups in society overall. This is based on a homology of social positions (Bourdieu, 1985: 735–7).

As a dominated fraction of the dominant class, drama producers identify with other dominated groups in society. The organisational position of drama producers in RTÉ is homologous to that of minorities in society as a whole. Similarly shaped social relations give rise to similar mental schema. As dominated groups they both struggle for greater recognition and power. This homology of social position predisposes drama producers to sympathise with those who are dominated in Irish society. They aim to make culture a social priority over money and aspire to ally with the dominated and excluded in society. This does not imply radicalism or altruism. If a dominated fraction of the dominant class is to achieve greater power, this can only be done in alliance with other subordinated groups (see Marx, 1852: 121–2).

**Constraints**

Despite the liberal/centre left culture which exists among RTÉ drama producers there are still criticisms of RTÉ drama for failing to address important social issues. The inability of RTÉ drama to tackle social problems to the satisfaction of commentators is less a product of the occupational culture of producers than it is of other structural constraints. This section briefly points out some of the constraints that exist for producers of drama in RTÉ.

RTÉ, compared with multi-national conglomerates or even neighbouring British stations, is a financial minnow. This is partially a legacy of Ireland’s past. The creation of Irish broadcasting soon after independence was politically necessary but economically
Cost and commercial viability were a concern for most of the producers interviewed. While producers may want to have better sets, better lighting and so on, the issue of cost must come first if they are to keep their jobs.

There’s a load of things that I would like to change in *Fair City*. There’s loads of production values that I would like to increase or make better. But I mean I am extremely pragmatic when it comes to the actual production of something like *Fair City*. I think that it has to have a cost effectiveness, I think it is only valid in the schedule if it is cost effective (Producer E).

Cost effectiveness is a concern for all in RTÉ but it is particularly salient for drama producers who have traditionally been at the thin end of any wedge of budget cuts.

Programme slots and programme ethos

Producers did not generalise about audiences wishing to avoid unpleasant social problems on television. Instead, they paid more attention to the position that a programme occupied in the weekly television schedule. A programme slot corresponds with the size, composition and viewing behaviour of an audience. The importance of the slot is evident when comparing *Glenroe* and *Fair City* and the way in which they both address social problems.

Producer E thought that *Glenroe* tended to take a softly, softly approach to issues while *Fair City* was more realistic and direct. *Glenroe* was described as having a different ethos to *Fair City*. The ethos of *Glenroe* was seen to be a direct consequence of *Glenroe* being transmitted at half past eight on Sundays.

There is a very different feeling about *Glenroe*. I mean I’ve always maintained that the feeling of *Glenroe* is that we’re watching it on a Sunday night. We want to know that before we begin the week, all is right with the world. And if all is right with *Glenroe* then all is right with the world. We can go to work on Monday morning, you know? Whereas what *Fair City* is basically saying is that everything is not all right with the world, and this is what’s wrong, and this is what’s right. And people are dying of AIDS, people’s marriages are breaking up and people do become poor, and *Fair City* tries to deal with that (Producer E).

Production technology and the representation of social issues

The coverage of social issues is also related to production technology. RTÉ drama is currently dominated by the station’s two soap operas, which are shot on multi-camera video. Video is relatively cheap. It allows saturation lighting of a set and so does not require careful lighting for each individual shot. Video allows producers to ‘churn it out’. Drama produced on video is generally intended for domestic audiences.

Film is much rarer in RTÉ. It is very expensive not only because it costs more to process and edit but it also takes longer to shoot. Each shot must be lit separately and often only one camera is used. This requires a lot of time and a large number of highly trained technicians. Film has been used by RTÉ in its police dramas *Making the Cut* and *District Detective Unit (DDU)*. Both were produced with the expectation of overseas sales.
Production technology can affect the issues that a drama may address. As Producer F put it, 'If you look at it from a purely economic point of view the more money you spend, the more comfortable a slot you want. The one that is going to get the high return tends to be a conservative slot'. Accordingly, expensive film productions are not as likely to upset or challenge the audience. Also, film productions, given their added expense, often necessitate co-production finance. This may reduce RTÉ's control of the production and so reduce the specifically Irish issues that it may address. Film productions may represent important social issues; for example political corruption and xenophobia were major themes in Making the Cut and DDU respectively. Film does, however, introduce commercial pressures that do not exist for video. As Producer F said, increasingly 'issue driven' drama is more likely to be produced for non-prime time slots using new cheap video technology.

A transformation among RTÉ drama producers: no longer the economic world reversed

Whitemore's hierarchy was inspired by the BBC, where a robust drama department is sub-divided into sections for single plays, series, soap opera and so forth (Selé, 1984). It does not accurately reflect, and never has accurately reflected, the professional culture of drama producers in RTÉ.

In the earlier years of RTÉ drama, this hierarchy could have been used, loosely, to describe the views of RTÉ drama producers. Hilton Edwards, RTÉ's first Head of Drama, imported a purist drama culture into RTÉ by recruiting staff whom he personally respected for their dramatic work. Producer B who was recruited by Edwards epitomised a purist view of drama. During his time as an RTÉ drama producer the most important aspect of a drama production for him was the artistic merit of a screenplay. In the 1960s, Producer B said, viewing figures were never a consideration for him. What mattered was making a competent and faithful production of a screenplay.

There was a desire among such drama producers that they should be producers of drama alone, and that television drama should stand separate from other genres. There was a struggle among producers to develop an autonomous space for drama within RTÉ. They wanted to specialise in drama as others specialised in sport, news or current affairs. RTÉ drama never did achieve the degree of specialisation, or separation from other activities, suggested by Whitemore's hierarchy or Tunstall's view of separate genre worlds (Tunstall 1993: 2).

We all tried to hold on to our autonomy within the drama department. The way it would work, you would get a memo or you might not. You might even just get a phone call, to come over and talk to the Controller and be sent to a particular department, for the year or for a series. And you may regard yourself as firmly entrenched in the drama department but that's rubbish. You'd finish up doing something like Shakespeare and be told 'well we need you to do Garda Patrol next week'. (Producer B).

Although there is scepticism about the so-called 'golden age' of RTÉ television drama it is undeniable that the volume and diversity of drama activity in RTÉ declined dramatically in the late 1980s. By 1990, RTÉ's Drama Department had ceased to exist as an independent department. It had been merged with Variety Television. The battle for drama's autonomy had been lost.

Contemporary drama producers are quite different. Increasingly, knowledge of television, rather than knowledge of drama, is prized among contemporary producers. They harbour artistic aspirations like earlier drama producers. Many aspire to producing single plays. They think that drama is socially important, and believe that marginalised issues should be represented in television drama. They also, however, have
a keen sense of the realpolitik of contemporary drama production. They operate with a
far less purist view of television drama. They have adjusted to what appears to be
inevitable task flexibility within RTÉ. They do not see any room in RTÉ for 'lovey's,
people who may see that some programmes are below them because they are 'drama
producers'. The schedule, location of a programme, and good Nielsen ratings, are
critical considerations for today's producers. Where soap would have been considered
an anathema by purists, as the backbone of RTÉ drama today, it is now seen to be a
perfectly valid dramatic form. Co-productions are recognised as a necessary part of
making quality drama; 'it is a good way of doing business'. Some traces of theatrical
culture survive: contemporary producers, like those in theatre, still compete for
individual recognition rather than seeking to be recognised as good team players.
Despite this, the purist approach to drama is gone.

Power, career paths and institutional memory

Theories of 'self censorship' assume that past sanctions imposed for programmes
deemed inappropriate, by management or government, are embedded in an
organisation's informal institutional memory (see Kelly and Rolston, 1995: 586). Such
events enter the culture and practices of an organisation and so deter staff from similar
transgressions. Organisational culture is a living history, where events in the past,
consciously or unconsciously, continue to affect perceptions and practices in the
present. Within RTÉ's organisational memory, it appears that what is remembered and
how it is remembered depends on the career path a producer has taken through RTÉ.
The Spike provides an infamous case of censorship in RTÉ. The programme was critical
of educational policy, religious orders and Irish nationalism. It provoked considerable
public controversy. It is to be expected, following theories of self-censorship, that The
Spike has entered into RTÉ's organisational memory deterring producers from revisiting
this type of production. The Spike was discussed by a number of producers but its
significance varies greatly among producers depending on their career paths.

Producer B mentioned The Spike as a famous production that had run into a lot of
trouble. He thought it had been good because it had attempted to criticise the
educational system within a drama series. There were, he admitted, some deficiencies
in the writing of the programme. As far as he was concerned, pressure from teachers, the
clergy and the government led to the programme being pulled. Producer A shared this
view. According to him, The Spike received hate mail and massive, extremely negative
press coverage. Producer C described his memory of the programme:

The Spike was a very gritty slice of life shot in Ringsend school using
the real pupils. Again that caused trouble and was taken off the air.
So basically RTÉ gave in, in the seventies, to religious pressure and
political pressure.

Producer E also mentioned The Spike briefly but as far as he was concerned the
programme had been blocked solely because it had contained a nude scene. Producer D
had a very different view of The Spike. According to him, there was no problem with
delivering uncomfortable or radical messages through drama but it had to be done
subtly and skillfully. He made a direct comparison between Roddy Doyle's Family and
The Spike: both had similarly contentious content. Family was a commercial and critical
success whereas The Spike was pulled after three episodes.

It's the cackhandedness, it's ... just bad drama, the ineptitude of The
Spike that sank it. If you take Doyle's thing (Family). Think of all that
he touched, no problems ultimately from the public. No problems at
all. That was because Doyle understands that less is more. The thing
about some of these things that have gone to ground is just that they
are so ... badly done. If you want to be radical you've got to be clever.
That's the other side of it. I mean anybody can ... shock. But it's a
skill to do it and to lay the punch with people going 'what ... was that'? But to come in ... flailing around and maybe land one or two half blows and people say 'ah what's ... he at'? It's to hit and be out before people realise what is going on (Producer D).

Many producers placed the fault clearly at the feet of management who were trying to appease the powers of the day. As far as Producer D was concerned, the programme was pulled because it was plainly inept.

Career trajectories, in shaping an individual's organisational experience, have an effect upon organisational memory. There is a politics of memory within an organisation. Positions and interests not only shape perceptions of the present but also the significance of the past. The Spike was, for producers rooted in a purist drama culture, a failed piece of social commentary and creativity tampered with by those who did not understand it. For producers adhering to a more general television culture, The Spike was either inappropriate or just bad television. Self-censorship then is problematic. Events do not simply enter into a collective memory. Institutional memory itself is representative of, and a site of, power struggles within the organisation.

A purist drama perspective was strongest among those producers who entered RTÉ in the sixties and did not rise above the level of Head of the Drama Department. A more generalist view of drama was prominent among those who entered the organisation after the 1970s. Their careers spanned general production and in some cases included high management positions in television. It appears that higher managerial positions correspond with a less purist and more depoliticised view of drama. A purist drama culture has been replaced by a more heteronomous culture, which is adjusted to the demands of an increasingly harsh broadcasting environment.

Occupational culture and environmental change

This rapid cultural change is by no means confined to RTÉ. Stune and Huitén have identified similar changes across Europe.

Drama and fiction, flagships for public service broadcasters, are still as important, but today single productions of the classics, opera and ballet are rarely found. There is more contemporary fiction, as a rule offered in serial productions (Stune and Huitén, 1998: 29).

The primary reason for this change lies outside RTÉ in a recent pan-European wave of change in technology, politics and commerce. Constraints of space do not allow a detailed discussion of the precise transformations that have taken place. Something, which is symptomatic of this transformation on the whole, however, is the explosion in commercial channels received by European audiences. This is visible in figures two and three.

The recent transformation in the occupational culture of RTÉ drama producers mirrors this broader shift in the broadcasting environment. There is a common tendency to address such a movement by applying Gresham's law to culture; where bad television, i.e., commercial television, simply drives out the good, public service broadcasting. This can not be accepted at face-value and poses a number of important questions. Is the proliferation of commercial television eradicating the elements of producer culture, which in the past have promoted the representation of society's marginalised? Is the creative role of television producers being eroded to the point where they are simply manufacturers of generic 'content'?

The liberal/centre left perspective of RTÉ drama producers is derided by Marxist commentators as being piecemeal, and so compatible with a capitalist hegemony. Following Garnham, if we are more practical, and less utopian, the resistance of a dominated fraction of the dominant class is preferable to the emergence of a cultural
figure 2
Western European Broadcasting 1983

figure 3
Western European Broadcasting 1993

(Source: Humphreys 1996: 200-1)
proletariat (Garnham, 1993: 187-9). There is a need to investigate whether recent changes in dramatic form and content, and producer culture signal a move towards apolitical, commercially driven 'content' manufacture. There is also a need to know if new formats and production practices remove the informal 'action channels' (Ettema, 1982: 94) previously available to RTÉ drama producers. Marcuse described late capitalism as a one-dimensional society (Marcuse, 1964). Are we nearing such a society where opposition is made impossible by the internalisation of apparently inevitable economic realities? Will we end up with television that has commercial dividends as its only yardstick of quality, to the detriment of public welfare? Is commercial logic the new common sense of RTÉ drama? These issues will be addressed in forthcoming research.

References


In 1999 Mary McAleese was elected President of Ireland in succession to Mary Robinson. The other candidates were Mary Banotti, Rosemary Seanlan (Dana), Derek Nally and Adi Roche.

1. In 1999 Mary McAleese was elected President of Ireland in succession to Mary Robinson. The other candidates were Mary Banotti, Rosemary Seanlan (Dana), Derek Nally and Adi Roche.

2. All references made to The Irish Times can be accessed via their website http://www.ireland.com/

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Dr Tanya Cassidy is a lecturer in the Department of Sociology at Trinity College Dublin.

ARTICLES

‘Race to the Park’: Simmel, The Stranger and The State

Tanya M. Cassidy

Introduction

In 1909, Georg Simmel opens his essay entitled ‘Bridge and Door’ in the following way. ‘The image of external things possesses for us the ambiguous dimension that in external nature everything can be considered to be connected, but also as separated’ (Simmel, 1997: 170). Ambivalence, meaning occupying two spaces at one and the same time, provides a stabilising social paradigm, and not a provisional condition of uncertainty. This paper discusses a socio-political drama in Ireland which makes active use of an ambivalent rhetoric, specifically linking notions of transcending boundaries.

In her inaugural speech (Tuesday, November 11, 1997), President Mary McAleese stressed notions of building bridges and inclusion. The rhetoric of inclusion and building bridges had been a feature of her campaign from the outset. At the launch of her campaign on September 26, 1997, the front page of The Irish Times2 reported that ‘Prof. McAleese spoke several times of embracing and building bridges’ and was questioned about whether her ‘reaching out to unionists might not be as welcomed by some as [it] was [by] President Robinson.’ The week before, on September 19, Mary Robinson, the newly appointed UN High Commissioner for Human Rights was quoted in the foreign news section of The Irish Times, vowing ‘to dedicate her new role to building bridges between North and South, referring to the developed and developing worlds, while standing up for victims of injustice.’ Obviously Robinson had extrapolated her Irish visions to her new role in the UN, but McAleese was adopting the same political rhetoric so as to suggest a logical continuity between herself and Robinson long before she made any explicit ‘claim as natural Robinson successor’, to quote the front page headline for the October 10 edition of The Irish Times. The success of this bridge-building rhetoric can be gauged from the headline of The Irish Times on October 1, the first day after the close of the presidential nominations: ‘McAleese is clear to win.’

Linking theory with method

The Irish Times front pages provided a discrete source of potentially fascinating sociopolitical data. Accordingly, the majority of The Irish Times newspapers from October 1 to October 29 were collected (the entire official election campaign period). Initially some Independent newspapers were also gathered, but later the decision was made to concentrate on The Irish Times largely because of its extensive Internet coverage. The Irish Times for the first time had a constantly updated web page devoted entirely to the presidential campaign, as well as being available essentially in its entirety on the net.

Both the print format newspapers and the Internet coverage were read, and reread, and coded for topics. Previous work on drinking in Ireland conducted by this author (Cassidy, 1996; 1997, forthcoming) had led to an exploration of theories of ambivalence dating back to Simmel, and it was felt that these theoretical notions were at play within this political performance. In one sense, we could argue that such ideas might help explain Mary McAleese’s successful presidential campaign and the political rhetoric of bridge building and inclusion. Moreover, this data could serve as another example that might help illustrate and expand notions of ambivalence and socio-political theory.
Simmel stands out among the founding fathers of sociological thought as one who attempted to deal with 'the ambivalences of human action' (Levine, 1985: 9).

Simmel repeatedly expressed the view, for example, that a condition for the existence of any aspect of life is the coexistence of diametrically opposed elements. Simmel treated conformity and individualization, antagonism and solidarity, compliance and rebelliousness, freedom and constraint, publicity and privacy, as so many sociological dualisms co-present in social interactions and constitutive of various social relationships. These dualisms, he held, are inherent in social forms both because of man's ambivalent instinctual dispositions and because society needs to have some ratio of discordant to harmonious tendencies in order to attain a determinate shape (Levine, 1985: 9).

Only fragments of Simmel's ideas, argued Levine (1985), have ever entered mainstream sociology, and Merton (1976) stands out as one of the few sociologists of the last generation who took up the challenges of ambivalence.

Merton notes that sociological ambivalence 'focuses on the ways in which ambivalence comes to be built into the structure of social statuses and roles' (1976: 5).

It refers to the social structure, not to the personality. In its most extended sense, sociological ambivalence refers to incompatible normative expectations of attitudes, beliefs, and behavior assigned to a status (i.e., a social position) or to a set of statuses in a society. In its most restricted sense, sociological ambivalence refers to incompatible normative expectations incorporated in a single social status (Merton, 1976: 6, italics in the original).

Merton's discussion concentrates mainly on the most restrictive sense of sociological ambivalence the 'conflicting status demands an individual may have within a particular social relation' (1976: 8). One of the famous examples that Merton gives of this core-type of ambivalence is the physician-patient relationship. He stressed that this is 'not merely a matter of social psychology but of role-structure' (1976: 19).

Simmel's social type of the stranger similarly has an inherent conflicting or ambivalent role-structure. Simmel's stranger does not conform to the traditional notion of someone who comes today and leaves tomorrow, but rather Simmel's stranger comes today and stays tomorrow: 'the potential wanderer, so to speak, who, although has gone no further, has not quite got over the freedom of coming and going' (Simmel, 1971: 143). Simmel's stranger is someone who crosses boundaries and therefore defines and defies boundaries, or builds bridges over them.

Using the notions put forward by Simmel and introduced to an English speaking audience by Merton, Mills says that 'the theory of sociological ambivalence proposes that individuals derive a positive benefit from normative dissonance, and, in some cases, depend upon it to manage the conflicting demands of complex role or status set' (1982: 2). Ambivalent norms or values within a society work to 'protect' the 'social order and provide a constraint against extreme behavior in groups' (1982:1). For the individual it gives a degree of 'moral autonomy within the framework of continued group conformity' (1982: 1). Mills goes on to put his argument in the context of social psychological field theory (Lewin, 1936), recognizing that we all 'exist within a value space bounded by the varied partially inconsistent values and norms of our reference orientations' (1982:3). 'Our moral decisions are made within these boundaries' (Mills, 1982: 3).
One of the most important properties of this value space is the inconsistency of the various positions, which form its boundaries. That is, the group accords legitimacy to more than one normative position. By balancing incompatible claims, or using one set of values or norms to counter the demands of another, group members enjoy some degree of autonomy in the face of such demands (Mills, 1982: 3).

Thus, the inconsistencies, ambivalences, or ambiguities of the boundaries of the group are tied to the interplay between the individual and the group.

Religion, anthropology and ambivalence

In some ways, the moral dimension inherent in this discussion makes it understandable that people interested in the study of religion have taken up similar issues. At the 1996 American Sociological Association meeting, R. Stephen Warner explored diversity in religious communities in American society, stressing the role ritual has in religion 'to bridge boundaries, both between communities and individuals' (Warner, 1997: 218). Warner argues that 'rituals can create – not only express – social solidarity' (1997: 16). Using ideas from authors such as Kertzer (1988), Warner says, '[i]t is as much the emotional power of doing things together as the compelling logic of ideological agreement that produces solidarity' (1997: 224; italics in original). Furthermore, he says 'the symbols around which ritual centres can and do carry multiple meanings; the more symbols are ambiguous, the more they produce solidarity in the absence of consensus' (1997: 17).

Bringing in notions of ritual, is reminiscent of the anthropologist Fredrik Barth who argues, like other reflexive interpretative anthropologists, that we need 'to discover the meanings, for the actors themselves, of their institutions and concepts – i.e., the interpretations by which they variously construct their worlds' (Barth, 1993: 97). We need to look at the duality of meanings in 'symbols, concepts and knowledge' (1993: 332). The answer lies in recognising and understanding the complexity of meanings associated with symbols. Rather than viewing symbols as providing a 'template or blueprint for organisation of social and psychological processes,' as Geertz (1973: 216) says, Barth argues that 'symbols are not in themselves the representation of ideas; their power of meaning arises in the conjunction of an image and the knowledge and experience you bring to it' (1993: 332). This is compatible with Bourdieu's ideas about the class distinctions associated with cultural artefacts such as food and drink. Barth concentrates on a religious social division, but his broader point is that the multiplicity of meanings should come from historical divisions identified by the actors themselves, whether class-based, or religious, or something else. Barth argues that this complex picture is accessible to the researcher and warns that:

[All] is not chaos: people pursue purposes, schemes, and conscious designs stubbornly and often collectively, thereby shaping many events; and various traditions of knowledge are taught and embraced, allowing people to build and repair conceptual worlds even while these are being undermined by other teachings and other experiences. From such crossing processes is generated the vast cacophony of discordant voices, ideas, and interpretations that coexist in a complex civilization: a characteristically shaped, disordered system containing emergent events and discrepant worlds, in a flux generated by identifiable processes, which we are in part capable of modelling (1993: 354).

The analysis of this complexity and variation, as Warner says, needs to move from an 'either/or polarisation' to a 'both/and inclusion' (1996: 7).
Political action and ambivalence

Neil Smelser has discussed some issues surrounding ambivalence as a counter to rational choice theory, one of whose main proponents was James S. Coleman. Smelser argued, 'Rational-choice theory does not deal with the possibility that we can actively love and hate the same object simultaneously, or that such affective orientations can not come into an equilibrium with one another so as to permit optimising choice and action based on that choice' (1998: 4). Smelser goes on to say 'The sobering paradox is that although we as sociologists are perhaps among the best equipped to understand ambivalences, we scarcely think about or study them' (1998: 10).

Smelser's argument culminated in a discussion of political ambivalence. He announced that 'political institutions and processes offer opportunities for converting ambivalent feelings into univalent preferences' (1998: 11).

In the electoral process, voting converts individual ambivalence into absolute preference. Votes, too, are not revealed preferences but conversion of ambivalence into univalence (1998: 11).

Smelser's comments are focused at the level of voter preference, whereas this analysis of the Irish presidential campaign discusses the tendency of some political interests to maintain, and even perpetuate ambivalences. As Bauman has argued, the 'national state is designed primarily to deal with the problem of strangers, not enemies' (1991: 81, italics in original).

The typically modern practice, the substance of modern politics, of modern intellect, of modern life, is the effort to exterminate ambivalence: an effort to define precisely – and to suppress or eliminate everything that could not or would not be precisely defined (Bauman, 1991: 8).

Postmodernity, for Bauman, is a reconciliation with ambivalence, not in the sense of representing a later historical condition, but rather in the sense of being a reflexive awareness of and deconstruction of scientific and political positivisms. For Bauman, drawing inspiration from Simmel, the nation state as a political construct is specifically designed to manage ambivalent categories. Theories of the ambivalent aspects of the nation state are naturally attractive when treating a political figure claiming to represent the whole of Ireland.

The Irish presidential campaign and ambivalence

The notion and rhetoric of bridge building or builder is ambivalent enough to be applied to a variety of issues, not only the notion of being Robinson's successor, but also to issues of Northern Ireland and the Irish Diaspora. On the day of the launch of her campaign, September 26, before the close of nominations, Mary McAleese (the government's presidential candidate, supported by Fianna Fáil, but not of Fianna Fáil) evoked two images from the United States. Like Martin Luther King she said she had a dream, and like Bill Clinton she said she wanted 'a bridge to the new millennium.' At the same time she is forced to defend this rhetoric in relation to her connections with 'the unionist spectrum' from which she claims to have received 'literally a mountain of correspondence and phone calls... telling her how delighted they are and wishing her well in this candidacy'.

As was remarked at the beginning of this paper, the campaign began with a defiant proclamation about McAleese leading the polls. This poll was taken the week before the close of nominations and did not include Derek Nally. The second day of the campaign once again discussed this poll (obviously The Irish Times was attempting to exploit the one poll for all it was worth), but this time the poll was discussed in relation to the support for the various parties (rather than in relation to the various candidates) and
with a picture of Adi Roche waving to supporters. It was not until the next day that Nally is mentioned. In *The Irish Times* only article on the campaign that day, he is described as the ‘cock of the walk’. In terms of media studies, it is significant that although this article appeared on the front page, it was below the fold and at the very bottom.

In the second week of the campaign, attention shifted towards the Ray Burke affair. This scandal culminated with his resignation, and was linked to a reflection on the new coalition government, in particular Fianna Fáil. The presidential campaign is not mentioned again on *The Irish Times* front-page until Thursday when an article appears discussing the car crash involving Mary Banotti’s campaign team. The next day *The Irish Times* reports on a speech that Mary McAleese delivered in Cork where she ‘stakes a claim as Robinson’s successor’, which is, incidentally, the title of the article. Once again, however, this article appears at the bottom of the fold, and significantly is coupled with a relatively light-hearted treatment of Bushmills whiskey and sectarian prejudice. This is the first of many linkages between McAleese and relationships between the two communities in the North. The following day, within the paper but referred to on the side of the front page, there is an article entitled ‘Spring challenges McAleese – not a natural successor.’ Incidentally, the only other presidential campaign story covered on the front page that day concerned Dana and the journalist Vincent Brown.

The front-page headline on the Monday of the third week of the presidential campaign is ‘Blair to bridge gap by meeting SF’ (Sinn Féin). Immediately below this is an article discussing McAleese’s attitude to abortion. At the same moment, Blair talks of building bridges the discussion of McAleese reverts to her ability or inability to mediate conservatism and liberalism on social issues, a theme which *The Irish Times* web page coverage continues in their discussion of the candidates, where McAleese is profiled under the slogan ‘Liberal Feminist or Catholic Conservative.’

The links to the north become more prominent and explicit the next day when the headline is ‘Nally questions McAleese on SF,’ and, in probably a deliberate sense of symmetry, the next article is about Blair stepping up the peace process. Nally discusses a Department of Foreign Affairs memo purporting to reflect some of her views on Sinn Féin’ which he says, if accurate, indicates that Prof. McAleese ‘works to a different moral agenda than most people in the Republic’. The following day it is reported that McAleese denies these allegations, but the headline reporting another poll, ‘McAleese still in front as Roche vote collapses’, detracts from this story. The next day a story appears, once again below the fold, discussing how McAleese questions Nally’s motives behind his criticism of her. That morning on the Pat Kenny radio show Gerry Adams says he would ‘probably vote for Mary McAleese’—a revelation which appears on *The Irish Times* web coverage that day and headlines their newspaper the following day together with an article that discusses the political disagreements between the government and Fine Gael caused by Adams’ endorsement. *The Irish Times* coverage continues to make links to other media coverage the next day when it discusses the appearance of all of the candidates on *The Late Late Show*, concluding that Banotti looked and performed better than McAleese, although conceding that McAleese ‘had greater reason to be defensive after the most political week of the campaign.’ The headline, however, for this day’s paper is ‘Reluctant Govt sets up inquiry into memo leak.’

The following week is dominated by a discussion of the government’s inquiry into this memo. It becomes a political battle between Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, and McAleese refuses to comment. For the first time in the campaign, the front page of *The Irish Times* features a picture of McAleese both on Monday and Tuesday. The latter day was headlined with the article ‘McAleese peace process role defended by Hume.’ The political dispute between Ahern and Bruton continues the following day, although less prominently. Thursday, on the other hand is marked by the headline ‘McAleese defends claim to act as bridge builder’ surrounding yet another picture of McAleese. McAleese is extensively quoted in this article, and says ‘it is a mistake to believe that one can build bridges from mid-stream to no man’s land.’ In other words, she is acknowledging boundaries rather than trying to cloud or obfuscate them. The next day there is no
coverage of the campaign on the front page, and the week ends on Saturday with the reporting of the third opinion poll, which states that 'McAleese remains on course to win'.

The final three days of the campaign begin with a last attempt by Banotti and her campaign team to state that despite the polls she still has a chance to win. The next day the campaign is not covered on the front page, and instead the headline refers to the American Wall Street decline (or near crash) which may indicate the degree of confidence in the outcome. Finally, the last day before the election, *The Irish Times* reports on a poll conducted two days before which, they said, showed McAleese had an 'unassailable lead.' Below this article, which incidentally also featured another picture of McAleese, was a picture of the US Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith and Frank McCourt, the author of *Angela's Ashes*, and the other two articles which appeared on the front page that day were also connected to the US: one about the US stock market recovery, and the other about the trial in the US of the British au pair. Thus, I would argue, *The Irish Times* is making an implicit link between Mary McAleese and the diaspora (a further identification of McAleese as Robinson's successor).

**Conclusion**

The concept of ambivalence from the time of Simmel onwards has captured notions of opposites. Simmel argued that it is 'in the correlation of separateness and unity, [that] the bridge always allows the accent to fall on the latter' (Simmel, 1997: 172).

Because the human being is the connecting creature who must always separate and cannot connect without separating – that is why we must first conceive intellectually of the merely indifferent existence of two river banks as something separated in order to connect them by means of a bridge (Simmel, 1997: 174)

Coverage of Mary McAleese's campaign has focused from the outset on the bridging or accommodation of opposites. Derek Nally attempted to portray McAleese as an outsider in the simple sense of being estranged from the normative moral sense of the Republic. This exclusivist, partitionist case against McAleese collapsed because of McAleese's successful linkage of herself as a cherishable figure of ambivalence or liminality. The endorsement of John Hume at this point perhaps served to reinforce this, and perhaps link the entire affair to his accepted and highly approved interactions with disparate communities in the north.

McAleese, as was commented earlier, acknowledged rather than obfuscated these boundaries. Bauman remarks:

As boundary-drawing is never foolproof and some boundary-crossing is difficult to avoid, hermeneutic problems are likely to persist as a permanent 'grey area' surrounding the familiar world of daily life. The grey area is inhabited by *unfamiliars*; by the not-yet classified, or – rather- classified by criteria similar to ours, but as yet unknown to us (Bauman, 1991: 57).

Mary McAleese for a long time inhabited this grey area. In many ways, one might say it was by exploiting this grey area that she became President of Ireland.

**References**


ARTICLES


Escaping the 'Evil Avenger' and the 'Supercrip': Images of Disability in Popular Television

Alison Harnett

‘Accept me for what I am and I’ll accept you for what you’re accepted as.’

(Christopher Nolan, 1987).

Introduction

This article examines the extent and significance of the under-representation of the disabled community in fictional film and television, arguing that when it is portrayed on-screen, the images are often inaccurate or unfair. Whereas media treatment of women, the gay community, or ethnic minorities has received considerable academic attention, no such priority has been given to the nature of the portrayal of the disabled, or the lack of proportional visibility on our screens.

There are 350,000 people with disabilities in the Republic of Ireland (National Rehabilitation Board and RTÉ, 1992) representing approximately ten per cent of the Irish population.1 Were disabled people proportionately portrayed and represented on Irish television, ten per cent of characters and presenters would be disabled – one in ten news readers, soap opera characters, television hosts. This is clearly far from being the case. In 1997, across the six main British and Irish soap operas on Irish television, there were only three disabled characters. Apart from specialist news bulletins for the deaf, there are no visibly disabled newsreaders on any of the stations currently available to Irish television viewers. With no established language or research methods to draw on in the study of disability in the media, this article adapts some tools of gender studies and argues that many of the problems of representation that have been highlighted for gender will be seen to have a corresponding value for investigating film and television portraits of disability, and for deconstructing some of the coded messages the mass media may be sending us about certain groups in society.

Representing disability

Gender studies have identified many cases in which female characters in the fictional media are stereotyped and not allowed to develop into fully-rounded individuals. Disabled characters are frequently subject to the same restrictions. They are oversimplified and used not for their complexity as people but for their easily identifiable impairment which is exploited by scriptwriters for dramatic effect, for emotional appeal or for blatant symbolism.

One of the common ‘uses’ of disabled characters is as the irredeemable villain. Martin Norden, in one of only two available critical media studies texts about disability, (Norden, 1994) has coined the term ‘evil avenger’ to describe the stereotype of disabled baddies seeking revenge for the bad deal they have been dealt in life. Adventure films such as the Batman movies and James Bond cast disfigured and deformed characters as the villain – easily identifiable personifications of evil. The immorality of the villain is linked with his or her physical deformity as a dramatic technique. In Goldeneye, for instance, the moment that Bond’s friend turns evil and betrays him coincides with the moment that he is physically disfigured, and thereafter the deformity represents all that is bad and lacks heroism. From Shakespeare’s Richard III to the modern day ‘Two Face’ Batman villain, we can see writers using physical disability to embody, or personify evil.

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1. The definition of ‘disability’ used is that developed by the World Health Organisation which includes physical or psychological impairment or restriction and the handicap that result from these conditions. The one exception is that of non-congenital mental illness which is not included as a disability for the purposes of this article.
When they are not inextricably linked with the dark side, disabled characters are often portrayed as remarkable achievers, 'supercrips' who, against all odds, triumph over the tragedy of their condition. In contrast to the evil avenger, the supercrip stereotype depicts a disabled person who, through astounding personal endeavour overcomes their disability – a cripple who learns to walk, a dyslexic person who becomes a writer. Dramatically, this image is useful to script writers for whom a disabled person's triumph over their impairment is a metaphor for the more general human struggle to overcome life's obstacles. The image, however, is unsavoury to disability critics who see it as crucial that a disabled person learn to accept their disability, rather than constantly struggling to rise 'above' it to 'normality'. It should not be assumed that it is the ultimate goal of a disabled person to be cured. The underlying message, or ideology, of this logic is that disabled people can never be happy as they are and must change to be accepted and valued.

Even the widely acclaimed film My Left Foot. Jim Sheridan's story of disabled artist Christy Brown, relies somewhat on the supercrip stereotype. In a Channel 4 Without Walls documentary, disabled critic Shabnam points out that when the hero writes with his left foot on the blackboard, his father lifts him up proclaiming 'This is Christy Brown, my son. Genius!' and brings him for his first drink in the pub. It is only when Christy begins to behave extraordinarily that his father accepts him.

Depiction of disabled people behaving 'ordinarily' arises much less frequently in film. Although there are a number of 'once-off' examples of films such as Children of a Lesser God or Boys in the Hood which represent people with disabilities as fully-rounded individuals, there are few films in which disabled characters play secondary roles as incidental people in society. In films, central characters have mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and friends, but few disabled characters fill those roles. Although there are films about disability, it is rare for disabled people to appear in an 'ordinary' capacity, as part of the general social context. One representation, which has been held up as a rare example by Shabnam is the brother of the groom in Four Weddings and a Funeral. He is firstly a brother, a good friend and he also happens to be deaf. His disability is incidental, though not ignored, and his deaf-signing is vividly depicted in the wedding scene where he signs to the congregation that he believes his brother is in love with somebody else.

However this film is exceptional. Disabled characters are more commonly portrayed in dramatic, dangerous or challenging situations. The disabled mothers, brothers, friends and business people that make up ten per cent of the population and lead ordinary lives rarely appear in television or film fiction. This reduces the possibility of on-screen disabled role models for disabled people, and deprives the estimated seven out of ten people (NRB and RTÉ, 1992) in Ireland who do not come in personal contact with disabled people the possibility of encountering fictional disabled characters. The media fail to counteract its stereotyping of disability with sufficient 'ordinary' characters for whom disability is merely one aspect of the personality portrayed. The resulting message is that disability is too abnormal to be integrated into 'normal' society.

With no context in which it is seen as 'normal', disability is perceived as threatening and unusual. The subjectification of female characters as described by feminist psychoanalysis 'controls' the threat of the unknown woman by either punishing her or fetishising her. Similarly, the disabled evil avenger always gets his or her 'comeupance'. The supercrip is portrayed as perfect: too intelligent, too sporty, and too gifted to be feared.

Norden (1994) discusses how disabled people are further isolated cinematically by various devices including the point of view shot which posits the spectator invariably as able-bodied; physical distance is often put between disabled characters and others, and shots are rarely taken from realistic wheelchair-height eye-lines. Thus we can begin to see the link with psychoanalytical theory. The spectator is automatically constructed as able-bodied.
Feminist theorists such as Mulvey (1975) and van Zoonen (1994) have concluded that many female characters in fictional film and television are over-simplified either for dramatic purposes that suit the script-writer, or as a means of keeping them in their place in either a pre-meditated or subconscious way. Examined under similar parameters, disabled characters in the fictional media tend to be used for the dramatic power of their disability alone, or over-glorified for emotional appeal.

Althusser (1971) suggests that Ideological State Apparatuses, such as the media in this case, play a vital formative role in the creation of a world and personal view. If we look at the portrayals of disability that embody evil in a physical disfigurement, or any of the other stereotypes, there seems just concern as to what they say to disabled and able-bodied people about disability. When disabled children see close screen connections between evil and their physical condition it cannot contribute to a positive self-image: when they see that supercrip is the acceptable public face of disability, they are not affirmed as valuable people for who they are or what they achieve, but rather defined in terms of their limitations, their achievements defined in terms of overcoming these physical limitations.

Just as there are positive, complex representations of women in films, and films where women do indeed succeed in escaping the restrictions of the ‘male gaze’ (Mulvey, 1975), so too there are positive representations of disabled people. The following study details a character in Boyz in the Hood identified by a group of young disabled people as being particularly well represented. His disability is an integral part of his character, without it being the main reason for his inclusion.

**Boyz ‘n the Hood**

John Singleton’s 1989 film Boyz ‘n the Hood is an exploration of the violence and frustration of the black ghettos of Los Angeles through the eyes of a group of teenagers growing up in this tense atmosphere and struggling to find their own identity. It begins with the two disturbing statistics: (1) one out of every twenty-one black males in America is murdered. (2) Most of these deaths take place at the hands of other young black males. These are the issues dramatised by the movie, not disability.

The story portrays the life of Tre Styles, a bright, ambitious youth, and his friends. One of the gang, Chris, is physically disabled, and uses a wheelchair. This never becomes a key issue in the film however – it is his membership of the group of teenage boys that merits his portrayal and his disability is incidental, or at least secondary. This is not to say that his disability is in some way hidden, or disregarded, rather it is realistically portrayed as an aspect of the day to day life of Chris. The character, played by Regge Green, is first introduced sitting around a table playing cards with three of the other characters. It is not until he pushes his chair back from the table at the end of the game, and it is actually a wheelchair, that the viewer becomes aware of his disability. Thus we are first introduced to a person, rather than a disabled person.

Chris is an integral part of the 'gang'. Crucially, his wheelchair is portrayed as a mode of transport rather than a restriction. He uses the wheelchair to ‘breakdance’, but is never portrayed as a wheelchair-user of exceptional athletic prowess. He is shown as a teenager with energy to expend, just like the others in this ghetto, where boredom offers few outlets for their frustration. This realism continues in the face of danger. When a rival gang drives around threatening to kill indiscriminately with a rifle, one of the gang immediately suggests that Chris be helped off the veranda. When he needs help it is accepted, until then it is not offered. In this way his disability is neither given heroic status nor ignored.

Not only does this film present us with an interesting and well-judged example of a disability representation; it also provides an insight into the manner in which the cultural studies world appears to be largely indifferent to the issues pertaining to
disability. In a study of *Boyz 'n the Hood*, Wiegman (1993) specifically seeks to examine the interaction between various aspects of identity, such as gender, age, race, class etc., and to point out various categories of male and female status which negate seeing 'male' or 'female' as single or stable entities. The categories of 'women' or 'men' become less useful as we see the hierarchical structure that arises around sub-groupings of those categories such as black men, black women, white women etc.,. Wiegman argues that the construction of black masculine identity is particularly problematic because within a particular hierarchy, black men come below white women, who come below white men. This happened historically, in literature and other cultural forms, she argues, through its feminization, on one hand, and 'hypermasculinization' (portraying black men as a sexual threat to white women) at the other extreme. She sees the film as subverting these stereotypes and exploring new representations of black identity:

*a meditated black masculinity is played out in the competing characterisations of young black men in Sty.le's neighbourhood, from the troubled Doughboy (Ice Cube) who spends his youth in and out of reform school, to his brother Ricky (Morris Chestnut), a teenage father who is on course for a football scholarship... to the more peripheral figures Monster, Docky, and the wheelchair bound Chris, all participants in Doughboys raucous circle (my emphasis).*

The term 'wheelchair-bound' is of the variety of language that the disabled community is at pains to eradicate and finds unacceptable. The term conjures up images of helplessness, need, and people in some way defined by their use of a wheelchair. Chris, I would argue, is certainly not 'wheelchair-bound'. Firstly, as described, he uses his wheelchair as his mode of transport, rather than being bound to it. Secondly, director John Singleton depicts him, with rare and much needed realism, out of his wheelchair, sitting on a sofa, relaxing and playing computer games with other boys. It is surprisingly unusual for films to show physically disabled wheelchair-users out of their wheelchairs, as if the language used to describe these people e.g. wheelchair-bound negates thinking of them engaged in activities without wheelchairs!

Even Wiegman's essay, which specifically sets out to explore conflicting hierarchies within cultural expression, does not avoid the common trap of language which objectifies people with disabilities — indeed the very use of the word 'the' before wheelchair-bound Chris heightens this effect. Whilst tracing the various elements of feminism, masculine and racial portrayal, and relating them to class and economics, her study, save for its reference to 'wheelchair-bound Chris', completely neglects a category with which this film so positively dealt — physical disability. This illustrates what I believe to be a failure on the part of communications/cultural studies theorists, to include the sub-division of able-bodied/disabled in its examination of themes of gender-race-class, as Wiegman describes them, even when examining those films which include noteworthy portrayals of disability.

**Soap opera and disability**

The soap operas available to an Irish television audience: *Fair City* and *Glenroe*, *Brookside*, *Eastenders*, *Coronation St.* and *Emmerdale* similarly display a general absence of disabled characters, despite the flexibility that soap opera possesses to include disabled characters and to develop them realistically. There are on average forty characters in a soap opera. Of all the characters in the Irish soaps *Glenroe* and *Fair City*, only one (Miley Byrne of *Glenroe*) has a disability. A central character in *Glenroe*, Miley was revealed some years ago to suffer from epilepsy. It affected his life significantly for several episodes and then Miley came to control his condition with medication. The story line, according to Claire Reynolds, the script editor for the series, was introduced as a convenience for script writers to explain why the actor Mick Lally could not drive, whilst he took lessons! Apart from this, the last time a physically disabled character featured regularly in either of the Irish soaps was eight years ago: *Glenroe's* Dave Brennan, who used a wheelchair as a result of childhood polio.
Among British soap operas, there are a further two disabled characters: Chris Tate from *Emmerdale*, a villainous man who was injured in a plane crash and Maud Grimes from *Coronation Street*, an elderly lady now using a wheelchair. In total then, there are three disabled characters out of approximately two hundred and forty (1.25 per cent) – far from representative of the ten per cent proportion of the population who have a disability.

From the point of view of the disabled community soap operas are particularly important because of their power to shape attitudes towards disability. Soap operas draw huge audiences. In the week ending 29 June 1997, *Fair City* had 639,000 viewers – the top rated programme on RTÉ 1 (TAM ratings, *RTÉ Guide*). The ten most popular programmes listed for RTÉ 1 that week included five soap operas. Five of the top seven programmes shown by Network 2 were also soap operas (episodes of Australian soap opera *Home and Away* in each case). This pattern of popularity is repeated throughout the ratings (*RTÉ Guide*: 1997), with minor seasonal differences.

In addition to its popularity, many theorists (Brown, 1994; Fiske, 1987; Dyer et al. 1981) have noted the *significance* that soap opera has for its audience. Viewers enjoy it and believe it depicts ordinary life, situations that people can identify with, personal stories, working class characters, family life and social relationships.

Taking into account the ‘ordinariness’ of the themes of soap opera, the genre is one that could be effectively employed to demonstrate the corresponding ‘ordinariness’ of disability. The significance that soap opera has for its audience and the pleasure derived from it come partly from the ability to see representations of oneself and the kind of life ‘Joe Soap’ leads. Disabled people do not have many opportunities to see representations of themselves on screen and as discussed above, the images they do see are often one-dimensional. If ‘ordinary’ life is portrayed by soap opera, then disability has a part to play in this normality.

Soap opera is arguably the genre best equipped to successfully portray characters from marginalised groups due to its flexible form and open-ended time frame. Using *Coronation Street* as a template, theorist Christine Geraghty, (Brown, 1994; Fiske, 1987; Geraghty, 1981) has identified the features of narrative, time and characterisation within soap opera which make its unique portrayal of daily reality so attractive to audiences.

Soap time is ‘real’ in the sense that within each episode, time is close to that lived by the audience, and between episodes, characters are considered to pursue an ‘unrecorded existence’ while the audience is getting on with their lives. Soaps are also open-ended – the narrative runs constantly and multiple plot lines inter-link and entangle over time and episodes. The use of ‘cliff-hangers’ at the end of each episode contributes to a continuing lack of closure, which in turn contributes to the creation of a sense of the future in the serial. The characters in soap operas are developed over a period of years, as opposed to the minutes or hours common for ‘one-off’ dramas, and the audience becomes deeply familiar with some characters. The form of soap allows the story line to twist and turn, to reflect social trends and opinion and to integrate a vast array of characters and situations into situations into the plot. Nothing in particular ever has to happen and no conclusions have to be reached.

As identified previously, one of the main areas where people with disabilities remain virtually unseen is as incidental, non-central characters. The formal features of soap opera lend it the potential for showing disabled characters as part of a wider social context. The large number of characters means that the character will not need to be a central part of every narrative, and may also perform dramatic functions completely unrelated to disability, especially in plot-lines that centre around other characters. A character that is developed over the long periods of time common for soap opera has a greater chance of speaking for him/herself rather than being ‘spoken’ since he/she will gain familiarity as a *character* rather than just a disabled character. The ordinariness
and permanence of the soap opera removes some of the features of tokenism, as any character must have multiple aspects to endure the long running nature of the genre.

Soap opera should be capable of presenting images of disabled people that go beyond mere stereotypes. It is a genre that has (often unfulfilled) potential to contribute to the integration of marginalised groups by depicting and developing ordinary disabled characters in ordinary situations leading ordinary lives.

According to Patrick Dawson and Thomas McLoughlin, two scriptwriters from Fair City, the absence of disabled characters is noteworthy and should be amended. However, a telling comment made by Thomas McLoughlin, highlighted one misunderstanding: 'It didn't occur to us to include disabled characters. And the reason it didn't occur to us is because we don't deal in issues...' Disability is not only an 'issue', but it is also an element of daily life – the very reality which soap seeks to portray. The question must be asked as to why it would occur to writers to include gay characters but not disabled, when the population figures are approximately equal.

The writers also indicated apprehension at writing in disabled characters. Dawson suggested that if the one disabled character introduced in a soap opera was a crooked businessman, for instance, there would be a problem: 'because we would be representing all disabled characters as slimy bastards'. The writers felt it would be necessary to depict a disabled 'paragon of virtue' to avoid offending or misrepresenting the disabled community as a whole. It is interesting to note that it was the two most common stereotypes – evil avenger and supercrip that came to mind for the writers.

Representation

The word 'representation' is applied in different ways according to the occasion of its use and is a potent concept as a whole, especially for a minority which can be seen to be under-represented. Richard Dyer (1988) has identified four senses of 'representation'. Each of the senses he speaks about has relevance in the study of portrayals of the disabled. The first sense he calls 're-presenting' - how television re-presents our world to us. Instead of seeing television either as a window on reality, presenting a clear unmediated view, or at the opposite end as a pure fabrication:

Representaton insists that there is a real world, but that our perception of it is always mediated by television's selection, emphasis and use of technical/aesthetic means to render that world to us. (Dyer, 1988:3).

Let us examine this first sense with regards to disability. On the evidence of lack of representation of disabled people as quantified in soap opera, for instance, we can see that theirs is not an immediate or obvious choice. As demonstrated earlier, the emphasis taken in disability portrayals, when they do occur, tends towards emphasising the disability over the complete personality of the disabled character.

The second sense identified by Dyer is that of being representative of something – or typicality. To what extent are the portrayals of women, the gay community, or disabled people typical of how those groups manifest themselves in society? Dyer maintains that we cannot communicate the individuated or the unique, we must always deal with the typical. He goes on to say: 'what harm or good the stereotype does to the group is of interest' (1988: 3). Whilst he does not see all stereotypes as derogatory, the categories that emerge such as supercrip and evil avenger, as common stereotypes, are certainly not ones that work to the advantage of the disabled.

The third sense of representation referred to is that of representation as speaking for people: faced with television images we constantly need to ask not 'What is this image of?' so much as 'Who is speaking here?' This applies mostly, according to Dyer, for groups outside the mainstream of speech. Television speaks often on our behalf, without
letting us speak ourselves. For those people with disabilities who for a century have existed in Norden’s ‘cinema of isolation’, it has been able-bodied directors, writers, and able-bodied actors who have spoken on their behalf.

The final sense of representation identified by Dyer asks the question: ‘what does the image represent to the people who are watching?’ This is not necessarily always the same as its ‘ideal’ meaning, or that intended by those who produced it. This is borne out by the experience of disabled people. For some, watching even those portrayals of disabled people which are well intentioned and aim to represent people with disabilities fairly, the message taken from the films is not entirely the same as that consciously intended by the director. Those disabled viewers who made the Without Walls programme felt that the message of My Left Foot was that in order to be accepted a disabled person must conform to what is valued in able-bodied terms – the moment of Christy’s acceptance by his father coincides with his proving of his intelligence and literacy.

Therefore we can see that the representation afforded to disabled people, using any of these four senses tends to be of a problematic nature. Although this is a long-standing problem with roots deep in societal prejudice and assumptions, I believe that this is not a problem without solutions.

The first sense of representation that Dyer talks about, the selection and emphasis made by television, as shown by the lack of depictions of disabled people, does not currently favour disability. But according to Desmond Bell:

... students in media studies actually expect to practice what we preach. From the outset Media Studies has been concerned not only with the retrospective appreciation of ‘classic’ media texts and with the refinement of consumer sensibility, but with the education of potential producers. (Bell, 1992: 27)

Producers who receive an education in media studies will read about the portrayal of women, the gay community, ethnic minorities, and can take this knowledge into account in producing their own representations. They will not automatically read about disability, as there is no strong body of literature available, as explained. Therefore, even those conscientious enough to attempt to practice what they have learnt, may not have considered disability in the way that other groupings will have become familiar. If those writers I spoke to are typical of television or film writers, it is not only media graduates who will have been exposed to media studies literature, as both of them were well versed on media theories. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that an increased academic interest in the topic, and the directing of articles to the general rather than to specifically the disabled readership, may cause disability to occur to writers like Patrick Dawson and Thomas McLoughlin in the future.

The second sense of representation highlighted by Dyer, that of typicality has a similarly poor record for disability, with the proliferation of stereotypes that cast disabled people as pitiable, heroic, villainous etc. The film of Boyz ‘n the Hood, and the possibilities available from television genres such as soap opera for portraying characters with disabilities as rounded individuals, clearly demonstrate an ability to transcend unhelpful stereotyping.

The third sense of representation begs the question ‘who is speaking’. In this regard, I believe that the responsibility for change lies largely with the disabled community. A common analogy drawn by disabled critics is that white actors are no longer ‘blacked up’ to play black roles, and that it is an outrage to cast able-bodied actors in disabled roles. When speaking to Patrick Dawson, he indicated that there is one physically disabled actor on Irish Equity books. If there are no disabled actors available it is fruitless to criticise directors who cast able-bodied actors to ‘speak’ for the disabled. Similarly the absence of media specific literature discussing disability places some responsibility on disabled writers to redress the balance.
Finally, the fourth sense of representation, which examines what the portrayal means to those watching. The difficulties that disabled people can have in constructing identity has been studied by Goffman (1963) who defines stigma as: 'the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance' (Goffman, 1963: 9). He includes people with disabilities as a stigmatised group in society. To return to the language of gender studies, the dominant ideology of our society does not treat people with disabilities as it treats the able-bodied majority. This social inequality is both reflected by and upheld by the media. As society’s attitudes change, the media will reflect those attitudes. However, the media can also play an active role in challenging society's fear and misunderstanding of disability by consciously seeking to portray characters with disabilities realistically, fairly and frequently. Providing realistic portrayals of disability will help in both the construction of a healthy self-image for disabled people, and a more informed image for those who never come in close personal contact with the disabled.

References

Filmography


*Boyz 'n the Hood* (1991), Dir: John Singleton.


*Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994), Dir: Mike Newell.


Acknowledgments

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Ireland in the immediate post-war period offers, to the student of Cold War politics and intrigues, some unusual insights into the nature of political surveillance in general and to the surveillance of the press in particular, according to documents recently released by the US State department and made available in the US National Archives in Washington. Politically, the situation was becoming more volatile. Fianna Fáil, which had been in power continuously since 1942 and had won its most recent election in 1944, was coming under increasingly vocal criticism from two key groups of erstwhile supporters: urban workers, who had been chafing under wages stand-still orders for much of the war, and who were disappointed that the end of the conflict had not produced much in the way of material benefits; and republicans, many of whom had been interned during the war, and some of whom felt in any case that a sense of drive and purpose was missing from Fianna Fáil's approach to the national question.

The two war elections of 1943 and 1944 – and particularly that of 1944 – had been marked by an intensification of the red scare tactics utilised by Fianna Fáil against the Labour Party in particular. This tendency was again emphasised, notably by Sean McEntee, then Minister for Local Government, in the by-elections in November 1947 which saw the emergence and vote-getting power of Sean MacBride's new party, Clann an Poblachta. McEntee's speeches, in particular, endeavoured to demonstrate that many of Sean MacBride's supporters and party members had been public or covert affiliates of the Communist Party.

De Valera lost two out of three of the November by-elections and a general election was called for early in 1948. Both McEntee and Sean Lemass beat the anti-Communist drum in this election with great fervour: Lemass, for his part, warned that Ireland was 'on the list for attack in the campaign now being waged to destroy Christian democracy in Europe'. These charges prompted the Labour Party, in desperate self-defence, into equally colourful language: its leader William Norton, at an election rally on 22 January 1948, referred to Communism as a 'pernicious doctrine... detestable to the Irish people, who prized religious liberty and freedom of conscience'.

McEntee, in an exchange of correspondence with Peadar Cowan of Clann na Poblachta, accused a number of people of loyalty to the Communist cause. Many of them were for many years standard-bearers of the Irish Left, such as John de Courcy Ireland, Sean Dunne, Roddy Connolly, James Larkin jr. and Con Lehane. Two of the names on McEntee's shopping list, however, are of particular interest to students of the history of Irish journalism: R.N. Tweedy and Sean Nolan. Possibly unknown to him, members of the diplomatic staff in the United States Legation in the Phoenix Park were casting their net even wider, and reporting to their superiors in Washington the existence of what they plainly believed to be an organised conspiracy by Communists and fellow-travellers to infiltrate the Irish media.

Vinton Chapin of the US Legation told Washington on 30 January 1948 that this view was shared by senior Irish officials, and that the alleged conspiracy had put down roots in some unlikely quarters. Reporting on a conversation with Freddie Boland, secretary of the Department of External Affairs, he quoted Boland as having said that a Communist, 'Moscow-inspired' document which he had read indicated that Communist policy should direct its interests to rural workers in Ireland and to a 'softening of the local press'. Boland's comment was that both policies were now evident to some degree and that, insofar as the press was concerned, 'this did not exclude the Irish Press'.

1. I am indebted to my DCU colleague, Professor Eunan O'Halpin, whose major study of Irish security policy is to be published shortly by Cambridge University press, for access to some of the documents cited in this article.


3. US National Archives, Department of State, 841D.00B/1-3048.
Three publications attracted the Legation's particular attention: the *Irish Democrat*, the *Review*, and the *Irish Press*. They were an odd trinity. The *Irish Democrat* was a Communist paper published in London by the Connolly Association, the Review was a journal of opinion with links to the Irish Communist Party which will be discussed later, and the *Irish Press* was, of course, totally controlled by the Taoiseach, Eamon de Valera.

The history of the *Irish Press* suggests that left-leaning tendencies in that paper might have been expected. Its first editor, Frank Gallagher, in an early memorandum to sub-editors, warned his staff to 'be on your guard against the habits of British and foreign news agencies to look at the world mainly through imperialist eyes. Propagandist attacks on Russia and other countries should not be served up as news.' The Third Secretary of the US Legation, R.M. Beaudry, reporting to his Washington superiors on 3 February 1948, gave details of a conversation he had had with a Fr. McLaughlin of Boyle, Co., Roscommon, who had entertained both de Valera and Gerry Boland during the election campaign and 'found them both unhappy about the poor way in which the *Irish Press* had handled their speeches.'

Fr McLaughlin was in no doubt as to the cause. 'This results from an infiltration of communistic elements on the staff of the paper. The Foreign News Editor of the *Press* [Brian] O'Neill, was, he stated, born in New Jersey, wrote for the *Daily Worker* in New York, was a foreign correspondent for TASS, and formerly held a Communistic party card.'

Nor did Fr. McLaughlin's enthusiasm, if amateur espionage end there. The drama critic of the Irish Press, Tony Mulloy (otherwise spelt Molloy), he told the Americans, was said to be a communist and had visited the Soviet Legation in Stockholm in the summer of 1947 'in the company of Miss O'Brien, a writer for the *Irish Independent*.' Miss O'Brien and Molloy later married: her apparent fall from political grace — both she and 'Mulloy' contributed articles to the Review — was in no way mitigated by the fact that she was a 'relative of Lord Inchiquin of Limerick.' In a later despatch to Washington, Molloy was described as a former editor of the Gaelic section of the *Irish Press*, and 'a communist sympathiser or fellow-traveler.' He was also the pseudonymous author of the 'Uncle Mac' column for children in the *Irish Press*: his politics might have alarmed the patriotic readers of that newspaper who recommended his articles to their children. He later again aroused the suspicions of the Americans when it emerged that he was to be the editor of a new Labour Party paper, the *Nation*.

Fr. McLaughlin tied the ends of his conspiracy theory neatly together by pointing out that the Balalatka, a Dublin restaurant owned by Michael FitzPatrick, a Clann na Poblachta deputy for Dublin North West who was a 'working communist', advertised regularly in the pages of the *Review*. Mr. Beaudry, while noting that it was impossible for him to press Fr. McLaughlin too closely on the accuracy of his statements, considered them 'interesting and possibly important.'

O'Neill's links with left-wing movements and even the Communist Party were, if not exactly a matter of public record, not buried too far under the surface either. Contemporaries of his have indicated to the present author the belief, current in Dublin journalistic milieux at the time, that 'O'Neill' was not even his real surname which was thought to be Brennan. There was a widespread belief — possibly erroneous — that he had served a term of imprisonment in Britain during the war for suborning members of the armed forces there. In fact he had come to Ireland during the 1930s, certainly one jump ahead of the British police force. He wrote a book, *The War for the Land* which was published with a foreword by Peadar O'Donnell in 1934.

According to another US despatch,

'Mr de Valera employed him on the *Irish Press* staff without consulting the editors and no one knows what recommendations O'Neill brought with him to receive this preferment. As foreign news editor O'Neill systematically takes advantage of his position to slant...

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5. US National Archives, Department of State, 841D.OOB/2-1048

6. US National Archives, Department of State, 841D.OOB/2-9.2349.

news. He minimises anti-Soviet statements and uses a series of journalistic devices to misrepresent the news items as originally received. His ingenuity in the Mindzenty case,⁶ at least, was not sufficient to disguise his sentiments and the treatment given the case by the Irish Press caused a marked drop in its circulation. When this fact was brought to the attention of Mr de Valera with the suggestion that O'Neill be transferred to a less strategic department, Mr. de Valera merely disregarded the incident.⁹

In fact de Valera was worried. He called in the editor of the Irish Press, William Sweetman, and told him that the Department of Justice had been expressing concern about his foreign news editor. Sweetman was unapologetic, and asked de Valera bluntly whether he had any doubts about him (i.e. Sweetman) as editor of the newspaper. When de Valera expressed confidence in his editorship, Sweetman assured him that 'O'Neill was the best foreign sub-editor the paper had, and that he read all 'O'Neill's' material. Sweetman's assurances were enough for de Valera.'¹⁰ O'Neill ended his career with the Irish Press, but came out of retirement after ten years to write a special report for the paper on the funeral of Frank Ryan.

There were other spies in the camp, as it happened. One of the most interesting of them, it appears from the US National Archives files, was the editor of the Standard, Peadar O'Curry. O'Curry was a peppery Ulsterman who ended his career as a sub-editor on The Irish Times after the closure of the Standard, but in the late 1940s this weekly newspaper was, under his editorship, to the fore in harrying the Labour Party and Clann na Poblachta, on the real or alleged communist sympathies of some of their adherents. McEntee used its tirades against Labour to good effect at election times, digging up anti-Larkin material from its pages in 1944 for use in the 1948 campaign. O'Curry, however, was not content with public criticism, but saw it as his role to identify, for the Irish security services, the danger of communist infiltration in the National Union of Journalists. Under his editorship the paper, which had a circulation of about 80,000, published a series of alleged exposes concerning people in the Labour Party whom it thought were crypto-Communists. Some of the articles were so detailed that it was thought they had been written on the basis of Special Branch files (Milotte, 1984).

Close co-operation between Irish and US security services ensured that a copy of a memorandum written by O'Curry for the Special Branch on 17 November 1948 found its way to the US Legation, which dutifully forwarded it to Washington. The context is interesting: the NUJ had recently sent a deputation to the Minister for Justice in order to foster closer relationships between journalists and the Gardaí. O'Curry saw it as his duty to warn the Special Branch of the possible dangers of taking journalists into police confidence.

O'Curry's memorandum argued that it was not possible to assume that journalists in Dublin were 'themselves adherents of the principles of democracy.'¹¹ He drew a sharp distinction in this regard between some of the Dublin membership and the Derry members of the NUJ, who had originated a motion at the NUJ District Council in Dublin which pledged the Union's total opposition to Communism and to 'all attempts at Communist infiltration of the Union'. The motion was passed, but not unanimously, and O'Curry drew the Special Branch's attention to other factors which he undoubtedly considered more relevant.

'At the same meeting the appointment as delegate of the Union to the T.U.C. was approved and the Interpreter of Union policy and leadership chosen was a Mr. McNerney (sic) of The Irish Times, a recent import into journalism, who is a founder of the so-called 'Connolly Association', who when working in the L.M.S. in Belfast formed with Betty Sinclair and one McCullough the triumvirate running the Communist Party in the Six Counties. The Dublin Branch contains quite a few active Communists and has as its delegate to the Dublin Trades Council Mr. Hickey of the Irish Independent, who is the Irish correspondent of the Communist Daily Worker of London.' Hickey,
although he fulfilled that role, was in fact non-political: like many Irish journalists of his era, he supplemented the meagre salary paid by Irish employers by freelance writing.¹³

'What guarantee is there', O'Curry asked rhetorically, 'that information, perhaps not necessarily of a confidential and political character, given to journalists in the course of co-operation with the Ministry of justice, such as is asked will not be communicated by persons such as are indicated to organisations which have the declared object of destroying the democratic Government of the Irish Republic and replacing it with a Godless totalitarianism?'

Michael McInerney had in fact been industrial organiser for the Communist Party of Northern Ireland in the early 1940s. After moving to Dublin, he and other members of the Communist Party joined the Labour Party, establishing the Central Branch of that party, which played a notable role within the party until many of its members were expelled some years later (Milotte 1984:195-196.) As his militant political attitudes mellowed, he became a respected member of the journalistic profession in Dublin and, although always sympathetic to left-wing causes, enjoyed the trust of a number of Cabinet ministers. He ended his distinguished career as political correspondent for The Irish Times.

O'Neill was the Dublin correspondent for the Irish Democrat, the second of the three publications mentioned above. In the late 1940s it was particularly vociferous in its opposition to the Marshall Plan, as an extension of 'America's colonisation of Europe programme'. It was not available for purchase in Ireland, but it urged its readers in England to 'buy an extra copy of the Irish Democrat and post it home.'¹⁴ Of more concern to the US Legation was the Review, described by the Legation as 'a local paper of limited circulation'.

The officials noted:

It appears, [the US officials noted,] that it has been able to enter into an agreement with the Irish Worker's Weekly in order to obtain the latter's ration of newsprint which would otherwise not be available to this publication. While the editor's name is not disclosed, he solicits correspondence addressed to No. 11 Sandford (sic) Road, Dublin, which, it will be noted from the case history of J. Nolan, that it is his present given address.

The 'J. Nolan' named is of course Sean Nolan, whose role in the Communist Party of Ireland and its various publications has been well documented by Milotte and others. His main activity was running the Party's bookshop in Pearse Street in Dublin. The Review, however, although it may have been edited clandestinely by Nolan, was, according to Fr. McLaughlin, financed by R.N. Tweedy. Tweedy was one of the few middle-class intellectuals who had been recruited to the Communist Party of Ireland during the Popular Front period; with Sean Nolan, he had been involved in the Central Branch of the Labour Party, and was one of those expelled at the time of the purge. His business interests included peat technology, in which he had been involved since the early years of the State: it was also an area in which he was involved in co-operation with the Soviet Union, also a developer of peat technology.

The US Legation was in no doubt about its provenance and the politics of the Review.

It professes to portray an Irish way of life based on Catholic tenets which may be rationalised to Communist ideology. Its influence may not be great at the moment nor is it believed that the Communist elements are well organised or substantially fortified by funds. However, there can be little doubt that adherents are working under cover undaunted by the powerful elements which stand in their path, particularly the power of the church, the discipline of the Army, and a police force which scrutinizes all undercover operations.¹⁴
The significance of all of this material is of course open to over-estimation, but one aspect of the industrial context relating to the unionisation of journalists in Ireland can be said to give it an added significance. The National Union of Journalists, a British-based union, had gained a foothold in Ireland as early as 1926 (Bundock 1957). By the late 1940s, however, and despite industrial gains by the NUJ, nationalist sentiment was beginning to chafe at the role of British-based unions. These sentiments were endorsed, and may even have been covertly encouraged by Sean Lemass, whose ministerial brief included the trade unions, and who told the Irish Council of the NUJ at its annual meeting in 1949 (when he was out of office and managing director of the Irish press) that it was particularly important that Irish workers should be enrolled in Irish unions. The Guild of Irish Journalists was set up as a rival to the NUJ in March 1949 was affiliated to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, and claimed to be ‘A National Trade Union, founded and controlled by Irishmen, with a place in its ranks for each and every Irish journalist’. It appealed to all Irish journalists to work ‘for the implementation of a progressive Social policy, based on Christian principles and having as its aim a fairer division of profits and a voice in the management of and a share in the ownership of industry’ (Guild of Irish Journalists 1952). In reality it represented only a minority of Dublin journalists, notably those employed by the Evening Mail. Office-holders in the Guild, however, included O’Curry and Liam Skinner, a devotee and later biographer of Lemass. In addition, one of its vocal early supporters was Billy McMullan, general president of the Irish Transport and General Workers’ Union in 1949-50, who was a close political associate of Lemass and was appointed by him to the board of CIE. McMullen attended one of the Guild’s early meetings at its headquarters in North Frederick Street in Dublin, and assured them: ‘If anyone does anything against you we will not hesitate in dealing with them’ (Guild of Irish Journalists 1949).

The Guild remained in existence until the 1960s; its membership dwindled until it could no longer afford to pay the annual affiliation fee to the Guild Congress of Trade Unions. It can perhaps also be remembered, in part, as one of the legacies of the Cold War to Irish journalism – a Cold War which is evidenced in particular by the US intelligence files. It is a matter for considerable regret that similar files for the Irish security services for the same period remain unreleased and may even have been destroyed.

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Eoin Kirk

Launch

Sport has changed. The nineteenth century rationale of amateurism, fair play and recreational participation has given way in the age of mass media and late capitalism to the staging of sport as commercial entertainment (Wenner, 1998; Whitson, 1998). While televised sport may work to create connections between people who have not yet met and are not likely to do so, it too, has slowly transformed these very relationships between sporting individuals and teams and the communities they supposedly represent (Whitson, 1998; Rowe et. al, 1998). Can the needs of national and international television, global commercial forces, transnational fans and audiences and narrow-focused sporting organisations all be accommodated by televised sport and still promote a sense of unified national identity? These larger issues of globalisation, postmodernism and national sporting identity are examined by exploring the world of the rolling, global circus of Formula One motor racing. Specifically, this article investigates Irish national sporting identity through an examination of Jordan Grand Prix and its commercial image, its representation in RTÉ's grand prix coverage of the team at the Belgian, Australian and Austrian races of 1998 and 1999, and the identification of Irish Jordan fans with the team.

The choice of Jordan Grand Prix for this study on the tenability of Irish national sporting identity in a mediated sports world, stems from the author's own fandom. As a devoted follower from the team's foundation in 1990, I never questioned the Irish identity of Jordan Grand Prix despite being aware of its multi-national alliance of drivers, engine suppliers, sponsors, tyre manufacturers and pit crew. My faithful fandom continued until August 30, 1998 when unexpectedly, Damon Hill's Jordan powered past the chequered flag first in the Belgian Grand Prix at Spa Francorchamps. This work arises out of the sense of disillusionment, anger and betrayal felt while watching RTÉ's coverage of the celebrations. The commentary team emphasised the triumphant nature of the Irish victory but the visuals were different. There were no Irish tricolours on display at the pit wall. There were no Irish symbols to be seen in the crowds. Eddie Jordan did not mention Ireland in his interviews. The Irish flag was not hoisted over the podium. *Amhrán na bhFiann* was not played as the constructors' national anthem. The post-race press conferences and press releases were an 'Ireland free zone'. It seemed clear to me, suddenly, Ireland had one story while a global viewing public had a totally different one.

Eirton Murpherrari's identity

‘The makers and purveyors of world class sport products seek to re-shape identities beyond the national stage.’

(Whitson, 1998: 72)

A consideration of Irish national sporting identity and Jordan Grand Prix must begin with the team itself. It licenses merchandise, produces press releases, supplies technical information and fact-files, controls the official fan club, Club Jordan,
approves marketing strategies and sponsors as well as running a motor racing team. All these forms of discourse produce meanings and reveal identification insights.

A primary characteristic of national identity, according to Schlesinger (1991a), is a sense of place. Jordan Grand Prix’s headquarters are located in Northamptonshire, England, close to Silverstone, the current site of the British Grand Prix. A staff of 176 people work in a state of the art, highly technical facility complete with a wind tunnel and a track simulator. On the first day of September 1998, five flags hung over the workshop and factory floor. They were from left to right the flags of Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland and the European Union representing respectively the nationalities of the Japanese engine supplier Honda, the German driver, Ralf Schumacher, the predominantly British-based staff in the United Kingdom, the founder and majority shareholder Irishman, Eddie Jordan, and the European ‘no trade barriers’ community where the team and its sponsors operate. Flags, anthem, uniforms, and pageantry are significant in nation building, as Woodward (1997) contends, yet the equal weighting of flags in the official Club Jordan photograph with pictures of the staff wearing Benson and Hedges yellow indicates that no particular national identity is conferred on the team. The notions of flags of convenience and flexible allegiances spring to mind. There have been no O’Connell Street open-top bus cavalcades for the team after victories to question this no sense of place identity through a ‘homecoming’. Instead, trophies have been brought back to the factory, the industrial, commercial and technical heart of Jordan Grand Prix. The territorial base, whether because of facilities, geographical convenience and competitive necessity or by choice, is beside a motor racing track in Great Britain. Ireland has no enhanced territorial claim over Jordan Grand Prix.

The next key factor that sustains and creates national identity is language which, according to Schlesinger (1991a), promotes difference and makes a country opaque to outsiders. Language marks boundaries in spoken words or communal images by invoking the first person ‘we’, the second person ‘you’ and invariably the third person ‘them’ (Raunsoberg and Sand, 1998: 165). Therefore, it is necessary to scrutinise Jordan Grand Prix discourse in terms of the words, images and logos produced by the team, if we are to find distinctive marks of Irish identity. The original Jordan Grand Prix logo and letterhead in the early nineties was a diagonal Jordan signature in green lettering, crowned by two wheels containing the world and a shamrock which was linked underneath by two vertical lines to the words ‘Grand Prix’ in regular font apart from the final ‘x’ which trailed off like tyre marks. The combination of the equality of the globe and Ireland’s national folk symbol, the authenticity of ‘Eddie’s’ handwriting and the flowing confident movement of the design had obvious connotations for Irish fans. The encoded message appeared to be that this was an unmistakably Irish motor sport team competing with total self-belief on the world stage. These notions were underpinned by the licensed merchandise of the time where the primacy of the shamrock and green was maintained. Indeed, one Jordan Grand Prix lapel pin I bought had a two toned green shamrock with the Jordan signature in gold across it. Such merchandise is now unavailable.

Benson and Hedges’ sponsorship in 1996 seems to have changed team priorities with regards to the logo. Initially there was the change of the colour of the signature and writing to yellow which was backgrounded by a two toned chequered green. This can still be found on some team uniforms in the pits and on letterheads. Then a snake supplanted the shamrock as the dominant symbol of the team. Ironically, the St. Patrick stories so rooted in Irish consciousness involve the banishing of snakes and the explanation of the Christian trinity by introducing the shamrock. Subsequently, Jordan’s viper was superseded by a bright yellow and black buzzing hornet which is rarely glimpsed in Irish habitats. The merchandise logo has also evolved to include the instantly recognisable Benson and Hedges script on a two toned yellow background with a blue tinted, green Jordan signature underneath. The sting in the tail of the
hornet would appear to be the ancillary role ascribed to conventional Irish language images in the promotion of Jordan Grand Prix.

For Schlesinger (1991a, 1991b, 1993), the next criteria for national identity are a roll of trustworthy heroes and a shared collective memory, amnesia or history. It must be understood that such collectivities extend through time and space and consequently, that which is considered typically national or ethnic is usually a highly selective account. Notwithstanding this, Rowe et al. (1998) believe that such shared moments allow identification with the lives, dreams, and aspirations of millions whom we shall never know and with a territory which we shall never walk on or see in its entirety. Eddie Jordan frequently appeals to a sense of shared history in asserting his Irish credentials. In the aftermath of the Belgian Grand Prix anthem issue, he has emphasised his Christian Brother education in Synge Street where he learnt every syllable of Amhran na bhFiann. This evocation is significant as he connects with Irish people who passed through the Church dominated educational system during the middle part of the twentieth century while also associating himself with the RTÉ appointed voice of Ireland, Gay Byrne, through Synge Street. Similarly, Jordan Grand Prix produced profiles regularly feature references to Mondello Park, karting, bank clerking and Eddie being a less than successful driver. The dismissal of failure in these ‘rags to riches, Mondello heartland to Monte Carlo heart thumping’ stories represent a new form of Irish identity. They strike a chord for a younger generation wishing to ignore politics, the Catholic Church, emigration and social exclusion. It is a capitalist identity which is humanised as Eddie Jordan emphasises his ‘Irish myth of the West’ personality traits. Achievement is attainable for all who ‘dream the dream and enjoy the craic’. Modifying the American version, the hiberno dream evoked by Eddie Jordan and possibly through Jordan Grand Prix is that a forward-looking, stylish expression of individuality leads to a community success for the individual. Irish identity thrives on this individuality-collectivity paradox as illustrated by the status of Jack Charlton as soccer hero but Eddie Jordan wants more. He requires affirmation and re-integration into the community in true Proppian fashion as exemplified by his request to the government in 1998 to be contracted to promote Ireland world-wide and his organisation of a charity golf classic in the K Club. Such actions allied to the on-track successes of Jordan Grand Prix may allow him to be included in the recognisable pantheon of Irish sporting heroes. However, Jordan Grand Prix, the multi-national Formula One motor racing company may not have the same identity needs.

Schlesinger’s (1991a) final defining characteristic of national identity is the integration of cultural signifiers into the political and economic domains. Governments may try to use the ritualism of sport to invoke feelings of history and unbroken tradition and confirm or create a national way of life in an essentially safe form of expression (Blain et al., 1993). However, they also warn how discourses of national identity are quite conservative, slow to evolve and lag a distance behind the rapid, energetic pace of change which characterises modern society. Therefore, it is quite surprising how quickly and enthusiastically the Irish government became involved in the sponsorship of Jordan Grand Prix. For £650,000 the display of Ireland/Discover Ireland emblems on the team cars, transportation equipment, and overall up to 1995, gave a fresh impetus to Irish sporting identity. The shamrock and the word Ireland zoomed around the glamorous locations of the globe in the most technically advanced, sporting world championship into the living rooms of billions of television viewers. The myth of the West was banished and replaced by an image of Ireland as an entrepreneurial, capitalist, modern location for business. For Irish people identifying with Jordan Grand Prix, it could be a break from the past with regard to sporting loyalties. Here was a sport endorsed at the highest echelon of power that did not have the class and cultural connotations of gaelic football, hurling, rugby or soccer. It was loud, brash, aspirational and most importantly ahistorical in an Irish context. The free-spirited, ‘rock n’ roll’, happy-go-lucky Irish projections of the team was heightened by the reverse discourse of the other sombre, unsmilng bosses such as Frank Williams.
and Ron Dennis. For the much-clichéd youngest population in Europe, Jordan Grand Prix, as supported by official Ireland, allowed the space for the creation of new social identities with changing codes. Indeed for all three interested parties, government, people and Jordan, this symbiosis allowed a fresh area of culture where a diasporic identity could be formed. For the government, the Jordan Grand Prix sponsorship deal was a safe vehicle for what essentially could have been an anti-national state identity standing as it does outside the regular codes of nation citizenship. It allowed Eddie Jordan to access and open for himself and other economic emigrants, the possibility and desirability of the journey home in the same way as Mary Robinson’s candle in the window invited the diaspora back. Those citizens in Ireland seeking points of identification with the nation could re-imagine their sense of belonging and reject the ‘comely maidens at the cross-roads’ mentality. Under the Jordan Grand Prix sponsorship, Ireland and Irishness became like Jonathan Swift’s Laputa, a flying island capable of landing in many places historically, geographically and culturally. It allowed the paradox of ‘a very ancient people and a very up to date one’ to become a reality in the sporting arena (MacClancy, 1996: 10).

But all this has changed as the symbiotic relationships encountered difficulties. The government could not increase its investment in Jordan Grand Prix as space on the cars became more expensive when the team enjoyed more success. Bord Fáilte questioned the value of the promotion in terms of tourism impact. Eddie Jordan was upset by the snub and sought sponsorship within the Irish commercial sector. No money was forthcoming and Jordan Grand Prix effectively moved away from a formal Irish identity. The massive deal with Benson and Hedges confirmed the break with official Ireland. Despite Esat Digifone’s sponsorship in 1998, the political and economic input from Ireland into Jordan Grand Prix’s £40 million annual budget is minuscule. Jim McDaid, Minister for Sport, has been embroiled in controversy since he re-established political links with the promotional benefits of Formula One by appointing Eddie Jordan, in his personal capacity, as a sporting ambassador. The pressure group, Action on Smoking and Health, have criticised the decision because of the links with Benson and Hedges but the Minister is adamant that Eddie Jordan’s appearances wearing Bord Fáilte and Ryder Cup logos will be successful because ‘he is so proud of his Irishness’ (Dept. of Tourism, 1999). But the link with Jordan Grand Prix remains severed politically primarily because the team moved financially out of Ireland Inc.’s league. Eddie Jordan’s individual Irish identity may remain but the collective national identity of Jordan Grand Prix has altered irrevocably.

**Eirton’s chassis**

‘In planet Reebok... there are no boundaries.’

*(Whitson, 1998: 69)*

Jordan Grand Prix’s difficulties are obvious. Wishing to maintain sponsorship necessitates being amongst the front runners and this requires massive funding. This money is not available solely on the basis of an Irish identity, as a potential audience of five million North and South and sixty million, if estimates of the diaspora are included, does not have sufficient marketable earning capacity. Sponsors look at the figures of a twenty billion audience per race estimate and fund organisations that can appeal to the greatest proportion of it. Naturally, communal traditions and loyalties are supplanted by commodified identities that ignore historical and geographical added values. Corporate images and consumer choice discourse become dominant as exemplified by the buzzing hornet replacing the shamrock as the primary emblem of Jordan Grand Prix. Jhally (1989) maintains that sporting teams that compete in such a highly mediated and global marketplace as Formula One, with 202 countries broadcasting coverage in 1996, are owned by companies of widely diverse characteristics and priorities. Esat Digifone’s investment in Jordan Grand Prix was
made on the basis that 'both epitomise dynamic Irish companies taking on (and beating) the big boys in an exciting high tech business' as well as wanting 'to sponsor the Irish team as opposed to the sport itself' but others have different priorities (Eaat. 1999). Benson and Hedges, Warner Pincus, Beta, Armour All, Cadtek, G de Z Capital, Bridgestone, Mastercard International, NatWest, Pearl Assurance, Playstation, Hewlett Packard, Rockport and a multitude of other Jordan Grand Prix sponsors in 1998 did not have such narrow focused, national interests. Jordan Grand Prix are under pressure to promote unrooted flexible identities that have commercial benefits for the greatest number of sponsors. It is share prices not shared national memories that are the focus of globalised, commodified sport.

The independent, outsider, full of fun image of Jordan Grand Prix widened the fan-base considerably and official membership 'outqualified' Benetton, a world-championship winning team by three to one in 1997 with fans predominantly residing in Great Britain (Nicholson and Hamilton, 1999). Consumers from large population centres became the target market for the team and the products of their sponsors. The hiberno-chic of the original Jordan image was not necessarily as useful in the Pacific-Rim's developing markets or on a pan-European base. The postmodern movement to a cultural convergence with no roots or fixed identity, suits all the interested parties in Jordan Grand Prix's global enterprise. A little bit of Irish identity can be beneficial but total alignment to one defining identity is dangerous in a commercial sense. With television rights and digital television subscriptions the principle form of funding in the future, Jordan Grand Prix can not afford to be encumbered by geographical boundaries. In a postmodern economy of signs, an unambiguous Irish national sporting identity for Jordan Grand Prix would be a liability. With the global beginning to control the local, Jordan Grand Prix must remain as independent, open and broad a cultural product as possible if it is to attract sellers, buyers and sponsors and survive in the financially-dominated sport of Formula One. Consequently, Irish national sporting identity becomes just another choice like Marlboro or Benson and Hedges. Tic Tac or Mastercard, red or yellow, in the cultural shopping centre of globalisation and commodification.

Yet, there are arguments which suggest that the global can, in fact, re-enforce the local (Walley, 1995). Hybridisation, whereby meanings of external origin are reconstituted, syncretised and blended with existing cultural traditions to produce vibrant identification, could offer hope for Irish national identity (Featherstone, 1995). This notion of 'glocalism', creating multiple blends of belonging which can sustain senses of the local, is illustrated perfectly by the coverage of the NBA on the Irish language channel TG4. Likewise under the yellow umbrella of Benson and Hedges Jordan Grand Prix. Irish fans can play with the German identification of Frentzen, the Britishness of Hill and Eddie Jordan's Irishness and all the permutations and combinations of such identities. But the conveyor belt of drivers, sponsors and engine deals which suits the contemporary desire for transient identities must call all multi-local identities into question when the organising structure is corporate rather than societal. Local identities can be protected when the framing agent has a unifying location whether in time or space. For example, despite its commercialisation and the merchandised, multi-national construction of Manchester United, Peter Schmeichel still ended up talking like a native Mancunian because the club has a solid, rooted base in the city of Manchester.

The multi-local argument cannot be sustained in Formula One, however. The sport constantly moves as if propelled by profit margins. It rejects fixation in terms of venues, drivers, teams, tyres, engines and sponsors. Formula One does not want national identities for its teams and the FIA (Federation Internationale de l'Automobile) does not officially ascribe them. An Irish team is not needed by Formula One. It requires a competitive, narrative structure that will attract large Irish interest and audiences for its multi-national sponsors. Jordan Grand Prix fills that void presently as its owner is undoubtedly Irish-focused in terms of national identity. But attaching the
label Irish to Jordan Grand Prix is pointless when identity formation is a convenient, commercial, expedient process. Eddie Jordan admits as much when he said that Jordan Grand Prix is 'as Irish as a glass of Guinness' (Nicholson and Hamilton, 1999: 214). Deconstructed in Derridean fashion, Guinness may be considered Irish but meaning slippage occurs on closer scrutiny. Possibly the 'black stuff' is Irish in terms of origins and marketing appeal but its current production, shareholdings, profit-making and consumption transact on a multi-national, globalised basis. The comparison with Jordan Grand Prix is apt. Both companies originally used traditional Irish symbols as their identifying trademarks. The harp and the shamrock have been transcended by the colours black and yellow. Green is not an option.

Since Jordan Grand Prix cannot drive Irish identity past the chequered flag maybe the media's and in particular televised sport's tendency to operate restricted and conservative discourse when dealing with international sporting teams may be just the assistance required (Blain et al. 1993). Over to the Radio Telefis Éireann Grand Prix trackside.

**Installation lap**

'A text is always uttered from an utterance position.'

(Raunsbjerg and Sand, 1998: 164)

Having reached the era of the electronic turnstile, an initial utterance position from which RTÉ's coverage operates is the total control and manner with which the FIA has employed the most refined technological structures to bring strikingly differentiated versions of Formula One to international screens. National broadcasters such as RTÉ and ITV buy the rights from the FIA, providing grand prix racing with massive terrestrial audiences which satisfy sponsors who invest approximately £600 million into Formula One annually, while host broadcasters such as TVE and RAI provide clean video-audio feeds (Steiner, 1999). The national broadcaster must then choose how it wishes to transmit the race using the visuals and ambient sound of another organisation. This appears to replicate the notion of Baudrillard's simulacra concept where the world is made up of copies of which there is no original simulation or representation (Real, 1998). There is little sense of the single, authored, focused artistic experience as there is a scramble for a unity of meaning with pictures, countries and commentaries colliding. Each national broadcaster must try to gauge their own and their nations' needs to create and maintain audience interest and marketing opportunities. RTÉ, operating on constrained budgets, relies totally on the host broadcaster during live coverage and must commentate over these tightly organised, FIA commissioned visuals. RTÉ has no role in the choice of the structuring television codes and filters such as lighting, editing and camera placement. The only visual differentiations in Irish grand prix coverage are the scene-sets and pre-race interviews which are pre-recorded.

Given that only 36 per cent of RTÉ's income is from the licence fee, another context from which RTÉ's Formula One coverage must operate is having to recreate events in order to target audiences which will in turn attract advertisers and sponsors and secure additional revenue (Kinkema and Harris, 1998). With only a minimum of commercial breaks during race coverage and with RTÉ charging the same rates for grand prix as for other live sporting events attracting bigger audiences, there is an onus on the coverage to deliver the 'correct' diverse demographic audience to advertisers. Therefore, RTÉ need in their coverage to nationalise a global sport within a strong, mainstream point of entry. Jordan Grand Prix are obviously central to this. But it is perhaps RTÉ's reliance on Eircell's sponsorship of the television coverage that creates the greatest commercial pressures on the production team. Eircell were quick to identify the potential of Formula One sponsorship when launching their mobile phone penetration campaign. Not being in a financial position at the time to actually
invest in the perceived Irishness of Jordan Grand Prix, the marketing gurus chose to identify themselves as a dynamic, practical, knowing and lively company by sponsoring Irish coverage of the 'Irish' team. The fail-safe guarantee was that they were not inextricably linked to the fortunes of the Jordan team. Yet, if a non-Jordan driver got a podium finish, the edit to an Eircell graphic created its own discourse. Their use of highly imaginative, nation-neutral, purple bookends at commercial breaks drew on the familiarities of Formula One racing such as rapid pit stops and champagne ceremonies and keyed into the pace and unpredictability of the sport which of course suits mobile phone usage. But the implication left is that RTÉ has to deliver an Irish element to make the 'Eir' part of Eircell evident to the audience. With Esat Digifone becoming the official supplier of communication services to Jordan Grand Prix in 1998, the pressure increased on RTÉ to strengthen Irish ties in the coverage, if Eircell are to consolidate its position in the Irish mobile phone market. This commercial backdrop may have significant influence for the encoding of Jordan Grand Prix's Irishness.

RTÉ Sport's coverage of and relationship with Jordan Grand Prix lies within the realisation that many economic and cultural benefits will accrue from focusing on the Irish national identity of the team, a feature not covered by the rival ITV coverage. However, other groups, companies and individuals also profit from such a national designation. Eircell, Esat Digifone, Formula One merchandise outlets, the Irish government's promotion of the Celtic Tiger, the tourism industry all prosper by RTÉ promoting Jordan Grand Prix as an Irish team. A whole economy and cycle of interdependency thus depends on RTÉ ensuring Ireland drives past the chequered flag.

Compared to ITV, RTÉ's coverage appears to suggest that if Irish sports' fans wish to follow grand prix racing they should support the 'Irish' team on the Irish channel. ITV tends to reflect the relative achievements and grid positions of the different teams while RTÉ over-represents Jordan Grand Prix. For example, during the coverage of the 1998 Australian Grand Prix, Jordan Grand Prix received almost twice as much coverage on RTÉ as Ferrari even though their qualifying performances were just over half as good. They received over two and a half times more coverage on RTÉ than on ITV despite the presence of British driver Damon Hill in the Jordan team. No other teams were ascribed nationalities by RTÉ or ITV. Eddie Irvine's shamrock on his green and orange helmet seems to ensure that coverage of Ferrari is quite constant but also poses the question about how more imbalanced would RTÉ mentions of Jordan Grand Prix and Ferrari be without the presence of the Bangor born, Dalkey resident. RTÉ's grand prix coverage through volume assigns Jordan Grand Prix as the main viewership entry point into the narrative of grand prix racing and for RTÉ, as national broadcaster, Jordan Grand Prix are the primary source of interest. It is to an analysis of this identity concentration and how RTÉ build their narrative around Jordan Grand Prix that I now turn.

Formation lap

'...the viewers are issued with a set of instructions or maxims as to how communication should be read, heard and seen.'

(Hargreaves, 1994: 157)

Preambles and conclusions in soap opera style are essential in nationalising an international event and retaining the less committed soft viewer in Formula One, particularly as there is no recognisable Irish sporting tradition to draw upon (Barrett,1995). Arising from Blain et al.'s (1993) model of textual analysis, this section examines the combination of stylistic presentation, expert usage and narrative primacy in the prequels and sequels to RTÉ's live race coverage at the Australian Grand Prix on Sunday, March 7, 1999.

The pre-recorded prequel opens with a view of Peter Collins dressed in a stylish, casual manner positioned at the entrance gate to Albert Park. Conveniently a fan attired
in an Irish rugby jersey ambles through the frame. The preferred meaning could be that the smooth media professionalism of the Irish production team will provide an avenue of access for Irish fans to the complex world of grand prix. Collins welcomes Irish viewers to Melbourne and introduces edited highlights of the qualifying session. Significantly, the IT rich quality of Formula One and its identity potential is stressed by including invitations to send e-mails. The inference seems to be that the viewes can not only choose identification positions but can also interact and influence the commentary. A video postcard of the attractions of a modern, lively Melbourne detailing the popularity and history of the Albert Park race follows. This is intermixed with interviews from grand prix fans including on two occasions a group of Irish supporters wearing Jordan merchandise and carrying an Irish flag, evoking a sense of the Irish diaspora.

The first expert motor racing interview takes place in an affluent, modern, commercial centre with Eddie Jordan discussing the possibilities and imponderables, in true soap opera style, for the race and the season. The setting and characterisation infer that the audience can be inside trendy grand prix racing if it identifies with RTÉ's coverage of Jordan Grand Prix. A chain of interview snippets follows including John Watson, former world champion from Northern Ireland, Declan Quigley, motorsports correspondent of the Irish Independent and RTÉ's pit lane reporter and David Kennedy, a former Formula One race driver. The positioning of Declan Quigley is particularly interesting in that he is shown beside the symbol of a bridge wearing the green racing overalls of the Jordan Grand Prix team of 1993. Expectations of bias towards Jordan in his links between the pit lane action and the commentary box is evident from this image alone. It was unsurprising later, therefore, for Quigley, after a brief mention of McLaren mayhem, to refer almost exclusively to the activity in the Jordan pits prior to the red lights going out. In addition, after Eddie Irvine's win, two live interviews are conducted by Quigley and Collins from the pit lane. Both focus on the victory of Irvine through Jordan Grand Prix eyes as Ian Philips, the commercial director and Eddie Jordan are asked for comments on the race. As with the pre-race segments, the framing device is Jordan Grand Prix whether it is Kennedy's view with relation to the Celtic rivalry between themselves and Stewart or Watson describing how they matched Ferrari for reliability in pre-season testing. Cutting from Eddie Jordan's opinions of his drivers to the authorised experts appears to sanction preferred interpretations of the narrative.

Multiple plots and characters are presented but only one narrative is foregrounded. No other team owner or driver was interviewed within the diegetic structure. The principal entrance point emphasised in qualifying, is carried into the pre-race programming and is hammered home by Collins over the first live pictures which showed Irish tricolours in the crowd by asserting: 'Among the very large crowd, a large Irish contingent here to support Eddie Jordan's team of course', and almost as an afterthought, 'and Eddie Irvine at Ferrari.'

This narrative order outlined by Collins above was shown throughout the preliminaries and post-race analysis. For RTÉ, Jordan Grand Prix represent the primary narrative entry point and source of Irish national sporting identity in Formula One. The implication is that this should be the case also for the audience. But during actual racing, meaning becomes more fluid as incidents dictate the commentary while the visuals compete with Collins and Kennedy since they are provided by the host broadcaster. The signification for Irish national sporting identity of clashing commentary and visuals are my final area of textual analysis.

The race

‘When players in one way or another are the extended or vicarious agents of a national audience... the commentator's role will essentially be to mediate a transcendental we’

(Raunshberg and Sand, 1998: 169)
According to Wenner (1998) the commentary of televised sport may be quite at odds with the visual presentation because each imposes a different structure and ideological viewpoint on the coverage. In general, mediated sport pictures concentrate on specific stars that cast actions in terms of individual rather than team effort. Meanwhile, commentary tends to emphasise factors which are essentially superfluous to accounts of action such as the conveyance of sympathy and antipathy that endeavour to heighten the spectators' involvement and interest (Rowe et al., 1998; Wenner 1998 and Raunsbjerg and Sand, 1998). I examined 30 minutes of RTÉ's live race transmission which is comprised of the final 25 minutes of race action and the first five minutes of celebrations from the Belgian Grand Prix in Spa Francorchamps which took play on Sunday, August 30, 1998. Owing to the Jordan Grand Prix triumph it allowed detailed analysis of the collision of the global priorities of Jordan, Benson and Hedges and the FIA with the national necessities of RTÉ.

As there was no change in race order during the selected sequence of images, the Belgian director inserted 16 shots from the pit lane and four slow motion action replays during the 25 minutes. 95 per cent of this non 'who will win?' race action was commented upon directly by Collins or Kennedy. Whether it was Johnny Herbert sulking in the pits, the Jordan pit crew looking anxiously at monitors, the Williams of Heinz Harald Frentzen sliding in the rain or Eddie Jordan being teased by Ron Dennis, the RTÉ team's flow of intense, hyperbolic national identification was interrupted and dictated to by the narrative concerns of the Belgian television director. They countered the global tenaciously with comments such as 'Jordan one and two, Ireland first and second' over regular images but the power of the cutaway made it difficult to construct notions of national sporting identity. In contrast, it was noticeable that during post-race euphoric images of the Jordan team, breaks to five inserts of fans waving Union Jacks or Benson and Hedges flags were ignored by RTÉ's commentators. They appeared to enter into a pre-planned mode of address that summed up their needs and the perceived needs of the audience and virtually ignored the presented visuals. Similarly, cuts to other parts of the race action did not have a defining power over commentary. Enduring shots of Jean Alesi and Jarno Trulli were largely ignored as Collins and Kennedy continued their speculations and considerations which were based on chats with Alain Prost in a bar the night before. Equally, images of disconsolate Ferrari fans on a litter strewn, half empty hillside viewing area as Sauber cars zoomed past was voiced over with 'We're not there yet'. Three or four different stories were available on screen but were ignored in favour of the evocation of the national. Thus, while the camera follows the race, the RTÉ commentary team follows their race for 'their audience' except for compelling, slow motions and humanised soap opera style inserts.

Raunsbjerg and Sand (1998) contend that on-screen graphics are more authoritative than what is uttered by commentators. Information that used to be the preserve of the all seeing, all knowing commentator now originates with the producer. The graphics do not illustrate the commentator's words according to their theory but orient his or her commentary. This global dictation to local concerns could be quite significant for expressions of national identity. In Formula One as the most frequently used graphics of time gaps and race order do not specify constructors but drivers only, RTÉ then has to counteract this individuality narrative in favour of its chosen collective through regular team namings. However, it appears that their predominant tactic is to totally ignore the super-imposed sponsored information. Of the fifty three on-screen graphics displayed during the final twenty five minutes of race action, only twenty three per cent of them were alluded to by the RTÉ team. Rather than referring to the number of laps remaining visual, Collins tells us that the cars have no windscreen wipers, relates the history of Jordan Grand Prix in one minute and implored 'Damon' to drive conservatively by using the colloquialism 'keep it between the ditches'. The emotive familiarity of the local commentator's address challenges the indifference and starkness of the global facts and figures.
In the coverage analysed above, there are no real winners, but more importantly there are no real losers. Certainly the global and the national undermine each other’s unified meanings but paradoxically both global and national interests are served by such fragmentation. Benson and Hedges, Serengetti and Jordan Grand Prix’s myriad of other transnational sponsors are satisfied by the widespread visual attention in a world-wide market. Eircell, RTÉ’s advertisers and RTÉ’s public service proponents are content with the nationally angled commentaries. Divide and conquer appears to be the motto of glocalism. The global equates with the visual while the national depends on the aural when applied to Formula One, Jordan Grand Prix and RTÉ. But critically, has meaning been so sub-divided that it has become powerless before reaching targets? Indeed no matter how polysemic globally or nationally encoded meanings become, the greatest variables remain in their reception. After Jordan Grand Prix’s ambivalence towards Irish national sporting identity and RTÉ’s over-enthusiasm for conferring it on the team, it will be the audience and specifically for this study, Jordan Grand Prix fans who determine ultimately whether Irish national sporting identity passes the chequered flag.

The in lap

‘There are as many fans and fan movements as there are meanings to contest and negotiate’.

(Harris, 1998: 4)

For this research two venues in Dublin were selected for a participant observation study and a series of focus groups were conducted with Irish fans of Formula One. Vicar Street and The Flowing Tide are two popular venues where fans congregate for live relays of races during the season.

The over-riding sense I got from participant observation at both venues was how organised and commercialised the fandom appeared. This was created initially by a most evident motivation at the locations to maximise profits through bar takings and in Vicar Street’s case by charging £12.50 for a sandwich and admission to a screening. This meant that the social, public outing so important to fanship was largely contextualised by promotion and marketing activity. The commercial needs of 98FM, Hewlett Packard, Fosters, Benson and Hedges and other companies became more
important than identification. For example, the deep knowledge and expertise of fandom was validated but in a competitive 'pick the winner rather than follow your team' manner. The emphasis on the best in terms of success and style over the fans' personal sympathies creates homogeneity of allegiance. A possible implication of the podium prediction contests for trips to Monza is that fans try to pick the winners without personal involvement or identification. Their allegiances become fragmented as the 'best' is re-emphasised by themselves. Commercialised fandom does not seem to breed diversity despite the democratic and personal choice arguments in favour of postmodernism. At the venues, the prospect of winning an Olympus camera or a Benson and Hedges tee-shirt appeared as important as cheering on your favourite driver or team. A form of low intensity 'diet-fandom' was more prevalent with lots of shouting, interest and discussion but very little commitment on display. The one step removal from direct involvement lightens the fandom emotions. Additionally there is no inheritance of grand prix fandom unlike football where you copy or originate allegiances based on prior allegiances of fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, friends or cousins. Who asks eight year olds what Formula One team they follow?

Instead, the grand prix fan selects from a list of eleven teams and twenty two drivers that are all multi-national, multi-commercial and globalised. Grand prix fandom becomes a deliberate decision and is as likely to be based on the colour scheme of the team as on nationality. As it is a considered identification, it does not have the 'natural' intense, frenzied negative connotations of fandom. If you do not like what you see, you switch channel and you do not have to wreck a stadium, throw missiles or cry. But because of the missing downsides of fanship, the grand prix fan may miss out on the deep play needed for identification. The representation of self by a team or driver becomes temporary and floats by without full engagement. The low number of fans who engaged in public shows of devotion illustrated this. Few Jordan Grand Prix fans wore colours and even if they did they were commodified yellow with sponsors names emblazoned all over them. Essentially there is no need since identity produced by consumerism and validated through third person media is worn lightly. Support seemed limited to big cheers in the darkness in true Lacanian style. The momentary escapism is nullified by the return to the daylight. The identity is so fragile that it depends wholly on symbolic affirmation and the tension felt before the playing of the national anthem after the Jordan victory at the French Grand Prix emphasised this. The grand prix series becomes a cultural product to be consumed with 'flexi-identities' the most common choice. A reciprocal transfer of allegiances between Ferrari and Jordan fans at the two different races re-iterates this point. On-track Ferrari tifosi just leave their seats and go home once 'their' cars have crashed or stopped. But Irish identities mediated through television were moveable and disposable and seemed to depend on 'which is the best performing most Irish car on the track'. Allegiances could be switched, without recriminations, for convenience. Identity appears to be as changeable as the tee-shirt you wear or the prize you might win. It would seem that these fans of the postmodern age build up a portfolio of light identities for access at different moments. Fandom does not have to be earned in the traditional manner by years of suffering losses and accumulating encyclopaedic knowledge. Postmodern fandom can be instantly acquired by buying a hat, switching on the television, acquiring a few key phrases such as understeer and reverse lock or paying £12.50. The witnessed smiles and tears of relief which greeted Anmhíon na bhFionn in the Flowing Tide were, I believe, more a form of self-affirmation of having made a successful identity selection than unconfined joy. There was little time for partying in the streets as the new opportunities for identity were already on the screen with the superbiking exploits of Carl Fogarty. But how do the fans view themselves and their transient, temporary identities? It is to their views and comments I now turn.
Spraying the fans

The fandom of Jordan Grand Prix supporters I interviewed seemed to be based on the largely intangible postmodern qualities of style, pace, prestige and transience in order to derive pleasures. The ability to move, be adaptable and become linked to a reality seemingly divorced from their own, emerged as the salient constructs of their fandom. The process of the race and its identities becomes far more pleasurable for these fans than the product of the result. The mystique and pace of the high tech equipment, detachment, financial pressures and fetishistic sophistication seems to heighten the fans' interest. Regular allusions to the numbers of pit stops, the commercial costs of managing the Jordan team and to the images of people and machinery controlled the flow of interaction. The fans appear to feel empowered by the realisation that the teams, packages, tracks, conditions, drivers and sponsors are ever-changing and temporary and delight in the transient, minor victories. There is little evidence of great outpourings of joy and pride as it does not matter who wins because there is another race in a fortnight and another championship next year with new engines, new colours, new sponsors and new venues. The delight shown by the fans in speculating about the future of Jordan Grand Prix emphasises the transitory nature of this fandom. Similarly, the dislocation of fandom due to its global nature becomes a virtue of loyalty because it is not local and it is not knowable. The voyeuristic, barely active involvement and participation with the sport is paradoxically its attraction. Fandom of Jordan Grand Prix allows a celebration of the detached, disengaged, fleeting moment.

Building on the perception created during observation, it would appear that the focus group members too had 'flexi-identities' and conditional identities. The former allows fans to have multiple emotional entry points into the text while the latter, in the best retail tradition, allows consumers of Formula One to reshell one identity if a more involving identity becomes available, however temporary. Thus, fans described their Jordan devotion as being a response to Williams' boring dominance but could be coupled with strong interests in the mid-field battles while the removal of the Irish tricolour from the factory in Silverstone would precipitate the demise of some Jordan allegiances. In a similar vein, my own fragile, loose identity with the team was threatened seriously by the non-playing of the Irish national anthem in Belgium in 1998. The suggestion is that the quantity of identities becomes more important than the quality of identity since being stuck with an unempowering and valorising identity does not remain an option. The identity opportunities are vast within the Formula One structures and if the Jordan Grand Prix cars crash at the first corner, the fan must be able to adapt to the new conditions of viewership by adopting a fresh identity without reproach. This process is facilitated through having multiple reference points initially and not applying limits to the distances and speeds at which individual identities can travel. When the Irish grand prix fan cries 'Go Eddie', the ambiguity is convenient.

The opinions on the represented 'Irishness' of Jordan Grand Prix were as divergent as the life histories of the members. Given the cultural climate and differing educational, social, locational and familial backgrounds of focus group members, it is not surprising that no over-arching, totally coherent notion of nationhood emerged from the discussions about Jordan Grand Prix's Irish identification. Instead, each fan in turn emphasised separate facets of identity and reconstituted them to serve his or her own cultural demands. It appeared that the fans extracted their own meanings from the global texts and used them to fulfil their own needs in their own ways. This creates through Jordan Grand Prix a form of privatised, aspirational Irishness that refashions Irish national identity through time and place. It can move to the past or project to the future. It can accommodate both the bound geography of the state or look beyond the shores to the diaspora. It can breathe life into traditional, modern or alternative identifications that encourage social prestige and self-esteem on an individual basis. Self inventive, selective Irishness occurs with Jordan Grand Prix because the rapidity and mixture of national signifiers and symbols does not permit
According to Wenner (1998) the commentary of televised sport may be quite at odds with the visual presentation because each imposes a different structure and ideological viewpoint on the coverage. In general, mediated sport pictures concentrate on specific stars that cast actions in terms of individual rather than team effort. Meanwhile, commentary tends to emphasise factors which are essentially superfluous to accounts of action such as the conveyance of sympathy and antipathy that endeavour to heighten the spectators’ involvement and interest (Rowe et al., 1998; Wenner 1998 and Raunsbjerg and Sand, 1998). I examined 30 minutes of RTÉ’s live race transmission which is comprised of the final 25 minutes of race action and the first five minutes of celebrations from the Belgian Grand Prix in Spa Francorchamps which took play on Sunday, August 30, 1998. Owing to the Jordan Grand Prix triumph it allowed detailed analysis of the collision of the global priorities of Jordan, Benson and Hedges and the FIA with the national necessities of RTÉ.

As there was no change in race order during the selected sequence of images, the Belgian director inserted 16 shots from the pit lane and four slow motion action replays during the 25 minutes. 95 per cent of this non ‘who will win?’ race action was commented upon directly by Collins or Kennedy. Whether it was Johnny Herbert sulking in the pits, the Jordan pit crew looking anxiously at monitors, the Williams of Heinz Harald Frentzen sliding in the rain or Eddie Jordan being teased by Ron Dennis, the RTÉ team’s flow of intense, hyperbolic national identification was interrupted and dictated to by the narrative concerns of the Belgian television director. They countered the global tenaciously with comments such as ‘Jordan one and two, Ireland first and second’ over regular images but the power of the cutaway made it difficult to construct notions of national sporting identity. In contrast, it was noticeable that during post-race euphoric images of the Jordan team, breaks to five inserts of fans waving Union Jacks or Benson and Hedges flags were ignored by RTÉ’s commentators. They appeared to enter into a pre-planned mode of address that summed up their needs and the perceived needs of the audience and virtually ignored the presented visuals. Similarly, cuts to other parts of the race action did not have a defining power over commentary. Enduring shots of Jean Alesi and Jarno Trulli were largely ignored as Collins and Kennedy continued their speculations and considerations which were based on chats with Alain Prost in a bar the night before. Equally, images of disconsolate Ferrari fans on a litter strewn, half empty hillside area as Sauber cars zoomed past was voiced over with ‘We’re not there yet’. Three or four different stories were available on screen but were ignored in favour of the evocation of the national. Thus, while the camera follows the race, the RTÉ commentary team follows their race for ‘their audience’ except for compelling, slow motions and humanised soap opera style inserts.

Raunsbjerg and Sand (1998) contend that on-screen graphics are more authoritative than what is uttered by commentators. Information that used to be the preserve of the all seeing, all knowing commentator now originates with the producer. The graphics do not illustrate the commentator’s words according to their theory but orient his or her commentary. This global dictation to local concerns could be quite significant for expressions of national identity. In Formula One as the most frequently used graphics of time gaps and race order do not specify constructors but drivers only, RTÉ then has to counteract this individuality narrative in favour of its chosen collective through regular team namings. However, it appears that their predominant tactic is to totally ignore the super-imposed sponsored information. Of the fifty three on-screen graphics displayed during the final twenty five minutes of race action, only twenty three per cent of them were alluded to by the RTÉ team. Rather than referring to the number of laps remaining visual, Collins tells us that the cars have no windscreen wipers, relates the history of Jordan Grand Prix in one minute and implored ‘Damon’ to drive conservatively by using the colloquialism ‘keep it between the ditches’. The emotive familiarity of the local commentator’s address challenges the indifference and starkness of the global facts and figures.
ARTICLES

RTE’s intersecting visuals and commentary relate multiple narratives. The pictures, the ambient sounds, the graphics and the commentaries all told conflicting, contrasting stories. Unified meanings depended on the viewer ignoring other facets of production. Commentators Peter Collins and David Kennedy tried heroically to ensure Jordan Grand Prix’s national identity as they used comments such as ‘A momentous day for Irish sport’, ‘the chequered flag falls for the Jordan Team’, and ‘it is very much an Irish win, we must remember that’. But the images and sounds of buzzing hornets, German flags, ITV interviewing Eddie Jordan first, Union Jacks, individualised graphics, yellow merchandise, freeze frames backdrops of Damon Hill and congratulating sponsors undermine their efforts. The only coherence of expression was global during the usage of slow motion and pit reaction shots, which could not be ignored by RTÉ. These close-up, intense, emotional visuals demanded fullest attention irrespective of identification while the inanimate, soulless profit-seeking machinery of globalisation as represented by the cars racing were deemed appropriate to be superseded by the local needs of RTÉ. Given this construction, Irish national sporting identity will depend on the race remaining an independent text. If global pictures continue to create more global narratives for global audiences, there will be little room amongst the ‘over the moon’ and ‘sick as a parrot’ pit lane shots to create national identification. If the ‘who will win?’ question becomes subservient to the ‘how are people feeling?’ story, RTÉ, with their limited production resources, will have to concede defeat in their attempts to drive Ireland coherently past the chequered flag.

In the coverage analysed above, there are no real winners, but more importantly there are no real losers. Certainly the global and the national undermine each other’s unified meanings but paradoxically both global and national interests are served by such fragmentation. Benson and Hedges, Serengetti and Jordan Grand Prix’s myriad of other transnational sponsors are satisfied by the widespread visual attention in a world-wide market. Eircell, RTÉ’s advertisers and RTÉ’s public service proponents are content with the nationally angled commentaries. Divide and conquer appears to be the motto of glocalism. The global equates with the visual while the national depends on the aural when applied to Formula One, Jordan Grand Prix and RTÉ. But critically, has meaning been so sub-divided that it has become powerless before reaching targets? Indeed no matter how polysemic globally or nationally encoded meanings become, the greatest variables remain in their reception. After Jordan Grand Prix’s ambivalence towards Irish national sporting identity and RTÉ’s over-enthusiasm for conferring it on the team, it will be the audience and specifically for this study, Jordan Grand Prix fans who determine ultimately whether Irish national sporting identity passes the chequered flag.

The in lap

‘There are as many fans and fan movements as there are meanings to contest and negotiate’.

(Harris, 1998: 4)

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The over-riding sense I got from participant observation at both venues was how organised and commercialised the fandom appeared. This was created initially by a most evident motivation at the locations to maximise profits through bar takings and in Vicar Street’s case by charging £12.50 for a sandwich and admission to a screening. This meant that the social, public outing so important to fanship was largely contextualised by promotion and marketing activity. The commercial needs of 98FM, Hewlett Packard, Fosters, Benson and Hedges and other companies became more
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The opinions on the represented 'Irishness' of Jordan Grand Prix were as divergent as the life histories of the members. Given the cultural climate and differing educational, social, locational and familial backgrounds of focus group members, it is not surprising that no over-arching, totally coherent notion of nationhood emerged from the discussions about Jordan Grand Prix's Irish identification. Instead, each fan in turn emphasised separate facets of identity and reconstituted them to serve his or her own cultural demands. It appeared that the fans extracted their own meanings from the global texts and used them to fulfil their own needs in their own ways. This creates through Jordan Grand Prix a form of privatised, aspirational Irishness that refashions Irish national identity through time and place. It can move to the past or project to the future. It can accommodate both the bound geography of the state or look beyond the shores to the diaspora. It can breathe life into traditional, modern or alternative identifications that encourage social prestige and self-esteem on an individual basis. Self inventive, selective Irishness occurs with Jordan Grand Prix because the rapidity and mixture of national signifiers and symbols does not permit
nor encourage enduring, shared national affirmation. Instead, with community associations and meanings having been abraded and transformed by market place logic, Jordan Grand Prix fans create their own Irish identities through reconstruction of the encountered texts.

It was noticeable that very little distinction was made by the participants between Eddie Jordan and the Jordan Grand Prix team. Fans could tap into senses of collectivity so central historically to the Irish social fabric while simultaneously enjoying the singular specificity so important in consumer culture through the personality of Eddie Jordan. Jordan Grand Prix offers multiple identification possibilities inherent in the variety of symbols, drivers, logos and television coverage. Eddie Jordan himself, is just one more entry point amongst thousands. The openness of the team as a text allied to Eddie Jordan’s distinctly Irish moments of recognition such as dancing jigs and singing "Ole Ole Ole," makes the identifications of the fans no lose situations for them. Despite RTÉ’s coverage, they do not have to embrace an all encompassing, narrow hegemonic vision of Irishness with Jordan Grand Prix. While one focus group member suggested that it suited Eddie Jordan to be proud to be Irish. I would contend that it also suits the fans. Under the umbrella of Jordan Grand Prix, they can test, dismiss and acquire competing and contrasting Irish national identities that vary in form and in intensity, for themselves and for their country.

Significantly with regard to RTÉ, it appeared that for focus group members, their pre-disposed, inside-the-camp, Jordan oriented, commentaries were rejected for the vitality of Murray Walker and the detailed analysis of Martin Brundle on ITV. In the manner of the postmodern cliché, the style of ITV’s commentary is more meaningful than the substance of RTÉ’s. A comment that ‘it’s more a visual thing than listening to the commentary’ also raises serious issues for RTÉ’s attempts to claw national identification from the globalised images. With viewers giving added weight to the visuals, RTÉ’s ability to specialise its coverage is severely diminished and it is quite possible that these fans did not notice RTÉ’s efforts to control national meanings because they are already using the global images to create their own. The joyful anticipation of being able to extend this meaning making process using digital tv technology through choosing suitable replays, graphics, angles and in-car shots may diminish RTÉ’s role even further. With the dearth of home produced visuals already costing RTÉ viewers, the future for grand prix on the station may be grim if they are not cogniscent of the real identity needs of their potential audiences. Self-empowerment through asserting control of the narrative with detailed knowledge and differentiating oneself from other sports fans were crucial meaning processes for these fans and seemed as vital as any Irish identifications. Fans may accept Jordan Grand Prix’s Irishness but deliberately oppose RTÉ’s appropriation of that identity. Since these fans also rejected the government’s involvement with Eddie Jordan as being vote catching and too little too late, perhaps the lesson to be drawn is that such postmodern identities do not rely upon the hierarchical, collective, cultural seal of approval. These Jordan fans, creating their own identities through using cultural products, do not welcome the type of central control as represented by RTÉ and the government. RTÉ may serve and fulfil the commitments of their public service role and the commercial needs of their sponsors and advertisers but the encoded and emphasised Irish national identity for team Jordan appears to be irrelevant, as postmodern fans watch to create their own identifications but do not listen. The Irish national sporting identity attributed to Jordan Grand Prix was negotiated with, re-negotiated with, played and toyed with until the identity needs of the audience were satisfied. Ultimately, Jordan Grand Prix became Irish if and when these fans wished it to be.
ARTICLES

Championship positions

'Like everyone else, I was in tears and without doubt that was the greatest sporting day of my life'

(Eddie Jordan, 1999b: 21)

In the interview quoted above in J, the official team magazine, Eddie Jordan was not talking about Jordan Grand Prix's first podium finish. He was not talking about the team's victories in Belgium nor in France. Instead, these quoted words refer to the Republic of Ireland's unexpected one-nil triumph over Italy during the 1994 FIFA World Cup. For me, the feelings expressed by Eddie Jordan here reinforce the findings of this study. The essence of a unified national sporting identity is to be found in this Jordan expression of collectivity and raw emotion. His identification with the soccer team appears absolute, probably because he has little choice in its creation. He could not influence his birthplace or his ancestral home. From childhood this attachment is strengthened every time the team plays, win or lose. All the joys and sufferings whether they be open top bus homecomings or last minute defeats must be lived through and endured and for Eddie Jordan, this compulsory, natural investment was regained with interest when Ray Houghton's goal precipitated national celebrations. Formula One is a world apart and even Eddie Jordan appears to seek national identification outside its realm.

Postmodern grand prix racing identities are different. They are chosen purposefully. They are selected by consumers. They celebrate individuality and flexibility. They foreground layers of distance using space age machinery, fenced off tracks, glamorous socialites, inaccessible pit lanes and faraway locations. National identities within such a loose framework of reality exist nowhere but occur everywhere. The television screen becomes the point of entry and identity into this created, unnatural environment. Fans have little primary experience and consequently their identifications become throwaway. The ability to easily discard an identity is inherent in a sport that requires massive consumer expenditure to justify its existence. Jordan Grand Prix, RTÉ and Jordan fans shape, use and reuse disposable identities for their own needs. Consumer culture, economic considerations and self-image appear to be of more importance than the raw emotion of Giants Stadium in June 1994. In this knowledge we can now embrace the fundamental rule of the postmodern, globalised, commodified national sporting identity that is Formula One. There is no chequered flag.

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The Case for Irish Newspapers Entering the Interactive Digital Market

Colm Murphy

Introduction

For over 300 years the newspaper business has been inseparable from ink on a page. But the growing use of digital distribution technology such as the world wide web, wireless application protocol for mobile phones and the potential for interactive digital television makes readers simultaneously easier to reach but harder to retain. Newspaper readership is no longer confined to the technology of print. This opens new opportunities for publishers but aggressive players from the software, telecommunications and retailing sectors are also exploiting this new technology and encroaching on newspapers' traditional market. This paper draws largely on the American experience to examine the arguments of whether Irish newspapers should enter the digital distribution channel. It critically looks at the opportunities to develop digital services that are provided by the use of newspapers' brand names, expertise and local networks. It reviews recent efforts by Irish publishers to establish an online presence. It argues that digital delivery is becoming a fundamentally different business to newspaper production and in the long-term will be more suited to broadcasters once bandwidth and compression technologies improve. The cost of trying to establish digital distribution channels is assessed and it is concluded that an alliance between newspapers, radio stations and other traditional media foes may be required to meet the content, technology and financial requirements involved. It concludes that the arguments for and against newspapers entering the digital arena are finely balanced as digital distribution is not necessarily compatible with the business of a physical form newspaper. In the long-term, however, early entry by Irish newspapers is required as both a defence against new competition and as a prerequisite for developing expertise in the area.

It is often remarked how in the late nineteenth century certain entrepreneurs in the railroad business were doomed by their love of trains even those who were smart enough to recognise they were in the transportation business. Does this analogy hold true for the fifty-six newspaper titles in Ireland? The internet, digital television and new broadband services will pose challenges for newspaper publishers. Ireland's unprecedented economic boom has seen record revenues for newspapers but the underlying long-term trend is of gradual downward newspaper sales despite an increasing population. Newspapers have generally managed to increase their revenues despite the long-term circulation fall by increasing their reliance on advertising. For Independent News & Media, Ireland's largest publishing group, advertising revenues represent fifty per cent of revenues compared to forty per cent in 1991 (Goodbody, 1997). The print media's share of the £391 million advertising spend in Ireland is about fifty five per cent, but the expansion of radio, television, online and outdoor advertising is making it difficult for it to retain this high percentage (IAPI, 1999). Competition in the newspaper market has largely come to mean attracting readers from other publications instead of creating new ones.

New technology has been used to reduce newspaper production costs, but delivery remains expensive. A calculation based on paying £1 for a Sunday newspaper and spending four hours reading it would give the average cost per hour to the consumer of Irish newspapers as twenty pence or fifty two pence if advertisements did not subsidise the product. This represents one of the most expensive of media products in Ireland. It is two pence higher than magazines and eleven pence more expensive than books. Television is only two pence and radio one penny. While the costs of other
broadcast and electronic media will stabilise or even fall, newsprint, distribution and transport will maintain and even increase newspaper prices. Against this background, about sixty per cent of Irish newspaper have set up hybrid world wide web editions partly due to fear of losing market share, as well as keeping up with competition and experimenting with new technology. The remainder of this article examines the wisdom of such a move.

The case for entering the digital interactive space

One compelling motivation for Irish newspapers to enter into digital distribution is the need to recapture readership lost due to decades of high emigration. The Regional Media Bureau of Ireland, which represents the publishers of Ireland’s regional titles, estimates that over ten per cent of Irish newspapers are exported to the expatriate population. With thirty-two million people in the US (US Population Office, 1996) and ten million in the UK (UK Office of National Statistics, 1991) claiming Irish descent, this diaspora provides a potential new market for Irish newspapers. Ireland has 5.8 million tourist visitors a year. Irish residents make 2.6 million trips outside the state annually and thirty five thousand young Irish people are away for a year at any one time (Bord Fáilte, 1999). This provides a geographically dispersed community of interest in Irish affairs. The web site of The Irish Times, (http://www.Ireland.com), for example, established in 1994, claimed 6.5 million page impressions per month in 1999, a large proportion of them from North America. Independent News & Media and Liberty, a subsidiary of AT&T, launched Unison (http://www.unison.ie) in February 2000, a web site containing its own publications and those of other half Ireland’s regional newspapers and aimed at the domestic market. It replaced a web site launched a year previously which was aimed at selling Irish regional media content to expatriates. Eircell and Esat Digifone, Ireland’s two mobile phone companies, plan to offer extensive information and interactive services over their networks to their customer base which, according to these companies by the end of 2000, will exceed fifty per cent of the adult population or 1.5 million people.

Another motivating factor for Irish newspapers going digital is the relative strength of their brands. Most newspapers in Ireland trace their lineage to the late 1880s and early 1900s and are very closely associated with their local communities. Their skills in newsgathering, knowledge of local culture and linkages with local businesses are extremely valuable assets but more critical is the trust their readers have in the brand name. In a digital world of free information, qualities of credibility, relevance to a local audience and trust in a brand name, thereby encouraging users to conduct online transactions, become extremely important. Interactive digital advertising can improve efficiency by targeting audiences more cost effectively. Interactive advertisements allow a more direct response than any other media through online purchasing. The trust which people have in newspaper brand names coupled with their long established links with local businesses thus provide an opportunity for them to become gateways for electronic commerce. Instead of simply publishing advertising for companies, newspapers can now manage financial transactions online and open an extra revenue stream through the earning of commission.

Early entry into the digital arena has also proven to be critical for publishers. The opportunity cost in terms of experience, building up an online brand and keeping out competition outweigh the savings from delaying entry until there is a clearer picture of trends. The annual Joint National Readership Surveys, which measure the readership habits of Irish people, constantly show inertia by readers in switching publications. There is some evidence to suggest that this is even greater in moving from one internet service provider to another (Amrach Consulting, 1999) increasing the case for early entry. Aggressive players from computing, financial services and telecommunications are expanding into digital news and information publishing with substantial investment in this area by Eircom, Esat Telecom (owned by British Telecom) and shortly NTL.
Digital newspaper services are also likely to be more attractive to young people. Ireland's young population is increasingly a more computer literate one and becoming accustomed to getting its news and event information free largely over the Internet in colleges. Newspapers' survival is dependent on attracting such readers, introducing them to the habit of reading and later purchasing. Today's under twenty-five year olds are also the first generation to have grown up with video, colour television and high telephone and mobile telephone use and attracting them to static media like newspapers can be difficult. But in this more affluent, global orientated world, Irish newspapers can reduce the emotional impoverishment and disconnectedness widely felt particularly amongst the young population.

Forecasts for the expansion of web-based readership are upbeat. Forrester Research (1999), a US new media consultancy, predicts that in the US $1.5 billion (IRE1bn) in local advertising will shift to the world wide web in the next three to five years. The new market dynamics will cause a loss of $3.6 billion (IRE2.5bn) in local ad revenues — due to fierce pricing competition between the new arrivals and the newspapers. The US market is a more advanced one than Ireland with free local telephone access, triple the amount of home computer ownership and widespread credit card use. People in Ireland spend on average three hours daily watching television, one of the highest rates in Europe and may be close to saturation point. Television is taking a larger share, now at thirty two per cent, of Ireland's advertising pool. The proposed introduction of digital television in Ireland within the next few years will increase ten-fold the number of television channels available, many of which will also be seeking advertising. Digital television technology also makes regional television channels and local interactive teletext type services feasible. It was estimated by Amárach, an Irish technology consultancy, that 444,000 people in Ireland were using the Internet regularly by October 1999. Amárach estimates two million adults in Ireland will be online by 2010. Entering such an interactive digital space opens a plethora of new opportunities for newspapers as it becomes easier for readers to suggest news stories, give automatic feedback and become involved in discussion forums hosted by the publication. The newspaper transforms from a traditional one way communications medium into an interactive medium with a reader part of the content creation process. Instead of filling in the crossword, readers can play it and other games over a network provided by the newspaper. Local community sports, social and political groups can be given their own space to publish their material and allowed their own chat lines. Banking, home shopping, ticket purchases, access to databases and classifieds can all be delivered over the new site. Space could also be given to readers to display the family photo album, publish their own work or give their views. Virtual opinion polls, address books, betting, yellow pages, local history channels and the newspaper archives are other possibilities.

The argument for remaining solely a physical form publisher

A temporary window of opportunity exists for newspapers to enter the online digital world while bandwidth for consumer use remains too narrow for quality audio and video to be transmitted between computers. Today's transfer rates of 20-100kBps are not even close to being sufficient for the user's unlimited visual enjoyment of advanced and visually elaborate world wide web pages and similar multimedia. However, text and still images, the raw material of newspapers, can be relatively cheaply 'shovelled' into digital delivery format. This system will in time be replaced and expanded upon by new types of content and services, as Andersen Consulting (1996) predicted:

One type of content will be video-centric with limited or no interactivity. The other type of content will be more text, graphics and application centric and have dramatically wider variety. The two
kinds of content will sometimes be integrated by a single end user device, but remain chiefly independent. Eventually, a fully integrated set of media, communication and financial content and services will emerge – switched broadband and wireless broadband.

By 2003 switched broadband networks should become available in many of the one million Irish homes. This will give broadcasters access to multimedia interactive services and their richer content is likely to dominate over any provided digitally by newspapers.

This scenario seriously questions the cost benefit to newspaper publishers in Ireland the majority of whom are small enterprises with net profit margins under fifteen per cent, investing heavily in entering the digital space. Investing their profits in shares of television and software companies could give them a better long-term return financially. Estimates vary from a £450,000 to £977,000 investment over three years as the cost of a regional newspaper establishing a basic interactive digital service before it reaches break even. Only a few of the estimated two thousand newspaper web sites internationally are breaking even and this is largely on archive sales.

Seventy per cent of newspapers sold in Ireland are owned by Independent News & Media. It along with Examiner Publications, The Irish Times Ltd, Post Publications, The Farmers’ Journal and perhaps one or two highly profitable regional newspapers would appear to have the internal resources to seriously invest in entering the interactive digital space in a meaningful way. Realising this, the smaller publishers have combined to contribute to Unison which, as already mentioned, is a web site owned by Independent News & Media and Liberty, a subsidiary of AT&T, the largest US telecom company. But they may also need alliances with other types of media such as radio to provide twenty four hour coverage.

The initial synergies between newspapers and their web editions will also be diluted as the medium develops. For example, The Irish Times Ltd had by early 1999 recruited thirty five people in its electronic division which produces its web edition. Digital media users are likely to demand up-to-date information and once compression technology improves they will also likely seek real-time audio and video. They may insist on more value added services and interactivity but be unwilling to pay for it. Newspaper newsrooms are not equipped for this type of operation and soon the cost will spiral with little prospect of short-term return. Even transferring the text and graphics produced for the linear newspaper product into a non-linear one for a basic web site is expensive as it is labour intensive. The Irish market is also small. Microsoft, one of the world’s most profitable companies, withdrew its Irish online service, MSN, after three years of losses seeing the market as too small. Forrester Research (1999), one of the world’s most expert internet forecasting agencies, did not foresee that the market would be big enough for domestic web sites to be profitable in Ireland for the next few years. The potential new audience of Irish Americans and the 853,000 Irish passport holders in the UK equally may not be as easy to attract. Ireland of the Welcomes, a bi-monthly reasonably priced glossy, sells only one hundred thousand copies in the US despite the thirty two million inhabitants who claim Irish descent. The age profile of emigrants is not conducive to large scale computer use and research has shown that emigrants do not retain a long-term interest for Irish media products.3

Internet and digital technology is also changing daily with equipment and skills quickly becoming obsolete. No satisfactory business model has yet been established for how newspapers can benefit from the internet. A more prudent ‘wait and see policy’ would save money which could then be used to launch a state of the art service if and when the technological and financial platforms have become clearer and the potential market has grown to a viable size. In addition, opinion is divided on whether people want interactivity. A survey in Business Week (Cortese, 1997) showed that users are split between preference for inactive and active services and many cited anonymity as the attraction for being online. Advertisers remain reluctant to commit themselves to digital media while statistics for readership are not independently audited and remain

3. Research into the media habits of foreigners settled in Bradford, England, showed that the second generation had little interest in ethnic press. Details of this study by the University of Bradford, were presented at the International Association of Media and Communications Research. Political Economy section, Glasgow, Scotland, July 1999.
low. John Katz, a journalist turned author writing in US technology magazine Wired in 1997, advised publishers: 'Shut down most of those web sites. Nobody needs the more than 3,000 paper sites out there cluttering up the ether with all this deadly, mostly useless stuff. You need to take what money you have and make your papers better, not throw the money away in another medium that undercuts you' (Katz, 1997). Katz argued: 'Newspapers aren't in the breaking news business anymore. That they have not got this 50 years after the fact is almost beyond comprehension. They can't compete with cable, radio or the Net when it comes to announcing news.' He advised newspapers to take a more coherent strategy to address their new role and foresaw a bright future for them if they did (Katz, 1997).

The skills required by newspapers for a viable interactive digital media presence are investment-intensive. Server platform management, payment processing systems (e-money/cash), new high quality customer care departments, creation and editing of interactive/hyperlinked content and individualised customer services shift away from newspaper's core competencies. They will also have to introduce this without upsetting their traditional business channels. For instance, how will banks react if interactive newspapers offer direct payment systems for products cutting out credit cards? They will probably withdraw their millions of pounds worth of advertising from the printed version of the newspaper. There could be loss of goodwill of older readers, forced to pay more for their print editions to subsidise free loss-making online editions. It remains unclear where the funding is going to come from to enable experimentation with a range of interactive digital media on a commercial scale. The two largest Irish newspaper publishers, Independent News & Media and The Irish Times Ltd, have to invest in new printing equipment and in rationalisation programmes for production staff who are being replaced by more efficient digital production equipment. Entering interactive digital services is also a legal quagmire. Discussion groups would have to be monitored around the clock to prevent libel and pornography for which the newspaper as a host would be legally liable. Once content is put into digital media format it is relatively easy to breach its copyright and re-use it, perhaps even to promote rivals.

It may be argued in favour of the newspaper industry remaining a physical publisher that newspapers are portable, cheap, require no technical knowledge, they are easy to navigate and can be shared amongst several people at the same time. Much of their appeal derives from the fact that they are a different medium, often described as active, to television and radio which are normally passive. Computer and television screens are not user friendly for reading large amounts of text. To attract readers into a digital edition, the newspaper must give added value to the print edition which so far most have failed to do. Despite a downward price trend, computer hardware and telecom connections are expensive and growing internet congestion and lack of cross-platform standards add to the drawbacks. There will also always be a premium price for quality communication and ink on paper continues to set the agenda in Ireland for radio and television news. Despite forecasts of their demise, the decline in British regional newspapers has stabilised at fifty nine million readers a week (Greenslade, 1998) and their new more focused management have made them more profitable than ever.1

Conclusion

Irish newspapers' gate-keeping role in a world of exponentially increasing information remains a vital but modified one (Singer,1997). The rapid growth in digital media delivery will continue for the foreseeable future and has to be embraced as an opportunity as well as a challenge. The benefits today are finely balanced with the drawbacks of entering the parallel interactive space. But the opportunity cost of staying out is arguably more expensive than following a new hybrid business model of trying to run both services. Alliances with traditional foes in other newspapers, radio, television, database and guide provision media organisations will be necessary to prevent newspapers becoming castaways in the tide of change. The pace of development of digital media has been faster than the growth of other media. The cultural, economic
and political consequences of allowing overseas media, whose main commitment is to profit, to become dominant in digital media in this country could have far reaching consequences for Ireland’s development. Unlike the altruistic, community based foundations of most of Ireland’s media, these new market entrants may be more concerned with commercial return and with representing the philosophies of their proprietors rather than serving the community. The technology means they no longer need to employ anyone in the country of broadcast let alone the community they serve.

This presents a Hobson’s choice for Irish newspapers. The potential return on investment for Irish newspapers entering the parallel digital space will be several years down the road, if ever. Staying outside it and investing their money in new printing equipment, increasing pagination, staffing, quality and marketing, could prove a more short-term beneficial investment. A low-level investment in basic internet services, such as just 'shovelling' the print content onto the web, could be more than a waste of resources. It could diminish their brand online, sour the organisation's attitude towards digital technology and waste valuable money. Instead, a heavy financial commitment has to be made to the new medium and partnerships formed to bring in expertise where it is missing. To meet this challenge and exploit the opportunity for both readers and publishers, Irish newspapers could combine with other local partners to provide leading edge digital services, thus providing a possible new long-term growth area, safeguarding existing revenues and helping fend off new competition.

Such an approach failed in the US in 1998 with the collapse of New Century Network, a consortium of one hundred and fifty newspapers formed several years previously with a web site to fend off internet competition. Arguments over who would provide content and how to share advertising revenue led to individual titles doing their own deals with other digital media companies. In the meantime, new entrants such as Digital City and Citysearch, and later portal sites such as Yahoo and Excite took the market initiative in attracting new readership as well as some of the traditional market for newspapers.

The lessons from this debacle should be learnt by Irish newspapers – the threat is no longer from each other and they must co-operate. They must also recruit the skills of people who understand the new media and not try to replicate what they do in print in a digital format. From the Irish community’s viewpoint, this will ensure that a local newspaper’s traditional social, cultural and business role survive in this millennium. New business models such as Boston.com, totalny.com, accessarizona.com, and 365.co.uk, provide examples of the new types of interactive services that newspapers can offer. A substantial change of mindset by Irish newspaper publishers will be required to contend with these emerging business models which will enable them to successfully interact with – and deliver product to – distributed global markets. For more than 300 years, their business has been inseparable from print technology. But like the railroad owners of the last century, they must first understand the business they are in and secondly not be blinded by their affection for ink on a page.

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Media Education in Ireland: An Overview

Brian O'Neill

Irish education – a decade of reform

The Irish educational system is frequently celebrated as a world class system that is held in high domestic esteem, has contributed substantially to Ireland's economic success and been compared very favourably with our counterparts elsewhere in the European Union. Such contentment belies the fact that it has also been a system very slow to change, is notoriously centralised and has only in the last decade instituted significant legislative reform that will enable and facilitate the growth of new curricular areas such as media studies – the topic of this article – an area in which Ireland lags substantially behind our European counterparts.

This article examines the origins and development of media education in the primary and secondary levels of the educational system. The rapid development and popularity of media-related courses, predominantly of a vocational nature, at third level arguably requires separate attention. In this instance, it is media teaching within the core curriculum for a general student population that is in question, whether as a subject in its own right or as part of another subject, such as English. A consideration of the position and role of media studies within Irish education is now timely: calls for education to be more relevant and attuned to the world in which we live have been answered by significant curriculum change and, it is felt by its advocates, media education offers a paradigm of what education should be like in today's complex, information-dominated world (Masterman, 1985).

Historically, Ireland's approach to school curriculum development has been a highly centralised one, closely monitored by the Department of Education and Science. The formation of the statutory National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) from its predecessor, the advisory Curriculum and Examinations Boards, was a crucial step towards a more responsive and flexible system of curriculum development. A number of innovations have followed from this. The Junior Certificate programme, comprising the three year junior cycle of secondary education was introduced in 1989, replacing the Intermediate and Group Certificate examinations. It now provides a single unified programme for students aged between twelve and fifteen years, emphasising knowledge, understanding, skills and competencies. It also emphasises qualities of 'responsible citizenship in a national, European and global context'. It is in this context that the majority of students encounter media studies as a formal element of the curriculum. The child-centred and integrated curriculum of the primary system, first introduced in 1971, has undergone a sustained process of review since 1990 and a revised national curriculum is now being introduced on a phased basis.

The traditionally academic senior cycle programme that prepared students for higher education is undergoing restructuring, in part due to the increased participation rates, and in response to its outmoded university-oriented approach. An optional transition year programme has now been introduced offering students opportunities for personal and social development. Its interdisciplinary and student-centred nature has provided interested teachers with extensive opportunities for the development of media education modules. The established Leaving Certificate examination is the terminal examination for the majority of students in the fifteen to eighteen age groups. Students take at least five subjects, though in practice seven to eight is the norm. Recent revisions of Leaving Certificate syllabi have included the inclusion of the study of film in the English curriculum.

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A vocational orientation to the senior cycle programme was introduced with the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), first introduced in 1989 and expanded in 1994 to include link modules for preparation for work. The Leaving Certificate Applied is a new self-contained two-year programme involving a cross-curricular approach rather than a subject-based one with a strong vocational and personal development emphasis. It incorporates modules in communications studies with media studies elements.

Much of the impetus for the decade of reforming measures that Irish education has undergone stems from the 1992 publication of the government Green Paper Education for a Changing World. The Green Paper articulated what all partners in education had long expressed. The educational experience, particularly in the second level which had remained largely unchanged for many years, was an examination-intensive system, unsuited to many, and biased towards a fact-acquisition academic approach to the neglect of the development of critical thinking. The education system as a whole was over centralised, making curriculum innovation enormously difficult. A wide ranging debate on the future of education, its content and structures, developed and culminated in such events as the National Education Convention in 1993, a government White Paper Charting Our Education Future (1995), and The Education Act of 1998. The direction of educational development is now clearly charted and a number of key targets have been identified. The key target for second level education is that by the year 2000, ninety per cent of those commencing second-level education will complete senior cycle. The completion rate in 1995 was seventy seven per cent. Reforms of the junior- and senior-cycle curricula are to be continued, catering for the wide range of ability levels now participating in second-level education and preparing students fully for effective participation in a rapidly changing society. The work of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is also now underpinned by law thus ensuring a greater responsiveness to curricular change and innovation. How media studies has fared and what its future prospects may be within this general environment of change is considered in the remainder of this article.

The development of media education

The manner in which media education has developed in Ireland, while closely influenced by educational developments in the United Kingdom, has not necessarily followed the same pattern. The chronological development in media education from a ‘protectionist’ paradigm, in which education seeks to inoculate against the adverse effects of media, to a ‘critical’ paradigm that seeks to empower students and to foster critical awareness (see Buckingham, 1998; Hart and Hicks, 1999) does not strictly apply. Where it has been formally offered, media education in Irish schools has generally been presented in an enabling and positive fashion, based on its intrinsic motivating features and the enthusiasm for media education by dedicated groups of teachers. On the other hand, it is also true that the progress of media education in Ireland has been particularly slow. The most positive forms of media education have been developed for marginalised areas of the curriculum, such as vocational programmes where teachers were given a large degree of flexibility to develop new approaches. Its entry into the mainstream curriculum has been a late, cautious and piecemeal one with little prospect of media studies in any extended sense being a core curriculum element for the majority of Irish students.

Implicitly, of course, the traditional response of education to the media, and Irish education is not an exception, has been ‘inoculationist’. O’Halloran (1992) observes how the original Primary Curriculum handbook (1971) pointed to the ‘parallel education’ which children received through:

the flood of information stimuli and exhortations conveyed by sound and image by which the pupil is assailed outside the school through
posters, cinema, television, strip cartoons, radio and popular songs.


Mc Loone (1983) linked this tendency in Irish educational thinking with the neglect more generally of the arts and creative expression. The relatively late arrival of television in 1961 was symptomatic of a more general fear of technology and the potential of film as an expression of culture, for example, was not recognised until the mid 1970s. Equally, a xenophobic nationalism combined with the cultural conservatism of Irish Catholicism exerted strong influence on Irish education at least until the 1960s. Ironically, however, some of the earliest initiatives in Irish media education were promoted by the Catholic Communications Centre, founded in 1968, which in addition to publications such as Introduction to the Mass Media (1985) also ran training programmes in well equipped studios for teachers and students in media production techniques.

The origins of media education in Ireland can be traced to the late 1970s and early 1980s when the education system was recognised to be under severe pressure and in need of reform. At that time, Ireland had one of the youngest populations in Europe with over fifty per cent of the population under twenty five. The demographic pressures on an ancient system coupled with cut backs in public spending and poor job prospects for many school leavers placed the entire system in crisis. At the same time, cultural change, the opening up of Irish society, as well as the obvious centrality of popular culture in young people's lives made the contrast between in-school and out-of-school life all the more apparent. Isolated efforts by teachers to develop media studies were galvanised and co-ordinated to some extent by the education department of the Irish Film Institute which in the absence of any other body assumed responsibility for the development among teachers of a culture of media education. In addition to offering seminars and courses in film and media studies, the Film Institute acted as a catalyst for the promotion of media awareness not just in schools but among the Irish public generally. A number of high profile joint conferences and summer schools between the IFI and RTÉ, the national public service broadcaster, created an environment in which the media's contribution to and representation of Irish life was critically debated. A well attended National Media Education Conference held in Dublin in 1985 and addressed by leading UK media educationalists such as Len Masterman, David Lusted and Eddie Dick created the impetus for the setting up of the Teachers' Association for Media Education (TAME). The purpose of TAME was 'to support and encourage teachers of media education in both primary and post-primary schools' and to act as a lobbying group for curriculum provision, in-service training and the development of teaching resources for media studies. It was partially successful in each of these aims though once the modest provisions for media education in the Junior Certificate English syllabus were instituted (see below), the activities of the organisation fell into abeyance. A contributory factor was also the financial crisis experienced by the Irish Film Institute and the winding down of its education department between 1986 and 1990.

As noted above, it was in the vocational area where media education made its first formal entry into an Irish curriculum in 1978. The now defunct Vocational Preparation and Training Programme, designed for early school leavers, included in its communications syllabus a requirement to study 'media among other elements of communications'. An expanded version of this programme in 1984 listed among its aims for communications studies 'to develop an awareness of the nature and function of communications in contemporary society' and to enable students to 'acquire greater social competence'. The objectives of this programme indicated that 'in addition to competence in the basic communication skills, an ability to cope with the various systems of communication, including mass media, would be required'. Students should know, furthermore, about the different kinds of mass media, processes of production, decision making, truthfulness, objectivity and bias. Students would also be encouraged to engage in practical production of news sheets, radio programmes, video magazine
programmes etc. to give them an insight into media processes as well as developing their communicative abilities.

This admirable and well-balanced syllabus was a successful element of the programme as a whole and gave many teachers a long awaited opportunity to introduce a more relevant engagement with contemporary culture into the curriculum. The difficulty from the point of view of those who had campaigned for recognition of media studies in the school curriculum was that it had been restricted to the vocational area and not seen as something that was fundamental to all education. This distinction between the traditional curriculum in the secondary school and the more practical curriculum of the vocational sector was perpetuated throughout the rest of the 1980s as the system itself expanded in an unplanned way to cater for the needs of industry and a bulging youth population with too few places at higher education. A range of vocational programmes were developed sometimes locally and with uncertain certification as post-Intermediate Certificate and post-Leaving Certificate courses, nearly all of which incorporated some elements of applied communications studies but for which skills acquisition was the primary emphasis. These efforts culminated eventually in the development of a new senior cycle programme, the Leaving Certificate Applied, whose integrated, modular and cross-disciplinary approach gave considerable emphasis to communications studies as a core element of personal development.

The campaign to incorporate media studies within the mainstream of the academic curriculum was led by the various interests of Film Institute of Ireland, the Teachers' Association for Media Education, and the Association of Teachers of English. In the context of an overall review of the curriculum at primary and second level, some measure of success has been achieved with a media component being incorporated into the integrated primary curriculum and into the English syllabus, and in varying lesser degrees in the Visual Arts and Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE). The transition year programme which allowed schools to develop their own curricula also received a boost with the setting up a Transition Year Curriculum Support Service and many schools offer media studies as an integral element of such a programme. Such curriculum reforms now see elements of media education at strategic points throughout the educational system: from junior cycle to transition year to senior cycle. While notable inclusions have been achieved, the result is also a disjointed one and the failure to establish media studies as a curricular unit in its own right at any level must remain a disappointment.

Provision for media education

A major revision of the primary school curriculum has taken place and a new revised curriculum is due to be introduced to all schools from September 2000. The new curriculum retains the child-centred approach while emphasising clearer learning objectives, appropriate assessment methods, literacy and numeracy, the arts, Irish, science, European awareness programmes and the promotion of health and well-being, including relationships and sexuality education. While media studies remains formally absent from the primary curriculum an attempt has been made to incorporate media education, more generally conceived, in a cross-curricular manner. It is clear that the revised curriculum recognises the prevalence of media in children's lives and encourages the use of media material as aids to learning across the curriculum. However, the most ambitious approach yet to media education is introduced in the block known as Social, Personal and Health Education. An integral element of this block from infant classes upwards is an exploration of media through such topics as advertisements aimed at children, the distinction between fact and fiction, the portrayal of family and school life in the media, types of information and the techniques used to communicate in newspapers. The central role that such issues occupy in this programme marks a significant innovation for media education and a change in its fortunes, the benefits of which will be felt downstream in the educational system.
The major responsibility for media education in the second level curriculum falls on English language teachers. The first step towards a universal provision for media studies was made in the revision of the Junior Certificate English programme in 1989 when it was suggested that English, while 'retaining the best elements of English teaching would allow teachers to introduce new elements such as adolescent literature, classroom drama and media studies'. The Junior Certificate, representing the final phase of compulsory schooling, aims at breadth and balance in its curricular approach and aims at relevance to the cultural, economic and social environment of the individual in its curriculum provision. The teaching of English at Junior Cycle aims to develop the personal proficiency of the student in the arts and skills of language defined as 'personal literacy, social literacy and cultural literacy' (Junior Certificate English Syllabus: 1).

While media literacy has become one of the defining principles of what media education is about, the elaboration of the principles of literacy in social and cultural dimensions in the syllabus is clearly more functionally oriented and mass media literacy is defined in this context. The syllabus refers to reading newspapers, having a critical consciousness with respect to language use and writing within the discipline of media forms such as radio and television and does create a specific curriculum space for the study of media. Teachers are given a high degree of freedom to develop syllabus units within the overall programme combining literary and media genre in a variety of ways, choosing their own texts and materials to achieve the objectives of the programme. Units can focus on a central text (e.g. novel or Shakespeare play) or group of texts. Alternatively, a unit can be structured around a theme or cultural topic (heroes and heroines, conflicts and contrasts, advertising) (Junior Certificate English Syllabus: 6).

The teachers' guides elaborate on how a media studies unit can be incorporated into the programme. Introduction to Media Studies, for example, is an introductory unit for first year students (age twelve to thirteen), and encourages them to think and talk about the media as products/processes. Through linguistic exercises, students can begin to approach such media-specific concepts as visual communication, selection and construction, and develop an awareness of their own interaction with the media. The context for such an introduction is articulated in a 'protectionist paradigm'. Features highlighted include the persuasiveness of the media, the power of the image and the significance of selection/construction in media news making. Students, it is suggested, 'could take a "nasty" character form a novel or story and write a sympathetic description of him/her. Construct a sensational news item from a selected poem' (Junior Certificate English – Guidelines for Teachers: 85).

A unit on advertising follows the 'Introduction to Media Studies' unit and introduces basic visual literacy/semiotic concepts of denotation, connotation, anchorage, preferred reading, target audiences and representations. Less 'protectionist' in description, it enables a wide discussion of knowledge and interaction with advertising in the media and encourages an awareness of the 'range of media products in society, media as a source of pleasure and personal consumption of media products' (Junior Certificate English – Guidelines for Teachers: 86). It also opens possibilities for creative, practical work in advertising in order to illustrate principles of targeting audiences and extends its analysis to television programme opening sequences, the moving image and film. More negatively, a section on representation in advertising images looks at how stereotypes represent and attract audiences and this has been a frequently repeated theme in the examination of the course.

While the openness of the new English syllabus and its inclusion of media studies have been widely welcomed, a major drawback to the entire approach, as acknowledged by teachers, is its mode of assessment. As Coy (1997) notes, The biggest obstacle to teaching the Junior Cert. course is the Junior Cert. exam. It has reduced English, once again, to a written subject despite the promise of the syllabus' (Coy, 1997: 96). In one of two examination papers, media studies is now formally examined but in a textual way in the form of written responses and analysis of visual elements. Thus, an examination in 1998 used a newspaper advertisement for Kellogg's. This depicted a teenager's bedroom
and asked questions such as: (1) what image does this advertisement portray of the lifestyle and values of teenagers? (2) Do you feel teenagers are being exploited in this advertisement? And (3) Do you think it is an effective way of promoting the product?

In an examination paper of 1999, following a transcribed segment of *The Simpsons*, students were asked, 'From what you observe in your own home and elsewhere list the bad and good effects of television on family life in general and discuss whether its use should be regulated by parents'. This is not representative of all the opportunities that media study at the junior cycle allows, but much of it in this vein is unnecessarily restrictive and limiting.

The transition year programme (TYP) is a unique phenomenon in Europe with a year long programme allocated to personal and social development and maturity, structured between the junior and senior elements of the second level system. A work placement is an integral part of the transition year. Seventy five per cent of schools now offer a transition year and thirty per cent of those schools have now made it a compulsory element for their students. A unique feature of the TYP is that schools are free to develop their own local approaches and with the support of a Transition Year Curriculum Support Service can integrate a variety of cross-curricular modules on offer around a core of general education units. Media studies has been a popular element chosen by many schools for inclusion with transition year (Kelly, 1998). The freedom that the TYP offers represents a significant opportunity for teachers to develop ambitious projects, new forms of teaching and learning and modes of assessment without the constraints of a formal examination syllabus. Studies of media representation, of visual awareness and education, film analysis and processes of media production have been typical elements used by teachers in such programmes. Teachers of English often develop the introduction to media offered in the junior cycle and introduce in the transition year the type of social and cultural analysis required of the new Leaving Certificate programme. Experiential learning through the production of magazines, videos and films, as well as work placements in media and cultural industries have been valuable experiences for many students. Despite the proven contribution of a transition year to the enhancement of overall student performance, not every school offers the programme and within those that do, it is not always a mandatory element.

At the senior level, the most significant innovation has been the introduction of film as a prescribed element of the English syllabus alongside the traditional literary genres of poetry, drama and fiction. The syllabus develops the Junior Certificate emphasis on literacy and oral skills in personal, social and cultural domains. The term 'language' is acknowledged to include visual forms of communication and the role of media, film and theatrical experience are seen as significant. The programme also introduces a more sophisticated approach to the analysis of all texts which looks to their 'embedded nature in history, culture, society and ultimately personal subjectivity' (Leaving Certificate English Syllabus: 3). The designated areas of language use are now defined across ‘lines of information, argument, persuasion, narration and aesthetic uses of language’. Areas of development to encourage media analysis are clearly outlined so that students should study documentary films and media reporting for the language of information, political speeches and advertising for the language of persuasion and films for the language of narration. Similarly, in the traditionally privileged literary section of the aesthetic use of language, teachers and students are also encouraged to ‘view films as complex amalgams of images and words’ (Leaving Certificate English Syllabus: 13). Students must study one literary text in detail but at higher level are now also required to study texts in a comparative way taking into account historical and cultural contexts. Film as a text is included as part of this comparative study which must also include other literary genres.

The Leaving Certificate Applied is the latest curricular innovation in media studies at second level. It marks a new departure for senior cycle education and offers an alternative to the traditional subject-based approach of the dominant examination programme. It results from what is viewed as a major achievement in Irish education.
that virtually all the age seventeen to eighteen cohort now remain in full time education. The programme is currently offered in approximately 200 schools and is aimed at those whose needs are not met by the academic Leaving Certificate programme. Thirty per cent of the programme consists of general education, thirty per cent vocational education and twenty five per cent for vocational preparation. Communications media represent one module in a broad-based and cross-curricular approach to communications that emphasises social and cultural skills of literacy, discrimination and awareness. Units on newspapers, radio, television, film and advertising aim to give students an understanding of the different media, develop critical thinking and communicative skills and to enable them to learn media techniques and technologies. Much of the emphasis is on engagement with a range of media content – newspaper coverage, radio and television programmes, advertising – learning the critical terminology to describe and analyse it, and to examine some of the underlying conditions of its production. Other modules in the social education curriculum likewise draw on media as a learning resource and a tool in the study of the social context of contemporary issues, the social and political process and the centrality of the media to active citizenship. A process of media education permeates the programme and seeks in an integrated way to stimulate critical thinking and active participation by using the readily available resources of media.

Conclusion

The principles of media education have been acknowledged by educationalists and all the principal stakeholders in Irish education as highly desirable and in many ways ideal for the development of the types of creative, technical and critical skills required in today's world. Definite advances have been made over a twenty year period to a stage where media is recognised as a topic within the school curriculum, strategically placed at each level of the school system so that every student has some exposure to the critical examination of media content. However, following what has been a ten year period of radical re-evaluation, legislative reform and significant curriculum change in Irish education as a whole, the case for an integral curriculum place for media studies has not been won. It is a decade that has witnessed the development of new subject areas such as Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). For the first time religion has become an examination subject. It is also a decade in which information technology has received massive funding at all levels. Media education, by contrast, has languished within existing curricula or been developed in specifically vocational directions. A number of constraining features also remain which do not augur well for its future development. Following a decade of curriculum change, the education system is likely to undergo a period of consolidation. Despite the willingness and enthusiasm of teachers generally to innovate, The Education Act of 1998 retains the centralised system of accountability and control under the Department of Education. A proposal by the previous administration to democratise the system through devolved, regional boards of education was dropped by the present government. There also remains considerable public pressure on schools to concentrate on academic performance given the dominance of the examination results-related points system in Irish education and the increasing number of calls for the publication of a results league table for Irish schools. Such conditions are not conducive for the type of major curriculum revision that the introduction of a required media studies subject would involve, whatever the merits of such a case might be.

The contrast with parallel developments in response to the needs for information technology skills could not be greater. In a 1998 Action Programme for the new millennium, the government committed itself to an investment of IR£40 million over three years to equip every school in the country with computer resources, to ensure that all teachers are trained in computer skills, and to engage in an ambitious programme of research to integrate technology in teaching and learning across the curriculum.\(^5\) The aims of achieving computer literacy and being equipped to participate in the information

society have, for reasons of Ireland’s future economic well being, received massive encouragement and investment. To date, in partnership with Eircom, the main telecommunications company, the Schools IT 2000 programme has supplied all schools with multimedia computers and free Internet connections; a network of Education Centres around the country have trained teachers in information technology, and, in partnership with INTEL, an on line curriculum resource ScoilNet, the Irish part of EuropeanSchoolNet (EUN), has been established. A School Integration Project has been set up to promote whole school development in relation to ICT integration and a new research project in partnership with IBM Reinventing Education has been announced. These extraordinary developments indicate the type of vigorous response that can be made to modernise education when the need arises and, with reference to ‘preparing students for the information society’, point all the more to the urgency for a more far reaching and imaginative media education initiative.

References

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Fear of Social Isolation: Testing an Assumption from the Spiral of Silence

Pamela J. Shoemaker, Michael Breen, Marjorie Stamper

Introduction

Although Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann’s Spiral of Silence Theory (1984) has been regarded as a basis for studying changes in public opinion, a major assumption in the theory – that people fear social isolation and therefore are hesitant to voice their unpopular opinions – has been given little empirical testing. Although Noelle-Neumann (1977) has conducted field experiments and surveys in which fear of isolation was manipulated, other scholars’ work has taken fear of isolation as an assumption.

This study is designed specifically to test the fear of isolation assumption and to explore its position in the Spiral of Silence model. It has been unclear from the literature whether fear of isolation is antecedent to opinion formation and dominant opinion assessment or an intervening variable between opinion formation and willingness to voice the opinion. Path analyses are used to empirically investigate the relationship of the fear of isolation variable to other variables in the model.

The study helps determine the importance of fear of isolation in the overall Spiral of Silence model. Several studies (e.g., Glynn & McLeod, 1984; Katz & Baldassare, 1992; Shamir, 1995) have found little or no support for the Spiral of Silence theory, but these did not include fear of isolation as a variable. We hope that measuring fear of isolation and including it in hypothesis testing will help move the development of the theory.

Theory

The Spiral of Silence is Noelle-Neumann’s attempt to explain public opinion as a dynamic process. It has been an important theory, because previous theoretical work had studied public opinion as a static concept, looking at interrelationships between public opinion and other variables at one point in time. Noelle-Neumann (1984) hypothesizes that public opinion changes across time in relationship to people’s monitoring of the ‘climate of opinion.’

According to the theory, if the majority of people hold an opinion opposite mine, then I may be hesitant to voice my opinion in public. This is especially true if I perceive that my opinion is likely to lose more support in the future.

Thus, if people who have opinions similar to mine also do not speak out in public, I will observe a decreasing amount of publicly voiced support for my opinion. Over time, I perceive that support for my opinion spirals downward, hence the name of the theory. It is not clear, however, whether the downward spiral represents only a decline in public support for an opinion or an actual shift in private opinions, i.e., that I have actually changed my own opinion to be consistent with the dominant opinion.

Figure 1 shows this process in a model by Garth Taylor (1982, p.315). Taylor specifies the theory as consisting of four variables at two or more time periods: (1) individual’s opinion, (2) individual’s perception of predominant opinion, (3) individual’s assessment of future trend concerning the opinion, and (4) individual’s willingness to express her/his opinion public.
This is a useful model, because it outlines the variables in theoretical order for hypothesis testing, but at least two important concepts are missing. First, there is no communication variable in the model. From where does my perception of the dominant opinion come? With Noelle-Neumann’s emphasis on ‘willingness to voice opinion’ as the dependent variable, interpersonal sources for opinions may shape my perception of the dominant opinion. However, with many opinions involving topics for which I have no immediate interpersonal source, we must also conclude that the mass media play a very important role in shaping perceptions of the dominant opinion.

Second, although Taylor (1982, p.314) asserts the importance of the fear of isolation concept in his article, he did not include it as a variable in the model. He is not the only scholar to have taken this approach (e.g., Glynn, Hayes & Shanahan, 1996; Willnat, 1996; Baldassare & Katz, 1996; Eveland, McLeod, & Signorielli, 1995; Katz & Baldassare, 1994; Katz & Baldassare, 1992; Kennamer, 1990; Glynn & McLeod, 1984). Other than Noelle-Neumann’s experimental approaches to manipulating levels of fear of isolation, it seems that researchers have mostly been content to assume that the downward spiral of opinion is due to a fear of social isolation without actually testing it. As Glynn & McLeod (1984) suggest, the theory may be improved if fear of isolation were measured and used as a variable, rather than being an assumption. Noelle-Neumann (1984, p.42) has herself argued for operationalizing fear of isolation.

Fear of Isolation

In her 1984 book, The Spiral of Silence, Noelle-Neumann introduces the fear of isolation concept as one of two motives for why we imitate other people. (The other motive is learning.) This is in response to the results of 1950s experiments by Solomon Asch (1951, 1952) in which subjects were swayed by experimental confederates to give clearly incorrect responses to questions involving the length of lines.

Noelle-Neumann found in these experiments the theoretical linkage for her theory: To study changes in public opinion, we must look at changes in individual opinions over time. What might cause someone to change an opinion? Either that something new has been learned about the opinion object or that the person feels a need to express opinions consistent with those of other people. While learning has been used as an explanation for imitation, it is the latter explanation that forms the basis for the fear of isolation concept.

To fear social isolation is to need to agree with other people, an idea she cites from Gabriel Tarde (1969). Noelle-Neumann (1984) says that there is a ‘social nature’ of human beings that is separate from just using learning as an explanation for imitation. ‘Our social nature causes us to fear separation and isolation from our fellows and to want to be respected and liked by them’ (p.41).
In her early studies, Noelle-Neumann (1977) defines public opinion as 'pressure to conform,' and her theory's first two theses demonstrate the role that fear of isolation plans in the Spiral of Silence.

1. As social beings, most people are afraid of becoming isolated from their environment. They would like to be popular and respected.

2. In order to avoid becoming isolated and in order not to lose popularity and esteem, people constantly observe their environment very closely. They try to find out which opinions and modes of behavior are prevalent, and which opinions and modes of behavior are becoming more popular. They behave and express themselves accordingly in public (p.144).

When a person's opinion is perceived to be in the majority, the person may speak out in public without fear of losing popularity or self esteem. If the reverse is true, the person may elect to remain silent, avoiding situations in which the person will be in a confrontational or embarrassing situation, such as when one's opinion is laughed at or criticized by others.

The problem is that no one has thus far tested the theory with fear of isolation as a measured variable rather than an assumption. To do so requires the explication of the construct fear of social isolation into dimensions or indicators that can be separately measured. Also, when studying fear of isolation as a variable, we must distinguish between its effects on opinions held and its effects on willingness to express opinions. Any empirical test using the fear of isolation as a variable should be able to say something about how and whether fear of isolation affects each. Noelle-Neumann writes: 'We assume that the normal individual's fear of isolation sets the spiral of silence in motion, and the Asch experiment shows for a fact that this fear can be substantial' (1984, p.40). This implies that fear of isolation might be an antecedent variable in a model of the complete theory (Glynn & McLeod, 1984). Yet others (Kennamer, 1990) believe that fear of isolation intervenes between the establishment of the opinions and the individual's willingness to express the opinion.

Social Anxiety

The psychological literature on social anxiety suggests some possibilities. Monfries and Kafer (1994) make a connection between self-consciousness and a fear of being negatively evaluated by others. Cognitive deficits (negative cognitions about one's self) have been shown to be related to internal attributions for failures (Beidel, Turner, & Dancu, 1985; Halford & Foddy, 1982) and to negative self evaluations (Cacioppo, Glass, & Merluzzi, 1979; Jones & Briggs, 1984). Socially anxious people, such as those who may fear social isolation, have been shown to hold negative self images (Schlenker & Leary, 1982; Leary & Atherton, 1986).

The negative self images probably come from the individual's perfectionistic expectations for themselves, although with a life-time of experiences that demonstrate otherwise (Higgins, 1987; Higgins, Bond, Klein, & Strauman, 1986). As the individual monitors the difference between her or his schemata of an idealized performance and memories of actual or anticipated less-than-perfect performances, the individual becomes increasingly self-conscious.

Two types of self-consciousness have been assessed – public and private. Public self-consciousness is closest to the idea of fear of isolation. The individual monitors many elements of the self (not just opinions) that others can and see and evaluate (Monfries & Kafer, 1994; Buss, 1980). Public, but not private self-consciousness, has been found related to social anxiety (Buss, Cheek & Buss, 1981).

Watson and Friend (1969) have developed a scale for measuring social anxiety – the Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE). It measures social anxiety stemming from public self-
consciousness, including apprehension about what others think (Monfries & Kafer, 1994). Watson and Friend (1969, p.449) define fear of negative evaluation as 'apprehension about others' evaluations, distress over their negative evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively.' They go on to say that 'fear of loss of social approval would be identical to FNE' (p.449). As these definitions of FNE indicate, it is very close to Noelle-Neumann's definition of fear of social isolation. Therefore the FNE scale will be adapted for this study and used to operationally define fear of social isolation.

Hypotheses

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of an operationalized fear of isolation variable in a model of the Spiral of Silence theory. Is there more support for using it as an antecedent variable or one which intervenes between opinion assessments and willingness to voice the opinion, as suggested by Kennamer (1990)?

H1. \textit{The more a person fears negative evaluation, the less discrepancy there will be between the person's opinion and perception of the predominant opinion.} If fear of isolation is antecedent to opinion formation, then we should expect that, in a dynamic public opinion system, over time the person's own opinion should move closer to the predominant opinion. Therefore, at one point in time, there should be a positive relationship between fearing and holding the majority opinion. We assume that we are not entering a discussion about the opinion subject at the beginning, but rather that at the time of the survey the opinion subject has already been under public discussion for some time. The more a person fear's social isolation, the more that person's opinion should move toward the predominant opinion over time. In this scenario, fear of isolation impacts opinion formation directly. It impacts willingness to voice the opinion through other variables in the model.

The discrepancy of opinion is the difference between the individual's private opinion and the individual's perception of the predominant opinion on a specific topic. Fear of isolation is defined as a person's fear of being negatively evaluated by others.

H2. \textit{The more a person fears negative evaluation, the less likely he or she will be to discuss a minority opinion.} If fear of isolation is intervening, we should observe this relationship. Opinions are formed and then the person considers his or her fear of social isolation. Fear will then mediate the relationship between opinions and willingness to voice opinions. A minority opinion is one which the individual perceives to be supported by less than half of the public; a majority opinion is one perceived to be supported by half or more of the public.

In addition, the study aims to look at an inference of making fear of isolation an assumption in the theory - that it applies to everyone and is therefore a nonvariable. We already know that some 'hard-core' people do not seem to fear being in the minority. However, in this study, it would be reassuring to see that there is substantial variance among respondents in their fear of negative evaluation. This would allow for the 'hard-core' supporters of minority opinions, as well as for those who feel a stronger need to socially conform. Treating fear of isolation as an assumption does not allow for such variability.

Method

A telephone survey of adults 18 years and older was conducted in a mid-size Eastern U.S. city; 403 interviews were completed. Graduate students in two classes acted as supervisors and interviewers in a centralized telephone facility. Telephone
numbers were selected at random from a CD-ROM directory of the area's telephone numbers (SelectPhone CD-ROM Northeast, 4th quarter, 1994). The procedural response rate was .77.

Opinion Variables

**Individual's opinion** – ‘Women should have the right to a legal abortion.’ Responses were to a 5-point Likert scale, with 5 indicating 'strongly agree.'

**Individual's perception of the predominant opinion** – ‘Thinking about the people you normally socialize with, would most of them strongly agree, agree, be neutral, disagree or strongly disagree that women should have the right to a legal abortion? Responses were to the same Likert scale.

**Discrepancy of opinion** – Absolute difference between the above two Likert scales. The minimum value of the scale is 0, indicating perfect agreement between the individual’s opinion and the individual’s perception of the predominant opinion. A value of 4 indicates the most difference.

**Willingness to express individual’s opinion** – ‘Now I want to come back to the abortion issue for a moment. If you were at a social gathering and people there were discussing abortion, how likely would you be to enter into the conversation if their views on abortion were different from your own? Would you be very likely [5], likely, neutral, unlikely, very unlikely [1]?’ (adapted from Glynn & McLeod, 1984, p.55).

Fear of Negative Evaluation Variables

The complete scale as developed by Watson & Friend (1969) has 30 items. We were unable to use that many items on our omnibus questionnaire, so we selected six items that seemed most appropriate to the fear of social isolation. Five items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, with 5 as strongly agree; one item was reverse coded.

- 'I worry about seeming foolish to others.'
- 'I worry about what people will think of me even when I know it doesn’t make any difference.'
- 'I become tense and jittery if I know someone is sizing me up.'
- 'Other people’s opinions of me do not bother me.' [reverse coded]
- 'When I am talking to someone, I worry about what they may be thinking about me.'
- 'I often worry that people who are important to me won’t think very much of me.'

The scale yielded a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .81.

Media use variables

**Television exposure** – The product of the number of days a week R watches television and the number of minutes per day television is watched.

**Television news exposure** – ‘On days when you watch TV, about how much time do you spend watching news or public affairs programs?’ Coded in minutes.

**Other television exposure** – ‘Now I’d like to ask you how often you watch different types of TV programming. In an average week, how many days do you watch... (Coded in days per week.)
ARTICLES

- Morning news programs
- National network news
- Local news
- News magazine shows
- Talk shows
- Tabloid TV news like A Current Affair
- Public TV news shows like the McNeil-Lehrer News Hour

Newspaper exposure – The product of the number of days a week R reads a daily local newspaper and the number of minutes per day spent reading the newspaper.

National newspaper exposure – The product of the number of days a week R reads daily national newspapers and the number of minutes per day spent reading national newspapers.

News magazine exposure – ‘Now I want to ask about other news sources you might use. In an average week, about how many news magazines do you read?’

Radio talk show exposure – ‘What about radio? In an average week, how many days do you listen to a radio talk show?’

National radio news exposure – ‘In an average week, how many days do you listen to a public radio news program, like NPR’s Morning Edition or All Things Considered?’

Results

As Table 1 shows, there is similarity between the individual’s opinion and the individual’s perception of the predominant opinion, with both showing support for a woman’s right to a legal abortion. Thus, there was minimal discrepancy between the two opinion variables, yielding an opinion discrepancy score of only .74. Respondents were also willing to express their opinions to others.

The Fear of Negative Evaluation index, which is the operationalization of the fear of social isolation construct, is also shown on Table 1. When the six items were added, they formed a reliable index (Cronbach’s alpha = .81).

Means and standard deviations for media use variables are shown on Table 2. Respondents watch about 2.5 hours of television per day, with one hour spent watching news. They also spend one-half hour per day reading local newspapers.

Table 2 shows Pearson correlation coefficients for the opinion and Fear of Negative Evaluation items. Individuals’ opinions were positively correlated with their perceptions of the predominant opinion (r = .52). The more a person supported a woman’s right to a legal abortion, the more the person perceived that most others also supported abortion.

In addition, perception of the predominant opinion was positively correlated with the person’s willingness to voice an unpopular opinion. The more support a person thinks there is for abortion, the more willing the person is to voice her/his own opinion in public (r = .15).

Hypothesis 1 stated that the more a person fears negative evaluation, the less discrepancy there will be between the person’s opinion and perception of the predominant opinion. As Table 3 shows, this is not supported. The correlation between the discrepancy of opinion (absolute value of the difference between the individual’s opinion and the individual’s perception of predominant opinion) and any of the Fear of Negative Evaluation items never exceeds -.09 and is not statistically significant.
The FNE index is, however, negatively correlated ($r = -.11, p < .05$) with the person’s opinion, indicating that the less fearful a person is of negative evaluation, the more the person supports a woman’s right to a legal abortion. The same is true of the index item ‘worry about seeming foolish;’ it is negatively correlated with the individual’s opinion at - .13 ($p < .01$). The less a person worries about seeming foolish, the more the person supports the abortion item.

Hypothesis 2 stated that the more a person fears negative evaluation, the less likely the person will be to voice her/his opinion in public. Table 3 indicates no support for the hypothesis.

We were also interested in whether media use variables would be related to the opinion and FNE variables. As Table 4 shows, there are only a few statistically significant coefficients, possibly indicative of Type I error rather than meaningful relationships. The FNE index negatively correlates with two of the fourteen media variables – watching national TV network news and watching public television news. The more fearful a person is, the less she or he watches these types of shows.

Finally, we looked at two path analyses to determine the amount of support for Fear of Negative Evaluation as either an antecedent or intervening variable. Figure 2 shows FNE as an antecedent variable, along with media exposure. Path coefficients are standardized beta coefficients. The results show modest support for the Spiral of Silence model. Fear of negative evaluation is negatively related to the individual’s own opinion. The individual’s perception of the predominant opinion is positively related to willingness to voice an opinion, even if it is in the minority.

- ‘The less fearful I am, the more I support a woman’s right to a legal abortion.’
- ‘The more I think others support abortion, the more willing I am to voice my opinion.’

Figure 3 shows media exposure as antecedent and fear of negative evaluation as intervening between the opinion variables and the person’s willingness to express an opinion. The individual’s opinion is negatively related to fear of negative evaluation. And, as before, perceived opinion is related to willingness to voice the opinion.

- ‘The more I support abortion, the less I fear negative evaluation.’
- ‘The more I think others support abortion, the more willing I am to voice my opinion.’

**Discussion**

In their review of research of the Spiral of Silence Theory, Price and Allen (1990) note that most tests of the theory in the United States have not supported the idea that holders of minority opinions are loath to present their opinions in public due to a fear of social isolation. They also note that fear of isolation has been assumed and not measured as a variable in the studies. We have attempted to do just that, using a modified scale of Fear of Negative Evaluation (Watson & Friend, 1969) as an operationalization of fear of social isolation.

Like many other tests of the theory in the United States, our study showed only the most modest support for the theory. On the other hand, we have shown that it is possible to operationalize fear of social isolation. Our adaptation of the Fear of Negative Evaluation index (Watson & Friend, 1969) did allow us to put a measure of fear of social isolation into two path diagrams – one with the fear variable antecedent and the other intervening. Fear of social isolation appears to be negatively correlated with the individual’s opinion, but the negative direction may be a function of the opinion topic – a woman’s right to a legal abortion. This is a highly politicized and controversial topic, yet it also has strong support among the public and is the law of the land. Among this
sample of respondents, most people thought that their opinion was identical to most other people's opinions. A topic less entrenched might react differently.

Although we were pleased at the way our six-item Fear of Negative Evaluation index came together (alpha = .81), it is certainly possible that a revision in this scale could increase its usefulness in the path diagrams.

It is difficult to say from our results that fear of social isolation is either antecedent or intervening. To say 'The more I support abortion, the less fearful I am' may be equally sensible as saying 'The less fearful I am, the more I support abortion.' The former assumes that fear is a function of the opinion, whereas the latter assumes that the opinion is a function of one's level of fear.

Noelle-Neumann, we think, would argue in favor of the latter – that fear of social isolation (operationalized in this study as fear of negative evaluation) is antecedent, a trait of humans, existing prior to the development of opinions. If fear of social isolation is an intervening variable, then it is not a trait, but rather ebbs and flows as each opinion topic comes up. In this study, however, the fact that fear of social isolation is not related to willingness to voice one's opinion (Figure 3) sheds doubt on the status of fear of social isolation as an intervening variable.

In conclusion, support for the Spiral of Silence Theory is minimal, but we have perhaps advanced the theory by operationalizing fear of social isolation and by considering whether it is an antecedent or intervening variable.

Much more research and concept explication are necessary before we can say that we know anything definitive about the role of the concept fear of social isolation in the Spiral of Silence Theory. Although neither hypothesis was supported (one where fear is antecedent and other intervening), we still believe in their logic and hope that future researchers will retest the hypotheses with new measures and/or new topics.
### TABLE 1
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR OPINION AND FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION VARIABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual's opinion*</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual's perception of the predominant opinion*</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrepancy between opinion and perception of predominant opinion**</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to express individual opinion***</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worry about seeming foolish to others*</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worry about what people think of me even when I know it doesn't make any difference *</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I become tense and jittery if I know somebody is sizing me up*</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other people's opinions do not bother me****</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I am talking to someone I worry what they may be thinking about me*</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often worry that people who are important to me won't think very much of me*</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of negative evaluation index</td>
<td>14.94</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

** Absolute difference between two Likert scales

*** 5 = very likely, 4 = likely, 3 = neutral, 2 = unlikely, 1 = very unlikely

**** 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree

***** The sum of the six individual items above. Cronbach's alpha = .81

### TABLE 2
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR MEDIA USE VARIABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minutes per week watch TV</td>
<td>1070.58</td>
<td>814.09</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
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<td>(394)</td>
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<td>P=.427</td>
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<td>10 I often worry that important people won't think much of me</td>
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<td>(395)</td>
<td>(362)</td>
<td>(358)</td>
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<td>P=.080</td>
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<td>(401)</td>
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<td>(399)</td>
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<td>-0.07</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(401)</td>
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<td>When talking to someone I worry</td>
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**TABLE 4 (cont.)**
FIGURE 2
PATH ANALYSIS WITH FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION AS AN ANTECEDENT VARIABLE

FIGURE 3
PATH ANALYSIS WITH FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION AS AN INTERVENING VARIABLE

References


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Global Theory and Touristic Encounters

Gavan Titley

'It's a lovely piece of real estate'

US Secretary of State in the Reagan administration, George Schultz, reacting to his first glimpse of Grenada following the US military invasion. (McAfee, 1991:97)

'They are buying the image. People will buy the fruit thinking, boy, this place is pristine'

Cecil Winsborough, Grenada's chief agronomist, commenting on Sainsbury's take-over of the entire agricultural production of the island. (The Guardian, January 19 2000)

Overview

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the tourist industry is providing one in nine jobs and eighty per cent of travellers come from just twenty countries. In other words, in a changing global economy, tourism is a matter of economic imperative for the Majority World, and privileged mobility for the Minority.

The economic dependency of the Eastern Caribbean on tourism has been well-documented (Ferguson 1997, Lea 1998, Patullo 1996). A large element of its attractiveness depends on its connotations of paradise in the Minority World, and therefore it is an economic necessity that paradise is continually simulatable. The widespread development of all-inclusive resorts, or what Bauman has termed 'reservation-style experiences' (1998: 58), organises social space as a simulacra of widely circulated images, and it is a structuration which approaches culture as a factor of risk and uncertainty. Furthermore, not only does a large amount of tourist/host contact take place within this confinement, but it is increasingly the normative setting for representations of the Caribbean in media texts.

In this paper I do not wish to re-examine arguments concerning the social unsustainability of this form of tourism, as I think that can be taken as read. My focus will be the way in which this kind of tourism provides a framework for imagining and gazing upon the Caribbean, and the problems this presents for island identities. Central to this is the question of identity and globalisation, that nebulous process which drives the increase in the type of tourism which is under discussion. An influential current in global theory is to analyse the way in which processes engendered in the economic sphere result in cultural phenomenon which are delinked from any simplistic notion of economic causality. While this is generally sustainable, I wish to argue that the precise form of tourism which defines the Caribbean's entry into this global market has a structuring influence on the cultural, precisely because it is the cultural which has been fundamentally commodified.

Introduction

In his pre-millennium Reith Lectures, Anthony Giddens suggested that globalisation is creating something that we can as yet only perceive the contours of, but which may respond to the name of the 'global cosmopolitan society' (1999: 19). The argument is an interesting, and by this stage quite familiar one. We may be experiencing processes which are fundamentally powered by capital accumulation, yet the spatial and temporal
Despite only displaying its contours, I think it is still possible to attempt to locate the Eastern Caribbean (which I will concentrate on) within this emerging concept. In analysing its global circumstance, it could be argued that its defining role in the global economy, namely that of pre-modern, touristic construct, questions the constituent relations of that cultural pluralism, and that the particularity of its economic relations disavow many of the liberating possibilities suggested by global cultural theory. Given the region's unsustainable dependence on tourism (Ferguson, 1997: 45) its economic survival depends on it being the untouched remnant, an unpeopled space organised and framed by outside desire; in other words, it is regarded as profoundly decultured. The Caribbean, despite its history and diasporic presence in the Minority world, is continually represented in the market as being beyond culture, virgin territory which is fleetingly possessable, a paradisal counterpoint to post-industrial society. Not only space, but also those that problematically inhabit it, must conform to the paradise paradigm:

It is the fortune, and the misfortune, of the Caribbean to conjure up the idea of 'heaven on earth' or 'a little bit of paradise' in the collective European imagination...the region, whatever the brutality of its history, kept its reputation as a Garden of Eden before the Fall. The idea of a tropical island was a further seductive image: small, a 'jewel' in a necklace chain, far from centres of industry and pollution, a simple place, straight out of Robinson Crusoe. Not only the place, but the people too, are required to conform to the stereotype. The Caribbean person, from the Amerindians whom Columbus met in that initial encounter to the twentieth-century taxi driver whom tourists meet at the airport, is expected to satisfy those images associated with paradise and Eden. (Patullo, 1996: 142)

Culture, and the cultural subject, are important only in so far as they are assimilatable to simulated nature. I wish to argue that what Patullo is describing here is the perspectival framework which still informs the circulation of the Caribbean as an image in the global economy. As a code of assumed expectations, it is materialised in the divisions of social space which delimit the islands' tourist zones and resorts. Caribbean space is in part orchestrated by the demands of what John Urry has usefully described as the 'tourist gaze' (1990). The commodification that tourism engenders always involves some element of making desire material. In this instance, given the dependency involved and the nature of the desired image which is sought and sold, that commodification has brought about systems of spatial apartheid, where space is ahistorical and risk for the tourist is minimised to contact with local citizens involved in the performance of circumscribed roles, both formal and informal.
What merits investigation here, then, are the factors which place the Caribbean at odds with the proto-utopian view of a global cosmopolitan society. This needs to be considered both in terms of the economic determinedness at work in the organisation of socio-cultural space, and in the determinacy of the perspectival framework through which the Caribbean is represented, even in the celebrated free flow of a global image-scape.

**Globalisation particularised**

I will continue by briefly outlining some contemporary thinking on global processes and cultural pluralism, and suggest why the particularisation of this theory to the Caribbean suggests some disturbing converses.

**Compression and contacts**

Globalisation is often theorised in terms of action, and a corresponding realisation of what that action entails. Thus Robertson describes it as 'the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole' (1997: 4) and Jonathan Friedman employs a similar construction; 'an increase in interdependence and an awareness of that interdependence' (1995: 70). The temporal and spatial reorganisation of the world, that is powered by the intensification of transport, capital, information, images and people (see Harvey, 1989), is argued to produce a sense of the global itself, and its immanence in contemporary circumstance. This sense of the global, it could be argued, is the emergence of a burgeoning consciousness in this cosmopolitan society. Robertson has termed this globality - the awareness that we are all part of something bigger. It is more than an acknowledgement of interdependence, and is not bound to the material. Instead, it is what he describes as 'the extensive diffusion of the idea that there is virtually no limit to difference, uniqueness, otherness' (1992: 102). Both in terms of physical and virtual mobility, people in 'global cosmopolitan' societies are confronted by what could almost be described as a semeiosis of otherness, unifying in the sense that in this compressed world, 'the bases for doing identity are increasingly and problematically shared (1992: 101).

Multiple compressions, to some degree universally experienced if not acknowledged, result in creating what can only be described as a new human environment. Mike Featherstone expressed this succinctly:

> The flows of information, knowledge, money, commodities, people and images have intensified to the extent that the sense of spatial difference which separated and insulated people from the need to take into account all the other people which make up what has become known as humanity has been eroded. (1995: 87)

The crucial concept here is the idea of insulation. The experience of separateness is unsustainable. This is not a comment on desire, as it must be noted that reactions to the erosion of insulation can range from the celebration of hybridity to the foregrounding of neo-tribal and fundamentalist tendencies (Bauman, 1998: 9). I will comment on the idea of globality at a later point, and deal firstly with the notion of compression itself.

Inherent in the notion of compression is the way in which speed has reorganised spatial and temporal relations. When this is applied to the relations between the Minority World and the Caribbean facilitated by tourism, it suggests several disjunctures. Contact facilitated by tourism is a process of inter-related choice and constraint; the interaction of what Bauman has called tourists and vagabonds (1998: 167) is the confrontation of actors in differing states of empowerment. While globalisation engenders a quantitative and qualitative leap in human interface, it does so in terms of mobility which is structured in hierarchy. The economic can never be
unpacked from touristic contact, it is the contract and expectation of those involved. More fundamentally, the idea of global speed has to be regarded as having differing gears, as the speed of opportunity is unrelated to the speed which characterises desire. In other words, while the fluid representations and facilitative mobility available characterise elements of western postmodernism, that which is sought in the Caribbean is the lived image of the pre-modern. ‘Getting away from it all’ has a temporal as well as spatial sense – a trip to paradise involves a global economic architecture which can get you there, and then construct the environment to meet expectations. Therefore the all-inclusive resort is an attempt to bound a territory against the speed which has rendered it attractive and available.

Similarly, it can be argued that there is a paradox related to the conceptualisation of global space. If the end of insulation creates the condition for the constant freeplay of otherness, it is only through a system of insulation that the attractiveness of the other can be guaranteed. Tourism depends on the circulation of a desired image of the Caribbean as untouched yet within reach; the resort, the ultimate fragmentation of the environment, allows for the untouched to be curated and fortified.

**Glocalisation and the division of space**

To problematise this further, I need to introduce some of the thinking on the linking of the local and the global outside of the paradigmatic relations of nation-states. Underlying this discussion also, is the reality of the disempowerment and weakening of cultural and civil rights that this form of apartheid tourism entails. To quote the Mighty Pep, spatial division involves differing forms of alienation:

> All-inclusive tax elusives/and truth is/they’re sucking up we juices/buying up every strip of beach/every treasured spot we reach/for Lucians to enter/for lunch or dinner/we need reservations, passport and visa/and if you sell near the hotel/I wish you well/they will yell and kick you out to hell. (From the calypso 'Like an Alien in We Own Land', in Patullo, 1996: 80)

To cite another paradox among many, the global moment was meant to offer the locality unprecedented empowerment. In relation to this Robertson has adapted the business term *glocalization* (1995: 35) to describe the way in which compression involves the linking of localities, and not merely the interpolation of the global. Multiple trajectories of contact allow for pan-local relations to develop outside of the established modernist channels; the example of the environmental movement or the international mobilisation of community organisations can be cited here.

The circumscription of the local in the Caribbean would seem to challenge a theory of glocalization on a number of fronts. If, as I have argued, the Caribbean is viewed as an ahistorical space defined by its natural attributes and their mythic resonances, then it could be argued that specific island localities suffer from a lack of differentiation, and that each ‘reservationised’ locality is unique only in the sense that it contributes to a generic whole. In the interviews with tourists contained in Polly Patullo’s book *Last Resorts* (1986), it is interesting that the choice of destination would appear to be based on the success of the promotional material in resembling the desired simulacra, while further differentiation is made according to the perceived cultural exchange value of each island. The entrance of the local to the global, in this particular dynamic, would appear to be characterised by a de-linking or de-localisation. The homogeneity of the controlled environments in which contact takes place results in them being distinguishable only in that some simulate expectations with more random accuracy than others. In other words, the cultural is profoundly disembedded from the local.
Globality and risk

So far I have argued that the forms of globalisation which cohere in the tourist experience would not seem to suggest processes of cultural pluralism, or what the global cosmopolitan society could look like in the eastern Caribbean islands. With this in mind I would like to revisit the concept of globality, or the idea that there is a consciousness developing which crystallises our awareness of what it is to be globalised.

The global cosmopolitan society must at least in part depend on the processes whereby members perceive and evaluate themselves and others as being part of that society, or at least as being within the emerging contours. The erosion of insulation creates the conditions for the 'bases of doing identity being increasingly and problematically shared'. The articulation of cultural identity present in tourist/host interfaces, particularly in a developmental framework, sensitises us not only to the question of power, but also to the structure provided by the context for that articulation. While it can be maintained that all such encounters involve an element of performance, in terms of a dialogue of expectation and satisfaction, in Caribbean terms, I contend that the structuration of locality prescribes the locals who can move within it, and that the terms of entry necessitate the performance of mythic stereotypes resonant of colonial ciphers. And this, in tum, is intimately bound up with the management of risk.

Risk, as the vogue term of the moment, is clearly central not only to the microcosm of the all-inclusive resort, but also to the way in which cultural contact is framed by tourism. Given that Caribbean tourism is often based on satisfying the assumed desire for an untouched remnant, the canvas of which can be artificially designated, the interpolation of local culture involves a disjuncture which admits risk. I am not talking here about the question of security and perceived physical risk, which has been dealt with elsewhere (Ferguson 1997, Pattullo 1996, Taylor 1993). And neither is this merely the idea of risk as unpredictability which has been a structuring concern of the tourist industry since the creation of the modern format by John and Thomas Cook (Crotin, 2000: 121). Risk in this context involves exposure to the ambiguities and uncertainties involved in the experience of travel in general, but more particularly to the uncomfortable experience of leisure in areas dependent on that leisure for their livelihood. The 'us visiting them' dynamic of global tourism is characterised by 'unequal and unbalanced relationships' with 'widespread disparities and levels of satisfaction' (Lea, 1998: 64).

This is no more than a statement of degree zero, as the complexities of role, status and identity negotiation are ever present in these contexts. Yet these complexities must belong to the fabric of anything as fanciful as globality, as they focus starkly on the decentering of self which it is argued is a central experience of intercultural contact (Guirdham, 1999: 213). As noted by Bourricaud, the increase in global interdependencies has resulted in people facing each other in an 'open ensemble of interlocutors and partners' (Robertson, 1992: 101), yet presence alone is obviously not enough to suggest the development of even a problematically shared consciousness. The tourist-local encounter, as a moment epitomising the shared problematics of identity in a global process, contains the potential to disturb and question Minority world orthodoxies. Edward Said has articulated this in terms of a postcolonial reading, where he states that:

The cultural interpenetration that globalisation brings implies a collapse of both the physical and the cultural 'distance' necessary to sustain the myths of Western identity and superiority established via the binary oppositions and imaginary geographies of the high colonial era (Said, 1993: 370)

It seems to me however, that Caribbean tourism is structured to cushion contact from precisely the kinds of encounters which these writers detail. For the Caribbean as immutable product, culture and its agents introduce ambiguities and disjunctures to
the carefully simulated stasis. Any random contact, or open ensemble, admits the risk
that consumer satisfaction may be confronted by uncertainty. The idea of consumer
satisfaction at work here is the assumption that pleasure lies solely in the accuracy with
which the physical environment can represent representations of itself. The de-limiting
of social space can be seen as the attempt to force the referent to second-guess
the interpretant.

The management of risk which is imbricated in the sociology of this form of tourism
mocks the notion that a global cosmopolitan society can emerge from the structured
inequalities of compression. Once again, the situation is paradoxical in that it is only
through the erection of barriers that the world can be offered as being without frontiers
for those privileged enough to undertake the journey. Trinh T. Minh-ha has observed
that voyages involve the re-siting of boundaries for the 'self that embarks on an
undetermined journeying practice, having constantly to negotiate between home and
abroad, native culture and adopted culture, or more creatively speaking, between a
here, a there, and a elsewhere' (Minh-ha, 1994: 9). The elsewhere that she speaks of
begins to reflect the contours of the global cosmopolitan society, in that encounter and
change present mediated, 'third culture' possibilities. In the context under discussion,
the negotiation presented is between the desire and the experience, the re-sited
boundaries are those which preserve the notional adventure. Without doubt there are
many kinds of tourists and modes of touristic experience, capable of a complex variety
of interactions, even in this context. Yet the spatial organisation of experience signifies a
limit to possibility, and the confinement and separation of difference. The limit mark a
further dislocation of the local; it is important only in so far as it can reify images of
western desire legitimised by a notion of globality that is unilateral in its generation.

Cultural identity, performance and the gaze

Service demands that locals be allowed entry into this carefully managed
construction. In a place displaced from surrounding communities, entry is limited to
service and performance. Yet this entails contact – as Michael Cronin has pointed out,
any tourist/tourist worker encounter is highly personalised, and the 'personality of the
tourist worker is an integral part of the tourism product' (Cronin, 2000: 122). Those
transient in paradise surely have a right to expect friendliness from those blessed
enough to inhabit; locals are part of the product, and as such have very definite and
circumscribed roles thrust upon them. Discrepancies are opened up by a refusal to
perform, or at least to maintain a level of presumably manic happiness. This is a
common problematic; countries which have employed tourism as a development strategy
often rely on their citizen's ability to stage a foisted notion of tradition and collective
psychology. The tyranny of constant happiness is by no means singular to the
Caribbean, though it has been historically a constant feature of how island life has been
observed from the outside (Pattullo, 1996: 142).

In this way, the kind of tourism which the Minority world undertakes in the Majority
can be seen as a search for authenticity, a projected definition onto the other which
details a sense of loss and a timeout from modernity. And there is a particular kind of
authenticity which is sought, and simulated in the Caribbean: it is the search for a pre-
cultural space. Those who must move within the compounds are therefore twice
fetishized; as objects of discovery, and also as beings so close to nature that their
dispositions are derived directly from the climate. It seems that the colonial binaries
which Said spoke of are here compounded, in both senses of the term. Cultural
negotiation, that ubiquitous challenge of compression, can only take place if both
parties regard each other as cultural. In this context, the romantic construction of the
land and environment dictates a performance of culture which is holistic to that
construction. It should not go unremarked that there are uncomfortable echoes in this
of the natural mythology surrounding American and Australian first nation people, not
to mention the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean (Ryan, 1994: 117. Hulme,
Service can never be regarded as simply that – it always involves performance. In an environment constructed for consumption, those who work within it must be coded appropriately, and local cultural identities must learn to negotiate the constructions of ethnic identities which render them recognisable to the tourist. As MacCannell has pointed out, tourism as a ritual involves ‘reconstructed ethnicity, a generalised other within a white cultural frame’ (1992: 168). Diverse cultural phenomena which have come to signify caribbean-ness – reggae, voodoo, stylised Rastafarianism, elements of carnival – are reconstituted in this frame which provides the frisson of the exotic with the certainty of recognition. There are undoubtedly issues here concerning the transgression of cultural significances, which this paper cannot hope to deal with. A salutary parallel may be drawn with a study of native women’s performances for the Ecuadorian tourist market, where Quimsena women were required to wear traditional outfits, normally reserved for special occasions, while serving in a Quito hotel which thrived on their thematised difference (Crain, 1996:128). The substantive point however, is that tourism places its workers under the sign of authenticity. Locals in their fragmented space, cannot, it seems, expect to be recognised as a member of the global community unless they step into the perspectival framework which sees the Caribbean in a very particular way. It seems difficult to sustain the idea that global trajectories of contact increasingly involve the mediation of identities, if a feature of the economic contract which brings people together is the immutability of homogenous Caribbean types.

The idea of global cosmopolitanism is not limited to production through contact. As I have alluded to, this environment is characterised by a rapid circulation of signs and images. I do not have the space here to offer full scale textual analyses, yet even to depend on the empirical position I stated in opening, of how the Caribbean is regularly made knowable, we can see several examples of a fluid continuity between space and representation. The gaze upon Caribbean space is one of possibility, the return to nature legitimises and provokes reactions and behaviours constrained in ‘the real world’. Last year’s box office success, I Still Know What You Did Last Summer, is an interesting example. The plot is simple enough: a group of college students are lured to a large anonymous Caribbean island by a radio contest staged by their prospective killer. When they arrive there is a hurricane warning, a hotel with the mandatory faulty wiring, and to introduce our cast, a drug guy and a voodoo guy. It is approaching the end of the tourist season, and luckily for the slasher, the island is deserted apart from the stock characters that provide the decontextualised ciphers of Caribbeanness in the market imaginary. As there are no consumers, there is no service and hence no need for a local population. The notional roles are so heavily circumscribed that there is no ambiguity to this absence, presence is purely functional to the romantic vision. What are important are the cultural connotations of the empty space and the proximity to nature, where the film’s protagonists are free to act without social constraint. In these terms, the island acts within a historical narrative of place-myths, where the host culture is somehow responsible for the exoticisation of the normal. Yet place-myths usually involves the fetishization of culture itself, whereas the elements of culture which creep into the gaze on the Caribbean are those which can be absorbed into nature, the authenticised cast and their practices.

An interesting example of this is the most recent film version of Wide Sargasso Sea, where the filmic language is a montage between the unsettled natural environment and the increasingly intense behaviour of those who occupy it. Rochester’s cultural certitude is seduced by the barbarous sensuality of the tropics, and Jamaica is a magical environment which teeters on the brink, as the magic can elicit passion and provoke tragedy. For Rochester, Antoinette is an intrinsic element of this beguiling environment, as are the drumming slaves in the yard whose rhythm constantly accompanies the release of the primitive within him. The storm clouds gather and roll on the night that Rochester rapes Antoinette, the dark side of nature has been released and he finds himself culpable only to the extent that his dalliance with this dangerously exotic atmosphere has led to immersion. In Hollywood film behaviour in the Caribbean space is
licensed by the struggle of culture in the natural world, and the perversity unleashed by the interaction with its embodiments.

The congruency in fictional representations is striking, and to take a programme like Caribbean Uncovered is to see image and experience converge. The BSB programme is structured like a fly-on-the-wall documentary, and within the confines of the compound the tourists are licensed by the same pervasive nature that infects the fictional characters. The controlled environment allows for an abdication of control; as Pattullo has pointed out, there is a strong continuity to the general mythology of blackness and partying in general, and to indolence and abandon in the Caribbean in particular (1996: 142). What is interesting about the programme, especially in Britain, is that this is presented as the essence of contact with the Caribbean, it is an available experience of desire, where expectation and environment can be made to cohere.

Conclusion

I would contend that there are few widely circulating images which contest this gaze upon the Caribbean. The postmodern consumption of images problematises the relationship between a social reality and its representations, particularly when, as in the exclusionary Caribbean space, that reality is intimately bound up with and shaped by the representations which popularise it. The rapid circulation of signs which is so characteristic of globalisation is often explained by metaphors of travel, many of which are now routinely familiar. John Urry suggests that, in fact, contemporary experience can be seen as that of the continual tourist, as he puts it: People are tourists most of the time whether they are literally mobile or only experience simulated mobility through the incredible fluidity of multiple signs and electronic images (1990: 17). This experience is one which should contain discontinuities, the kinds of negotiations which, it is argued, make a notion like globality theorisable at the very least. It signifies the terrain around which Giddens’ emerging contours may begin to incorporate the social.

Visitors to the Caribbean may be tourists in both senses as well; in this case however, it is because the imagined geography which has become an economic necessity is mapped both onto the local and the represented space. This reality is one which is obviously contested in terms of rethinking sustainable economic policy, and structuring and providing ethical and heritage tourism in conjunction with local communities. What needs emphasising here, in a theoretical framework, is that rethinking globalisation and cultural identity needs to recognise that admitting the influence of the economic over lived relations is not a form of crude determinacy. In many situations of global domination, the fact of mediation and subversion is often celebrated as a strategy rather than recognised as a necessity or fact of life. Consumption and reception may be secondary production, people may evolve their ways of negotiating satisfaction from structural inequalities, but as an observed phenomenon it does nothing to suggest how we can imagine the social and cultural rights of members of a brave, new, cosmopolitan collective. If we do not articulate the inequalities which any such concept must engage with, then the contours become very clear. It is just like the nationally contoured societies that we are used to, with classes simplified to tourists and those that seem to be permanently happy.

References


Chris Frost *Media Ethics and Self Regulation*  
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Michael Foley

In the US there has been a long tradition of writing books on journalistic ethics; and not only books, there are journals on media ethics and even a magazine, *Brill’s Content*. The *Columbia Journalism Review*, the *American Journalism Review* and others all cover ethical issues. The freedom given to the press under the First Amendment has meant that ethical issues assume a greater importance on the basis that journalists assume they can write something. The issue is now one of whether they should. As with so much else we are following the US and an increasing number of works on ethics are being published. While working journalists still tend to find the subject of ethics embarrassing, media sections of newspapers are taking ethical issues increasingly seriously.

Why is this? Why this fascination with the good and bad of journalism, the behaviour of its journalists and the problems of regulating the press. There are a number of reasons. Ethics provides a ready and scholarly area of study for what is increasingly being called, ‘journalism studies’. This new subject has arisen out of journalism training and media studies and ethics seems to offer instant academic respectability to a subject which too often wants to apologise for its existence in the academy. How can a traditionalist professor doubt the validity of a subject that has Aristotle, Kant, Russell, the Existentialists, Bentham, Moore, Hare and Ayer at its centre? At least the study of journalism will be respectable, even if the practice is not.

This is not a cynical viewpoint. Media studies tends to look at the end product, the product of media activity. Journalism studies is looking at the ‘how to’ and is still defining what exactly journalism is. Increasingly it is finding that media studies and communications theory are not a useful base for what is emerging as a new subject that merges theory and practice, the professional and academic, and views journalism as a discipline independent of the media. The student of journalism today is the practitioner of tomorrow. Ethics has a central place in this new subject that is about educating reflective journalists rather than just training journalists. With ethics at its heart journalism educators are saying that they want more than a critique of journalism, they actually want to influence the practise and possibly produce better journalism with all the implications that might have for civic culture and civic participation.

The other reason, is, of course, the pressure within the establishment to control the media as it becomes increasingly central to a media obsessed political establishment. This is taking place as readers and audiences are becoming more and more cynical and the media, especially print, is finding it increasingly difficult to engage readers. Its answer is too often to seek out sensationalism. In Britain, Ireland and other parts of Europe the question has been less how should a free press behave ethically, but what sort of regulation will ensure the press behaves ethically.

Ethics and press regulation is not a new idea. It was Lord Northcliffe who instructed his journalists, 100 years ago, to give him a murder a day. As long as the press were concerned with so called human interest there have been those seeking to regulate or modify the behaviour of the press. In 1936 the annual conference of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) adopted a code of conduct that is more or less still the union’s code, though amended regularly to take account of changing fashion and concerns.

In this country concern about the behaviour of the press is more recent. The media in Ireland has traditionally been rather respectful and conscious of being involved in the serious business of nation building and defining democracy within a new state. With the decline in the power and influence of the Church, politicians and other authority figures, the media, the press in particular, has come under increased scrutiny from some of
those same people. There is also little doubt that the Irish press has got bolder and possibly braver, while the influence of the British press, with Irish editions and increased sales, has become increasingly strong. In June 1996, newspaper industry representatives agreed that some sort of voluntary regulatory system should be established and, in return, the Government would agree to reform the laws of libel as recommended by the Law Reform Commission in 1991. Although this has not happened yet, it signalled a willingness on the part of the press to consider regulation if only in return for something else. In July 1998 Senator Kathleen O’Meara, of the Labour Party, launched her proposal for a voluntary, non-statutory, press council.

The report of the Commission on the Newspaper Industry (June 1996) recommended that a newspaper Ombudsman, funded by the newspaper industry, be appointed to investigate complaints of breaches of press standards (not including defamation) and that extensive changes in the law of libel be introduced as a matter of urgency.

That unfortunately has been the level of discussion in this country. Other than a handful of NUJ activists, journalists have left discussion of ethics and regulation to newspaper publishers. The debate has therefore centred around libel reform, because that costs money. Ethics has been seen as a currency, something that might be used to pay for reform of the libel and other laws relating to the media.

*Media Ethics and Press Regulation* by Chris Frost is aimed at students of journalism. It comes with chapter summaries and questions. It offers a ready made course and course text for the many new journalism courses that are coming on stream, especially in Britain. It is valuable because it is based on British conditions and its legal environment and on a media that we know well and is familiar in this country, rather than the many US texts, that are based on the strong First Amendment tradition.

Mr Frost is a different sort of academic author and is probably an indicator of how things will develop within academic journalism. He is a former newspaper journalist, but also a former president of the NUJ. He now lectures at the University of Central Lancashire but is still engaged with journalists and is currently the chair of the NUJ’s Ethics Council, the watchdog of the code of conduct that was voted on in 1936.

One might review Mr Frost’s work simply in terms of how it works as a text and if it would be useful in the lecture hall. In that it is a valuable addition and especially useful in linking current concerns about right and wrong, good and bad, ethical and unethical to the classical and modern major ethical thinkers. This he does in an introduction that asks ‘what are ethics’. Importantly, he also integrates the thinking of Aristotle and Kant into the later discussions of media ethics and behaviour. This is necessary because to see media ethics as simply a code or a series of rules allows it to be ignored when found inconvenient. To be educated in ethics means discussions and arguments about professional practice will always be about right and wrong, good and bad.

This work, however, is more than a college text book, because at its heart is a critique of the present voluntary regulatory system in Britain, currently called the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) but which has traded under many names since the system was first introduced in the 1950s.

Frost looks at the role of law and the enforcement of ethical standards. The usual way is either through law, a statutory regulatory body or a mixture of both. Most western-style democracies have developed a cultural ethic for journalists that cover in some way most or all of the issues of truth, privacy, harassment and fairness. In some cases the society concerned will enforce that ethic by legislation and it is one of the more interesting and revealing areas of study for those seeking difference in national cultures and identities,’ (p 106).

It is perfectly possible for the press to be answerable under the law but not to the state. The British press, he points out, is already tightly controlled and the effect of this is to distort the view as to what is ethical and what is not. ‘Journalists have become so
busy trying to slip around the wording of this law or that that they rarely step back and look at the ethical dimension of what they are doing' (p 107)

He addresses the question so many who control the press ignore: why is it that whilst the press is allegedly free, constrained only by a voluntary self regulating body, broadcasting is hedged in by statutory regulatory bodies and laws about what can and cannot broadcast?

Frost's arguments are interesting for those concerned with how the media will develop in Ireland. The Minister responsible for broadcasting, Ms Síle de Valera, intends to put in place a new regulatory body that will replace the IRTC. It will have wide powers in relations to all broadcasting outside RTE, including issues of taste. The RTE Authority will remain in place acting as a regulator for public service broadcasting, while the Broadcasting Complaints Authority will have its powers strengthened.

In the meantime the newspaper industry, including the journalists through the NUJ, have offered to adhere to the rulings of a voluntary council or ombudsman if libel is reformed.

Frost accepts that an argument for impartiality on television but not the press can be sustained; he is less convinced by strict regulation on fairness and privacy for television, but not the press. He also suggests that the view in Britain that holds broadcasting to be more trustworthy than the press might in part be due to this.

Frost is concerned that strict laws have the effect of masking the moral principle. One way around this, he suggests, is to use law at one remove, by giving regulatory bodies statutory powers. This is where a body is established under statute, its membership selected according to criteria laid down by law and its methods of hearing complaints and punishing offenders also laid down by statute. The Broadcasting Standards Commission in the UK and our own Broadcasting Complaints Commission are two such bodies.

This is a very controversial viewpoint and to understand what the newspaper industry would think of it just consider what the eminent British QC, Mr Geoffrey Robertson, had to say in his book Freedom. The Individual and the Law: The British newspaper industry not only deploys its editorial space to campaigning against a privacy law, it has established a sophisticated public relations exercise called the Press Complaints Commission, with an annual budget of £1 million to convince Parliament that its ethics are susceptible to what it optimistically describes as "self-regulation". But the PCC is a confidence trick which has failed to inspire confidence, and forty years of experience of "press self-regulation" demonstrates only that the very concept is an oxymoron' (Robertson, 1993: 111).

Journalists, rather than proprietors, might consider Frost's argument, for as he says, a statutory body has to have an appeals mechanism. An appeal system gives journalists the chance to fight their corner. Frost is clearly of the opinion that voluntary systems, as he has experienced them in the UK and within the UK's press culture, act in their own and the industry's self interest. On the one hand cases are sometimes not properly tested because it would not be in the interest of the self-regulator to do so. On the other it might bring in a judgement in a case that was not in fact unethical in order to maintain its position and knowing that the only punishment would be the publication of its adjudication. In this instance the system might be protected but the journalist would not and could not appeal the decision. The self-regulatory systems might well sacrifice the individual journalist to what it considers a greater good, its own preservation, whereas a statutory system would given the journalist an appeals mechanism, through the courts.

Frost holds that it is difficult for the newspaper industry to credibly maintain its opposition to a statutory body when the same industry will say that a voluntary body doing more or less the same is perfectly acceptable. However, the question that has to be
answered, he says, is ‘what is wrong with statutory regulation for the press if it is all right for broadcasters?’

This is an interesting and useful book, and made more interesting by incorporating an argument that many in the newspaper industry would prefer not made. What is not dealt with in detail is the counter argument being made by the increasing number of commercial broadcasters, outside the public service sector. Why should they be subject to statutory regulation? As the number of radio and television channels increases and trans-national television becomes more common, the regulation of television and broadcasting is being questioned and becomes increasingly difficult to sustain.

Frost is very much a product of the British newspaper environment, where voluntary regulation has been in existence since the 1950s. He does not consider whether regulation itself works, just whether the British self-regulatory system has worked. In Ireland so many incidences of alleged press bad behaviour are more often than not questions of taste, which no regulatory system could police without a serious threat to press freedom. Maybe, in the interests of democracy, we will have to accept that a free press is a flawed one and that regulation is not possible. If that is the case then the question of ethical education for journalists becomes even more urgent.

The books does have some flaws itself; why so little attention to Northern Ireland? The political conflict in Northern Ireland is the single longest running story in the British media this century. For thirty years people living in the UK were being shot and bombed. British soldiers patrolled the streets and were engaged with a number of guerrilla armies, yet it was covered so badly in the British press. Northern Ireland and its portrayal in the British media has far more case studies of fundamental ethical failings than the coverage of Princess Diana. She gets twelve entries in the index and Northern Ireland one.

Not all the terms used are defined. Sensationalism is a bad thing, to the extent that there is a rather odd diagram portrayal of how and when sensational becomes a risk. It strikes one as rather po-faced and a bit like communication theory’s attempts to look scientific. In 1953 the legendary editor of the Daily Mirror in Britain, Hugh Cudlipp defended himself against the accusation of sensationalism, saying: ‘The Mirror is a sensationalist paper. We make no apology for that. We believe in the sensational presentation of news and views, especially important news and views, as a necessary and valuable public service in these days of mass readership and democratic responsibility. Sensationalism does not mean distorting the truth, it means the vivid and dramatic presentation of events so as to give them a forceful impact on the minds of the reader.’

In other words there is good and bad sensationalism, just like there is good and bad journalism and ethical and unethical journalism.

References
It's a long, long way from Socrates to The Star. And it's a long way from Socrates to Gerry O'Regan, former editor of the Irish edition of The Star, now editor of the Evening Herald. The title of the first paper in The Search for Ethical Journalism is: 'What would Socrates say? Towards a foundation in media ethics.' 'But what would Gerry O'Regan say?'

There is a huge gap between books about media ethics and most Irish journalists. If asked to unfold the ethics of their daily practice, they would probably surprise us, and themselves as well. But ethical self-examination is not exactly an obsessive occupation of Irish journalism culture.

This culture revealed itself in a remarkable way at a session of the Media Forum for MA students of the Faculty of Arts of the Dublin Institute of Technology, held at Aungier Street in January, 2000.

The forum session, in theory, was to feature a panel of five leading journalists discussing ethical issues. However, in practice, it turned into an infotaining ping-pong of argument and banter between, on the far left (of the table), Damien Kiberd, editor of the Sunday Business Post as well as of the book under review, and, on the extreme right, Mr O'Regan himself. Mr Kiberd, who is, of course, on the side of the angels and Socrates, made his ethical points. And Mr O'Regan raised some valid questions, suggesting, in essence, that newspapers are as ethical as they can afford to be. (For example, is it possible that there might be a link between the noble broadsheets' coverage of property and the fact that they rake in a huge amount of revenue in property advertising?)

What was remarkable was the extent to which O'Regan pulled back and at times silenced other members of the panel who had begun edging towards the high moral ground. The former Star editor repeatedly put them on the defence - not only by means of mockery and good-humoured bully-banter, but also, it seems, because they were reluctant to take up a strong position on the high moral ground in case they were seen as self-righteous, priggish, smug and hypocritical.

*Me virtuous? Certainly not* ...

A Fleet Street editor, told that an ethics expert was talking to his journalists, reportedly exclaimed: 'Efficksl What's That?' This was the title chosen for the overall forum. It turned out to be ironically apposite.

Given that working as a journalist entails so sharp a conflict between competing interests in a job in which ethical considerations are so easily overridden, it is worrying that bottom-line journalists can so easily force their ethically minded colleagues into defensive mode. Irish journalism needs to do some ethical thinking, and The Search for Ethical Journalism, the outcome of the Seventh Cleraun Media Conference, in February 1998, does a good job at opening up the issues.

It is introduced by American financial consultant William Hunt, who is now based in Ireland. While smartly summarising and relating the essays of the various contributors, he also offers his own observations. His strongest proposal is that the media would better serve the public if the media itself were to feature more explicitly in its own coverage of the institutions that govern our lives. (p13)

The first essay is by Brendan Purcell of UCD's Philosophy Department. Using personal conversation as his model, he suggests that journalists should speak to their
readers in good faith, with the same standards of morality as apply when we converse honestly with another person. The notion of journalism as conversation in good faith is suggestive and flexible. The essay is a worthy attempt to establish basic philosophical principles for the practice of journalists. But it is academically distant from the immediate problems of working in daily journalism. Purcell describes the journalist as a 'person-in-dialogue'. Tell that to the hacks!

If good journalism is comparable to honest conversation, then the reporting about refugees and asylum-seekers in some newspapers from 1977 onwards may be likened to scaremongering gossip and the relaying of destructive rumour. Irish Times journalist Andy Pollak argues that ‘treatment of the refugee issue’, particularly by O'Reilly's newspapers, 'did a considerable amount to change the benign, if ignorant, attitude of most Irish people to refugees into something much more volatile and potentially dangerous in the short space of less than twelve months'. The extent of Irish colour-blindness had not been severely tested previously – by a neat and tiny influx of College of Surgeons students – but Mr Pollak convincingly marshals the evidence of an 'embarrassing litany of sloppy, sensationalist and sometimes mischief-making reporting and sub-editing' (he does not omit to mention a 'momentary lapse' by his own paper), and specifically of 'Independent Newspapers pandering to the most fearful and xenophobic strands in our island people's character'. He suggests that people should write letters of complaint to Dr A.J.F. O'Reilly, that great supporter of Nelson Mandela. If anyone thinks that his newspapers have calmed down since 1977 and become more responsible, they can not have been reading The Sunday World recently.

Following up and complicating Pollak's analysis, Klaus Schonbach of the University of Amsterdam examines the role of journalists in the outbreak of racist violence in Germany in the early 1990s. He shows how good intentions and the principle of truth-telling were not good enough. In effect, he argues for – beyond an ethics of conscience – an ethics of responsibility: for sensitivity to and care about the consequences of one's reporting. In an Irish context, the dilemma could be, for instance: how do you report a crime by a particular Traveller without intensifying prejudice against Travellers in general? Schonbach argues: 'Even if a report is completely true and important according to news criteria, journalists cannot leave it at that.' It's a funny business, journalism. Bad journalism can do much more damage than a planning development, but to propose that journalists working on sensitive stories be required to prepare community impact statements would be preposterous. Of course. Another Cleraun conference could well be devoted to the problem Schonbach raises.

Claude Bertrand of the French Press Institute believes that 'the fate of mankind' depends on 'improving' the media. While Mr O'Regan might demur at that, his hackles will not rise so much at M. Bertrand's avoidance of the term 'media ethics', which is, as he says, loaded with 'moralistic connotations, which irritate some people'. Instead he speaks of 'quality control'. He also points out that 'quality control implies action, not talk'. Fair point. And he does mean action: media accountability systems set up by 'media owners/controllers/managers'. I doubt if Dr A.J.F. O'Reilly is listening. There is a problem here. Control of quality is essential in most businesses which aim to be successful. The public will not buy stale bread but they will buy bad papers, or what some of us like to categorise as bad papers. From where, then, will the pressure for quality control and media accountability systems arise?

Irish Times editor Conor Brady might reply that he does not need any such pressure: 'The Readers' Representative at The Irish Times satisfactorily resolved more than ninety per cent of the complaints or observations which were lodged last year', he points out. He lacks the imperviousness to criticism common to some of his colleagues: 'Irish editors and journalists, in too many instances, are not responsive to complaints. We ... are slow to import into our own thinking the standards of openness and accountability which we so readily urge upon others.' It is not clear, however, how far he includes himself and his own paper in this criticism. In other parts of his paper, he lashes out at the low standards of some other Irish newspapers. (He does not name them, but we can
make a wild guess.) He is, it seems, open to the notion of a newspaper ombudsman which he believes would be the quid pro quo 'if we have action from government on libel'. But, despite his fine summary of the absurdity of our libel laws, there is no sign of government urgency on that little matter.

As regards an ombudsman, Robert Healy, former executive editor of the Boston Globe, in an interesting account of American experience of the Swedish 'go-between', confirms M. Bertrand's point that the support of owners is needed to make quality control and accountability systems work.

The answer to our problems would appear to be Britain's self-regulatory system, judging from the examination by Robert Pinker, Privacy Commissioner of the British Press Complaints Commission, of the workings of the Code of Practice introduced after Diana's death. It works, and it is upheld by industry, he says. For example, 'thanks to the cooperation of the industry and the work of the Commission, there has been a marked improvement in press conduct at the scene of major tragedies'. The system as he outlines it does seem to be improving the standards of the less scrupulous of the British press in many ways, but they do, after all, have a long way to climb to even the lower moral ground The commission has often been dismissed as lacking teeth. But the teeth of an Irish equivalent would probably not need to be devastatingly sharp, since it would not have to deal with a press as carnivorous as Britain's, and in Ireland's smaller community it might more easily embarrass the worst culprits on to at least the lower reaches of the high moral ground.

Sean Duignan, it appears, was not sure what kind of moral ground he was on when Government Press Secretary (GPS) for Albert Reynolds. Discussing leaking by spin doctors, he says it may be 'a somewhat dishonourable business', 'usually done for the most venal and self-serving reason', but is at the same time, 'in the exercise of practical politics ... as natural, and unavoidable, as breathing'. As GPS, he 'participated energetically and enthusiastically in the whole business'. But 'poor Diggy', as he calls himself at one point, 'wasn't good at it'. As a former journalist, he knows that the media want to have it both ways: newspapers rise in righteous indignation against political leaks, but did you ever hear of a journalist who refused the leak of a glorious exclusive?

Mr Hunt, however, sharply details the pernicious effects of leaking, including the diversion of journalists towards what politicians want them to know and away from what they want them not to know. In his call for media coverage of the media, he also points towards one of the oddities of the media, summarised by the US Hutchins Commission on the Freedom of the Press in 1944 (quoted by Healy):

‘One of the most effective ways of improving the press is blocked by the press itself. By a kind of unwritten law, the press ignores the errors and misrepresentations, the lies and scandals, of which its members are guilty.’

An example of this, as Mr Hunt points out, was the failure of The Irish Times to cover as a 'legitimate news story' The Star's nonsense about 'Refugee rapists on the rampage'. It is a telling example of how media reluctance to cover the media amounts at times to a serious dereliction of duty.

Such a lacuna in coverage comes on top of the fact that the fourth estate probes and castigates almost every area of Irish life that is open to question, yet itself is, in general, hypersensitive to and dismissive of any criticism of its own behaviour, and maintains practices which if followed by any other organisation would be thunderously denounced from the editorial pulpit. This is a line book, in the main, which debates in useful detail many of the ethical issues in Irish journalism which need not merely to be discussed, but acted upon. But from where will the pressure for higher standards come? From the public, which grousers about the media but will continue to devour its products voraciously? From the politicians, who will continue to play the cat-and-mouse game with the media, in which sometimes they are the cat and sometimes the mouse? From
journalists who, between the public interest, commercial interests and their own interests, have a difficult balancing act to perform? Or from owners such as Dr A.J.F. O'Reilly?

Mr Hunt criticises the Irish media for failing to make a 'concerted attempt to inform the public' about the effects of the libel laws 'and enlisting their support to oblige our politicians to live, if not in the current decade, at least in this century' – which is now the next century. The tribunal revelations continue to stir public indignation about the secret scandals engaged in by some of our libel-law-protected politicians. What better time for the media to campaign for the reform of the libel laws – accompanied by a plan to establish either a press ombudsperson or a press council?

### Peter Mason and Derrick Smith *Magazine Law: A Practical Guide*

Eavan Murphy

One of the chapters in this book consists of tips for those training journalists, who ideally should be 'qualified lawyers who specialise in media matters and are experienced journalists'. The authors – a barrister who specialises in copyright and publishing law, and a freelance journalist who is a media law specialist – may have been describing themselves, but their experience shows in this clear, useful guide to magazine law.

The book is split into a large number of short chapters, with punchy titles and subheadings like 'Of course it's true but can we prove it' and 'In the public interest or just interesting to the public?'. The journalism experience of the authors is obvious, because unlike many legal texts, this book is easy to read and understand. It is designed for a non-legal readership, and contains a handy glossary of legal terms such as coroner, in camera, and injunction (although I've never come across the term 'law-laws', apparently an umbrella term for all laws and also slang for the police).

Six chapters – almost half the text – are given over to consideration of defamation. Each chapter ends with a useful checklist of the key issues to be checked before publication of an article. The authors recommend replacing the traditional test of 'if in doubt, leave it out' with 'if in doubt, find out'. As an English text book, the focus is on the recent Defamation Act 1996, which Irish journalists working under the Defamation Act 1961 can only look at enviously. There is good consideration of possible libel through publication of reader's letters, mis-captioning photographs and critical restaurant reviews and other less obvious issues in defamation.

*Magazine Law* does not deal with defamation in online publishing, which is an area of increasing litigation as many periodicals go online, (as well as creating increased difficulties with copyright). The recent unsuccessful libel case taken by Texan beef producers against Oprah Winfrey for allegedly libelling beef in a television programme dealing with mad cow disease, is not included, presumably because it came too late for publication. It would have made a graphic and entertaining example, which are the types of cases Mason and Smith focus on. For example, a number of references are made to a 1959 action by Liberace against the *Daily Mail* when he successfully sued them for defamation for suggesting that he was a homosexual, but the case seems to be included mainly for its supposed entertainment value of repeating the description of Liberace as, among other things, a 'quivering, giggling, fruit-flavoured, mincing, ice
covered heap of mother love'. By contrast, the chapter on privacy makes no mention of such ethical issues as reporting of sexual orientation. Indeed the privacy chapter is somewhat misleading when it deals with 'other remedies' available instead of complaints to the Press Complaints Commission. It is not clear that these are remedies which may be available, rather than alternatives. This is important because most complaints of invasion of privacy by the press occur where there is no other legal protection, highlighting the lack of a law on privacy. This lack is not apparent from this book.

The chapter on copyright provides some interesting points of comparison with the new Irish Copyright and Related Rights Bill 1999. A number of the new features of the Irish bill are already part of English law, e.g. moral rights such as the paternity and integrity rights. It is interesting to see English practitioners' views of their operation; 'the practical day to day implications of the introduction of moral rights into magazine journalism were horrendous'. An issue as important as copyright could really have done with greater detail, whereas something like contempt of court which is far less important for most magazines is given equal weighting.

The issue of journalists' confidentiality is also dealt with too briefly. The ground-breaking Goodwin case, where the European Court of Human Rights protected the confidentiality of journalists' sources is barely explained, it is simply one of a number of examples. This use of case law as illustration is somewhat unsatisfactory. In keeping with the tone of the book, the examples are brief and more anecdotal than instructive. There are no full references or years of the cases given for the reader who wishes to look at one in more detail, and the reader could easily get the impression that the cases are simply the result of the law, rather than actually creating the law in many cases.

Overall however, this is exactly what the title promises – a 'practical guide' to magazine law. It would be very useful desk top reference book, if used with the proviso that English and Irish law are similar but not identical.