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'Knowing what it means to be Irish': Cultural identity and the production of Irish advertising.

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A dissertation submitted to the Department of Sociology at Trinity College, the University of Dublin, in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy.

April 2008

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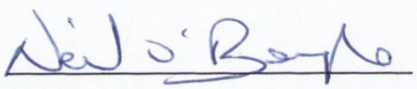

Neil O'Boyle

25/03/08

Summary

'Knowing what it means to be Irish': Cultural identity and the production of Irish advertising.

While advertising has long fascinated researchers in the social sciences, the majority of studies undertaken in this field have focused on consumer receptivity and interpretation, while generally ignoring the production of these commercial texts. This work follows a recent shift towards examining the social processes, occupational cultures and work-based identities of practitioners in the 'culture industries'. This dissertation draws a sample from among the winners of the 'Irish Television Series' category of the Irish creative advertising awards, or 'Shark Awards', between 1995 and 2005 i.e. during the period of the 'Celtic Tiger'. From this ten-year sample, I construct three case studies detailing the production of four award-winning advertising campaigns (two for Heineken, one for Today FM and one for Smithwick's ale). In undertaking what I refer to as 'constructivist grounded research' (a derivative of 'grounded theory'), this research employs a variety of qualitative data collection methods of which in-depth, topic-orientated interviews are foremost. When analysing the discourse of respondents, I follow Neuman's (2003) method of 'first', 'second' and 'third-order' interpretation of empirical data. In constructing case studies, I explore structural and power dynamics and investigate the creative strategies adopted by the Irish advertising agencies examined and the cultural assumptions and motivations underlying these strategies. Moving beyond this, I explore how the idiom of cultural identity functions to legitimate and exoticise the knowledge claims of these workers. In Chapters 6 and 7 of the dissertation, I move to consider how respondents draw upon and articulate a vocabulary of cultural identity and highlight the particular importance of notions of 'intuition' and 'authenticity'. In the final chapter, I advance three explanations for the salience of cultural identity in the promotional discourse of regional advertising industries such as Ireland. Firstly, I suggest that this can be explained structurally, positing that changes in the worldwide advertising industry and concomitant changes in the Irish industry have motivated Irish advertising practitioners to prioritise cultural identity in the expert knowledge they offer to global clients and their networked partners. Secondly, I suggest that the idiom of identity permits 'emotional instrumentality' or the realisation of instrumental goals (and the continued categorisation of consumers) in softer terms. In this respect, I suggest that

the concept of identity has served a similar function for both advertising workers and social scientists; identity has provided academics with a means of bringing emotion into social theory while it has enabled advertising producers to cultivate emotional proximity to consumers. Thirdly, I advance a culturalist explanation which suggests that cultural identity is essentially 'national character' reconfigured and that the salience of cultural identity documented in this dissertation can be interpreted as a resurgence of national culture. In light of the data presented and analysed, I argue that the first and second explanations are most compelling because the cultural perspectives of advertising workers cannot be meaningfully divorced from occupational imperatives. As such, I conclude that cultural identity constitutes a valuable form of marketable knowledge that is fundamental to the autonomy of Irish advertising agencies. In contrast to Sean Nixon's (2003) insightful description of London-based advertising workers as 'purveyors of creativity', in this dissertation I argue that Irish advertising practitioners can be considered 'brokers of identity' (Finlay 2000: 35).

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I wish to express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Andrew Finlay for his many insightful comments and his cogent criticism of my work. Likewise, I wish to thank the various people who have read and reviewed chapters of this dissertation, including Sean Dunne, Elaine Moriarty and Adam Drazin.

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I wish to express my gratitude to my colleagues in the Department of Sociology, Trinity College, to Fiona and Anne for their continual assistance, and to my postgraduate friends with whom I share an office (listed alphabetically to avoid accusations of favouritism!): Brid, David, Jean, Jonathan, Maja, Matt, Sean and Suzanne.

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Table of Contents

Declaration----------ii

Summary---------- iii

Acknowledgements----------v

Chapter

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction----------1

1.2 Advertising, Identity and the Cultural Turn----------2

1.3 The Celtic Tiger and the Reconfiguration of Irishness----------9

1.4 The Irish Advertising Industry----------14

1.5 Investigating Cultural Identity in Irish Advertising Production------19

1.6 Conclusion----------23

2. Methodology

2.1 Introduction----------25

2.2 Background and Research Interests----------25

2.3 Constructivist Grounded Research----------28

2.4 Sampling Strategy----------32

2.4.1 The Television Series Category----------35

2.4.2 Research Sample----------37

2.4.3 Shark Awards 'Irish Television Series' Winners 1995-2005------38

2.5 Research Strategy----------42
2.5.1 Case Studies----------43
2.5.2 In-depth, Topic-orientated Interviewing----------45
2.5.3 Textual Analysis: 'Unearthing the Creative Brief'----------47
2.5.4 Support Materials----------49
2.6 The Shark Awards----------51
2.7 Conclusion----------59

3. Heineken Case Study

3.1 Introduction----------62
3.2 McCann-Erickson----------63
3.3 Background to Heineken Campaigns----------70
3.4 Heineken Cuba and China----------74
3.4.1 Textual Analysis----------74
3.4.2 Analysis of Interviews and Support Materials----------77
3.5 Heineken Green Energy----------93
3.5.1 Textual Analysis----------93
3.5.2 Analysis of Interviews and Support Materials----------97
3.6 Conclusion----------107

4. Today FM Case Study

4.1 Introduction----------112
4.2 Cawley Nea/TBWA----------112
4.3 Background to Today FM Campaign----------122
4.4 Today FM Series----------125
4.4.1 Textual Analysis----------125

4.4.2 Analysis of Interviews and Support Materials----------129
4.5 Conclusion----------140

5. Smithwick's Case Study

5.1 Introduction----------147
5.2 McConnell's----------148
5.3 Background to 'Locals' Campaign----------153
5.4 The Smithwick's Series----------155
5.4.1 Textual Analysis----------156
5.4.2 Analysis of Interviews and Support Materials----------159
5.5 Conclusion----------179

6. Second-Order Analysis Part 1

6.1 Introduction----------181
6.2 Achieving 'Fit' and Producing from Experience----------182
6.3 Creative Brief Elements----------187
6.4 Identity Assumptions----------190
6.5 Assumptions about Irishness----------194
6.6 Authenticity and Intuition----------203
6.7 Conclusion----------210

7. Second-Order Analysis Part 2

7.1 Introduction----------212
7.2 Advertising, Academia and the Idiom of Identity----------213

7.3 Relating the Discourse and Texts of Producers to Wider Discourses of Irish Identity----------224
7.4 Conclusion----------242

8. Conclusion

8.1 Introduction----------245
8.2 Advertising, Irishness and the Celtic Tiger----------246
8.3 Grounded Research and First-order Interpretation of Case Studies-248
8.4 Second-order Interpretation of Case Studies----------250
8.5 Third-order Interpretation: Explaining the Salience of Cultural Identity----------252
8.6 Weighing Alternatives----------264
8.7 Conclusion----------268

References----------272

Appendices

Appendix 1: Respondent Profiles----------300
Appendix 2: Elements of the Creative Brief----------303
Appendix 3: Conceptualising Creativity in Advertising----------304
Appendix 4: Advertising Images----------322

Tables and Figures

Table 1.1: Media Expenditure Ireland Jan-Dec 2006----------15
Figure 1.1: Model of Heineken Brand Communication----------111

"Writing is not all therapeutic, at least if you do it in a way that I do. It's a painful, laborious life-consuming project. Not to be recommended"

(John Banville, interview with *The Big Issue* 2006).

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Advertising has long been regarded a potent socio-symbolic force that endows consumer goods with symbolic meaning (Elliott 1999; Elliott and Ritson 1997; Leiss et al 1990). According to Williamson (1978: 11), 'advertisements are one of the most important cultural factors moulding and reflecting our life today'. Academic interest in advertising, however, has tended to focus more on its purported effects rather than its production. In short, it would seem that researchers have largely been content to study the *ends* without exploring the *means.* Referring to the British industry, Nixon (2003: 4), for example, highlights that 'little remains known about the social make-up of the advertising industry in Britain, its informal cultures or the subjective identities of its key practitioners'. This work attempts to redress this imbalance in an Irish context and explores the manner in which people, processes and culture conspire to produce advertising texts. As such, this research is concerned with 'practitioners' of advertising. Here, 'practitioner' refers to people working in the Irish advertising industry who are in some way responsible for the *content* of advertisements[1]. This primarily refers to those working in advertising agencies, however, I also include the views of several marketing managers (or 'clients' of advertising agencies) as well as occasional comments from members of the Board of Directors of the Irish creative advertising awards, known as the 'Sharks', from which I draw my sample (see below). Lien (1997: 51) highlights that an advertising agency is usually organised according to a basic internal division between the creative (copywriters and art directors) and the consultant (account managers, directors and planners) departments. Among Irish practitioners, these are generally referred to as the "creatives" and the "suits". In this dissertation, I acknowledge the delineation of roles as well as the ideological tension, alluded to by Lien and others (e.g. Schudson 1993; Myers 1986) between the creative and executive spheres in advertising agencies. Nevertheless, my

[1] 'Many of the services once performed within the advertising agency are now purchased from outside, third-party companies. Photography, typography, print and television production, artwork and illustration would be the prime examples of this phenomenon' (Fox and Abdullah 1995: 99).

interest lies in the articulation and deployment of cultural identity as it transcends occupational divisions. While Ireland appears to be in the midst of a period of profound social and cultural transformation, the Irish advertising industry remains broadly monocultural (O'Boyle 2006a).

In choosing to focus on practitioners of advertising, this work is influenced by recent ethnographic and micro studies of production in advertising and marketing (Alvesson 1994; Cronin 2004a; Kelly et al 2005; Lien 1997; McFall 2002; Miller 1997; Moeran 1996a; Nixon 2003; Schudson 1993; Slater 1989; Tunstall 1964). In addition, two other literatures are given particular attention in this dissertation. Firstly, I attempt to locate the present work within a precisely defined spatio-temporal context (i.e. 'Celtic Tiger' Ireland) and as such, this dissertation draws upon critical studies of Ireland and Irishness in the current conjuncture. Secondly, as I elaborate upon below, this work is primarily concerned with the ambiguous and contested concept of 'identity' or specifically, how the idiom of cultural identity functions as a 'commercial currency' (Cronin 2004a, 2004b, 2004c) informing and legitimating the expert knowledge claims of Irish advertising practitioners. Hence, sociological works about identity are also drawn upon in analysing the discourse of respondents. These three literatures, however, are neither neatly demarcated nor drawn upon here in a linear or deductive fashion. Indeed, my intention is precisely the opposite of deductive theorising; it is from the words of respondents and the texts that they have produced that my analysis derives. As such, while various works are cited throughout this dissertation, my priority lies at all times with the empirical data generated. Often in academic writing one is compelled to neatly summarise what was for the most part, intense writing, continuous reflexive discovery and serendipitous insight. Mindful of this, I have been careful to convey a sense of the 'discovered' and 'emergent' in writing this dissertation.

1.2 Advertising, Identity and the Cultural Turn

The phrase 'knowing what it means to be Irish' in the title of this dissertation derives from a television commercial for MasterCard as part of its 'Priceless' campaign. The narrative subject of this work is the indefinable, visceral sense of 'being Irish' and the

commercial depicts what we are compelled to believe is a 'genuine' Irishman as he strolls through Dublin encountering cliques of tourists. In contrasting 'authentic' Irishness with its ersatz reflection in tourism, the advert strives to identify with genuine Irish experience, however, elsewhere I have suggested that this work essentialises Irish identity and despite its celebratory intent, offers a particularly sterile and insular vision of Irishness (O'Boyle 2006a: 109). My reason for returning to this commercial here, however, is not to compound this analysis but rather to draw from the powerful discourse of authenticity this work espouses[2]. As I suggest throughout this dissertation, authenticity and intuition play an especially important role for producers of commercial[3] Irish advertising and it is via these notions that cultural identity is chiefly articulated.

Given that 'modern advertising concentrates at those points where the individual and society meet' (Corrigan 1997: 67), it is perhaps little wonder that advertising has long been a subject of considerable social and academic interest. Advertising is colourful, topical and often brilliantly creative; yet it is also commonly viewed as manipulative, mendacious and morally corrupting. Early critiques of mass culture and the 'culture industries' analysed the connection between television and consumption in the context of political economy and the Frankfurt School's more general critique of ideology, the media and the public sphere (Bernold and Ellmeier 1997: 191). In the standard account, commodities were wedged between people and traditional ties and in turn, the consumption of commodities was constructed by the culture industries as a means of reconnecting individuals and society (Goldman 1992). As the parameters of 'mass' society began to take shape, individualisation, urbanisation, dislocation, fragmentation and alienation emerged as central themes in critical accounts of modernisation (e.g. Park 1928). As Ewen (1989) and numerous others have described, modern advertising evolved from its earlier form as a system of newspaper brokerage to become a highly sophisticated image industry amidst the dislocatory processes of modernisation. 'The erosion of older cultures created a void in personal life. For all practical purposes

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[2] According to Amy Fuller (Vice President for Brand Building, MasterCard New York): "What's made 'Priceless' so successful is its authenticity about how we fit into people's lives" (Elliott 2004). Similarly, Joyce King Thomas (Executive Vice President and Executive Creative Director of the New York office of McCann-Erickson) remarked: "We're always looking for ways to make the campaign resonate better with consumers" (ibid).

[3] 'Commercial advertising' can be defined as 'advertising that involves commercial interests rather than advocating a social or political cause' (www.utexas.com).

there was an empty slate on which to write, and advertising seized the pen' (Leiss et al 1990: 53). For the 'culturally eviscerated individual', advertising offered the prospect of meaning and belonging. In doing so, advertising habituated people to the terms of the marketplace and performed a socialising function such that people were educated to *be* consumers (Ewen 1989: 84-89). It was during the post-war boom in the United States, however, that advertising found its true vocation (Sardar 2000). Once again, conceptions of 'mass' society and especially a belief in escalating 'homogenisation' were central to critiques of marketing and advertising.

> If Ford represented the triumph of mass production to his admirers, he represented the terror of uniformity and conformity to his critics. Moreover, the toll that mass production extracted from workers was matched to the loss from the uniformity of mass production. All too often, the price of decreasing costs associated with mass marketing was a frightening loss of the rich mosaic of American culture (Norris 1990: 168/9).

As Hall (1982) highlights, in the 1950s media researchers became obsessed with analysing the 'effects' of mass media. Views of communication at this time were highly simplistic and linear: 'The mass media were seen both as instruments in this evolution, and as symptomatic of its most troubling tendencies' (Hall 1982: 57). In particular, critics feared the erosion of grassroots communal structures and in an Adornian sense, the debasement of art in an era of mass production: 'In this world, mass culture spreads like a deadly ether suffocating folk culture and threatening to stifle the very integrity of art' (Strinati 1995: 9/10). In their abhorrence of commercialisation, early critics tended to conflate 'mass' and 'popular' culture. 'On this view, 'popular culture' is 'mass culture': mass produced, thoughtless, unsophisticated and hollow[4]. Modern society is in large part characterised by the *industrialisation of culture*' (Inglis 2005: 80, author's emphasis). As the foundation of commercial culture, America was held accountable for 'contaminating' the rest of the world (cf. Hoggart 1958; Leavis 1930). However, it was not merely the products but increasingly also the methods of the culture industries (especially market research and

[4] Cultural Studies has revealed, however, that not all perspectives of 'mass' or 'popular' culture are quite so dystopian. The work of Jackie Stacey (1994) and David Morley (1992), for example, has demonstrated how the mass media is not wholly disempowering but can sometimes help to expand the cultural horizons and enrich the lives of certain viewers.

audience testing) that troubled critics. As perhaps the most famous of these, Vance Packard's *Hidden Persuaders* (1957) was a bitter invective directed towards advertising's 'techniques of persuasion' and powers of psycho-seduction[5]. While critics of this kind were quickly dismissed as scaremongers, it was undoubtedly the case that the advertising industry was becoming increasingly adept at capturing consumer attention. If in the early twentieth century advertising championed rationality and objectivity and implied a predominantly pragmatic relationship between persons and objects, this mode of representation was gradually and systematically replaced by one in which products became "reanimised", transporting them from the rational-physical universe of things to the world of human social interaction (Leiss et al 1990). Furthermore, responding to the conditions of uncertainty that pervaded (and continues to pervade) their work[6], practitioners promoted their industry as both aesthetic and scientific, leading Bernstein (1991: 17) to describe advertising as a 'bastard art in the middle of an inexact science'. As I highlight in Chapter 7, the advertising industry has long borrowed from, and at times contributed to, the theories and methods of the social sciences and related disciplines (such as cognitive and social psychology). So much so, in fact, that advertising is commonly described as a career based on practical psychology (Hackley 2005: 222).

The emergence of 'critical' media studies in the 1970s, Harms and Kellner (2000) note, directed academic studies of advertising towards the social and cultural effects of mass communications and their role in perpetuating an unjust social order. Classic studies such as Goffman's (1979) *Gender Advertisements* and Williamson's (1978) *Decoding Advertisements* were a product of this shift. In more recent times, researchers have increasingly framed their analysis in reference to the growth of an ideology of consumerism (Heath 2001), a more intense aestheticisation of the representations which accompany the circulation of consumer goods (Nixon 1996, 1997) and an expansion in the wider economy of signs and symbols (Baudrillard 1973; Goldman and Papson 1996; Lash and Urry 1994). As consumption has assumed a central position in most accounts of modernity and self-identity (Bauman 1995;

[5] This critical thread persists in recent 'mainstream critiques of consumer culture such as Klein (2000), Ritzer (2000), Schlosser (2002), and film documentaries such as "The Corporation" and "Supersize Me"' (Kelly et al 2005: 506).

[6] 'Advertising agencies are characterised by work which is difficult to specify and outputs which are difficult to evaluate' (Keegan 1997: 16).

Featherstone 1991; Giddens 1991; Mort 1996; Preston 2005), marketing and advertising as "the literature of consumption" (O'Donohoe 2000; Scott 1994) are viewed as increasingly important[7]. Leymore (1975: x), for example, has suggested that 'the more anxious, confused, uncertain, and bewildered modern society gets, the stronger will be the role played by advertising' (cited in Pollay 1986: 24). It is in relation to 'identity', however, that this role appears most acute. Kellner (2003: 9), for example, contends that media culture provides the materials out of which we forge our very identities while Thompson (1995: 210) insists that mediated symbolic materials are central to the construction of 'a narrative of self-identity'. 'As advertising becomes ever more influential in contemporary life one's sense of identity, aspiration and order is increasingly inconceivable other than within the terms of reference of consumption' (Hackley 2002: 220). Implicit in many accounts is a view of advertising as an agent of globalisation and a purveyor of "cultural imperialism" (Schiller 1976; Tomlinson 1991). Several commentators highlight, for example, what appear to be signs of transnational (Hannerz 1993) and transcultural (Nederveen Pieterse 1995) alignment. In a similar fashion, Robins (1997) describes a growing sense of a 'new world order' and the emergence of 'global tastes' attributed to the transnationalisation[8] of economic and cultural life. In accounting for this, Robbins ascribes considerable importance to the globalisation of media, to which he attributes a postmodernist, expansionist logic; 'media geographies are thus becoming detached from the symbolic spaces of national culture, and realigned on the basis of the more 'universal' principles of international consumer culture' (Robins 1997: 33). For many commentators, it is among youth culture that advertising's power to shape and mould identities is most pronounced. As I have elsewhere suggested (O'Boyle 2006b: 42), in youth culture advertising found a natural alliance; the apparent insecurities, aspirations and 'openness' associated with youth identities and lifestyles combined with a perceived need 'to belong' made young consumers disproportionately willing to invest economically and emotionally in advertising.

[7] Nixon (1997) highlights the privileging of marketing, 'which includes the practices of advertising, market research and design', in the work of Baudrillard (1988) and Wernick (1991), yet draws attention to McKendrick's *The Birth of A Consumer Society* (1982), which suggests that there is 'very little new about the centrality of marketing to the culture of mass consumption' (Nixon 1997: 182, 187).

[8] De Mooij favours the term 'internationalisation' and argues that 'the internationalisation of brands has been stimulated by the internationalisation of media' (1994: 211).

> In youth culture, consumption invested the whole life of the individual. This indicated that consumer goods could be given meanings that went far beyond their actual uses; that they could be made to signify a particular way of life or, as the term would become, 'lifestyle' (Arvidsson 2003: 118).

With an influx of mediated symbolic material and the breakdown of tradition, lifestyle has been drawn towards the very core of self-identity with 'choice' becoming the crucial element of 'high modernity' (Giddens 1991). Coulter (2003: 7) describes the putative 'biographical autonomy' of the present, wherein 'social actors are increasingly willing and able to assemble their own biographies out of the manifold resources of everyday life'[9]. In tandem with the growing popularity of these ideas, many researchers of advertising have moved away from earlier preoccupations with individual texts and have turned their attention to the more holistic and multidimensional concept of 'brands'[10], which are viewed as intimately entangled with culture and identities (Klein 2000: 335). In economically advanced societies, Holt (2002), for example, suggests that brands function as a 'cultural resource'. Despite this widespread interest in consumer culture and branding, however, it is surprising how little empirical research has been undertaken in the culture/knowledge industries. Fortunately, with the 'cultural turn' in the social sciences, there has been a renewed interest in the production of meaning at work (du Gay and Pryke 2002: 1). Several researchers have stressed the interdependence of cultural and economic practices, moving away from purely semiotic approaches to advertising. Slater, for example, scathingly comments:

> Over the course of the twentieth century, advertising was treated as a psychological technology, as a semiotic process, as communications media, as modernist art, as ideology or as production of sign values – as absolutely any

---

[9] Campbell (1983: 289) notes that ironically, it was the Romantic view of the individual as an autonomous being that inadvertently provided powerful cultural support for the principle of consumer sovereignty.

[10] 'An interesting new line of criticism is now beginning to emerge: a critique of the 'brand' – of which advertising is but one facet – and more importantly of the international corporate power which lurks behind it' (Klein 2000; Cook 1992: 214). Conceptions of brands are increasingly identitarian: 'Brands are part of ourselves and we are part of our brands' (Lannon and Cooper 1983: 205). Likewise, Sutherland and Sylvester (2000: 66) suggest that 'our choice of brands can become an expression of self-identity'.

cultural thing so as not to look at it as a common or garden business effort (2002: 61).

Research associated with 'cultural economy' (Ray and Sayer 1999; du Gay and Pryke 2002) and the 'production of culture perspective' (Coser 1978; Peterson and Anand 2004) have examined, among other things, organisational life and culture, Post-Fordism and the rise of 'knowledge intensive' companies[11]. Cultural practices, it would seem, have come to play a crucial role in the conduct of many different forms of economic life (du Gay 1997: 6) and the 'culture' and 'soft' knowledge intensive industries now represent some of the most important economic growth sectors in the modern world (Lash and Urry 1994: 108-9)[12]. Irrespective of its cause, therefore, it would appear that the basis of society has shifted from the social to the cultural (Baudrillard 1988) and that people are increasingly 'symbolically' dependent on the culture of consumption. According to Featherstone, 'the overproduction of signs and loss of referents [...] is therefore immanent within consumer culture. Hence within consumer culture the tendency is to push culture towards the centre of social life' (1991: 114).

Responding to this growing interest in 'culture' and as highlighted in the introduction to this chapter, in recent years a number of researchers have examined practitioners of marketing and advertising, often critically engaging with the concept of "cultural intermediary"[13] (Bourdieu [1984] 2000; Featherstone 1991). These researchers commonly situate their analyses within wider socio-cultural contexts. Anne Cronin (2004a), for example, has suggested that advertising is constituted via 'circuits of belief' that flow between practitioners, clients, regulators, consumers and academics and that these are eventually reincorporated into the 'repertoires of belief' of advertising practitioners. As such, Cronin (2004a: 54) argues that 'beliefs about

[11] 'In contrast to bureaucracies, knowledge intensive companies promote time flexibility, collaborative work environments, immediate human relations, autonomy and performance-related career progression' (Greco 2005: 45).

[12] This can be related to Mazzarella's (2003: 63) description of the 'marketisation' of public life and the 'imagification' of the market'.

[13] 'Both Bourdieu ([1984] 2000) and Featherstone (1991) frame the increasing importance of cultural intermediaries in terms of the rise of the new petite bourgeoisie and the parallel expansion in demand for expert knowledge to assist consumers in deciphering the increasingly complex cultural terrain' (Cronin 2004c: 351). The term 'cultural intermediary', however, has been extensively criticised. See S. Nixon and P. du Gay (eds.) (2002) 'Special Issue: Who Needs Cultural Intermediaries', *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 16 (4).

advertising 'substantialise' it and generate its social form'. In a slightly different vein, Marianne Lien (1997, 2004) has investigated how the processes of modernity, theorised in Giddens' account of 'high modernity' (1991) and Bauman's 'liquid modernity' (2000), among others, are enacted and experienced within the context of a Norwegian marketing department. Chief among Lien's observations is that marketing is biased towards future scenarios and change: 'Repeated references to novelties, news, the future and anticipated change serve to constitute what I will refer to as a *bias of temporality* in marketing discourse' (Lien 2004: 49, author's emphasis). Sean Nixon's exploration of London-based creative advertising practitioners in *Advertising Cultures* (2003), however, has perhaps had most bearing upon the present work. While this dissertation dedicates comparably little attention to gender and 'creativity'[14], Nixon's grounded analysis of practitioner identities and the cultural resources they draw upon has much in common with my interests here. In particular, Nixon's (2003: 162) insistence that creativity was valued and promoted by his respondents above all as a 'strategy of distinction' is comparable to the valorisation and deployment of cultural identity in this dissertation.

1.3 The Celtic Tiger and the Reconfiguration of Irishness

Taylor et al (1996: 2) highlight that 'advertising is clearly a cultural phenomenon, culturally inspired and created within the expectations of a culture'. As noted in the introduction, in addition to examining the production of selected Irish advertising

[14] Creativity is a subject of increasing interest to scholars. Creativity looms large in notions of 'enterprise' (Rose 1990; du Gay 1997) and is tied to the idea of 'choice' in reflexive modernisation (Beck et al 1994). Advertising, in particular, serves as an excellent site in which to explore commercial creativity or even 'cultural creativity' (Liep 2001) more generally. While Reid et al's (1998) suggestion that creativity is the most important aspect of advertising is debatable on various grounds, it is undoubtedly the case that creativity is important in the work of advertising agencies. Nixon (2003), for example, prioritises creativity in his examination of the subjectivities of London-based advertising practitioners, suggesting that 'the cult of creativity was bound up with their embrace of entrepreneurial and individualistic ways of working' (2003: 91). It is also possible, as Nixon and others have demonstrated, to link creativity and ageism in this field. 'We continue to associate youth and hip with creative. Age, it appears, has more to do with the logic of the advertising industry than aging itself' (Powell 2000: 212). As I have suggested elsewhere, professional notions of societal flux which help to anchor youth as a central aesthetic have in turn profound implications for advertising industry mythologies, perpetuating a bias of youth in occupational terms. As a consequence, it has become near axiomatic that advertising creatives should not merely strive to understand youth but ideally, should *be* young themselves (O'Boyle 2006b). While creativity features throughout this dissertation and has formed the basis of several conference papers (see Appendix 3), this work prioritises 'identity' as the central analytical and theoretical concept.

campaigns, this dissertation attempts to relate respondents' articulations of cultural identity to wider discourses of Irish identity circulating in the period of the Celtic Tiger. The term 'Celtic Tiger' was coined by US investment bankers Morgan Stanley in 1994 (Lentin and McVeigh 2006: 19). Despite Boucher's (2004) insistence that the Celtic Tiger ended circa 2001, the term is still widely used in media, academic and political discourses in Ireland (Kirby et al 2002). Although referring initially and somewhat narrowly to economic growth (associated with the Asian 'tiger economies'), the Celtic Tiger has become a 'master signifier for a very particular and essentially hegemonic reading of the nature of contemporary Irish society' (Coulter 2003: 4). In particular, Ireland's increasing globalisation[15] and precarious reliance on transnational corporate investment combined with the 'institution of neo-corporatist social relations' (ibid. 11), has divided commentators. On one hand, the government's abandonment of recessive economic policies and a largely ruralist canon (Kiberd 1996) combined with the breakdown of the Catholic Church's 'moral monopoly' (Inglis 1998) has left the Irish Republic an economically thriving and secular state of the European Community[16] (Kearney 2006). On the other hand, various commentators (Allen 2000, 2007; Kirby et al 2002; O'Hearn 2003; Lentin and McVeigh 2006) highlight Ireland's subservient integration into Anglo-American informational capitalism.

> Such a liberalised regime by definition requires the Republic of Ireland to follow the prescriptions of radical globalisation, including privatisation, liberalisation, wage-restraint, flexible labour and fiscal restraint. By adhering to such a regime, the south of Ireland was reckoned in 2001 to be the 'most globalised' country in the world (O'Hearn 2003: 52).

It is in relation to Ireland's increasingly 'globalised' culture that critiques of the media and advertising are commonly framed (a finding that is hardly peculiar to Ireland). As

[15] The CSGR Globalisation Index ranks Ireland as the second highest country in terms of overall globalisation and the highest in terms of economic globalisation (Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation 2005; Lentin and McVeigh 2006: 21).

[16] Daly (2003: 12) insists that 'rural Ireland, Catholicism, the traditional family structure, the language are all disappearing as symbols of Irishness'. While there are undoubtedly signs of widespread change in Irish society, I am inclined to disregard sweeping and fulsome claims of this sort as cultural continuity and resistance register as strongly as change in my analysis. Indeed, as I argue in Chapter 7, respondents' confident articulation of an ostensibly 'new' Irishness borrows much from previous essentialisms.

mentioned above, a considerable amount of work focusing on the cultural impacts of globalisation emphasise homogeneity, uniformity and standardisation (e.g. Twitchell 1996[17]). The consensus, albeit in simplified form, is that globalised culture not only traverses all lines of genre, nationality and taste but that it is producing a monolithic, worldwide order and an asymmetrical world media system characterised by cultural imperialism (Schiller 1976; Tomlinson 1991; Tovey and Share 2000). Reminiscent of some of the literature referred to above in which traditional organic society is held under siege by insidious global forces, O'Connell (2001: 181) renounces 'a new Irish psyche' deriving from 'rampant consumerism and individualism'. With prosperity has come a relaxation of social values and a frank materialism that worries the older generation still in the thrall of tradition (Zachary 1999: 131). Lee (1997: 12) similarly argues that international media carries with it a 'silent value system' that is pervasive and self-referential and usurping of traditional Irish values. Maírtín Mac an Ghaill likewise launches an invective on the 'New Times' in Southern Ireland, 'marked by economic boom, transnationalism, global tourism and a revisionist historiography with its attendant amnesia' (1999: 44). Despite such positions, however, other commentators insist that internationalism was always fundamental to the Irish experience and that Irishness has always been a 'globalised identity' (Fagan 2003; O'Toole 2000). Indeed, for many, it is the 'uncertainty' of Irish identity that offers the greatest hope for cultural redefinition in altered circumstances (Foster 2001; MacÉinrí 1994; O'Toole 1998). While such positions are undoubtedly praiseworthy, my analysis in this dissertation questions both the postulate of 'uncertainty' and the frequent conflation of 'change' and 'openness'. As de Paor (2004: 52) writes: 'A quick glance at the glossy supplements to our weekend newspapers suggests that alternative cuisine, music, and fashion are apparently acceptable while different religious practices and languages remain problematic'. Despite the celebratory air of the carnivalesque that increasingly pervades Irish public discourse, 'outsiders have always been perceived as profoundly problematic' (McVeigh 1992: 41). Thus, it appears that the salience of Irish national identity to Irish people has intensified with increasing in-migration (Moriarty 2005). Indeed, some commentators highlight that paradoxically, globalisation can inspire enhanced localisation or re-localisation

[17] 'From high culture to folk, from high brow to low, from Aeshetica to Vulgaria, commercial speech is not so much shouting down competing voices as enlisting them to sing the same tune. If ever there is to be a global village, it will be because the town crier works in advertising' (Twichell 1996: 43).

(Robins 1997: 28) and provoke counter-tendencies, such as a resurgence of nationalism (Smith 1995) and patterns of local resistance (see Hall 2001; Klein 2000). In Ireland, Gibbons (1996: 3) has likewise argued that it is often the country's integration 'into the new international order which activates some of the most conservative forces in Irish society'. Hence, it seems that globalisation is presented as both good and bad and both inevitable and resistible (Lentin and McVeigh 2006: 25). It is in light of these prevailing and sometimes contradictory perspectives that I analyse the views of Irish advertising practitioners (see especially Chapter 7). Rather than a single, unified position, my analysis finds celebratory neo-liberalism and revivalism alongside narratives of loss, and is perhaps therefore illustrative of Keohane and Kuhling's (2004) notion of 'collision culture', in which the traditional and the modern, the past and the present and the local and global collide, negotiate and intermingle in new configurations. Respondents ostensibly celebrate multiculturalism and display a kind of neo-liberal populism that champions diversity yet equally, they maintain essentialist notions of 'authentic' Irishness that has been 'updated' to include modern sensibilities.

As a result of the manifold changes in Irish society, I became interested in how the representation of Irishness was changing and how broader societal shifts were impacting the work of Irish advertising practitioners. Film has long been considered an important symbolic resource and disseminator of Irish identity (Gibbons 1996), along with literature, music, drama, festivities such as St. Patrick's Day etc. However, I suggest that since the latter half of the twentieth century (and perhaps even more so during the period of the Celtic Tiger), advertising has become increasingly important in Irish cultural life. Guinness (as the obvious example) is globally emblematic of Irishness[18], yet marketing texts more generally are increasingly important resources of cultural identity.

> In Ireland and outside of Ireland, 'Irish' marketing texts – in particular advertising for tourist products, alcohol and other stereotypically 'Irish' goods – have not only been defined by, but have also come to define 'Irishness' and Irish identities (Kelly-Holmes 2000: 24).

[18] 'It is hard to think of a beer which over two centuries has been held in such affection and has, to many around the world, come to symbolise a way of life' (Davies 1998: 5).

My interest in this dissertation, however, is not merely to undertake textual analyses of seminal Irish adverts (see Chapter 2) but more importantly, to examine how the content of these ads was decided upon i.e. how these ads were produced. This study can be considered timely because not only does it critically examine Irishness at a time when it appears increasingly ambiguous and contested but equally, this dissertation provides an empirically grounded investigation of Irish cultural producers working in the global-local nexus. Held et al (1999: 25) have described a kind of "diffused globalisation" in which individuals increasingly work in a transnational business environment utilising global communication channels while simultaneously maintaining culturally specific, private lives. As a consequence, individuals are increasingly exposed to decontextualised ways of thinking about self, politics and identity, which foster a more national *and* international mindset. Advertising practitioners, I suggest, are a paradigmatic case of this and are commonly viewed as working on the fault lines of cultural change. Nevertheless, as McFall (2004: 4) indicates, the casting of advertising 'in a transformative historical role' and marketing's preoccupation with change (Lien 2004) can overlook the extent to which these industries perpetuate hegemonic understandings and reproduce social systems. Indeed, as I highlight in this dissertation, the relatively stable cultural grammar in Irish advertising (despite the frequent construction of the industry as a site of cultural flux) may be in large part a consequence of the taken-for-granted assumptions of producers. Despite the compression of time and space and the prioritising of 'movement' in popular social theory, Tomlinson (1999: 29) insists 'that a huge proportion of cultural experience is still for the majority the day-to-day experience of physical location, rather than of constant movement'. In the present 'global times', it can be argued that 'country of origin does not matter. Location of headquarters does not matter. The products for which you are responsible and the company you serve has been denationalised' (Ohmae 1990: 94, 96). While companies may be increasingly 'denationalised' as Ohmae puts it, and this is certainly the norm in advertising, I suggest that the expert knowledge of regional producers has if anything, become *more* nationalised.

1.4 The Irish Advertising Industry

The Irish advertising industry is comparatively small by international standards. At present, the Institute of Advertising Practitioners in Ireland (IAPI) lists forty-eight corporate member agencies, which are classified as either 'full service' advertising agencies or 'media specialists'[19]. These are further divided into agencies that have become part of a global communications group and those that have remained 'independent'. While Bagnall and Langan (2007: 36) insist that 'independent agencies continue to thrive in the Irish market despite trends towards international consolidation', Neary (2006: 258) highlights that of the forty largest agencies in Ireland, 'some thirty-five are owned by larger advertising groups whose head office is in New York, Paris or London' (Neary 2006: 259). Furthermore, it should be highlighted that despite their so-called 'independent' status, independent agencies are increasingly called upon to contend with international industry developments and the growing presence of global brands and therefore are more entangled in wider shifts than this term might imply. Dunn et al (1990) advance a number of reasons for the growth in global advertising which include: 1. the rise of the multinational corporation; 2. the increase in global brands; 3. trade agreements between countries; 4. increased trade in goods and services; 5. worldwide improvement in living standards and; 6. innovations in communications and transportation. As a consequence, it would appear that the increasing internationalisation of the business is the biggest global change that Irish advertising faces (Fox and Abdullah 1995: 111). As outlined above, this dissertation examines the production of commercial Irish advertising during the period the 'Celtic Tiger'. This signifies a time of profound social and cultural transformation in Ireland yet equally, this period has witnessed the most sustained growth in Irish advertising[20]. In Celtic Tiger Ireland, the media landscape is considerably richer and more vibrant than it was in the past. 'Advertisers now have a choice of fourteen television stations, four terrestrial and ten external channels, with which to reach consumers, and that choice is set to grow' (Shaw 2006:

[19] 'In the past, agencies were 'full service', carrying out all the functions from creating ads to media buying [...] media buying is now seen as a separate function, and so there are media-buying specialists who have expertise in rolling out an advertisement campaign across the full range of media' (Neary 2006: 259). Like advertising agencies, media specialists can be sub-divided into those that remain independent and those that have become part of global groups.

[20] Total advertising expenditure in Ireland increased from €344 million in 1995 to €1,461 million in 2005 (Source: Advertising Statistics of Ireland/IAPI Scope, ZenithOptimedia. www.ppa.ie).

2). In addition, Irish editions of British newspapers have recently been introduced carrying advertising intended for the Irish market (e.g. *Sunday Times*) and it is further estimated that Irish advertisers are spending as much as €20 million on television channels such as UTV, Sky and Nickelodeon (Neary 2006: 259). In 2006, advertising spend in Ireland was €1.7 billion, which is categorised according to media type in Table 1.1 (below). Despite predictions that online advertising spend is due to grow significantly in the near future[21], it can be seen that at present, traditional media channels retain the bulk of advertising expenditure in the Irish market. According to O'Mahoney (2007), Irish advertising expenditure may top €2 billion by the end of 2007, following a very strong first half-year performance.

Table 1.1:

Profile of Media Expenditure in Ireland Jan - Dec 2006

Medium	**Expenditure 2006 Jan - Dec Euro (m)**	**Profile % 2005**	**Profile % 2005**
PRESS	1,101.9	64	64
TELEVISION	326.2	19	20
RADIO	124.1	7	7
OUTDOOR	133.8	8	8
CINEMA	10.3	1	1
INTERNET (from Sept)	13.5	1	0
TOTAL	1,709.8	100	100

Source: IAPI BASE/Adspend. www.medialive.ie

[21] According to very recent research conducted by the *Irish Marketing Journal* (June 2007), the future of Irish advertising will in large measure depend upon how well agencies equip themselves for the 'digital age'. This is supported by O'Mahoney (2007), who notes that the most explosive growth in Irish advertising in 2007 has come from the online sector, with internet spend up by seventy-seven per cent from the previous year. The future expertise of Irish agencies, it is assumed, will not merely reside in the conventional generation of 'ideas' but is also likely to demand a more creative approach to 'integrated marketing communications' (Schultz et al 1993), in which digital media is expected to play an increasingly important part.

Despite the fact that advertising has become an increasingly visible aspect of the Irish social landscape and this industry generates significant revenue, the Irish advertising industry remains small in comparison to Britain, where advertising expenditure exceeded £19 billion in 2006 (www.adassoc.org.uk). According to Lee (1997: 11/12), Ireland is 'one of the most peculiarly situated states in the entire media cosmos [...] our geographical, linguistic, cultural, and psychological location leaves us uniquely related to the most powerful media culture in the world'. Despite this, academic interest in media and advertising is of relatively recent vintage in Ireland. Above, I described some of the processes leading to the emergence of modern advertising, which according to Goldman (1992: 17) occurred in tandem with the transition from competitive to corporate capitalism. The emergence of Irish advertising, however, is rather more difficult to deduce and to date only one self-proclaimed 'history' of the Irish advertising industry has been written: Hugh Oram's *The Advertising Book: the History of Advertising in Ireland* (1986). Not only is this work more than two decades old but more significantly, it was written before Ireland's most successful economic period to date i.e. the 'Celtic Tiger'. Nevertheless, Oram's account is insightful and he skilfully weaves historical events and technological developments with the personal reminiscences of past practitioners. While Ireland was a deeply conservative nation for much of the last century, primarily as a consequence of close church-state ties (Inglis 1998), Oram highlights that the beginnings of a recognisable advertising 'industry' in Ireland was largely due to the influence of developments in the United States and Britain and the tendency of British advertisers to export campaigns to Ireland. Thus, in one sense, advertising provides an interesting counter to depictions of Ireland as an entirely insular state during its formative years. While captivating, Oram's account avoids any kind of in-depth analysis of socio-cultural climate or prevailing ideology. Nationalism is mentioned, for example, yet the influence of nationalism on Irish advertising is not explored. Hence, while Oram highlights that Sean Lynch – the founder of Lynch advertising – 'had a strong Republican background' (1986: 40), he fails to analyse the significance of this. Nevertheless, Oram's account of the origins of the Municipal Technical Institute in Dublin (which began teaching courses on advertising as early as 1930), the formation of the Irish Association of Advertising Agencies and the creation of the *Irish Press* in 1931, which was closely associated with Fianna Fáil, are all highly interesting. He indicates, for example, that 'many big advertisers were British and pro-Unionist; they were

willing to advertise in newspapers like the *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Times*, but not in the *Irish Press*' (ibid. 70). Indeed, Oram reveals the importance of personal and political connections in the establishment of Irish advertising agencies and highlights that politics was not always separate to agency life. 'Jimmy Gooch came to the creative side of O'Kennedy Brindley; described by former colleagues as an "out and out English loyalist" (ibid. 127). Oram's work is informative, yet it lacks critical and analytical depth. Another work, Derek Garvey's *A Century of Irish Ads* (2000), presents a selection of the favourite ads of Irish creative people produced throughout the last century. Like Oram, Garvey highlights that advertising in Ireland prior to World War I was almost entirely produced by English agencies for brands such as Bisto, Bovril and Pears' soaps. The book offers a kind of pictorial history of Irish ads from about 1900, however, like Oram's work, generally lacks any kind of rigorous analysis.

In addition to a general lack of historical sources, archival materials can be particularly difficult to come by for the researcher of Irish advertising[22]. McDonagh (2003: vii) highlights, however, that this is not peculiar to Ireland; 'unlike the well-documented histories of many other fields, much of advertising's past remains buried, reported only in rare contemporary press accounts and other primary sources'. This is compounded by the fact that advertising agencies are notoriously bad at maintaining historical records and given the relatively recent vintage of the professional industry in Ireland, most research bodies and institutes offer very little information on the period prior to Ireland's accession into Europe in the early 1970s. Nevertheless, unlike the social sciences, business studies scholars have generated considerable research on marketing and advertising in the Irish context. Marketing text books (e.g. Meenaghan and O'Sullivan's (1995) *Marketing Communications in Ireland*), journals (e.g. the *Irish Marketing Journal* and the *Irish Marketing Review*) and trade press (e.g. *Marketing Age*) have compensated where contributions from the social sciences have been noticeably lacking. While Bell argued in 1991 that media studies in Ireland 'remains in its infancy' (1991: 88), the launch of the *Irish Communications Review* in 1990, an increasing number of academic texts dedicated to media and culture in

[22] There are various archives available which include some advertising material, such as; the Guinness Ireland Group Archives, the RTE Archives, The National Irish Visual Arts Library and various collections in the National Library (e.g. the William O'Brien Collection).

Ireland, such as Luke Gibbon's *Transformations in Irish Culture* (1996), the recent broadening of Irish Studies to include a focus on media (cf. *New Voices in Irish Criticism* 2000) and recent initiatives dedicated to fostering inter-disciplinary media research (such as the launch of the Irish Media Research Network[23] in 2005) have improved the situation. Despite this, Irish advertising has received surprisingly little sociological attention and empirical research in this industry has been conducted by a mere handful of researchers (Keegan 1997; Kelly et al 2005). A search of university databases in Ireland suggests that the present work is the first PhD dissertation to examine Irish advertising producers from a sociological perspective. It is in this void therefore, that I am hopeful the present work will make a significant contribution.

While 'nationality is not primordial but constructed' (Calhoun 1994: 314), it is clear that media everywhere play a vital role in the project of nation building[24]. As Hall suggests, all national cultures are discourses which construct identities by producing meanings about 'the nation' with which we can identify; these are contained in the stories, images and memories which connect past and present (Hall 1999: 626). Nations and nationality, therefore, are not essential and pre-given, but imaginative and narrative constructions (cf. Anderson 1983; Bhabha 1990, 1994). In the context of Ireland, Kelly and Rolston (1995: 563) highlight that the Irish media have had to tread a fine line between seeking 'to represent the existing socio-cultural worlds' within Irish society and 'reproducing a particular version of cultural and national identity'. In the era of the Celtic Tiger, Irishness is regularly called into question, particularly against a backdrop of escalating immigration and fears that traditional Irish values are losing out to an ideology of rampant consumerism and individualism (e.g. Bogle 1997). It is within this interregnum that Irish advertising practitioners are called upon to negotiate a course.

> A central problem facing contemporary Irish culture is how to navigate between the images of past and future; how to avoid the petrifaction of tradition and the alienation of the hyper-new; how, in short, to obviate the

[23] I presented a conference paper entitled 'A Hollow Discourse of Coexistence: 'Strategic Multiculturalism' in Irish Advertising' at the IMRN Annual Conference June 16th 2006.

[24] In its formative years, the State 'foresaw broadcasting as promoting the spread of the national language and of the phonetic teaching of modern languages, the elementary principles of hygiene, of gardening, fruit-growing, bee-keeping, poultry-keeping and the like; and this it considered vastly more important than its use for entertainment, however desirable' (Gorham 1967: 14).

> extremes of either a reactionary Re-Evangelisation or a multi-national Los-Angelisation of society (Kearney 2006: xvii).

1.5 Investigating Cultural Identity in Irish Advertising Production

As highlighted above, this dissertation examines production in Irish advertising and focuses on practitioners in this field. I believe that a producer-orientated focus is useful because it helps us strike

> a more appropriate balance between the autonomy of the reader and authorial intention. It enables us to ask who, within the existing structure of the division of cultural labour, are the producers, what are they trying to achieve, and why do they think and act in the ways that they do (Garnham 2000: 86-7).

Garnham's position is useful because in choosing to focus on production, the importance of consumption is not discounted. Indeed, I argue that an adequate account of consumption necessitates some understanding of the motivations and practices of production[25]. In producing commercial texts, advertisers are constrained by the cultural milieu in which they operate and to which they must appeal. McCracken (1986: 74) suggests that advertising producers draw upon a plethora of cultural codes in a process of "meaning transfer". Clearly, as Hall (1980: 131) indicates, the 'degrees of symmetry' or 'understanding/misunderstanding' in the communicative exchange will depend on the degrees of symmetry/asymmetry between the positions of encoder-producer and decoder-receiver[26]. In light of this,

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[25] As Hall suggests, production is inseparable from consumption because the production process 'is framed throughout by meanings and ideas: knowledge-in-use concerning the routines of production, historically defined technical skills, professional ideologies, institutional knowledge, definitions and assumptions, assumptions about the audience and so on' (Hall 1980: 129). Nevertheless, I would also stress that the products of the culture industries do not pass smoothly into the belief repertoires and value systems of people but that this process is more accurately considered a dialectic of symbolic resistance and appropriation (Peterson and Anand 2004). Overall, it seems 'likely that creators of ads, quite as much as novelists, lawyers, newscasters or scientists, adopt a voice which is suitable to the discourse of their profession, and that receivers also, once they have identified the genre, adopt a particular stance, or stances, of interpretation. Both writers and readers play roles' (Cook 1992: 201).

[26] As I suggest in the following chapters, socio-cultural 'fit' assumes great importance in advertising; 'advertising thus does not work by creating values and attitudes out of nothing but by drawing upon and rechanneling concerns that the target audience (and the culture) already shares' (Jhally 2003: 251).

Scott (1994) argues that "ads are crafted by people who share a social milieu with the audience, and thus reflect collective cultural knowledge and imply the probability of response" (cited in Hackley 2002: 216). This fact, I suggest, compels us to consider the ways in which producers' understandings of identity draw from wider discourses. Hence, in Chapters 6 and 7 of this dissertation, I attempt to 'excavate the social assumptions' (Goldman 1992: 2) of Irish advertising practitioners and explore the relationships between the discourse of producers and wider discourses of identity. Paraphrasing Negus (2002: 118), I examine how broader identity assumptions are inscribed *into* and become an integral part of business practices. In light of these research interests, I began with the following broad questions in mind:

- Do Irish advertising agencies construct themselves (and their work) in the same general ways?
- Are issues of identity as important in the production of advertising as they putatively are in its consumption?
- To what extent are the cultural resources of producers drawn upon in their work?

The above questions crystallise in a single overarching question: To what extent do Irish advertising practitioners (and the adverts they have produced) draw upon and articulate a vocabulary of cultural identity? The case studies presented in Chapters 3-5 and the analysis in Chapters 6 and 7 are primarily concerned with addressing this and the above questions. With exponential growth in global branding and increasing consolidation in the advertising industry worldwide, questions of autonomy and power have become especially important for regional advertising agencies. As Malefyt (2003: 140), drawing on Goffman (1959), puts it: 'Agencies must seek [...] an advantage of position from which they can assess or define the situation and react accordingly'. In the Irish context, I suggest that a privileged understanding of cultural identity increasingly fulfils this need. However, as the above sections indicate, this is not a simple affair. Along with other sociologists, I have noticed the strange conjunction of globalisation and a resurgence of cultural identity in the current period. I wanted to explore this conjunction and how it operates in a particular area of the

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Likewise, Cook (1992: 180) claims that 'through ellipsis and assumptions of shared knowledge, ads create an atmosphere of intimacy and informality'.

culture industry in which I also happened to have work experience (see Chapter 2). In the case studies presented, respondents assume a pragmatic though ambivalent attitude towards globalisation; it emerges as a significant yet problematic and contentious process, both praised and derided in equal measure. While globalisation is frequently conceived as an insidious homogenising force, this research finds support for Fagan's (2003: 114) assertion that Irish 'cultural' products are increasingly produced with a global audience in mind. Hence, it should be borne in mind that those criticising putative homogenisation and Americanisation frequently ignore the ways in which global neo-liberalism *panders* to and helps *construct* national identities (cf. Kirby et al 2002), a position that can be related to the 'globalisation of nationalism' described by Smith (1991: 143)[27]. In all case studies an attempted reconciliation of competing forces and identifications emerges as significant, typically framed as a conjoining of the local and global or what Robertson (1992) describes as 'glocalisation'. In the Smithwick's 'locals' campaign discussed in Chapter 5, for example, respondents at McConnell's (an Irish-owned advertising agency) convey an impression of two Irelands colliding and negotiating, suggesting that Irishness is unfinished and emergent. Awarded in 1997, this series is useful in tracing evolving conceptions of Irishness throughout much of the Celtic Tiger period and highlights that globalisation is not merely a centre-periphery issue but that it also has an urban-rural dimension, which respondents at McConnell's feel is especially important in Ireland. However, like the Heineken and Today FM campaigns examined in Chapters 3 and 4, the Smithwick's case study also offers support for what I describe as 'going forward while looking backward', in the sense that the cultural vocabularies of respondents continue to reveal assumptions about Irishness that derive from considerably older discourses, in particular those originating with the Celtic or Gaelic Revival of the late nineteenth century. Hence, in framing this research in terms of the conjunction of globalisation and a resurgence of cultural identity, the case studies presented in Chapters 3-5 demonstrate the management and reconciliation of putatively incompatible forces, processes and ideologies through commercial imperative: revivalism is enjoined with revisionism becoming a kind of "revivalist modernism" (Kearney 2006: xv), while versions of the local are increasingly

[27] The case of Celtic Tiger Ireland can be compared to what Miller (1982: 209-11) calls 'reverse' Orientalism in Japan, describing what he considers an *in*ternal form of Orientalisation conducted by Japan on itself (Moeran 1996b: 109).

amenable to global purposes (Holton 2005: 124). Importantly, the case studies presented further highlight that identities are processual and constructed inside, rather than outside of discourse and difference (cf. Hall 1996).

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I present a 'third-order' interpretation (Neuman 2003) of empirical data, which attempts to explain the salience of cultural identity in the discourse of respondents. Hence, moving beyond questions of how respondents articulate a vocabulary of cultural identity and the form that this assumes, the concluding chapter of this dissertation examines *why* cultural identity has become fundamental to the expert standing of Irish advertising practitioners. In attempting to answer this question, I advance three broad and interrelated explanations. Firstly, I suggest that the salience of cultural identity can be explained structurally, positing that changes in the worldwide advertising industry and concomitant changes in the Irish industry have motivated Irish practitioners to prioritise cultural identity in the expert knowledge they offer to global clients and networked partners. This is increasingly expressed as an intuitive, visceral understanding of Irishness, which mystifies and exoticises cultural identity and renders the knowledge of these workers highly specialist and valuable. Secondly, I advance an explanation that views the communicational and emotional potency of identity as a more effective means of realising the instrumental goals of agencies. While social categorisation remains central to the practices of advertising (and other culture industries), the idiom of identity offers a means of continued categorisation in softer terms. As such, I suggest that the concept of identity has served a similar function for both advertising workers and social scientists; identity has provided academics a means of bringing emotion into social theory while it has enabled advertising producers to cultivate emotional proximity to consumers. Thirdly, I offer a culturalist explanation, suggesting that cultural identity can be interpreted as the semantic offspring of 'national character' and that its increasing importance signifies something of a 'neo-revivalism' (Mathews 2005) in the Irish context. This suggests that the salience of cultural identity is less a consequence of exogenous pressures or instrumental interests and rather signals a resurgence of national culture, implying that some notion of cultural 'authenticity' may be embedded in the 'practical consciousness' (Giddens 1984) of Irish advertising practitioners. In light of the data presented and analysed, I argue that the first and second explanations are most compelling as the cultural perspectives of these workers

cannot be divorced from occupational imperatives. As such, I suggest that the centrality of cultural identity cannot be interpreted as mere revivalism or *Bildung* (cultural self-realisation) as this entirely overlooks how it is instrumentally and strategically employed in this field. Cultural identity therefore has a real *economic value* in advertising. Hence, against (or perhaps in tandem with) the assertion that nationalistic resurgence is testament to the enduring importance of national memory (Smith 1995: 24), my analysis highlights that cultural identity constitutes a lucrative form of marketable knowledge that has become central to the expert knowledge and autonomy of Irish advertising agencies. Nixon (2003) has described his London-based respondents as 'purveyors of creativity', however, in the conclusion of this dissertation I argue that in the Irish context, advertising practitioners are perhaps better conceived as 'brokers of identity' (Finlay 2000: 35).

In the following chapter, I outline my personal background and interest in this study, the difficulties I encountered in locating a sample and the innovative approach I eventually came to; drawing a sample from among the winners of the 'Irish Television Series' category of the 'Shark Awards' between c.1995 and 2005 i.e. during the period of the Celtic Tiger. From this ten-year period I construct three case studies detailing the production of four award-winning advertising campaigns. In analysing these campaigns, I establish a basis from which I build a more general theory in Chapters 6-8 of this dissertation.

1.6 Conclusion

Advertising practitioners are sociologically interesting, I suggest, because of their dual positioning within the privileged ranks of a burgeoning knowledge society and a transnational capitalist class (Sklair 1995) while simultaneously subject to historically specific local knowledge and idioms. For advertising 'communication to work there has to be a shared cultural vocabulary between the makers and consumers of advertising' (Hackley 2005: 232). Hence, it can be safely assumed that advertising campaigns will be effective if they resonate with lived practice (Goldman 1992: 23). Against exploring this consumerist proposition, this dissertation advances from the

reverse direction, examining 'producers' rather than consumers of advertising. Advertisements can indeed 'show individuals how to be 'Irish' or what 'Irishness' is' (Kelly-Holmes 2000: 19) but rather than conclude my analysis with texts, this dissertation employs a sample of seminal Irish advertising campaigns as a *point of departure*. How Irish advertising practitioners produce and create campaigns, how their assumptions about Irish identity inform their work and how the idiom of cultural identity functions to legitimate the expert knowledge claims of these workers, are the primary concerns of this research. This dissertation demonstrates that discursive practices are central to the production (and perpetuation) of social identities and highlights the 'interactive, discursively mediated processes through which collective solidarities and self-understandings develop' (Brubaker 2004: 43). As 'brokers of identity' (Finlay 2000: 35), Irish advertising practitioners are forced to negotiate a difficult course between emphasising particularity and accepting universality, espousing localism and embracing globalism. 'Mediated forms, globally available yet specifically Irish, are the prisms through which identities are constantly refracting' (Titley 2000: 254). Given the paucity of sociological research on Irish advertising generally (and production in particular), I argue that the current conjuncture offers a particularly fertile time in which to conduct research of this kind.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Introduction

As suggested in the Introduction, this dissertation explores the idiom of cultural identity in the production of commercial Irish advertising. In the sections that follow, I first outline my methodological orientation, elaborating on the distinctive variant of 'grounded theory' (Glaser and Strauss 1967) adopted in this research. I then move to discuss what is perhaps most important in this chapter; the sampling strategy. The reason I attach so much importance to the sampling strategy is because in beginning this research, as indicated in the Introduction, I faced a significant obstacle; both practically and strategically speaking, I was confronted with the problem of *defining* Irish advertising. As I explain below, sampling from the Irish creative advertising awards (or the 'Shark Awards' as they are called) not only helped to overcome this obstacle but is also in keeping with my desire to undertake respondent-led research. Following the discussion of sampling, I move to explain the recruitment of respondents and the various data collection methods employed in light of my research interests and methodological orientation. Finally, as my research sample derives from an Irish advertising awards show, I felt it important to briefly examine the origins and perceived significance of this event and therefore include interview excerpts with some members of the Board of Directors of the Shark Awards. I begin, however, with a short account of my background and research interests.

2.2 Background and Research Interests

My desire to investigate production in Irish advertising has been 'marked with a few false starts' (Ugba 2006: 15) and has taken me in various directions[28]. As a

[28] Initially, I was interested in conducting a work of historical sociology, which would trace the emergence of advertising in Ireland within the framework of state formation and socio-cultural transformation. Methodologically, this would have necessitated extensive archival research of Irish state and industry archives (which are very limited in relation to advertising) and international works (such as *The Advertising Age Encyclopaedia of Advertising* and *Harper's Weekly*).

practitioner of advertising, I became interested in the social and cultural dimensions of this industry[29]. As a researcher, I was interested in examining whether issues of identity are as important in the production of advertising as they putatively are in its consumption. Specifically, I was interested in how assumptions about cultural identity influence practitioners' decisions and how these assume material form in the texts produced. As the research developed, my analysis moved to consider the ways in which this privileged knowledge about Irish cultural identity functions to empower Irish advertising agencies (see Chapters 6-8).

In pursuing the above research interests, I considered it important that I locate myself in the work and that my tacit and experiential knowledge of day-to-day practices and industry vernacular inform my writing. As a past practitioner in advertising, I was confronted with the dilemma of being both insider and outsider; on one hand, possessing 'penetrating discernment' (Merton 1972) and privileged knowledge unavailable to the casual observer yet on the other hand, arguably more liable to overlook significant minutiae of practice and discourse through over-familiarity. Regardless of the topic and field, one must acknowledge the ineffable fact that a researcher approaches a subject with preconceptions, thoughts and ideas. While the approach advanced here is 'grounded' in the sense that theory derives mainly from the empirical data gathered, ''Theory' in the sense of formulating ideas which attempt to explain something, always comes before research' (Lentin 1995). Likewise, one must recognise that 'all knowledge ultimately reflects a set of norms and values about what is worth examining' (Thomas 1993: 21). Furthermore, it demands recognising that my status as a past practitioner in advertising may also have influenced respondents when conceding to be interviewed and arguably helped me to secure more interviews. Indeed, it is undeniable that this insider status impacted most if not all of the research process, from research design and data collection to interpretation and analysis. When contacting respondents, for example, I intentionally emailed first, followed by a phone call, doing so in the latter half of the working week (typically late on a Thursday or early Friday morning – see below). Likewise, the mechanics of interviewing and my

[29] I have worked as a media buyer in Mediaworks (a media specialist company affiliated with DDB international) and as a client services executive in TMP Worldwide (a full service recruitment advertising agency). I also worked for a time as a business developer in Viacom Outdoor (now CBS Outdoor), which was especially interesting because in this company advertising agencies were my 'clients'.

interpretation of respondents' answers were informed by a working knowledge of time schedules and roles, marketing ideology and discourse and both 'front' and 'back stage' (Goffman 1959) processes in this industry. Recognising rhetorical devices, being inquisitive yet agreeable, and suggesting alternative explanations with polite sincerity requires a great deal of conscious effort, yet it also presupposes an ability *to spot* discursive strategies. It is here, therefore, that experiential knowledge plays a crucial role. The 'trained eye' as it were, is nothing more than an acquired disposition informed by routine engagement and exposure to particular modes of talk and practice. While my analysis is unquestionably an interplay of 'positioned utterances' (Clifford and Marcus 1986: 12), I suspect that the framing of my initial correspondence with advertising practitioners (i.e. highlighting that I formerly worked in the industry) helped to create at least the *perception* of shared positionality. Hence, while the methodological approach outlined in the pages that follow demanded a certain suspension of theory, it is beyond question that ''theory' with a small 't' informed methodology, which informed Theory with a capital 'T'' (Lentin 1995).

It is important to reiterate, however, that the aim of this research is to analyse how *respondents* articulate (and utilise) cultural identity in relation to the adverts they have produced. While my experiential knowledge has undoubtedly shaped the research process, I have not prioritised my own understandings but have attempted to use these in achieving a high degree of "analytical reflexivity" (Finlay 1999). My research therefore brings acutely to light the complexity of being both 'insider' and 'outsider' to varying degrees.

> Every investigation is therefore situated between two extremes doubtless never completely attained: total overlap between investigator and respondent, where nothing can be said because, since nothing can be questioned, everything goes without saying; and total divergence, where understanding and trust would become impossible' (Bourdieu 1999: 612).

While I lay claim to working for a time in Irish advertising, it is important to highlight that the practitioners examined here are not part of my social set, that I have never worked in the three advertising agencies examined and that with the exception of Saibh Hooper of McConnell's, I did not personally know any of the people

interviewed prior to beginning the research. Thus, the term 'insider' is relevant in my research but in a highly circumscribed way. In attempting to overcome personal preferences and biases and to avoid 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu 1999), this research adopts an inductive and emic[30] perspective that seeks to elucidate meaning from the insider's point of view. In this work, as Schwartz and Jacobs (1979: 126) express it, I 'pursue understanding instead of prediction or control'. My intention from the outset has been to develop a flexible and malleable research approach that permits the generation of contextually relevant 'grounded' theory. Like Nochlin (1999: 10), I am inspired by Levi-Strauss's concept of "bricolage"; 'constructing your method as you go along to suit the needs of the material and the evolving argument and, in turn, examining the material in the light of the argument so constructed'. As I suggest below, this circuitous process of data generation, examination, comparison, analysis and re-examination is central to the 'grounded research' approach adopted here. Like Nochlin (1999), I believe that the methods employed must permit the researcher a degree of 'breathing space' or room to manoeuvre and that theory should emerge from the data accumulated. Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 1) quote Orwell, who famously wrote; "let the meaning choose the word, and not the other way about". I rather like this notion and if one were to substitute 'data' for 'meaning' and 'theory' for 'word', I think one will better appreciate the approach I am advocating.

2.3 Constructivist Grounded Research

> The net that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises may be termed a paradigm, or an interpretive framework, a "basic set of beliefs that guides action" (Guba 1990: 17).

All research is interpretive; 'it is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied' (Denzin and Lincoln 2003: 33). Denzin and Lincoln (2003: 35-6) offer a useful overview of four major interpretative paradigms: positivist and post-positivist, constructivist-interpretive, critical (Marxist,

[30] 'It is important to appreciate that emic and etic are not necessarily dichotomous but, as Pike (1967) puts it, they often represent the same data from two points of view' (Daymon and Holloway 2002: 137).

emancipatory) and feminist-post-structural. Although it is with extreme difficulty that one might attempt to demarcate *distinct* paradigms, I locate the present research within the constructivist-interpretive paradigm. The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (the co-creation of understandings) and a naturalistic set of methodological practices. As Denzin and Lincoln (2003) note, findings in this paradigm are commonly presented in terms of the criteria of 'grounded theory' (Glaser and Strauss 1967), which is selectively adopted in this research.

Janesick (2003: 76) describes a grounded theory as one that is 'inductively derived from the study. Data collection, analysis, and theory are related reciprocally'. The premise underlying this approach is that 'rich description' or conceptual density emanates from the data. Essentially, this process involves theory *construction* rather than theory *testing*. While the latter is largely deductive, the former is inductive and emergent. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) use the term 'analytic induction', which involves scanning data for themes or categories, developing a working scheme after examination of initial cases, then modifying and refining it on the basis of subsequent cases. In this way, the researcher seeks out links between analytical categories and explores emerging concepts and theories by seeing how they stand up to further data. Thus in grounded theory, 'analysis is interwoven with data collection, a process of finding, analysing and theorising' (Arksey and Knight 1999: 162). Nevertheless, it should be highlighted that grounded theorists do not form a uniform school and that this theoretical/methodological orientation[31] has been challenged both from within and without. The approach to grounded theory taken in this dissertation follows the Straussian line towards constructivist assumptions/epistemologies (Strauss 1987; Charmaz 1995; Locke 2001; Clarke 2005)[32]. A useful example of this is provided by

[31] Daymon and Holloway (2002: 117) highlight that grounded theory is 'both a set of research procedures and the emergent theory that develops from that research'.

[32] Various aspects of grounded theory have been subject to criticism, not least Strauss's contention (1987) that researchers should use all prior knowledge in generating theory. As perhaps the most ardent critic of 'constructivist' grounded theory, Barney Glaser insists that this approach 'forces and feeds interviewee responses' (2002: paragraph 10). While Glaser offers some thought-provoking criticism, I take issue with his apparent belief in theoretical purity untainted by researcher input and interpretation. As Becker's (1998) notion of 'imagery' implies, a researcher approaches a subject with various thoughts and questions in mind and these will influence both the research process and ongoing analysis. Glaser argues that constructivism 'is an effort to dignify the data and to avoid the work of confronting researcher bias' (2002: paragraph 11). In fact, I argue the opposite; that this theoretical approach is dignified *in recognition* of researcher bias. It is undeniably the case that 'the writer's

the constructivist grounded theory approach of Kathy Charmaz, which draws attention to the importance of *perception* rather than fact:

> A constructivist grounded theory distinguishes between the real and the true. The constructivist approach does not seek the truth – single, universal, and lasting. Still, it remains realist because it addresses human *realities* [...] the pragmatic underpinnings in symbolic interactionism emerge here. W.I. Thomas and Dorothy Swaine Thomas (1928: 572) proclaim, "If human beings define their situations as real, they are real in consequences" (Charmaz 2003: 272, author's emphasis).

While the above provides a useful counter to rigid objectivism, it must be acknowledged that inductive methods can tend to overemphasise the individual actor. Yet 'larger social forces' clearly act upon the actor; hence, 'the researcher needs to learn how these social forces affect the actor and what, if anything, the actor thinks, feels and does about them' (Charmaz 2003: 284)[33]. As such, in addition to the work of Charmaz, I was also drawn to a derivative of Straussian grounded theory known as 'situational analysis', advanced in Adele Clarke's seminal work *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory After the Postmodern Turn* (2005). Situational analysis moves beyond traditional grounded theory's concern with 'social processes' to a position close to Strauss's 'social worlds/arenas/negotiations' framework. Inspired by Foucault, Clarke's approach incorporates historical, narrative/textual and visual discourses into Strauss's framework using a series of cartographic approaches; situational maps, social worlds/arenas maps and positional maps[34]. 'Situational

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"voice" pervades and situates the analysis' (Clifford and Marcus 1986: 12) and therefore that interpretations are always partial. Likewise, it is difficult to deny that theory '*will* be present in research' (Cooper 2001: 1, author's emphasis). As Geertz (1973: 15) puts it; 'we begin with our own interpretations of what our informants are up to, or think they are up to, and then systematise those'. One strives for transparency, a sense of fairness and a commitment to reflexivity but at the last count, one's account is undeniably *one account*.

[33] Mindful of this potential shortcoming, I have remained attentive to the structural and situational conditions governing the practices and discourse of respondents and in the final chapter of this dissertation, I suggest that the salience of cultural identity is to a large extent attributable to these 'larger social forces'.

[34] Like Clarke's 'cartographic approach', I also compiled maps of processes, concepts (such as creativity) and social worlds (such as that of the Heineken consumer), although I did not methodically produce situational, social worlds/arenas and positional maps in each case. Furthermore, while this research dedicates considerable time to interpreting and analysing language and discourse, my interest does not 'concern the specific details of talk (of the kind on which conversation and discourse analysts

analysis allows researchers to draw together studies of discourse and agency, action and structure, image, text and context, history and the present moment – to analyse complex situations of inquiry broadly conceived' (Clarke 2005: xxii). As such, while traditional grounded theory (underpinned by symbolic interactionism) has been useful in exploring the campaign elements of a sample of award-winning Irish adverts (see below), my desire to relate the discourse of producers to wider discourses of identity led me to consider more recent constructivist approaches.

It is important to highlight, however, that the approach adopted in this study does not conform in the strict sense with *any* particular model in either traditional grounded theory or more recent constructivist variants, yet draws from across these. Grounded theory, as I refer to it here, suggests a manner of data collection and a commitment to theory construction through the ongoing analysis of empirical data. As such, it was via the coding[35], categorisation and analysis of data that the theory presented in the following chapters emerged. Nevertheless, I do not claim to have undertaken 'grounded theory' in its formal sense and my approach shows important deviations from more traditional approaches. In formal grounded theory, 'theoretical sampling' implies that both the sample *and* the theory/method is emergent. My work conforms to the latter but not the former as I was constrained by a fixed list of award winners (see below). Nevertheless, my investigation includes theoretical sensitivity and constant comparison as central tenets of grounded theory. Hence, in the words of Daymon and Holloway (2002: 128), my approach can be described as having 'employed a grounded theory *style*' rather than 'full-blown grounded theory' as it were. In moving from a grounded to a grounded/comparative line that acknowledges the various 'salient discourses within the situation of inquiry' (Clarke 2005: xxx), my approach might be better termed 'grounded research' (Whiteley 2002). This work does not contest the 'emerging' or 'provisional' nature of theory but merely widens

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focus') (Alvesson 1994: 542) but rather, lies in how respondents articulate and utilise a vocabulary of cultural identity.

[35] Generally, I transcribed all recorded material within hours of the interview encounter. While coding was initially line-by-line, in time it gravitated towards 'meaning condensation' (Lee 1999), a mode of analysis involving the identification of "natural meaning units". Similarly, I used 'sensitising concepts', which Charmaz (2003: 259) describes as 'background ideas that inform the overall research problem'. In this work, my approach closely followed that of Charmaz, i.e. coding, developing categories and finally generating 'concepts'. 'Our categories for synthesising and explaining data arise from our focused codes. In turn, our categories shape our developing analytic frameworks. Categories often subsume several codes' (ibid. 260). In this process, I frequently used subject's *in vivo* codes as well as my own sociologically constructed categories (Strauss 1987).

the analytical aperture to incorporate wider discourses that transcend and encircle the specific site of investigation. In doing so, my approach is more committed to grounded theor*ising* (Clarke 2005, author's emphasis) than substantive or formal grounded theory, although I do go some way towards generating the former.

2.4 Sampling Strategy

This dissertation examines Irish advertising during the period of the Celtic Tiger (c.1995-2005) – a period of unprecedented economic growth and a time in which Ireland has seemingly become one of the most 'globalised' countries in the world. As highlighted in the Introduction, while some commentators embrace Ireland's neo-liberal primacy, others lament the passing of 'simpler' times, scornful of frank materialism and rampant consumerism. Many, however, increasingly occupy a hazy middle ground where certainty and uncertainty are cast as inevitable bedfellows. Notions of collision, negotiation, intermingling, in-betweenness and other terms suggesting novel configurations of inherited ways and imagined futures are increasingly common in Irish social theory. While Irish advertising has in recent times taken on a more 'multicultural' appearance, this has been late coming and has hardly altered the cultural grammar of Irish advertising in general. In researching this dissertation, I became curious as to whether this 'continuity in the face of change' might be explained by recourse to the cultural assumptions and identities of Irish advertising practitioners. However, as stated earlier, in beginning this research a significant obstacle that I faced was *defining* Irish advertising. Given the Irish advertising industry's international influences and foundations, the global consolidation of agencies, media fragmentation and new media channels (such as Irish editions of British newspapers and the increasing tendency of Irish agencies to buy advertising space on international television stations), the exponential growth of global brands and associated advertising, among other factors, defining the 'Irish' in Irish advertising was rather a daunting task. In *The Importance of Being Branded* (2006), John Fanning makes a similar point in respect of Irish brands. In reflecting on the difficulties of defining an 'Irish brand', Fanning concedes that

> there should be an easy answer to this question but there isn't. The increasingly complicated ownership structure of modern business makes it very difficult to assign specific locations to different brands and the problem is compounded by the fact that the very large global corporations deliberately try to make their brands "country neutral" in the belief that this makes life simpler internally and is likely to be more profitable externally (Fanning 2006: 218).

Fanning highlights that examining country of origin (or location of production) and brand ownership does not solve this problem. Guinness, for example, is considered an Irish brand but is owned by Diageo – a British-based multinational.

> So if ownership or location doesn't determine the nationality of brands, what does? The answer to this conundrum probably lies in one of the key aspects of brand definition, one that many people have difficulty with – that because brands are collections of ideas, opinions and impressions in people's minds, it is people themselves who determine their nationality (ibid. 219).

Following Fanning's logic, it is to *people* that I defer, in this case the community of practitioners who collectively constitute the Irish advertising industry. In seeking to identify a sample of Irish advertising that coincided with the timeframe I was interested to explore, I decided to sample from the Irish creative advertising awards, known as 'the Sharks', which includes a specific section called 'Irish Advertising'. (John Holohan, Festival Director and Event Manager for the Awards, claims that this section was created because Irish advertising is generally uncompetitive in international terms but also because "there are culturally specific references which make Ireland different to other markets" (JH 30.09.05) – see below). Sampling from the Shark Awards resolved the dilemma of defining Irish advertising; the significance of the below sample therefore is that it represents an Irish advertising producer's view of what constitutes Irish advertising (which is in keeping with an 'emic' research perspective).

The advertising industry worldwide stages numerous award shows of various kinds. In fact, 'it is estimated that there are as many as five hundred advertising award shows throughout the world each year' (Shamoon 1987; Polonsky and Waller 1995: 25).

Opinions of award shows vary greatly, however, and depend largely on the occupational group investigated; executives, creatives or clients[36]. For the industry broadly conceived, however, these events perform an important networking function and help to inspire a sense of community:

> Advertising is a small community and award shows and other events create a sense of specialness and exclusivity that is important to the industry, in order to offset the lack of wider recognition for advertising expertise and accomplishment. This tendency for advertising professionals to award each other prizes seems important, sociologically, to the industry and it also reflects a self-referential insularity (Hackley 2005: 84).

While comparatively small by international standards, Ireland stages several advertising and media award shows annually, such as the PPAI Magazine Awards, the Interactive Media Awards, and the Irish Digital Media Awards, among others. The three most important industry-wide award shows, however, are undoubtedly the Sharks, the ICAD Awards[37] and the IAPI Advertising Effectiveness Awards (ADFX). While the first two of these are 'creative' shows, the ADFX Awards, as the name suggests, is concerned with campaign 'effectiveness'[38] and consequently, requires that entrants provide substantive data on factors such as return on investment, sales and consumer awareness (www.iapi.ie). In effectiveness award shows, judges 'evaluate advertising campaigns based upon specific marketing goals and on market evidence

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[36] 'Award shows strike a nerve with ad people. Some love'em (mostly creatives) and others hate'em (mostly non-creatives). The Love'ems see awards as an important and necessary industry acknowledgment of high creative standards and achievement. The Hate'ems see them as self-indulgent distractions from what really matters – the client's bottom line' (Follis 2005).

[37] Ireland's other creative advertising award show is the Institute for Creative Advertising and Design (ICAD) Awards. ICAD has existed since 1958 (www.icad.ie) and is dedicated to fostering creative excellence in Irish advertising and design. While the ICAD 'Bells' are highly prized in themselves, the award show constitutes only a small, though important, part of the Institute's annual calendar and is a significantly smaller event than the Shark Awards. Above all, ICAD is dedicated to raising creative standards in Ireland by staging various events, lectures, discussions, training programmes and practice-based workshops throughout the year, as well as publishing *Creative* – the journal of ICAD.

[38] It should be noted, as all of my respondents highlight, that 'creativity' and 'effectiveness' are hardly mutually exclusive and if anything, should be co-present in advertising. 'Creative people (copywriters and art directors) believe that creativity is necessary for effectiveness, that the creative element pushes the message into viewers' minds. In fact, some even feel that creativity *is* effectiveness (Kover 1995)' (Kover and Goldberg 1995: 29). The perfect union of creativity and effectiveness is considered "the Holy Grail" of advertising, as one of my respondents called it (OB 12.10.05). This is supported by the fact that very creative advertising is often also highly effective. (Heineken Green Energy, for example, received a Silver ADFX award in 2004 and the campaign case history – available in the ADFX archives (www.iapi.ie) – is drawn upon in the Heineken case study included in this dissertation).

that those goals have been met' (Kover and Goldberg 1995: 30). As my interest, however, lies in the more qualitative dimensions of the advertising process – informal knowledge and assumptions, articulations of commonality and groupness etc., and incorporates nebulous terms such as 'identity' and 'culture' – I considered the ADFX Awards an inappropriate source from which to draw a sample. It bears adding that this event occurs only once every two years and is of very recent vintage, with the first ADFX Awards occurring in 1996. Furthermore, the Sharks is a considerably larger affair and is the most internationally recognised (and attended) of Irish advertising award shows.

2.4.1 The Television Series Category

In any given year, the Shark Awards will have approximately seventy entry sections and subcategories spread across a variety of broadcast media types (television, cinema, radio and viral media), product groups and other categories (www.iapi.ie). According to members of the Board of Directors of the awards, entrant categories are reviewed each year with the intention of removing redundant ones and adding useful ones. This ensures that the Irish advertising industry keeps up-to-date with worldwide developments and provides a means of invigorating and enlivening the festival each year. In addition to categories relating to particular media and products, the festival includes categories for specific technology (such as lighting, directing, sound design, editing, animation and music), which are referred to as 'craft' awards. Like other award festivals, the Sharks also include a 'Grand Prix' prize for outstanding advertising.

As noted above, among the various entry categories of the Shark Awards, a number are grouped together in a broad section referred to as 'Irish Advertising': 'The Irish Section in the Shark Awards is open only to commercials which have been created for television and radio by Irish (ROI & NI) agencies only' (www.iapi.ie). Among the Irish Advertising categories, the most prestigious is the Grand Prix Irish Television Award. This award is unavailable for other media and therefore represents the apotheosis of Irish advertising. While perhaps an obvious choice in respect of sampling, this award is rarely given with jurors invoking Section 6 of 'The Conditions

for Entry', which state that 'the jury reserves the right not to make any award in any category for any prize' (www.iapi.ie). As might be expected, this occurs if the quality of submissions in any given year is deemed below the standard deserving of the Grand Prix accolade. Returning to the category of Irish Advertising, therefore, one encounters various subcategories spread across a variety of broadcast media: television, cinema, radio and viral media, which are subdivided again into product categories (alcoholic drinks, non-alcoholic drinks, food/confectionary, consumer durables etc.). As my intention, however, is neither to focus on a specific product or brand nor to prioritise a particular medium, I decided to draw my sample from the award category 'Irish Television Series'. While this category obviously specifies television, its remit is less the specific use of media and more the synergy and cohesiveness of a campaign spread across a series of commercials. Hence, the advantage of this category in respect of my own research interests is that not only does it refuse to privilege a particular brand or product category but more importantly, it directs the attention of judges towards the *ideas*, *strategy* and *linkages* in the work. As such, I believe this category facilitates a more holistic examination of campaign elements which are spread out among varied executions yet under a unifying theme. This also provides a more longitudinal view of brand/consumer identity via an extended dialogue. Despite differences in plot, script and creative execution, each series commercial works to compound and reiterate an overriding concept or idea, around which identities are fashioned. Brands, rather like constructivist accounts of identities, are fluid entities. It is evolving brand narratives, therefore, or the manner in which personalities, cultural frameworks and institutional arrangements combine to produce advertisements for Irish brands, that interests me. The TV Series is a narrative, not a snapshot. According to the Shark Award's regulations, a 'series' comprises '2/3 commercials advertising the same product or service using the same concept or production technique' (www.iapi.ie). By its very nature, the series commercial tries to develop a theme over several executions, sometimes over many years. The logic of the series is rarely informational. Rather, it is concerned with developing the brand narrative and creating affinity and character. Like all ads, series commercials attempt to invite identification (Hall 1997). However questions of identity (nation, brand, consumers etc.) are more deeply embedded in the structure of the series commercial as the framing of meaning is premised upon constant repetition and reinforcement. In a sense, therefore, series commercials have more 'essentialist'

tendencies because the intention is to develop a somewhat fixed set of brand properties and a consistent identity narrative, cultivated over a prolonged time period. How brand identity is fashioned and 'fixed' and the wider discourses of identity that are drawn upon in this process are central concerns in this work.

2.4.2 Research Sample

The 'Television Series' category of the Shark Awards, as suggested above, offers a useful means of exploring how particular brand identities and narratives are maintained over time. These can be further related to the broader temporal context, which for this research is the period widely referred to as the 'Celtic Tiger'. Although mine is not a work of 'historical sociology' per se, my approach does nevertheless detail something of an historical shift in Irish society and culture and acknowledges that all historical accounts of advertising are, to some extent, sociological: 'A book about advertising therefore becomes inevitably a critique of the society' (Rorty 1934: 12). The Celtic Tiger signifies a period of profound economic and social transformation in Ireland that as I suggested in the Introduction, has coincided with the most sustained growth period in Irish advertising. During this period, the representation of Ireland and Irishness has become a complex affair, revealing both consistency and change. One encounters private and public narratives of progress *and* loss, often concurrently, leading Keohane and Kuhling (2004) to describe contemporary Irish society as a 'collision culture', in which alternative modes of being and alternative conceptions of self and community collide and intermingle. It is for these reasons that I felt the period of the Celtic Tiger (between c.1995 and 2005) would prove an interesting one in which to explore questions of Irish cultural identity. Furthermore, it should be highlighted that my own experience working in the advertising industry was gained during this period. The following is the entire list of award-winners in the 'Irish Television Series' category 1995-2005, from which I constructed three detailed case studies (see below).

2.4.3 Shark Awards 'Irish Television Series' Winners 1995-2005[39]

1995 Section C	
Award:	Best Irish Commercial and Series
Client:	Telecom
Ad Titles:	Jack/Dave/Joe and Dustin
Agency:	McConnell's
Concept/Script:	Tim Mundie/Lawrence Keogh
1996 Section C	(No Section C Irish Winners)
Award:	Grand Prix Television Winner (Ireland) Guinness 'Life'
Client:	Guinness
Ad Title:	Life
Agency:	Bell Advertising
Concept/Script:	Christian Cotterall/Justin Hooper
1997 Section C	
Award:	Best Series Commercial
Client:	Smithwick's
Ad Titles:	Local/Granddad/Festival
Agency:	McConnell's
Concept/Script:	Martin Healino/Gerry Kennedy
1998 Section E	(Irish Television Series)
Award:	Bronze Shark
Client:	Deaf Awareness
Ad Titles:	Road Rage/Computer Plonker/Two Things
Agency:	Young's
Concept/Script:	Mike Mesbur

[39] As can be seen from the list presented, the 'Television Series' category has changed and developed over the ten-year period examined. In 1998, this category was changed from Section C to Section E and from this point onwards, commercials were awarded gold, silver or bronze sharks (or simply diplomas), while also being eligible to receive the coveted Grand Prix Award.

1999 Section E

Award:	Bronze Shark
Client:	Golden Pages
Ad Titles:	Bride/Groom
Agency:	Des O'Meara and Partners
Concept/Script:	Alan Kelly/Martin Cowman

2000 Section E

Award:	Diploma
Client:	Bank of Ireland
Ad Title:	GAA Sponsorship
Agency:	McCann-Erickson Dublin
Concept/Script:	Shay Madden/Jonathan Stanistreet

2001 Section E

Award:	Silver Shark
Client:	The Irish Times
Ad Titles:	Magazine/Lunch Box/Waiting Room/Call Waiting
Agency:	McConnell's
Concept/Script:	Michael Creagh/Dani Vlismas

2002 Section E

Award:	Bronze Shark
Client:	Diageo (Guinness UDV)
Ad Titles:	Guinness Draught Quality/1759/45 Degrees
Agency:	Irish International BBDO
Concept/Script:	Mark Nutley/Patrick Hamill

2003 Section E

Award:	Gold Shark and Grand Prix Television Ireland Winner
Client:	Heineken (Green Energy Festival)
Ad Titles:	Van/Edenmore/Kitchen
Agency:	McCann-Erickson Dublin

Concept/Script:	Shay Madden/Jason Hynes/Keith Doyle

2004 Section E

Award:	Gold Shark and Grand Prix Television Ireland Winner
Ad Titles:	Ian Dempsey/Ray D'Arcy/Philip Cawley
Client:	Today FM
Agency:	Cawley Nea/TBWA
Concept/Script:	Martin Cowman/Alan Kelly

2005 Section E

Award:	Silver Shark
Client:	Heineken
Ad Titles:	Cuba/China
Agency:	McCann-Erickson Dublin
Concept/Script:	Shay Madden/Jonathan Stanistreet

In choosing campaigns from the above list to base case studies on, I was guided by access[40] to respondents and secondary materials as well as the richness of empirical data accumulated. I was also consciously drawn to those texts in which quite explicit statements of identity were made (via cultural referents, lifestyles, etc.) as well as those that were deemed worthy of the highest awards available. Both Today FM and Heineken, for example, were Grand Prix winners and can therefore be reasonably considered the acme of Irish advertising. The Golden Pages, Deaf Awareness and Bank of Ireland GAA Sponsorship campaigns, on the other hand, were obviously rated significantly lower in creative terms. As can be seen from the list above, several campaigns were created by the same advertising agencies and often by the same creatives. In these instances, bearing in mind access and time limitations as well as my desire to not overly complicate the question guide, I consciously prioritised one

[40] Despite a prior history of working in Irish advertising and strong personal ties in the industry, access to respondents proved difficult on occasion. Given the career mobility that characterises advertising, I was forced to accept that some of those I intended to interview no longer worked in the listed advertising agencies or indeed, in advertising generally.

campaign above another[41]. This is important because in my interviews I was often asking respondents to recount details, events, processes and motivations surrounding a campaign that they may have worked on several years prior and thus, memory[42] played a substantial part. To request that respondents recall the details of multiple campaigns would not only have put unnecessary strain upon their faculties of memory but would, I believe, have significantly impoverished my findings. Consequently, I felt it more worthwhile to concentrate upon a single campaign and to probe as deeply as possible. In addition, as I wish my contribution to be original, I made a conscious decision to avoid Guinness where possible, as this brand has become synonymous with Ireland and has received considerable attention in this regard (see, for example; Corcoran 2005; Davies 1998; Griffiths 2005; McHugh 2005). Furthermore, Smithwick's and Guinness are both owned and managed by Diageo and hence, references to Guinness arise willy-nilly in the Smithwick's case study and throughout this dissertation. A final point requires mentioning. In choosing campaigns to base case studies on, I felt it would be interesting to include a broad selection of agency-brand configurations as this would permit comparisons of various local-global arrangements and perspectives. In the first case study presented, I examine McCann-Erickson's work on Heineken. This agency is part of McCann Worldgroup – the flagship agency network of US-based Interpublic Group. Hence, this case study examines advertising for a global brand by a branch office of a global network. In the second case study, I again look at a local office of a global network, this time Cawley Nea\TBWA, which is part of Omnicom – the largest communication company in the world. This campaign differs from the first case study, however, in that Today FM is an Irish-only brand. Finally, in the third case study, I examine McConnell's work on Smithwick's – a brand primarily sold and marketed in Ireland. McConnell's is unique in my sample, however, because it is a privately-owned Irish advertising agency. These various institutional arrangements are important when interpreting

[41] In the case of McConnell's, for example, I conducted a kind of 'pilot' interview with Saibh Hooper in which I discussed both Smithwick's and the *Irish Times* and this helped to confirm my decision to focus on the former. For the most part, however, the decision rested with access to other respondents and primary/secondary sources. Importantly, the Smithwick's Marketing Manager Maura McGinn (of Diageo) was very forthcoming in agreeing to be interviewed. In addition, John Fanning devotes a considerable number of pages to describing the 'locals' campaign in his recent book *The Importance of Being Branded* (2006), which I treat as a primary source.

[42] It is commonly acknowledged that memory is distorting yet I do not consider this fact a shortcoming of this research. In line with constructivist epistemologies, I suggest that happenings are always subject to revision. It has not therefore been my intention to somehow reconstruct the 'actualities' of production but rather to examine creative strategy and how cultural identity features as important.

practitioners' perspectives on globalisation, consolidation, agency autonomy etc. Given the paucity of sociological research on production in Irish advertising, a diverse range of case studies might further prove useful to future researchers of this field.

2.5 Research Strategy

> I was tired of impressionistic accounts and interpretations of advertisements by other scholars (who were often biased against the commercial world) and I wanted to find out how the world of advertising worked: in short, how ads were made. It was the social processes of advertising as a business, and personal interactions among people in an agency that I thought would be fascinating [...] (Moeran 1996c: 6).

Moeran's interests resonate with my own. As a consequence of pilot research, I developed a flexible research strategy that would permit an examination both of the creative strategy in the campaigns considered and the idiom of cultural identity in production. In order to prevent a tautological research design, I opted for a qualitative approach. Qualitative approaches are considered useful when attempting to investigate the experience of others (Burns 1989) and when exploring topics that cannot be statistically validated (Domegan and Fleming 1999). The contextual, constructivist nature of qualitative accounts makes them partial and temporal rather than predictive. As Geertz (1973) argues, the goal of qualitative research is to enrich human discourse, not to produce a formal body of knowledge. Hence, the strategy and methods presented here are not a full-proof prescription but rather offer, I believe, a viable approach based upon reasoned assessment and feasibility. As qualitative methods can be considered merely more or less 'suitable' (as opposed to 'correct' or 'incorrect'), findings (and by implication methods) should not be assessed on positivistic notions of accuracy. In the following sections, I describe the particulars of my research strategy, which entailed constructing three case studies using a variety of

qualitative research methods[43]. My intention throughout has been to present empirical data and analysis simultaneously to reflect the actual process of constructivist grounded research.

2.5.1 Case Studies

As highlighted above, this dissertation presents three detailed case studies of four award-winning Irish advertising campaigns. Yin (1993) indicates that the case study approach, as a consequence of multiple variables and multiple sources of evidence, is not really a 'method' but is better considered a 'strategy'. This distinction is helpful and consequently, case studies can be viewed as the core element of the research strategy described here. As it is my intention to advance through three orders of theoretical abstraction, case studies offer a useful means of establishing a detailed empirical foundation that can be returned to throughout. The virtues of grounded research (as noted above) are the careful prioritising of gathered data, remaining with the data throughout and the refusal to elaborate conclusions that cannot be sustained by recourse to said data. As this is a foundational study in Irish sociology, I believe that it is important to establish a solid empirical basis and to avoid grand speculative claims and as such, the sample size is purposefully small. Nevertheless, commitment to a small sample and a grounded approach does not preclude abstract theorising. Rather, employing the metaphor of a mountain climber, the detailed case study can be imagined as an empirical or conceptual base-camp from which the theoretician ascends and to which s/he eventually returns.

Case study research is inductive, iterative and open-ended, and facilitates in-depth examination of processes (Whipp 1998). Furthermore, Stake (1978, 2000) suggests that this method is suited to uncovering tacit knowledge because it is directed to the

[43] Triangulating investigative techniques is both reasonable and rational, however, I am dubious about the implicit idea of reliability in notions of triangulation as well as the implication that research methods are equally weighted. If 'each practice makes the world visible in a different way' as Denzin and Lincoln (2003: 5) insist, then clearly the incorporation of various methods raise questions regarding the fusion and weighting of data. This being so, I felt that multiple methods were necessary in order to build a more complete (though hardly more 'valid') picture of production, although, as I have mentioned, I prioritised interview data. Furthermore, while my research is not ethnographic, I did allow for opportunistic ethnographic encounters (such as my attendance at the 2005 Shark's festival) – an orientation that I describe as an 'ethnographic sensibility'.

'discourse of persons struggling to increase their understanding of social matters' (2000: 24). In each case study presented, I focus primarily on the advertising 'agency' involved, although I also include interview data with 'clients' (brand managers) for comparative purposes. In addition to describing the agency's material features and structure, I attempt to formulate a general impression of its culture and corporate ethos. However, as I describe below, the principal purpose of case studies is to detail campaign production and creative strategy, paying particular attention to how a vocabulary of cultural identity is articulated and harnessed by respondents. Hence, rather than merely present a kind of calendar of events, the case studies in this dissertation focus upon how strategic decisions are defended and legitimated by recourse to some notion of cultural identity and how respondents, in turn, construct Irishness through the prism of the adverts they have created.

Case studies are criticised for lacking rigour and reliability and for being ineffective at generalising results in comparison to large-scale quantitative studies. However, my interest in 'generalisability', if such a notion has any value, is not about presenting individual cases as perfect microcosms of the macro environment 'in the manner of a laboratory experiment' (Yin 1993: 39), but rather is concerned with establishing a correspondence between different groups of practitioners working in the same cultural milieu and faced with the same sorts of structural constraints. While the practitioners, brands, strategies and organisational arrangements (among other factors) differ considerably in each of the case studies presented, this approach allows one to observe synergies as well as discrepancies. Specifically, it has allowed me to explore how hegemonic assumptions about Irishness are inscribed into the discourse and texts of Irish advertising agencies and how the idiom of cultural identity performs a similar function for all of these companies by serving to mystify, exoticise and legitimise their expert knowledge

When constructing case studies, I proceed from an initial textual analysis to consider supporting materials where available (e.g. newspaper articles, archives etc.). While data collection entails the abovementioned variety of methods, my analysis, however, derives chiefly from qualitative interview data.

2.5.2 In-depth, Topic-orientated Interviewing

This dissertation draws upon twenty-one interviews conducted with Irish advertising practitioners (and clients) [44] during the period 2004-2007. Of these, twelve interviews relate to the campaigns presented as case studies (see Appendix 1) and these form the core of my analysis. Interviews were dyadic and were by informed consent[45]. They were mostly conducted at the work premises of respondents and ranged in duration from forty-five minutes to approximately one and a half hours. As my interest lay in the routine experience of respondents and, in particular, how campaigns are invested with informal knowledge and assumptions, I considered qualitative interviews a highly useful method. 'Interviewing is a powerful way of helping people to make explicit things that have hitherto been implicit – to articulate their tacit perceptions, feelings and understandings' (Arksey and Knight 1999: 32). Similarly, as McCracken (1988: 17) notes; 'the purpose of the qualitative interview is not to discover how many, and what kinds of people share a certain characteristic. It is to gain access to the cultural categories and assumptions according to which one culture construes the world'.

Generally speaking, qualitative interviews range from completely structured (limited to fixed responses) to semi-structured (focused questioning with allowance for divergent or unforeseen developments) to unstructured[46] (entirely led by the immediate discourse). Within this very general cline, I employed a 'semi-structured'

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[44] While media is a crucial part of the 'tripartite business' (Moeran 1996a) of advertising, it is clients and agencies that receive my primary attention here, as it is within these institutions that the campaigns examined were conceived and developed. Media decisions usually centre on budget considerations, campaign projected timeframe and proximity to target audience, and while media departments will often suggest innovative ways of capturing attention (e.g. ambient media), media selection usually occurs after the identification of core target and creative strategy.

[45] My strategy in respect of recruiting respondents for interviews was to email first and to follow this with a phone call. The tone of emails was semi-formal, sincere, complimentary (in reference to the award-winning advertising campaigns I wished to discuss) and slightly apologetic. I explained that as a past practitioner, I was very much aware of the time constraints imposed upon workers in this industry. In doing so, I was subtly attempting to minimise our respective professional differences and hoped that at the very least, a perception of me as a prying researcher might be temporarily suspended. I was aware that Fridays can be both hectic and relaxed in advertising agencies (often both) as copy deadlines for weekend newspapers tend to fall on a Friday afternoon. (I have personally experienced the panic of meeting Friday deadlines in the past). Consequently, I deliberately emailed late on a Thursday or early Friday morning. For the most part this strategy proved successful. What I cannot of course prove is whether I would have been any less successful recruiting respondents had I called early or mid week!

[46] As is the norm in qualitative research, 'unstructured interviews' are accompanied by a host of similes and are also known as naturalistic, intensive, autobiographical, in-depth, narrative or non-directive (Holland and Ramazanoglu 1994; Arksey and Knight 1999: 6).

interview format, derived in large part from analysis of pilot findings and using a 'guide' rather than rigid schedule of questions. In addition to variations in structure, there are numerous 'types' of interview approach, which vary methodologically and epistemologically. In this research, I employed a combination of 'in-depth' and 'topic-orientated' approaches. In-depth interviews 'tend to involve a greater expression of the interviewer's self than do some other types of interviews' (Johnson 2002: 103). While I aimed for reflexivity throughout the research (arguably to refuse to do so would amount to interpretative blindness[47]), I did not strive for the kind of reciprocal exchange that some versions of reflexivity imply. More importantly, I considered this interview approach useful because I was 'interested in questions of greater depth, where the knowledge sought is often taken for granted and not readily articulated by most members [...] where different individuals or groups involved in the same line of activity have complicated, multiple perspectives on some phenomenon [...]' (ibid. 105). Complementing this focus on 'depth', my approach to interviewing was also 'topic-orientated' (Wodak et al 1999). Wodak et al (1999: 4) suggest that national identities are produced and reproduced, transformed and dismantled, *discursively*. In examining the discursive construction of national identity, these researchers consider the topic-orientated approach useful because it allows the researcher to investigate how patterns of national identification and identity find expression in individuals. Furthermore, they suggest that this approach helps the researcher to trace the diffusion of specific information units (news, literature, media etc.) down to the level of the individual. Wodak et al (1999) organise questions around several thematic areas or 'question sets', maintaining a semblance of structure while also allowing for reasonably free-flowing conversation.

In conducting interviews, I was mindful of the collaborative production of meaning between interviewer and interviewee and that the interview is essentially a 'negotiated text' (Denzin and Lincoln 2003: 48). Nevertheless, while I clearly influenced the structure of these encounters (as well as interpreted the resultant material), I attempted as much as possible to allow the discursive *content* to derive chiefly from respondents. As Berg (2004: 103) comments; 'you must participate as actor but must

[47] 'Each researcher implicitly draws upon his or her commonsense cultural knowledge – or "stock of knowledge", as Alfred Schutz (1967) terms it – and creates or constructs a truth or interpretation that will work for all practical (intellectual) purposes' (Johnson 2002: 106). One cannot remove the self from research; one can merely attempt to manage the *extent* and *manner* of intervention.

serve as director and choreographer as well'. While I may well have been an actor as Berg suggests, my intention in interviews was to have few lines and to do a great deal of loitering about the wings so to speak. Borrowing from Charmaz (2003: 280), I aimed for 'participation without domination'. Pilot interviews generated considerable insights, although their merit lay not so much in specific findings but in the identification of worthwhile lines of inquiry. In conducting interviews, I adopted a conversational approach (Douglas 1985) beginning with questions relating to the respondents' occupational roles and then moving to discuss his or her direct experience of the campaigns examined. Questions included, for example: What is this commercial about? Who is it targeting? Why was that creative approach chosen? In particular, I attempted to explore how the lives and experiences of producers intersected with their work practices and helped shape resultant texts, how brand and consumer identities were researched/imagined/"known" and how Irishness featured in these commercials, what respondents understood by this and the particular form that it assumed. From here, I attempted to broaden my focus to examine agency culture, departmental functions, industry relations and Irish advertising in general terms. Finally, I moved to consider more abstract questions, such as the importance of culture in advertising and how socio-cultural transformation in Ireland is impacting the advertising industry. Where possible, I avoided prefiguring the use/meaning of certain terms (e.g. 'culture') and instead allowed ample scope for interviewees to introduce these terms of their own accord, at which point I would seek explanation. In proceeding in such a fashion i.e. starting with unambiguous personal and professional details and moving to more abstract topics, I enabled interviewees to 'settle into' the interview encounter. It also bears highlighting that the primary function of the interviews was to discuss work for which interviewees had received industry plaudits. This was clearly advantageous from a research point of view because it is reasonable to assume that people will be more forthcoming when asked to discuss their successes.

2.5.3 Textual Analysis: 'Unearthing the Creative Brief'

This dissertation does not incorporate rigorous content or semiotic analysis of sample texts. Nevertheless, I did undertake an initial 'reading' of case study campaigns

because I felt that it was important to attempt to extract some visual and verbal clues relating to strategic intentions and referent systems (Frith 1997) and to use these when constructing the interview guide. As I have mentioned, my overriding objective has been to allow producers *themselves* to verbalise meaning and as such, I was determined that the research data *itself* should generate theory. Though I consider both semiotics and content analysis useful in deciphering meaning in visual texts[48], my approach to textual analysis veered closer to the former as I was interested in how the image 'works in relation to broader systems of meaning' (Rose 2001: 69) or in the words of Ewen (1990: 44), I wished to 'penetrate the surface of the image and place it within the social and historical setting of its development'. Thus like Moeran (1996a), I approach semiotics from the advertiser's, rather than the consumer's perspective. Nevertheless, the approach to textual analysis in this dissertation is neither strictly semiotic nor content focused but derives from my knowledge of a document known as the 'creative brief'[49]. In the global advertising industry the creative brief has become the principal means by which clients, agency executive personnel and creative teams co-produce advertising texts.

> Ultimately the creative brief is probably the most important document that the account executive and creative team will develop. It is the strategy for the advertising, and therefore reflects our understanding of where the brand is, where it is going and how it is intended that advertising should change the attitude of consumers (Abdullah and Donnelly 1995: 157).

The creative brief not only delineates creative parameters and directs the creative team towards specific objectives but also ensures that all parties are, as one of my respondents put it, "singing off the same hymn sheet" (DO: 08.10.04). However, in seeking to interpret specific texts, I have used my knowledge of the creative brief *in*

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[48] The approach of Leiss, Klein and Jhally (1990) attempts to combine the semiological methods of researchers such as Williamson (1978) and Leymore (1975) with content analysis, which they suggest, grounds their 'analysis of images and words in something more than individual and impressionistic interpretation' (Leiss et al 1990: 223). While useful and innovative, it is important to acknowledge that 'the open-ended social life of texts' (Frow and Morris 2000: 328) undermines the possibility of a 'correct' reading and highlights that readings, analyses, interpretations and theories will always be partial and tentative.

[49] As such, it is perhaps permissible to claim that 'this work foregrounds attention to the construction of meaning through the rules of signification internal to the representations that are at the centre of its analysis' (Nixon 1996: 11).

reverse. In other words, rather than inspire creativity, I have used this knowledge to *extract* in a process I refer to as "unearthing the creative brief". A creative brief normally includes several elements such as a header, media strategy and budget (see Appendix 2). However, these elements largely involve industry-specific input from various parties and are difficult to deduce by merely examining finished advertising texts. Thus, in surmising brief elements I restricted my analysis to three specific components; target audience, proposition and tone of voice. These are not only the elements upon which 'creativity' is primarily focused but I argue that together, they also encompass the site at which 'identity' (practitioner/brand/consumer/nation) manifests. The 'target audience' describes the particular audience the campaign is appealing to. While this usually incorporates demographic information, this is increasingly described in identitarian and psychographic terms. The 'proposition' represents the distillation of the campaign strategy into one sentence, encapsulating and expressing the original creative idea. It is, in other words, a précis of all the other elements of the brief and is designed to function as an inspirational springboard. Finally, the 'tone of voice' describes the characteristics or personality of the ads; funny, exciting, informational, sentimental, etc. Normally, this is reduced to three to four carefully chosen words to avoid confusion (e.g. 'witty' is not the same as 'funny') and is potentially an explosive area as creatives often view it as account management interference. In advance of interviews, I attempted to 'unearth' the target audience, proposition and tone of voice of the adverts in question and used this when constructing the interview guide[50].

2.5.4 Support Materials

In constructing case studies, I considered it important (where possible) to seek out supporting materials that would help build a more complete picture of the selected campaigns and perhaps illuminate the production process. As advertising is heavily research driven and entries for award shows generally require some sort of

[50] In the case studies presented in Chapters 3-5 (and in subsequent analysis chapters), I occasionally include the question asked in the interview encounter. I do so when the question posed is not immediately discernible or when I feel its particular wording is important.

background information on campaigns, I was fortunate in obtaining a reasonable amount of supporting materials for the campaigns in question. Occasionally, agency and/or award show archives will contain case studies of winning campaigns that provide a chronology of events, an outline of the strategic goals and an assessment/evaluation of outcomes. Frequently, a description of the socio-cultural, temporal and business issues circumscribing events will also be included. In this respect, the ADFX archives (www.iapi.ie) proved useful as did various articles available in newspapers and trade journals. Indeed, throughout the entire research process I created an archive of newspaper clippings, magazine articles, notes on television programmes and radio shows dedicated to advertising, etc. that I continually referred to when building case studies.

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Clearly, I do not suggest that the research strategy adopted here is the only adequate or feasible line of enquiry. I claim simply that in consideration of available methods, that the approach described offers the most suitable means of addressing the *particular questions* that my work prioritises[51]. Before concluding this chapter, I now briefly turn to the Shark Awards, as I feel that it is important to say something of the origins and perceived significance of this event considering it constitutes such an important part of this research. In the following section, I include interview excerpts with some members of the Board of Directors of the Shark Awards as well as occasional comments taken from informal 'opportunistic' interviews with delegates at the 2005 Shark Awards. These data offer unique perspectives on Irish advertising generally and furthermore, provide invaluable insights into specific aspects of the Sharks, such as the evaluation of entries, the selection of jurors and the broader social and industry significance of award shows.

[51] One could, for example, examine 'social advertising', employing the premise that an examination of the behaviours social advertising is intended to counter should provide a useful window on some of the values, vices and virtues of the culture from which it is derived and to which it is directed.

2.6 The Shark Awards

The Shark Awards is a creative showcase of advertising work from Ireland and around the world that has been staged annually since 1962. In explaining the emergence of the Shark Awards, Donald Helme, the longest serving member of the festival's Board of Directors, draws attention to the birth of commercial television in Ireland:

> "[In 1962] Ireland suddenly found itself with commercial television and it found itself with twenty-five, thirty-five ad agencies who had [heavily emphasises following words] no idea how to make television at all [...] [Nowadays] you can see any ad you want to anywhere in the world. In those days it was really hard. So they [the founders of the Shark Awards] reasoned that if you got them [foreign agencies] to enter Aha! [laughs] Cunning plan! So you'd bring in the best in the world and you'd be able to see it and it would inspire. So that's actually what happened [...] so you know, I don't think it was actually the first year but certainly one of the first years they invited a legendary advertising character called Bill Bernbach and Bernbach came not once but twice actually" (DH 06.04.06).

Above, Helme describes an immature, insular and peripheral Irish advertising industry at the dawn of the 1960s. In this passage, Helme reveals the desire of the Shark's founders to raise the profile (and professionalism) of Irish advertising as well as its international standing by introducing the industry to international standards of 'best practice'. The festival would permit foreign advertising professionals to view and evaluate Irish advertising but more importantly, would allow them to showcase their own work and in doing so, it was hoped, raise the creative bar of Irish advertising. John Holohan[52], Festival Director and Event Manager for the Awards, likewise

[52] Holohan, like the majority of my respondents, was highly educated and extremely articulate. Indeed, the immediacy and fluency of his answers gave the impression of being rehearsed and strongly indicated that he was very accustomed to giving interviews and rather enjoyed them. As it happened, he had already given one interview to a journalist on the day I visited him and was due to give another that same afternoon. However, as the Shark Awards had occurred that very month, the journalistic interest was perhaps unsurprising, although this hardly takes from the previous point.

maintains that the Shark Awards was created with an educational/inspirational role in mind. Like Helme, he highlights the highly restrictive media environment of the early 1960s:

> "You didn't have the multiplicity of media avenues you have now – satellite TV, television programmes like Chris Tarrant or Ruby Wax showing quirky material from other places [...] access to these reels was very limited. And there wasn't, you know, the world was not a village at that point at all, so you know, living in a small country on the periphery of Europe you were very isolated, we were still dancing at the crossroads in terms of international media. So you didn't have so many opportunities to see this stuff, so it [the Shark Awards] was a chance to say; "oh my God, that's what you can do!" So it was to open people's eyes and it worked very, very well" (JH 30.09.05).

Above, Holohan draws upon former Irish president Eamon de Valera's vision of comely maidens 'dancing at crossroads' but instead of nostalgic idealism, Holohan summons this image to reinforce an impression of severe isolation. He also refers to McLuhan's metaphor of the 'global village' yet uses it to depict Ireland as a remote, peripheral village in international media terms. Consequently, he intimates that the Shark Awards was created to break through the media myopia of the early Free State and to "open the eyes" of its advertising industry. Holohan explains that although small relative to other international advertising award shows, the Shark Awards is a "massive undertaking" and consequently, a board of directors was established early on to oversee its various aspects.

> QA: I am aware that the judging panel for the Sharks changes year-on-year but can you tell me about the board of directors [...] does that change as often?
>
> "In terms of membership of the board, a lot of them are long-serving members because it requires a lot of international contacts – there are specific skill-sets that we require. For example, Peter Brady and Donald Helme have been on the board for many, many years [...] [Donald has] a vast network of international contacts so you would jettison that experience at your peril, am so I mean their

role is continual and it evolves [...] [But] no, it's not a board of management that changes year on year" (JH 30.09.05).

As can be seen from Holohan's comments above, reputation, contacts and visibility are key criteria at advertising award shows, for those managing it and those attending it as well as for those adjudicating entries. It is an important reminder that power and self-interest lie at the heart of advertising, despite the industry's putative 'feminine values', such as emotionally governed work, close friendship relations and the absence of extensive hierarchy (Alvesson 1998: 970). It further suggests that award shows (as well as advertising work generally) entail multiple motives, for both individuals and occupational groups alike[53]. Paraphrasing Cronin (2004a: 5), I suggest that advertising award shows manage and rearticulate industry classifications and hierarchies. Award shows are thus pronounced instances in the 'circulation of self-promotional rhetoric' or the 'promotional nexus' by which Cronin largely defines the advertising industry[54].

Unlike the Board of Directors, Holohan explains that the festival jury changes annually:

> "Advertising as an industry is like quicksilver – I mean people's reputations tend to be kind of like a wave in the sea if I can draw that analogy [...] creatives usually have a number of years in the sun and then they move out of focus and it focuses on somebody else. So the trick is for a jury – people will enter a festival on the strength of its reputation and the quality of its awards but also on the quality of the people who are actually judging it so you know, for example, the chairman of our jury was Dan Wieden, who [...] is one of the

[53] 'Advertising is an industry in which winning awards functions to promote an agency. But awards also offer considerable individual self-promotional leverage, translating into higher salaries and greater occupational mobility' (Cronin 2004a: 67). Similarly, Polonsky and Waller (1995: 25), drawing on Schweitzer and Hester (1992), highlight that the winning of awards offers various advantages to advertising agencies, which include recognition for their work, encouraging creativity among staff members, increasing the prestige of the industry and helping agencies to promote themselves to potential clients.

[54] 'I argue that the industry does not merely produce advertisements or 'commodity signs'; agencies expand considerable effort and money in attempting to institute a system of commercial exchange based on their knowledge and skills. The circulation of these (self-)promotional accounts between agencies, their clients and regulators functions to *constitute* advertising as a social and economic form' (Cronin 2004a: 7, author's emphasis).

> biggest names in the world [...] he devised all of the Nike campaigns, you know 'Just do it' [...] that's his [...] Their creative director Tony Davidson was in charge of the festival three years ago, four years ago. So these guys have burgeoning reputations so what you do when you compile a jury is to have an iconic figure – the likes of Dan Wieden, the likes of Gerry Moore, John Hunt [...] I'm dropping names at you. These are all past jurors and past jury members but people who would have big strong international names and would be kind of like a beacon figure. Then you try to map together a jury which would pull in people from different disciplines with particular skills and again strong reputations within those fields [...] you need to put in people who have reputations, who have visibility, whose head sticks above the barrel" (JH 30.09.05).

In the above excerpt, Holohan makes abundantly clear that "reputation" is equally important in the selection of jurors as it is for the Board of Directors of the Shark Awards. Holohan's description of advertising as "quicksilver" supports Marianne Lien's (2004: 49) suggestion that marketing discourse exhibits a 'bias of temporality' due to 'repeated references to novelties, news, the future and anticipated change'. The Shark Award's jury is usually made up of six people 'representing each of the major entrant regions. This ensures that a broad social, professional and cultural mix is brought to bear on the judging process resulting in the highest and fairest possible standard of award' (www.iapi.ie). Generally speaking, juries exhibit a male bias. Of the six jurors at the 2005 awards, for example, four were male and two were female. In my own experience working in Irish advertising, however, this gender weighting actually under-estimates the male monopoly in creative positions. To compound this point, it should be noted that every person listed as responsible for 'concept/script' in the ten-year sample (shown above) is male. This is hardly to suggest that female creatives are wholly absent in Irish advertising, which is absolutely not the case, but indicates that the more equitable gender ratio of the Shark's judging panel cannot be extrapolated to the industry at large.

Donald Helme suggests that unlike some other prestigious international advertising award shows (such as Cannes), the Sharks has "always had a policy of having all creative juries" rather than including, for example, clients or executive members of

advertising agencies. He criticises some of the larger award festivals for their size and the need for "jumbo juries" of twenty-five or thirty-people. Helme further suggests that while rarely publicised, large award shows generate enormous profits for their holders. "I mean the Cannes festival was sold to EMAP last year for like forty something million[55], some huge number. It was owned by a family called the Hatchuels – it was a French family – and they made a fortune out of it" (DH 06.04.06).

> QA: And would people in the industry be cynical about that? Would they say this is about money, not creativity [...]?
>
> "Yes. Of course. It's a huge, huge hype. I mean it's a fantastic hype. We've always said no we're not like that. We don't want to be like that. A., we don't have the weather; B., we don't have the hotels. So this is not about [indicates imaginary figure] you're the chairman of the board poncing around in his Gucci loafers and linen suit. That's what happens in Cannes. I mean I've been to Cannes quite a few times and it's always like that so, you know, the agency board members are there – they're sporting themselves and smoking big cigars and generally behaving like head honchos. We don't get that. We said we will have an all-creative jury and we accept the fact that the all-creative jury may have quirkiness, may have quirky decisions that are not necessarily business-based decisions. They are recognising creativity; they don't necessarily recognise the relevance of that. So if the ad's a great ad [...] we're not saying therefore that it will work" (DH 06.04.06).

In Helme's description above, one gets a less than masked contempt for what he perceives as the arrogant falsity, narcissism and self-aggrandising pompousness of other award shows, Cannes[56] in particular. He describes these as all show and no substance (although it is less than certain that if Ireland had the "weather" and the "hotels" that Helme would not change his mind and his ostensible dislike for Cannes

[55] More than double Helme's estimate, Parpis (2004) suggests that the Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival (IAF) was sold by Roger Hatchuel to British publisher and conference organiser EMAP in 2004 for approximately $97 million.

[56] This viewpoint is also expressed on the Shark Awards section of IAPI's website: 'The Sharks attracts entries from all over the world, and delegates seeking an antidote to the razzmatazz of Cannes' (www.iapi.ie).

is questionable given his frequent attendance at it). Above, Helme also draws a comparison to 'effectiveness' shows (such as the ADFX Awards in Ireland), intimating that "ideas" are paramount in creative award shows. In respect of the actual judging process, Holohan describes this as "sacrosanct" and insists that the board "does not interfere with it" and has "no political agenda to bring to bear" (JH 30.09.05)[57]. He describes the various stages of the judging process as follows:

> "The ad is viewed. They [jurors] view it communally and they score it individually on a scale of one to ten, one being awful, ten being excellent. And then those scores are pooled and then they discuss. So that crude scoring mechanism is a simple kind of wheat from the chaff or honing down to, in terms of a particular category, which are the four or five gems that we are seriously talking about? So the criterion of judging a good execution from a bad one is, how well was the creative idea and concept realised? Is that core concept, that core creative idea – does it integrate well with the brand? Does it develop the punch? Does it engage your attention? And they will also look at production issues as well [...] has the idea been well produced? Has it been well shot? Are the components honed together? Is it well edited? [...] All of these things come into play. But ultimately you're looking at the creative content, so we don't take into account how successful the campaign was or otherwise, whether it delivered on sales or targets or anything" (JH 30.09.05).

Holohan uses the metaphor of separating the "wheat from the chaff" to illustrate the selection process. In more practical terms, Helme describes the judging process as a relaxed occasion in which the jury "sit there for a couple of hours and shoot the breeze"[58]. In doing so, Helme champions the Shark's small size[59], implying that such close personal attention and exchanging of opinions is a luxury unavailable to juries

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[57] Informal 'opportunistic' interviews with delegates at the 2005 Shark Awards paint a more translucent picture of the judging process. An Irish creative, for example, told me quite flatly that judges "have ulterior motives" (PO 09.09.05) and likewise, a Belgian delegate commented; "all the judges have seen Cannes, have seen other award shows [...] so they know what's won [...] [So] they are not going to say; "no it's not going to win anything [here]" (BB 09.09.05).

[58] Again, somewhat countering board member's promotional rhetoric, one respondent in an informal opportunistic interview at the 2005 Shark Awards commented; "the bitchiness that goes on is incredible" (RP 09.09.05).

[59] 'Delegate numbers are limited to four hundred giving the Festival a uniquely intimate and personal ambience' (www.iapi.ie)

of larger award shows. For this reason, he suggests that judges at the Shark Awards "get a huge amount out of it because they get to sharpen their own sensibilities" (DH 06.04.06). In describing the judging process, 'culture' emerges as a key (and oftentimes problematic) variable.

> QA: If you have jury members of different cultural backgrounds and say, there is a Cavan accent or something used in an ad, how is the quality judged? Is this where the 'idea' comes into play?
>
> "I think so. I mean it's a two-edge thing and I've never been quite clear which edge is favoured. And the two edges are, what I've always called Paddyism – that is to say, if you have a judge, you know an American, a Brit, you know an Australian – and you have a real [puts on rural Irish accent] Oirish ad they'll go; [puts on syrupy American twang] "gosh that's great because it's Irish" and you go; "ah ah [shakes his head] please just forget about it being Oirish, just fucking look at it as an ad". And so there's that edge. Then the other edge of the sword is that if cultural referencing is absent for them [presumably they will like it less] [...] and that is why we have at least one, usually two Irish jurors, who will say; "hold on guys, you don't understand the way it works – this is the cultural reference here" (DH 06.04.06).

Above Helme slips into invective for what he considers maudlin, insipid and hollow representations of Ireland and Irishness (what he calls "Oirish" advertisements or "Paddyism") that are peddled internationally. Helme suggests that foreign jurors, long fed on a diet of 'shamrocks and shannanagans', saints and sinners, John Hinde postcards of rural simplicity, The Quiet Man, Lucky Charms, Riverdance and thick Connemara brogues, has left them with a very clear and hugely simplified (indeed erroneous) vision of Ireland and Irishness. Consequently, foreign jurors (moments before praised unconditionally) are in his view often incapable of recognising Irishness that does not draw from the aforementioned shallow pool of referents. For this reason, Helme explains the need for Irish jurors who in addition to their own creative expertise, function as cultural translators for foreign jurors. It is partly as a consequence of this (and partly due to the uncompetitive nature of much Irish

advertising) that Holohan suggests an 'Irish Advertising' section of the awards was created.

> QA: How is the category Irish advertising decided upon?
>
> "This is one of the controversies, I suppose, of the festival in that it grew out of international competition – it is an international festival. It does have an Irish section. Unfortunately, the bulk of Irish advertising would not really be effectively able to compete on international level. That's not saying it's bad but [...] operating at the top of the bus is more difficult for Irish agencies. So we developed a parallel Irish section. So Irish agencies [emphasises next word] can enter the international material of course, and they do and they win on merit when the work is of sufficient quality, but we will also pull together Irish commercials [...] again mimicking and mirroring the international categories as best we can [and] they are judged by the international jury. So the same approach, the same standard is [used]. But it just means that you have a common currency in that there are culturally specific references, which makes Ireland different to other markets. And the same for every other market [...] an international jury may not understand all the nuances so you have to have Irish representation on the jury to be able to explain some of the cultural references [...]" (JH 30.09.05).

Holohan suggests (in line with the majority of my research respondents) that despite the Celtic Tiger, Irish advertising remains uncompetitive by international standards. Despite this, the Shark's Board of Directors is adamant that Irish entries should not lose votes to a lack of understanding of cultural idiosyncrasies or vernaculars. While positioning itself as a "serious" award show, sociability emerges as a key attraction for attendees at the Shark Awards, which Helme describes as a "pretty good party" lasting three days. He points out that several managing directors of Irish advertising agencies actually own houses in Kinsale, adding that "McConnell's Managing Director bought a house right in the middle of [the town] – that was always one of the best parties" (DH 06.04.06). Holohan explains, however, that by 2000 the seriousness of the festival began to suffer from its reputation as an extravagant "piss-up":

> "It was seen as a bit of piss-up, which invariably it was, because we do party here as well! So we put a lot of effort into changing the content of the festival, in terms of appending to it a lot more serious speakers and presentations, workshops, content, so that people would send their agency teams not just as a reward, which was what was being done, but also as a means for them to learn" (JH 30.09.05).

Like Holohan, Helme commends the festival's revamped educational aspect, describing the "purpose" of the event as "recognising outstanding creativity in communications [...] hopefully we tell people how to get there and then we award the people who have. That's how it works" (DH 06.04.06). Despite this, the festival's social component remains a top priority. The small size of the awards show, its informal atmosphere and scenic surroundings (i.e. Kinsale) are all part of its attractiveness. While "one of the oldest advertising festivals in the world", Holohan adds that the Sharks "has always remained a kind of nice festival, a smaller festival. It didn't grow into a Cannes" (JH 30.09.05). Helme develops this theme, linking the festival more broadly to Ireland as a "tourist attraction" and depicting it as a close-knit gathering of peers or even "family": "I asked a Dutch guy once why he came every year and he said because it's like a country wedding. And I know exactly what he meant. It was meant kindly – it's like really family [...]" (DH 06.04.06).

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter outlined my research interests and work experience in Irish advertising, my methodological orientation and the particular strategy and data collection techniques employed in this study and most importantly, explained the unique sampling frame devised for the research. As highlighted above, the approach to grounded theory adopted in this dissertation is constructivist. This perspective views all accounts and interpretations (including those of the researcher) as constructions; 'the interest lies primarily in discourses within organisations, not in what people believe or in what they really are [...]' (Alvesson 1994: 541). This distinction is important because, as I argue in later chapters, the discursive accounts of respondents

must be viewed strategically and purposively. As Cronin (2004b: 349) highlights, advertising practitioners are not interested in 'truth' per se but rather aim 'to generate material which can be deployed as convincing evidence of commercial expertise [...]'. Furthermore, I felt that constructivist grounded theory was suitable because this approach acknowledges the significance 'of enduring worlds and tries to show how they are socially created through action, intention and routine' (Charmaz 2003: 283). This notion of 'enduring worlds' is fundamental to my suggestion that despite an inflection on 'change' and 'flux', the discourse of Irish advertising practitioners reveals essentialist leanings and implicitly speaks of an unquestioned (and limitedly changing) 'we' (see Chapters 6-8).

This research employs in-depth, topic-orientated qualitative interviews (Johnson 2002; Kvale 1996) as the primary data collection technique, however, as highlighted above, I also textually analyse adverts and use support materials to build a more comprehensive picture of campaign elements. While 'there are good reasons to be sceptical about how much interviews can reveal in terms of 'objective conditions' or even 'subjective beliefs and attitudes' (Alvesson 1994: 541), I suggest that interviewing is particularly suited to a flexible, fast-paced and often guarded industry like advertising. Respondents commit to the interview yet feel that they have not sacrificed much by way of time or confidentiality. Furthermore, considering the fragmentary nature of production processes in advertising – with the exception of 'pitching' and occasional meetings, it is exceptionally rare to encounter all parties responsible for a campaign in one observable encounter – the interview permits an investigation of the campaign elements from various subjective viewpoints. Complementing this, textual analysis helped to orientate interviews while an examination of support materials helped to build a more substantive picture of campaign production. Obviously, these methods are also susceptible to criticism, which primarily focuses on the validity of the inferences made by the analyst. In attempting to overcome this shortcoming, I directed my analysis towards 'unearthing the creative brief', using knowledge of this document to focus on three elements: target audience, proposition and tone of voice, which I then questioned interviewees about.

The research strategy presented above is relatively elastic and gives 'priority to openness, curiosity and a sensitivity to what the interview subjects can offer in terms of unexpected insights and experiences' (Alvesson 1994: 1001). The sampling frame presented was chosen because not only did it relieve me of the difficulty of defining 'Irish advertising', but it also offered excellent scope to gather rich empirical data from which three detailed case studies could be constructed. Hence, I began the research with clear research questions, a clear research sample and clear data collection process. Then, as grounded theory stipulates, the dynamic between data collection and data analysis guided the thematic content. The campaigns around which case studies are fashioned are abundant in identity themes and permit comparisons of different institutional arrangements. Furthermore, they are both aesthetically interesting and culturally complex, involving questions of localism and globalism, tradition and modernity and past and future, and can therefore be considered reflective of Ireland's 'collision culture' (Keohane and Kuhling 2004).

Chapter 3: Heineken Case Study

3.1 Introduction

As the previous chapters of this dissertation have highlighted, this research follows Neuman (2003) in undertaking 'three orders' of interpretation of empirical data. The case studies presented in this and the subsequent two chapters can be considered 'first-order' interpretations. Neuman (2003: 147) describes a 'first-order' interpretation of data as one that assumes the perspective of the people being investigated, giving priority to *their* reasons and motives. As such, a 'first-order' interpretation tends to be more descriptive than critical.

This, the first of three case studies, focuses on two award-winning advertising campaigns for the Heineken brand created by the Irish office of McCann-Erickson. The first campaign that will be examined (and features two commercials titled 'China' and 'Cuba') is the more recent, and received the Grand Prix Television Ireland Award and the Silver Shark in the category 'Irish Television Series' at the Shark Awards 2005. The second campaign (featuring three commercials titled 'Van', 'Edenmore' and 'Kitchen') was created to promote Heineken's sponsorship of the music festival 'Heineken Green Energy' and was awarded both the Grand Prix Television Ireland Award and the Gold Shark in the category 'Irish Television Series' at the 2003 Shark Awards. In the sections that follow, I provide a general background to these campaigns and then move to consider each series individually, beginning with a short textual analysis that aims to surmise (or 'unearth') elements of the creative brief: target audience, proposition and tone of voice. Throughout this chapter, I include empirical (interview) data and supporting (archival/documentary) material where available. Rather than drown the reader in a cataract of detail, my intention in presenting case studies is to identify processes and themes that can be used to build a more detailed analysis in subsequent chapters. I begin, however, with a description of the McCann-Erickson advertising agency in Dublin.

3.2 McCann-Erickson

McCann-Erickson is the second largest advertising agency in Ireland with a company turnover of €42.4 million in 2005 (www.businessworld.ie). McCann-Erickson is part of McCann Worldgroup – the flagship agency network of US-based Interpublic Group, which has offices in one hundred and thirty countries. As such, McCann-Erickson Dublin can be considered the quintessential branch office of a large multinational company and therefore provides an interesting site in which to explore the power dynamics in such a structure. In terms of Heineken, this case study examines how, via McCann-Erickson, an essentially global brand has attempted to sustain a global image while simultaneously engendering local ties. As it is the 'production' of particular advertising campaigns that is documented here, the case studies presented focus on the advertising 'agencies' involved. Hence, while the views of 'clients' are incorporated for comparative purposes, this dissertation does not analyse the corporate structures and occupational cultures of client companies (in this case Heineken Ireland). This case study derives mainly from in-depth, topic-orientated interviews (Johnson 2002; Wodak et al 1999) with four people who worked on (or who have specific knowledge of) the two Heineken campaigns under investigation. The four respondents in this case study are: Orlaith Blaney (Managing Director McCann-Erickson), Stephen Bogan (Account Planner McCann-Erickson), Shay Madden (Creative Director McCann-Erickson) and Jacco van der Linden (Marketing Manager Heineken Ireland).

McCann-Erickson is situated in Hambledon House, 19-26 Lower Pembroke Street, Dublin. Unlike some of the more ostentatious advertising agency façades, McCann's is relatively sombre and modest. The agency is housed within a large grey and somewhat plain office block with an interior that mirrors its outward stylistic sobriety. Despite the advertising industry's reputation for unorthodox and novel organisational design, McCann's is unspectacular. Save perhaps the simple trophy cabinet and scattering of advertising posters at reception, the agency's design and layout adheres to the generic corporate template, with partitioned desks, small offices and meeting rooms and non-intrusive white painted walls. McCann-Erickson Dublin employs fifty-five people (at the time of research) working in various occupational roles, at the helm

of which is 'Ireland's youngest woman ad boss' (Webb 2005: 3) Orlaith Blaney. Blaney describes the agency profile as follows:

> "The fifty-five people in the company split [into] four creative teams, about ten people in account management doing day-to-day client service, very heavy resources in strategic planning and consumer understanding which would probably be unusual versus our competitors, and then we've got about ten people in media planning and buying" (OB 12.10.05).

All of the four respondents interviewed for this case study are educated to third level. Blaney and Bogan have backgrounds in the liberal arts and humanities. Blaney did a Social Science Degree in University College Dublin (UCD), which included a marketing stream in the third year while Bogan studied history and politics. Both appear to have been attracted to marketing and advertising and decided to undertake further study; Blaney pursued a Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing Management at the College of Marketing and Design, Dublin, followed by a FAS[60] work placement, while Bogan received a grant to undertake a Master's Degree in Advertising. Jacco van der Linden, Heineken Ireland's Marketing Manager, studied marketing and business administration at Erasmus University in Rotterdam and followed this with an MBA. Shay Madden, the Creative Director at McCann-Erickson, studied advertising at the Technical College in Rathmines, Dublin and like Blaney, followed this with a FAS course. With the exception of van der Linden, whose career trajectory appears highly premeditated[61], the McCann-Erickson respondents generally claim to have "fallen into" advertising. Unlike their more determined peers in the UK[62] and America, Madden, for example, claims that people in Irish advertising generally "stumble into" the business, although he concedes that this is changing. Likewise, Bogan claims to have had a very vague idea of possible careers upon leaving

[60] Irish Training and Employment Authority.

[61] Van der Linden worked in a marketing capacity for Unilever after completing his MBA and was subsequently approached by Heineken, working first in the company's corporate head office in Amsterdam and then moving to Nigeria, where he was involved in managing all aspects of Heineken's export operation there. Van der Linden has taken on various export management roles within the Heineken Group and also worked for a time as Brand Manager of Amstel (also part of the Heineken brand portfolio) in Holland.

[62] "In England now you get people, guys aged twelve, who are already putting portfolios together" (SM 27.10.05).

university and was drawn to journalism and advertising mainly because these had a "broad footprint" and therefore would not leave him "pigeonholed":

> "I thought it [advertising] was an interesting territory, an interesting area which kind of encapsulated a number of different social sciences and that was primarily it, journalism or advertising, because they had a broad footprint, a broad exposure to a number of different areas so I didn't feel as if I was being pigeonholed" (SB 27.10.05).

In discussing the client profile of McCann-Erickson, Blaney comments that the agency has a diverse portfolio ranging "from clients who do absolutely all of their creative work here to clients where we just import the work" (OB 12.10.05). As Managing Director, she describes her role as very "hands on" and presents herself as an arbitrator between the agency and its multiple clients. Blaney maintains a strong notion of industry professionalism and expertise implying that clients are frequently ill-equipped and incapable of articulating communicational needs: "I sit in on client meetings [...] especially if they're trying to brief us on stuff that is not really what they should be briefing us on at all!" (OB 12.10.05). Blaney describes the Irish advertising business as small and intensely competitive. As with almost every respondent in my research, she claims that standards of creativity in Irish advertising are generally poor, in part due to the unwillingness of clients (and sometimes agencies) to take risks. This, she suggests, undermines creative autonomy producing staid work and tired ideas. She implies that conservativeness is endemic in Irish advertising largely because clients are reluctant to break from the creative norms of their product groups. In basing their own work on the efforts of competitors, these companies fail to recognise the power of creativity, perpetuating a culture of cautious, hidebound and uninspiring advertising. She comments dismissively: "I think Irish clients don't come into agencies and say; "I want to be famous; I want work that's going to shake" [...] [They say] "I want an ad that's like my competitors but a bit different". And we're like; "no, no, let's start again!"" (OB 12.10.05). Nevertheless, Blaney describes Heineken as exceptional in this regard. Indeed, she reveals that the brand was the first to receive the plaudits of the Irish advertising industry in recognition of its support for creativity:

> "We're privileged to work with them [Heineken] [...] They're very supportive. They won an award about two years ago, the first client ever to be awarded a creative award [...] ICAD. They actually gave out an award to Heineken the year they did the Transformers and a lot of other good creative work and basically said; "look, for your support for creativity in Ireland [...] if only as many other Irish clients would get the standards up"" (OB 12.10.05).

Blaney suggests that exceptional work in advertising is largely the product of open, challenging (even "confrontational") relationships with clients. She describes the culture of McCann-Erickson as energetic[63] and somewhat defiant, both in respect of its output and in its uncompromising attitude towards clients. Likewise, Bogan staunchly proclaims; "you give what the consumer needs, not what the client's looking for" (SB 27.10.05). Bogan argues that the "the big companies and the best companies and the most successful companies [...] want to be challenged". He argues that good advertising requires "a heuristic approach", insisting that agencies must be flexible and willing to critically appraise their methods and processes and be continually open to new developments. In a similar vein, Madden describes his role as trying to "encourage people to go that little bit further and to be braver – first of all to hire people who are brave and daring and doing unusual stuff and not to let them get suffocated by the reality of Irish advertising [...]" (SM 27.10.05). Blaney concedes that this resilience has lost the agency clients on occasion: "So I think the energy we have in here in trying to do great work is quite confrontational with clients and we've had clients that we've resigned because they just don't buy into our culture" (OB 12.10.05). In spite of this resilient and headstrong attitude, however, some of Blaney's later comments undermine this, revealing the limitations of the agency's position and the power asymmetry with clients. In describing the agency's former relationship with Heineken, for example, Blaney conveys a blatant sense of powerlessness. When faced with a reel of globally produced advertising, she highlights that the agency was simply forced to "go with the one that hurts least". In the case of sponsorship arrangements for global brands (such as Heineken), the following passage reveals both frustration and acceptance of a situation that Blaney considers unfortunate yet

[63] In an interview with *Checkout* Blaney commented: "One day you could be dealing with Heineken, the next day Nurofen are in. The variety is fantastic, it's a very youthful, dynamic young business and McCann Dublin is not in any way corporate, we've a very flat structure and it works" (www.checkout.ie).

unalterable. Against her intimations of autonomy and an uncompromising attitude, the impression conveyed here is one of 'damage limitation':

> "So if you're an international brand and global company saying; [voices imaginary client] "we've spent five hundred million on soccer take it in Ireland", it's very difficult to say; "you know what, actually it doesn't fit with our strategy". So we get these things like rugby, like the soccer thing, which we're not really supporting in this market but [...] [We are] not exclusive to international forces, you can't operate and say; "we don't want rugby and we don't want to have soccer" [...] [Voicing imaginary client again] "Sorry, we've paid and you're paying part of your marketing budgets towards this whether you like it or not" (OB 12.10.05).

Indeed, while espousing a belief in challenging agency-client relations, Shay Madden, the Creative Director, offers a more limited version of Blaney's culture of defiance. He comments; "actually, there's a very pleasant atmosphere in here now and sometimes I almost want it to get a bit edgier" (SM 27.10.05). Beyond power asymmetries at the corporate level, Blaney intimates that this frequently spills into the social realm. Describing social encounters with Heineken personnel, for example, Blaney reveals that her choice of beverage is compromised as she is compelled to order one of her client's brands. The implication here is that this malleability of her personhood is to some extent part of her professional duty and is directed towards cultivating positive relations:

> "I'm not really a beer drinker myself [...] except when I'm out with them [Heineken personnel]. I'd be a Bacardi and Diet Coke person but I can't drink that when I'm out with them! [Laughs] You could drink a Coors or a Murphy's but you couldn't drink something from Diageo. So I'm not a beer drinker but when I'm out with them I don't have much choice! [Laughs]" (OB 12.10.05).

In an interview with Nick Webb of the *Sunday Independent* (November 20, 2005), Blaney communicated her desire to attain a greater percentage of Irish (as opposed to international) business as this, she maintains, protects branch agencies from business

losses by the global company. (L'Oreal and Nestle, for example, have both withdrawn their accounts from Interpublic in recent years). Blaney commented; "my ambition would be to have seventy percent in local business and thirty percent global" (Webb 2005: 3). Nevertheless, creatively speaking, Blaney exhibits great pride in her agency's global brand portfolio. Indeed, as I suggest below, McCann's mainly 'global' brand portfolio may to some extent explain the reluctance of practitioners here to promote cultural specificity in advertising. In contrast to McConnell's unequivocal belief in using Irishness wherever possible (see Chapter 5), for McCann-Erickson the "Irishness thing is such a debate" (OB 12.10.05). From a creative point of view, Blaney is "highly critical of Irishness done badly" and suggests that the conservative repetition of tired stereotypes can have disastrous consequences, not only in terms of the reception and likeability of advertising, but also for the international standing of the Irish industry. She insists that "when you show them [stereotypically 'Irish' adverts] at international show festivals like the Sharks the judges go; "oh Jesus"!" (OB 12.10.05). Likewise, Shay Madden, recalling an experience judging at the Shark Awards, reveals a similar sentiment:

> "I judged Kinsale a few years ago [...] and you'd be judging the international section one day and then it was the Irish section and there were international jurors there – I was the only Irish juror and I was looking at the reactions of them and they were kind of shocked and appalled, am because the particular main judge was a South African guy and he was so into the idea of being in Ireland, I mean Ireland – full of creativity, loved Irish music, loved Irish poetry, all of this kind of stuff and he said; "I cant wait to see your work" and I watched him visibly slump in his chair during the Irish section and that was kind of embarrassing, and that was a wake-up call for me" (SM 27.10.05).

Blaney offers the example of the National Lottery insisting that the company's problem is "it's too bleedin Irish! [Laughs]". Against dismissing cultural referencing outright, however, she insists that producers must appreciate that "Irishness now is contemporary, modern [...] not the historical [...]" (OB 12.10.05). From this, one detects not only a reluctance to promote Irishness generally but moreover a rejection of historical parameters in favour of contemporary progressiveness. In other words, Blaney's position is not so much a disavowal of Irishness per se as it is a disavowal of

what she considers *outdated* configurations of Irishness. She criticises Irish media content generally, suggesting that this largely amounts to an anaemic mimesis of British ideas:

> "And there's a sense that we copy everything, reality television – we copied Celebrity Farm [...] oh it's just such a bad idea! And like Winning Streak is kind of a replica of what they did in the UK except it's done so badly, with the wrong presenter, and the cuddly toy [...]" (OB 12.10.05).

Blaney concedes that defining Irishness is intensely problematic yet insists that if Irishness is invoked in advertising it should be presented as dynamic and progressive. At the same time, however, she maintains that 'traditional' Irish culture persists to some extent and therefore suggests that agencies should attempt to balance tradition and modernity where Irishness is concerned, or "do a Riverdance" as she calls it. Despite her reluctance to emphasise Irishness thematically or stylistically, it is precisely this cultural knowledge that explains, in her estimation, the need for an Irish branch in global agency groupings: "So I think defining Irishness is actually a really tough thing to do and that's why an international agency needs an Irish agency because actually figuring it out is difficult" (OB 12.10.05). Moreover, like virtually all of my respondents, Blaney's ostensible renunciation of historical coordinates belies a belief that traditional Irish culture is more worthwhile than its ersatz contemporary alternative. Indeed, as I argue in subsequent chapters, it is perhaps plausible to suggest that some notion of cultural 'authenticity' may be embedded in the 'practical consciousness' (Giddens 1984) of Irish advertising practitioners.

For respondents at McCann-Erickson, creativity is crucial. Shay Madden describes creativity as a kind of organically evolving process that should not be too rigidly controlled. He suggests that it is important for producers to recognise the "spirit" of a project and let it evolve and therefore argues that an over-reliance on research can prove disastrous. Yet for respondents at McCann-Erickson, creativity and effectiveness are not mutually exclusive but mutually attainable and reinforcing under the right conditions. In fact, Blaney argues that creativity *requires* effectiveness to be considered truly great in an advertising context. For her, this union of creativity and

effectiveness constitutes the "holy grail" of advertising and she suggests that Heineken's success is largely attributable to this:

> "So they [Heineken] have been [...] over the last couple of years the best awarded work locally and it is also effective, which from my point is what we want. We want creativity, and it drives share and volume. That's the Holy Grail really [...]" (OB 12.10.05).

3.3 Background to Heineken Campaigns

Heineken is among the most famous beer brands in the world. Heineken Ireland (formally known as Murphy Brewery Ireland) is a wholly owned subsidiary of Heineken International. The company's brand portfolio includes; Heineken, Murphy's, Amstel, Coors Light, Paulaner and Zlaty Bazant (www.heineken.ie). In 2005, the company's turnover was €325 million and in Ireland, Heineken remains the number one lager brand (www.finfacts.com). In addition to Heineken's sponsorship of the eponymous 'Heineken Green Energy' music festival (examined below), the company is also a powerful sponsor of major sporting events, such as the UEFA Champions League, the Heineken Cup and the Rugby World Cup, as well as a supporter of other cultural initiatives and projects, such as the European Capital of Culture event in Cork in 2005. In this case study, I examine two campaigns falling under the umbrella of the Heineken brand (both deriving from my sample of award-winning Irish advertising 1995-2005). What is particularly useful about these campaigns is that they provide a means of examining the globalising and localising efforts of an international brand via the interventions of its Irish advertising agency. By examining these campaigns jointly, I believe that it is possible to gain a more holistic sense of brand strategy and a more nuanced picture of the structures and forces encircling production.

As noted above, McCann-Erickson's Managing Director Orlaith Blaney is strongly critical of creative standards in Irish advertising. As a consequence of this, she suggests that until very recently, there was a belief that in order to receive innovative

and inspiring advertising ideas it was necessary for Irish brands (and alcohol brands in particular) to look to agencies outside of Ireland. She cites, for example, the decision by Guinness in the 1990s to award its account to HHCL in London. In the case of Heineken, however, the bulk of the brand's communication (including sponsorships and other initiatives) is handled by McCann-Erickson. Blaney explains that in 2002, Heineken decided to relocate its advertising account from the agency Lowe in London to McCann-Erickson in Dublin as the brand's management was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with Heineken's performance locally relative to Diageo (the owners of Guinness, Smithwick's etc.) and also felt that the brand was losing local appeal: "So they decided being Heineken Ireland, we need our own local knowledge, expertise, understanding of the Irish market and we need a local agency" (OB 12.10.05). Apart from the desire for 'local expertise', it also seems that Heineken was concerned that the brand's image was "losing its edge" in style terms. McCann's Creative Director Shay Madden explains that part of the agency's task, therefore, was to "dirty up" the brand image in the hope of attracting new (younger) consumers:

> "Well part of the thing was Heineken sales were dropping and also Heineken at the time was seen as a bit, not quite middle-aged, but [...] a bit guy in a suit, you know, played rugby. Am he was probably heading into early thirties, you know, mid-thirties possibly [...] maybe even older. And they had this thing about recruiting younger drinkers, maybe Heineken was just losing its edge. It had gone a bit too polished [...] so one of our things was we wanted to dirty it up a bit or make it a bit grittier or make it a bit more edgier [...]" (SM 27.10.05).

In addition to declining beer sales and image difficulties, Heineken was also facing negative industry factors, such as an increase in the price of beer, an explosion of choice in this product category[64] and perhaps most significantly, the introduction of a smoking ban in Ireland in 2004. Despite having to contend with these significant obstacles, McCann-Erickson was fortunate to receive a considerable amount of

[64] "The consumer now has an increasing array of drinks available to him and he has become more promiscuous in terms of his choice" (Nico Vervelde, Managing Director Heineken Ireland; in Hardiman 2004).

research and direction from Heineken[65]. In particular, the brand company had begun to identify the kind of image territory that it felt was appropriate going forward and the sort of consumer it wished to target, therefore simplifying McCann's task. Jacco van der Linden, Heineken Ireland's Marketing Manager, explains that when the brand company approached McCann-Erickson it had a very clear strategy in mind. He gives a very precise and somewhat rationalistic account of brand building, dismissing marketing "fluff" in favour of the more quantitative, scientific aspects, such as volume and profit targets. Van der Linden describes the need for three interrelated streams of brand communication: 'authority stream communication', which emphasises the brand's stature; 'world of Heineken communication', which offers a global perspective and; 'Heineken in my world communication', which cultivates 'closeness' and cultural resonance. In van der Linden's three-pronged communication model, a fusion of local and global initiatives is made possible. For him, a precise brand strategy must be in place before the communications model (of which advertising is only part) is devised.

> QA: Where did the idea for this campaign come from [...] how did the process start?
>
> "For the Heineken brand you [...] need to do three things. One is to establish the notion amongst consumers that Heineken is a better beer and that is your fundament, compare it to building a house. You have to have your fundaments first. Heineken is a better beer, so that is an authority stream of communication and beer drinkers need that and especially male beer drinkers need that [...] So the beer has a history, a brewing tradition, we use the highest quality standards, it's a family company, its brewed in the Netherlands, all these elements are very important for an emotional product like beer. So that is what we want, that is layer one. The second layer is what we call 'world of Heineken' communication. It is to build aspiration around the brand and show

[65] 'Creative, innovative, responsible marketing and promotion of the Company's brands continues to be the hallmark of all Heineken Ireland marketing efforts in the marketplace. Such efforts are supported by ongoing in-depth market research in the formulation of all company brand programmes' (www.heineken.ie).

> that the Heineken brand is the most international in the world – it's sold in over one hundred and seventy-four countries, no other brand can claim that. And consumers are sometimes a bit like sheep and I don't want to mean that in a negative way, but showing that you have bigness or ubiquity comforts people and that's just a normal human trait. So first of all you're the better beer, second of all there are a lot of people out there that have Heineken as their preferred choice – that's the second layer, plus then that you are a global brand and truly global with a worldly mindset. When you've done that, then in certain markets and it depends on the phase of brand-consumer relationship, you need to be close as well [...] and especially in Ireland that's the case, where people are ad-savvy, very critical and cynical towards brands. Being a good beer and being big is just not good enough, you need to be close as well. And there you have 'Heineken in my world' communication stream so there we have to be close and what I really dislike about marketing is that it can, if you don't watch out you're talking fluff all day or you're not talking hard things [...] that you have a profit target and a volume target" (JV 07.11.05).

Linking to the need to address image problems and partly offering a solution to these, Heineken and McCann-Erickson began to identify a new emotional and lifestyle "territory" to which the nascent advertising would appeal. As Blaney comments; "an open-minded sense of adventure is the territory we want to be in creatively [...]" (OB 12.10.05). In particular, it was felt that this new approach would draw in younger, more experimental consumers. In the following quote (taken from a media interview), van der Linden explains that the new strategic direction derived directly from consumer research:

> "The idea for our advertising campaign came from asking ourselves – what has made Heineken the world's favourite beer? Our customers of course! So we talked to them and began to understand that they are the kind of people who like to try new things, meet new people and go to new places. They are open-minded and have a real thirst for new experiences. This is what sets them apart," said van der Linden (www.checkout.ie).

However, it was acknowledged that this new approach would require careful deliberation as the consumer group identified tends to negatively react to ideas that are considered pseudo-fashionable, pretentious or attempting to "mirror" their interests and lifestyles. Blaney argues, for example, that it would have proven disastrous for the brand had it attempted to

> "show this guy back to himself doing adventure holidays or skateboarding or bmx-ing, which is a very dangerous thing to get into with guys first of all [...] Don't hold a mirror up to the audience and show them me playing back their lives, which is kind of what some beer advertising tries to do" (OB 12.10.05).

While the new advertising strategy was concerned with attracting younger drinkers to the Heineken brand, the agency was adamant that this should not alienate other potential consumers: "That's part of the power of advertising, not to alienate the other people by going after quite a specific target" (OB 12.10.05). With these parameters in place, McCann-Erickson set about devising a new brand campaign for Heineken, which I now examine.

3.4 Heineken Cuba and China

In the 2005 Shark Awards, McCann-Erickson received both the Grand Prix Television Ireland Award and the Silver Shark in the category 'Irish Television Series' for two adverts promoting the Heineken beer brand, titled 'China' and 'Cuba'. I include empirical (interview) data throughout this section but begin with a short textual analysis of the 'Cuba' commercial[66] which aims to 'unearth' the creative brief.

3.4.1 Textual Analysis

Cuba

[66] 'China' was unavailable for viewing.

The location is the dusty streets of a North American coastal city, presumably one close to Florida. The camera pans across a lightly populated suburb. Children are playing football in the heat and dust; break-dancers are gathered round a mat as one spins on his head. We see a 'typical' 1980s detective car – cream coloured and box-like, with two stern-faced detectives seated in front while another smaller, darker man is seated in the back. The backseat passenger and one of the detectives make eye-contact in the rear-view mirror. The former gulps nervously. It appears that the two square-jawed detectives are escorting this extremely nervous individual to an airport; we are given a close-up of his face on which beads of sweat are clearly visible. He appears to be in his early thirties. He wears a stylish blue shirt and is handsome in an everyday sort of way. His beard is light and sculpted, not overgrown and dishevelled. There is no conversation, however, the soundtrack is a fast techno beat interspersed with submarine signals that add to the mounting tension. The car pulls up to the airport as two burly airport police (one man, one woman) dressed in white shirts and black ties approach the car, relieving the detectives of their prisoner and escorting the visibly nervous man inside. We now see that his hands are cuffed. He is led to a desk where a very large and severe-looking black lady receives his passport and stamps 'Deported' on it. He attempts to engage her with a meek smile but is met with a dispassionate stare. A bag is thrown in front of him, which he grabs and walks down the boarding tunnel, turning occasionally to check behind him. In an instant the plane has landed at its destination and the man is forced to shield his eyes from harsh sunlight as he exits the plane. He enters the passport control area and hands his Cuban passport to a large, aggressive looking Cuban man fully clad in uniform and sporting a short, greying moustache. The officer eyeballs the new arrival, both men unctuous in the afternoon heat. The customs official looks into the other man's eyes, down to his small brown bag and back to his face. He looks at the passport and notices the 'Deported' stamp. A slight wry smile now appears on his face and he nods to the younger man to carry on. The young man's face shows nothing for a moment and then smiles openly expressing relief. The music tempo increases as the submarine signals now give way to carnival pipes as the hero enters a cab laughing lightly to himself. The camera pans across the streets of Havana showing ageing buildings, two elderly gents carrying a double bass, a vintage Cadillac and other stereotypical scenes of the tourist gaze. The hero enters a door and walks out onto a balcony where several attractive and stylish young people receive him cheerfully. One girl jumps up and

hugs him. The camera falls upon the bag which is now unzipped revealing a stash of Heineken bottles.

'Not strictly available in Cuba in 1982' fills the screen.

For the first time we hear the man speak in his native tongue. He looks happily at another man and throws the now empty bag in his friend's lap. Subtitles translate: "You know what, your round!" All of them burst out laughing.

'But where there's a will …' fills the screen, followed by 'Heineken. Meet you there'.

Surmising brief elements:

Target audience

Males 20-40.

Sociable; independent; willing to take risks for the sake of new experiences.

Proposition

Heineken: worth the risk.

Tone of voice

I have generated a list of words that might have directed the creative execution. These include: Energetic, intense, upbeat, powerful, passionate, reckless, concentrated, deep, zealous.

Generally 'tone of voice' in a creative brief will be reduced to about three to four words. As such, I distil mine to the following:

Passionate upbeat lively

3.4.2 Analysis of Interviews and Support Materials

Above, I provided a short narrative description of the commercial titled 'Cuba' and attempted to undertake a very limited textual analysis of this in terms of the 'creative brief' elements. As outlined above, the 'China' and 'Cuba' commercials were a direct result of a new strategic initiative by Heineken Ireland deriving from rigorous consumer research and planning. These commercials can be considered 'brand' advertising in the sense that they are wholly directed towards cultivating a strong international brand identity that emphasises a particular ethos and personality and is universalist in appeal. In the following quotation, Heineken Ireland's Marketing Director Jacco van der Linden explains this new brand "spirit":

> "[...] there's a bit of risk-taking element in there, progressive, zest for life [...] and then these guys actually go a step beyond the normal, and that's our brand point of view. It's to go beyond who and what you know because that makes life a lot more interesting [...] and that's what we want to deliver as a brand because that's the Heineken spirit basically" (JV 07.11.05).

Above, van der Linden articulates a notion of self overcoming. He talks about "going beyond" what is known and not being restricted by "who" you are or where you live. Here, he appears to be making a virtue of identities that are not settled (which relates to one set of assumptions about Irishness as open and contingent – see Chapter 6) and is reminiscent of what Giddens (1991) calls 'emancipatory politics', wherein identity becomes a 'reflexive' and 'biographical project'. As suggested above, prior to the decision to revise its brand communication, Heineken conducted considerable research focusing in particular on the brand's consumer. Indeed, it appears that the McCann-Erickson team was somewhat surprised at the thoroughness of this research. It was so comprehensive, in fact, that Heineken had actually given a name to the new target consumer: 'Jack'. As Creative Director Shay Madden comments:

> "They got it right down to it [...] they had a target of one person, they actually had a name on him, they had an age on him, they'd clubs he went to, countries

> he travels to [...] so they had a real person [...] So we had a very, very clear idea of the sort of person we wanted to appeal to" (SM 27.10.05).

Madden's use of the word "real" is telling and on one level implies a willingness on the part of practitioners to endorse a rational-scientific belief in objective, verifiable "reality". (As I suggest in later chapters, however, such 'belief' is secondary to practitioner's need to 'convince' significant others that they 'know' target audiences and Irishness). Madden explains that subsequent to a briefing by Heineken, creative staff at McCann-Erickson were divided into teams and asked to develop campaign ideas, which were then consumer-tested. He notes that the successful idea was surprising:

> "One of which was this 'where there's a will' campaign and that was initially written by Stanno, who's a writer here. He had written this idea, and it was funny because a lot of the other ideas were much more obviously ticking off the boxes of the brief [but] this one did it in a whole different way. It was like, let's go into the world of film, let's go into the world of stories, let's go into sort of dark places so that was different [...] A lot of the other stuff was sort of semi-comedic and all this kind of stuff. And the client initially was a bit unsure of it but we put it into research and this ended up being the one that people liked most" (SM 27.10.05).

Above, Madden reveals a preference for unconventional ideas and lateral solutions to briefs. For him, the truly creative idea in advertising is one that broaches a common subject or theme in an unusual or novel manner. Against obviously "ticking the boxes" of the brief, the chosen campaign went against the grain in two respects; not only was the idea considered unconventional and unusual but it also seems that the client was surprised that its Irish agency was proposing a strategy that would be entirely devoid of explicitly 'Irish' referents. According to Madden, this decision was based on the preferences of Heineken consumers, who were dismissive of Irish themes or contexts and desired to "see exotic places":

> "So that way it [the new campaign] started ticking the boxes in ways they hadn't expected and we decided then afterwards with the brand campaign

being international we could actually go parochial and local on small things like Green Energy or when they sponsor local music [...] that's a license to suddenly go completely Irish on it" (SM 27.10.05).

In the above passage, Madden describes a two-tiered global/local strategy, which is a common approach among beer advertisers[67]. In effect, he explains that while Heineken 'brand' communication (such as the 'China' and 'Cuba' commercials) would maintain an essentially global "look and feel", the brand would simultaneously build more local connections via events such as Green Energy (see below). For McCann-Erickson, it was critical that Heineken as an international brand should not be tarnished by the "local" or "parochial" but should always be perceived as "global". Nevertheless, the agency aimed to create a commodious spectrum of identification that would range from local touch points to large, global identifications.

Target Audience

Shay Madden explains that the first two brand commercials produced in this campaign were called 'Mexico' and 'Prague' and that these were followed by the award-winning 'China' and 'Cuba'. He explains that the historical setting and geographical context in each case were of secondary importance and rather were chosen to highlight the ingenuity and determination of the personified Heineken ethos i.e. 'Jack':

"Jack liked the idea of pushing himself beyond his comfort zone so it was showing people over the years who showed a sense of bravery or a sense of intelligence to make use of their, I suppose, intellect to get past situations and to outwit people to get Heineken [...] A bit of dare and do going on, but also using their smartness to outwit somebody else [...] I suppose the link is it's a time and a place. It's almost as if it's a historical event that happened and in each case you've got the equivalent of Jack – he doesn't have to be the exact

[67] In pilot interviews with agency practitioners working on the Carlsberg account, for example, a distinction is made between 'affinity' and 'quality' messages, which can be compared to Heineken's differentiation between 'stature' and 'closeness'.

> age of Jack but they [the audience] can identify traits within him that they can see in themselves, like if he was a friend of mine I'd respect that guy" (SM 27.10.05).

For Madden, consumer 'identification' with Jack is fundamental. Against depicting Jack as an uncommonly handsome or talented individual, his extraordinariness is rooted in the quotidian. Consumers can "see themselves in" Jack; he is a respectable "friend". For Madden, these commercials are "almost" a depiction of "historical events", again revealing his tendency to conflate the imaginary and the real. Interestingly, this tendency to veer towards 'reportage' as a visual technique, as I highlight below, is also favoured in the Green Energy campaign. Van der Linden notes the tendency of marketers to construct the target audience as 'real' but stresses that this is a somewhat arbitrary approximation of various generalities. Jack is the "bull's-eye" consumer; he is the "target target":

> "And people forget it sometimes, because we call him Jack, and even marketers sometimes start to believe that Jack is a real guy, but Jack doesn't really exist. He is first of all an average of a lot of people, plus he is the target target – he is the bull's-eye that if you focus your communication to this guy then you reach what we call your target audience" (JV 07.11.05).

Van der Linden continues, outlining the various kinds of questions that required answering in order to build a profile of 'Jack':

> "[…] What's his mindset? What's his age? What does he look like? What are his hobbies? What are his interests? Does he work? Does he go to college? Does he study? Does he travel? Where does he travel? What type of clothes does he buy? What type of other products does he use? And this Jack guy, yeah we know pretty much, yeah we know a lot about this guy" (JV 07.11.05).

Having just noted the tendency of marketers and agency practitioners to lapse into moments of imaginative fantasy, conflating the 'target' and the 'real', van der Linden himself appears to fall into the same trap, claiming to "know a lot about this guy". Unlike other respondents in this case study, the McCann-Erickson Account Planner

Stephen Bogan was much more guarded and initially less forthcoming in answering questions. Bogan describes the target broadly as a "younger male adult audience, twenties through to thirties", explaining that beer drinkers "tend to bed down in their beer choice mid-twenties and they basically stay with that choice thereafter". He adds; "we would have been pitching at probably a mid-twenties audience but then moving through I would say, bull's-eye twenty-five to thirty" (SB 27.10.05). Reiterating his depiction of Jack as a kind of intelligent and almost avant-garde trendsetter, Madden comments: "He was a little bit smarter than your average guy, he was a guy that's interested in new stuff, he was very filmic [...]" (SM 27.10.05). Likewise, Blaney describes Jack as an unconventional risk-taker but stresses that the appeal is more to a disposition or "attitude" rather than a specific age group:

> QA: Can you tell me a little bit more about Jack?
>
> "[...] Young guys kind of your [points to me] age group, sense of adventure, travel a lot, take risks [...] So it's not mainstream guys who leave college and go straight into a job, they're more cutting edge type guys [...] it wasn't about an age, it was about an attitude. So they had picked out this particular guy; open-minded, sense of adventure, doesn't go to kind of Benidorm on his holidays but will go to Vietnam, likes discovery, likes taking risks, so there was an intensive profile built of this guy that they believed was the right target for Heineken" (OB 12.10.05).

In stressing an "attitude" above a specific age group, Blaney argues that the campaign was less likely to alienate those outside of the core group and expresses satisfaction that the "average Joe" also tends to like Heineken advertising. Indeed, she comments that "the Mexico commercial was very well liked outside of the Jack audience, you know, men in their fifties [...] my dad loved it" (OB 12.10.05). In addition to the dual strategy of presenting a global brand image alongside regionally specific communication, Blaney explains that within the global strategy the targeting is relatively elastic and hence, some commercials target Jack directly while others broaden the aperture slightly. Ideally, she suggests, a platform should be in place whereby certain elements can be "dialled up and down" depending on specific objectives.

Proposition

As noted above, the "proposition" attempts to express or capture the campaign strategy in a single sentence. When I asked Bogan to explain the proposition he again appeared somewhat guarded and rather than explain it outright, described its general sense in a fashion similar to van der Linden:

> "I think the proposition is expressing a viewpoint on life, which is about seeking out new experiences. That's essentially what the proposition is rooted in. It's an experientialism, it's a way of looking at life, it's people who want to go out and experience life. That's the basis of it, without giving away the specifics, which I can't actually do [...] but it's rooted in that territory" (SB 27.10.05).

Madden, the Creative Director, however, was much more forthcoming and returned once more to the 'Jack' character, intimating that a "thirst for new adventure" may have been part of the proposition. Again, Madden highlights the target's uncommon attitude and outlook, which he considers intelligent, unconventional and rather bohemian. For Madden, it is this mindset (both intellectually and attitudinally) that provides the linkage between consumer identity and brand identity:

> "[...] What Jack and Heineken shared was a thirst for new adventure [...] I remember that was part of the brief. And what they meant by that was Jack, the Jack character, he'd be the guy who would discover a band about a year and a half before anyone else, and he would almost lose interest when it began to become mass popular, you know. He would go to unusual places on holidays, he wouldn't go to the obvious places, he liked pushing himself beyond his safety limits and he was interested in all of that. And the link the client had is Heineken in a bizarre way – it's a global brand obviously – but they'd like to think there's a certain intellectualness to Heineken and it's almost, it's got itself placed in all these odd places all around the world so in their minds almost no matter where Jack went in the world Heineken could meet him" (SM 27.10.05).

Madden continually builds the brand identity in relation to the target biography, in which the hard language of 'demographics' dissolves in favour of more human description. Madden also inadvertently offers a rationale for the "meet you there" tagline that is used on all Heineken communication, sometimes without any immediately obvious significance[68]. Blaney likewise builds an impression of the proposition indirectly, constructing it via an associative space or "territory": "So the proposition territory that we worked in was the 'open-minded beer'" (OB 12.10.05). Blaney views Heineken advertising as a means of opening up a space in which a particular type of person, with specific interests and an adventurous spirited outlook, can engage with a brand that putatively shares this disposition. Against depicting a conventional product-consumer encounter, the Heineken work strives to create a loose, attitudinally relevant association. Blaney explains, however, that this type of strategy is not without difficulties and that it does not easily translate into clear identifications by consumers:

> "Now open-mindedness [...] would people watch those commercials and say Heineken equals [...] in the same way as Volvo equals safety? Do people look at the Heineken commercials and say; "Heineken equals an open-minded [...]" [...] I think it's possibly more in the sense of adventure type space" (OB 12.10.05).

Above, Blaney concedes that despite a campaign strategy and unique proposition, commercial viewers interpret advertising in their own unique ways and that their understandings, even when favourable, often differ from the intentions of producers. She suggests, however, that an effective dialogue and distillation of ideas in the creative process should minimise these dangers.

Tone of Voice

The final element of the brief that I attempted to 'unearth' was the 'tone of voice'. Replicating the practice of industry practitioners, I generated a series of adjectives

[68] Some campaign posters, for example, depict simply a Heineken bottle being splashed with water yet also include the "meet you there" tagline (see Appendix 4).

that I felt best described the character and feel of these adverts. Tone of voice is often a highly contested and problematic section of the brief because individual words can produce vastly different interpretations on the part of creatives. Clearly, the target, tone and proposition mingle in the persona and lifestyle of the mythical Jack. In my research, practitioners often claimed that the tone must 'fit' the brand and target. In other words, if the target audience is older, erudite and sombre males, for example, a farcical scenario or comedic tone may be unlikely to work. Likewise, when asked to explain the tone in the 'Cuba' and 'China' commercials, practitioners return to the profile of Jack. Blaney, for example, describes Jack's personality and attitude towards life; his self-confidence and willingness to break from the norm. For her, the tone is therefore 'confident' and 'smart':

> QA: How would you describe the tone of voice of the Cuba and China commercials?
>
> "It's very much a confident tone of voice in terms of aspiration for the brand. It's not humorous [...] so it's confident, a kind of person who gets it, lots of cop-on. So when you do the personality profile of this guy Jack – Jack doesn't really care what other people think if he's going to the middle of Vietnam with no money to try and find his way, so it's confidence [...] a real [voicing Jack] "I don't care what other people think, I'll make my own decisions" [...] it's not witty, it's not humorous [...] it's entertaining but kind of on a bigger scale" (OB 12.10.05).

As before, Bogan is much more reserved and measured when describing tone of voice. He ponders every question as if he is sitting an examination; pausing, frowning, deliberating, ruminating, qualifying. Rather than slipping into atmospherics he carefully offers a few choice descriptives, again suggesting that these can be "dialled up and down". Reflecting his own considerable experience writing briefs, Bogan chooses his words carefully, indicating that generic terms like "humour" are unhelpful on advertising briefs because they carry minimal descriptive value:

> "Wryness is a word that I often use to describe Heineken advertising [...] I mean I think it's an important quality. It's not humour per se, humour wears

out. Humour's shallow, humour's superficial. But it's a more wry aspect of humour [...] I think there's a degree of wit in the ads, which is dialled up and down, there's tension in the ads [...] Sophisticated. I think sophisticated, subtle and wry would be the three ways, three words I would use to describe the ads" (SB 27.10.05).

***

Taken together, the above offers a general framework for interpreting the selected commercials, although clearly the Heineken brand amounts to considerably more than the analysis of two texts will reveal. As Bogan highlights, the Heineken brand (indeed any brand) must be understood as the whole ensemble of brand-consumer "touch points", of which advertising is only part. As such, Bogan reasonably defers to the consumer as it is with the consumer that the meaning of a brand ultimately lies and it is the consumer who will ultimately decide its fate. (Again, Bogan's commentary is littered with qualifications):

QA: How would you define Heineken?

"The only way I can define it is in terms of the way consumers see it. That's the only meaningful way [...] there's a brand positioning which is where you want to get to and then there's the brand reality as to where you are and that is the current positioning in consumers' minds. And I'd say what they would see it as is a number of things [...] they'd probably see it as, and part of this is ordered by advertising, part of this is ordered by the whole look of the beer, the signage, the point of sales, the tins, the cans, the bottles, it's the sum of all consumer touch points with the brand actually. Advertising is an important part of that but it's not by any means the only part of that. It's also ordered by who else drinks Heineken in their social set, that's really important too, because that has an impact on how they see the brand. But I would say en masse, because it has to be a generalisation because different groups think about it differently [...] different socio-economic groups think about it

> differently, different age groups think about brands differently, not just Heineken but every brand and every beer brand actually. I would say it's probably seen as a quality beer, it's probably seen as relatively trendy – the trendier element, probably the trendier beer out there at the moment. There are dangers in being trendy as well; this year's trendy is last year's out-of-date. But it is seen as maybe just a little bit more sophisticated. For some that's a negative, some think that's kind of, you know, pretentious. Am but for many and particularly those who drink it they probably see it as a little bit more subtle, a little bit more sophisticated and that's reflected in the type of person who drinks it. And I think they'd probably see it as maybe having a sense of humour, a wit which has probably come from the advertising that has been run over a great number of years [...] and that's as I say, that's a snapshot of how en masse people might view the brand right now" (SB 27.10.05).

Bogan intimates a direct transfer or mutuality between brand and consumer. For him, the brand's "trendy" image, its "sophistication" and "wit" is "reflected in the type of person who drinks it". Here, we see a direct correlation between the interacting identities; they are viewed as one and the same. In the following passage, Shay Madden expresses this idea even more clearly. When questioned about the brand and target audience, Madden returns to the source of his own inspiration at the time – a former work colleague named 'Phil'. This provides an interesting example of how the brand personality tends to mingle with a real identifiable person in the creative imagination. Madden's memory of Phil offers a means of conceptualising the brand in tangible, corporeal terms. In visualising the brand and target, creatives constantly search for suitable external associations, such as movies or music, but Madden's account offers a less noted view of the importance of personal, biographical associations for the creative practitioner. For Madden, Phil resembles a human prototype in which the brand and target appear to "blur":

> "I suppose it's good to have this Jack character in your head – a lot of it is defined by him. The client had this Jack character but at the same time as we were pitching for the business we had a bloke here called Phil and Phil was the bloke who [...] I think everyone loved him – girls loved him but guys just loved the guy too. He just had a quirkiness and he's a total [...] he would do

> anything [...] he would do stupid things but it was endearing, endearingly stupid, but there was an intelligence to him as well [...] and I was like; "I wish I had the balls to do that!" He eventually left, like the reason he left McCann's was to go on a world tour and he used to email us incredible long emails of amazing stories but it wasn't written in a bragging way. There was sort of an understated intelligence to the guy and also a tiny hint of oddness and it was really good to have that in your head as well [...] you begin to blur the target market with the brand in some ways [...]" (SM 27.10.05).

The above suggests that Heineken brand communication strives to intersect the lives and identities of consumers in certain ways; it attempts to generate 'touch points' and a shared space for identification. As Bogan puts it, McCann's intention in each commercial is that the Heineken perspective is "married with the viewpoint of our consumer" (SB 27.10.05). Similarly, van der Linden employs the metaphor of a "bowtie" to convey the interaction of brand and consumer. He suggests that the brand is equipped with an architecture (history, heritage, values etc.) which is brought into contact with a specific consumer profile (mindset, values, lifestyle etc.) and that it is in this reciprocal exchange or shared space that the communication must be analysed:

> "It's a kind of bowtie, where on one side you have the consumer [...] and we know everything about him. The target consumer is Jack [...] and then on the other side of the bowtie you have your brand architecture; your history, heritage, values, proposition, essence [...] and that comes together and that's your touching point and that's your communication" (JV 07.11.05).

Returning to the idea of three stages or "streams" of communication mentioned above ('authority stream communication', 'world of Heineken communication' and 'Heineken in my world communication'), van der Linden argues that a wide variety of brand advertising is possible and permissible. Practitioners at McCann-Erickson, however, argue that this can prove confusing for the audience. Blaney, for example, is deeply critical of a recent Heineken commercial produced in the US and featuring

Brad Pitt[69] and argues that showing this commercial on Irish television clashes with the work produced by her own agency. Nevertheless, as with global sponsorship, she concedes that she is essentially powerless to influence these decisions:

> "Now my view is that ad [featuring Brad Pitt] should not be running here and as MD of the agency like I would say [...] if you've got a strategy then the 'where there's a will' work does an awful lot of the brand stuff; it does the aspiration thing, it does the quality cues for the product, so I've been debating, fighting would be a better word [laughs] actually! Debating the Brad Pitt thing [...] talking it through sensibly saying you shouldn't run it [laughing] so I personally think that that does send out a conflicting [...] if 'where there's a will' is the idea for the marketplace then why would you bring that in? The reason they are doing that is because (a), it doesn't do the brand any harm [...] all the research scores [...] a lot of girls like it! But also in terms of overall aspiration and premium and world class it does a certain job there [...]" (OB 12.10.05)

While critical of the Brad Pitt advert, Blaney acknowledges that it "doesn't do the brand any harm", therefore implying that her reasoning may have less to do with ostensible audience confusion and more to do with her agency's compromised position. She appears frustrated by her inability to control all the variables. Taking a slightly different tact, she suggests that the brand is upstaged in this work and that the result is "an ad for Brad Pitt [...] not an ad for Heineken [...] are we trying to sell his next movie or do we want to sell more Heineken?" (OB 12.10.05). Unlike Blaney, Bogan reveals a much more pragmatic acceptance of the power asymmetries at play. He suggests that there is always an "uneasy mix" between a multinational's central communications department and its various local subordinates. He invokes a language

[69] In this commercial, Brad Pitt skilfully outsmarts a gathering of relentless paparazzi. The intention of the advert, however, is to highlight the everydayness and normality of Pitt. Rather than associating Heineken with the ubiquitous 'star' that is Brad Pitt, we are led to view him as a regular guy, who also just happens to be an international icon. In the commercial, Pitt is 'brought down to earth' as it were, and depicted as a man of ordinary wants and needs (comfort, companionship, autonomy) while simultaneously keeping his stardom intact. What was seemingly unfathomable and untouchable is now vulnerable and identifiable. Heineken drinkers can relate and identify with Pitt not as a superstar but as an ordinary human being.

of "flux" inferring that the relative mix of local and global communication shifts continually in a pendular fashion and that this is simply "the way of the world":

> "When you've a multinational company, what they tend to do is they have a central communications department and then they have the local communications department and there is always an uneasy mix and that relationship is in flux. And the view of the world as to how to market is in flux as well [...] and that's not just Heineken, that's every multinational brand I've ever worked on. I've worked on quite a few – that's just the way of the world. And yes you do get things that feel intuitively discordant but then you have to say well, we've got to test that in research and understand where each of the components are actually fitting in [...] intuitively it mightn't feel right but when you actually go to research, that consumers find a way of fitting it into their overall perception of Heineken and it does make sense – it's a part of the jigsaw. Now [...] I would love to have one central wellspring from which everything springs because then we're ordering everything, but the reality is, the way of the world, economies of scale – that's an impossible situation, it's an impossible scenario [...] you've got to have a pragmatic perspective as well and you've got to [...] be careful to guard against our own preciousness because it's a natural reaction for the agency who is doing the lead communications work not to want to run [...] its 'not invented here' syndrome. And I think we have to be above that and say well actually, what role does this play in the grander scheme of things? If a brand is the sum of all perceptions towards that brand, does this help in one angle [...] is this the northwest bit that was missing?" (SB 27.10.05).

Bogan, like van der Linden, conceives of the brand attitudinally, but uses spatial metaphors to describe the communication. While van der Linden refers to various "worlds", Bogan offers a cartography of brand communication. For him, the Brad Pitt work is acceptable if research proves its effectiveness. In this case, it may well constitute the "northwest bit that was missing". Thus, he conceives of Heineken communication beyond a simple local-global dichotomy and views it in terms of complex and multivariate overlapping processes within a loosely defined territory. Nevertheless, like Blaney, Bogan admits that he would prefer complete control of the

communication model, favouring a "central wellspring". Ultimately, however, he accepts that McCann-Erickson's role is not only to generate creative ideas but to ensure brand cohesion, or that different pieces of Heineken communication maintain a single voice and identity; that they are "part of the jigsaw".

It is perhaps on account of Heineken's inherent globality that McCann-Erickson decided that despite being made for Ireland, the various commercials produced should exhibit a 'global' look and feel. Bogan explains this decision in "market" terms, which he suggests incorporates a plethora of factors including "culture". He hypothesises that the flaunting of subterfuge and the undermining of authority in the Cuba commercial might resonate with consumers in other countries besides Ireland, hinting at the subtle persistence of what might be described as a 'post-colonial' mindset:

> "[...] Every market is at a different stage of development as well. For instance, an African market would be [...] there are rules of engagement for an African market versus a sophisticated market like ourselves. Ireland has specific and unique social and cultural and historic circumstances, which maybe makes these ads resonate a little bit more. There are other countries who may be in that position, for instance, Portugal, Belgium or countries like that who maybe have had a strong dominant neighbour [...] this is just my hypothesis. But in other countries, such as Africa, they won't have a clue because they're more unsophisticated markets and it's more about, I suppose it's more about being upfront in the advertising" (SB 27.10.05).

Bogan describes African markets as "unsophisticated" and suggests that these demand entirely different communicational strategies, which are less "complicit" and more "didactic" in his terms. He implies that advertising in African markets is blatantly infused with Western ideals of consumerism and functions accordingly:

> "It's a much less subtle approach if you were to evaluate the advertising in those markets. It's cool guy drinks brand X, therefore you should too [...] and it doesn't try to dress that up in any way whatsoever, it's very, very clear. And in fact, Guinness has a very successful campaign running in Africa where they

> have a James Bond character who drinks Guinness and essentially it's; "I want to be like him – I'll drink Guinness too". So it's that level. So if you compare that with what Guinness does in Ireland, it's at the opposite end of the spectrum completely. One end you've got complicit advertising in Ireland and other markets – Holland for instance, the UK – and at the other end you've got a more didactic style of advertising" (SB 27.10.05).

When I asked Bogan if he thought the ads would work in other "sophisticated markets" he commented:

> "Whether they'll resonate in the same way as they resonate in the Irish market is a moot point – I really don't know. They'd have to test it and see what's coming out of that. Our characters doing what they do [...] would they empathise with them the same way as an Irish person would? And I suppose any person's view of life is ordered by their experiences of life and some sort of cultural subconscious or consciousness which has been generated over generations essentially [...] so I don't know if they would have that same cultural background to read into the ads maybe and decode them at a greater level – I'm not really sure" (SB 27.10.05).

Above, Bogan makes a strong case for cultural coding in advertising. He uses the word "empathy", which is a particularly emotive way of describing understanding. Here, it would seem that culture plays a significant part in consumption at the "subconscious" level. Equally, he seems to imply that 'history' is important at the level of the deep subconscious. While highlighting the importance of culture, however, Bogan and other practitioners at McCann-Erickson argue that this is a tricky subject in advertising. In particular, they suggest that to attempt to localise Heineken (a Dutch beer) would be potentially harmful to the brand.

> "Our view as an agency was to do Irish ads for Heineken – you should never mess with a brand like Heineken. It is a global, big, world stage brand so don't try and do [emphasises next word] Irish things with Heineken [...] people don't expect it and you shouldn't do it and it actually might almost alienate them from the brand" (SB 27.10.05).

The above is somewhat paradoxical given that many advertisers claim the problem with much global advertising is that it lacks cultural specificity, yet when asked to discuss work that they consider especially creative or effective, it is more often than not a 'culturally transcendent' (Domzal and Keman 1993) or 'universally comprehensible' style that practitioners are attracted to. Madden admits a certain "contradiction" in this but suggests that an essentially global brand can be made relevant to Irish people without necessarily attempting to make the brand *itself* appear Irish:

> "I suppose the way we resolved it in our heads is Coca-Cola will never be Irish and it's wrong to ever try and make it Irish. You can make it relevant to Irish people but for us, Heineken is an international, global brand that every now and again [...] [is] part of your daily life here, and every now and again it actually organises or facilitates events which you can go to so I think it's not Irish in my head but it would appeal to certain types of Irish people who would recognise themselves in its traits so you try and find some link there" (SM 27.10.05).

To an extent, Madden's comments above appear to uphold some notion of 'rooted cosmopolitanism' (cf. Appiah 2005; Debeljak 2001). Against a forced and ersatz Irishness or "doing a Guinness on a Heineken", Bogan likewise argues that it is necessary to find "a licensed connection point" whereby consumers are "complicit in that relationship" (SB 27.10.05). He constructs consumers as intelligent and discerning and criticises transparent attempts by advertisers to conflate brand identity and cultural identity. In a similar vein, Blaney criticises brands that attempt to play too many cultural cards as it were. Referring to a recent Amstel lager commercial depicting Columbus's discovery of America, for example, Blaney argues that the mélange of elements and referents is utterly confusing: "I don't think their idea is that clear. America, Dutch beer [...] Irish guys [...] I think the messaging it's sending out is not particularly clear" (OB 12.10.05). Where global brands can legitimately foster local ties, however, is via the sponsorship of events such as Heineken Green Energy, which I now examine.

3.5 Heineken Green Energy

In the 2003 Shark Awards, McCann-Erickson received both the Grand Prix Television Ireland Award and the Gold Shark in the category 'Irish Television Series' for a series of adverts promoting the Heineken Green Energy music Festival[70]. These were titled 'Van', 'Edenmore' and 'Kitchen' and centered upon an unorthodox band of four twenty-something musicians known as 'The Transformers' and their comical attempts to play at the festival. The Heineken Green Energy (HGE) festival comprises a line-up of rock and pop bands playing over the three days of the May bank holiday weekend in Dublin city venues. As the Transformers campaign proved extremely successful (acclaimed by both industry practitioners and journalists alike), there were multiple sources available to draw upon when reconstructing and analysing this campaign. In particular, I make extensive use of a 'case study' of the campaign published in the ADFX Awards Archives (www.iapi.ie). I include empirical (interview) data throughout but as above, I begin with a narrative description and textual analysis of this series.

3.5.1 Textual Analysis

As before, the following textual analysis proved useful as a means of orientating interview discussion, however, I did not attempt to assess the accuracy of my reading (although some correlation is evident). As has been noted, the 'Television Series' category emphasises coherence and symmetry between executions but permits variation in respect of storyline, characters and setting. In the Heineken brand campaign ('China' and 'Cuba') discussed above, the brand essence or spirit is consistent between commercials, although how this is communicated remains relatively open. The HGE commercials, however, were televised over a period of approximately three weeks and consequently, show even less variation than is typical of series adverts. In this case, the elements are much tighter and the storyline and

[70] As noted above, Heineken also received a client award from the Institute of Creative Advertising and Design (ICAD) for the Heineken Green Energy campaign. 'McCann-Erickson Managing Director Orlaith Blaney said the ICAD awards were the icing on the cake for the agency [...] The Heineken Green Energy campaign, she said, boosted Heineken's brand loyalty by 6 share points, while the brand grew its share by 1.2 per cent, to 27.5 per cent of all on-trade lager sales in Dublin in May 2003' (O'Mahony 2003).

characters are uniform; each execution documents another phase of the comical (though commendable) attempts of the eccentric band 'The Transformers' to play at the festival. Below, I provide a narrative description of each commercial yet 'unearth' a single brief (in terms of target audience, proposition and tone of voice).

Van

The four members of 'The Transformers' approach the back of a canary yellow Volkswagen van in what looks like a disused industrial lot as the drummer says in a strong working class Dublin accent; "right lads, here she is, brace yourselves". The camera holds the enthusiastic faces of his fellow band members as they behold the new van. The drummer opens the back of the van to reveal a 1960s style velvet interior with hanging crystal beads and cushions and a small fridge. In strong Dublin accents, the others express their satisfaction: "Wow" says one, "deadly" says another. One whistles as he exclaims; "very nice". His voice now filled with confidence, the drummer describes the sound system proclaiming; "two hundred lids[71] all in". The group now move to view the van side-on. On one side, the band name and logo are painted, with flaming glasses and black print. The group is silent as they behold this sight. However, at that moment one of the guitarists says; "The Tranformers?" A protracted silence descends upon the group as they consider this statement. The camera focuses on the lead singer's face as it shifts from glee to anger. Now irate, the lead singer taps against the side of the van and enquires; "where's the 's'?!" "That looks brutal" he cries, directing his irritation to the guitarist who, noticing the error, tries to defend himself by pointing to the second guitarist saying; "he's after spellin it". The lead singer comments; "I'm workin with two saps here" as he starts to walk away. Shaking his head, he mutters "saps" in a dejected tone.

'Will you make it this year?' fills the screen.

[71] Pounds/Euro.

Edenmore[72]

'The Transformers' are on stage. They are dressed in 1960s style clothing with matching hairstyles. The back of the stage is painted black with flaming yellow glasses and 'The Transformers' is written in the font-style of early Hollywood horror film titles. The singer and the other members of the band jam enthusiastically. The camera angle switches in rapid succession. We gain occasional glimpses of the background scenery which appears to be a green field in a housing estate. It is only then that the camera pulls back to show that the makeshift stage is actually in the front garden of a whitewashed council house. The music comes to an abrupt halt. Into the microphone the singer shouts; "we're The Transformers, goodnight and God bless", his strong working class Dublin accent very apparent. The band strolls confidently off the stage. A man and a woman standing on the pavement facing the makeshift stage clap enthusiastically. Two other people stroll by minding their own business.

'Will you make it this year?' fills the screen.

Kitchen

We see a simple, brightly-lit kitchen (possibly the one from the house in the above commercial). The walls are covered in white wallpaper with little patches of green flowers and a picture of the sacred heart of Jesus is clearly visible. Three of 'The Transformers' are seated around the kitchen table while one of them (a guitarist) stands. It appears to be the guitarist's home. "Are we jamming tonight?" the guitarist asks to nobody in particular. The lead singer replies; "we are, you're not. We all want you out of the band". "What?!" screams the guitarist, in a shocked tone. The lead singer repeats matter-of-factly; "you're out of the band". The stunned young man instantly shouts out: "Ma! They want me out of the band!" to which the now panic-stricken others try to quell his screams. "No don't tell your ma!" they shout. A burly woman in her forties carrying a clothes basket now enters the room. Reminiscent of a character in a Roddy Doyle novel, she is wearing a tight pink tracksuit and her black

[72] Edenmore is a north Dublin residential district.

roots are showing through her dishevelled blond hair. She hisses; "what's wrong?" to which her son replies dejectedly; "they want me out of the band".

The others cringe and cover their faces as the mother angrily dumps the basket on the table and shouts while pointing aggressively; "no way. He is the band. The Transformers is nothin without him! He's more talent than the three of you put together and you know it", she screams. The others raise their hands in surrender muttering; "right, right, you're right, you're right yeah" and in a meek tone the lead singer says; "you're in, you're in".

The mother walks off as her son asks/says defiantly; "so I'm in the band yeah?"

The lead singer nods and asks; "any biscuits?" He then leans forward and looks out the kitchen door gauging the whereabouts of the guitarist's mother. Satisfied she is not nearby he whispers; "you are outta the band" to which the standing youth once again erupts into "ma, ma" as the others once more try to drown his screams; "shhhhhhhhhh", "we're only messin, we're only messin!" they screech desperately as the guitarist flees in search of his 'ma'.

'Will you make it this year?' fills the screen.

Surmising brief elements:

Target audience

Males 16 – 35 (core 25). Social, outgoing and playful. Interested in 'authentic' music and especially live acts. Somewhat critical of advertising and corporate sponsorship.

Proposition

Anticipation is half the experience.

Tone of voice

I have generated a list of words that might have directed the creative execution. These include:

Funny, ironic, self-effacing, modest, genuine, fun, grounded, likeable, grassroots, down-to-earth, comical, unconventional, playful, irreverent, unyielding, committed, sincere, daring, adventurous, reckless, honest, enthusiastic, upbeat.
Generally 'tone of voice' in a creative brief will be reduced to about three to four words. As such, I distil mine to the following:

Comical upbeat unconventional

3.5.2 Analysis of Interviews and Support Materials

In the ADFX Archives, the marketing background to the Heineken Green Energy Transformers campaign is described as follows:

> In 2000-2002 there were signs that the brand [Heineken] was starting to be seen as less relevant among young men – the key lager target market. To counteract this, the client and the agency set out a re-positioning plan for the brand, central to which was the leveraging of the Heineken Green Energy music sponsorship as a key platform (www.iapi.ie).

The re-positioning plan alluded to here has been discussed (above) in relation to Heineken 'brand' advertising. In 2000, the London-based advertising agency Lowe was responsible for both Heineken global 'brand' and Heineken Green Energy advertising, however, in 2002, Heineken Ireland decided to relocate all of its advertising to the Dublin-based McCann-Erickson advertising agency. This new repositioning entailed several key objectives. Firstly, the festival was viewed as an opportunity to infuse the brand with additional values. Again using somewhat structural language, van der Linden describes Heineken Green Energy as a "property" of the Heineken brand. Returning to the notion that Heineken had become rather staid (a bit "distant" and "formal"), van der Linden suggests that the HGE festival was viewed as a means of adding new values (such as youthfulness, dynamism and energy) to the brand without taking from its stature and quality associations. He

describes the event as "a hook"; the advertising was not concerned with generating awareness but with "infusing" the brand with the aforementioned values:

> "We have this property which is Heineken Green Energy, but from a brand perspective what we wanted to do is two things; one, if you look at the Heineken brand values, so what did consumers think of when you mentioned the Heineken brand was good quality, great consistency, very trustworthy, a premium brand, a bit of a rugger-bugger premium connotations, but very good quality, reliability am but also a bit distant, a bit formal, a bit business like. So our objective was to add a few values to that [...] we wanted to be a bit younger, a bit more dynamic and energetic so 'zest for life' we called it. A bit more progressive [...] so we set three years ago a target to add these values – a bit more risk-taking to the brand. That was the first objective, the second objective was [...] we had ticked the box of quality – so the authority stream – quality, history etc. We were seen as a big brand because we were putting Brad Pitt, Jennifer Anniston, all those corporate ads on TV, which gives you a big brand feel and shows ok, Heineken has this big world to offer of which you can be part of. But we had to improve in terms of closeness, so we had to achieve closeness and we had to be a bit more modern, young and appealing to Jack [...] these were the two objectives. And then your Heineken Green Energy event is only a hook to achieve that objective because we are not putting those ads on air to make people aware of the event because that will be sold out anyway and we do that via posters etc. It's to infuse the brand with some different values [...] so that was the brief that we gave to McCann's" (JV 07.11.05).

Rather than simply associating itself with a kind of grassroots, popular musical event, Heineken wished to be acknowledged as a facilitator; to be viewed as adding to the overall experience. In this sense, Heineken strove to portray itself as both participant and performer; as patron of the audience's interests and catalyst of the event itself. In the following paragraph, the specific communicational objectives of the Transformers campaign begin to come to light.

> Speaking to the twenty-something's about what they liked about festivals in general, we learned that they look forward to them, like a weekend away, because the whole vibe provides some of their favourite moments and memories: a real atmosphere and the potential for an unplanned and unscripted interaction. There is an air of carefree spontaneity and the promise of a good time with friends, and in music terms it's a mix of the familiar with the new (www.iapi.ie).

Above, one detects a deliberate attempt to locate the brand emotionally and experientially in the mindset of the consumer, mindful that such a union cannot be forced, just as the unfolding of the event itself is "unplanned and unscripted". Likewise, the mixing of the "familiar with the new" echoes the strategic intention of Heineken to 'update' its image. The above registers a note of 'authenticity' ("a real atmosphere") but it also reveals a desire on the part of Heineken to ingrain itself in the memories of those attending the festival. Even The Transformers themselves seem to represent a rebellious, nostalgic stance against globalisation, technology and rampant consumerism. They voice a kind of pacifist 1960s ethos; free love, committed creativity and self-expression, reflecting the "carefree spontaneity" the brand is trying to cultivate. The band drives a dingy Volkswagen van and dress in retro, dishevelled clothing. While faintly comical in their attempts to achieve stardom, there is something endearing and uncompromising in them; they represent the antithesis of the manufactured *Pop Idol* generation. The agency saw this campaign as an opportunity to "free up all the stuff that you have to get into your brand advertising. You can be a little bit more focused on the people who go to these festivals, even at the expense of drink" (SM 27.10.05). In addition to infusing the brand with additional values, the HGE campaign permitted a more explicit 'Irish' focus. As highlighted in the previous section, practitioners at McCann-Erickson believed that Heineken should always be perceived as a large global brand yet the agency felt that a sense of Irishness could be conveyed via the brand's association with local events: "Heineken can't be Irish. But they can use other things in their marketing to kind of connect with Irish people" (OB 12.10.05). Strategically therefore, the HGE campaign facilitated the development and enrichment of 'local' ties. As such, 'the platform was an opportunity to connect locally and demonstrate Heineken's understanding of our target through an entertaining Irish tone of voice' (www.iapi.ie).

Madden reveals that the Transformers brief was approached somewhat differently to the Heineken 'brand' work. He suggests that Heineken's stature and ubiquity afforded the agency the opportunity to play with the brand image in this campaign. He indicates that while McCann-Erickson is required to tick "a number of boxes" with each Heineken campaign, "you don't always have to tick all of them at the same time" (SM 27.10.05). Nevertheless, he stresses the importance of cohesiveness and that campaigns should cumulatively amount to "one brand speaking":

> "Once you have established that sort of upper tier you can then do other little things within it and it's up to us that all these individual bits hold together cohesively as one brand speaking" (SM 27.10.05).

Blaney suggests that a difficulty with brand communication is that it can become rather like "wallpaper" if an idea is overused. She offers the example of 'Be with AIB', which is effectively stamped on all the company's communication without any apparent differentiation. Blaney argues that when such a strategy is used by global brands, messages can appear extremely "diluted". Against this, she claims that Heineken shows much more discernment, taking "each brief" individuality. Nevertheless, she admits that Heineken's sponsorship decisions have not quite matched its brand strategy and that the brand's continued sponsorship of sporting events, such as rugby and soccer, completely conflict with its attempts to capture younger, edgier consumers. Here again, Blaney reveals the compromised position of her regional agency and the difficulties inherent in managing a global brand:

> "I think once you also start to stretch it out too much it becomes a bit of a wallpaper thing [...] it doesn't look differentiated [...] 'Be with AIB'[...] [is] an interesting one because [...] every ad they do is 'Be with AIB' whether it's motor loans or it's rugby sponsorship or whatever it is and when you start to do that with a big brand it all gets very diluted, it all looks the same so I think Heineken have been quite, I suppose, focused on taking each brief and saying ok; "what do we want to do with this audience?" [...] But I think if you were to look at marketing theory and marketing textbook definitions [...] like if it's all about open-mindedness and sense of adventure, actually, if you could control the sponsorship properties you will probably look at the kinds of things

> that Jack does in terms of sense of adventure, so what are they? Are they going snowboarding in the Himalayas? [...] So that's the territory you might get into sponsoring, but the existing properties they have like rugby isn't particularly open-minded, isn't particularly Jack's thing but yet they have a global property for rugby. They've now got into soccer, which looks really odd on the back of the sponsor. We're like; "don't [...] not soccer [...] it just feels so wrong for the audience"! [Laughs]" (OB 12.10.05).

In the above passage, Blaney touches upon the importance of intuition – producers developing a 'sense' of the brand and a 'feel' for what is suitable and unsuitable in communicational terms. Above, she implies that her agency's understanding of Heineken and its target audience is somewhat at odds with the brand's global sponsorship properties. As I highlight in Chapter 6, this intuitive sense is fundamental to advertising production and arguably assumes even greater importance than formal research.

Target Audience

The above makes quite explicit a bias towards men in the brand's targeting, however, equally important for McCann-Erickson was that this work would not alienate those outside of the primary target audience. 'The role of the communication was to: transfer the values and credibility of the HGE festival to the Heineken brand in a way that reaches beyond the narrow festival target' (www.iapi.ie). Above, I described in some detail the "bull's-eye" target audience of Heineken. It is noteworthy that both client and agency appear highly confident of this profile, often pointing to extensive research as the basis of this certainty (although as I have suggested above, and which I elaborate upon in Chapter 6, there is strong evidence to suggest that for agency practitioners at least, informal and intuitive knowledge are increasingly favoured above research findings).

> Through McCann-Erickson's proprietary consumer insight generation tool – PulseTM, and through in-depth qualitative research undertaken by the client,

> we identified key motivations and the opportunity for connection with music and our typical consumer (www.iapi.ie).

In a language utterly devoid of ambiguous surmising or hopeful conjecture, the HGE campaign was apparently developed 'through a thorough and insightful understanding of the target and their relationship with music' (ibid.). When asked to describe the target audience for The Transformers commercials, van der Linden returns to the three-tiered communication model (outlined above). He describes these commercials as "tactical" advertising because they communicate with consumers "indirectly" via an event and because they are part of the Heineken "in my world" communication stream. In other words, against promoting the stature or ubiquity of the brand, these commercials are directed towards generating "closeness" with consumers. Nevertheless, van der Linden concedes that this is difficult because the brand cannot be seen to be attempting to "put a mirror" in front of Jack. (This parallels Bogan's insistence (above) that the communication must be "complicit"). Van der Linden suggests that while broadly similar to the 'brand' advertising target audience, the target in the HGE commercials is younger and more likely to "get" the Heineken spirit of adventure. He implies that overall, Heineken consumers fall into one of two categories; younger, edgier drinkers who are the principal target and older (thirty-five plus) drinkers who may not grasp the 'zest for life' message but who are nevertheless attracted to Heineken's stature and quality image:

> "With The Transformers it's what we call tactical advertising, so it's an indirect relationship [...] the communication is about the event and then you have the consumer. So we make use of the event to talk to the consumer because it is 'in my world' communication in order to get close but at the same time the most difficult type of communication because you cannot be too direct with Jack [...] you cannot put a mirror in front of him, being a foreign brand and say; "ok this is who you are". Because there are consumers who will say; [voicing consumer] "well you're paternalising me, who the hell do you think you are? Bugger off". So doing that indirectly via the Green Energy event then you have a reason to be a bit Irish [...] The target group is the same, it's Jack, who is about twenty-four, but it does a different job [...] and what we see is that this stream of advertising realises closeness [...] So what

> we see from research is that there are two types of consumers. There's the younger target group – they say they get what we really want to say and they really do get it and they take out risk, progressiveness, this mindset [...] so we're happy with that. And then the older target group. So if we look at how well the ads are doing with thirty-five plus [...] yeah, they get a quality message and an international message out of it and that's fine for us because that's what they seek for in our communication and that keeps them loyal to our brand" (JV 07.11.05).

Like van der Linden, Bogan indicates that while the target audience for both campaigns was "essentially" the same, The Transformers campaign was "maybe pitched slightly younger [...] maybe towards a sort of twenty-two, twenty-three year old audience" (SB 27.10.05). Like its parent brand, the target for the HGE campaign is a discerning, intelligent consumer and an adventurous risk-taker in both lifestyle and music. He is, inwardly at least, mildly anti-capitalist and openly non-conformist in certain respects. He cherishes what he considers 'authentic' music and consequently can be scathing of corporate sponsorship and commercialisation:

> We knew that he admires brands that are brave, original and provocative. Music is a key interest for him but he is wary of a bland exploitation of it by large brands. He expects beer brands to use music to drive youth appeal and credibility, but often dislikes the way that some brands seek to 'take credit' for the cool line-up rather than add to the overall experience or build-up (www.iapi.ie).

Proposition

For Madden, the HGE work prioritised humour and a sense of anticipation. Indeed, the sense of anticipation (perhaps most famously used by Guinness) is key to understanding the resultant Transformers work. 'The creative brief was around the thought of 'anticipation'. The brief to the creative team was to consider the notion that 'anticipation can lead to bizarre and unexpected experiences' before the festival' (www.iapi.ie). The creative idea centres upon

> the bizarre escapades of a little band with big ambition. The campaign idea focused on the trials and tribulations of a fictional north Dublin band – 'The Transformers' in the lead up to the event. We invited our audience to share in the band's anticipation of the HGE festival with the campaign line 'Will you make it this year?' in a series of mini-sketches and in documentary style (www.iapi.ie).

Hence, while attempting to generate interest and anticipation, the creative idea in the HGE series is still very much tied to the abovementioned brand identity and ethos. Anticipation could conceivably be fostered via glamour and beauty, however, in light of its 'extraordinary in the ordinary' outlook, Heineken opted instead to explore this from the perspective of hopeless, yet endearing wannabes. The band members are comical, even delusional, yet also admirable in their relentless commitment and belief. The audience is motivated to share their anticipation and the 'documentary style' creates the impression of authenticity. The unglamorous, unspectacular filmatic style compounds the 'real life, down-to-earth' personality the brand is attempting to cultivate[73]. 'The Transformers' embodied the archetypal struggling Irish band. Our advertising was a humorous 'take' on a little band with big ambition, teetering on the verge of self-destruction' (www.iapi.ie). However, as comical and eccentric as The Transformers might occasionally appear, it was important for Heineken that the commercials should not be interpreted as condescending or demeaning. The executions are certainly humorous but they are primarily concerned with showing anticipation and the willingness to pursue dreams.

> "The only trick with The Transformers was these guys are funny guys and they look a bit different but if you start to take the piss out of them that's not what we want as a brand [...] so you want to laugh with them, you don't want to laugh at them. And that was the trick with the Transformers, and that was the role of the creative agency and the director, that you make sure that we don't make them a kind of victim [...] or fun of that. And Transformers did that job for us" (JV 07.11.05).

[73] There is some evidence to suggest that a deliberately 'amateurish' filmic style is becoming increasingly popular among advertisers (see Baldwin 2007, for example).

Tone of Voice

Unlike van der Linden, who sees considerable overlap between the Heineken 'brand' and Green Energy executions, Blaney suggests that the latter has a "completely different tone of voice for the brand". For Blaney, a kind of irreverent humour best describes the HGE work. She comments; "it was like The Commitments in terms of its tonality" (OB 12.10.05). Likewise, Madden suggests that "there's a touch of Spinal Tap to it and mixed with other things as well. There was another film reference we had [...] but yeah, we were treating that brief slightly differently" (SM 27.10.05). Here, respondents highlight how intertextual referencing is used to explain and develop advertising campaigns. In particular, the crossover between film and music is deemed especially useful. Respondents at McCann-Erickson suggest that while the HGE work shares a similar tone to the brand work, its focus on younger drinkers encouraged a more irreverent and playful tone in the commercials investigated.

***

The complete HGE campaign included a series of seven TV executions, outdoor posters, radio, press and PR and was so successful that the 'fictional' Transformers inspired a kind of 'mini-cult' and were invited to partake of radio interviews and television performances and their song was frequently requested by radio listeners. 'The campaign generated 'talkability' among our core eighteen to twenty-four target and made an impression far beyond the brand/festival association' (www.iapi.ie). The brand also used non-traditional media (such as beer-mats that directed consumers to a website[74]) and PR initiatives (such as a *Hotpress* feature interview with the band). Thus, the boundaries between fiction and reality were cleverly blurred leading to a kind of suspension of belief where the band was concerned. The HGE Transformers

[74] As part of this campaign, a Heineken Green Energy microsite was developed, which 'offered "fans" of the fictional band "The Transformers" the chance to interact with band members as well as have the opportunity to win merchandise and vote for the band to play at the Festival itself' (www.webfactory.ie).

campaign was hugely successful, both in terms of product sales[75] and in respect of its communicational objectives. As previously stated, the role of the advertising was to enliven the image of the brand and to make it attractive to eighteen to twenty-four year olds. Essentially, the objective was to 'transfer' the values of the festival to the brand and in this respect the campaign was highly successful; in April 2003, Hall and Partners (a research group) identified a positive upward shift in desirable brand attributes like 'modern and contemporary', 'for people like me' and 'cool, edgy' (www.iapi.ie). Likewise, the success of the campaign was reflected in the numerous industry awards it received. In addition to its success at the Sharks, the campaign was awarded four ICAD Bells, was considered the 'best integrated campaign' at the 2003 Media and Marketing Awards and received an award for outstanding and effective communication at the Advertising and Communication Excellence Awards. Jacco van der Linden commented: "This was an outstanding campaign that really cut-through and caught the popular imagination which is rare. More importantly, it was extraordinarily effective and is a great example of how to leverage a sponsorship in a way that serves the brand" (www.iapi.ie).

Shay Madden, McCann-Erickson's Creative Director, suggests that as a consequence of Heineken's success with Green Energy, its competitors have pursued similar creative strategies with the result that it is becoming difficult to distinguish McCann's work for Heineken Green Energy from that of other music festivals, such as the 'Bud Rising Festival', for example:

> "But I mean there's blurring of lines here [...] Budweiser are doing the Bud Rising festival and they're pushing that a lot more now in response to the Heineken music stuff. They did the poster of the guy as a needle on a record player and it could have been a Heineken campaign in a way so I mean everyone's sort of in the same area" (SM 27.10.05).

[75] The total investment (production, media, sponsorship fee) for the campaign was €980,000. The payback was 1:1.2. For every €1 spent the return was 20% or €1.20 based on revenue contribution (www.iapi.ie).

3.6 Conclusion

This case study has presented an analysis of two award-winning advertising campaigns for the Heineken brand created by the McCann-Erickson advertising agency in Dublin. The focus on 'campaigns' as opposed to individual executions is important, as I have argued that this facilitates a more longitudinal and holistic approach to analysing brands. The McCann-Erickson Account Planner, Stephen Bogan, suggests that the very premise of any 'campaign' demands "commonalities" between executions, however

> "what you're looking to guard against is formulaism if there's such a word, you don't want to make them formulaic – you want to take what's working from each of the ads, which you would have learned through research and then re-apply it in hopefully a slightly new interesting context for the next commercial. And then there's ultimately an opportunity as the campaign progresses to stand right back and say; "ok, where does the campaign go next? Where should it go next? Where can it go next? Or has the footprint of the campaign been expanded fully?" [...] [Have we] basically worn-out the campaign idea? Which is a hard call for people to make" (SB 27.10.05).

In explaining the linkages between the Heineken 'brand' advertising and the Heineken Green Energy campaign, McCann-Erickson's Managing Director Orlaith Blaney suggests that the brand's stature and reputation was especially important. She argues that the perception of Heineken as a "premium, international stature beer" is the "common thread" (OB 12.10.05). While the analysis presented here is clearly limited to a handful of texts, it offers a useful insight into the kind of issues, processes and questions at stake in the production of these campaigns. In particular, it should be reiterated that these commercials were deemed worthy of industry praise and plaudits. When I questioned Blaney on why she felt these campaigns were so successful, she suggested that it was on account of their "world-class quality [...] Now that's advertising that could run anywhere in the world, there's no reason why not" (OB 12.10.05). Bogan likewise attests to the world-class quality of the work. He draws attention to the enormous difficulties that advertising agencies face in bringing

promising ideas to fruition and how, in the case of a successful ad, "the sum of the parts" often amounts to "something more than they should have done on paper":

> "I think they [the Heineken adverts examined] were crafted, I think they were clever advertising, I think they broke the mould at some level [...] in different ways, and Transformers broke it in a very different way – it was irreverent, it was unorthodox, it was unlikely, it worked [...] it was also very, very engaging and very, very enjoyable. It was very well crafted, very well acted, very well executed and the sum of the parts just seemed to add up to something more than they should have done on paper. And I think judges, who tend to be creative people in themselves, respond to that because they know the difficulties of actually bringing an ad together and somehow, sometimes you get an ad – it looks perfect, you develop it all the way through and it just doesn't somehow see the final hurdle – it should do. I mean making great advertising is all about not messing up at each stage. It's about reducing the margin of error at every single stage of development. That's how you do it. You can't say; "if I do all these things I'm going to end up with a fantastic ad" [...] it's actually trying to avoid the pitfalls at each stage, which reduces the possibility of not ending up with a fantastic ad and that's, in my experience, that's how it happens" (SB 27.10.05).

While prioritising creativity in advertising, Bogan defines this negatively. Against challenging clients with provocative and inspiring ideas, it seems that "making great advertising is all about not messing up at each stage"; it involves "reducing the margin of error at every single stage of development" (SB 27.10.05). This suggests not merely that creativity in advertising is arguably defined more by restriction than latitude (see Appendix 3) but also that a purely formulaic approach will not produce definite results. There seems to be an element of 'luck' in this process (a view shared by van der Linden). In addition, several respondents highlight the particular talents of commercial directors, pointing us to creative activity that occurs *outside* the agency-client realm.

> "Damien O'Donnell who shot Transformers and the four guys in that campaign never acted before. I remember thinking oh God it is such a high

> risk for us because it was our first outing for Heineken. The director was looking at them saying they are amazing but I don't know if I can make it work. And then he actually said; "I'm going to rehearse these guys to death, I'm going to kill these guys in rehearsals because I can't take that risk". So I think when you put someone like Damien O'Donnell on Transformers he's going to get the best out of that cast. So world-class directors and production companies like that give it a world-class look [...] I'm not saying there isn't local talent, like Damien is local but there aren't ten Damien O'Donnell's" (OB 12.10.05).

While I do not explore the role of commercial directors, photographers etc. here, I suggest that this is a realm of advertising production that is deserving of further attention, especially given the scarcity of research in advertising that examines creative practices outside the agency environment. It suggests that while creativity emerges first in planning and is encapsulated in the creative brief, creative production does not end in the client-agency interaction but carries through to the final assemblage and execution. Interestingly, in the following quote in which he describes the production of the 'China' and 'Cuba' commercials, Madden mentions "the things that *didn't* get done", reminiscent of Stuart Hall's (1982) treatment of representation as a process of selection, omission and framing:

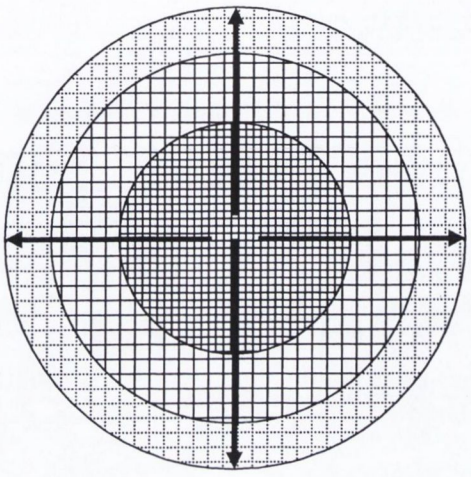
> "It's actually really good working with good directors because oftentimes they will stand up and just say; "no I wont do that" [...] actually just blatantly refuse to do stuff which maybe sometimes local directors or B directors or C directors will just bend over and just say; "of course I'll do that" and if someone hasn't got a strong vision themselves or is not strong enough they will end up doing something that's not as good and in a way, I think what makes those ads good is all the things that didn't get done. It's hard to determine but in the course of making these commercials there's so many meetings, so many decisions, so many split-decisions even on the day when you're shooting that a really good director, if they're really good, they'll just go; "no I'm keeping the camera this way", "no I'm not actually going to show that bit over there, I don't need to see a reaction shot [...] it's cooler if you

don't see it" [...] it's little, small things and just even the pacing of the story" (SM 27.10.05).

In the series commercials examined in this case study, the Heineken brand is conceived in various ways. While Madden speaks of a "blurring" of boundaries between brand and consumer, van der Linden prefers to imagine a series of "worlds", whereby the aspirational and exclusive "world of Heineken" is connected to (but remains above) "Heineken in my world". He suggests that these worlds interact and exchange values, that they have synergies and similarities, but that the brand cannot afford to become "parochial" or too local. Thus, a final "blurring" is resisted in his account. Nevertheless, van der Linden argues the need for mixed messages because individual communiqués can only reasonably achieve "a couple" of objectives. Each does "a job". This suggests that against a simple dichotomous strategy of local and global communications, the Heineken approach is multi-layered and flexible. It appears that all brand communication emanates outwards from a fundamental brand platform enshrining a specific Heineken brand identity and as such, even work of a more 'local' flavour (such as 'The Transformers' campaign) is infused with a basic collection of values to which others may be added. Rather than a rigid "formulaic" (SB 27.10.05) approach, Heineken appears to favour more organic and autonomous production once the "fundament" is in place. Thus, while work such as the HGE series can be distinguished from 'China' and 'Cuba', Heineken brand communication is perhaps best conceived as a space in which different associations and ideas can be combined within a loosely-defined territory. The model of concentric circles emanating outwards from a central core (see Figure 1.1 below) illustrates this. Within this symbolic space, numerous signifiers float, interact and engage and it is these that collectively constitute the Heineken brand.

Figure 1.1:

Model of Heineken Brand Communication



Brand Fundament (heritage, values etc.)

'Brand' Advertising (e.g. *China* and *Cuba*)

Sponsorship and Local Initiatives (e.g. *Transformers*)

Chapter 4: Today FM Case Study

4.1 Introduction

This case study focuses on an award-winning advertising campaign for the Irish radio station Today FM created by Dublin-based advertising agency Cawley Nea\TBWA. The campaign featured three commercials, each focusing on a particular Today FM personality (Ian Dempsey, Ray D'Arcy and Matt Cooper) and received the Grand Prix Television Ireland Award and the Golden Shark in the category 'Irish Television Series' at the Shark Awards 2004. In the sections that follow, I provide a general background to this campaign followed by a short textual analysis or 'unearthing' of the elements of the creative brief: target audience, proposition and tone of voice. Throughout this chapter, I include empirical (interview) data and draw upon support (archival/documentary) materials where available. As with the previous case study, it is the advertising 'agency' involved i.e. Cawley Nea\TBWA that I am primarily interested in and hence, while the views of the client are included, this chapter does not provide a detailed analysis of the corporate structure and organisational culture of Today FM.

The respondents in this case study are: Martin Cowman (Creative Director Cawley Nea\TBWA), Diane Tangey (Account Manager Cawley Nea\TBWA) and Sara Falconer (Marketing Manager Today FM).

4.2 Cawley Nea\TBWA

Cawley Nea was founded in 1992 and in 2002 became Cawley Nea\TBWA when the agency joined Omnicom, the largest communications company in the world. TBWA has 223 offices in 73 companies (www.cawleynea.ie). "We used to be boutique, domestic, entrepreneurial," said Cawley [one of the agency founders]. "Where we're going is big, international, outward-looking" (O'Mahony 2004). Cawley Nea\TBWA

is located on Blackberry Lane in Rathmines – a reasonably affluent area very close to Dublin city centre. Like McCann-Erickson in the previous case study, Cawley Nea\TBWA is housed in a somewhat nondescript building, although architecturally it is of a more recent vintage. Within the building, however, Cawley Nea\TBWA is markedly different to McCann's. The decor and layout reflect the shift towards flexible organisations and flat 'open-planned' structures in the advertising industry. Work stations are spread out creating the impression of one large and densely populated office space. While the bulk of the interior is designed as such, a number of meeting rooms are positioned off this central body providing refuge from the general hustle and bustle of the agency environment. While the 'active' business of McCann-Erickson is hidden from the visitor until invited inside, a visitor entering Cawley Nea\TBWA is immediately cognisant of a colourful hive of activity.

Like McCann-Erickson, Cawley Nea\TBWA can be considered the quintessential branch office of a large multinational corporate structure. Yet while the previous case study focused on a global brand (i.e. Heineken), this chapter examines Cawley Nea\TBWA's work on Today FM – a brand (and medium) solely based in Ireland. Despite being part of the TBWA network, Martin Cowman, the Creative Director, is dismissive of the term 'branch office' and argues that Cawley Nea has a "voice" in the network. He comments; "it's really about whether you position yourself as a branch office or whether Irish agencies have a voice in the network. The advertising world is kind of evening out and it's a case of whether an agency will take their position and try to apply it. We have a voice in our network" (MC 16.03.06). Here, much like Blaney in the previous case study, Cowman is keen to construct his agency as a powerful, autonomous entity, resisting suggestions of increased power asymmetry amidst corporate consolidation in this industry. Cawley Nea\TBWA employs a staff of approximately fifty-two people (O'Mahony 2004) working in various occupational roles. Diane Tangey, the Account Manager, suggests that the "borders are blurred" between planning and other functions at the agency. She constructs her colleagues as inquisitive and curious and constantly on the look out for creative ideas, reminiscent of Hirota's (1995: 340) description of advertising creatives as 'commercial urban ethnographers'. In particular, she suggests that practitioners are watchful for novel and exciting socio-cultural developments; her repeated use of the

words "latest" and "new" in the following passage offering support for Lien's (2004) 'bias of temporality' thesis:

> "[Something that] everybody in this agency has in common is a wider interest in all things [...] be that the arts, film, be that new things, travel, experiences. People are really interested in what's going on around the world and we get a lot of industry and out-of-our-industry publications in here; latest style, latest art, latest news, latest inventions, latest technology [...] everybody in here is curious beyond their realm and I think that's where a lot of people across departments draw a lot of their inspiration" (DT 14.12.05).

As with the previous case study, all respondents are educated to third level. Both Falconer and Tangey received Commerce degrees from University College Cork (UCC). Falconer explains that she specialised in marketing management in her final year and followed this with a Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing Practice in Smurfit Business School, Dublin. Cowman, on the other hand, received a degree in Visual Communications from NCAD (the National College of Art and Design). Although a number of 'creatives' in my research intimate feelings of the 'failed artist', Cowman claims to have "wanted to focus on commercial advertising [...] even before I went into NCAD in the first place" (MC 16.03.06). Tangey claims to have been "unmotivated" when she left college and insists (like the majority of respondents) that she had only a vague ambition to enter the advertising profession. Nevertheless, she claims to have been drawn to it because she viewed it as a sociable, "informal", "unstructured" and "fun" occupation that thrives on "diversity" (both in respect of the work performed and the people populating the industry):

> "I mean you know, we have people in here who have law degrees, we have people in here who have been pig-farming, we've got people in here from all over the world [...] one guy has been a courier for the last five years and it's the same all over the world [...] how you get into advertising is not through degree and process and entry [...] it can be, but the nature of the industry brings in all different disciplines and all different people" (DT 14.12.05).

Despite this apparent triumph of 'diversity', the meritocratic image of the industry constructed here cannot be taken at face value. As Cronin (2004c: 353) highlights; 'the informal feel to agencies belies their fairly rigid gender, race and class structuring and their heterosexist outlook'[76].

For practitioners at Cawley Nea\TBWA, creativity is considered paramount and on the agency website, Cawley Nea/TBWA describes its creative philosophy (or 'practical working methodology') as 'disruption', invoking a sense of the ground-breaking, the 'visionary' and the innovative:

> Disruption is our philosophy and way of working; it underpins out approach to our clients' marketing challenges. Disruption is a tool for change and an agent of growth: a practical working methodology. Disruption means dismantling the status quo and replacing it with something better, bolder and new. [...] It is the art of asking better questions, challenging conventional wisdom and overturning assumptions and prejudices, that get in the way of imagining new possibilities and visionary ideas, that help us to create a larger share of the future for our clients and their brands (www.cawleynea.ie).

In considerably more mundane language, Tangey conceives of creativity, (much like 'executives' in general – see Appendix 3), as a means to verifiable ends. Against prioritising the novel, she emphasises the restrictive and functional basis of creativity in advertising: "There's a job that needs to be done and there are deadlines that need to be met and there are standards that need to be met and awards that need to be won" (DT 14.12.05). For Tangey, creativity occurs in the interactions between people; the locus of creativity is not a single department but rather, creativity occurs across departments. Here, Tangey envisions creativity as a collaborative interpersonal process and outcome, reminiscent of Csikszentmihalyi's (1988) social systems model of creativity. However, despite herself, Tangey does not completely relinquish all notions of novelty; there has to be something new, the pattern must change: "I think

[76] Relatedly, Adkins (1999: 121) finds evidence of a 'retraditionalisation' of gender, despite widespread claims of detradionalisation, individualisation and the (putative) attendant breakdown of ascribed roles. Likewise, accounts such as those of Nixon (1996, 2003) and Nixon and Crewe (2004), suggest that in certain industries, namely advertising and publishing, older 'productivist' ideas about gender persist.

what you do is you try and make them [clients] see the bigger picture [...] if they're [competitors] all zigging, we want to zag" (DT 14.12.05). Cowman, in a slightly different vein, describes creativity in terms of motivation and connectivity. In respect of the latter, he feels that it is necessary to appeal to a mindset or lifestyle and to speak in a language that is relevant to the target group in question. Invoking the metaphor of 'harmony', Cowman suggests that advertising communication must be "in tune with" the target audience. Like the previous case study, practitioners here unsurprisingly celebrate and champion their agency culture, often contrasting their modus operandi to the second-rate practices of others. Closely tied to the importance of innovative ideas is the belief that agency practices and processes must continually adapt. There is an imperative to constantly evolve and change. In the following quote, Tangey promotes a corporate philosophy that is strikingly close to Stephen Bogan's "heuristic approach" and his insistence that advertising agencies must have fluid and malleable organisational structures:

> "I think you constantly try to improve and I think you're in trouble the day you stop trying to improve, and I guess it's constant change, constant innovation [...] I think it is about constantly, constantly looking at new ways of doing things and getting better all the time" (DT 14.12.05).

For Sara Falconer (the Today FM Marketing Manager), the Cawley Nea-Today FM relationship is particularly strong because it has been based from the outset on genuine collaboration. She suggests that while it is common to hear clients insist that agencies should be "part of their company", the reality in most cases is that clients decide upon a strategy, produce a brief and the agency is then left to its own devices[77]. In this case, however, Falconer maintains that Today FM is so entwined with Cawley Nea that the agency has been involved in projects of which she has not been personally aware. Falconer suggests that the absence of "huge chains of command" has been important in helping staff at Cawley Nea to develop a sense of "ownership" of the Today FM brand. She implies that this level of emotional involvement not only

[77] This dialectic between best/ideal practice and actual practice is a recurring theme in my research. Practitioners continually construct themselves and their work in contradistinction to the imperfect practices of others. In classic identity terms, they construct themselves through, not outside of 'difference' (Hall 1996).

enhances agency-client relations but is likely to vastly improve the quality of output from the former:

> "A lot of clients say; "oh the agency should really be part of the company, they should always be in everything" and all of that and in most cases it just doesn't happen. What happens is you make the decision, you go to your agency and say; "we want to do x, y and z and go off and do it". With Cawley Nea, because they've been so close and because we're a small company, like I report directly to the CEO, so there isn't huge chains of command and all that so they actually are very closely involved [...] and they will get involved in other things. The Ray D'Arcy show did a project with a book which was a kind of day in the life in Ireland and Cawley Nea produced it, so Cawley Nea were working with them [...] I didn't even know. So they are as close as an agency should be. I think that really helps [...] because they feel they have ownership of it and they are very proud of it" (SF 19.12.05).

Likewise, highlighting the importance of collaboration and partnership, Cowman comments: "So most of the clients that I work with would feel, I hope, that we're on a team together" (MC 16.03.06). Cowman's language is one of commonality and exchange. He speaks of "joint process", "collaboration" and achieving a "common ground", reminiscent of the metaphoric language of harmony he uses when discussing Today FM's relationship with its target audience (see below). While offering a more nuanced and circumspect account of agency-client relations, Falconer is highly praising of the work of advertising creatives, which she describes quite forcefully as "art"[78] (a term many creative practitioners are ironically reluctant to use). Repeating the commonly cited tension between commerce and creativity or creative and managerial ideologies in advertising (see Frank 1997; Hackley 2003; Kelly et al 2005), she claims that "an awful lot of creatives don't like commerciality. And I think

[78] For Falconer, the 'art' of advertising lies not only in the beauty of texts and the talents of producers but also, in an almost Arnoldian vein, in its ability to elicit emotional responses in viewers. She relates a personal episode of being brought to tears upon hearing a particularly touching Barry's Tea ad, although she is mildly embarrassed by this emotional outburst: "They can be so beautiful and they can make you laugh and they make you cry [...] I mean I'm such a sap. The Barry's Tea ad at the moment, of the fella going off and buying the train set for his [...] I cried when I heard that [...] I actually cried when I heard that! [Laughs lightly and self-consciously] I was wiping away tears in the car. I'm really pathetic but I've got a baby so that's why all of these things are now suddenly really touching" (SF 19.12.05).

to be truly creative; I think in a lot of cases it probably helps that you aren't commercially minded [...]" (SF 19.12.05). For Falconer, advertising creatives are admirable in their ability to produce ideas in a highly restrictive and regulated environment, littered with rules, specifications and "parameters". In many cases, creatives appear to be given little clue as to what is expected yet myriad indications of what is *not* permitted. (This relates to Bogan's tendency to conceptualise advertising creativity in the 'negative' – see previous case study).

> "They are being told, you know, you have to go off and you have to create this masterpiece but this is who you have to talk to, and you can't mention – if it's drinking – you can't mention getting drunk or enjoying yourself or meeting women or becoming more appealing or all of these things [laughs]. So they're given these really difficult parameters and they're told; "now go off and come back with something wonderful" (SF 19.12.05).

Falconer suggests that the relationship between agency and client is crucial and she argues that clients must "empathise" (occasionally even "sympathise") with agencies. As with Orlaith Blaney in the previous case study, Falconer maintains a strong sense of industry professionalism and expertise, implying that clients are sometimes ill-equipped to articulate needs and communicate strategic objectives (although presumably she does not include herself amongst these). She informs me; "my boss is terrible for saying; [puts on loud, obnoxious male voice] "We're looking for [...] give me a pen" (SF 19.12.05). Here, Falconer appears to be making a strong case for creative (agency) autonomy but as she continues her position gradually alters. In moments of dispute, she confesses that "while you don't want to resort to; "I'm the client" because it doesn't help the relationship [...] [in some instances] you might have to" (SF 19.12.05). Indeed, Falconer somewhat undermines her earlier picture of mutuality and transparency, implying that agencies are often driven by ulterior motives, such as the desire to win awards. Derogating from an image of creatives as 'failed artists', she moves to describing them as astute business people. For Falconer, awards are not important, "not in the slightest". Here, somewhat ironically, Falconer has shifted positions entirely, coming to align herself perfectly with the utilitarian perspective of Stephen Bogan in the previous case study. She now appears to propound an entirely instrumental and quantitative logic couched in a language of

"effectiveness": "You don't spend your money on advertising to win awards [...] you do it to grow your business, to answer to your shareholders, to do whatever your goal is [...] in the end of the day it's normally shifting boxes" (SF 19.12.05). Somewhat reasonably (as I have made this observation independently), she indicates that "at the end of the day the awards aren't for us. I mean I don't have a stack of awards on my desk – Cawley Nea does. So the awards aren't for me" (SF 19.12.05).

Keenly aware of discerning and oftentimes cynical clients, Cowman adopts a pragmatic attitude towards awards. He views them as important as both a statement of ability and as a source of motivation for agency staff. Yet he argues (dubiously in light of Falconer's comments) that adhering to the wishes of the client is the surest way of winning awards: "My experience has been that if you put that [the desire to win awards] first you'll disconnect from your clients, you'll have an ulterior motive and ironically, you'll win very few of them" (MC 16.03.06). However, Cowman does acknowledge that these are especially important among "your peer group". He advocates an integrated and multiperspectival approach (using the metaphoric language of 'worlds' also evident in the Heineken case study):

> "There are three participants; there's the creative world – they are the ones that will give you an award; there's the client world – they're the ones that need the sales; and then there's the consumer world, who are the people that we're talking to. So if you overly focus on any one of those three you're going to drift and you'll make a bollix of it" (MC 16.03.06).

Tangey similarly claims; "awards are essential [...] awards are the measure, whether rightly or wrongly, they are the measure of an agency's success in one way". Cowman links winning awards to agency culture. He suggests that a "good positive selling attitude" among practitioners is conducive to producing award-winning advertising. In particular, he feels that collaboration is essential, insisting that "it's never a one-man show" (MC 16.03.06). As before, however, Falconer is more circumspect and offers a much more limited and judicious impression of agency 'culture', drawing attention to the falsity that sometimes attends client-agency relations in advertising. When asked if she felt Cawley Nea's success was directly attributable to the agency's culture, she answered with thinly-veiled cynicism:

> "It's hard to know because you really don't know, and I know from my sister and her husband [both of whom work in advertising] and from just dealing with agencies over time – they're as nice as pie to you and when they get off the phone to you they say; "that fucking bitch" [laughs] [...] So it's hard to know the true culture of an agency. Cawley Nea seem to be very creative and they've won some very big clients of late [...] they seem to work very long hours [laughs] [...] and you're kind of thinking will they burn out and they seem to be notorious in the business for long hours. They don't seem to be very popular amongst other agencies and I think that's a lot to do with them getting some very big jobs and clients from people" (SF 19.12.05).

Above, Falconer makes explicit the intense rivalry in the advertising industry. (I should add that informally, I have been given a similar impression of Cawley Nea by practitioners in other agencies). Despite these sometimes conflicting accounts of organisational culture, however, both agency and client appear to share a similar understanding of 'culture' in its broader sociological/anthropological usage. Falconer describes 'culture' quite simply as "the way things are done [...] it's the way things are around here" [laughs] (SF 19.12.05). Similarly, Tangey conceives of culture as "the sociological measure of a country [...] so I'd say it's a combination of way of life and Irish psyche" (DT 14.12.05). For Cowman, "culture" functions as a 'programme' that is habitual and historically framed. In these descriptions, practitioners invoke what Wright (1998) refers to as the 'old' anthropological idea of culture, suggesting a bounded small scale entity, defined characteristics, an unchanging and underlying system of shared meanings ('authentic' culture) and identical, homogenous individuals. (I return to respondents' conceptions of culture in Chapter 7). For practitioners at Cawley Nea\TBWA, Irishness is important; however, this should not become a kind of all-encompassing "badge". (Arguably respondents' views fluctuate between celebration and disavowal[79]). Tangey is dismissive of explicitly 'Irish' referents in advertising and appears to champion social change and flux, suggesting

[79] Given the difficulties that emergent multiculturalism presents for Irish advertising, it is perhaps unsurprising that in my research I have encountered dissonant viewpoints. On one hand, practitioners appear to celebrate cultural change, echoing Bourdieu's ([1984] 2000: 366) suggestion that many cultural intermediaries exhibit leftist tendencies and are 'inclined to sympathise with discourses aimed at challenging the cultural order'. On the other hand, many remain sceptical of 'diversifying' strategies and can be rather condescending of and cynical about multicultural advertising.

that advertising can "lead" and shape culture just as much as it is itself led and shaped by culture. She constructs a sort of symbiotic (at times perhaps parasitic) relationship in which advertising both "feeds off" and "contributes" to society:

> "I think the culture is changing in Ireland and I think it's up to us to keep up and to lead it actually because I think advertising can have an impact on culture as well and I think it's about understanding the shifts, understanding what aspects of our culture are going to change, what aren't going to change, and cultural shift is good [...] it can't be anything but good. You know, it's inevitable and it's very much evolutionary and I think advertising feeds off culture as much as it contributes to culture as well" (DT 14.12.05).

Like many of my respondents, Cowman argues that advertising should not attempt to hold up a "mirror" to consumers, yet his reasoning is different to that of Blaney's[80] (see previous case study). He argues that advertising should depict an 'ideal world' (cf. Schudson 1993) that is attractive, harmonious and aspirational and that reveals the "highlights" of life, not bleak or mundane scenarios:

> "At the end of the day the world is not that glossy a place. You know, people, unless you're a very depressed person, think in terms of the highlights anyway [...] So if you just show a mirror to somebody life is not that nice actually [...] It's how we choose to see or how we choose to process what happens in our day" (MC 16.03.06).

Here, Cowman implies that it is within the psychological terrain of desires, emotions, hopes and dreams that advertising chiefly operates – a view long held by researchers and analysts (e.g. Cook 1992; Corrigan 1997; Ewen 1989; Frith 1997; Goldman 1992; Leiss et al 1990). Cowman offers a personal anecdote about driving to work to bolster this viewpoint: "Now I spent an hour in traffic this morning. Now I could be upset if I wanted or I could say; "I like my car" [...] so somebody showing me in a traffic jam isn't going to make me feel good about myself" (MC 16.03.06). Cowman continues,

[80] Blaney's reasoning centred upon notions of 'authenticity' and how advertisers' attempts to reflect the lives and identities of prospective consumers, especially young ones, runs the risk of being interpreted as insidious and transparent corporate attempts at ingratiation.

moving from the importance of presenting aspirational and desirable images to a perspective closer to that of Blaney. In the following passage, he highlights that consumers/viewers do not passively absorb messages and information but are always active (and occasionally subversive) interpreters of televisual media[81]:

> "Even something like Big Brother is the viewer sitting there formulating an opinion about what they're seeing. And that's why it's [advertising] magic, not because it's a mirror. So it's actually very, very patronising as well to say to people; "we know what motivates you and it just so happens that this product is all you need"" (MC 16.03.06).

As in the previous case study, respondents at Cawley Nea\TBWA adopt a predominantly negative view of Irish advertising. Cowman is especially critical and constructs the Irish advertising industry as peripheral, static, non-responsive and non-challenging:

> "I think the advertising industry in Ireland is in a desperate state – I think it's very disconnected from the realities. It hasn't really structured itself properly around what's changed in the last decade. The world has got smaller and the opportunities have escalated [...] and the Irish industry sees itself in the shadows [...]" (MC 16.03.06).

4.3 Background to Today FM Campaign

Today FM is one of several independent national radio stations in Ireland. The station launched on Saint Patrick's Day 1997 as Radio Ireland, however, poor listenership led to a name change and re-branding. 'A major problem with Radio Ireland was that it had not been sufficiently marketed – although it had received plenty of publicity' (www.independent.ie). When I asked Sara Falconer if Today FM (in brand terms) was more of an evolution or a reinvention of Radio Ireland, she insisted on the latter:

[81] Similarly, Fiske (1987: 316) has suggested that television viewers engage in 'semiotic warfare'.

> "I mean when Radio Ireland [became] Today FM it had to reinvent itself because it died a thousand deaths as Radio Ireland and there was no saving it [...] It had nicknames like 'Radio Direland' and 'Radio 1%' because we only had one percent listenership. So there was no point evolving that. They just had to kill it and go back to the BCI [Broadcasting Commission of Ireland] and say; "please can we change our description of our product because this is just not going to happen" [...] Now that that's [Today FM] working we evolve, we don't turn around and say; "now we're going to change everything"" (SF 19.12.05).

In explaining the background to this campaign, Falconer admits somewhat reluctantly (given her professional capacity), that product content or in this case "programming", was arguably more important than marketing. Indeed, she highlights that as Today FM is itself a medium, that the station performs a large portion of the marketing function inadvertently:

> "We're not big spenders [in advertising terms] [...] but you don't need to be. You are a medium yourself so what you put out there is constantly advertising your product so really the money is, it's probably terrible for a marketing manager to say, but certainly as well spent by investing in programming" (SF 19.12.05).

However, in needing to "tick" a number of "boxes" with this campaign (terms used by virtually all of my respondents), Falconer explains that television was favoured because it suggests stature and allowed the station to be perceived as a "national big brand". In the following passage, Falconer explains that using the station's presenters was fundamental to this campaign. However, she describes the inherent difficulties of attempting to market radio personalities. For listeners, these are "disembodied voices"; radio is intangible yet also an especially "personal" medium. As such, this campaign was directed towards putting "faces to the voices" of presenters and enhancing audience-presenter closeness.

> "So we feel that it actually did what we wanted in that it raised listenership outside and it also raised awareness [...] you know, people know what Matt

> looks like, which they didn't before [...] because radio [...] it is completely intangible. They're voices, they're disembodied voices. We had the opportunity to actually put faces to the voices, so people had more of a picture in their head which I think makes it a bit more personal, you know, one-to-one. So I think that it worked for us" (SF 19.12.05).

Above, Falconer argues that Today FM listeners have particularly strong relationships with their favoured presenters. This idea is fused with the proposition (discussed below) that against positioning itself as "background noise", which respondents felt defines a lot of commercial radio, that Today FM has successfully generated active, participative listenership: "The advertising that we do tries to promise a more active sense of participation with the station, that it's their [listeners] station" (MC 16.03.06). In effect, listeners might be described as engaged in a form of limited conversation with presenters. While they may not actually text or call the station, their emotional state is comparable to an interlocutor; it is not passive and detached. Indeed, sudden changes of schedule or presenter can leave them "mortally wounded"[82] (SF 19.12.05). Hence, the commercials in this campaign were designed to operate on a more emotional, human level. They were directed towards creating tangibility, corporeality and making the medium more personal and "one-to-one". Cowman explains that a focus on personalities and programming schedule "left us with a map of their business plan", which demarcated a very clear creative "platform" and a concept that would form the "backbone" of all consequent work (again revealing the tendency of practitioners to use spatial/structural language and metaphors). He explains that:

> "We needed to find a language for them, we needed to find a look, a feel, a tone, which is the standard stuff, but in this case we needed that to be tuned into what it is they do for a living. So we have a creative platform that is sometimes used in the ads [...] which is 'right time, right place', which turns up in the ads you referred to. It doesn't turn up in everything we do but it will always be the backbone of it" (MC 16.03.06).

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[82] Similarly, Muniz and O'Guinn (2001: 424) claim that 'members [of brand communities] often feel that they have a better understanding of the brand than the manufacturer does. In fact, brand community members feel that the brand belongs to them as much as it does to the manufacturer'.

As Cowman suggests, the creative strategy in this campaign centres upon the idea of an appropriate 'time and place' yet cleverly subverts this by showing presenters in entirely inappropriate scenarios.

> The ads show Today FM presenters in the wrong place at the wrong time – performing in entertaining but inappropriate scenarios. Ian chats in an upbeat manner to a couple breaking up, Ray spurts useless trivial information to a man attending a funeral. Today FM presenters got to show off their acting skills while starring in diverse situations promoting the unique attraction of each of their shows to its target audience (www.todayfm.com).

4.4 Today FM Series

In the 2004 Shark Awards, Cawley Nea\TBWA received the Grand Prix Television Ireland Award and the Golden Shark in the category 'Irish Television Series' for three commercials promoting Today FM, titled 'Ian Dempsey', 'Ray D'Arcy' and 'Matt Cooper', in reference to the radio personalities featured in each advert. The following analysis was used to orientate interviews with respondents. As suggested in the Introduction of this dissertation, I consider the 'reading' of these award-winning texts not an endpoint in my analysis but rather a *point of departure*.

4.4.1 Textual Analysis

As has been noted, the 'Television Series' category emphasises coherence between executions but permits variation in respect of storyline, characters and setting. In the Today FM commercials examined below, the 'right place, right time' tagline is consistent (as is an essential brand personality or spirit), however, the manner in which this is communicated remains relatively open. Each commercial depicts a different radio personality and is intended to convey a sense of the show he presents

(e.g. Ian Dempsey's 'breakfast show'[83]). The setting for each commercial differs, depicting an assortment of people in various degrees of discomfort. What is most significant, however, is that the situation or event elicits a wholly inappropriate response from each of the radio personalities. 'Each, bravely, is a parodic take on the topics typically discussed on their shows. Though masked by humour, an overall theme emerges; that, through the Today FM day, there is always someone worth listening to' (Clarke 2004: 28).

I include interview data throughout this section but begin with a narrative description and textual analysis of these commercials. While the stories and settings are entirely different, the target audience, proposition and tone of voice are considered largely similar in each execution and hence, as before, I 'unearth' a single hypothetical creative brief.

Ian Dempsey

In the first execution, a couple stand distressed in mid break-up at the end of Dun Laoghaire pier in Dublin, with a seated and blurred Ian Dempsey in the background. Ominous grey clouds are visible overhead. Shadows are etched into the faces of the man and woman. Distraught and emotional the woman turns to the man. "It's over", she says sullenly. Our view switches to the man's ashen face as he dejectedly looks downward. He is unkempt and unshaven. She continues, almost to herself; "I don't love you any more. I'm sorry Joe". Suddenly, a now visible and plainly intrusive Dempsey interjects 'with all the daft cheeriness of Eric Idle at the end of The Life of Brian' (Clarke 2004: 28): "Got the ol elbow eh? Don't worry cheer up, plenty more fish in the sea".

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[83] 'Ireland's most popular breakfast show presenter kick starts your day with a lively mixture of music, humour, news, live traffic reports plus the hottest competitions around. Ian Dempsey's Breakfast Show is must listen radio; Gift grub is an essential mood booster for dark winter mornings, the hottest competitions around are your ticket to hotter climes and all the latest news, weather and traffic reports are indispensable morning armoury. All this is combined with the best music on the radio' (www.todayfm.com).

The couple look shocked and appalled. They stand speechless, staring at Dempsey as he continues; "actually this should cheer you up [...] it looks like it's gonna be an absolutely beautiful day out there today". His voice drifts off and the black screen fills with the Today FM logo and the words 'Right Time. Right Place', as the voiceover says: "This is no time to be listening to Ian Dempsey. However, seven to ten weekdays is bang on".

Ray D'Arcy

In the second execution, Ray D'Arcy initiates a conversation with a fellow visitor at a funeral parlour. The priest at the podium announces solemnly; "he was the life and soul of any party" as his voice drifts off and we see Ray lean in and ask the man immediately in front of him and to the right; "here. What crime were the A-Team sent to prison for?"

"I dunno" shrugs the man, markedly surprised and visibly agitated.

"It was a bank job in Hanoi" Ray continues, as the voiceover interjects with: "This is no time to be listening to Ray D'Arcy".

"They didn't do it though" D'Arcy says earnestly.

As the scene closes we see D'Arcy lean forward and flick the ear of the man in front and the latter grumbles something inaudible as the voiceover finishes with; "however, ten to one weekdays is bang on". The screen blackens revealing only the Today FM logo and the words 'Right Time. Right Place'.

Matt Cooper

In the third execution, the camera opens on a small room basked in the yellow glow of lamp light. A little boy of perhaps five or six is lying in bed, surrounded by shelves of books and toys. Matt Cooper enters the room and sits himself upon the bed with a large, very old looking story book and begins: "Now once upon a time there was a dodgy businessman". "One day a Garda and a tax inspector came calling on the dodgy

businessman for a cup of tea and a quiet chat" he says, as he winks knowingly at the boy. Putting on a deep voice in the fashion of a parent reading the lines of a giant or monster in a storybook, Cooper continues: "What is the nature of your relationship with the politician? They asked" as the camera focuses on the confused eyes of the little boy as he lets out an exasperated sigh.

"This is no time to be listening to Matt Cooper" the voiceover interjects as Cooper continues enthusiastically: "Our story starts with a lawyer on the first day at Dublin Castle [...]" Cooper's voice drifts off as the voiceover finishes with; "however, five to seven weekdays is bang on". Again the screen blackens revealing only the Today FM logo and the words 'Right Time. Right Place'.

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In each commercial above, the comments and/or behaviour of the radio personality depicted is not merely inappropriate but in some cases entirely distasteful and rude. This is markedly the case for Dempsey and D'Arcy. However, the happy and carefree joviality the former exudes undermines this accusation. His seemingly careless and callous faux-pas appears more the misplaced advice of an absent-minded, though well meaning fool. His comments may be offensive but his delivery, pitch, tone and gestures suggest otherwise. Yet this is exactly the point; this is entirely the wrong place and time for Ian Dempsey, however, as the commercial reminds us, Dempsey does have his place and time – that being weekday mornings on Today FM. D'Arcy's funeral parlour antics, on the other hand, are not only obscure and downright silly but could be considered grossly offensive and disrespectful. Indeed, this was precisely the interpretation of the British Ad Clearance Organisation (BACC), which refused to run the commercial on British channels broadcasting in Ireland for reasons of 'bad taste' (McCaughern 2004). In the third execution, the irreverence is toned down with the assumption that the child will not comprehend the language and subject matter of Cooper's story. Conversely, the incongruity of character/dialogue and context is dialled up. Here, there is clearly an assumption that the target audience is abreast of current political affairs and keenly aware of the various scandals that have marred Ireland's 'economic miracle' in recent years. Given the nature of Cooper's narrative (as well as the "A-Team" reference in the Ray D'Arcy execution), it is perhaps

reasonable to assume that the lower age limit of the target audience is mid to late twenties (see below).

Surmising brief elements:

Target audience

Professional, sociable, middle-class people aged 25-40, with a slight urban and male bias.

Proposition

The reliably different radio station.

Tone of voice

I have generated a list of words that might have directed the creative execution. These include: Funny, disrespectful, cheeky, profane, humorous, clever, original, jocular, farcical, absurd, preposterous, jesting, and tongue-in-cheek.

As 'tone of voice' is generally reduced to three or four words, I distil mine to the following:

Irreverent witty facetious

4.4.2 Analysis of Interviews and Support Materials

As previously mentioned, Cawley Nea\TBWA describes the agency's philosophy and approach to advertising as a strategy of 'disruption'. On the agency website (in a section entitled 'Case Studies') a conspectus of the Today FM work is available.

Here, the campaign is briefly explained in terms of 'task', 'disruptive idea' and 'results':

> Task: Following on a failed independent radio station launch for Radio Ireland, we were asked to create a new identity, a new positioning and an effective communications strategy for the new incarnation that became Today FM.
>
> Disruptive idea: Radio Worth Listening To.
> Today FM invested in personalities that cut through the bland radio babble to establish shows that people actually sought to listen to.
>
> Results: The only national radio station to increase listenership every year for the last 5 years running. The advertising was honoured at the prestigious ICAD (Institute of Creative Advertising and Design) awards and at the 2002 Media Brand of the Year awards (www.cawleynea.ie).

Above, I provided a short narrative description of the commercials in this series and attempted to undertake a limited textual analysis of these in terms of the 'creative brief' elements. In the sections that follow, I return to the three creative brief elements, this time drawing directly from interviews with respondents.

Target Audience

Cowman indicates that from its inception, Today FM had a bias towards male listeners but that this was "not by design" and was rather a consequence of certain presenter associations, in particular Eamonn Dunphy[84] who he considered rather "polarising". Against blatantly attempting to attract female listeners (by putting "frilly skirts" in the advertising), Cowman suggests (below) that part of the strategic approach in this campaign was to appeal to a "broader, younger audience":

[84] Eamonn Dunphy is a controversial Irish radio and TV personality and a former professional football player.

> "When they [Today FM] started out, one of their strongest characters would have been Eamonn Dunphy and he was very polarising; a lot of males liked him a lot and most women disliked him a lot, so it became a bit of a challenge to get women to listen. So we don't put frilly skirts on the ads because that would be just silly but we do try and appeal to a broader, younger audience. I think what we target more than age groups is mindset and it's very easy in marketing terms to say; "I want to talk to eighteen year olds" but I know a lot of eighteen year olds and they're not alike so the thing to do is to pick the mindset that you think has broad appeal and maybe not worry about the people who fall outside of that. So our advertising tends to target people who are up for a bit of a laugh to be honest, and have a bit of pepp in their step and like the idea of listening to a radio station that has content that they're interested in as opposed to listening to a radio station that's on to break the silence" (MC 16.03.06).

Like Blaney in the previous case study, Cowman prefers to speak of a shared "mindset" rather than a narrow alignment with age. However, unlike Blaney, who is careful not to "alienate" those outside of the target audience, Cowman prefers "not to worry about the people who fall outside of that". In outlining this favoured mindset, Cowman's description ("up for a laugh [...] a bit of pepp in their step") is arguably very similar to Heineken's "risk-taking [...] progressive, zest for life" (JV 07.11.05). Both brands appeal to confident, energetic, youthful consumers; a group that is the locus of many analyses of contemporary Irish society (cf. McWilliams 2005; Bogle 1997). Falconer paints a similar portrait of the Today FM target audience, describing it first in classic socio-demographic (alphabetical) media terms[85]:

> "Well our target audience in the broadest sense is twenty to forty-four, you could say ABC1 but really, I think it's B, C1, C2 or something like that because it's kind of changing [...] you know, talking to builders and plumbers used to be the lower end of the market, now they're the higher end so it's all a bit [...] and there are very few As around anyway. I suppose in the broadest

[85] Traditionally, media populations have been analysed using the following socio-economic groups: A (upper/middle class), B (middle class), C1 (lower middle class), C2 (skilled working class), D (other working class), E (lowest level of subsistence), F1 (large farmers (50+ acres), F2 (small farmers (50- acres) (www.medialive.ie).

> sense it would be twenty to forty-four ABC1s, our core would be twenty-five to thirty-five. So that's who they would be aimed towards, but then we can afford to be more targeted am so for instance, Matt Cooper's show would be kind of male biased back from when Dunphy used to present it" (SF 19.12.05).

Above, Falconer constructs the Today FM audience as professional and relatively well-off, although she concedes that social class is much more ambiguous as income categories have radically altered in recent times. Nevertheless, the target audience here clearly possesses a high disposable income, which is further emphasised in a study cleverly titled 'This is the way we live for Today'[86], published on the station's website (www.todayfm.com). This study appears to endorse individualism and consumerism and suggests that Today FM understands its audience; that it is 'on the same wavelength'. (However, it is plausible to suggest that a study of this sort might generate criticism, not least in the apparent conjoining of spending and popularity). Here, the station shrewdly ties its own name to the research; the station itself represents the ethos of 'living life to the full', which again can be compared to Heineken's 'zest for life' ethos. In terms of target audience, this study conveys a sense of well-heeled consumers; these are not marginalised groups or recent immigrants with 'subsistence' concerns but privileged, affluent consumers dedicated to enjoying the fruits of economic success. It also appears that there is a markedly Irish character to the station. Indeed, when asked if a sense of Irishness is central to the Today FM brand, respondents answered resoundingly in the affirmative. In doing so, respondents directly linked presenters to the target audience, the implication being that presenters are not speaking *to* a target audience from some detached, remote position but rather are *members of* the target audience. In the following passage, Falconer returns to her

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[86] 'A survey published today by Today FM, Ireland's biggest independent commercial radio station, shows that the attitude of young Irish people in 2005 is to make the most of their lives right now, and not to worry too much about what's round the corner. Over 78% of respondents reported that they Live for Today with almost 40% stating that they are not worried about their old age [...] Looking even further ahead, over 70% of participants said that they are not concerned in the least about the afterlife. This reflects recent trends in church attendance, but the figure is much higher than expected. The Live for Today attitude is emphasised in people's financial decision-making with 72% opting to spend their salary on a "good time" rather than save it for a rainy day. We know it's not a popularity contest, but if you Live for Today, you're likely to have more friends – over 28% of those who do Live for Today have in excess of 30 friends. Willie O'Reilly, CEO of Today FM commented: "It's terrific that these findings support our philosophy here at Today FM of lightening up, having a laugh and enjoying life to the full. Our presenters work hard to provide our listeners with light relief in their stressful lives, and it's good to know that we're on the same wavelength - we're all Living for Today"' (Press release June 1, 2005: www.todayfm.com).

description of radio as a highly "personal" medium. She intimates that presenters have forged strong social and interpersonal bonds with listeners and stresses that the station is intrinsically Irish.

> "The people who are presenting – they are all, in most cases they are within the target audience and they are living in modern Ireland and they are successful people and all of that stuff so they are living the life [...] of our target audience. The other thing is, we have really come about and grown up during the Celtic Tiger time so I suppose I feel radio is a very personal medium so if your radio alarm goes off in the morning you have that person's voice as the first thing you hear in the morning. It's a real one-on-one and because we're not format-driven, because it's not ten hits in a row, little bit of banter and on to the next ten hits, it's a lot more about the personalities and what they're talking about. The Ray D'Arcy show would be similar I suppose to the Gerry Ryan show in that people will be ringing in [...] people have a real one-on-one relationship with Ray. So I think because of that it's kind of part of their lives so I suppose it's part of a new Ireland life, because RTE would be much more old school and much more the station of your youth and growing up with maybe Radio 1 on in the kitchen and listening to 2FM as it used to be in the evenings and Dave Fanning and all of that kind of stuff and, you know, to people like myself and probably yourself[87] who would have had those kind of formative years in the 1980s it's kind of nearly old Ireland to us, whereas Today FM [...] and it's just by the nature I suppose of when we've grown that it has become a part of contemporary Ireland" (SF 19.12.05).

Above, Falconer contrasts the Irishness of Today FM with that of RTE, which she describes as insular and staid. For Falconer, Today FM reflects "modern" "Celtic Tiger" Ireland; it speaks to "successful people" who are "living the life". She constructs the station as a voice of modern Ireland and as a medium that is in tune with evolving Irish society. It is not rigidly rooted in "old Ireland" but rather is

[87] Throughout the interviews relating to this case study, respondents (Falconer in particular) tended to include me as both part of Today FM's target audience and as someone whom she felt had a broadly similar life history (education, upbringing, cultural identifications etc.). This suggests both an acute consciousnesses of my status as researcher as well as a desire on the part of respondents to legitimate their responses to questions.

reflective and expressive of the zeitgeist. Despite this, Falconer insists that "Irishness is a dodgy territory", mainly because she feels that in advertising, this often tends to pander to outdated stereotypes. Nevertheless, she believes that some brands, such as Guinness, virtually define Irishness: "Once you put that Guinness sign in front of it, it probably makes it Irish" (SF 19.12.05). Tangey appears to share this view, implying that Ireland and Irishness are "part of the soul of the [Guinness] brand". Here, one is reminded of the importance of commodification in the construction, promotion and dissemination of ideas about Irish national identity (cf. Negra 2001). Nevertheless, Falconer suggests that capturing a sense of nation is invariably difficult and she offers many examples of brands that have failed in this regard, including the MasterCard commercial referred to in the Introduction[88] and more recently, advertising for the *Irish Times*. In both instances, she claims that the advertising attempted to reflect what might be described as an Irish "psyche", yet failed because this appeared unconvincing, artificial and "too self-conscious":

> "The *Irish Times* did an outdoor campaign recently [...] [The visual was designed to look like] letters they've cut out of a newspaper. It's got a few things like; 'are you working to pay the childminder?', 'a credit card limit isn't a goal' and all of this and I think they were trying to say we understand what your life is about now in modern Ireland but I don't know if I like it. I don't know if it's too self-conscious or something" (SF 19.12.05).

Proposition

In describing the campaign proposition, Cowman links the idea of Today FM as a "personal" radio station (i.e. not 'noise') with its varied "line-up", which is designed to accommodate various listener interests, moods and contexts (commuting, working etc.). As such, the proposition can be understood broadly as Today FM is "in tune

[88] As highlighted in the Introduction, MasterCard's 'knowing what it means to be Irish' commercial attempts to express the indefinable experience of 'being Irish', however, I have argued elsewhere (O'Boyle 2006a) that it is rather unconvincing in this respect. Falconer appears to agree: "Yeah I thought they just did it wrong [...] they had the guy sitting down in Temple Bar and you're like; "who the hell goes out in Temple Bar except tourists?" [Laughs] And that's why you have to be really careful because people are so cynical and it's very hard to actually resonate" (SF 19.12.05).

with the listener". In the following quote, Cowman differentiates the station's approach to the readily identifiable and singular "mood" of other radio stations:

> "They've [Today FM] got a line up that is very in tune with the people listening. Now most radio stations will pick a mood for themselves, so you might have Lyric FM, which is classical music and it's of a soft nature, you might have Newstalk, which does what it says on the tin[89], you might have a 98FM which is quite smashy and nicey in its delivery and all those appeal to different people. Today FM looked at it more [...] from a programming point of view, of being in tune with the listener" (MC 16.03.06).

The notion of being "in tune" is not simply expressive of programming variety but is also linked to the idea of closeness discussed above. It suggests a kind of shared understanding, a shared mindset or outlook that (in the view of respondents) creates a particularly strong bond between presenters and listeners. So much so, in fact, that Falconer insists the listener's attachment to Today FM personalities is frequently stronger than his or her attachment to the station itself. Again, she describes this relationship as "one-to-one" differentiating it from Radio 1, where listeners are inattentive and indifferent:

> "[...] We've got some research that indicates that a lot of times people don't even really know that they're listening to Today FM as much as they're listening to Ray or they're listening to Ian or whoever [...] you know, it's that much one-on-one [...] So it's not like say a Radio 1 listener who will get up in the morning and turn on the radio and it will be on all day and they will probably be in and out of the house all day" (SF 19.12.05).

Tangey links this strategy to Cawley Nea's philosophy of 'disruption'. She suggests that the campaign was disruptive because "we recognised what was different about Today FM was that you don't just hear it as noise – you listen to it. And that was a very disruptive thought because it was unlike any other station and I think that really

[89] Here, Cowman is referring to the well-known Ronseal wood varnish ads that continue to use the tagline; "it does exactly what it says on the tin".

unlocked the truth[90] about Today FM" (DT 14.12.05). Nevertheless, Cowman is adamant that the public interest in presenters should not detract from the impression of Today FM as an "entity" over and above the appeal of individual personalities. Likewise, Tangey comments; "hopefully the sum of the parts has become greater". Hence, Cowman appears to resist the "blurring" of brand and target (alluded to by Madden in the Heineken case study).

Tone of Voice

As with the previous case study, respondents tend to describe tone of voice in personality adjectives. For Falconer, the campaign tone can be described as a kind of "irreverent" humour, reminiscent of the Heineken Green Energy work discussed in the previous case study:

> "Well what's very important for us is that everything we do reflects the personality of the brand and our [station] personalities and the personality of the brand are interlinked, like you can't separate them, which is the way it should be [...] so the bit of humour is really important. The ads had everything we had; a kind of irreverence, the humour and personalities. So I think that the tone of them was absolutely spot-on" (SF 19.12.05).

In explaining this further, Falconer elaborates on the connection between brand identity and programme content. She plausibly claims: "There's no point in us being irreverent and the programming not". Falconer explains that the various shows on offer are designed to be in tune with listeners' emotional states. The breakfast show, for example, is light and topical, the afternoon shows are somewhat "quirky" and the evening time is reserved for more serious discussion of current affairs. This relates to the creative idea (discussed above), which centres upon the notion of 'right place, right time'. As such, we might suggest that Today FM attempts to capture or reflect the whole emotional spectrum of the quotidian. In the following passage, Falconer

[90] A language of brand essence or 'truths' is particularly common in advertising and marketing. However, it is important to remember, as Cronin (2004b) suggests, that the 'truth' of practitioners' statements cannot be considered in isolation from the instrumental interests of these workers.

describes the station as "quite diverse". She constructs it as a collectivity of personalities, views and interests; a sort of eclectic assemblage which offers "exactly what you want at exactly the right time of the day".

> QA: Can you explain why the 'time and place' strategy and what you have described as an 'irreverent' humour were used as opposed to say, trying to make the station appear sexy and cool?
>
> "[Well] I mean you couldn't go out there and say; "Today FM all the hits, all the time". I mean we're not. You're not going to say; "Today FM – best in current affairs, best sports radio" [...] I mean we're not any of that stuff. So when they came back with this 'right place, right time' it suited because our offering is quite diverse; we've everything from Ian Dempsey in the morning and Ray, which is music and chat, through to Matt Cooper, which is current affairs, through to Tom Dunne, which is specialist, alternative [...] so Cawley Nea said; "we are exactly what you want at exactly the right time of the day"" (SF 19.12.05).

Going further, Tangey describes the Today FM tone of voice as "self-deprecating", "informal" and "tongue in cheek"; a station that is frequently humorous but one with an underlying intelligence:

> "I mean Today FM pokes fun at itself, it's very self-deprecating [...] [One of the posters on the sides of buses showed] a picture of six faces and it said: 'Perfect for Radio' [...] so it is informal and fun and it's tongue-in-cheek [...] it's not loud and brash but it's kind of clever humour, so there's a wit there as well and it assumes a wit in its audience" (DT 14.12.05).

Tangey links her description of tone to what she feels is Today FM's inherent Irishness. Reminding us of the abovementioned conceptions of 'culture' in psychosocial terms, she claims that Today FM is "very much aligned to the Irish way of thinking". She continues: "I think it taps into a mindset in Ireland unlike anybody else, because we are very self-deprecating and we are very informal and tongue-in-cheek and irreverent" (DT 14.12.05). Hence, tonally it would appear that Today FM is

aligned perfectly with Tangey's vision of Irish society; there is a naturalness about it. (However, as I discuss in later chapters, one might question the extent to which this natural "self-deprecation" and "irreverence" is evidence of a 'new', postmodern, confident Ireland).

As with the previous case study, all respondents at Cawley Nea\TBWA are for the most part, celebratory of cultural change in Ireland, however, they express uncertainty as to how brands should reflect this. Falconer reasonably argues that "programming" (rather than advertising) should be a more immediate concern for Today FM. In terms of advertising, she insists that a more culturally and ethnically diverse brand image must emerge organically and naturally. At present, Falconer frankly admits that Today FM reflects "the white, affluent, twenty to forty-four year olds". She tries to find a term for this group: "What are they called? The Celtic Tiger cubs [...] not even the cubs, they're a bit older than that" (SF 19.12.05). When I suggested McWilliams's (2005) term 'the Pope's Children'[91] she replied:

> "Yeah. I mean that is us. So it's hard to see how we would be able to do something about it without tacking things on but as I said, it needs to be something that happens. It needs to make sense I suppose is the way to describe it; it needs to make sense with what we're about but for the more FMCG[92] types of this world – the Guinness's and the Heinekens and the Mars bars and all of that stuff – I think it's probably more immediate because it's a big part of their consumers" (SF 19.12.05).

In arguing such a position, it is entirely comprehensible why Falconer is critical of what she considers hollow attempts to "do the multicultural thing". For example, she is utterly dismissive of Ballygowan's 'Bodies Never Lie' campaign (as is Tangey), which she views as simply taking an ad "off the shelf"[93]. Likewise, she insists that "if

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[91] The title of McWilliams' book refers to what he considers the new powerful elite of Irish society; people whose births coincided with the visit of Pope John Paul II to Ireland in the autumn of 1979. McWilliams considers this key demographic, amounting to some 620,000 people, the 'dynamo' of a newly confident and prosperous Ireland.

[92] Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG).

[93] 'In recent years, Ballygowan for example, has decided to divest itself of the mythological garb that cloaked its previous 'Children of Lir' and 'Butterflies' campaigns and instead has adopted a postmodernist, abstract style depicting people of various colours dancing and interacting in its 'Bodies Never Lie' campaign. Reactions to this work, however, tend to be rather mixed. In the following

Guinness suddenly had an ad and there were loads of different cultures coming in and enjoying the pint of Guinness together I think everyone would be like; "hmmm we know what you're up to" [laughs]" (SF 19.12.05). Here, Falconer constructs consumers as savvy and discerning and critical of hollow efforts at political correctness. Consequently, she argues that attempts to change a brand must "make sense" to consumers; they cannot be artificial attachments. In other words, change must be tempered and counterbalanced by some measure of consistency. Tangey shares this position. Just as agencies should take a "heuristic" approach (see Bogan in previous case study), brands should evolve:

> "I think what you say in your communication needs to be absolutely rooted in the brand [...] it's ok to jump [reinvent the brand] and there are some fantastic examples of that [she mentions Volkswagen Beetle, Mini Cooper and Bryllcream] but you've got to bring something with you [...] you've got to bring a brand truth" (DT 14.12.05).

Like Falconer and Tangey, Cowman considers Today FM expressive of a 'new' Ireland. As with Falconer, I asked him if he felt that the station's target audience might fall within McWilliams' category of 'the Pope's Children'. He reluctantly agreed (revealing a less than masked dislike for social analysis and categories), commenting; "yeah I think so but it's almost like as soon as you talk about it like that it almost becomes a bit heavy or something" (MC 16.03.06). Cowman is highly celebratory and declares; "I think the Irish are beginning to find themselves ironically as we're more at sea culturally and spiritually than we've ever been" (MC 16.03.06). However, as I argue in Chapters 6 and 7, it appears that Irish advertising practitioners have not at all abandoned inherited (and somewhat 'essentialist') positions on Irish identity and culture. Respondents at Cawley Nea\TBWA stress that Today FM is very much of the 'current' cultural climate in Ireland and is therefore different to the oppressive image of RTE radio, yet they equally tend to valorise traditional Irish

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passage, a marketing manager is strongly condescending of the campaign, implying that the re-branding exercise is likely an attempt to 'do the multicultural thing': "That's like hello, let's get an ad off the shelf and put whatever product you want at the end of it [...] It doesn't look like Ireland [...] Now maybe it's not supposed to look like Ireland. I guess they were trying to do the multicultural thing" (Interview: Marketing Manager)' (O'Boyle 2006a:102).

culture. Indeed, as noted earlier, they generally view 'culture' as something pre-existent and unchanging; it is "the way things are done" (SF 19.12.05). Arguably then, the need for brands to appear consistent, the circumspection of savvy consumers (who might reject change and/or tokenism) and the inertia of culture amount to a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby Today FM is effectively vindicated from addressing cultural diversity in any form. What appears a celebration of change and an image of the contemporary might be considered, upon closer inspection, a conduit for the very outmoded identities and representations respondents putatively wish to dispel.

4.5 Conclusion

This case study has examined an award-winning advertising campaign (or 'series') for the Irish radio station Today FM, created by the Dublin-based advertising agency Cawley Nea\TBWA. The commercials examined focused on Today FM's "suite of personalities" (DT 14.12.05). Tangey explains that the purpose of this campaign was not simply to create closeness between the station and listeners but was also designed to highlight that Today FM is not background "noise" (like many other radio stations) but a station people actively choose to listen to. This implies a sense of participation and engagement: "So it's like some radio is stuff that you just have in the background. It's noise. It's just kind of ambient [...] but you kind of tune into Today FM. You listen to it" (DT 14.12.05). Central to this idea is a notion of 'diversity'. The commitment to diversity infuses not only the content and range of discussion and personalities but also the communication strategy. Respondents describe Today FM as a benevolent (even altruistic and empathetic) companion of listeners. Presenters are constructed as responsive and attentive. Indeed, they are considered *part* of the community of listeners, a fact that seems to legitimate their views and opinions. In attempting to remain "in tune" with listeners' lives, Today FM brand communication emphasises synergy; the idea of "right place, right time" is emphasised both in the adverts examined and in the strategic location of outdoor advertising messages, which respondents describe as natural, rather than forced encounters:

> "So for instance, if you are a smoker and you walk out of the pub there's an ashtray [...] the ashtray says something like: 'Smokers Die Younger, But Then Again, So Do Rock-Stars'. You know, they're there having a smoke, they're cold and no-one cares about them so we're in the right time, in the right place with the right message for them at that moment, which is a little bit like they [Today FM] do in their business. So that's sort of our strategy – there's always an opportunity to be in tune with the person that's watching. Another example of the way we thought was, if you went down to the Point Theatre, right beside the Merchandising stall, where we think people pay too much for t-shirts, there's a permanent poster for Today FM and it says: 'Free Air Guitars, Please Take One' [...] now it's just being silly but at the end of the day it's in tune with what people are thinking. So that's our creative platform and the TV commercials you referred to were – we had an opportunity to write large that strategy I suppose" (MC 16.03.06).

Respondents at Cawley Nea\TBWA describe the Today FM brand as lively, informal and self-deprecating; a station with a keen sense of humour but also with an underlying intelligence. One could draw a parallel here with respondents' descriptions of Heineken in the previous case study. Descriptions of the Ray D'Arcy show and another show – Tom Dunne's 'Pet Sounds'[94], for example, are reminiscent of Shay Madden's comments about "intelligence in stupid things" in relation to Heineken Green Energy. In a sense, this kind of regression to childlike humour tempered by a degree of adult intelligence might be considered part of a wider comedic shift, with roots perhaps in Monty Python yet developed more recently in shows such as Black Adder, Father Ted, Trigger Happy TV, The Fast Show and Ali G. (The humour here might be described, in the fashion of Lewis Carroll, as clever absurdity). Like Tangey, Falconer uses the term "irreverent" to describe the Today FM personality and tone yet

[94] Interestingly, in June 2005, Heineken decided to sponsor Tom Dunne's 'Pet Sounds' [...] Speaking at the announcement Colm McNamara, Brand Manager Heineken, said: "Heineken Music is delighted to be involved with Tom Dunne's Pet Sounds. Tom is widely recognised a one of the most knowledgeable, innovative DJ's in Ireland and the format of his shows fits well with Heineken music's strategy and target audience. We are really looking forward to working with Tom and his team to create some memorable music moments for consumers." Commenting on the announcement Fiona Tuomey, Sponsorship and Promotions Manager, Today FM said: "We are delighted that Heineken Music have come on board as the new sponsor of Pet Sounds. There is great synergy between the brand and the show and we look forward to working with them with the common goal of bringing the best music to fans across the country"' (Press release June 8, 2005: www.todayfm.com).

she concedes that this is problematic because irreverence can take several forms. Despite this, she intimates that she intuitively "knows" what is and is not Today FM:

> "And you get to a stage where when we see ads [...] I saw scripts that I hadn't briefed and they were just wrong – you just know. You looked at it and you go; "no, it's not us". Whereas those ones [the commercials being investigated here] really are, they really, really are. Sometimes you just can't even say why but you just know that is Today FM and that isn't [...] and they definitely are. So you can say 'irreverent' but then like, FM 104 do a thing 'Kids in the car' which would be irreverent in inverted commas but it wouldn't be Today FM, so to say irreverent [...] it is probably much more specific than that. So you probably can describe it in words but we know when we see it if it is, or if it isn't, and I think they definitely were" (SF 19.12.05).

Above, Falconer touches upon the importance of 'intuition' which I explore in greater depth in Chapter 6. She suggests that a significant factor in the success of the Today FM/Cawley Nea partnership is due to the fact that the agency also shares this "sense" of the brand. This idea is particularly evident when Falconer is discussing the 'Irishness' of the Today FM brand. As noted above, she constructs the station as reflective and expressive of modern Ireland, however, she stresses that this contemporaneity is not "conscious". Again, this appears to add a degree of legitimacy; the implication being that the station is organically produced and "naturally" reflective, especially as creatives and presenters are, in this case, *members of* the intended target audience: "I think that's why it works so well for us because our creatives *are* our target audience". In a sense, they are consequently "talking to themselves to a certain extent" (SF 19.12.05). Falconer's construction suggests that the station does not intervene and distort but simply channels contemporary Irish culture. Yet when I asked her if D'Arcy's reference to "The A-Team" in one of the commercials is a clue to the intended audience (in terms of grasping this cultural reference and therefore indicating a particular age group) she is wholly affirmative. Against her earlier hints at undistorted conduit, here Falconer reveals that programme content is largely derivative of the backgrounds and interests of presenters, who "play music that they like to hear" and which is often "the stuff that we grew up with" (SF 19.12.05). Thus, it is apparent that radio programme content *is* shaped, authored and

selected, just as much as advertising campaigns are framed by the experiences and perspectives of agency practitioners (see Chapter 6). As a creative, Cowman insists that it is important to draw from his "own life" and his "own experiences". He offers an example of work he produced for McDonald's, which derived primarily from discussions with other creative practitioners about Cowman's own wife and her experiences as a mother:

> "And last year we were involved in a project in which McDonald's wanted to think in terms of the summer time and mothers and I have a wife, I have two children and we sat and we talked about her [...] that was our inspiration and we came to the conclusion, actually summers are not shiny, happy places for mothers [he says adamantly]. They're a fucking nightmare, because they can't even send the kids to bed early because they don't have school tomorrow and it's sunny anyway and all the other kids are out and they're all cutting their knees and there's no downtime and it's a fucking nightmare [laughs as if exasperated] and I wonder if McDonald's can help? And this was our discussion that at least you can bring them there, so we produced an ad which you may have seen which had a little kid jump into the back of a car and speaking to the mother as a taxi driver and all the mothers that I spoke to at least said; "that's me!" You know [...] that's us talking from our experiences and applying script-writing skills to something that's really just normal and practical [...] whereas maybe some of the big financial institutions might represent the summer as a time when mums and kids are on swings together [...] so it's not just finding reality, it's about representing it in a way that people enjoy and to do that you've got to have your own experience and you've got to be able to represent it in a way that works within thirty seconds and gets all the selling messages in" (MC 16.03.06).

Cowman, however, contests the idea that 'direct' life experience is necessary for creatives to produce work that resonates with audiences. He argues that practitioners must attempt to move beyond mere observation to penetrate the subconscious, to "tap into a mindset". Falconer similarly argues that "empathy" is required by both client and agency practitioners. For the former, this necessitates appreciating the complexity and conditions of constraint under which agencies are required to perform. For the

latter, and especially 'creatives', this involves attempting to understand and penetrate the mindsets of target audiences. Falconer highlights, for example, that all of the Cawley Nea\TBWA creatives working on the Today FM account are male, however, she feels that with the right attitude and with the support of research, these practitioners can just as easily speak to a female audience. Supporting this position, Cowman champions face-to-face interactive research. In classic anthropological terms, one might say that he constantly stresses the importance of 'emic' research. He believes in "talking" to consumers and "wearing down" a bit of shoe leather. Nevertheless, while Cowman may have a "personal need to know who I'm talking to" (MC 16.03.06), he concedes that it is practitioners who will have the final say and hence, he stops short of the apparent triumph of the emic.

On the subject of Irish multiculturalism, respondents are generally hesitant and uncertain. Cowman adopts a highly instrumental and strategic position. When explaining a recent decision by Cawley Nea to target the Chinese community in their own language in a telecommunications advertisement, he describes this in purely pragmatic terms (his language is now divested of emotion, empathy, celebration); "we didn't do that in order to break moulds [...] We were looking at it quite pragmatically and saying, how else are you going to talk to them? [Laughs]" (MC 16.03.06). Cowman is highly dismissive of transparent 'politically correct' corporate gestures towards diversity or what he calls the "Starship Enterprise effect", referring to advertisements that depict people "from everywhere". He also feels that "the word racism gets thrown out too easily" (MC 16.03.06). He indicates that even countries with long histories of racial and ethnic mixing, such as the United States and Britain, "are not integrated", implying that integration itself is a flawed and problematic idea

> "because if you pretend that they [people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds] are [integrated] in a way that's not natural I'm sure they'll dismiss it [...] a playground is absolutely natural. Put them sitting at a restaurant together – it can happen of course and does happen a lot – but there's something a bit convenient about that particular setting [...] so it's actually not that easy to do and don't forget that marketers set out to sell more products. These are peripheral discussions that they don't want to get wrong

but they're not waking up in the morning worrying how to do it" (MC 16.03.06).

Cowman argues that there are limitations to multiculturalism – a view perhaps that many would hold. He suggests that while the bond of childbirth is universal, everyday engagement between cultural groups is much more limited. In arguing for more "naturalistic" representations, Cowman therefore stresses the importance of shared humanity. Yet this is somewhat at odds with his celebration of cultural change and his suggestion (above) that the Irish are increasingly comfortable with change. When I suggested that it may prove worthwhile for Irish agencies to employ a more ethnically diverse workforce in the future, Cowman is uncertain and as with his abhorrence for tokenism, is equally dismissive of "quotas". He suggests (perhaps with good reason) that marketing is a "very Western phenomenon" and as such, the logic that multicultural marketing demands an ethnically diverse workforce, is problematic. The Occidental 'cultural logic' of marketing and the requirement for specific occupational skills-sets undermine the rhetoric of 'equal employer'. Hence, "there probably wouldn't be too many thriving advertising agencies in Nigeria for instance" (MC 16.03.06). This combined with the relatively small size of the Irish advertising industry makes the issue of employment quotas additionally troublesome: "So you can't just run out and say; "right, let's take four people from the Nigerian community just to get the balance right" [...] it's not just as simple or convenient as that" (MC 16.03.06). Again, Cowman returns to the idea of "natural", "human" needs and wants, such as the fact that all people, irrespective of colour, race or ethnicity, will get hungry: "If you're dealing with food products and your spin is this is food for hungry people, well then you're talking about hunger, you're not talking about race. Do you see my point?" (MC 16.03.06). What Cowman seems to overlook, however, is that the *vast* majority of commercial advertising does *not* utilise product benefit or functionality messages. Rather, this tends to appeal to lifestyles, mindsets and aspirations, and it is here that cultural framing is important. In discussing cultural change in Ireland, practitioners at Cawley Nea/TBWA stress the importance of reconciling past and present in their work. Tangey, for example, comments: "I think you can be of Ireland but it can have modernity as part of that as well [...] [you] don't need to cut ties" (DT 14.12.05). In contrast to its repressive past, respondents celebrate Ireland's newfound confidence and its putative liberal social climate. For

Tangey, Irish people "have evolved to be more all-embracing and open" (DT 14.12.05). Yet contrary to their intimations, it can be argued that Today FM is somewhat problematically trapped in a romanticised past that if anything, patently resists the monumental changes occurring within Irish society. Here, one detects 'a certain discontinuity between discursive images and day-to-day action' (Lien 1997: 236). Against revelling in the 'up-to-date', these cultural producers are arguably living vicariously amongst the signifiers of the past; 'old' Ireland is, in fact, very much alive in their words and values and in their nostalgic collective imaginings.

Chapter 5: Smithwick's Case Study

5.1 Introduction

This final case study examines an award-winning advertising campaign for Smithwick's ale created by Dublin-based advertising agency McConnell's. Like the previous chapter, which examined Today FM, this case study focuses on a brand that is chiefly consumed and marketed in Ireland (although Smithwick's has limited availability in the United States and Britain). However, McConnell's is unique in this sample because it is a privately-owned Irish advertising agency. The Smithwick's series explored here is referred to as the 'locals' campaign and was voted Best Irish TV Series at the 1997 Shark Awards. The awarded series featured three commercials titled 'Local', 'Granddad' and Festival', although, according to Fanning (2006: 87), over thirty commercials were made for the 'locals' campaign between 1995 and 2002. This chapter begins with an examination of the McConnell's advertising agency followed by a short account of the background to the 'locals' campaign. As before, this is followed by a surmising or 'unearthing' of the elements of the creative brief: target audience, proposition and tone of voice. As in the previous case studies, however, the principal analysis derives from an examination of empirical (interview) data and support materials. In addition to investigating the creative brief elements discursively, I attempt to examine how practitioners' biographies and experiences shape and imprint their work and in doing so, broaden my analysis to include more recent advertising for Smithwick's.

The respondents in this case study are: John Fanning (Managing Director McConnell's), Gerry Kennedy (Creative Director McConnell's), Saibh Hooper (Account Executive McConnell's), Karen Hand (Freelance Planner working on Smithwick's) and Maura McGinn (Marketing Manager Smithwick's).

5.2 McConnell's

McConnell's is one of Ireland's oldest advertising agencies, founded in 1916 and now with a permanent staff of one hundred and twenty people (www.mcconnells.ie). McConnell's is located on Charlemont Place Dublin, on the banks of the canal and approximately sixty seconds walk from the foyer of Dublin's Hilton Hotel. The area is relatively verdant and quiet, somewhat removed from the hustle and bustle of the city centre. The agency itself is housed in a modern grey building and, as is generally the case in the Dublin agencies I have visited, the reception area is spacious, bright and minimalist. Magazines and trade journals are neatly stacked on coffee tables and the walls display a scattering of sample work. As I sat awaiting my various respondents, cliques of energetic people periodically engulfed the reception enquiring about faxes, deliveries and such things as the receptionist repeatedly said; "Good morning, McConnell's" with mechanical, though surprising warmth. Leading from the reception area through characteristic double doors are several floors housing the interior of the agency. For all my interviews here, I was led to one of several small boardrooms occupying the ground floor. These are plain but pristine and are, for the most part, interchangeable with those of other agencies I have visited, such that Urry (1995), following Augé, might describe them as 'non-places'. What is perhaps most significant about McConnell's, however, is that it remains a privately-owned Irish advertising agency, the significance of which I attempted to probe in my interviews. As with the vast majority of respondents in my research, all practitioners interviewed for this case study are white and educated to third level. Gerry Kennedy pursued a degree in English and History at University College Dublin (UCD) and was a teacher for three years before being offered a job placement in a friend's advertising agency. Maura McGinn, originally from the Bay Area in California, studied Liberal Arts in Berkley, followed by a two year full-time MBA. Karen Hand (whose husband is a freelance creative) likewise "did business in college" and ended up in brand management in the UK. John Fanning studied Commerce at UCD (in the early 1960s) and Saibh Hooper studied Law at UCD, followed by an MSc in Advertising at the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT).

As with previous case studies, most respondents here tended to immediately agree that agency 'culture' is fundamentally important. Having formerly worked in Cawley

Nea/TBWA (see Chapter 4), Hooper describes the corporate culture of McConnell's as "less self-conscious" (SH 30.07.06). For many respondents, this is directly attributable to John Fanning, who is both the Managing Director of the agency and one of its founding figures. For Karen Hand, John Fanning "encapsulates" McConnell's culture: McConnell's is John and John is McConnell's. She can see it "in his behaviour, in his mentality" (KH 19.07.06). Kennedy concurs, commenting that the culture of McConnell's is "definitely" important. "It's driven at the very top by John" (GK 11.07.06). Fanning himself, however, is ironically much more dubious about the importance of agency culture. He posits a contrast between agencies in larger markets, where differences in practices and cultures are more immediately discernible, and smaller markets (such as Ireland), where differences are harder to identify. "In a smaller market it's not as easy to see" (JF 17.05.06). Despite this, other respondents insist that John's influence has been significant. Hand points to the legacy of founding figures in advertising (e.g. Saatchi, Ogilvy etc.) and continually returns to Fanning when describing McConnell's. Interestingly, her description of Fanning bears a close relation to her description of Smithwick's (see below); both appear to derive from or inhabit a world still coming to terms with Celtic Tiger Ireland:

> "I remember when I first came to this agency, like you heard Marie at reception say; "well there are Diet Cokes so we'll put them in the fridge and we'll put them out when the client arrives" [...] they have a view here that they'd only put things out if there was a client, like if there was an internal meeting you couldn't put them out and I remember somebody telling me once, Sean Whittaker from II [Irish International] actually, that when he worked with John Fanning he remembers John saying when they had the biscuits out; "only eat the broken ones – keep the whole ones for the clients". That's strikes me as quite Irish. Now funny enough it's not just Irish; it comes from a particular Irishness [...] kind of putting the good stuff out for the, you know, when Granny comes around. It's kind of from that kind of money doesn't grow on trees attitude, which I think is kind of John's own attitude. And I think it is an Irish attitude particularly to have in advertising, where actually money does grow on trees. It's kind of counter and I think it made John

himself quite a compelling person and a person that clients trusted" (KH 19.07.06).

Above, Hand conjures up an agrarian idea of the 'Sunday best', suggestive of church-going folk in Ireland (and elsewhere) historically reserving their best attire for mass on Sunday. In her story, Fanning is cast as a wholesome, down-to-earth Christian that is almost an anomaly in his industry; a sort of last bastion of a former time and mentality. Fanning represents tradition, trust, hard work and value. In a sense, it is as if Fanning balances on a tightrope[95] between traditional and contemporary Ireland. What is perhaps most interesting here, however, (and a point that I return to in subsequent chapters), is the close correlation between brands and persons and persons and a *specific* Irishness, evident in all case studies. Returning to the idea of Fanning representing a kind of "counter" culture, I prompt Hand to elaborate:

QA: That's quite interesting because I suppose most people in Irish advertising are perhaps closer to this idea of Celtic Tiger cubs or something?

"Yeah, yeah, like Brian Swords down in Cawley Nea[96].

QA: So Fanning is almost like a different type?

"A counter type. He's almost like an antidote to it [...] what I notice in very strong founder cultures like that is everybody has their mimicry of the founder. You know, everybody has their John Fanning stories here for example, everyone can do a "he said to me don't eat the broken biscuits" [...] Everyone has one of those stories and that just shows to me how strong a cultural figurehead he was, is [...] but there's a huge love and respect for him internally and a huge respect for him externally from clients, but also beyond [...] you know, so in a lot of ways John would be the best of what this agency is. My question would be, if I project forward over the next five years, will something else step into that vacuum [...] I'm not sure" (KH 19.07.06).

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[95] See Beck (1992, 2000) for an elaboration of the idea of 'tightrope biographies'.
[96] Brian Swords is among a growing cache of thirty-something managing directors of advertising agencies in Dublin, which includes Orlaith Blaney (see Chapter 3).

Again, Hand uses the word "counter", suggesting resistance and opposition rather than accommodation. Indeed, her use of the word "antidote" constructs Fanning as a veritable cure for a contemporary malady while the word "vacuum" reinforces the idea of immanent loss. For all respondents, McConnell's status as a privately-owned Irish advertising agency is especially important. Kennedy suggests that this is particularly important for Irish accounts (such as Ballygowan and the *Irish Times*) and that practitioners at McConnell's "tend to try to look for Irish solutions" to briefs (GK 11.07.06). While Fanning does not go so far as to suggest that some notion of 'Irishness' is incorporated into all the work performed by McConnell's, he similarly maintains that the agency looks for "stuff that's rooted in Irish society and [that] resonates with a mass of Irish people" (JF 17.05.06). Kennedy insists that Irish brands should not have to go overseas to find capable advertising agencies. In line with Fanning, he suggests that Irish agencies are in a unique position to understand Irishness and to promote or "tap into" certain aspects of it. For Kennedy, the current "confident" cultural climate is especially important. In a view reminiscent of Blaney's 'Riverdance' analogy (see Chapter 3), Kennedy intimates that McConnell's has very much promoted this contemporary progressive Irish spirit in various campaigns, such as that for Powers whiskey and AIB banking. AIB, for example,

> "was based on the whole thought that anything is possible and this was [...] if you're just looking at Irish history, like could you have said that one hundred and fifty years ago, when nothing was possible? So it [...] was a great opportunity to tap into what's happening in Irish culture now and it's easier to do it with an Irish brand" (GK 11.07.06).

Kennedy is adamant that against a staid and restrictive past, contemporary Ireland is liberated and replete with possibilities. Nevertheless, Kennedy and other respondents are keenly aware that worldwide consolidation within the advertising industry to some extent undermines the autonomy of 'branch offices'. In the following quote, Fanning draws an analogy to poker:

> "I mean it's like a game of poker, you have to play the hand you're given ... there's no doubt about it that I think, on the one hand, if you're totally Irish-owned, I think you can probably do a bit of a better job for local clients in

particular [...] you're not in a position of being just a collector of money for some anonymous head office in London or New York and have to dash off the money every Friday" (JF 17.05.06).

Above, Fanning casts consolidation in a less than salutary light and in doing so, implicitly challenges empowering views of internationalisation[97]. Hence, while practitioners at Cawley Nea/TBWA (see previous case study) had a generally positive take on consolidation, stressing their "voice" in the network, McConnell's executives offer a bleaker perspective. Like respondents in other case studies, practitioners at McConnell's argue that creativity is crucial for advertising agencies and as such, awards must be considered important. "[Like] they say about money, it's not money that's the problem; it's the lack of it! And it's the same with awards. If an agency doesn't win awards or is never on the award level it's very hard to sell yourself [...] like, what are you?" (GK 11.07.06). Here, Kennedy suggests that winning awards helps to legitimate the promotional claims of advertising agencies implying that awards work to establish a classificatory hierarchy within advertising. Having a lot of awards confers status and prestige on an advertising agency and more importantly, makes the agency attractive to potential clients. As such, awards function as symbolic capital for these companies. Nevertheless, Kennedy concedes that the pursuit of awards can sometimes justifiably be considered "self-indulgent crap" by clients.

Given its history and independent status, Irishness emerges as highly significant in the work of McConnell's and in this respect, McConnell's appears to differ somewhat from Cawley Nea/TBWA and particularly, from McCann-Erickson. Nevertheless, as I argue in Chapters 6-8, respondents' assumptions about Irishness and their vocabularies of cultural identity in all three case studies show considerably more convergence than divergence on the whole.

[97] 'While agencies generally see internationalisation as a natural business progression, whether they choose to exist as a multinational or national agency, they must position the agency properly within that environment to ensure its survival and prosperity' (Turnbull and Doherty-Wilson 1989: 14).

5.3 Background to 'Locals' Campaign

In his book *The Importance of Being Branded* (2006), John Fanning[98] offers a rich and often humorous account of the development of the 'locals' campaign. He suggests that while the Irish beer market was formerly 'a relatively simple affair', by the 1970s things had changed dramatically with the arrival of 'lagers from a sophisticated continent increasingly familiar to a more cosmopolitan generation' (Fanning 2006: 87). Kennedy likewise comments: "Lager would have been the big problem. Heineken moving in, Carlsberg moving in [...]" (GK 11.07.06). Maura McGinn, the Brand Manager at Diageo (client), similarly highlights that the influx of lager brands was of particular concern for Smithwick's. In a metaphorical sense (as I suggest below), lager might be interpreted as a symbolic precursor to more intensive cultural globalisation in Ireland; a kind of 'globalisation *avant la lettre*' (Skov 2002: 559) so to speak. McGinn insists that the transformations in Irish society (associated with the dawn of the 'Celtic Tiger') were particularly damaging to Smithwick's because it was rooted in the past; "it was still very much a beyond the pale" rural brand (MM 14.09.06). Despite a number of failed marketing attempts during the 1980s, Smithwick's continued to lose market share and by the early 1990s, the brand's market share fell below ten per cent (Fanning 2006: 87). Fanning describes how at this point, an effort was made to revive the brand, which involved the use of external consultants and multiple kinds of research. Of the various exercises undertaken, a day-long session with Smithwick's 'loyalists' (as Fanning describes them) was to prove most insightful:

> This all took place on a Saturday in a more central hotel where between sixty and seventy Smithwick's loyalists from all over the country were assembled in one of the large conference rooms. The marketing department and agency teams intermingled with the respondents and the sense of drama was

[98] It should be highlighted that although Fanning features prominently in the interview material included here (and he was a key participant in the 'locals' campaign), I had limited time when interviewing him and decided to direct the interview towards broader sociological questions (such as agency and national culture, consolidation within the global advertising industry, multiculturalism etc.). This was a strategic decision, in part influenced by time constraints and in part by the fact that Fanning devotes a considerable number of pages to describing the 'locals' campaign in his recent book *The Importance of Being Branded* (2006), which I treat as a primary source.

> heightened by the mass of lights, cameras, microphones and wires as the entire proceedings were filmed. Respondents vied with each other to grab the microphone and tell their own "Smithwick's story". As the day unfolded a remarkably coherent pattern emerged. A Smithwick's man – there were no women as the brand has the lowest percentage of female drinkers of any beer – was intensely loyal to the brand, in spite of the inevitable slagging he received from companions who drank stout or lager. They were also very conscious of the brand's declining fortunes and were bitterly critical of the company behind the brand for its neglect. The more they let off steam – and at times the atmosphere resembled a religious revival meeting – the more it became clear that the Smithwick's drinker saw himself as a beleaguered minority unfairly derided by the rest of the world but secure in the knowledge that the rest of the world was out of step and that he could see through the phoniness and pretensions of stout and lager drinkers. Smithwick's was an uncomplicated brand, beer was an uncomplicated category and they were uncomplicated people. A pint of beer was a social lubricant, not a deeply meaningful statement about themselves (ibid. 86).

Fanning explains that the above discovery resulted in a very precise marketing strategy and in 1995, it was decided to 'consolidate the existing brand loyalists' (ibid. 87) or target Smithwick's "adorers", as other respondents tend to describe them. Kennedy explains that a key task of the new campaign, which Diageo "referred to straight away as the 'locals' campaign", was to "establish credentials" (GK 11.07.06), reminding consumers of the product's heritage and quality. Nevertheless, the Smithwick's man and his environment were to be the primary focus. As Fanning writes: 'The solution in the case of Smithwick's was very much dependent on an acute understanding of the personality, mentality and motivations of existing users of the brand' (2006: 88). Karen Hand, the Freelance Planner, attributes this strategic insight or "eureka moment" directly to John Fanning (with faint mockery):

> "What John would say happened, certainly the eureka moment, which he would credit as being the agency's and credit as being himself, along with a few other people [...] maybe [...] am was a realisation that Smithwick's was effectively a provincial brand rather than a parochial brand, and that within the

> provinces was what he would see as that kind of Patrick Kavanagh sensibility of talking, of what is happening in [stresses next two words] their world at that time actually being incredibly important, that it has significance. And he would have quoted in particular the poem *Epic* at the time and, you know, the local row [...] 'Gods make their own importance' and maybe the Iliad and such" (KH 19.07.06).

Above, Hand, like Fanning, employs psycho-social notions of "mentality" and "sensibility" and stresses the importance of place; the locale as well as 'the local'. (Although, as I suggest below, the provincial/parochial distinction is not entirely convincing). Kavanagh's poem *Epic* centres upon a local feud and is reminiscent of Tomlinson's (1999: 9) insistence that despite globalisation, 'local life occupies the majority of time and space'. Hand's reference to "talking" is important and suggests face-to-face interaction. As I elaborate upon below (in reference to the local 'pub'), respondents differentiate the impersonal environment of the urban 'bar' from the spontaneous, organic nature of the rural pub. The identity and habitus of the Smithwick's man is therefore key to understanding the 'locals' campaign.

5.4 The Smithwick's Series

The Smithwick's series explored here, which is part of the so-called 'locals' campaign, included three executions (titled 'Local', 'Granddad' and 'Festival') and was voted Best Irish TV Series at the 1997 Shark Awards. The following reading, as with other case studies, was undertaken primarily to establish a framework for conducting and analysing interviews. As already noted, the 'Television Series' category emphasises synergy between commercials in terms of brand identity but generally permits variation in respect of storyline, characters and setting. Unlike the Heineken (brand) and Today FM commercials, however, the Smithwick's commercials do not, in fact, alter the setting (each features the 'Gravediggers' pub in Glasnevin, Dublin) and show very little character variation. Hence, like Heineken Green Energy, the 'locals' campaign is perhaps closer to the 'ideal type' of advertising series.

5.4.1 Textual Analysis

Below, I provide one reading of the creative brief elements (target audience, proposition and tone of voice) yet offer a narrative description of each of the commercials in this series.

Local

All three commercials dedicate as much attention to the setting and ambience as to the events unfolding. The first commercial, in particular, does not depict a story as such but instead focuses on the setting i.e. the 'Gravediggers' pub in Glasnevin, Dublin. The camera pans across a dark and dusty partitioned bar with stained glass windows, abundant wood, simple bare walls and hanging lights. It is comfortable looking but basic, devoid of neon glare and superfluous flair. The camera fixes upon a large solid bar at which a gathering of intimates (presumably the 'locals') are perched. These have amiable though somewhat impassive faces. The air is still and the light bleached, creating an almost mystical tranquillity that engulfs the place. Echoing Fanning's wry analogy to a 'religious revival' above, there is an air of reverence and respect here and one would be forgiven for thinking that the pub is considered 'sacred' terrain by these people.

Are you going for a pint? fills the bottom right hand corner of the screen.

Granddad

In the second execution, an attractive young woman in her twenties with a sallow complexion, dark brown hair, blue jeans and a tight long-sleeve black top strolls confidently into the same pub as before, followed by a small, meek and mildly embarrassed elderly man. The latter is wearing a tweed jacket and tie, and his self-conscious gait is tracked by a slow electric guitar soundtrack reminiscent of Budweiser's T.J. Hooker commercial. The pair are several feet apart and the young woman strolls self-assuredly towards the bar, her dark hair flowing as the older man shuffles behind her. The camera focuses on the reaction of several pockets of men in perhaps their late twenties (all consuming pints of Smithwick's that are almost entirely full) as they observe this procession, blatantly giving their utmost attention to

the young woman. Two young men stand to look at her over a partition while others cock their heads sidewise to follow her; their reactions displaying a combination of bewilderment and awe.

The hands of a barman fill the screen as he places two pints of Smithwick's before the young woman and elderly man.

"I dunno, what's everyone gonna think", the old man says, shifting uneasily.

"Granddad, nearly everyone drinks pints", the young woman replies, a smile filling her face.

The old man raises his eyes to the sky and shakes his head in submission.

Are you going for a pint? fills the bottom right hand corner of the screen.

Festival

In the 'Festival' commercial, the camera pans across the same pub, offering cursory glances of its various inhabitants. The soundtrack is energetic and fast-paced, with a violin keeping the tempo. The bar is visibly fuller; more young women in particular can be seen. As a young man places a unicycle against the wall of the bar, we hear a voiceover say: "Once a year for festival week the whole place would go mad". The camera cuts to a long-haired man juggling three pins. We see two young men (their faces familiar as the admirers of the young woman in the above commercial) shake their heads as they observe the carryings on about them as if to say; "what's this nonsense all about?". Even the voiceover seems to concur, sarcastically continuing: "It was filed under art". The camera cuts to a carnival mask in Punch and Judy style, lying discarded beside a half consumed pint of Smithwick's. We see a little Jack Russell dog wearing a large frilly circus collar sitting on a bar stool and then a young woman playing a violin surrounded by a scattering of people. Finally, the camera settles upon a mime artist wearing a bowler hat, a striped shirt and a jacket, with a little yellow flower in his breast pocket. He is intently reading a book at the bar and there is a small brown teapot sitting in front of him. The 'Granddad' from the previous advert is sitting close to him, looking at him with a mixture of curiosity and bewilderment. A younger man in the company of the older gent encourages the latter (inaudibly) to ask the mime artist something. After several moments hesitation the old man addresses the mime artist: "Sorry for butting in but do you mind me asking, what

do you do?" he asks earnestly in a strong Dublin accent, as his younger companion peers at the mime artist over his shoulder.

"I'm a mime artist".

"He's a mime artist" the old man says turning to the younger man beside him.

"Do you know what mime is?" the mime artist inquires in a friendly tone.

"Yeah" the young man replies, speaking audibly for the first time in a Northern Irish accent; "mime's a pint".

The old man laughs into his pint and the mime artist, with an exasperated expression, lifts his eyes to the sky before returning them to the page before him.

Are you going for a pint? fills the bottom right hand corner of the screen.

***

In their various ways, each of the above commercials presents a fleeting glimpse of a somewhat esoteric and insular world, the 'Festival' advert perhaps capturing this most completely. The comment made by the young man to the mime artist is light-hearted but condescending nonetheless. Indeed, the emphasis on 'mime' and 'yours' deliberately stresses opposition and difference. The 'local' cannot speak for the outsider and does not wish to. Not only is the latter patently, visibly (and even comically) different but even his choice of beverage is constructed as a marker of significant social import. In Rakoff (2001), the mime artist Marcel Marceau described his life's work as follows: "I make the visible invisible and the invisible visible. People think that when we are silent, you have nothing to say. But you can make people laugh and cry through the tragedy and the comedy of life". Marceau's comment is both brilliant and fitting in the context of this case study and suggests that 'looks' can convey just as much meaning as words (and often more). The bonds of the pub's inhabitants are unspoken; they constitute a silent community. It is the absence of women and 'outsiders'; the bemused, bewildered, hostile or patronising 'looks' registered in their collective faces that suggest a tacit alliance. It is via these, we might say, that the invisible is made visible.

Surmising brief elements:

Target audience

The above commercials are most certainly directed at men, with a slight rural bias. While older men are included, one assumes that the primary target is perhaps men aged 25-35. These are small town men and it is the community to which they defer for guidance and with which they primarily identify.

Proposition

Smithwick's is a genuine drink for genuine men.

Tone of voice

Irreverent Witty Intimate

5.4.2 Analysis of Interviews and Support Materials

Above, I provided short narrative descriptions of the three commercials in this series and attempted to undertake limited textual analyses of these in terms of the 'creative brief' elements. In the sections that follow, I return to the creative brief elements, this time drawing directly from interviews with respondents.

Target Audience

Gerry Kennedy describes the target audience for the Smithwick's 'locals' campaign as "males in their twenties, early thirties, with kind of a rural bias" (GK 11.07.06). For McGinn, the rural-urban divide is especially important. "I mean I'm sort of getting into the differences between townies and culchies[99] [laughs]" (MM 14.09.06).

[99] Derogatory term used to describe people living in rural areas of Ireland.

McGinn suggests that the target audience for Smithwick's has remained largely consistent. For her, the Smithwick's "heartland" is still rural Ireland and the brand's traditional drinker embodies a rural sensibility or "mentality". This is reflective of Fanning's suggestion (above) that these people consider themselves 'uncomplicated'. Gerry Kennedy explains that the 'locals' campaign was directly inspired by his own experiences growing up in a rural pub:

> QA: Do creatives draw from their own personal experiences?
>
> "I do yeah, I do indeed. Well the whole Smithwick's thing [...] I mean the fact is my pop owned a pub. So I suppose that was, I suppose, the ultimate personal experience. A lot of those characters were based on little guys that drank in that pub. We did an awful lot of ads over about five or six years and some of the characters were definitely drawn on people that I would have served drink to when I was a nipper. So that was probably the most fun thing I've ever worked on because that was purely drawing on my own experiences" (GK 11.07.06).

Probing this further, I asked him:

> QA: Creative people in other areas often describe their work as a reflection of their own identity; to what extent do you think advertising campaigns bear the imprint of practitioners' own identities?
>
> "Well [...] it's an interesting thing, like some people tend to be almost like soulless creatures; they tend to just absorb from other advertising cultures and they tend to throw it back but I certainly wouldn't see any point in just doing that. I just love as much of your own imprint as you can [...] Obviously, as I said, Smithwick's was something that was very based on experiences growing up. And I did a little bit of stand-up about twelve years ago and a lot of that stuff I tried to turn into radio campaigns [...] I did it for Kellogg's Crunchy Nut" (GK 11.07.06).

Above, Kennedy implies that the more personally involved a creative is and the more he or she can bring his or her experiences and memories to bear upon the process of creating advertising, the better the end result is likely to be. He doesn't believe in 'soullessly throwing back' appropriated cultural material but in harnessing personal experiences. As I have suggested in previous case studies and linked to this idea of 'imprinting' texts via introspection, many practitioners describe the operation of a kind of intuitive or visceral "sense" when producing. While the 'locals' campaign was directly informed by Kennedy's background, respondents highlight that Smithwick's more recent 'not the usual' campaign, which I discuss later in this case study, was inspired by the knowledge and experiences of Padraig Burns, the former Smithwick's Account Manager in McConnell's, who like Kennedy, came from a rural Irish background. Hand, for example, comments:

> "[Burns] was the energy behind that [new] campaign [...] and the observations that fuelled it. And I wanted to do some anthropological research at one point, ethnographic research, with the head of anthropology down at Maynooth because I felt [stresses next two words] so naked working on this account actually because I didn't feel I had the nuggets of insight into living in Kilkenny or living in Sligo [...] and it wasn't even that I wanted it to be about that place but I wanted it to be about that mentality [...] and there was a danger it wasn't going to be because it had been hijacked by a load of people in Dublin working in advertising trying to trivialise or patronise people [...]" (KH 19.07.06).

Above, Hand refers to Burns as a source of legitimacy and credibility for Smithwick's new strategic direction. Hand considered herself incapable of sharing Burns' "sense" of the brand and target audience and she felt that anthropological research might generate "insights" about consumers that would render her more capable of understanding them. Repeatedly, Hand slips into psycho-social descriptions of psyches and mentalities, insisting (above) that her wish to gain anthropological insights was driven not by a desire to understand a specific "place" but a particular mindset or "mentality". This suggests that target audience is not so much a demographic as a psychographic notion. The nakedness she describes relates to the mind and not the body; it is incorporeal and metaphysical. Despite this, Hand does

implicitly maintain rigid geographical boundaries and it is via place that local particularities emerge or 'the mind's landscape'[100] (MacDougall 1994) is rendered intelligible. She perpetuates a kind of Yeatsian urban-rural divide, criticising the "patronising" pretentiousness or bourgeois pompousness of Dublin executives. Living in Dublin, one senses that people have become irreversibly tainted by the global cultural miasma and have lost the ability to reconnect with their roots. Nevertheless, Hand insists that in recent times Smithwick's has reconfigured the essentially urban-rural divide, appealing instead to a geographically looser sense of 'independence':

> QA: In terms of the target audience Karen, Gerry implied that Smithwick's had a male, rural bias [...] is that still the case?
>
> "[Diageo] made a decision that they were only going to talk to twenty to thirty year old males in the heartlands of Smithwick's. The heartlands of Smithwick's are South East Kilkenny and the surrounding lands, and North West Sligo and the surrounding lands [...] we managed to talk them [...] into having at least [stresses next two words] a presence in Dublin, with what we called our 'mavens' [...] because funnily enough, there is a certain group of men drinking Smithwick's in Dublin who are quite opinion-leading because they drink it almost in that kind of anti-brand kind of; "I'm so fucking unimpressed by all this designer lark or whatever that I drink a sound-as-a-pound drink like Smithwick's" and you know, there was one guy I remember in research and he said; "I love the fact that when I go up there the barman says; "what?" and I come back and people go; "I can't believe you ordered Smithwick's"" and he was trading on this whole archaic thing [...] so there's a group of people in Dublin [...] the kind of Grogan's fraternity" (KH 19.07.06).

Above, Hand makes explicit a strong male bias and also a focus on brand "adorers". Nevertheless, she suggests that Smithwick's has expanded its appeal in recent times to include a certain sect of Dublin bohemian types or what she labels the "Grogan's

[100] MacDougall (1994: 261) writes that the mind's landscape 'is often apparently incoherent, and a strange mixture of the sensory and the verbal. It offers us the past in flashes and fragments, and in what seems a hodgepodge of mental 'media''.

fraternity", referring to people who frequent one of Dublin's best known pubs for 'Triple A's': artists, actors and academics. She labels these people "mavens", meaning experts or enthusiasts in a particular field. One assumes that these urban dwellers long to escape the conspicuous consumerism and globalism of Celtic Tiger capitalism and are drawn to what they perceive as a more down-to-earth authentic pub like Grogan's. Their enthusiasm is directed towards the rebellious, archaic and alternative, and Smithwick's, it would seem, shares this ethos.

Proposition

Gerry Kennedy suggests that by the mid to late 1990s, a kind of generic creative standard had developed in beer advertising. In the following passage, he describes the Smithwick's response as an attempt to inject an element of realism into its campaign.

> "Well I suppose at the time [...] there seemed to be a feeling in every beer ad that it was, you know, drink the beer, get the girl and [...] it just seemed to me to be fake [...] or British ads which tended to be highly, highly inventive and very, very creative advertising am but you didn't have [...] I just felt there didn't seem to be anything that was reflecting a bit of reality and it seemed to us that there was a great opportunity if we could explore the 'public bar'. Not so much the [emphasises next word] 'lounge' as it were but the public bar where guys go in drinking. So that was the basic thought behind it. To go in and explore that territory" (GK 11.07.06).

Above, Kennedy makes clear that it was the pub itself that McConnell's wished to explore. This involved less a focus on materiality or spatiality per se and more deliberate attention to the interpersonal relationships and collective bonds therein. His description of entering and "exploring" this territory conjures an image of the anthropologist at work. All respondents contrast the "real country pub" with the "town bar". McGinn, for example, describes the 'locals' campaign as "a celebration of the values and experiences of the community within the pub and what that meant and what that brought to peoples' lives" (MM 14.09.06). In arguing such a position, respondents appear to uphold a vision of the small rural community as expressive of

'genuine' Ireland. In a metonymical sense, the 'pub' can be interpreted as a proxy for rural Irish society. However, Kennedy insists that the campaign "wasn't so much pushing Irishness as pushing the Irish drinking" and the sociality, liveliness and joie de vivre of Irish pub-going men. Kennedy contrasts social relations in urban bar culture – people arriving and remaining in isolated packs, occasionally venturing out into the impersonal collective – to the tacit confederacy of the local pub:

> "In [stresses next word] proper local pubs what you have is you have people who meet within that pub and they don't meet anywhere else. So you know, for instance, you can go down at ten o'clock at night and you will meet Sean or Paddy; he's gonna be there and one guy can be a doctor, one guy can be a barrister, one guy can be a plumber and that this is where you meet and what happens outside those four walls doesn't really count so it wasn't so much an exploration of friendship or even Irishness [...] it was an exploration of the pub [...] of a proper Irish pub, and the friendships that actually happen within that" (GK 11.07.06).

Above, Kennedy describes the pub as a sort of egalitarian, pluralistic refuge that divests individuals (or specifically men) of externally imposed, inhibitive categorisations. The pub facilitates and encourages relations across backgrounds, occupations and ages. While Kennedy is keen to emphasise the pub rather than Irishness, it is clear that one is inseparable from the other. What is distinctive about the pub described is that it is 'Irish' first and foremost; it is this fact that engenders other distinctions. Kennedy describes the "proper" local pub as one which promotes an equality of drinking men and wherein social masks are cast aside. Men here can relate without social labels and it is almost as if the mystical properties of the place itself fertilise these bonds. The pub is putatively class blind, though one can assume (as I suggest below), that it is neither gender nor colour blind.

Tone of Voice

In line with her description of Smithwick's, Hand describes the tone of the 'locals' campaign as down-to-earth, "real" and "grounded" (KH 19.07.06). Kennedy likewise

avers; "well, at the time it was real unpretentious, a no nonsense drink basically" (GK 11.07.06). Hand insists that despite a failed attempt to appear "hip" in the 1970s ("basically Smithwick's trying to be lager"), the tone of Smithwick's advertising has remained relatively consistent over time. Revealing a strong degree of overlap with the previous two case studies in terms of the language used to describe the brand (particularly McCann-Erickson's descriptions of Heineken[101]); Hand explains the tone of Smithwick's as follows:

> "I think it's quite wry, I think it's Irish and that's interesting because it's not [puts on dramatic syrupy voice] Oirish, it's not the way Guinness can be. It is actually Irish, it is [stresses next two words] real Irish [...] I think it's realistic maybe [...] I think it's kind of grounded" (KH 19.07.06).

Above, one detects what might be described as a subtext of 'authenticity'. Smithwick's apparently does not peddle ersatz visions of Ireland that accommodate global stereotypes but offers a "realistic", "grounded" perspective. Hand suggests that the Irishness imbued in Smithwick's is of a "deeper" kind than that of Guinness (a distinction that I return to in Chapters 6 and 7).

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Maura McGinn suggests that by the late 1990s, Smithwick's was losing market share mainly because it was "too ruthlessly focused on holding onto adorers" without attempting to accommodate its strategy to wider socio-cultural change in Ireland. While earlier executions in the 'locals' campaign worked because younger Smithwick's drinkers could still identify with the life depicted, a subsequent series of ads in 2002/3 using the character 'Norm' from the American series *Cheers* was utterly rejected and deemed highly damaging to the brand.

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[101] "I think there's a degree of wit in the ads, which is dialled up and down, there's tension in the ads [...] Sophisticated. I think sophisticated, subtle and wry would be the three ways, three words I would use to describe the ads" (Stephen Bogan describing Heineken).

> "The 'locals' campaign ... tested really well and it seemed to get the brand in a place where the adorers started feeling better about their brand [...] they could definitely relate to it even if a younger guy wasn't going as often to dad's pub, he could relate to it and he respected it [...] he would say; "you're not talking exactly to me but you're talking about something that's very familiar to me. So it exists in my community, you're just not talking to me as a, you know, thirty year old guy specifically". [Later] [...] they brought in Norm from Cheers [...] and I was really surprised how much damage those ads did to the brand [...] the 'locals' campaign was starting to put Smithwick's into a corner but Ireland at the same time in the backdrop was changing so you didn't really see it so much in our kind of volume data but I think when Norm came on it actually seemed to just cement or finally crystallise all the things that were kind of going on around 'locals' that weren't helping the brand [...] Norm had aged a lot and [...] and what it was they [Smithwick's drinkers] would just say; "why do you always have, you know, unattractive old people in Smithwick's ads?" [Laughs] (MM 14.09.06).

Above, McGinn describes a conflict between maintaining groundedness and presenting an aspirational image of the brand in the contemporary world. McGinn relates Smithwick's outdated and anachronistic brand associations to a receding Ireland, personified in the tired, aging frame of 'Norm'. Divested of his upbeat *Cheers* personality, Norm appeared weary and out of place. Hence, the Norm campaign "was just getting the brand ready for death in a decent way [laughs]. You know, like make them die like you would an older person, like with respect in their own comfortable world" (MM 14.09.06). Adopting a somewhat extreme position, McGinn suggests that the Norm campaign effectively signalled the death-knell for the 'locals' campaign and forced a rethinking of strategy. Here, she directly invokes the idea of 'brand as person', in this case approaching the end of its life cycle. Ultimately, she suggests that the brand was forced to modernise and update its image, while being mindful not to alienate core drinkers. In a sense then, 'locals' offered a portrait of an Ireland with which Smithwick's drinkers could no longer identify. Ireland has fundamentally altered; wealth complicates class as much as immigration complicates culture, and the insular dreamlike world of 'locals' is no longer attainable, if it existed at all.

> [Smithwick's drinkers will say] ""That's not the Ireland I know. I may be a builder but I'm going off to Lanzarote" [...] so they like that life [the life depicted in 'locals'] and they want to keep to certain values and keep being Irish but that's not a world they know anymore. Or I shouldn't say know, but that they interact with anymore" (MM 14.09.06).

In discussing Smithwick's decision to abandon the 'locals' campaign and reposition the brand, Hand explains that a British semiotician was hired and after conducting various semiotic analyses of the brand and product category he advised "that Smithwick's could, his words, "play with conventions". And they [Diageo] decided that would be the strategy for Smithwick's" (KH 19.07.06). While McConnell's and Hand considered this rather an ambiguous strategy, McGinn (the Brand Manager in Diageo) naturally offers more certainty. Deferring to a research tool used by Diageo called a 'motivational mapping grid' (which she describes as a kind of pie-chart displaying multiple consumer 'types' based on motivations), McGinn suggests that upon further research, it was discovered that as well as his positioning within a motivational state called 'contentment', the Smithwick's drinker possessed another distinctive (and somewhat contradictory) characteristic; a strong sense of 'independence':

> "And I said look, the Smithwick's guy is charming and has potential, we just need to keep who he is true to who he is but make him spread his wings and kind of get his day in the sun [...] we had started looking at the motivation states and tried to carve out a space even though they were kind of right on top of each other [...] [Guinness is] the mass brand in Ireland, you know, the ten thousand pound Gorilla [...] so we just weren't going to compete. But there was an interesting correlation between what we called 'independence', which was another motivational state but completely opposite, which is kind of surprising [...] it's not only independent because Smithwick's is an ale and a red beer but also because there was a bit of independence in the character as far as he [a Smithwick's drinker] would say; "yeah, I definitely get slagged a lot but you know, I don't mind that". There's a resilience and independence and I think the difficulty was trying to tease out that word 'independence' because these are global words; how do you tease out 'independence' vis-à-vis

> the Irish male mentality and also vis-à-vis rural, communal mentality as well, and that generated a lot of interesting discussion around that [...] and we definitely tested things out. Like would you be the flag burner independence, the maverick independence, the anti-cool independence? [...] and it was brought back down a lot, which made sense because you were still in contentment, that easy-going thing, but just bringing that edge back a little, so making sure it doesn't make them feel disconnected from the group" (MM 14.09.06).

McGinn's account above provides an interesting glimpse into power asymmetries in a corporate structure such as Diageo, in which a large portfolio of brands must compete internally as well as externally. Thus, while the Smithwick's decision to alter its brand strategy and communication appeared culturally inspired i.e. as a consequence of wider socio-cultural shifts in Irish society, here it seems that a more structural explanation is equally valid. Indeed, other respondents offer additional support for this argument. Karen Hand suggests, for example, that while Smithwick's was actively pursuing its successful 'locals' campaign, Guinness was attempting to attract younger drinkers and "had lost the kind of stout drinking man [...] the normal run-of-the-mill artisan guy who drinks Guinness was being left behind in terms of the advertising" (KH 19.07.06). While Smithwick's was successful, it seemed that Guinness advertising was faltering, and understandably this did not please Diageo. McGinn explains that Smithwick's success with the 'locals' campaign caused ripples internally within the Diageo organisation because some felt that its success might negatively impact the company's flagship brand Guinness. "Guinness is the pearl, the joy [...] the centre of gravity" (KH 19.07.06). In particular, it was felt that Smithwick's had become too similar to Guinness in terms of brand imagery and symbolism (or what McGinn describes as "contentment" above). Kennedy likewise stresses that the Smithwick's work began to "image-wise eat into the Guinness market share", implying that in subsequent work, the symbolic "territory" and imagery developed by Smithwick's was re-appropriated by Guinness:

> "In many ways what we did was lay down the markers for where some of the Guinness work has gone now believe it or not. If you see a lot of Guinness advertising now [...] for instance, you don't see too many women in the pub –

> they're kind of all the rules that we kind of established. They began to lock onto that" (GK 11.07.06).

The above explains why Kennedy insists that more recent work by Guinness, such as the 'Sorry' commercial[102], has "a very Smithwick'sy feel to it". (I return to discuss the relationship between Smithwick's and Guinness in Chapters 6 and 7). Hence, irrespective of its precise cause, Smithwick's evidently faced something of an 'identity crisis' by the late 1990s and it was decided (in view of the advice from the semiotician to "play with conventions") that Smithwick's should adopt a new marketing strategy. However, McGinn insists (above) that it was also necessary that the brand remain "true to who he is", again invoking a powerful notion of authenticity. In essence, McGinn argues that it was important to carry elements of the brand's past into the new strategy (honesty, integrity etc.) while also contemporising it or encouraging it to embrace modern Ireland. Hooper corroborates this view, highlighting that the term "jester"[103] frequently arises in brand meetings and is used to describe "someone who's not afraid to break with convention and do things their own way" (SH 30.07.06). Elaborating upon this description of the new variant of Smithwick's drinker, Hooper continues;

> "You know, there's a really interesting side to Smithwick's at the moment that's going on, which is this kind of anti-brand movement because Smithwick's isn't seen as one of the big lager brands, it doesn't have the same budget behind it. So there's kind of an arty set in Dublin, kind of Grogan's drinking-actory types who are starting to drink Smithwick's" (SH 30.07.06).

Hooper's description of a new variant of "anti-brand" Smithwick's drinker is self-evidently oxymoronic, yet comprehensible in light of the brand's recent strategy. In

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[102] This commercial depicts a highly determined and purposeful man as he walks across Ireland, swims the Atlantic Ocean and finally, enters a small bar in Manhattan. Upon his entering, the noisy bar falls deathly silent. The hero approaches another man and they hold eyes for several moments. Finally, the hero utters a single word; "sorry". After several more moments of mounting tension in which neither shows the slightest change of expression, the seated man finally breaks into a beaming smile and embraces his steadfast friend.

[103] One can draw an interesting parallel between Hooper's description here and Heineken Green Energy (HGE) in the first case study. Both target an intelligent prankster; someone with a degree of silliness and zestfulness but with acuity and wit also. The term "jester", however, is curious because it carries pejorative historical baggage – the jester being the subject of ridicule as much as enjoyment. Here, the jester is a self-affirming individual; passionate, powerful and confident.

contrast to the somewhat taciturn and low-key drinker formally associated with the ale, the brand's new drinkers are confidently expressive and artistic, outwardly relishing their individuality. Against the silent brooding "loner" in the corner, the new variant occupies centre stage; indeed, he is quite literally an "actor". One might suggest therefore that the brand has been reconfigured in the revivalist fashion of turning 'negatives into positives'[104]. The loner has become 'alternative' and 'independent'; the silent 'artistic', 'bohemian' and 'contemplative'; the subdued 'confidently expressive' and the marginal 'centre stage'. Hooper's "odd character" is non-conformist and eccentric but appealingly so. He is not ridiculed but celebrated and admired.

At present, both Diageo and McConnell's appear generally content with the recent 'not the usual' campaign, although for some it remains too early to say. "Watch this space [...] I really don't know what will happen next" (KH 19.07.06).

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The central thread binding practitioner accounts in this case study centres upon a notion of two Irelands colliding, negotiating and attempting reconciliation. As I suggested above, McGinn described the context of the 'locals' campaign as a case of old Ireland meeting new. She describes the influx of "foreign" lager brands as expressive of Ireland's nascent internationalism, the dawn of the Celtic Tiger era, symbolised by rampant individualism and crass commercialism. McGinn insists that the onslaught of change was particularly damaging to Smithwick's because of its strong association with rural, "traditional" Ireland. She suggests that even in the present time Smithwick's remains, as it were, part of the very essence, the very physicality of small-town Ireland: "[It is] part of the life, the land, the community" (MM 14.09.06). When discussing the proposition above, McGinn posits a definite contrast between urban (Dublin) living and rural Irish life, which might be considered shorthand for wider global-local tensions. For McGinn, the contrast between the 'pub' (communitarian, interactive, familial, agrarian) and the 'bar' (individualistic, formal,

[104] 'The strategy of the revivalists thus became clear: for bad words substitute good, for superstitious use religious, for backward say traditional, for irrational say emotional' (Kiberd 1996: 32).

sterile, urban) is expressive of the contradictory forces inherent in contemporary Ireland. In theories of post or late modern society, the fragmentation of identities and breakdown of communities, anomie, alienation, dislocation, etc. are central themes, as is the growth of individualism linked to rampant consumerism[105]. In the following passage, McGinn touches upon these larger themes in her construction of the Smithwick's brand and the kind of 'Irishness' it enshrines.

> QA: Irishness seems to be central to the brand [...] and it seems a very traditional, rural, small town Irishness [...]
>
> "Yeah definitely and even the ads, I think they captured it so well because you had all walks of life in the bar though you hardly saw women so even that kind of thing. Like my mother grew up here [in Ireland] and she never went to a pub and she would kind of frown upon that thing [...] like they certainly had women but you know, because they [Diageo] started saying; "we'll have to appeal a bit to younger people, you know get a few nice looking females in" [laughs]. But it would still be very male dominant and, you know, the older man with the younger man. So it was kind of showing the whole sense of community in a rural town that everyone knows each other no matter what stage of life you are, you interact and look out for one another and have a good time" (MM 14.09.06).

On the surface, McGinn's description above is of a pluralistic, wholesome close-knit community of like-minded people. The pub appears open and welcoming, transcending age barriers in the Platonic bonding of older and younger men. Yet there are clear signs of intolerance and insularity here, most obviously in its uneasy welcome of women and the requisite close personal ties. The blatant suspicion of the Other so apparent here (powerfully expressed in the campaign name 'locals') might be related to wider Irish society. However, clearly an unsurpassable 'clash' is a fruitless aporia offering little to the Smithwick's brand. Hence, as suggested above, it was necessary to modernise while also remaining "true" to the brand's heritage.

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[105] Postmodernism above all implies breakdown and change. Tucker (1998: 2) describes 'an increasingly "detraditionalised" and globally interdependent world, where old traditions and customs no longer provide signposts for how people should live, and who they should be'.

Broadly, this reconciliation of past and present (as I suggest in Chapter 7) might be described as 'going forward while looking backward' and effectively necessitated balancing competing forces.

> QA: In ways it seems that there are many contradictory forces at play; consumers who feel young and contemporary but who also relate to rural, traditional values [...] it must have been very difficult from the point of view of strategy?
>
> "Yeah absolutely. Like you could just say well, all you should do is take the 'locals' campaign and modernise or contemporise it. So you kind of put in cooler music, or a cooler looking pub [...] [But instead we examined two ads that tested well with] younger adorers and when I say younger, we're not talking like nineteen, we're talking late twenties, early thirties. The two ads that resonated quite well [...] were the ad called 'Pat's Bar', which is the Guinness ad where the guy decides to remove the TV from the bar – which if you think of the imagery in that ad, like definitely young but it's still kind of a country pub – it's celebrating the pub and their lives and they're kind of pushing back, you know, modern Dublin living or something and talking to one another, but still in a contemporary way. [The other one] was an old Bass ad. And I was kind of blown away because I didn't think the Bass ad was very good [laughs] [...] it was a pub, like two guys and two girls were sitting there and it was a real Northern Ireland humour and they were all, it was that kind of [...] I don't know if you've ever heard of deaf jam poetry but it was that kind of sparring thing, like a game, and the girls are really giving it to the guys. It's just rapid dialogue, you know, real banter and real funny and cutting, real Northern Irish, and they [Smithwick's drinkers] liked that because it was just humour they could relate to [...] there was a lot of slagging going on [...] so tonally and kind of a flavour and a feeling like in terms of what appealed to these guys" (MM 14.09.06).

Above, McGinn suggests that the two commercials described are useful because they point to the possibility of reconciling the traditional and modern. The removal of the television in the Guinness commercial might be interpreted as a stroke against cultural

globalisation or media imperialism but the youth, vibrancy, language and style depicted retain a contemporary urban accent. These are not ageing and detached hermits pathetically attempting to hold back the flow of change but lively bon-vivants embracing one another in the spirit of community. Likewise, McGinn describes the Bass commercial as a setting and humour that her respondents related to. When I questioned her on the precise meaning of "Northern humour" she replied: "[It's] far more cutting and [...] spikier, like even just the way they talk is so much faster [...] the humour in the south is more like being a charmer". Given this background and rationale, Smithwick's subsequent work (under the umbrella slogan 'not the usual') might be considered an attempt to embrace contemporary Ireland but with a view to tempering change. It strives to reconfigure individuality as idiosyncratic (not synthetic), and promotes a sense that all is not lost in the cultural maelstrom, that Ireland does not have to submit to rampant commercialism or align itself fully with the ideals of the so-called 'Celtic Tiger'. One might draw an interesting parallel here with Bulmers[106] 'consistency in a world of change'. Bulmers advertising promotes an easiness and relaxation that is comparable to Smithwick's, depicting casual and carefree scenes removed from the clamour of city life. Yet the underlying logic of these commercials is not pure fantasy or escapism; they do not suggest a return to the mythical scenes of John Hinde postcards but rather, function by offsetting competing forces. McGinn explains the premise of the 'not the usual' campaign in accordance with the notion of 'going forwards while looking backwards'; its very logic exists in the "juxtaposition" of countervailing impressions and associations:

> "'Not the usual' [...] kind of plays with all the, you know [...] my usual in the local, not the usual character being the surprising bit of a comedian [...] just the juxtaposition [...] All of a sudden lager looks quite bland and Smithwick's looks quite interesting" (MM 14.09.06).

In describing the larger context of the campaign in this fashion, however, respondents offer dissonant and oftentimes contradictory impressions of contemporary Ireland. Kennedy compares Celtic Tiger Ireland to America of the 1950s – an air of confidence after the war, rising consumption, urban development, suburbanisation and

[106] Magners in the UK.

soaring house prices, yet he appears to offer a vision of loss. He insists that there has "got to be something more real than that and I just think that agencies who do well are the ones that tap into the whole kind of conflict that's going on between suburban sprawl and [...] the things that we've lost or whatever" (GK 11.07.06). Again, Kennedy contrasts a sort of ersatz cosmetic present with a more authentic "real" past. He explains this in terms of a "conflict" and like Fanning, suggests that advertising agencies that capture this sense of tension in their work will be successful. However, while Kennedy and other respondents appear to hold some belief in 'authentic' Irishness, Fanning is acutely aware of the problematic implications of such a position:

> QA: In your opinion has Irish identity fundamentally altered or has some kind of 'essence' remained? Is there an authentic Irishness?
>
> "Am that's a very difficult question because you're getting into all sorts of very racist areas and stuff like [...] [very hesitant answering]. On the one hand, people are the same no matter where they are. On the other hand, you know, you do get kind of personality differences [...] I wouldn't overestimate the differences in culture, however, it is seen around the world as important. People do it for stereotypical reasons, not out of racism but out of taking a short cut in the same way that we all, you know, do that [...] you know, the Italians are flash and the Germans are dour and the French are arrogant [...] you know, we all kind of have these little stereotypical things. Now they're [emphasises next word] there whether we like it or not – it's a part of human nature to categorise other people. It's not racism as such [...] it can get to that but it isn't" (JF 17.05.06).

Fanning links questions of authenticity to issues of racism. He plausibly constructs culture (presumably as it is harnessed in advertising) as a simplifying device and posits that categorisation is a natural human activity. Consequently, he appears exasperated or impatient with certain critical positions and offers a more pragmatic perspective on the social aspects of commercial advertising. Nevertheless, other respondents, as I have suggested, were much more forthcoming in expressing a belief in some notion of 'authentic' Irishness. Hand, for example, again refers to Padraig Burns, the former Account Director from Dingle.

QA: So do you still believe in authentic Irishness in the face of so much change?

"Yeah and I think Smithwick's should try and own that. Funny Padraig [...] was from Dingle. He was from Kerry [...] I think Padraig had a very good [stresses next word] feel for the brand from a [stresses next word] real Irish point of view. In the same way that I think he has a really great feel for Ireland [...] As I say, he knows an Ireland you or I may not know living in Dublin [...] [even] 'not the usual' is a very Irish way to talk about being quirky. Like the brief was all about being quirky and mad and zany – but actually, [puts on rural accent] 'not the usual' is very Irish, it's very grounded [...] it's not [puts on American squeaky accent] "hi I'm funky, I'm mad, I'm out there" [...] Because I don't think Smithwick's has any credibility there [...] We're not Martini's, we're not, we're just not [...] I actually think a lot of people who work on the marketing and advertising of Smithwick's have historically felt uncomfortable with what the brand is and tried to mask that. And I think 'locals' was the only time they were true about it. [Even the 'not the usual' campaign works because it's] very grounded, it's dry, it's Irish, it's true, it's based on true things, it's reportage" (KH 19.07.06).

In explaining her position on Irish 'authenticity', Hand invokes a notion of the visceral, intuitive "sense" often described by advertising practitioners (and which I examine closely in the next chapter). As a consequence of his background, she suggests that Padraig Burns had a perspective and "feel" that was true to the brand and true to its consumers. Her implication is that this kind of sense cannot be gained artificially (though earlier she suggested that anthropological research can help uncover the "mentality" of Smithwick's drinkers). Hand insists that the brand strategy must be "credible". Indeed, towards the end of the above passage, she appears to have become so thoroughly convinced by her own rhetoric that she describes Smithwick's advertising as "reportage". Gerry Kennedy likewise believes in the persistence of 'authentic' Irishness and similarly locates this in the rural heartland of the country, yet he implies that this is eroding "in our race to become more international and more cosmopolitan, I suppose the whole Celtic Tiger thing [...]" (GK 11.07.06). It is against this backdrop that one must consider respondents' impressions of

multiculturalism in Ireland. Kennedy, for example, implies that Americanisation is not a 'new' phenomenon; however, he concedes that multiculturalism does indeed make questions of 'culture' complicated for Irish advertisers. Rather like the theory that water 'finds its own level', Kennedy implies that advertising will match itself to the needs and wants of new consumer groups and will tailor its language to a level that is generally accessible (primarily visual and colourful, for example):

> "An awful lot of the immigrants that have come, they are not coming in with a huge amount, they are not coming in with enough money to start going out and buying Ipods and stuff like that so what they're looking for basically is, they need, you know, simple communication [...] I'm not saying they're all living off basic stuff but I'm saying, you know, the simple stuff. Like if you're in Ireland, you know, Brennan's bread is the bread for you. So it's kind of, I think it's simple [...] it's nearly like [emphasises next word] communication that we need to start talking about [...] we need to talk to the Polish people that are out there in a, you know, in a human way" (GK 11.07.06).

The importance of simple selling messages or basic "communication" is often highlighted by respondents in relation to multiculturalism. It is perhaps unsurprising then that so many conjure images of common humanity and cultural universalism, espousing ideas that are universally intelligible. Kennedy also highlights the economic factor; that many immigrants are not financially capable of participating in high-end commodity purchasing and that rudimentary "communication" is initially required. "It's almost like [...] probably back in the medieval times pamphleteering, you know [laughs] [...] yeah, you go right back to basics" (GK 11.07.06). Fanning, on the other hand, circumvents questions of multiculturalism to highlight what he considers a conflict between urban and rural Irish life: "The only ethnic differences is that I think a lot of people in advertising don't understand what goes on outside of Dublin [...] but that's not ethnic I suppose [...] but I don't think that's an issue in this market" (JF 17.05.06). Here, Fanning appears to reconfigure ethnic or cultural change in Ireland in terms of a rural-urban divide. He criticises an urban Dublin mentality that is incapable of appreciating life outside of the metropolitan centre. While he acknowledges that this does not actually pertain to ethnicity, he seems to imply that

questions of this sort are somewhat moot and outside the remit of commercial advertising.

Kennedy is adamant that while brands are uniquely positioned to capture and reflect particular tenets of culture, they should not champion 'difference' per se. In a sense, he wishes to present the particular in a way that is available to the general, a position that perhaps characterises advertising broadly. Advertisers are quick to appropriate cultural specificities but their task, it seems, is not to defend the integrity of these but to reconfigure them such that they become available to the mainstream. Hence, the esoteric is rendered exoteric by the intervention of advertising. As such, Kennedy is strongly critical of campaigns that centre upon and appear to him to perpetuate difference, such as the Budweiser World Cup stings[107], which depict two brash and ignorant American presenters asininely attempting to narrate the proceedings of soccer matches.

> "Budweiser is making a dog's dinner of it. They are now sponsoring World Cup stings and they are out there and they are highlighting the difference between our culture and your culture and I think that is a totally dangerous thing for a brand to do [...] so I think that advertisers who get into culture and just do it at a very, very top level way, I think it's really bad [...] I think Budweiser is a classic example of a brand that is absolutely fucking itself up. Excuse my language. But because it is throwing you back kind of Americana glib [...] so what America Budweiser is kind of, you know, like Superbowl, they sit around, they eat pretzels, they drink beer, they get big, they get fat, they watch these games and we think that's part of America, it's not [...] It's getting into the more Americana side of it than real America. Whereas you have Miller that can sell itself in a kind of almost west coast laid-back hippy kind of, you know, grunge chilled-out style [...] like it's actually going to give you sub-strands of America that are interesting [...] or the way that Jack Daniel's would give you a taste of the south or even like, God bless us, like rubbish like Maybeline [...] but it's still got to be sold, is giving you kind of

[107] In advertising terms, a 'sting' refers to a short commercial by a programme's sponsor which runs both before and after each commercial break.

> international New York chichi stuff whereas Bud is going for a big, umbrella America global glib [...]" (GK 11.07.06).

Kennedy's position above is at odds with his suggestion that the agencies that are performing best in the current conjuncture are those that successfully portray a sense of social tensions. Paradoxically (and somewhat problematically), Kennedy appears to favour 'realism' but is reluctant to signpost 'difference'. He criticises what he considers "Americana" glib (football Sundays with beer and pretzels) yet arguably his "real" America (Miller grunge, Jack Daniel's taste of the south and Maybeline's New York chichi) is equally clichéd and stereotypical, rendering his distinctions unconvincing. In essence, he merely seems to prefer the stylistic conventions of the "sub-strand" or alternative. Likewise, his remark that even Maybeline has "still got to be sold" suggests that brand identity is relatively arbitrary as it is commercial imperative that ultimately dictates.

For most respondents at McConnell's, the cultural associations of a brand must reflect common perceptions and hence, the reconfiguration of traditionally 'Irish' brands as international or multicultural is problematic. Maura McGinn points to recent advertising for Jameson as a successful example in this regard: "I think Jameson is trying to do that [...] like an Irish voice but articulated through an international way or an international look and feel. So the messenger is international but the actual voice and tone is a bit Irish" (MM 14.09.06). Nevertheless, McGinn is deeply critical of transparent attempts at political correctness and for the present, feels that reconfiguring Smithwick's as 'multicultural' could be problematic.

> QA: Like if you had an African person in a bar drinking Smithwick's, you don't think it would exactly resonate with your audience?
>
> "No because I think eventually demographics change so much. I even think a lot of people are immigrating here for the appeal of modern Ireland [...] like they can get like a Starbuck's or go to Monsoon or all these places all around. But indigenous products and keeping true to who you are and like your local identity as long as that is not something that is way out in the sticks [...] so I think you keep your eye on the ball" (MM 14.09.06).

Above, McGinn offers a perspective close to Fanning's; there is nothing wrong with preserving a certain cultural viewpoint, even highlighting difference, as long as the brand is seen to be attempting to accommodate change. She suggests that demographics change willy-nilly and here seems to construct advertising as simply mirroring social realities. The inference to sport is interesting, implying that rules exist but that the game evolves so to speak. Despite this, she too constructs a narrative of loss:

> "Ireland has evolved so quickly, like what defines Ireland? What are the symbols of modern Ireland? [...] People just don't know and I think in some ways they aren't going to have some of the answers, which I think is sort of disturbing to them. I think people want it because they feel their identity is being lost but at the same time they don't know beyond those kinds of really old narrow cues [...]" (MM 14.09.06).

McGinn's account depicts an Ireland in the midst of an identity crisis, in which "old narrow cues" are constraining yet equally sustaining. In the absence of any clear markers or "symbols of modern Ireland", uncertainty and anxiety prevail, and it is in this hiatus that Smithwick's is attempting to negotiate a new course.

5.5 Conclusion

This case study foregrounded a 'series' of award-winning commercials for Smithwick's ale, which were part of the so-called 'locals' campaign, created by Dublin-based advertising agency McConnell's. While attempting to 'unearth' elements of the creative brief (target audience, proposition and tone of voice), this case study derived primarily from analysis of interview data. In examining the background and creative brief elements of this campaign, I attempted not merely to tease out the meaning and form of identity statements and to trace wider socio-cultural change in Ireland through the discourse of respondents but also attempted to investigate the 'producer in production', or how the backgrounds, views and experiences of producers are implicated (and indeed imprinted) in their work. Of particular note, it would appear that in this and the other case studies, respondents

insist that traditional media categories (e.g. ABC1, C2 etc.) are inadequate. Against narrow demographics focusing on class or age, all appear to prefer qualitative and psychographic data, which appear to permit a more holistic analysis of brand and consumer. Likewise, the idiom of identity is favourable to these workers because it helps cultivate 'closeness' to audiences.

Keenly aware of political correctness, respondents equivocate endlessly. 'Irishness' is strongly articulated but remains an ambiguous, contestable category. In one sense, practitioners at McConnell's are prone to verbalise a sense of loss and disenchantment, particularly in relation to the Celtic Tiger. The inscription of the past in their discourse is evident in the recurring revivalist terms and imagery. On the other hand, however, these practitioners appear to be enjoying an interregnum from the authority of the past and 'celebrate' multiculturalism (though some, such as Fanning and McGinn, consider this more a socio-political concern than a phenomenon the advertising industry must seriously reflect upon). Hence, respondents' views can be contradictory; on one hand championing cultural specificity (even 'authenticity') and on the other, espousing some notion of cultural universalism. I suggest that this dissonance is not merely traceable in the discourse of respondents but also in the brands that they collaboratively construct (and the enunciations of Irishness therein). In a sense, therefore, these brands function as prisms through which the multifarious and elusive views of practitioners are rendered concrete and intelligible. A structural mode of analysis, however, offers an alternative explanation. This suggests that practitioners' proclivity or penchant for 'identity speak' is reflective of their precarious position within the matrices of an asymmetrical (power) industry in which they are forced to strategically "play the hand given", as Fanning put it. Discussions of 'identity' are in large part derivative of market segmentation and brand "portfolio management". From this perspective (or what I term a 'structural explanation of a cultural phenomenon' in the concluding chapter of this dissertation), we might suggest that the idiom of identity is important to these practitioners because it is, in fact, fundamental to their very raison d'être: local particularity demands 'local' expertise and this is clearly advantageous in an industry increasingly defined by global consolidation. Knowing when and how (and also when 'not to do' Irishness) therefore becomes especially important.

Chapter 6: Second-Order Analysis Part 1

6.1 Introduction

In the three previous chapters of this dissertation, I presented case studies detailing the background, production and creative brief elements for four award-winning advertising campaigns derived from a ten-year sample of 'Television Series' winners at the Shark Awards. I described these as 'first-order' analyses or interpretations, in the sense used by Neuman (2003), and it is from these that I build a 'second-order' analysis in this and the subsequent chapter. Fundamental to second-order interpretation, according to Neuman (2003: 149), is an attempt to understand the *significance* of actions, events or circumstances from the perspective of *the people being investigated.* However, this differs from 'first-order' interpretation because it is the researcher who is charged with reconstructing accounts and giving meaning to the data accumulated. In light of this, I wish to probe further into:

1. The relationships between the advertising campaigns presented as case studies in this dissertation and the people who produced them and;
2. The extent to which practitioners (and the adverts they have produced) draw upon and articulate a vocabulary of cultural identity.

In this chapter, I pay particular attention to 1. above, however, I also sketch the contours of respondents' assumptions about cultural identity. In Chapter 7, I examine their vocabulary of cultural identity more closely, first by examining the industry's ties with academia and then moving to explore the linkages between the discourse of Irish advertising practitioners and wider discourses of Irish identity. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I link these themes in a 'third-order' analysis that attempts to explain *why* the idiom of cultural identity is increasingly important for producers of commercial Irish advertising.

Incorporating empirical data from in-depth, topic-orientated interviews with practitioners, this chapter addresses the following questions:

- To what extent do producers draw from their personal lives when producing and to what end?
- How are creative brief elements (target audience, proposition and tone of voice) decided upon and how do these relate to brand identity?
- What assumptions about identity do respondents make in this process?
- What assumptions about Irishness do respondents make in this process?
- What is the significance of notions of 'authenticity' and 'intuition'?

6.2 Achieving 'Fit' and Producing from Experience

In the case studies presented in previous chapters, respondents conveyed a strong impression of emotional investment and personal attachment to their work. For clients, this is important because it helps agency workers develop a sense of "ownership" of the brand. This was especially evident in Cawley Nea's relationship with Today FM, which migrated beyond mere advertising to include, for example, the agency's involvement in producing a book associated with the Ray D'Arcy show. Ironically, however, this can prove problematic for the client if over time, agency workers claim to have developed a stronger "sense" of the brand and on this basis, challenge the authority of the brand manager. Agency practitioners, however, are generally cognisant of this danger. As Bogan comments: "Sometimes we have to be careful to guard against our own preciousness [and avoid the] 'not invented here' syndrome" (SB 27.10.05).

In analysing case studies, I suggest that that the work of agency producers does not so much involve 'creating' (in its fullest sense) as 'selecting' elements that 'fit'[108]. As Hackley (2002: 215) writes; 'advertising creativity can be seen to hinge on the extent to which cultural meanings can be extracted from the consumer's milieu and reformed

[108] It is important to highlight that advertising agencies are forced to contend with an increasingly restrictive regulatory environment that I do not give explicit attention to in this work. This is especially the case for alcoholic beverages. For example, in January 2005, the Institute of Advertising Practitioners in Ireland, the Association of Advertisers in Ireland, the Drinks Industry Group Ireland and the Department of Health agreed and implemented a new code of standards for the Irish advertising industry designed to minimise the exposure of young people to alcohol advertising. This new code of standards is available at: http://www.iapi.ie/iapi/alcohol.html

in juxtaposition with marketed meanings'. Producing a new campaign requires identifying the brand's current identity and positioning (product environment, competitor strategies, demographics, industry shifts, policy changes e.g. the introduction of a smoking ban, increased commodity taxes etc.) and deciding upon a new strategy, mindful that any change must "make sense" to the consumer and, according to respondents, remain "true" to the brand. Hence, producers must look backwards and inwards, as well as forwards and outwards. Their view, we might say, must be "multiperspectival" (Douglas 1976). Of fundamental importance is that producers develop connections that are deemed credible and 'authentic' by consumers and hence, the cultural identifications of advertising practitioners play a significant role in this process (Nixon 1996, 2003; Kelly et al 2005). An important and convenient means of achieving resonance is if members of the production team have life experience that directly relates to that of the target audience. This appears especially important for creative departments, where introspection and the incorporation of biographical references is encouraged and celebrated. Creating from experience appears to confer legitimacy on that created and it is therefore little wonder that many creatives argue that better ideas derive from personal experience rather than research. Helme describes this as "accessing something inside you [...] something in your own life experience, something in your childhood, something in the way you have formulated your own personality and the way you relate to other people" (DH 06.04.06). When discussing the source of his inspiration, Cowman likewise claims that he "used to think that I need to watch more movies, I need to read more books, I need to go to more art galleries but actually, that isn't the answer at all" (MC 16.03.06). Instead, like several other creatives in my research, Cowman claims that it is more important to draw from his "own life" and his "own experiences". In one sense, this might appear to contradict the construction of advertisers as culturally omnivorous, yet equally, it should be stressed that while practitioners appropriate from different cultural contexts, the *sense* that they make of these appropriations and the manner in which communication is *framed* will depend upon their subjective cultural understandings. Creatives, however, contest the idea that 'direct' life experience is necessary to produce work that resonates with audiences. Cowman insists, for example, that "your personal experience is whatever you chose to allow in". He suggests that if advertising practitioners are "sensitive" to the "realities" of the life of a target audience, then they do not necessarily require lived experience: "I

don't believe that you need to have a baby to do a Pampers ad but to sell Pampers you need to understand the dynamic between mother and baby [...] I could do an ad for Rolls Royce tomorrow. I don't own one" (MC 16.03.06)[109]. As such, Cowman argues that practitioners must attempt to move beyond mere observation and "tap into a mindset"[110]. In doing so, a producer's ability to intuitively recognise synergies and evaluate ideas becomes important (see below). Nevertheless, direct life experience is clearly advantageous in advertising and a correspondence between producer biographies and lifestyles and those of target audiences emerged as important in all three case studies. In describing the recent 'not the usual' Smithwick's work, for example, Karen Hand referred to Padraig Burns, the former Account Manager in McConnell's, suggesting that Burn's rural background conferred him with a distinctive ability to identify and relate to Smithwick's core drinkers. In doing so, Hand reveals very clear (and perhaps anachronistic) assumptions about "real Ireland":

> "[The new campaign] wasn't contrived [...] all the interesting executions in it were based on things Padraig had seen driving up and down from Kerry to Dublin. In [stresses next word] real Ireland [...] but he was the energy behind that campaign [...] and the observations that fuelled it" (KH 19.07.06).

In the above passage, Hand references Padraig as a source of legitimacy and credibility for the new campaign. Invoking a strong notion of authenticity, she constructs a vision of "real" Ireland embodied in Burns. In her opinion, the work "wasn't contrived" because the ideas and observations derived straight from Burns. While this example is insightful, it is among creatives, however, that the incorporation of the self (as a resource for creativity and credibility) assumes most importance. Gerry Kennedy is perhaps the most obvious in this regard as the 'locals' campaign

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[109] This is reminiscent of McIntosh's (1997: 158) suggestion that 'one need not have been Caesar in order to understand Caesar'.

[110] Research on creative processes in advertising remains sparse, however, some findings suggest that creatives attempt to connect with audiences by, for example, engaging in one-on-one dialogues with an internalised target consumer (Reid et al 1998) as well as employing methods such as role-play and personification, which appear to better enable the creative to envision the world as consumers experience it (Lannon and Cooper 1983). Du Gay (1997: 287) develops a notion of 'hybrid' work identities to explain the manner in which employees in service work are encouraged to take on the role of both worker and customer in the workplace. Applying this idea to advertising, creatives frequently describe their role as penetrating the target mindset: "A creative will always put himself or herself in the mindset of the person they are selling to" (DO: 08.10.04).

was directly inspired by his own experiences growing up in a pub. For Kennedy, as with other creatives, the more personal the solution to a brief the more authentic it is likely to appear. He comments: "I just love as much of your own imprint as you can [...] it also makes it easier to do because you're not trying to ... you're kind of living with it, you're having fun with it [...]" (GK 11.07.06). Here, Kennedy implies that more "interesting" ideas derive from personal experience. His implication is that these ideas are not artificially inseminated but borne of the creative's own life experiences and are therefore more genuine, appealing and worthwhile. He also implies a level of emotional commitment in the notion of "living" with the idea. It is perhaps as a consequence of this that the lines between fact and fiction tend to blur in some respondents' accounts. In the Heineken case study, for example, Shay Madden claimed that the target audience and brand identity "blur" in his mind when producing. In this sense, we might suggest that the personal experiences of creatives are subsumed by the brand and by a kind of syllogistic logic; creative, target and brand are mutually appellated. This might explain the tendency of these practitioners to speak of brand 'truths' because these are partly *their* truths. In this respect, the 'locals' campaign can reasonably be described as depicting "real" life because it is, in fact, reflective of Kennedy's upbringing. 'Locals' is in large part the reification of his memory.

An obvious problem with the above, however, is that while perhaps 'authentic' in respect of the producer's life and experiences, the extent to which the consumer is given 'actual' consideration in this process becomes increasingly unclear. In many respects, it is arguable that the consumer is rendered 'virtual' (Lien 2004)[111]. As suggested above, practitioners frequently develop proprietary attitudes towards brands, especially when creative ideas derive from personal resources (such as memories, experiences etc.), yet as Hand indicates, a negative consequence of this is that these cultural producers can remain entrapped in their own biographies, seriously hindering their ability to identify with different audiences. Kennedy's insistence that the most worthwhile ideas derive from *within* creatives can therefore be viewed as deeply inhibitive. In line with Hand, McGinn suggests that the new strategic direction for Smithwick's developed in the 'not the usual' campaign was initially difficult for

[111] It requires highlighting that Lien's focus is on marketing practitioners (or in my case 'clients') while my own work prioritises those working in advertising agencies.

McConnell's creatives to get to grips with: "Their heart was there but they really couldn't get their mind around it [...] like any script we'd get back you'd almost hear the 'locals' voice in there" (MM 14.09.06). This suggests that emotional investment, coupled with temporal constraint, can leave creatives highly resistant to change (as well as potentially stultifying creativity). Furthermore, in 'producing introspectively' so to speak, some respondents (especially executives) insist that creatives tend to project a particularly bourgeois view of society and have little understanding of broader societal divisions. John Fanning, for example, suggests that creatives have difficulty "understanding the normal society in the country [...] they tend to have a kind of slightly Dublin 4[112], for want of a better expression, view of the society in which they live and not enough experience of the [emphasises next word] reality of that society" (JF 17.05.06). Fanning's remark suggests that creative practitioners are to some extent insulated or divorced from the more mundane actualities of Irish society at large. In the following passage, Hooper describes the creative practices of a former colleague. Despite her jovial tone, her perspective is not all that dissimilar to Fanning's:

> "There's a copywriter I know who has never once, and he is one of the most awarded copywriters in Dublin [...] who has never once been on an international shoot because he's always setting his ads around the kitchen table with a family, so he writes little sitcoms all the time for his ads, which are brilliant and entertaining and do the job but it's like, if you put all his ads [laughs] back to back it would be his autobiography [continues laughing]" (SH 30.07.06).

Hooper's use of the word "autobiography" is insightful and strongly indicates that producer biographies are to some extent imprinted in the texts they author. So much so, in fact, that for Hooper, the above creative's life story is traceable through his oeuvre – it functions as an autobiographical archive[113].

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[112] Dublin 4 is informally recognised as Dublin's most exclusive postcode. For a caustic and satirical take on bourgeois life in this area see Paul Howard's *Ross O'Carroll-Kelly's Guide to South Dublin: How to Get by on, Like, 10,000 Euros a Day* (2007).

[113] 'The elision of the personal and the national, the way history becomes a kind of scaled-up biography, and biography a microcosmic history, is a particularly Irish phenomenon, but the exclusions thus implied raise wider questions too' (Foster 2001: xi).

6.3 Creative Brief Elements

The function of the creative brief is to condense strategy and inspire creativity. It is a crucial document because it gives material expression to a production process that is mostly dialogical. As highlighted above, a creative brief contains various elements but target audience, proposition and tone of voice are given special consideration in this dissertation because these are considered the primary elements through which statements about identity (practitioner/brand/consumer/nation) are made manifest. The proposition is a concise statement of creative strategy and the tone of voice is an aesthetic parameter, however, the target audience is perhaps most important because it addresses two fundamental questions: Who is the campaign 'speaking' to and, by implication, who does the brand represent? At the heart of advertising production is therefore a process of categorisation; the creation of categories pertaining to individuals and groups. As I suggest below, there is evidence of reductionism in the views of practitioners through an active construction of stereotypes. Respondents ostensibly reject outdated categories and stereotypes yet inevitably create new ones (such as their valorisation of a new Irish 'go-getter' – see below). Governing all of this is the notion of 'fit' discussed above. The choice of appropriate target audience (and consequently proposition and tone) involves a process of selection and creation; selecting traits from existing consumers and creating or imagining an ideal consumer. (Oftentimes, as suggested above, respondents conflate the imaginary and the real in their accounts)[114]. Added to this is an examination and analysis of research materials, key demographic trends, emerging lifestyle patterns etc. At the end of this process an imaginary individual is created who 'stands for the group' (which is perhaps similar to sociological models that do likewise). Jack is Heineken and Heineken is Jack; the mutual transference between brand and target rendering connections 'authentic' according to respondents.

Tomlinson (1990: 28) suggests that in consumer society 'there is a shift from function to lifestyle, from group identity to self-identity'. This is reflected in the following comment from John Holohan of IAPI:

[114] 'These implied consumers, who are addressed by the ad's persona, are not real. They are imagined by the ad's creators to be ideal consumers who acquiesce in whatever beliefs the text requires. They are, in effect, part of the drama of the ad' (Arens 2005: 8).

> "What you want is the end user looking at the commercial and seeing it as an individual communication to themselves, because that's how we consume advertising. We consume it as a sole person – you don't consume it collectively. So an advertising execution has to be a personal communiqué. On a mass scale, but it's a personal communiqué" (JH 30.09.05).

Holohan implicitly acknowledges, however, that while the individual is addressed, group recognition is always required. As all case studies demonstrate, the individualistic qualities of the target audience (such as a keen 'sense of adventure') are intimately fused with, indeed inseparable from, the qualities of the group. Thus, the Smithwick's drinker's maverick qualities are expressive of Smithwick's *drinkers* as 'a beleaguered minority' (Fanning 2006: 86). The case study on Heineken offers an especially good example of this, whereby van der Linden's "world of Heineken" and "Heineken in my world" are seemingly intertwined[115]. Interestingly, case studies reveal considerable similarities in respect of target audience, proposition and tone of voice. The target audience for all brands, for example, reveals a male bias and an age profile of (broadly) twenty-five to thirty-five as well as lifestyle and dispositional similarities, such as Heineken and Today FM's targeting of a youthful and intelligent prankster with a 'zest for life'. Furthermore, the Heineken target's unconventional attitude and bohemian outlook bear a close resemblance to the new cultural 'avant-garde' Smithwick's drinker (or "maven"), although Heineken's 'open-mindedness' is not precisely the same as Smithwick's 'independence'. Similarly, the proposition in each case study entails both a declaration of authentic experience and a statement about a distinctive mindset (such as Heineken's "thirst for new adventure"). Tonally, campaigns also share many similarities. 'Witty', 'wry', 'grounded', 'tongue-in-cheek'

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[115] 'Heineken wants to build thriving personalised communities based on trust, privacy and freedom of expression. We want you to feel free to express yourself, but - just as important - we also want you to feel secure in an environment that puts you in control' (www.heineken.ie). The language here is noteworthy for its expression of values; the emphasis on 'trust', 'security' and 'freedom' appear incongruous with what is essentially (and simply) an alcoholic beverage. Nevertheless, these reflect the lifestyle emphasis in brands of this sort. The reference to 'personalised communities' might be considered oxymoronic, yet must be interpreted in relation to the brand identity and values; in particular, the emphasis on self-expression *as well as* sociality and community. (It is also, I might add, taken from Lichterman's (1996) suggestion that advertising campaigns create a kind of "personalised form of community"). In a similar vein, Norris (1990: 23) writes; 'the ads that encourage one to express "individuality" by transcending communal values make this pitch to the entire community'.

and 'irreverent' are terms that arise often in discussion with practitioners. All brands in particular seem to share an 'irreverent' attitude, implying both confidence and autonomy, which are related to the current cultural climate (see below).

Creative brief elements in each case study, however, also reveal some significant differences. This is most obviously the case in Heineken's global brand status. While keen to avoid making the brand "parochial", respondents in this case study describe a communicational continuum wherein global and local messages function in tandem. Against a simple dichotomous strategy of local and global communication, the Heineken approach is multi-layered and flexible, respondents conceiving of various intermingling consumer worlds. In the case of Today FM and Smithwick's, however, cultural identification is both narrower and more pronounced. (Interestingly, and perhaps unsurprisingly, perspectives on globalisation and consolidation are closely correlated. Thus, Cawley Nea/TBWA's position as a branch office appears to render practitioners there more apologetic and defensive about both processes). In both case studies, respondents describe the emergence of a culturally and generationally specific Irishness marked by a more confident articulation, yet Today FM reveals an explicit urban and class (and even ethnic) bias and a slightly older target audience, appealing to "the white, affluent, twenty to forty-four year olds" (SF 19.12.05). In the case of Smithwick's, however, a traditional rural bias persists alongside a markedly different "sensibility". For McConnell's, the Smithwick's drinker, like the target audience of Heineken and Today FM, is confident and expressive but he has a firmer grounding in and commitment to his community. While it seems that the Heineken drinker has abandoned his homeland for "Vietnam" or some "exotic" destination and the Today FM listener has been "consumed by the Tiger" so to speak, the Smithwick's drinker has remained true to his roots. He has suffered the brunt of condescension and ridicule as a result, yet he remains defiant, 'secure in the knowledge that the rest of the world was out of step and that he could see through the phoniness and pretensions of stout and lager drinkers' (Fanning 2006: 86). Here once again, a particularly strong notion of authenticity is made manifest. As I suggest below, however, these putative brand differences are difficult to sustain when examined in light of respondents' assumptions about Irishness. All valorise the new confident 'go-getter' yet all appear to maintain normative assumptions about 'authentic' Irishness that are powerfully tied to the past. As I further suggest, this does not signify the same 'kind' of essentialism

evident in pre-Celtic Tiger Ireland and should be considered a new variant, yet it is indicative of essentialism nonetheless.

In all case studies, brands are 'organically' tied to consumer lifeworlds; the values of consumer and brand gain relevance from their relationship to each other (Davidson 1992; Moeran 1996a). Brands are reified, personified[116] and described as possessing a kind of shared cultural mindset with consumers. Likewise, brands help to forge a bond between producers and consumers. This, according to McCracken (1986: 74), is achieved through "meaning transfer" or the sharing of cultural codes. What is perhaps most interesting, however, is the close correlation between brand and person[117] and person and a *specific* Irishness, evident in all case studies. Here, one finds both metonymy (brand/producer denotes Irishness) and syllogism (the producer possesses a unique mindset and biographical particularity that confers him with a special ability to articulate 'real' Irishness. The brand is a product of this 'authentic' imaginary; therefore, the brand is representative of genuine Irishness).

6.4 Identity Assumptions

As highlighted, this chapter is concerned with exploring the relationships between case study campaigns and their producers. Above, I examined how producers attempt to cultivate a natural and credible 'fit' between brands and consumers and how ideas that originate in the life experiences of producers are considered especially credible and authentic. In discussing the creative brief, I revealed that behind the commercial and aesthetic aspects of advertising, production is fundamentally a process of categorisation and that the case studies presented in this dissertation, despite notable

[116] Creatives will often describe the brand by referring to 'real' people. In describing the source of his inspiration when working on Heineken, for example, Shay Madden (Creative Director at McCann-Erickson) referred to a former work colleague named 'Phil', whose persona closely matched that of the brand and desired target audience. This provides an interesting example of how brand traits tend to mingle with a real identifiable person in the creative imagination. Madden's memory of Phil offered him a means of conceptualising the brand in tangible, corporeal terms.

[117] In examining the intermingling between persons and objects, Cronin (2004a: 85) draws upon Latour's (1993: 11) notion of 'translation' and what Haraway (1991: 215) calls a multitude of 'illicit fusions'. In doing so, she suggests 'that advertising draws so much criticism and regulation partially because it restates the anxiety-provoking recognition that, in contemporary understandings, the boundaries between the classes of objects and persons are permeable, and more troublingly, function as mutually constitutive [...]' (Cronin 2004a: 96).

differences, also reveal interesting similarities in respect of target audience, proposition and tone of voice. In this section, I wish to further tease out some of the assumptions about identity that producers make when describing themselves, their brands and other groups.

Paraphrasing Hall (1996), it is undoubtedly the case that 'identity matters' for advertising practitioners. This is revealed explicitly and implicitly. Assumptions about identity (both personal and collective) are made daily in advertising and to some extent, these assume material form in the commercial texts produced. While making identity assumptions is undoubtedly a routine feature of everyday life for most people, in this dissertation, I argue that 'identity work' (Alvesson 1998) assumes particular importance for advertising practitioners because these workers are continually required to cultivate unique and purposive occupational identities while simultaneously expropriating wider cultural identities. In interviews with these workers, assumptions about identity are abundant. While rarely articulated as such, identity is implicitly understood as a key component of their work. In discussing the production of the seminal texts examined, respondents reveal assumptions about themselves as advertising professionals and individuals, about their colleagues and peers, about clients and other occupational groups, about workers in different fields and in different geographical locations, about their own brands and competing brands and those in different product categories, about consumers, about national identity and so on.

In respect of brands, for example, respondents imply that not only do people now inhabit a world of symbolic saturation, reminiscent of Baudrillard's (1983) suggestion that consumption has heralded the passage from "use value" to "sign value", but that brands can no longer compete on functional attributes alone but must cultivate emotional proximity to consumers. In doing so, they seem to align themselves with Sutherland and Sylvester (2000: 66), who suggest that 'our choice of brands can become an expression of self-identity'. In the case studies presented, this appeared especially important for Heineken and Smithwick's as the marketing of alcoholic beverages has become largely a matter of image and lifestyle, as revealed in the following comment from Blaney: "But it's hard, like [beer] is not like a Volvo that says for everywhere in the world we're going to be safety [...] beer is just so much

more about image, so it's much harder to define" (OB 12.10.05). While this grants considerable creative license to agencies, it also heightens the importance of credibility and authenticity. Respondents infer that identities are important to consumers and hence, advertisers must proceed with caution when attempting to cultivate 'fit'. In a putative era of savvy, discerning and advertising-literate consumers, respondents suggest that forced proximity can prove disastrous. "Show this guy back to himself doing adventure holidays or skateboarding or bmx-ing [...] is a very dangerous thing" (OB 12.10.05). Here, Blaney maintains that attempted 'fit' always carries the risk of being interpreted as insidious and transparent corporate efforts at ingratiation. Thus, campaigns should not attempt to "mirror" the lives of consumers; they cannot say "ok this is who you are" (JV 07.11.05). On the other hand, some respondents challenge the impression of the circumspect consumer. While strongly critical of mirroring strategies, van der Linden, for example, implies that consumer identities are fragile, fickle and malleable and that they are "a bit like sheep". By postulating the importance of identity to consumers, respondents highlight the significance of local particularity, yet this is frequently contradicted by statements of universality. Having just stressed that local understanding is important, for example, the Heineken commercials are commended as work that "could run anywhere in the world" (OB 12.10.05). As a consequence of this, respondents' assumptions about other markets are rendered problematic and unconvincing, such as Bogan's description of the African market as "unsophisticated", inferring that consumers here are less advertising literate and that advertising must assume a more "didactic" form.

In discussing their work, respondents reveal considerable assumptions about themselves as advertising professionals and individuals, about their colleagues and clients and about other occupational groups. As suggested above, the biographies and experiences of producers are drawn upon in their work. Not only is it considered useful (and 'authentic') for producers, especially creatives, to incorporate their own life experiences but respondents tend to agree that like artists in other fields (cf. Gilot 2001), advertisements reveal identity traces of their producers. Referring to the relationship between creatives and their work, for example, Tangey comments: "I think [advertising] is a reflection of themselves, I think it's very personal" (DT 14.12.05). As I have suggested above, it is imperative that the communications

developed by agencies credibly 'fit' the lifeworlds of consumers. To achieve this, it is important that advertising agencies are perceived as fashionable and contemporary and that their practitioners are considered urbane and sophisticated. 'Young, fresh and zesty is the image to which every advertising agency aspires' (Powell 2000: 212). In attempting to develop this association, agencies are typically located 'at the heart of metropolitan life [thus cultivating] [...] an association of the agencies with modernity and urban sophistication' (Nixon 1997: 215). In line with Nixon (1997) and Alvesson (1998), I suggest that the construction of advertising as a knowledge-intensive, creative, flexible and sociable industry positioned at the forefront of cultural change generates a tendency among practitioners (and creatives in particular) to develop work-based identities and behaviours that conform to these norms (O'Boyle 2006b).

Perhaps as a consequence of the above, my data tend to reproduce the commonly cited tensions between commerce and creativity or creative and managerial ideologies in advertising (Frank 1997; Hackley 2003; Kelly et al 2005). Thus, it is not unusual, for example, for creatives to be highly critical of the artistic abilities of clients: "I hate work that's been generated by a client am, that feels that that he knows [...] You can kind of tell, you can look and say; "oh that's been done by the client" (DO: 08.10.04). While the clients involved in the campaigns examined in this dissertation are obviously described in positive terms, this must be considered against negative constructions of clients in general. Including the views of clients, however, offers a useful counter-perspective and is especially interesting when these workers in turn construct agency practitioners. Derogating from an image of creatives as 'failed artists', Sara Falconer, for example, moves to describing these workers as astute and strategic business people. She draws attention to "false" personal relations in advertising that are driven by instrumental interests. Falconer's account is one of 'roles' and 'masks', reminiscent of Goffman's (1961) analysis of impression management. She describes the sometimes brutal and callous personal politics at play in this field and reveals, rather caustically, the importance of rhetoric, role-play and even subterfuge and deception:

> "[Agencies are] as nice as pie to you and when they get off the phone to you they say; "that fucking bitch" [laughs]. And [...] you'd be on a night out and they'd start talking about client X and you'll feel they're just as likely to say

the same about you [...] Ad world is a horrible, spiteful place to be" (SF 19.12.05).

The above suggests that respondents' articulations and assumptions do not necessarily amount to the same thing. However, more importantly from my perspective here, it suggests that assumptions about identity shift depending upon the respondent, the circumstance and the question[118]. Equally, it reminds us that power can never be pried from identity, for as Castells (2004: 7) indicates; 'the construction of identity always takes place in a context marked by power relationships'. In the following section, I move to analysing respondents' assumptions about Irishness as this forms the central pillar of the research.

6.5 Assumptions about Irishness

Respondents' assumptions about Irishness, as with their assumptions about identity in general, cannot be divorced from the award-winning texts examined. Indeed, their views on larger socio-cultural issues are expressed in relation to these texts. Hence, Cowman's casting of the modern Irish "psyche" is enjoined to Today FM's confident "take me as I am" attitude. For Cowman, this shared perspective confers legitimacy on the station, yet he constructs this as something un-stated, intuitive or taken for granted; "we don't necessarily talk about it like that" (MC 16.03.06). In the final section of this chapter, I link this analysis of identity assumptions and the importance of 'fit' (discussed above) in an elaboration of the notions of intuition (or "sense") and authenticity.

[118] Ethnographers have documented a tendency among 'bicultural' people to switch between cultural frames depending upon the setting (Briley et al 2005: 351). In other words, bicultural Hispanic Americans, for example, tend to exhibit more prototypically Western patterns of speech and behaviour in the company of European Americans than with members of their own ethnic group. This idea of switching, I suggest, applies equally well to advertising producers, who are inclined to temper their positions to the situation at hand. In some instances, they are prone to present themselves as cultural generalists while at other times, they are more likely to cultivate a strong impression of the cultural specialist, i.e. a specialist in Irishness. In an increasingly globalised and consolidated industry, I suggest that the latter position is increasingly important.

For Orlaith Blaney, the "Irishness thing is such a debate" (OB 12.10.05). From a creative point of view, Blaney is "highly critical of Irishness done badly" and suggests that the conservative repetition of tired stereotypes can have disastrous consequences, not merely in terms of the reception and likeability of advertising, but also for the international standing of the Irish industry. This view is shared by all respondents, leading Falconer, for example, to insist that "Irishness is a dodgy territory" (SF 19.12.05). Yet it appears that Irish advertising practitioners are torn between two competing drives. On the one hand, they are keen to promote themselves as specialists in Irishness, a facility derived from direct life experience, an understanding of cultural identity and an intuitive "sense" (see below). On the other hand, the plaudits of London and New York are never far from their minds and it is the "field" as opposed to the "domain" (cf. Feldman et al 1994) that determines best practice[119]. Thus, while respondents complement the ability of Irish agencies to penetrate the Irish "mindset", they simultaneously express feelings of embarrassment about standards of creativity in the Irish industry, perhaps best captured in Madden's reflection on his experience judging at the Shark Awards (see Chapter 3). Here, as in the previous section, power emerges as a significant variable. As highlighted in Chapter 2, the Shark Awards were initially created to educate and inspire practitioners and to professionalise the Irish advertising industry generally. However, this festival has also historically been used as a platform for asserting the particular expertise of Irish agencies and for showcasing how regional agencies can develop idiosyncratic work that is nevertheless produced to the highest standards of professionalism expected of the industry at large. This demonstrates that '*acting* (and thinking) globally is increasingly necessary in order to make the very notion of locality viable. Locality is, to put it simply, globally institutionalized [...]' (Robertson 1992: 172). Award shows are therefore not merely indicative of the 'circulation of self-promotional rhetoric' (Cronin 2004a: 5) in this industry, but are also pronounced instances of centre-periphery and local-global exchange. In this sense, the Shark Awards (as indeed any award show) can be viewed as occasions in which 'glocalisation' is enacted, performed and realised and wherein one can observe the 'syncretic combination of putatively local practices with universalistic ones' (Robertson 1992: 171).

[119] 'Creativity results from the interaction of a system composed of three elements: a culture that contains symbolic rules, a person who brings novelty into the symbolic domain, and a field of experts who recognise and validate the innovation. All three are necessary for the creative idea, product, or discovery to take place' (Csikszentmihalyi 1996: 6).

Respondents concede that the perpetuation of stereotypes of Irishness is often a consequence of exogenous pressures, which Helme describes as a "double-edged sword" (DH 06.04.06). On one hand, Helme is highly critical of what he considers maudlin, insipid and hollow representations of Ireland and Irishness (what he calls "Oirish" advertisements or "Paddyism") that are peddled internationally. At the same time, however, he reveals that even well-seasoned international creatives – themselves acutely aware of cultural reductionism in advertising – often succumb to the lure of stereotypes of Irishness and seem to favour ads that pander to these. Here, one is reminded of the 'tendency to image Ireland as lodged in the past', which as Negra (2001: 89) highlights, 'is an axiomatic strategy in terms of Irish tourist advertising'. Thus, while the particularistic knowledge of Irish practitioners is valued, these workers also wish to ingratiate themselves to international peers who ironically may favour the repetition of stereotypes. It is in relation to these competing drives that I suggest we analyse respondents' assumptions about Irishness. While 'culture' is strongly particularistic in their accounts (see Chapter 7), creativity is more universalistically framed, gravitating towards the universally intelligible and appreciable 'big idea'. As a consequence of this, as I suggest below, the legitimacy of Irish advertising constructed in practitioner accounts rests more strongly on a notion of cultural 'know-how' than it does on creative ability.

Linking all three case studies is an expression of acute discomfort at what respondents consider stereotypical, blatant, maudlin or excessive statements of Irishness, such as Blaney's insistence that the National Lottery is "too bleedin Irish! [laughs]" (OB 12.10.05). This should not, however, be interpreted as a reluctance to promote Irishness per se but rather represents a rejection of what respondents consider *outdated* configurations of Irishness. In many respects, explicitly 'Irish' referents are tied to historical associations that producers appear keen to avoid. As Tangey derisively comments: "Jameson is very much about heritage and very much about Ireland, which is half of its problem [laughs]" (DT 14.12.05). Here, respondents assume that "Irishness now is contemporary, modern [...] not the historical [...]" (OB 12.10.05). Referring to recent commercials for Amstel lager that centre upon Columbus's discovery of the 'New World' and depict the comical antics of his Irish crew, Blaney is scathing of what she considers a hark back to "stereotypical", condescending and outdated representations of Irish people:

> "For me tonally it just feels, you know what, that's not modern, progressive. That doesn't reflect back I think what Irish guys, Irish people are; ambitious go-getters, travelling, you know, doing lots of stuff, making lots of money, property [...] and that psyche in the Amstel commercial I feel misses the point [...]" (OB 12.10.05).

Above, Blaney implies that the Irish mindset or "psyche" has irreversibly changed and consequently, the impression of Irishness in the Amstel work "feels" discordant to her. Revealing a somewhat materialistic and bourgeois attitude, she constructs contemporary Irish people as ambitious, independent and economically successful and appears to valorise the new 'go-getter'. As I indicate in Chapter 7, however, this perspective must be set against another literature that is deeply critical and worrisome about growing individualism, consumerism and materialism in Celtic Tiger Ireland. In a somewhat different, though equally celebratory vein, Kennedy intimates that Irishness now exudes confidence and progressiveness. He suggests that McConnell's recognises this and has promoted it in various campaigns, such as that for Powers whiskey and AIB banking. In Chapter 5, for example, he highlighted that the AIB work "was based on the whole thought that anything is possible" (GK 11.07.06). Kennedy is adamant that against a staid and restrictive past, contemporary Ireland is liberated and liberating and replete with possibilities. Irish people are, as it were, afforded complete biographical autonomy. Yet somewhat problematically, he appears to simultaneously believe in the persistence of a more traditional, 'authentic' Irishness:

> "I think you do see it still and it's to me, it's when the Gaelic [football] matches are on and you're still seeing that kind of [...] just a nice simple, rural [...] I still think that's out there and I think Guinness tap into it in the advertising to a degree [...] I think they are probably the one brand who are still able to capture that, am capture it very, very well. I like, for instance, the ad where the son brings the dad the ticket and there's that, and again it's that thing where it's the Irish dad – lack of communication and all that kind of stuff. So there's still elements of that there" (GK 11.07.06).

Above, Kennedy perpetuates a somewhat revivalist ideal of agrarian simplicity. His vision of the Irish father depicted in a Guinness commercial is reminiscent of the ill-communicative, ascetic father in Brian Friel's ([1964] 2002) 'Philadelphia Here I Come'. Yet while highlighting his patent inadequacies and shortcomings, Kennedy is not wholly condescending of the father's verbal parsimony. Indeed, there is something nostalgic and prideful in his account. One senses a powerful emotion in the father's silence – a sort of silent scream that perfectly expresses the despair of the son Gar in Friel's work. This depiction bears more than a passing resemblance to McGinn's idealisation of the "strong silent type" when describing Smithwick's as Guinness's ill-forgotten sibling. For many respondents, however, Guinness remains intimately tied to Irishness[120]. "Once you put that Guinness sign in front of it, it probably makes it Irish" (SF 19.12.05). Tangey appears to share this view, implying that Ireland is "part of the soul of the [Guinness] brand". Yet for respondents associated with the Smithwick's case study (with perhaps the exception of Kennedy), Smithwick's represents a more 'authentic' Irishness:

> "I think [Smithwick's is] Irish and that's interesting because it's not [puts on dramatic syrupy voice] Oirish, it's not the way Guinness can be. It is actually Irish, it is [stresses next two words] real Irish [...] I think it's realistic maybe [...] I think it's kind of grounded" (KH 19.07.06).

In Hand's opinion, Smithwick's does not entertain ersatz visions of Ireland that pander to global stereotypes. It is not 'Oirish' (a term also used by Helme above) but offers a "grounded" grassroots perspective. Indeed, the ground or land is an essential part of this. When I asked Hand; "are you saying that you find the Irishness of Smithwick's more genuine than that of Guinness?" she is wholly affirmative:

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[120] One practitioner in pilot research, for example, commented: 'If you want to map Ireland's progression through the 80s, 90s and 2000 I think Guinness ads are a really good representation of that. In my mind, Guinness and Ireland have come full circle [...] we have the money, we have the affluence, we have the Tiger [...] now it's back to basics. And Guinness reflects that [...] it always tries to tap into the current insight at the time' (RO 14.04.05). In this passage, the respondent considers Guinness advertising a 'perfect mirror' of changing Ireland, presenting it as 'a key index of the normal' (Cronin 2004a: 126). Yet the "progression" described is questionable and appears to imply that a fundamentally intact and essentialist Irishness has evolved.

> "[Guinness is] more mythological [...] on one level. It's an international version of how we want ourselves seen. It's projective in all of that. I think ours is a grounded Irishness, I think it's a soul versus an aspiration in a way. It's a deeper place. I saw somebody do a good presentation on Smithwick's once [...] it talked about Guinness being the spirit of Ireland and Smithwick's being the soul. I think that's interesting. I think there's something interesting about Smithwick's as soul. But I think it's part of Smithwick's problem in standing out, because it's almost [...] I remember going into a pub and looking around at the colours [...] [all you see is] mahogany. Like Smithwick's really is invisible in a pub because it is the pub. You know, if you think of it kind of in cultural terms [...] it's the peat, it's the bog [...] it's hard to see it against the Irish landscape" (KH 19.07.06).

Smithwick's, Hand insists, is accepting of its history, its status and its small town associations. For Hand, the Irishness imbued in Smithwick's is of a "deeper" kind. Even the spirit-soul distinction suggests something consistent and perennial. While the spirit can be flighty, evanescent and somewhat superficial (as in 'the spirit of the times'), the soul is lasting – it conveys a sense of permanence. The difficulty with depth of this kind, however, is that it is almost indiscernible; it is everywhere and nowhere. Unlike more shallow aspects or traits, the soul is not as easy to extract. Indeed, the colour of Smithwick's blends into the mahogany tones of the pub. For Hand therefore, Smithwick's does not merely signify or symbolise but is itself *part* of the essence of Irishness. It *is* the pub, the peat, the bog and the landscape. One is not simply consuming ale but imbibing the very "soul" of Ireland.

While other respondents do not perhaps maintain such narrow assumptions about Irishness, their discourse also reveals a strong notion of authenticity that if not entirely rooted in the past, does nevertheless draw considerably from it. Tangey, for example, claims that Today FM is "very much aligned to the Irish way of thinking". She continues: "I think it taps into a mindset in Ireland unlike anybody else, because we are very self-deprecating and we are very informal and tongue-in-cheek and irreverent" (DT 14.12.05). Here, the brand identity and her position on Irishness appear to fuse. While Today FM is depicted as a conduit for modern Ireland, one might question the extent to which this natural "self-deprecation" and "irreverence" is

evidence of a newfound cultural confidence. Furthermore, given Today FM's somewhat specific target audience, the "we" in question implies a particularly narrow strand of Irish society. For Tangey, it seems that Ireland has become dynamic, progressive and modern, yet has retained a strong element of tradition. Thus, for Irishness "to work" in terms of brand strategy, agencies must attempt to reconcile tradition with modern progressiveness, thereby reflecting a perceived climate of positive economic and social change. (This relates to what I call 'looking backward while going forward' – see Chapter 7). For Blaney, Irish advertisers must likewise portray a positive sense of progress (or "do a Riverdance") if they intend to depict Irishness:

> "So I think if you're going to show Irishness you've got to – it's almost the step-change that Riverdance made for Irish dancing and that's often used as an analogy in our business. That Irish dancing was girls with ringlets, not sexy, red hair, don't want to do it [laughs], not cool [...] and suddenly you have Jean Butler – stunning looking girl, fantastically fit, brilliantly energetic, and amazing music and you think, God like it went from there to there overnight [...] so you know, it completely changed what people thought of Ireland, so it's almost like in a way you've got to do a Riverdance if you want to do Irishness" (OB 12.10.05).

In the above quote, Blaney posits a direct contrast or "step change" between a stymied past and a progressive present; the aesthetics and showmanship of Riverdance apparently symbolising an 'updated' Irish revivalism[121]. For other respondents, however, the link with the past is utterly severed. In these instances, their discourse is celebratory, comparing a recessive, backward Irishness to a more contemporary progressive variant:

> "I think Irish identity has fundamentally changed and I think it has been fundamentally changed in other peoples' minds outside of Ireland. They look at Ireland and now they're looking at this economic powerhouse – and that's

[121] Elsewhere, I have described this re-articulation of Irish identity as 'Riverdance revivalism' (O'Boyle 2006a).

> changing how they're looking at the Irish identity [...] Ireland the brand has changed from rolling hills to kind of can-do, economic mini-powerhouse" (SB 27.10.05)

Above, Bogan, like various other respondents, insists that Irish identity "has fundamentally changed". It is perhaps for this reason that McCann-Erickson's Heineken strategy completely sidelined Irishness, as revealed in the following quote from Madden. (However, it might be suggested that the client's obvious surprise in the below passage undermines Bogan's insistence that assumptions about Irishness have fundamentally changed outside of Ireland):

> "[The client had] just come back from London – they were working with a UK agency for Ireland, but they were coming back to Ireland for the first time and one of the things they wanted in an Irish agency was that we would have a great understanding of Ireland and in their minds that probably meant having ads that were based in Ireland, using Irish people [...] so it [the agency's proposed strategy] went against the grain for them to suddenly have ads shot around the world that didn't even look like they were Irish. And that was our big thing, it was like, no we don't want the Heineken brand to become parochial. We want it to seem like a big international, brand campaign because we want the glamour and all the associations that go with that [...] all the Jacks going to research were saying; "I don't want to see myself, I don't care if it's set back in 1952, I identify with that guy. I don't want to see Darndale or Foxrock or Cavan [...] I want to see exotic places [laughs] [...] take me somewhere in a story". So that way it started ticking the boxes in ways they hadn't expected and we decided then afterwards with the brand campaign being international we could actually go parochial and local on small things like Green Energy or when they sponsor local music [...] that's a licence to suddenly go completely Irish on it" (SM 27.10.05)

Above, Madden reveals that cultural 'know-how' was a chief consideration in the appointment of McCann-Erickson yet the agency's proposed creative strategy "went against the grain" because it defied the client's expectations. Here, Madden infers that knowing when *not* to do Irishness (in a limited or stereotypical fashion) is a crucial

aspect of agency expertise. In the above passage, agency workers' assumptions about Irishness are interwoven with their personal aspirations ("the glamour and the associations"). However, according to Madden, research vindicated the resulting strategy as consumers were dismissive of explicit Irish themes or referents and desired to "see exotic places". Once again, consumers appear strongly opposed to 'mirroring strategies' ("I don't want to see myself"), as highlighted in the previous section. Against narrow identity statements, here "identification" is perhaps regarded as more important. Identification implies looser and more open affiliations, which Hall (1996) insists should be understood 'not in terms of recognising some common origin with others and the ensuing solidarity, but rather as a construction, a process never completed' (Lentin 2000: 8). For McCann-Erickson, it was important that Heineken as an international brand should not be tarnished by the "local" or "parochial" but should present an image of the "global" and "exotic". Rather than allowing the brand to be artificially naturalised everywhere, the agency was adamant that the brand remain a kind of truly global citizen. In many respects, as I suggest in the following chapter, this position is analogous to recent theorisations of Irishness as cosmopolitan, contingent and negotiable.

However, despite their putative aversion to explicit Irishness, the apparent disavowal of romantic allusions ("rolling hills"), the disinclination to promote place and heritage and the ostensible renunciation of historical coordinates, Irish advertising practitioners continually reveal assumptions about Irishness that derive from older discourses (see Chapter 7), in particular those originating from the Celtic or Gaelic Revival of the late nineteenth century. A number insist, for example, that as a people the Irish have retained a unique "wit" and a distinctive "psyche". Thus, the putative renunciation of the past belies a belief that "traditional" Irish culture is more worthwhile than its ersatz and diluted contemporary alternative[122]. Indeed, as I argue below, it is perhaps plausible to suggest that some notion of cultural 'authenticity' remains embedded in the 'practical consciousness' (Giddens 1984) of these practitioners, which is in turn closely allied to the operation of an intuitive "sense"[123]. Leaving aside the individual

[122] In this regard, my work supports the textual analyses of Negra (2001) and Kelly-Holmes (2000), which highlight that despite contestation and negotiation, the cultural coordinates of Irishness in advertising remain relatively resistant to change.

[123] Giddens defines practical consciousness as 'what actors know (believe) about social conditions, including especially the conditions of their own action, but cannot express discursively' (Giddens

beliefs of respondents, however, I suggest that these various assumptions about Irishness should not be considered contradictory or interpreted as 'and/or' positions but rather represent alternative strategies which together serve to reinforce Irish advertising practitioners' claims of particularistic expert knowledge. Irrespective of how Irishness is configured, it is precisely their ability to harness cultural identity and generate 'authentic' associations that empowers regional advertising practitioners in an increasingly globalised industry. "So I think defining Irishness is actually a really tough thing to do and that's why an international agency needs an Irish agency because actually figuring it out is difficult" (OB 12.10.05).

6.6 Authenticity and Intuition

At the heart of commercial advertising production, as suggested in the opening section of this chapter, is a process of selection, appropriation and assemblage, in which credibility or 'fit' is of crucial importance. This is expressed by respondents as "being in tune with" or "on the same wavelength" as audiences, suggesting propinquity and mutuality. Thus, the decision to convey a more multicultural outlook in the marketing of a brand, for example, will necessitate credible associations, not transparent gestures towards political correctness. Above all, credibility depends upon the presence or perception of 'authenticity'. Achieving authenticity, however, is exceedingly difficult and hence, as noted above, the more producers can draw upon personal experiences, the more genuine and authentic their work is considered. For creatives in particular, the process of imaginatively 'becoming the other' of the audience is made considerably easier if creatives themselves fall broadly within the profile of the target audience (as was the case in all three case studies). In these instances, ideas are not artificially cultivated but derive from the creative's own life experiences. Authenticity, however, is not merely a matter of producers drawing from their own lives but is a notion that governs the entire process by which brands become

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1984: 375). The conflation of 'know' and 'believe' here implies something akin to intuition. In this, I am reminded of Clifford and Marcus's telling of the Cree hunter who, when asked to tell the whole truth under oath, hesitated saying; "I'm not sure I can tell the truth [...] I can only tell what I know" (1986: 8). In this statement 'truth' is deemed less important than that which is instinctively "known", a position that aligns well with the views of my respondents.

'legitimately' part of the target's lifeworld[124]. In staging the Heineken Green Energy music festival, for example, Heineken is constructed as both patron and participant, the former by the brand's sponsorship of the event and the latter through the cultivation of values closely associated with festival goers. In doing so, Heineken is organically and emotionally tied to the event; its association is rendered 'natural' in the same way that Smithwick's is virtually indistinguishable from the pub and the land. Likewise, Today FM listeners are active, participative and emotionally engaged. So much so, in fact, that Falconer suggests that sudden changes of schedule or presenter may leave them "mortally wounded" (SF 19.12.05).

As I suggested above, respondents describe a kind of mutual transference or appellation between brand and consumer and this explains why the brand identity is continually described in relation to the target profile. For Bogan, for example, Heineken's "trendy" image, its "sophistication" and "wit" is "reflected in the type of person who drinks it" (SB 27.10.05). When these associations are made manifest in a 'real' identifiable person, such as Shay Madden's mental "blurring" of his former colleague Phil and the Heineken brand, the latter is authenticated by reference to the former. This mutuality or symbiosis between brand and person is especially evident in the case of Today FM, where the station's presenters effectively *are* its brand. Respondents in this case study maintain that presenters are not speaking to the target audience from some detached, external position but rather, are *members of* the target audience. Falconer intimates that presenters have forged strong social and interpersonal bonds with listeners (almost to the point of constructing the station as a kind of 'public service' broadcaster[125]) and stresses that the station is intrinsically Irish, although it represents a 'new' strand of Irishness. Furthermore, despite being a Dublin-based radio station, Falconer legitimates Today FM's presence in Cork via the

[124] The precise (and desirable) relation of brand and target audience is something of a quandary in my analysis. One gets a sense that brands should be *of* the audience, yet simultaneously *above* it. While Madden's "blurring" of brand and target conforms to the former, Tangey's insistence that Today FM is more than "the sum of its parts" conforms to the latter. This dual positioning is perhaps best captured in the Brad Pitt commercial for Heineken, in which the aspirational and the quotidian are seemingly enjoined in Pitt, whose basic humanity does not deflate his iconic status.

[125] Although Today FM is clearly not a public service broadcaster, at times respondents tend to construct it as such, their accounts veering close to Gibbons' (1996: 74) assertion (when discussing the marriage of public service broadcasting with cultural nationalism in Ireland) 'that the media were simply giving the nation back its own birthright, promoting cultural values the population at large could readily identify with'.

endorsement of 'genuine' Cork confidantes (the commercial director and her husband, who are both from Cork). In her view, the station is not an alien outsider falsely ingratiating itself in a transparent manner but legitimately part of the community. Here, we are reminded of Bogan's insistence on the importance of "complicit advertising", which can be closely linked to the perception of authenticity.

While authenticity is highly subjective, it is also clearly related to realism on some level. Gerry Kennedy, for example, suggests that by the mid to late 1990s, a kind of generic creative template had developed in beer advertising. As such, he describes the Smithwick's response as an attempt to inject an element of realism into its campaign:

> "Well I suppose at the time [...] there seemed to be a feeling in every beer ad that it was, you know, drink the beer, get the girl and [...] it just seemed to me to be fake [...] or British ads which tended to be highly, highly inventive and very, very creative advertising am but you didn't have [...] I just felt there didn't seem to be anything that was reflecting a bit of reality" (GK 11.07.06).

Above, Kennedy rejects simple formulaic advertising in favour of realistic depiction. Hand likewise argues the importance of realism, comparing the creative approach of Smithwick's at the time to the work of Guinness:

> "Like at the time there would have been a view that advertising needs to be creative, it does not need to be about real people sitting in pubs having chats [laughs] [...] It needed to be about dancing pints and you know, waves coming in and whatever. You know, Guinness in particular [...] driving that sense of the need to be creative and the need to kind of transcend consumer's reality" (KH 19.07.06).

Above, Hand compares the Guinness approach of the late 1990s to that of Smithwick's. For the former, it was important to "transcend" the mundane and the quotidian. For the latter, it was precisely these that were (and are) the essence of the brand. Her reference to "real people" is used as an attack on creativity that has lost sight of social actualities. Likewise, other respondents continually employ terms that invoke a sense of realism and authenticity; they speak of "real" Ireland, a "real"

country pub, a "proper" Irish pub, a "down-to-earth" brand, an "unpretentious" drink etc. Hand suggests that Smithwick's advertising is "grounded, it's dry, it's Irish, it's true, it's based on true things, it's reportage" (KH 19.07.06). Here, Hand appears to have become so thoroughly engrossed in her own rhetoric that she describes Smithwick's advertising as "reportage". Nevertheless, the constant use of the word "real" should not be interpreted too literally. In fact, I suggest that 'authenticity' carries more analytical purchase than realism because it is more subjectively orientated. In the following passage, McGinn contrasts the "real country pub" with the "town bar":

> "They [McConnell's] didn't [...] go into celebrating like the town bar; it was almost like the real country pub. So it wasn't even going [...] more into the modern, real life but it was much more a celebration of the values and experiences of the community within the pub and what that meant and what that brought to peoples' lives" (MM 14.09.06).

McGinn appears to uphold a vision of the small rural community as expressive of 'genuine' Ireland, however, her use of the word "real" when describing modern, urban life undermines this. In effect, she seems to construct a sort of timeless rural ideal that is dreamlike; it is not urban 'reality' but a kind of retreat or haven from reality. In one sense, she appears to attribute a different ideological basis to the urban and the rural; for McGinn, the former is governed by scientific rationality, the latter by an organic communitarian ethos. More importantly from the perspective of my analysis here, however, is that authenticity, unlike 'reality'[126], emerges as something deeply personal; it is about "values" and "experiences". Authenticity reveals itself in the tacit confederacy of like-minded people and in this respect, 'intuition' is fundamentally tied to authenticity. Indeed, while research is enormously important in advertising, my analysis largely endorses Lien's (1997, 2004) suggestion that the bulk of decisions taken by marketing departments (or in my case advertising agencies) are made in the absence of verifiable data.

[126] Some would consider 'reality' an entirely redundant and ill-suited concept in relation to advertising. Schudson (1993: 215), for example, suggests that advertising functions as a form of 'capitalist realism' that does not represent society as it is but as it should be according to capitalist ideals. This is similar to the suggestion that advertising is engaged in the 'fictionalisation' of reality (cf. Baladrón 2003: 38).

> QA: One thing I find very interesting is that despite the supposed importance of research, objectivity etc. that in fact, the production process seems quite intuitive [...]
>
> "It's very intuitive. What do you pick? You know, in the end of the day when you work on a given pitch you take out a stack of research. What strikes you from that research? Because there are far too many things there [...]" (KH 19.07.06).

Above, Hand infers that intuition plays a significant part in advertising production, a contention that is supported by Hooper's insistence that "most work isn't researched" (SH 30.07.06). It is via the operation of this 'sense' that authenticity is recognised and cultivated and thus, to some extent, authenticity and intuition constitute two sides of the same coin. In the following passage, McGinn suggests that the 'not the usual' Smithwick's campaign was primarily shaped by the experiences of Padraig Burns – the former Smithwick's Account Manager in McConnell's. McGinn avers that Burn's experiences growing up in a rural, small town in Kerry conferred him with a distinctive ability to identify and relate to Smithwick's core consumer group:

> "Having someone like Padraig, who was the former Account Director and he was a Kerry guy and he really was, you know, even though he kind of lived in Ballsbridge and was into the Dublin kind of life [...] he is still who he is, you know. And so I think in talking and working with him I definitely got a strong sense of [...] he did have a really good feel of the humour that would appeal [...] I do think it helps to have a little bit of that outside-of-Dublin mindset and being outside looking in" (MM 14.09.06).

Above, McGinn suggests that Burns could "feel" what might resonate with Smithwick's drinkers and that despite living and working in Dublin, Burns remained true to "who he is". Her suggestion is that the trappings of modern urban living did not usurp his rural identity and that his past directly shapes his engagement with contemporary Ireland. The notion of "being outside looking in" is suggestive of the social scientist but Burns' position is more complicated as he is, to McGinn's mind at least, legitimately both insider *and* outsider. Nevertheless it is Burns' 'sense' that

ultimately counts; it is not learned but instinctive. His capacity to intuitively screen ideas that might resonate with Smithwick's "adorers" is described by McGinn as something innate, rather than trained or acquired. The example of Burns illustrates that while intuition holds particular importance for creatives, it constitutes a routine aspect of production for all practitioners. Just as stereotyping offers interpretative shortcuts to both producers and consumers, this "sense" of brand/consumer permits cursory readings of research (and also explains the ability of producers to spot synergies between their own life experiences, tastes, values etc. and those of consumers). Respondents also suggest that clients likewise rely on intuition. "[Most of what they do is] done on intuition, a gut, so they'd look at an ad and they'll know it's right" (SH 30.07.06). This suggestion is confirmed by Falconer, who intimates that she intuitively "knows"[127] what is and is not Today FM:

> "You get to a stage where when we see ads [...] I saw scripts that I hadn't briefed and they were just wrong. You just know. You looked at it and you go; "no, it's not us" [...] Sometimes you just can't even say why but you just know that is Today FM and that isn't" (SF 19.12.05).

Falconer maintains that the success of the Today FM/Cawley Nea partnership is largely due to the fact that the latter shares this "sense" of the brand and intuitively understands the Irishness of the radio station. As I suggest in the next chapter, the operation of this intuitive "sense" relates to respondents' constructions of 'culture', which is largely viewed as "preset" and "unconscious". In another example, in which she refers to a decision to reference the "The A-Team" in the Ray D'Arcy commercial, Falconer claims that this was not deliberate but more accidental, implying that the shared cultural understandings of producers, presenters and listeners had almost unthinkingly selected such a reference: "We would never have said; "oh that will be spot on for our target audience". But if he [Ray D'Arcy] had said; "what's the new Pokemon character called?" or something we would have been; "that's not

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[127] Likewise, Lien suggests that 'by means of sophisticated transformations, sales figures are matched to key characteristics of consumers involved, enabling the marketing practitioner to 'know' with some degree of certainty, the sociological characteristics of the people that operate at the other end of the transaction chain [...] In this way, the disentangled virtual consumer becomes a person of flesh and blood' (2004: 58).

us"! [Laughs]" (SF 19.12.05). As this comment suggests, knowing the appropriate advertising response is equally a case of knowing what is *not* appropriate. Likewise, intuition is constructed as an important part of the production process for practitioners outside the realm of agency-client interaction. In describing the successful Heineken campaigns, for example, Madden (like many other respondents) attributes great importance to commercial directors. In championing these creative practitioners, Madden presents a powerful impression of the importance of autonomy, creativity and intuition working in harmony. Given the temporal and other constraints that producers (of all kinds) in advertising face, he expresses great admiration for those who are willing to pursue their own "vision" and follow their instincts.

Above, I suggested that given the tendency of advertising producers (and especially creatives) to introspect combined with the valorising of intuition[128], that one might concur with Lien's (2004) suggestion that the consumer is rendered 'virtual' in the production process. While I arrive at this broadly similar conclusion, on first impression my explanation appears precisely the opposite of Lien's. Lien argues that 'the way in which the marketing profession conceptualises markets and consumers may in fact sometimes prevent them from gaining certain types of knowledge that they actually require' (2004: 49), on which I wholly agree. However, part of this, she suggests, derives from a tendency to 'portray consumers as if they were strangers, acting unexpectedly, in ways that are difficult to understand', thereby generating 'an image of a consumer as *someone you don't know*' (ibid. 49, author's emphasis). In my own work, however, respondents' biographical and emotional proximity to consumers generates a powerful intuitive sense whereby producers effectively view themselves as 'members of' and 'spokespersons for' these people. However, my differences with Lien may in fact be a matter of the terms employed. Lien concedes that the term 'virtual' is misleading in that flesh and blood consumers clearly exist, however, her point is that:

[128] Respondents' tendencies to prioritise their own intuition above research findings may constitute an example of what Carrier and Miller (1998) refer to as 'virtualism'. 'According to Carrier, abstraction leads some people to adopt an abstract economic world view in which the 'concepts and models of economic abstraction [...] are taken to be fundamental reality that underlies and shapes the world. This becomes 'virtualism' when "people take this virtual reality to be not just parsimonious description of what is really happening, but prescriptive of what the world ought to be; that is, they seek to make the world conform to their virtual vision" (Carrier 1998: 2; in Lien 2004: 60).

> The term 'consumer' is not meaningful with regard to identification at a personal level. It does not offer any lasting source of identity [...] the term 'consumer' is, in other words, a part-time activity reconstructed as a person, and reclassified as 'hedonist', 'traditional', 'retro' or 'generation x', whatever term appears appropriate in the light of current fads of market research (Lien 2004: 61).

It is perhaps as a consequence of this that in advertising agencies, the term 'target audience' is favoured along with naming strategies (such as 'Jack' in the case of Heineken) as these imply a more specific and engaged understanding of the 'consumer' and are used to humanise such abstract entities. Drawing on Miller's (2001) ethnographic study of shopping, Lien argues that consumption is *not* first and foremost about self-identity, lifestyle or fashion. Consumption is first and foremost about relationships (Lien 2004: 61/2). I would suggest, however, that advertising practitioners have largely recognised this insight. Thus, 'target audience' becomes an affective label for someone deeply embedded in communal relationships and among its other functions, the idiom of identity allows advertisers to emotionally connect with audiences. Hence, while Lien concludes that 'human resources related to personal and professional experience are not often fully utilised as a basis for future decisions' (ibid. 62), my research on advertising practitioners suggests that it is the personal and communal, configured as cultural identity, that has gravitated towards the centre of practitioner claims of expert knowledge.

6.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the first component of a 'second-order' interpretation of case studies. My intention in this chapter has been to analyse the relationships between seminal Irish advertising campaigns and the people who produced them. In particular, I attempted to gain an impression of the input of respondents when developing commercials, their understandings of themselves in relation to this process (and the resultant texts), and the assumptions about identity, especially Irishness, that they hold. Clearly, this analysis should not be taken to suggest that Irish advertising

practitioners share a singular social experience or a unified set of identities, although my analysis perhaps goes some way towards supporting Lien's (2003: 173) assertion that producers possess a 'shared cultural repertoire'. Fundamentally, this chapter argues that respondents share many assumptions about identity, which appear to rest upon some notion of 'authenticity'. Authenticity is in turn closely linked to the operation of an intuitive 'sense' when producing. In this chapter, I have suggested that authenticity and intuition go hand in hand; they are two sides of the same coin. 'Knowing what it means to be Irish' presupposes an instinctive ability to identify authentic Irishness. It is this more than anything else, as I suggest in the final chapter of this dissertation, which has become the foundation of Irish practitioners' claims of expert knowledge in an increasingly consolidated, global advertising industry.

Chapter 7: Second-Order Analysis Part 2

7.1 Introduction

> [...] The cultural identities of practitioners and the wider occupational culture in which they move will provide resources for and set certain limits to the process of cultural production in which they are engaged. Thus, the subjective dispositions of key practitioners and the meanings, values and normative assumptions written into their occupational cultures will be important in mediating the process of reaching out to and connecting with consumers (Nixon 2003: 5).

As indicated in the previous chapter, this chapter comprises the second component of a 'second-order' interpretation of the case studies presented earlier. 'Because meaning develops within a set of other meanings, not in a vacuum, a second-order interpretation places the human action being studied in the "stream of behaviour" or events to which it is related – its context' (Neuman 2003: 148/9). As Nixon similarly indicates (above), an investigation of advertising producers should consider their subjective dispositions, values and normative assumptions (or what Lien (2004: 48) calls 'doxic assumptions') within the context of wider cultural frameworks and discourses[129]. This position is shared by other researchers of the 'cultural intermediary' occupations, such as Cronin (2004a, 2004c), McFall (2002, 2004) and Negus (2002) and by researchers of identity generally e.g. Zaretsky's (1994: 198) insistence that identity politics 'must be situated historically'. In writing this dissertation, I have been adamant that my analysis derive directly from data *actually collected* and hence, investigating the construction of respondents 'as subjects' is clearly beyond the scope of this work and would necessitate extensive and prolonged research of respondent biographies, past education etc. Nevertheless, as the previous

[129] While I acknowledge the interconnectedness of cultural production and cultural consumption, I admit that my concern with producers does at times construct these as analytically distinct spheres. It is hoped that this chapter in particular offers some means of linking production and consumption, albeit solely via the discourse of producers.

chapter indicates, it *is* possible for me to say a considerable amount about respondents' understandings and assumptions *in relation to* the campaigns examined. Moving beyond this, this chapter investigates more closely the extent to which practitioners draw upon and articulate a vocabulary of cultural identity and the form that this assumes. In doing so, I first examine the interface between academia and the commercial realm (Cronin 2004b), highlighting how an increasingly shared methodological orientation and vernacular helps to explain the supplanting of traditional media categories by identity. I then move to examine how the discourse of Irish advertising practitioners (and the identity statements contained in the texts examined) draws upon wider discourses of identity and especially those circulating in the period of the Celtic Tiger.

7.2 Advertising, Academia and the Idiom of Identity

Researchers of advertising have long been interested in the interface between academia and the commercial realm and have highlighted that the understandings which flow between advertising practitioners, their clients, and academics 'function to constitute important power-knowledge formations' (Cronin 2004b: 339). Clearly, these workers are influenced first and foremost by personal ambition, by their peers and clients, by conferences, networks, award shows, research exposés and other gatherings. 'While each single judgement is locally grounded, it is still informed by an expert system that reaches far beyond the local context' (Lien 1997: 11). Likewise, practitioners draw considerably from the wider pool of work generated by other advertising agencies (Moeran 1996a; Nixon 2003; McFall 2004). Hence, while my interest in this dissertation is in developing a sociological analysis of these workers and in doing so, I draw various parallels with sociological theory, this is clearly not intended to suggest that respondents consult this literature as a matter of routine (though many reveal a familiarity with popular social theory[130]). Rather, my interest is in highlighting the commercial *value* of cultural identity and how its deployment and

[130] John Fanning, for example, has published numerous articles in trade press and academic journals, as well as his recent book *The Importance of Being Branded* (2006). The fact that his writing falls between the boundaries of abstract academic theorising and applied industry knowledge suggests that he be considered a kind of academic-industry hybrid or to borrow Callon's (1998: 27) term, an 'academic marketing specialist'.

articulation signifies merely one instance of this industry's tendency to borrow from other discourses and disciplines. It is also illustrative of Davidson's (1992: 175) suggestion that 'the critic and the advertiser are locked into endlessly reworking each other's methods in complementary idioms'.

Market research, like the study of audiences, became a central agency of modern consumer society, which not only helped to create social needs but also shaped understandings of 'the consumer' and 'the audience' (Bernold and Ellmeier 1997: 198). As numerous researchers have indicated (e.g. Cook 1992; Malefyt and Moeran 2003; Fox 1984; Leiss et al 1990; Lien 2004; Nevett 1982; Norris 1990), the practices, tools and discourse of advertising have developed in tandem with wider technological and social shifts. In the post-war period, McLuhan (1947) pointed to the commonalities between advertising and everyday parlance and experience:

> The multi-million dollar, nation-wide educational programs of the ad-man (dwarfing the outlay on formal education) provide a world of symbols, witticisms, and behaviour patterns which may or may not be a fatal solvent for the political traditions of America, but which certainly do comprise a common experience and a common language (cited in Twitchell 1996: 132).

In order for marketing and advertising to be recognised as distinctive disciplines in their own right, however, academic and scientific knowledge was steadily expropriated such that marketing is now viewed as 'a field of knowledge which is both ambitiously academic and intensely applied' (Lien 2004: 48). Throughout the last century, developments in the social sciences and other fields (such as communications and psychology) have influenced the advertising industry to varying degrees. In the early to mid twentieth century, for example, the influence of cognitive psychology was particularly powerful, leading to rather simplistic and linear models of communication, such as Strong's (1925) AIDA sequence (Awareness, Interest, Desire, Action) and Colley's (1961) DAGMAR model (Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Advertising Results). A more recent collection of models, variously referred to as 'the "brand image school" (Ogilvy 1963; Joyce 1967), "humanistic advertising" (Lannon and Cooper 1983) and "right-hand side of the brain approach" (McDonald 1992), has at its core a more symbolic, intuitive and emotional view of

products and advertising in the scheme of consumer decision-making' (Meenaghan 1995: 324). The incorporation of stronger elements of consumer emotionality into the persuasion process (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982) parallels recent interest in the sociology of emotions (Thoits 1989). Likewise, marketing, advertising and consumption theory since the 1980s has steadily incorporated a more explicit focus on 'identity' (e.g. Belk 1988; Buttle 1994; Elliot and Wattanasuwan 1998; O'Donohoe 1994) in line with the dominance of identity in social theory generally. Nixon (1996: 91) highlighted how, in the 1980s, advertising practitioners had two dominant paradigms of consumer segmentation to draw on in describing their target consumers; demographics and attitudinal or motivational segmentations. He suggests that since this time, the latter variety has become increasingly significant, a suggestion that is supported by the findings in this dissertation.

> Psychographics and lifestyles signified a new set of consumer identities which cut across and often pluralised demographic segmentations. Two consequences followed from this. First, lifestyles and psychographics produced a more intensive individualisation of consumers [...] The lifestyle segmentations also, secondly, explicitly foregrounded cultural distinctions between different groups of consumers (Nixon 1996: 100/1).

What is of particular interest to me here is Nixon's second consequence and specifically, how the foregrounding of cultural distinctions appears to have had the effect of validating the subjective experiences and interpretations of practitioners. While advertising agencies continue to employ neo-positivistic methods such as "copy testing" and survey research, they also make extensive use of consumer research approaches deriving from the interpretative traditions including semiotics, ethnography, anthropology and discourse analysis (Hackley 2002: 212)[131]. Consequently, several researchers suggest that descriptively at least, the work of

[131] It should also be highlighted that Irish advertising agencies make extensive use of commercial market reports (such as Mintel) and research data provided by or purchased from research organisations such as A.C. Nielson, BASE (Breakdown of Advertising Share and Expenditure), ABC (Audit Bureau of Circulations) etc. – see www.iapi.ie.

advertising producers shares much in common with that of social scientists[132] and anthropologists in particular (Astroff 1997; Malefyt and Moeran 2003; Hirota 1995; Kemper 2003; Moeran 2005). 'If every human being is a folk ethnographer by default, anthropologists and advertising executives are ethnographers in the strict sense of the word' (Kemper 2003: 35). Astroff compares marketing and anthropology on epistemological grounds:

> Both anthropology and marketing research can be seen as systems through which cultures are made knowable – that is, identified, defined and codified. Marketing, like anthropology, provides paradigms, theories, definitions, values and needs that are used to identify and produce cultures and markets (Astroff 1997: 123).

In the case studies presented in this dissertation, respondents describe their work as concerned with exploring "territories" and "worlds", identifying markets and trends and connecting consumers and brands. Diane Tangey suggests that Cawley Nea/TBWA's success is in large part due to the fact that agency staff do not conceive of their occupational roles within narrowly defined parameters but are willing to think beyond their immediate tasks and responsibilities. She constructs practitioners at Cawley Nea as naturally inquisitive and curious, reminiscent of Hirota's (1995: 340) description of advertising creatives as 'commercial urban ethnographers'. Martin Cowman similarly champions "face-to-face" research and believes in "talking" to consumers and "wearing down" a bit of shoe leather. Against relying on abstract quantitative research, he expresses a "personal need to know who I'm talking to" (MC 16.03.06). (The propinquity implied here perhaps explains the tendency of respondents to employ powerful penetrative expressions and metaphors[133], such as the

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[132] Moeran argues that advertising workers can be likened to practitioners of symbolic interaction theory: 'Both are concerned with the meanings that things take on for human beings – meanings that involve an interpretative process, on one hand, and that derive from, or arise out of, social interaction, on the other. Like symbolic interactionists, advertising people adopt a down-to-earth approach to the understanding of group behaviour and human conduct' (Moeran 2003: 98).

[133] In interviews with advertising practitioners, metaphors are employed constantly. One can identify spatial metaphors (creative 'territory'), structural metaphors (Green Energy is a 'property' of Heineken), religious metaphors (the 'spirit' of the brand), metaphors of war, friendship, nation etc. In the language of 'Discourse Analysis', the metaphors and descriptions of practitioners can be described as "interpretative repertoires". Potter and Wetherell (1987: 138) define an interpretative repertoire as: "[...] a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterise actions or events" (cited

notion of "entering a mindset" or piercing a "psyche" – see below). Kennedy, for example, insists that "tapping into" the zeitgeist and spotting nascent trends necessitates that advertising workers keep abreast of fashions and fads as well as social, political and cultural changes. He insists that practitioners must keep an "ear to the ground", again reminiscent of the urban anthropologist, the 'constant garnerer' of information. In a similar fashion, Stephen Bogan, the Account Planner at McCann-Erickson, suggests that good advertising demands "a heuristic approach [...] you learn as you go along and your depth of knowledge expands [...]" (SB 27.10.05) (which is reflective of the inductive tradition in the social sciences). Here, Bogan implies that society is in constant flux and that practitioners must develop flexible methods and remain open to new developments. In describing their work, respondents therefore offer a repertoire of desirable qualities for people working in this field. Cowman, for example, stresses the diversity inherent in advertising and insists that one can gain a broader perspective on the world if one is open-minded and inquisitive, constructing advertisers as culturally omnivorous. In this respect, he feels that his own line of work is particularly well suited: "I'm at an advantage because of what I work at because you wouldn't be in the business very long if you weren't searching, finding things [...] you're always trying to at least look at something slightly differently to how it's been looked at before" (MC 16.03.06). Similarly, Tangey claims:

> "[Working in advertising] has shaped me more in the past five years than I would ever have imagined or chosen because you look at things differently, you question things differently, you are over-stimulated all day at work in terms of visual and thoughts [...] you question things, and that's not something that stops at five-thirty. You know, I have learned to switch off and chill out but I think it has given me a perspective that's always there [...] so I'm scarred for life! [Laughs]" (DT 14.12.05).

Above, Tangey describes her work as a persistent and conditioned questioning of the social world implying that reflexivity is as important for advertising practitioners as it is for social scientists. Hand likewise insists that "multidimensional curiosity" and

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in Kelly et al 2005: 512). See Kelly et al (2005) for a comprehensive account of the use of this method in analysing interviews with creative advertising practitioners in the Irish industry.

"synthesis as a mental capacity in people is really, really important" (KH 19.07.06), again drawing attention to the cognitive and intuitive faculties of producers. However, despite an increased alignment with the social sciences, comparisons to other more 'exact' sciences and professions, such as architecture and the medical profession, are also made by respondents. In the following passage, for example, Blaney recalls an encounter with a particularly insensitive client and his attempts to convince her to produce an advertisement on the basis of his wife's doodling[134]. Here, she reveals thinly-veiled frustration with the unprofessional associations that she feels the advertising industry has unfairly accumulated. Against this, Blaney constructs her agency as an expert, comparing her own industry to that of the medical profession and constructing herself and her co-workers as 'brand doctors' of a sort:

> "One client came in one day with his pen and paper and he had a drawing his wife had done and it was some idea for an ad and was something like ever-decreasing circles and I was like; "what does that mean"? Like, you don't go into a doctor and say; "I've a pain in my arm, I think I know what it is, I think I'll take [...] what do you think?" [Laughs]. But for some reason everybody's got an opinion on ads and it's not seen as a particularly professional industry" (OB 12.10.05).

Above, Blaney is at pains to present herself and her peers as experts and she implies that advertising's ubiquity and taken-for-grantedness make it difficult for the lay person to recognise the professionalism of workers in this field. The comparison with practitioners of a more 'exact' scientific bent should not be taken to undermine previous comparisons with social scientists; both comparisons are borne of the difficulty practitioners experience in *proving* their assertions. As Alvesson (1994: 543) highlights; 'advertising professionals often have difficulties in convincing customers about their 'know-how'. Their abilities and products seldom talk for themselves'. This difficulty instigates various discursive strategies that are intended to enhance the expert standing of practitioners. It is also as a consequence of this difficult predicament that academic knowledge is so highly attractive to these

[134] Interestingly, an interviewee of Alvesson (1994: 548) likewise 'remarked that it is sometimes the boss's wife's opinion that lies behind what the client says'.

workers[135]. 'Academic soundbites' are desirable because they function as a currency supporting their claims to be expert knowledge providers (Cronin 2004b: 358). It also appears, however, that academic language in general and the broad vernacular of the social sciences in particular, has enabled producers to speak more compellingly and comprehensively about consumers. Thus, while positivistic methods are still employed in this industry, my analysis suggests that interpretative research is favoured by practitioners because it is considered more revealing of 'authentic' experience and more suited to 'real-life'[136]. 'Equipped with fragments of state-of-the-art sociology (Giddens, Bourdieu) and with 'real-life' photographs of 'real people' to represent the typical 'prototype' of various segments of consumer cartography, they portray an image of the world of consumers which is both familiar and intriguing' (Lien 2004: 60). In her research, Anne Cronin (2004b: 348) similarly encountered what she describes as 'anti-intellectualism' and a clear preference amongst her respondents for 'real-life' research. In the three case studies presented in this dissertation, respondents insist that traditional media categories (e.g. ABC1, C2 etc.) are inadequate. Against narrow demographics focusing on class or age, most[137] prefer qualitative and psychographic data, which appear to permit a holistic analysis of brand and consumer.

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[135] Hackley (2002: 212) notes that views among advertising practitioners regarding the contribution to the field from academics are mixed. Some argue that a different 'mentality' divides academics and practitioners (e.g. Wells 1997) while others draw attention to what they perceive as a difference in 'language' (e.g. Cook and Kover 1998). In an earlier work, Hackley (2003) suggested that the divide might be better considered from the perspective of differing representational practices, including various differences in judgement and evaluation. I would suggest, however, that the case studies presented in this dissertation demonstrate that the usage (if not precisely the theorisation) of identity is markedly similar in both fields.

[136] Cronin (2004b: 353) highlights that 'techniques and theories imported by agencies from academia function less as means of accessing 'the real' (or as accurate means of describing and targeting the market), and more as rhetorical means of legitimating advertising as a commercial tool'.

[137] Van der Linden at first seems to dismiss the rhetorical flourishes of marketing or what he calls "fluff" in favour of more quantitative measurements. Yet as he describes the three tiers of Heineken communication (particularly "world of Heineken communication" and "Heineken in my world communication"), he slips into more identitarian terminology, describing, for example, a distinctive "mindset" and a brand "spirit" (JV 07.11.05). Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that although the argument advanced in this dissertation is that the idiom of identity has gained increasing currency in this industry, it is certainly not the case that advertising workers have abandoned the language of hard science. Indeed, at times even creatives propound an entirely instrumental and quantitative logic couched in a language of "effectiveness". In this respect, as I suggest in the next chapter, the idiom of identity functions to permit what I describe as 'emotional instrumentality'. One can perhaps therefore concur with Mazzarella's suggestion that the legitimacy of the advertising business rests upon the claim that the industry brings together intuitive understanding with a rationalising and panoptic marketing expertise (2003: 66). Likewise, it is reasonable to suggest that 'today, the successful brands are likely to be those which can create a brand personality that will persuade consumers to prefer one brand over another, through advertising, which creatively combines the emotional and rational in a coherent and effective communication' (Abdullah and Donnelly 1995: 148).

> This means going beyond the simple demographic categorisations of consumers into ABC1, Families with two children, etc. To articulate the composition of a target group fully, they must be classified in terms of the way they live, what their values are (especially in relation to the product category in question), what their usage patterns are. Then it is possible to develop a mental image of an individual, *a target person instead of a target group*, and to write advertising specifically directed to *that person*' (Abdullah and Donnelly 1995: 150, authors' emphasis).

Diageo's motivational mapping grid ('contentment', 'independence' etc.) mentioned in the Smithwick's case study, for example, is reflective of shifts towards psychographic research. Similarly, practitioner accounts are littered with psycho-social terminology relating to 'attitudes', 'psyches', 'mentalities', 'sensibilities' and 'mindsets'[138]. As Fanning writes in relation to the Smithwick's 'locals' campaign: 'The solution in the case of Smithwick's was very much dependent on an acute understanding of the personality, mentality and motivations of existing users of the brand' (2006: 88). Likewise Hand, referring to the famous Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh, whose oeuvre is almost entirely devoted to themes of rural Irish life (such as poverty and sexual inhibition), describes a "kind of Patrick Kavanagh sensibility of talking" in reference to Smithwick's drinkers. Maura McGinn creates a similar impression (and here one can observe a close association between respondents' descriptions of brands and their assumptions about Irishness – see Chapter 6):

> "I think a Smithwick's drinker in a way personifies a more [...] what would I say? [...] definitely not an urban Irish attitude but it is still a kind of country [...] there's a certain politeness and they would never be, like even in focus groups [...] they would be very polite and [...] it's very hard for them to say they don't like something. Whereas a Guinness drinker is very clear, just generally – they're quite vocal about what they don't like or what they like [...] it's just a different mentality; there's an easiness to them that's always been in the campaign" (MM 14.09.06).

[138] 'Mindset', as opposed to a narrow alignment with age, is strongly favoured by respondents. Arguably, this can be considered a widespread social phenomenon in which the category of 'youth' appears to be 'expanding' to include biologically older people (cf. O'Boyle 2006b).

For McGinn, the Smithwick's drinker is clearly identifiable in research groups and personifies a small town "politeness" and "easiness", as opposed to the Guinness drinker, who is much more confident, direct and self-assured. This is reflective of Fanning's suggestion (above) that these people consider themselves 'uncomplicated'. Hand similarly maintains such distinctions, however, she suggests that in recent times Smithwick's has reconfigured the essentially urban-rural divide into a championing of 'independence' and has therefore broadened its scope to include urban individuals or "mavens". In all of these distinctions categories such as class and income, while not entirely absent, are certainly regulated to issues of secondary importance (although this is less evident in the case of Today FM). Respondents' descriptions of brands effectively amount to webs of identity statements, as the following description of Heineken (prior to launching the campaigns examined) by van der Linden indicates:

> "If you look at the Heineken brand values, so what did consumers think of when you mentioned the Heineken brand was good quality, great consistency, very trustworthy, a premium brand, a bit of a rugger-bugger premium connotations, but very good quality, reliability am but also a bit distant, a bit formal, a bit business like" (JV 07.11.05).

The above conveys a powerful impression of the brand 'as person'[139]. Van der Linden's description does not merely relate to physical characteristics and personality attributes but extends to deeper qualities (such as trust). In all of this, social referents are essential; "rugger-bugger" and "business like" are used to convey distinctive identity associations. Hence, the brand identity is cultivated via external referents and in turn becomes itself a symbolic marker (e.g. Guinness in relation to Irishness). Diane Tangey fuses the Today FM brand identity with its target audience, implying (in almost Durkheimian terms) a shared cultural attitude or psyche: "[Today FM has] become an irreverent attitude that has tapped into the Irish psyche. It's very much more of a mindset, that's very much akin to the Irish people" (DT 14.12.05). These

[139] Respondents' descriptions of brands often bear striking similarity to the conception of a 'brand as person' (cf. Smothers 1993) and the idea that brands have 'life cycles' (Aaker 1991) comparable to human life cycles. In this sense, the brand can be conceived as a child at its inception and launch (which was particularly evident in the case of Today FM). Consequently, its attempts at communication and promotion typically entail the use of simple messages and imagery that claim little because the brand and persona are unfamiliar. However, as the brand evolves and external relationships develop, a more coherent identity and more complex affiliations can be constructed.

examples highlight how specific kinds of knowledge and attendant language are used by practitioners to both justify (their claims) and describe (their audiences). Cronin (2004c: 358) highlights that with increasing uncertainty, advertising agencies respond by presenting themselves as 'experts in researching and "delivering" the consumer'. Moving beyond this, I suggest that their expertness increasingly lies in a more fulsome claim to "know" brand audiences. It is perhaps as a consequence of this that 'culture' assumes such significance for advertising workers. In the previous chapter, I suggested that reification is especially important in this industry. Reification provides a means of infusing abstract entities (such as brands) with material characteristics, which in turn permits respondents to invest these with human qualities (i.e. anthropomorphism). This is also apparent when respondents describe Irish culture and identity. Most imply that culture and nation effectively amount to the same thing. Practitioners typically evoke 'anthropological' conceptions or 'folk models' of culture, using terms that resonate closely with Geertz's classic descriptions of culture as 'an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbolic forms' (Geertz 1973: 89) and 'a shared and learned world of experiences' (Alvesson 1993: 2/3). As with their descriptions of brands and consumers, the discourse of respondents is littered with psycho-social notions of an Irish "mindset" and "psyche". Tangey, for example, conceives of culture as "the sociological measure of a country [...] so I'd say it's a combination of way of life and Irish psyche" (DT 14.12.05). Bogan likewise draws attention to the importance of what he calls a "cultural subconscious or consciousness which has been generated over generations" (SB 27.10.05). For Cowman, "culture" functions as a programme that is habitual and historically framed:

> "Culture is the way we do things isn't it [...] it's programming basically [...] whatever groups of people are connectively programmed, whatever attitudes and ideas are preset in their minds that will form a culture. So that can be to do with your upbringing, particularly the place you live in, yes the brands that you collectively surround yourself with, the entertainment that you aspire to, and in as much as that collectively creates habits and opinions that will form the building blocks that we will call culture. But there's a huge connection to history there as well" (MC 16.03.06).

What is interesting in the above descriptions is the implicit idea that culture is pre-existing, "preset" and resistant to change. Respondents invoke what Wright (1998) calls the 'old' anthropological idea of culture implying that culture is simply the "way things are done" or that it operates as a kind of subconscious "programming". (This parallels the tendency of respondents to describe the advertising professional in terms of proclivity or acumen[140]). As I suggest below, this casts doubt upon practitioners' unequivocal embrace, indeed 'celebration', of cultural change in Ireland. However, more importantly in respect of my analysis here, these notions directly feed into practitioners' claims of expert knowledge based upon unique cultural understanding. As I highlighted in Chapter 6, this is predominantly expressed as gut feelings, tacit understandings and informal, semi-articulated observations, insights and intuitions (cf. Alvesson 1994; Hackley 2002; Nixon 2003). It is therefore arguable that the increasing acceptance of academic-style language (especially that deriving from studies of identity and cultural psychology) permit advertising practitioners to operationalise their own informal knowledges with greater legitimacy. If culture amounts to a kind of visceral and indefinable sense of community, the importance of local interpreters who can cultivate 'authentic' connections on the basis of shared (and particularistic) meanings therefore becomes increasingly important. In the following section, I examine the cultural knowledge and vocabularies of respondents more closely, paying particular attention to the linkages between the discourse of producers and wider discourses of Irish identity.

[140] Bourdieu's ([1984] 2000) account of the 'new cultural intermediaries' and his concepts of 'cultural capital', 'habitus' and 'field' have been widely employed by researchers of advertising. The great merit of his research is that it directs the researcher towards subjectivity in context, incorporating both individual and structural elements. Through habitus, Bourdieu reintroduces a notion of the agent without slipping into Romantic idealism while his concept of field grounds the agent's action in objective social relations without succumbing to wholesale mechanistic determinism (Johnson 1993: 2). Habitus, in particular, is a most useful concept because Bourdieu guides us towards a dispositional theory of action that can be related to much of the analysis presented in this dissertation; such as the importance of intuition, the articulation of Irishness as visceral and instinctive, the description of culture as preset and unconscious etc. Nevertheless, in this dissertation, I have consciously avoided a repetitious engagement with Bourdieu, despite incorporating some of his concepts intermittently. As suggested above, it is not my intention to prioritise the work of any single theorist (or theory in general for that matter) as this runs contrary to the inductive ethos of grounded research.

7.3 Relating the Discourse and Texts of Producers to Wider Discourses of Irish Identity

As suggested above, referent systems (see Frith 1997) are essential when advertising practitioners are attempting to carve distinctive brand identities and in turn, brands themselves become symbolic markers of cultural identity (e.g. Guinness)[141]. Similarly, as the case studies presented in this dissertation suggest, respondents reveal a familiarity with wider discourses of identity and utilise these when describing themselves, their work and their brands. In arguing the importance of a consistent brand identity that is self-sustaining across time and space and in the face of continual change, respondents appear to share a position that is foundational in identity theory (cf. Erikson 1968). Equally, the views of practitioners can be related quite easily to recent theorisations of identities as mutable, processual, shifting and emerging (Castells 1997; Craib 1998; Hall 1990, 1996; Lentin 2000). In this sense, their thinking is perhaps characteristic of reflexive modernity; it suggests a position that accepts and affirms ambivalence and consciously lives with uncertainty (Beck et al 1994). In this section, I concentrate on the linkages between the discourse and texts of producers and wider discourses of Irish identity. Paraphrasing Cronin (2004a: 47), I suggest that it should not be surprising that practitioners' accounts of Irishness parallel those which circulate more generally. The various linkages posited below are neither definitive nor exhaustive of the available literature. Nevertheless, they help to position the accounts of respondents within wider discourses of Irish identity and provide a useful vocabulary for interpreting their viewpoints.

Firstly, and most forcefully expressed by respondents, is the idea that Irishness has radically altered in the current conjuncture. This is most clearly expressed in Bogan's insistence that "Irish identity has fundamentally changed" (SB 27.10.05) and relates to Fintan O'Toole's (2000) observation that the disappearance of a fixed Irish identity

[141] While the focus in this dissertation is on the producers of commercial Irish advertising, I suggest that advertising is a potent socio-symbolic force that plays a significant role in the construction of cultural identity for consumers. In respect of Irishness, Helen Kelly-Holmes considers this glumly stating; 'it can be argued that [the] advertising and commercial texts have now somewhat depressingly, but perhaps predictably, come to compose the new prescribed texts of 'Irishness' and may eventually become the foundational texts, forming the givens and providing the pathways through which new texts of 'Irishness' will in turn be read and written' (2000: 39).

is an indisputable fact of contemporary Irish life. Coulter (2003: 2) likewise proclaims 'a radical recent transformation of the manner in which Irishness is perceived, signified and imagined'. Economic globalisation (and especially Foreign Direct Investment) assumes great importance in this transformation and in some respects, my respondents construct themselves as enthusiastic and ardent neo-liberals. For many, Ireland's newfound confidence is intimately tied to economic progress, which parallels the analysis of Hussey (1995), Kiberd (1996) and O'Hearn (1998), among others. Indeed, the description below of a 'new Ireland' closely aligns with the views of respondents and relates especially to their descriptions of target audiences (in particular those of Today FM and Heineken):

> The "new" Ireland of the late 1990s, a software hothouse, of *Riverdance*, e-commerce and property speculators, with its cosmopolitan cities and an increasingly self-confident, agnostic, entrepreneurial and worldly youth, has leapt into a future unimagined, and certainly unanticipated, in the doldrums of a decade ago (MacLachlan and O'Connell 2000: 2).

In the above passage, a clear break is posited between the Ireland of the late 1980s/early 1990s and that of the new millennium, which is reminiscent of the "step change" alluded to by Blaney in the previous chapter. In claiming such a change, respondents insist that the 'the historical hallmarks of the Irish psyche are changing' (MacLachlan and O'Connell 2000: 2) and as a consequence, are highly critical of stereotypical representations of Irishness (what is referred to as "Oirishness" or "Paddyism" in Chapter 6). Against these outdated and myopic depictions, practitioners insist that Irish advertisers must portray a positive sense of progress when depicting Irishness or "do a Riverdance" as Blaney put it. In the following passage, for example, Cowman expounds at length on the synergies between Today FM and an Ireland that he views in the process of "transition":

> "I think [Today FM is] extremely Irish and it's very, very much designed to be. But there's no green on it, so there's none of that green card, stage Irish or, you know, our Irish station – we don't speak like that but inherently, I think Irish people like a bit of a laugh, we like to slag each other off, we're very self-deprecating as a nation. And we're endeared to people who put

> themselves down in a way, and if they do it with a wit and charm we really like them so if you look at any of the ads that we do for Today FM, we will be completely taking the piss out of ourselves [...] there's still an Irish culture I believe, a huge shift away from [...] the concept of authority figures, so when we were children – the bishops, the priests, the headmasters, the doctors, the pharmacists, the politicians. They were authority figures, am in a way, there was a them and us feel and maybe we're more aware of it than our parents because we're in transition [...] and the concept of a radio station, I mean if you think of it with RTE, which is an authority figure in itself. Now you've got radio stations that have a real license to be cheeky and to be silly and fun but it needs to be an intelligent cheeky and fun and I think that's what Today FM does in its day-to-day behaviour [...] I think that the Irishness we aspire to [...] it's to be upbeat, fun, cheeky, disrespectful, but intelligent and forward thinking all at the same time [...] we don't necessarily talk about it like that all the time [...] but I think the reason I think it [our advertising] works is because as I'm saying, it's tapping into an emerging Irishness that we're increasingly comfortable with" (MC 16.03.06).

In Cowman's description above, one is compelled to view Today FM as a sort of legitimate outgrowth of or mouthpiece for a new and progressive Ireland. His language is unequivocally positive and celebratory and he offers what Fagan (2003) might describe as a new 'postcolonial pro-globalisation' perspective on Irishness. He contrasts a time of insular and ascetic authoritarianism (characterised by RTE, which is itself "an authority figure") to the present time of enthusiasm, fragmentation, confidence, progressiveness and "forward thinking". One is compelled to believe that Today FM understands and endorses this transition. Indeed, it is borne of this transition. He constructs a strong sense of understanding, exchange and equality between station and listener. Today FM becomes, in Cowman's emotional rhetoric, the verbal conduit of this anti-authoritarian, emerging Ireland. Likewise, Falconer insists that Today FM reflects "modern" "Celtic Tiger" Ireland; it speaks to "successful people"; people who are "living the life" (SF 19.12.05). She constructs Today FM as the voice of modern Ireland and as a station that is in tune with evolving Irish society. It is not rigidly rooted in "old Ireland" but rather is reflective and expressive of the zeitgeist; "it's part of a new Ireland life". In these instances,

respondents convey an idea of two Irelands colliding, that 'is often experienced as a conflict between the claims of tradition and modernity' (Kearney 2006: xi). In the views just expressed, it would appear that the past has been utterly disavowed. Yet as I suggested in Chapter 6, there is something resistant in practitioners' accounts of 'change' and something hesitant in their apparent embrace of a 'new' globalised Ireland. Above, Cowman celebrates what some might consider a recessive notion of Irishness; a certain small-mindedness and insularity, a willingness to jovially mock and "take the piss". His language is inclusive; he speaks with communal authority – the fact that "we don't necessarily talk about it like that" reveals a certain taken-for-grantedness (see Hall 1980). Yet he implies perhaps an underlying discomfort with change; there is a semblance of embarrassment at the nation's newfound wealth and economic success (conveyed, for example, in the suggestion that the Irish tend to be "very self-deprecating as a nation"). Hence, while Cowman insists that there is "no green" to the station, one suspects that it is green nonetheless, albeit perhaps a diluted shade. In the case of Smithwick's, however, the brand's rootedness in 'traditional' Ireland is celebrated openly. As a consequence of this, practitioners at McConnell's are more circumspect about the benefits of economic globalisation and express concerns about the disappearance of 'traditional' values associated with growing individualism and the breakdown of community. In this respect, their views align closely with O'Connell's account of the emergence of a 'new Irish psyche' deriving from 'rampant consumerism and individualism' (2001: 181). In the following passage, McGinn invokes the idea of 'brand as person' (noted above) in an interesting comparison of Smithwick's and Guinness as siblings; describing the latter as a confident, worldly charmer while the former remains reliable and respected yet ultimately unappreciated. In the interests of relating the discourse of producers to wider discourses of Irish identity, this can be interpreted as a masked attack on the Celtic Tiger's lust for progress and aligned loosely with the work of Bogle (1997), Kirby et al (2002), Mac Éinrí (2004) and O'Hearn (2003).

> "Think of Guinness and Smithwick's as part of the same family. Like Guinness is the sexier older brother, who is, you know, tall, goes off to America, charms everyone, brings a sense of Irishness that he kind of creates as he goes along but it's just very confident, you know, comes back a lot but he's just a real charmer [...] and then he's got a younger brother at home, or it

> could be his older brother it doesn't matter, but who is quieter, doesn't leave the town, you know, is dependable, the town people who know him really know him but with strangers it takes a long time to get to know him, salt-of-the-earth kind of thing, definitely overlooked. But it's almost like as well that what has happened with this business is that the company gave the older brother the big house and my Smithwick's guy got left with the turnip patch in the back corner [laughs]" (MM 14.09.06).

Above, McGinn contrasts the ad hoc Irishness of Guinness with Smithwick's steadfast commitment to roots, implicitly constructing the latter as more expressive of genuine Irishness (and relating to her distinction between 'soul' and 'spirit' in Chapter 6). Interestingly, McGinn implies that Guinness (as person) has emigrated to America, not from necessity but rather as the conscious and confident choice of one who is captivated by the evanescent instantaneity and cultural cosmopolitanism of the 'New World'. Guinness has voluntarily abandoned his homeland while Smithwick's has remained true to his people and place. Yet contemporary Celtic Tiger Ireland (symbolised by Diageo – the 'multinational' corporation), it would seem, has rewarded the voluntary émigré, leaving its loyal and dependable son thankless and relegated. The above implies that while Irishness has to some extent been liberated from 'tradition', it has in turn been captured by the commodifying forces of global capitalism wherein commerce is inseparable from cultural identity.

> "So I always like to think it's very funny that really, basically Ireland has been colonised. I mean guys spent their blood in 1916 and 1922 saying we're gonna be a free nation – bullshit. It really boiled down to money in the end and the money speaks. It's taken fifty years, or a hundred years nearly, but actually Ireland is being commercially colonised" (DH 06.04.06).

Above, Helme rebukes and bemoans the 'corporate takeover of Ireland' (Allen 2007), which might be considered ironic given advertising's central position in the commercialisation of culture. In many respects, as I suggested above, respondents' views can be related to their various positions on consolidation. Fanning, speaking pragmatically and strategically, describes this as a "game of poker" in which agencies

"have to play the hand" given[142]. However in doing so, he challenges empowering views of consolidation, stating bluntly:

> "Multinational companies have this fiction that they are genuinely global organisations with no rationality bias [but] that's all bollox [...] I mean they are invariably dominated by the culture of wherever their head office is. Am and as somebody once said, Declan Kiberd actually from UCD in an essay recently said that globalisation is very often an excuse for the hegemony of a powerful entity – in this case obviously America. And it's the same in advertising. You know, the big global companies have cultures rooted in the countries in which they're founded and usually those countries by definition are big countries, like Britain, America, Germany or wherever and traditionally, people in big countries think people in little countries are a bit thick [said exasperatedly and matter-of-factly]. So that is a fact of life and there's no point in kind of trying to deny it. I mean people in big countries generally [...] I mean they try to be nice and they think the Irish are charming and they're great to go out for a pint with but essentially people in big countries think people in little countries are a bit thick. Am and the Americans are now adopting all the characteristics that the British had when they ruled the world of assuming that they are right all the time [...]" (JF 17.05.06).

Above, Fanning reveals a familiarity with contemporary social theory (i.e. referring to Declan Kiberd) and the vernacular of the social sciences (e.g. his use of the term 'hegemony'). Fanning invokes a kind of postcolonial reading of hegemonic transnational capitalism in which he challenges notions of autonomy and emancipation. He compares American economic dominance to British imperialism, reminiscent of notions of 'cultural imperialism' (Schiller 1973; Tomlinson 1991). That 'headquarters' might be seriously interested in branch office affairs is dismissed by Fanning, reducing the former's concern to a kind of frivolous curiosity or

[142] Fanning's pragmatism ("play the hand given") can be related to O'Toole's (1996: 22) suggestion that Ireland must 'learn how to surf the global waves without drowning [...]' Likewise, his description of the "hegemony" of powerful entities is reminiscent of Schiller's (1973) argument that regional broadcast, film and print industries are so thoroughly ensnared in the global media system that even when these increase their share in the home market "the outcome is the same. The content and style of the programming, *however adapted to local conditions*, bear the ideological imprint of the main centres of the capitalist world economy" (cited in Gibbons 1996: 78, author's emphasis).

afterthought – the possibility of a fleeting encounter with "charming" locals over a pint. For Fanning, American multinationals now exhibit imperialist dispositions and sensibilities, blinded by their own power. To "assume that they are right" does not spell joint-procedure but a one-way process. This is not an image of shared expertise, dialogue and reciprocity but is closer to dystopian claims of reconfigured colonisation (such as that offered by Helme above). Fanning's invective counters benign views of globalisation that place the centre and periphery on an equal footing. In terms of Celtic Tiger Ireland, Fanning develops this idea to highlight a process of homogenisation, emanating from the urban core of Dublin and sweeping the entire country. This suggests a kind of urban takeover of Irish identity (see Gibbons 1996) that is tied to global consumerism and appears especially alluring for young people. In outlining the emergence of Smithwick's 'not the usual' campaign, McGinn similarly explains that changes in Irish society, and in particular new modes of socialising among young people, demanded a rethinking of the Smithwick's old strategy: "Like the guys from the country pub would go into the town and socialise more with their mates and with girls [...] they're looking to towns and to trends and a lot more trends are coming from Dublin" (MM 14.09.06). Here, the centripetal grip on the imaginary exerted by the urban metropolis appears overbearing and impossible for these youths to resist. McGinn's perspective is reminiscent of Bogle's (1997: 85) insistence that 'the dominance of a worldwide pop culture through which millions of the world's youth tune into a universal sound' challenges and usurps traditional Irish values and culture. Likewise, respondents at McConnell's draw attention to growing individualism[143] in Ireland via a distinction between the impersonal environment of the urban 'bar' and the spontaneous, organic nature of the rural 'pub', characteristic of Ferdinand Tonnies' (1887) classical comparison of *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society or association).

Above, I suggested that respondents at McConnell's express more pronounced reservations about cultural globalisation, which is undoubtedly related on some level to the fact that this agency remains privately-owned and independent. Nevertheless,

[143] Ferguson (2001) insists that there is no shortage of empirical evidence available in Western societies to support the individualisation thesis. 'In Ireland, for instance – a society which has traditionally symbolised the triumph of tradition over modernity, of the external control of institutions such as the Catholic Church over the self (Powell 1998) – one-third of all births are now outside of marriage' (Ferguson 2001: 46).

all respondents, irrespective of their positions on globalisation and consolidation, tend to maintain strong notions of authenticity in respect of Irishness. Drawing attention to this, I suggested to Kennedy that Irish advertisers persistently use a somewhat limited pool of terms when describing Irishness:

> QA: It's funny Gerry, when my interviewees describe Irishness, certain terms keep popping up like witty and irreverent [...] what does irreverent, for example, mean to you and why is it so popular do you think?
>
> "I suppose it's the ol anti-authority thing. I really think there's always that, you know, lock the pub door. I think it's sort of our latent hatred of authority really [...]" (GK 11.07.06).

Kennedy's use of the term "latent" again highlights a proclivity to employ psychological terms and explanations. Here, he points to the existence of a lingering nationalist mistrust of (presumably foreign or British) authority in Ireland. The "lock the pub door" is not intended to suggest defence or security but is a furtive snub of authority. It is not about keeping others out but about keeping drinkers in after the official (legally sanctioned) closing time. Not only does this suggest a continued tendency to define Irishness in relation to its colonising 'other' (Kiberd 1996) but implies something of a "national inferiority complex" (Lee 1989) that can be related to Cowman's suggestion (above) that Ireland is "very self-deprecating as a nation"[144]. On the term "irreverent", Hooper similarly suggests that its common usage may have something to do with Ireland's "underdog status": "The whole, the Irish are the blacks of Europe and the Dubs are the blacks of Ireland and north-side Dubs are the blacks of Dublin[145] and all that [...] Irish people always support the underdog don't they?" (SH 30.07.06). Here, it is useful to draw on Roy Foster who has written: 'Sometimes it's hard to avoid the feeling that the new, modernised, liberated Irish consciousness feels a sneaking nostalgia for the verities of the old victim culture: which was also, in its way, a culture of superiority' (Foster 2001: xv/xvi). Here, as with numerous examples

[144] 'Cultural conquest leads to the cultural inauthenticity of those who are invaded; they begin to respond to the values, the standards and the goals of the invaders. [...] For cultural invasion to succeed, it is essential that those invaded become convinced of their intrinsic inferiority' (Freire 1970: 122).
[145] Quote from the movie *The Commitments* (1991).

above, Irishness is located firmly in the mind[146]. Foster refers to the "Irish consciousness", however, it is perhaps more common to encounter descriptions of Irishness as preconscious or unconscious. Hederman and Kearney's (1982: 93) description, for example, 'would seem to point beyond the level of conscious decision' postulating a 'primitive atavistic layer of Irishness'. Likewise, respondents tend to describe Irish cultural identity in terms of a 'psyche', a 'mindset' and a 'mentality', implying perhaps that some notion of authenticity may be rooted in the practical consciousness (Giddens 1984) of Irish people. Rather than pursue this suggestion further, the more important point to highlight is the correlation between the discourse of practitioners and wider discourses of Irish identity, which indicates the importance of local knowledge for these practitioners in addition to "decontextualised cultural capital" (Hannerz 1990: 246). In this sense, and once again drawing from Foster (2001: 30), we might suggest that for both advertising workers and social critics, 'the language of individual psychology' is 'unthinkingly scaled up to communal identification'. Not only does 'intuition' therefore constitute a routine aspect of advertising production (see Chapter 6) but equally, it is constructed as a conduit for 'authentic' Irishness.

Problematically, as the above sections reveal, Irish advertising practitioners tend to waver between constructions of Irishness as contingent and malleable and suggestions that it is fixed and timeless. Many appear cognisant of these seemingly contradictory positions and as a compromise, describe the current conjuncture as a time of both uncertainty and possibility. In a similar vein, Keohane and Kuhling (2004) describe contemporary Ireland as a 'collision culture', wherein multiple modes of being and alternative conceptions of self and community collide and intermingle, implying that narratives of Irishness are ever-shifting and 'continually unfinished' (O'Toole 1997: 175). Likewise, Kelly and Rolston (1995: 563) highlight that the Irish media have historically had to tread a fine line between seeking 'to represent the existing socio-cultural worlds' within Irish society and 'reproducing a particular version of cultural

[146] This is reminiscent of Kiberd's (1996: 6) suggestion, in relation to the lingering effects of colonisation in Ireland, that 'it was less easy to decolonise the mind than the territory'. Similarly, Kearney (2006: xi) describes the present state of affairs as a 'crisis of consciousness' while MacLachlan and O'Connell (2000: 2) insist that 'the historical hallmarks of the Irish psyche are changing'.

and national identity'[147]. In all case studies, respondents describe an attempted reconciliation of past and present, tradition and modernity, and local and global, which might be described as 'going forward while looking backward'. Here again, we might suggest that these binaries have 'become so intertwined and interdependent that a new hybrid, the glocal, has emerged, together with processes of glocalization' (Holton 2005: 126). Far from vanquishing the local, this rather implies 'the simultaneity of the universal and the particular' (Robertson 1992: 172). While not expressed in precisely these terms, this theme is implicit in the critical-historical perspectives of Declan Kiberd, Michael Cronin, Luke Gibbons, Fintan O'Toole and countless other commentators on contemporary Irish life. Despite examining a different set of advertising texts, my analysis in this respect parallels that of Helen Kelly-Holmes:

> [...] These advertising texts illustrate how 'Irishness' and Irish identity today are no longer constituted through the prescribed intertextual hierarchy of the past. Instead these are gleaned from a constantly changing plethora of global and national offerings, the strength of the mixture changing from situation and from individual to individual (2000: 38).

For some, the current conjuncture is one of considerable hope and optimism in which uncertainty, contestation and ambiguity offer great possibility. As MacÉinrí (1994) proclaims; 'for the first time [in Ireland's history] we have the opportunity to redefine ourselves, even to re-invent ourselves'. For O'Toole (1998: xv), 'the only useful Irish tradition is the Irish tradition of not having a fixed identity', while Foster likewise insists that 'the ambiguities of Irish history are, in many ways, the most distinctive thing about it' (2001: 35). Many of my respondents appear to joyously endorse such notions. Cowman, for example, enthusiastically claims:

> "I think the Irish are beginning to find themselves ironically as we're more at sea culturally and spiritually than we've ever been. You walk down any street

[147] Analogously, Boucher (2004: 63) describes the preservation of a 'core Irishness' by the Irish political elite: 'This core Irishness recombines 'traditional' features of Irish society and culture such as Gaelicism, Catholicism, agrarianism and rurality with 'modern' features based on urbanism, secularism, liberalism and consumerism'.

> [...] and you could be in any city in the world from the ethnic mix so it's very hard to know where we are but yes, I feel a sense of settling, of people actually finding themselves, that they're not part of a script that they've been handed as children, that they're encouraged to find themselves and what's emerging out of that is something that we're quite comfortable with as a nation which I think is quite a sense of; "ah sure fuck it, it'll be grand!" [Laughs and waves his hands in a 'what can you do' gesture] There's a point at which we just stop and have a laugh. That's a very Irish thing [...] Germans don't do that, as a nation. As a blanket statement you'd find that Germans will take out a calculator whereas we might have a beer and have a laugh to break our own inhibitions" (MC 16.03.06).

In the above passage, Cowman is confident and optimistic about Irish identity, although he concedes that this is perhaps surprising given the widespread transformations occurring in Irish society; a position that resonates with O'Hearn's (2003: 52) observation that 'it is somewhat ironic that we appear most confident of our culture at a time when we are seemingly the 'most globalised' country in the world'. Cowman's language is pluralistic, liberal and emancipatory. Confirming MacÉinrí's (2004: 98) assertion that 'it has become fashionable to endorse a new self-confident postmodern Celtic Tiger identity as somehow divorced from the past', Cowman celebrates freedom from the bonds of tradition and history. He emphatically proclaims that people are "not part of the script that they've been handed as children". Yet while his comments at the beginning of this section argue that "there's no green on" Today FM (inferring that the Irishness of the station is of an entirely new kind), here Cowman returns to stereotypical conceptions of Irishness which promulgate the view that as a people, the Irish are 'happy-go-lucky', 'carefree' and 'easygoing'[148]. He implies a disavowal of outmoded stereotypes but in constructing a new one evidently takes what he considers preferential elements from the former. Indeed, he

[148] These stereotypes, as Seamus Deane (1991) has highlighted, were invented by English colonial writers. Similarly Finlay, describing a geography textbook still in use at the Protestant secondary school in Belfast he attended in the 1970s, draws attention to a section on political divisions that attempts to explain partition: 'It makes some reference to the troubled history of British/Irish relations and then says: The six counties of Northern Ireland differ from the Irish Republic in having fewer Roman Catholics and more people not of pure Irish lineage, largely due to the "plantation" of Scottish settlers during the reign of James I. The people of Northern Ireland have many Scottish characteristics, and are more thrifty, far-seeing, and methodical than the more carefree, happy-go-lucky, quick-tempered people of the South' (Finlay forthcoming 2008: 334).

reveals a strong proclivity for stereotyping in his depiction of Germans as austere, calculative, unfeeling and wholly utilitarian (as well as the oft-noted fondness of the Irish for the 'liberating' qualities of alcohol). The suggestion that "we" (Irish people) would probably "have a beer and have a laugh to break our own inhibitions" resurrects a vision of Irish insularity, insecurity and small-mindedness that is at odds with his confident, progressive, worldly mindset. Kennedy, on the other hand, offers a much more discerning vision of 'new' Ireland in which narratives of loss and narratives of progress are more complexly intertwined:

> "There is kind of a lostness there because you think like, the people that kind of educated us, the people that looked after us when we were sick, who both turned out to be [...] you know, the whole Church. I mean I've just even seen last Friday now where the Christian Brothers are deciding not to educate people anymore. You know, they're moving out of the whole education business. So I think there is a genuine [...] there is a little something that's lost. And I also think there's a psychological worry as well because I mean this famous boom you'd wonder well, if it happened like that then surely it can go away as quickly. I just think we're kind of maybe living in the now with our heads in the sand and [...] we nearly need to go out, take a chill, take fresh air [...]" (GK 11.07.06).

Kennedy does not complete the sentence ending with "turned out to be [...]" but as he is referring to the Catholic Church, one might surmise that he is insinuating at the spate of sexual scandals that have marred the Church's standing in recent years[149]. Yet unlike an earlier passage (above) in which Cowman describes the breakdown of tradition as an inherently liberating experience, Kennedy's vision is one of anxiety and insularity; not an insularity inspired by the economic protectionism of past governments or the cultural conservatism of Catholic Ireland but a new variant; one borne of rampant consumerism, individualism and widespread insecurity. Against the confident, worldly, boisterous Irishness so commonly described, his picture is one of isolated individuals, self-possessed and with their heads buried "in the sand".

[149] Kennedy's position might be taken as support for Zachary's suggestion that 'rather than showing a positive commitment to secularism, the Irish display a growing disaffection from Catholicism, not because of any concern that the privileged position of the church makes a full commitment to diversity in Ireland impossible, but because a series of scandals have battered its reputation' (1999: 132).

Irrespective of whether their take is positive or negative, however, (and I would suggest that most respondents reveal aspects of both), all of these workers appear to accept that Ireland is in the midst of a profound transformation and as such, they insist that the agencies that are performing best in the current climate are "the ones that tap into the whole kind of conflict that's going on [...]" (GK 11.07.06). In his *The Importance of Being Branded* (2006), for example, John Fanning applies the 'cultural branding' model of Douglas Holt (2003) to Ireland. The 'foundational premise' of Holt's model is 'that iconic brands perform national identity myths that resolve cultural contradictions' (Holt 2003: 232). Applying Holt's analysis, Fanning (2006: 323-338) discusses six 'cultural contradictions' in twenty-first century Ireland: freedom vs. constraint, individualism vs. community, globalisation vs. dinnseanchas[150], affluence vs. affluenza, control vs. chaos and conformity vs. creativity. Nevertheless, Fanning (2006: 71) concedes that 'most established brand images are more or less hard-wired and re-wiring is complicated, time-consuming and not always successful'. I would venture to suggest that the same appears true of cultural identity, at least as it is articulated by respondents in this research.

As the analysis of their assumptions about Irishness in Chapter 6 attests, respondents' views on cultural transformation in Ireland are far from clear and despite the putative 'celebration' of change, multiculturalism emerges as a difficult issue. Falconer insists that Irish advertising does not yet adequately reflect Irish multiculturalism, suggesting that the 'recency' of the phenomenon is a factor (cf. Lentin 2001). She appears apprehensive and indecisive: "But really you just go; "where do you start?" [Laughs] [...] It is such a huge part of our lives now but it has happened so quickly that you're kind of left saying; "I don't have a clue how to deal with this!"" (SF 19.12.05). While all respondents consider cultural and ethnic diversity both positive and inevitable, they express uncertainty as to how Irish advertising should reflect this. Relating to the

[150] Seamus Heaney (1980: 131) describes the Irish nature writing genre called *dinnseanchas* as 'poems and tales which relate the original meanings of place names and constitute a form of mythological etymology'. For Fanning, globalisation vs. dinnseanchas 'is another "cultural contradiction" which is to be found in many European countries but is particularly acute in Ireland. There was always an intensely strong emotional loyalty to local counties, villages and even townlands in this country and Irish playwrights, Brian Friel in particular, have often used this attachment to dramatic effect [...] In twenty-first-century Ireland there is a feeling that life is moving too fast, that we may be jettisoning too quickly tried and trusted ways of life that have served us well in the past' (Fanning 2006: 329). Fanning concedes that 'of all the "cultural contradictions" in modern Ireland, this probably represents the most interesting to exploit' (ibid. 332).

discussion of credibility and authenticity in the previous chapter, Falconer argues that the extent to which a brand assumes a more "multicultural" image and identity (and the speed at which this occurs) will depend in large measure on both the product category and the profile of consumers. In the following passage, her language is careful, diplomatic and self-conscious. Her comment "how am I going to describe this without sounding really funny?" might well be interpreted "how am I going to describe this without sounding un-politically correct or racist?" Nevertheless, Falconer makes a compelling argument that an alteration of brand image and identity, if it is to be accepted by existing consumers, must proceed with the interests of those consumers in mind. While this can be interpreted as legitimising exclusivity, it does nevertheless make good business sense.

> "I mean for someone like Spin [another Irish radio station] it would make sense I suppose [...] how am I going to describe this without sounding really funny? [...] Our audience would be [...] if you look at the profile of who we're trying to target, I suppose the multicultural thing probably hasn't hit that yet. You know what I mean? So we probably aren't under as much pressure as some other brands would be or we won't feel the pressure so quickly [...] but we're licenced by the State so we need to be seen to be reflecting or at least to be considering how we're going to do it. At the moment it's a funny one; at the moment we're getting pushed very much to do with the Irish language and all that kind of stuff and very little about anything else, which I actually find quite surprising" (SF 19.12.05).

Bearing in mind Today FM's professional and affluent target audience, Falconer suggests that the station has felt less pressure to embrace multiculturalism than other stations (such as Spin FM). Indeed, Falconer implies that against an assumed imperative to appear more culturally or ethnically diverse, the station is in fact being "pushed" to make increased use of the Irish language (which relates to the suggestion that increased globalisation can often inadvertently inspire a resurgence of national culture). In the above passage, one gets a sense that diversity is something that must occur organically and 'naturally' for a brand or product. Likewise, Cowman is highly dismissive of transparent 'politically correct' corporate gestures of diversity or what he calls the "Starship Enterprise effect". Below, he describes feeling "comforted" by

his client's desire to be more reflective of ethnic diversity in Irish society, however, he insists that this must be suitable, relevant and above all "natural". He commendably interrogates the logic of assimilation ("doing things as we like them to do") but his solution might be deemed somewhat isolationalist or separatist[151]. He prefers to see a "natural development" (though he concedes the difficulties inherent in such a position), offering the suggestion of the mother-child bond as something universal and 'culturally transcendent' (Domzal and Keman 1993):

> "[It is good to reflect the ethnic mixture in Irish society but] you have to be careful because if you are seen to do a Starship Enterprise effect, which is what I call it, in ads where they have someone from everywhere [...] is that not patronising in itself? And the second point is [...] I feel a bit uncomfortable sometimes when I see a black man with a Dublin accent doing things as we like them to do [...] well you say, is that culturally embracing or are we saying there's somebody from another culture doing things our way and that's good? I'd be much more happy to see a natural development [...] and I don't even know how to do that because everything we do is created so it's a preoccupation of mine. I would be hugely encouraging of, you know, if you see an ad on the playground and there are two mothers sitting there having a chat, well you know, it reminds me of my own wife sitting in a playground and she could be talking to a mother from anywhere in the world about what the common bond with their children is like and the children are playing together [...] I'd prefer to see that sort of texture coming through in advertising than to see tokenism [...] so it's a tricky subject but I think most people in my business would have their heart in the right place in wanting to get that right and sometimes it can come out a bit wrong [...]" (MC 16.03.06).

[151] Similarly, while Kennedy's position in the following passage is determinedly pluralistic and ostensibly culturally sensitive, he implicitly maintains cultural boundaries: "But [recent immigrants are] just buying the basics because a lot of them probably, you know, probably psychologically they're not settling down because it's still the dream they'll go home so they're not going to be looking for anything [like] long-term mortgages" (GK 11.07.06). While many respondents offer a picture of Irish society beginning to "settle" and organically reinvent itself, here Kennedy avoids the possibility that recent immigrants will eventually integrate into a new culturally plural Ireland. Conversely, he naturalises and normalises cultural boundaries and views their presence as temporary and transient, suggesting that their collective aspiration is to eventually "go home".

Cowman maintains that there are limitations to cultural exchange and integration, a view perhaps that many would share. He suggests that while the bond of childbirth is universal (and offers what he considers a credible means of illustrating common humanity), everyday engagement between cultural and ethnic groups is much more limited. In arguing for more "naturalistic" representations, Cowman pushes us back to a sense of shared humanity and an almost biological perspective on solidarity. "At the end of the day if you're selling a soft drink you're selling a soft drink to people who are thirsty so [laughs], let's start with their thirst instead of their culture!" (MC 16.03.06). However, one might argue that such a position facilitates and engenders inertia and apathy. Indeed, it is arguable that this might be as counter-productive as pandering to stereotypes because it absolves the host culture from any kind of self-interrogation beyond attempting to ensure that 'culturally diverse' representations are not read as tokenism[152]. This is similar to what Lentin (2002) describes as a tendency to walk the 'interculturalism' walk and talk the 'diversity' talk and relates to Garsten and Lindh de Montoya's insistence that ''talking the talk' of social responsibility is to some extent a way of 'doing' social responsibility' (2004: 12). As such, one should perhaps consider the championing and celebration of diversity circumspectly, mindful that the rhetoric of cosmopolitanism does not easily translate into meaningful exchange nor does it necessarily produce substantive change at the level of civil society[153].

> More broadly speaking, it is an ideological contradiction that implicitly calls into question the capacity of Irish culture to generate its own social imaginaries, and of whether any symbolic capital accrues from cultural achievement to immigrants in Ireland (King 2007: 39).

Foster highlights that 'the need for self-renewing narrative [...] encourages a swerve into identity politics' (2001: xii). In the case of advertising, however, I suggest that practitioners have embraced identity in the realm of *life-politics* but not in respect of 'Politics with a capital P' (Bauman 2000: 65). The undifferentiated 'imagined

[152] From a different perspective, though ultimately to the same effect, McGinn suggests that demographics change willy-nilly and thus in time, advertising will follow suit.
[153] Some practitioners, however, appear highly cognisant of this fact. Helme, for example, insists that advertising agencies "are intensely conservative organisations. We preach liberality, we preach dynamism and we behave the opposite way" (DH 06.04.06).

community' reconfigured in the Celtic Tiger 'elides difference and often draws attention away from the material experiences of domination and subordination which are intrinsic to bourgeois society' (Loyal 2003: 83). For the most part, advertisers are extremely reluctant to evoke the complexities of the social order and reveal a kind of exasperation with Politics, which might be taken to support Coulter's (2003) suggestion that under the revivalist rhetoric of the Celtic Tiger, nationalism seems to express itself in lighter, less jingoistic ways. It perhaps also suggests that 'revivalism' must precede 'multiculturalism' if the latter is to flourish, reminding one of Thomas Davis's insistence that 'Ireland would never achieve its full industrial and entrepreneurial potential until it had first recovered its cultural self-confidence' (Kiberd 1996: 22). More recently, MacLachlan has compared the 'melting pot' and 'mosaic' approaches to cultural integration, ardently favouring the latter: 'Here I argue strongly for the mosaic approach because I believe that only such an approach can at once give people the dignity of their heritage and at the same time a sense of belonging to an Irish nation' (MacLachlan 2003: 33). From this perspective, respondents' views can be considered expressive of a new Celtic Tiger revivalism that paradoxically emerges from, not against, the embrace of global modernity (cf. Eagleton 1987; Fagan 2003). In many respects, advertising practitioners sit between the poles of revivalism and modernism and consequently, their position 'might be described, paradoxically, as 'revivalist modernism'" (Kearney 2006: xv).

In one sense, advertising practitioners can be considered entrepreneurs of the postmodern and agents of globalisation. In the words of Fagan (2003: 117), we might describe these workers as 'local cultural keys turning global locks'. Yet ironically, their countless dealings with globalising processes may render them much more inward looking and thus, while marketing may be the ultimate "postmodern" institution (Firat and Venkatesh 1993), practitioners' backgrounds, experiences and personal values often resist the course of change. In many respects, these competing tendencies arguably produce the same results: latent essentialisms seem to emerge when identity is called into question yet likewise, globalisation appears to foreground essentialist identities.

> Those [...] who claim authenticity by 'indigenisation' might not yet be aware of the fact that local knowledge, upon which they want to construct an

> alternative, has long since been part of global structures; or of the fact that they play a part in a global cultural game which itself calls for the 'essentialisation' of local truth' (Abaza and Stauth 1990: 211; in Robertson 1992: 171).

Perhaps most problematic, is that respondents appear to hold a notion of 'authentic' Irishness (that is increasingly malleable) *alongside* a notion of universal humanism. It is almost as if Ireland can become culturally plural while 'Irishness' remains separate and intact. This is, as I have argued above, indicative of a *new kind* of essentialism, in which elements of the past are enjoined with elements of the present in a new, confident, yet ultimately restrictive articulation of Irishness[154]. In other words, the positions of respondents do not align neatly with anachronistic essentialisms that speak of an age-old, primordial Irishness yet equally, they do not abandon all ties with 'traditional' Ireland and in postulating a new and different Irishness, an unquestioned 'we' remains. As such, I argue that this new confident and essentialist articulation of Irishness should not be viewed as counter-hegemonic but *is itself*, the new hegemony; it appears conterminous with what is 'natural', 'inevitable', 'taken for granted' about the social order' (Hall 1980: 137). The Irishness these workers evoke is 'less boundaried', 'less concerned with territory and sovereignty' and 'attempts to portray a new cultural confidence', however, it ultimately facilitates 'the naturalisation of who belongs and hence who doesn't' in modern Ireland (Moriarty 2006a: 27).

In an optimistic turn in an otherwise scathing commentary, Mathews (2005: 12) comments:

> Looking to the future, one might predict the emergence of a vigorous new local Irishness, which could follow the trajectory of the Irish Revival of the last century in lots of interesting ways. It is not difficult to imagine such a cultural movement being led by a new generation anaesthetised by Celtic

[154] The process of categorisation itself is not unhinged even though the contours of difference have shifted; the 'new' Irishness remains essentialist and ethnocentric but constitutes a 'new way to be different' (Clifford 1988). In this sense, respondents are not so much celebrating a looser, more 'open-ended and heterogeneous' (Gibbons 1996: 179) Irishness as consolidating cultural identity in new ways.

> Tiger consumerism, the cultural blandness of global Irishness, and the homogenising pressures of Anglo-American culture.

While Mathews' optimism is to be commended, I would suggest that the Irish Revival of the last century and the appeal to primordial authenticity underpinning it is of dubious merit in current circumstances. Furthermore, I argue that the emergence of a 'vigorous new local Irishness', if it is to be ethnically and culturally plural, will necessitate a change in the social/cultural/ethnic constitution of Irish advertising agencies and other institutions. As Preston (2005: 77) highlights: 'Despite all the privileged attention the cultural turn gives to consumption over production, it remains the case that one's relationships to and differential position in the production sphere still serve as the key conduit and determinant of performance in the carnival of consumption'.

7.4 Conclusion

In Chapter 6, I presented the first component of a 'second-order' interpretation of case studies in which I analysed the relationships between the advertising campaigns examined and the people who produced them. These texts can be considered seminal because they bear the imprimatur of the Irish advertising industry as exemplary and in light of the cultural importance of advertising, I argue that these texts are sociologically and historically significant. In Chapter 6, I attempted to gain an impression of the input of practitioners when developing commercials, their understandings of themselves in relation to this process and the assumptions about identity (particularly Irishness) that they make. In this respect, I suggested that respondents share many assumptions about identity, which appear to rest upon some notion of 'authenticity'. Authenticity is in turn closely tied to the operation of an intuitive 'sense' when producing. In this chapter, I moved to examine more closely how respondents draw upon and articulate a vocabulary of cultural identity and the form that this assumes. In doing so, I explored firstly, the advertising industry's increasingly symbiotic relationship with academia and secondly, the linkages between

the discourse of my respondents (and the identity statements contained in their award-winning texts) and wider discourses of Irish identity.

In this chapter, I examined how advertising's borrowings from academia help to prop up and support the claims of practitioners and have provided these workers with a greatly expanded vocabulary with which to address and describe audiences. Furthermore, I highlighted that advertising is always subject to a 'bias of temporality' (and therefore disposed towards change), but that it is also 'of the moment' so to speak. As such, I felt that it was important to attempt to relate the statements about Irishness contained in the texts examined and the discourse of practitioners to broader discourses of Irish identity in the current conjuncture. Not only does this help to locate and contextualise the normative assumptions and expressed values of producers as Nixon (2003) and others argue is important, but it also helps gain greater analytical purchase on how identity is used in this field. For producers, it is important that campaigns are considered legitimate and authentic and it is for this reason that knowledge of wider discourses is significant. This indicates that production is not merely introspective, as suggested in Chapter 6, but necessitates that producers are cognisant of broader social and cultural meanings, which are in turn used for description, justification and legitimation. It can be further suggested that these widely circulating ideas are eventually incorporated into the repertoires of belief of advertising workers (Cronin 2004a).

Chapters 6 and 7 indicate (among other things) that Irish advertising producers speak of identifying with target audiences, that they valorise authenticity and intuition, that they are more or less versed in the language of Irish cultural identity and that they speak of change but retain various essentialist positions. On this last point, I suggested that this dissertation demonstrates the persistence of the 'old idea' of culture (Finlay forthcoming 2008; Wright 1998). It suggests that respondents have not abandoned a notion of 'Irish exceptionality' (Kiberd 1996) nor relinquished essentialist ideas about Irishness but have merely reconfigured these in the context of late/post/reflexive modernity. Most importantly, Chapters 6 and 7 indicate how cultural identity constitutes a specialist form of knowledge countering occupational ambiguity and professional marginalising. If this and the previous chapter have been directed towards questions of what (producers and texts have in common) and how (producers,

texts and wider discourses of identity relate), the final chapter of this thesis, in shifting to a 'third-order' analysis (Neuman 2003), explores *why* the idiom of cultural identity has become increasingly salient in the production of commercial Irish advertising. In this regard, I advance three interlinked explanations: Firstly, I suggest that with extensive structural change in this industry (in particular the global consolidation of advertising agencies), regional expertise becomes chiefly equated with cultural 'know-how', pushing the idiom of cultural identity forefront as a currency of legitimation and expert knowledge. Secondly, I argue that the need for advertising agencies to cultivate emotional proximity with consumers has motivated greater attention to identity, which is viewed as a more effective means of realising instrumental goals in softer terms. Thirdly, I advance a culturalist explanation, which suggests that cultural identity displays an historical lineage with national 'character' and can therefore be considered evidence of a resurgence of national culture in the Irish context.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This dissertation has examined how the idiom of cultural identity functions as a 'commercial currency' (Cronin 2004a, b), informing and legitimising the knowledge claims of Irish advertising practitioners. I have examined this via an investigation of the relationships between a sample of seminal Irish advertising campaigns and the people who produced them. In this final chapter, I move to a generalised 'third-order' interpretation (Neuman 2003: 149), which seeks to explain *why* the idiom of cultural identity has become central to how Irish advertising practitioners describe, explain and interpret their work and more importantly, 'sell' themselves to clients. Clearly, as the Introduction and other chapters indicate, there are vast literatures documenting the rise of identity as the dominant idiom of social science (Appiah and Gates Jr. 1995; Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Calhoun 1994; Taylor 1989) and changes in working life attributed to late modernity, globalisation, post-industrialism, postmodernity, post-Fordism, the information society and the learning society (Edwards 1998: 377)[155], which must be considered part of the macro context of this study. Nevertheless, in this dissertation I theorise inductively, prioritising at all times the empirical data at hand. Below, I advance three interlinked explanations (structural, instrumental and cultural) for the salience of cultural identity in the case studies presented. I begin, however, by briefly restating my particular research interests and questions, re-describing my sampling frame and methodological approach and recapitulating the analytical positions (or 'first' and 'second-order' interpretations) developed in Chapters 3-7.

[155] Other accounts describe the emergence of 'disorganised capitalism' (Lash and Urry 1987), the displacement of skill by knowledge (Aronowitz and DiFazio 1994) and the rise of 'an ethos of enterprise' (du Gay 1996) among other characterisations. For many, two processes have been central to economic transformations in recent times; the culturalisation of economy and the commodification of culture (Klaus 2004).

8.2 Advertising, Irishness and the Celtic Tiger

As a past practitioner in Irish advertising and as a researcher familiar with the vast literature on this subject (both academic and practitioner-orientated), I was interested in how the cultural knowledge of producers is drawn upon and incorporated in their work. While advertising practitioners have been cast as important 'captains of consciousness' (Ewen 1976), relatively little attention has been given to their identities and work practices (Cronin 2004b: 340). This research attempted to redress this imbalance and penetrate the informal cultures of Irish advertising agencies, motivated by the belief that 'opening up the informal cultures and subjective identities of advertising practitioners is an indispensable part of an adequate account of the commercial practices performed by advertising agencies' (Nixon 2003: 5). In addition, I wished to relate my familiarity with sociological models of identity and a knowledge of critical studies of Ireland and Irishness in the current conjuncture to a small but growing literature focusing on production in advertising and marketing (Alvesson 1994; Cronin 2004a; Kelly et al 2005; Lien 1997; McFall 2002; Miller 1997; Moeran 1996a; Nixon 2003; Schudson 1993; Slater 1989; Tunstall 1964). Consumerist studies frequently suggest that the symbolic power of advertising as a reservoir of self and communal identity has grown significantly in recent times (e.g. Elliott 1999; Elliott and Ritson 1997; Leiss et al 1990). My interest, however, was to explore whether issues of identity are as important in the production of advertising as they putatively are in its consumption. In doing so, I textually analysed iconic Irish advertisements, not as an end in itself, but rather with the purpose of generating themes and questions that could be used to direct interviews towards the content of texts and the back-stage processes (Goffman 1959) of campaign production. 'I am concerned rather more with advertis*ing*, therefore, than with advertise*ments* since it is the former that to a large extent explains the latter' (Moeran 1996a: 27, author's emphasis). Nevertheless, as I have argued above, one can say very little about advertising as cultural production, if one does not at *some* point and in *some* measure examine actual advertisements. In this dissertation, it is via the seminal texts investigated that respondents' assumptions about identity (and Irishness in particular) are articulated. Thus, while consumption per se is not my concern, it is undoubtedly the case that production and consumption are always intertwined, if only in the 'ways

cultural producers imagine or know markets – audiences – and how such knowledge figures in their decisions about what events, experiences, and products to make' (Ohman 1996: vii).

With the above in mind, I developed a research strategy that would examine the production of a specific sample of exemplary Irish advertising. A significant obstacle that I faced, however, was in *defining* Irish advertisements. Given the structure of the industry in Ireland (and elsewhere) and particularly, worldwide consolidation in advertising and media and the exponential growth in global branding, this proved a complicated task. As outlined in Chapter 2, I decided upon an innovative sampling approach that would defer this question to the industry *itself*. Sampling from the Irish creative advertising awards (known as 'the Sharks') resolved this dilemma for me because these awards include a specific section reserved for Irish advertising. As such, the texts examined in this dissertation can be considered seminal because they bear the imprimatur of the Irish advertising industry as exemplary. From a ten-year sample of award-winning campaigns, I constructed three case studies from which my analysis primarily derives. Among the various categories of the 'Irish Advertising' section of the Sharks, I drew my sample from the 'Television Series' category. The advantage of this category in respect of my particular research interests is that series commercials are not free floating, independent or once-off communiqués but protracted brand narratives that are designed to develop the brand biography and foster an extended dialogue with consumers. As a consequence of this, I argue that series commercials provide particularly useful texts in which to explore identity statements of various kinds[156]. In addition to identifying the sample category, however, it was also necessary to delimit a sample timeframe. In this respect, I was adamant that my research be timely and that my analysis contribute to contemporary debates about Irish identity. The period referred to as the 'Celtic Tiger' signifies a period of profound economic and social transformation in Ireland that has coincided with the most sustained growth period in Irish advertising. During this time, the representation of Ireland and Irishness has become a complex affair, revealing both consistency and change. It is for these reasons that I felt the period of the Celtic Tiger

[156] Dickason suggests that series commercials 'have the added advantages of adaptability, topicality and the possibility of some sort of character and plot development' and that 'their paradigmatic variations are all examples of the introspective tendency of advertising culture' (Dickason 2000: 164, 175).

(between c.1995 and 2005) would prove an interesting one in which to explore the abovementioned themes and questions. In essence, therefore, I chose a sample of seminal, award-winning advertisements that also relate to a crucial juncture in Irish society.

8.3 Grounded Research and First-order Interpretation of Case Studies

The research approach developed in this dissertation is qualitative and directed towards meaning in context (Mishler 1979). In seeking to undertake a producer-focused exploration of Irish advertising, I felt it important that my analysis derive primarily from interview material. In anthropological terms, I was committed to undertaking *emic* research, or that which attempts to elucidate and articulate meaning from an insider's perspective. However, as a past practitioner in this field, I also felt it important to develop a research approach that was flexible and open enough to permit the reflexive incorporation of my own tacit knowledge of this industry (as well as capitalise on 'opportunistic' research). My commitment to inductive, respondent-led research drew me towards grounded theory (Glasser and Strauss 1967), yet the approach adopted here deviates somewhat from foundational principles and follows the Straussian line towards constructivist assumptions/epistemologies (Strauss 1987; Charmaz 1995; Locke 2001; Clarke 2005). I was especially influenced by the 'constructivist' grounded theory approach of Kathy Charmaz and Adele Clarke's 'situational analysis', which stresses the need to incorporate 'salient discourses within the situation of inquiry' (Clarke 2005: xxx). These approaches seemed to me to offer a viable means of preserving the integrity of my data while also broadening my analytical aperture to incorporate wider discourses of identity. As suggested in Chapter 2, while the approach adopted here takes much from traditional grounded theory, I am rather more committed to grounded theor*izing* (Clarke 2005, author's emphasis) and hence, my approach is perhaps better termed 'grounded research' (Whiteley 2002).

Of the various data-collection methods employed in this research, in-depth, topic-orientated interviewing was foremost and it is from interview data that the analysis

presented primarily derives. In seeking to theorise the general from the specific, I constructed three case studies from the ten-year sample, incorporating interview data and support (documentary/archival) materials as well as undertaking thematically-orientating textual analyses of campaigns (a process that I have referred to as 'unearthing the creative brief'). In the three case studies presented (Heineken, Today FM and Smithwick's), I detailed the background, production and creative brief elements of four award-winning advertising campaigns, establishing a platform from which to move to a 'second-order' (Neuman 2003) interpretation in Chapters 6 and 7.

The commercials around which case studies are built were chosen for various reasons, including access to respondents and secondary materials, the richness of empirical data and the explicitness of identity statements in these texts. In regard to the latter, it bears highlighting that I consciously avoided Guinness due to its symbolic hegemony and because it has already received considerable attention from researchers[157]. However, in choosing case study campaigns, I also wished to include a broad selection of agency-brand configurations as this permitted comparisons of structural-cultural variations. Hence, two agencies examined are branch offices of global networks while the third is a privately-owned Irish advertising agency. Finally, as several campaigns in my sample were created by the same advertising agencies (and indeed, often by the same creatives), bearing in mind access and time limitations as well as my desire to not overly complicate the question guide, I consciously prioritised one campaign above another.

The case studies presented in this dissertation are abundant in identitarian themes and insightful because they permit comparisons of different institutional arrangements. Furthermore, the advertising campaigns examined are both aesthetically interesting and culturally complex, providing valuable sites in which to explore Ireland's 'collision culture' (Keohane and Kuhling 2004). In all case studies, cultural identity emerges as a central dimension of production, although this is somewhat bifurcated in the case of Heineken. Interestingly, the target audience for all brands reveals a male bias and an age profile of (broadly) twenty-five to thirty-five as well as significant similarities in terms of mindset, attitude and lifestyle. In respect of Irishness, I posit

[157] Initially, I was reluctant to omit Guinness from my sample, however, the realisation that researching Smithwick's would invariably bring Guinness into my analysis swayed my decision.

the emergence of a culturally and generationally specific (male) Irishness marked by a more confident articulation. Indeed, it can be suggested that with the possible exception of the Telecom Eireann (1995) and Deaf Awareness (1998) campaigns, the entire ten-year sample is heavily masculinist, which may be related to the male bias on the Shark's judging panel or may simply be reflective of a wider trend in Celtic Tiger Ireland. Nixon's (2003) description of the sanctioning of certain forms of masculinity among creatives in advertising can be linked, I suggest, to the traditional all-male characterisation of entrepreneurialism (Lewis 2006). As such, it can be argued that the creative entrepreneurialism much publicised in Ireland's economic 'success' stories confirms the gender specific, rather than gender neutral, characterisation of Irish economic progress. We remain part of the 'Celtic Tiger' and not, as it were, the 'Celtic Tigress' (O'Gorman and Terjesen 2006).

8.4 Second-order Interpretation of Case Studies

In chapters 6 and 7, I constructed a 'second-order' interpretation of data which analysed firstly, the relationships between case study campaigns and their producers and secondly, the links between the discourse of producers (and identity statements in seminal texts) and wider discourses of Irish identity.

In Chapter 6, I explored respondents' roles in producing campaigns, paying particular attention to their assumptions about identity and especially Irishness. I suggested that 'authenticity' and 'intuition'[158] emerge as important notions and that these are summoned primarily to evoke legitimacy, both in terms of the credibility of creative propositions and posited brand/target affiliations and in relation to the 'expert knowledge' of producers. In respect of the latter, I highlighted the centrality of cultural identity in the discourse of respondents. In Chapter 7, I explored the interface between academia and the commercial realm (Cronin 2004b) suggesting that the

[158] It should be noted that while 'intuition' is suggestive of individual autonomy, it hardly signifies an escape from discourse and socially constructed subjectivity: 'Intuition is the form of reason that is not yet fully articulate, that may never be such. It requires proximity because it cannot be annexed; however, that does not make intuition simply "internal" to a subject rather than intersubjective or communicative. Philosophical descriptions of it as internal, and personal experience of it as such, betray not a truth about intuition but the continuing subject-centred and logocentric interpretation of mental processes in modernity' (Phelan 1993: 609).

vernacular of identity and an increasingly shared methodological orientation between social scientists and advertising producers partly explains the supplanting of traditional media categories by identity. While demographics and class markers have clearly not been abandoned by the advertising profession, I argue that the idiom of identity is increasingly appealing to these workers both in terms of how they understand and describe their work and in the manner by which they articulate the affinities between brands and target audiences. In Chapter 7, I also examined descriptions of Irishness, suggesting that respondents implicitly and explicitly draw from wider discourses of Irish identity and tend to favour celebratory and revivalist positions. In particular, I argued that despite constructivist leanings and postmodern sensibilities, essentialist notions of Irishness persist in practitioner accounts, which can be related to their tendency to invoke an 'old' anthropological idea of culture (Wright 1998) whereby culture as a 'way of life' is considered "preset" and resistant to change. Thus, within moments of celebrating the ostensibly liberal and emancipatory climate of contemporary Ireland and valorising personal autonomy, Cowman, for example, claims that "most people just end up repeating what their parents did at the end of the day" (MC 16.03.06). Such inconsistencies and contradictions are rife in the accounts examined and suggest that one consider practitioners' views circumspectly. This is clearly not intended to imply mendacity or falsehood on the part of respondents but merely highlights that positing 'change' does not signal its actuality. While advertising is popularly 'cast in a transformative historical role' (McFall 2004: 4), paradoxically, the picture that emerges between the lines in practitioner's 'celebration' of change is more often one of timelessness and continuity, where resistant cultural frameworks are made manifest and group boundaries are naturalised and normalised[159]. Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 6) highlight that 'we often find an uneasy amalgam of constructivist language and essentialist argumentation' which relates to Finlay's (2004: 21) suggestion that although 'the preferred view is that identities are socially constructed, fluid and multiple', essentialist notions of Irish identity persist. In many respects, as I argued in

[159] Similarly, the identifications of Nixon's (2003: 164) creative respondents suggested 'that in a sector that was often taken as exemplary of the 'new economy' there persisted some rather old productivist ideas of work and gender'. While Nixon's particular interest is in gender, the disparity alluded to has resonance with putative reconfigurations of Irishness in Celtic Tiger Ireland, reminding us 'to be attentive to how even the most emancipatory developments can sometimes collude with or be commandeered by the regressive' (Cleary 2006: 7).

Chapter 7, the collective position of my respondents can be interpreted as a *new kind* of essentialism, in which elements of the past are merged with elements of the present in a newly confident, although equally exclusive, articulation of Irishness.

8.5 Third-order Interpretation: Explaining the Salience of Cultural Identity

Although one might wish to dedicate more time to tracing the various inconsistencies in the accounts of respondents, I consider this unnecessary. While it is insightful, I believe, to point out the self-contradictory oscillation between a view of identity as essentialist and a view of identity as fluid, Brubaker and Cooper (2000) indicate that this slippage seems to be intrinsic to the idiom of identity. As such, I will move to investigating *why* the idiom of identity is increasingly important to Irish advertising practitioners. In doing so, I advance three interlinked explanations.

1. **A structural explanation of a cultural phenomenon**

While the recourse to identity by advertising practitioners is expressed culturally, one can offer a structural explanation for this cultural phenomenon. This argues that changes in the worldwide advertising industry and concomitant changes in Irish advertising have motivated Irish practitioners to prioritise (and exoticise) cultural identity in their expert offerings to both networked partners and (perhaps more importantly) their increasingly global clients. It should also be highlighted that there are an increasing number of independent specialists and consultants that claim the ability to provide the same services as advertising agencies and thus, the latter are pushed to more defensively promote their skills in a crowded, competitive marketplace (Cronin 2004a: 57).

Worldwide agency consolidation has on one hand permitted Irish advertising agencies to participate in the globalisation of brands thereby offering economic gains and access to wider knowledge networks. On the other hand, this has heavily impacted traditional agency services (and creativity in particular). Gerry Kennedy, for example,

employs the metaphor of a steamroller when describing global agency mergers. His suggestion is that Irish agencies are subsumed in a sort of flattening assimilation ("rolled into") rather than afforded productive autonomy. Likewise, Hooper insists that consolidation is "emasculating to a certain extent. There are some agencies that are basically local [...] administrators [...] you know, you're just taking international copy and rolling it out, like translating it and that's it" (SH 30.07.06). For others, and especially practitioners at Cawley Nea/TBWA, global networks are premised upon maximising local autonomy. Thus, respondents at Cawley Nea insist that they have a "voice in the network". Irrespective of their views on consolidation, however, all respondents reveal a pragmatic acceptance of the power asymmetries in this industry, arguing that agencies cannot develop proprietary attitudes towards brands or suffer from "not invented here syndrome", as Bogan expressed it. These workers understand the economic advantages of global advertising as well as the realities of cultural globalisation and therefore appreciate the importance of transcultural marketing messages (Faura 1999) and culturally transcendent (Domzal and Keman 1993) advertising campaigns. Nevertheless, both agencies and advertisers alike are mindful of 'the spread of ideologies of local identity that demand products with local specificity, especially from global culture industries' (Averill 1996: 203) and therefore realise the commercial advantages of maintaining strong notions of cultural identity. Thus, in one scenario, Irish advertising practitioners appear ardent neo-liberals and in the next, as cultural nationalists. These positions, however, should not be considered contradictory but rather represent strategic alternatives:[160]

> The coexistence of homogenising and heterogenising trends does not constitute a paradox or contradiction; rather, the two processes are inextricably linked: globalisation generates its own local diversity, particularity, difference (Averill 1996: 215).

The varying positions of respondents in this dissertation are therefore arguably less a consequence of political orientation or entrenched belief systems and more a case of

[160] It is also the case, as I suggested in Chapter 7, that while international advertising is championed for its creativity, the vast majority of my respondents consider standards of creativity in Irish advertising generally poor by comparison. Thus, by their own admission, creativity is generally less a competitive advantage than cultural know-how. The ambivalent relationship between creativity and culture is perhaps most apparent in the judging of award shows, as discussed in Chapter 2.

"playing the hand given" (JF 17.05.06) and understanding the dynamics of globalisation and localisation. Indeed, in many respects, the case studies presented highlight 'the simultaneity of the universal and the particular' (Robertson 1992: 172). This corresponds with what Hall theorises as the 'subaltern proliferation of difference', signalling the emergence of 'a *new kind of localism* – a localism which is not self-sufficiently particular but arises, so to speak, *within* the global' (Hall 2001: 10, 11, author's emphasis).

In a world in which 'culture' and 'identity' have become central not only to conceptions of the self but increasingly also to commercial practices, spurned by structural changes in the culture/knowledge industries, cultural identity is increasingly employed by Irish advertising agencies as a currency of knowledge and legitimation. Industry structural change[161] imposes an imperative to reconfigure expert knowledge, which is increasingly expressed as an intuitive (even visceral) understanding of cultural identity and an ability to recognise 'authentic' expressions of this.

> This kind of broadly interpretive understanding resides in agencies as knowledge not as codified facts but, rather, as folklore or cultural knowledge. This knowledge may have an intuitive, semi-articulated, discursive character, and it may but often does not derive from relatively formalised approaches to data gathering (Hackley 2002: 213).

[161] It is important to highlight that brands (and therefore agencies) are constrained by endogenous as well as exogenous factors. In the case study on Smithwick's, for example, McGinn describes how Diageo's motivational mapping grid was used to carve a distinctive set of identifications for the brand: "We had started looking at the motivation states and tried to carve out a space even though they [Smithwick's and Guinness] were kind of right on top of each other [...] [Guinness is] the mass brand in Ireland, you know, the ten thousand pound gorilla [...] so we just weren't going to compete" (MM 14.09.06). McGinn's account provides an interesting insight into power asymmetries within corporate structures such as Diageo, in which brands do not merely compete outside but also within. This pushes us to consider more structural dimensions in our analysis. While the qualities of Smithwick's are described as intrinsic and pre-existing in respondents' accounts, a structural interpretation might consider postulated differences in brand identities merely the product of "portfolio management" (SH 30.07.06). Here, it seems that putatively 'inherent' differences are more accurately a case of playing "the hand" dealt as Fanning would put it, or creating within the 'available' symbolic space; that is, the space not occupied by the "ten thousand pound gorilla". Given the rift within Diageo (described in this case study) and the symbolic constraints imposed upon Smithwick's, the 'not the usual' campaign was arguably more a structural consequence than something borne of semiotic 'insights' or brand 'truths'. 'For whenever a consumer insight is 'found', a brand truth 'discovered', or a market position 'claimed', it must eventually be abandoned and replaced with another brilliant insight, brand truth and market position [...]' (Malefyt 2003: 158). I argue that Smithwick's promotion and valorisation of a rural sensibility and revivalist Irishness is therefore as much a structural consequence of portfolio management as it is the product of particular dispositions or belief systems.

Clearly, Irish advertising practitioners are also informed by industry mythologies and ideologies, such as 'anti-bureaucracy' (Alvesson 1994), that construct occupational cultures and identities in various ways. Yet despite the oft-noted tension between management/science and creativity, it might be suggested that professional mythologies have calcified in advertising. Irrespective of geographical location and occupational role, it is generally assumed that advertising practitioners will a. be creative to some extent and at the very least appreciative of the importance of creativity, b. have a broad interest in current affairs and developments in media and communication, c. be in tune with current trends in fashion, music etc. and d. be reasonably sociable people. It is largely as a consequence of this that respondents' descriptions of occupational identities and organisational cultures in advertising tend to be somewhat interchangeable. (Indeed, a quick comparison of corporate philosophies listed on the websites of Irish agencies and those in other markets generally supports this proposition). However, while advertising agencies everywhere may be broadly concerned with the same kinds of communicational issues and influenced by a global literature of 'best practice' emanating from New York, London and other hubs of marketing practice, cultural understanding remains largely the preserve of domestic advertising agencies and in an era of unstoppable globalisation and multiculturalism, this becomes both more important and more elusive. It is perhaps as a consequence of this that cultural 'knowing' has become a vital resource for Irish advertising practitioners. This mystifies the expertise of these workers and renders their knowledge esoteric and highly specialist. The impossibility of quantifying 'experience, judgement, knack, wisdom, intuition' (Perrow 1970: 76) becomes an important competitive advantage[162]. Hence, in this sense, it can be suggested that the turn to cultural identity is a function of systemic changes in the advertising industry itself. While the growth of international media may be "driven more by market opportunity than by national identity" (Stephen Ross, former head of Time Warner – cited in Robins 1997: 34), I suggest that cultural identity becomes in turn, the primary source of legitimacy and the principal expert currency of regional advertising producers. As such, it can be argued that advertising provides a

[162] Interestingly, the valorising of tacit knowledge, which is 'highly personal and hard to formalise' and which is associated with 'subjective insights, intuitions, and hunches' brings advertising agencies rather close to Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995: 8) characterisation of Japanese firms. 'The Japanese mind is believed to defy 'rational analysis' (Singer 1973: 56) in that people 'think' with their hearts' (Moeran 1996a: 83).

paradigmatic illustration of 'the paradox of our time: the growth of a global economy and transnational movements of populations produce or perpetuate distinctive cultural practices and differentiated identities'[163]. It is indeed paradoxical that the less the Irish advertising industry is Irish owned the more cultural identity has gained in importance. More broadly, it suggests that notions of Ireland as global and notions of Ireland as having an essentialised culture are not contradictory but convergent.

As Alvesson (1994: 535) highlights, 'talk comprises a major part of organisational life' and in advertising, talk is especially important because the advertising 'shop' 'has no goods on its shelves except experience, ideas and ability' (Hower 1949: 205). While practitioners claim to 'know' a great deal, production in advertising 'operates on a more contingent basis' (Cronin 2004a: 57) and the industry 'is characterised by work that is hard to specify and a product that is hard to evaluate' (Alvesson 1994: 542). Consequently, the rhetoric of professionalism must be viewed strategically, as a device used to combat client cynicism and public condescension. A structural mode of analysis highlights the precarious position of Irish advertising agencies within the matrices of a global industry marked by asymmetrical power relations. With increasing consolidation, a powerful position on cultural identity is clearly advantageous to Irish agencies. Boucher's (2004) account of the Irish government's strategic manipulation of symbolic sources of Irish identity to reinterpret Ireland's British, European and global integrations and thus push (successfully) for a 'yes' vote in the second Nice Treaty referendum is comparable to the discursive strategies of Irish advertising practitioners. The prioritising of cultural identity reflects the industry's relational (and peripheral) position within an increasingly consolidated global industry. Paraphrasing Boucher (2004: 81), it can be suggested that the articulation of a powerful notion of cultural identity involves a reshaping of the discourse of autonomy to take account of the changing power relationships in global advertising. Knowing when and how (and when 'not') to do Irishness therefore becomes especially important to these workers.

[163] Statement of "aims and scope" of *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* (1994), cited in Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 38).

2. Emotional instrumentality

Parallel to the above, one can advance an explanation for the centrality of cultural identity in the discourse of Irish advertising practitioners that considers it a more effective means of realising instrumental goals. Naturally, this is closely allied with the first explanation but considers the salience of cultural identity less a consequence of exogenous pressures and more a budding realisation by practitioners of the communicative potency of identity. Given the putative importance of culture and identity in an increasingly reflexive though uncertain world, advertising agencies have recognised the need for strong identitarian coding in their work. 'If economic models take little heed of the emotional side of economic life, the advertising agency, which is simultaneously involved in day-to-day economic transactions, must cope with the multifaceted human' (Garsten and Lindh de Montoya 2004: 8). While social categorisation has always been central to advertising production, the idiom of identity offers a means of continued categorisation (including the use of traditional media categories and quantitative methods) in softer terms. As other researchers have illustrated (e.g. Hackley 2003, 2005) and as I highlighted in Chapter 7, advertising producers share not only a similar methodological orientation but also an increasingly shared vernacular with social scientists, evidence of 'the double hermeneutic' described by Giddens (1976). While traditional media categories (ABC1 etc.) based on class are still used, in my research it appears that these have largely been supplanted by the idiom of identity[164]. Sara Falconer, for example, highlights that class profiles are increasingly ambiguous because occupational hierarchies are dismantling and income categories are changing:

> "Well our target audience in the broadest sense is twenty to forty-four, you could say ABC1 but really, I think it's B, C1, C2 or something like that because it's kind of changing [...] you know, talking to builders and plumbers used to be the lower end of the market, now they're the higher end [...]" (SF 19.12.05).

[164] It might be argued that this signifies a retreat from class and other Enlightenment notions of progress (Finkielkraut 1988; Finlay 2001; Zaretsky 1976), however, to substantiate such a hypothesis would necessitate more sustained and focused analysis that is beyond the scope of the present work.

Just as the concept of identity has offered academics a means of bringing emotion into social theory[165] (e.g. Goodwin et al 2000; Melucci 1988, 1995), advertising producers are increasingly called upon to cultivate emotional proximity to consumers and have therefore been attracted to identity politics (albeit with a small 'p' – see Bauman 2000). For considerable time, emotions were as neglected in advertising research as they were in the social sciences, which only began to give this facet of human life serious and systematic attention in the 1980s. Thoits (1989) highlights that increasing attention to emotions is not merely due to the recognition that humans are not motivated solely by rational-economic concerns but is also a consequence of epistemological challenges to traditional scientific methods dominated by an ethos of objectivity and researcher impartiality. Hackley (2005: 27) has described how 'the research fields of mass communications, artificial intelligence and cognitive psychology, social psychology, sociology and anthropology have all influenced advertising research in differing ways and degrees'. While the models of cognitive psychology, such as Strong's (1925) AIDA sequence (Awareness, Interest, Desire, Action) were especially influential in the early to mid twentieth century, subsequent models have incorporated stronger elements of consumer emotionality into the persuasion process (Elliott 1998; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Hackley 2005: 28). These shifts can be considered alongside accounts detailing the rise of 'third wave' advertising agencies in the UK (Mort 1996; Nixon 1996, 1997, 2003) for which emotional appeals (along with a general prioritising of creativity) became especially important. McFall (2004) likewise describes the popular idea of the 'ESP' (Emotional Selling Point)[166], which signified a shift away from cognitive and product-centric models of advertising effects. While it is not at all clear that recent advertising is more emotionally appealing, my respondents appear to believe that emotion is increasingly important in producing resonant commercial communication.

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[165] While identity has offered academics a means of bringing emotion into social theory, it is noteworthy that many researchers underplay or overlook this dimension. Carolyn Vogler (2000), in line with Craib (1998), argues that the majority of sociological models of identity (such as Jenkins' (1996) interactionist approach and post structuralism's cultural or discursive approach) remain chiefly cognitive and afford inadequate attention to emotion. In this respect, it might be suggested that advertising producers have been precocious in recognising the emotional qualities of identity.

[166] 'The notion of the ESP stands in opposition to the 'traditional' Unique Selling Proposition (USP) approach described in Reeve's (1961) *Reality in Advertising* where adverts seek to stress a 'unique' feature of each product' (McFall 2004: 88).

Above, I suggested that structural changes in international advertising have prompted a reconfiguration of expert knowledge among Irish advertising practitioners, re-enlivening cultural identity. This top-down explanation, however, stands parallel to a bottom-up explanation which posits that in an affectively and qualitatively enhanced world in which 'the self, like the broader institutional contexts in which it exists, has to be reflexively made' (Giddens 1991: 3), identity has gravitated towards the centre of both commercial and consumption practices[167]. In this scenario, the turn to identity by advertising practitioners can be considered a response to putative wider value shifts in consumer society away from efficiency, authority and rationality towards autonomy, diversity and self-expression (Inglehart 1997: 12). In light of this, practitioners not only appear to generally favour interpretative research but their analytical language is equally affectively enhanced; practitioners are called upon to 'humanise' business strategy and in turn, their language shifts towards the phatic.

> Statistical descriptions of the target market may be useful for understanding the market trends, or for defining the role of advertising, and such descriptions are certainly essential to the making of media decisions. But when it comes to creating the advertisement itself, there is a need to get behind the statistics to see the consumer as a person in a fuller human form. There is a need to develop a mental image of an individual, *target person*, instead of a *target group*' (Abdullah and Donnelly 1995: 154, authors' emphasis).

My respondents suggest that audiences demand propinquity with brands. It is perhaps as a consequence of this that brands are increasingly described as 'friends', rather than authority or aspirational figures. (This is markedly the case for beer brands[168]). Emotional proximity, however, can be more easily and credibly achieved if producers are culturally and experientially proximate to consumers (in which case identity

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[167] Warde (1994) contests the centrality of identity in consumption, challenging the near-axiomatic theorisations of Beck, Bauman and Giddens. Central to Warde's position is the need to distinguish between 'choice' and 'selection'.

[168] In the Heineken case study, Heineken (and by association 'Jack') is constructed as a respectable friend. This was evidently also the case for Carlsberg (pilot research): "We try to play back to them the kind of person they'd like to have a pint with. So we try to position Carlsberg as a mate. Not a wanker, not a condescending big brand trying to be cool [...] just a really down-to-earth [...] It's all about the 'probably' – the kind of understated, kind of [voices brand] "I'm one of the lads, I have integrity, I've worked hard for your respect, you respect my opinion, we can have a good laugh whenever you want, I can be serious when you want, I am not a sheep in wolf's clothing in terms of a brand. I'm a genuine brand. I give a shit"" (RO 14.04.05).

statements are considered more 'authentic'). Creatives, in particular, were not viewed as detached from target audiences but were constructed as reflexive *members* of these imagined communities in each case study. The more creatives were perceived as producing through experience, the more legitimate their ideas were considered. Indeed, it was their ability to think, feel and act like audiences and to 'speak' in a manner intelligible to them that 'authenticated' the work of these practitioners[169]. Hence, it is not merely the case that advertising practitioners are interested in gaining 'deep' and naturalistic views of the lives of consumers via ethnography (cf. Malefyt and Moeran 2003), but equally, my work finds evidence of a kind of turn towards 'autoethnography' or what Shotter (1993: 19) calls 'knowing from within'[170]. In describing the relation between brands and wider communities, practitioners make frequent use of syllogism, metonymy and synecdoche, through which the categories of brand, producer and consumer are frequently blurred. Likewise, brands are metonymically expressive of Irishness. In this sense, brands function as prisms through which the values and norms of advertising producers are rendered concrete and from this perspective, the brand becomes coterminous with their various narratives of Irishness.

Respondents insist that advertising cannot peddle simplistic propaganda and treat consumers as passive and malleable but that each brand must stand for something, it must "have an opinion" (MC 16.03.06). Cowman refers to several brands that in recent times have had to "reinvent" their world perspective to encompass a more "emotional" viewpoint in order to connect with savvy, discerning consumers: "I work for Dairygold, Galtee, Shaw's, where most of their credentials have been in an emotional part of our culture space and that's much, much more powerful than going out there and saying; "here's a mirror to the world"" (MC 16.03.06). Yet this emotionality must be credible; it suggests a movement from simplistic 'ideal world' (Schudson 1993) depictions to a kind of emotional authenticity. Bogan describes this as "complicit" rather than "didactic" advertising. Against a forced and ersatz Irishness or "doing a Guinness on a Heineken", Bogan argues that it is necessary to find "a

[169] Though less explicit, the biographies, cultural frameworks and experiences of 'executives' (which in my research are broadly similar to those of creatives) equally shape creative strategy, the most obvious example being Padraig Burn's influence on the recent 'not the usual' campaign for Smithwick's.

[170] In a somewhat different vein, Stanley (1996: 247) and Lentin (2000: 247) describe an 'experiencing because knowing subject', whereby 'knowing' refers to something known instinctively and also experientially.

licensed connection point" whereby consumers are "complicit in that relationship" (SB 27.10.05). Bogan, like other respondents, constructs consumers as intelligent and discerning and criticises transparent attempts by advertisers to conflate brand identity and cultural identity. Likewise, Today FM listeners are constructed by practitioners at Cawley Nea/TBWA as active and participative. They are emotionally connected to the station and the brand. Hence, in creating advertising both consumers *and* producers are co-imagined and co-constructed. Practitioners speak of being on the "same wavelength" or being "in tune" with audiences; their language is one of connectedness, commonality and mutuality, implying some notion of 'community'. Nevertheless, within such a community, the brand occupies centre stage (c.f. Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). Hence, their recognition of the communicative and emotive potency of identity cannot be considered independent of the instrumental[171] goals of advertising workers. At the final count, Cowman does not dispute advertising's commercial imperative: "But the role of culture in marketing is mainly led by the guy with the money in his pocket" (MC 16.03.06). This suggests that in the "age of identity" (Balakrishnan 2002) or what Bowers (2005) calls the "era of identity politics", and at a time when emotion has regained purchase in social theory, advertisers have been drawn towards a 'gentler form of transnational capitalism' (Averill 1996: 203). However, this reconfiguration remains purposive and strategic; practitioners' personal beliefs in and about advertising operate less as truth claims than as invested understandings (Cronin 2004a: 73). Economic calculation is embedded even in apparently 'non-economic' statements (McFall 2004), such as those pertaining to cultural identity. As such, I suggest that it is impossible (and inadvisable) to separate respondents' views on cultural identity from occupational imperatives.

[171] Banks (2006: 458) insists that 'the shadow of influence cast by Bourdieu's work has meant more recent observers have neglected to address non-instrumental aspects of cultural work'. This is a reasonable position and in general, Bank's argument is persuasive. My respondents exhibit neither false consciousness nor moral vacuity, however, I argue simply that in the case studies presented, the non-instrumental motives of producers do not register to sufficient degree to contest an instrumental reading of their practices. Indeed, in a bitter invective directed towards the 'cultural turn', Preston (2005: 75) insists that 'the contemporary world is clearly marked by the extended hegemony of a specific economic logic rather than any hint of the cultural turn'. He highlights sarcastically that 'the literature emphasising an epochal shift towards a symbolic, information, or knowledge society, centred around a new self-reflexive subjectivity and the manipulation of signs or free-floating symbols, now comprises a mini-cultural industry of its own' (ibid. 78).

3. Resurgent nationalism

In addition to the above explanations, a third may be advanced, which offers a culturalist explanation for the centrality of cultural identity in this research. Rather than advancing from the instrumental goals of producers or prioritising structural factors and power asymmetries, this implies that some notion of cultural 'authenticity' may in fact be embedded in the 'practical consciousness' (Giddens 1984) of Irish advertising practitioners (O'Boyle 2006a)[172]. This is not to deny the mutability and malleability of cultural constructs but rather, points to essentialism in the subjective and perceptual frameworks of cultural subjects. It highlights that 'all of us come to be who we are (however ephemeral, multiple and changing) by locating ourselves (usually unconsciously) in social narratives rarely of our own making' (Somers and Gibson 2001: 59).

The resurgent nationalism in the discourse of respondents may be partly explained by the tendency of globalisation to inadvertently inspire a reinvigoration (and reconfiguration) of flailing nationalisms (Gibbons 1996; Hall 2001; Klein 2000; Robins 1997; Smith 1995)[173]. As perhaps the 'most globalised country in the world' (O'Hearn 2003: 52), Ireland can be considered a paradigmatic example of this. Fanning, for example, claims that McConnell's is working in

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[172] Despite Titley's (2003: 7) description of 'authenticity' as a 'deeply problematic and counter-productive concept', I have elsewhere suggested that this concept may have some currency when interpreting the views of advertising practitioners (O'Boyle 2006a). In explanations 1 and 2 (above), I approach the idiom of identity (and attendant notions of authenticity) from structuralist and instrumentalist perspectives, describing it as central to discursive strategies designed to regain legitimacy and autonomy. Here, I am highlighting that 'cultural producers are as much the products of the culture in which they exist as are the goods they deliver' (Shumway 1996: 251). Lentin (2001: paragraph 5.2) powerfully demonstrates that new ethnic landscapes are changing Ireland's 'geographies of exclusion' rendering 'the "we" of contemporary Ireland obsolete as an "authentic" (mono)cultural voice'. As cogent an argument as this is, it bears adding, however, that authenticity can often resist its empirical refutation, reminiscent of van Dijk's (1997) suggestion that the discursive shaping of consciousness can occur without the actors necessarily being aware of this influence.

[173] Vogler (2000: 19) provides a link between the various explanations advanced above: 'In order to understand the persistence and indeed strengthening of nationalism and national identities in the contemporary world, we need to take account not just of changes in the inter-relationships between economics, politics and culture at the global level, but also of the ways in which they may now be coming to inter-relate with the kind of unconscious psychological processes and strong emotions such as love, hate, shame and anger, which occur within groups'.

> "[...] what we would say is quite a divided market, in the sense that on one hand, Irish people are quite open and want to be globalised and recognise that they have benefited hugely from globalisation and want the best from around the world [...] However [...] the more globalised the world becomes the more small societies will want to put up some barriers – not trade barriers but kind of mental barriers – and they want to cling on to areas of excellence in their own societies so I would argue that, you know, Irish brands, if they can achieve that excellence, would work quite well" (JF 17.05.06).

Fanning's position above can be related to Friedman's (1999: 279) suggestion that people require some defences against globalisation to ensure that they are not 'so overwhelmed by it that it turns their culture into a global mush and their environment into a global mash'. Certainly, it is the case that respondents offer narratives of loss alongside narratives of progress, suggesting perhaps a level of personal nostalgia beyond the general tendency of the cultural industries to employ nostalgia in communicational strategies. It is also clearly the case that my respondents' views of culture draw heavily upon what Wright (1998) describes as the 'old' anthropological idea of culture as a 'way of life'. As such, one should not discard the importance of inherited beliefs and values and the appeal of historical discourses of Irishness. Arguably, the idiom of identity has long been hegemonic in Ireland having been bequeathed first by English colonialism and subsequently propagated in the cultural nationalism of the Gaelic Revival of the late nineteenth century (Hutchinson 1987). 'Cultural nationalism, tracing its intellectual origins to nineteenth-century German romanticism, tends to a mythic irrationalism in its emphasis on the locus of individual identity in mystical union with the soul of the larger community' (White 2005: 89). In the formative years of the Irish state, 'national character' assumed great importance. Seamus Deane (1991) highlighted that colonisers explained Irish economic underdevelopment in terms of a defective character, preferring such explanations to less sanguine alternatives, which might draw attention to exploitative racist practices. Irish people were in turn encouraged to look inwards and often internalised these ideas.

> Many see the alleged Irish obsession with history as a distinctive characteristic in the Irish psyche. It invariably derives from a comparison with English

> normalcy. England constituted normalcy, Ireland therefore deviance. This deviance can be explained as a psychic condition (Lee 1994: 245).

Arguably, in the current climate of confident celebration, Irishness is still inwardly focused. In recent times, discussion of 'cultural identity' has become much more commonplace, however, this should not be considered an entirely new notion. Both national character and cultural identity, in the form that they have generally assumed in Irish studies, imply a similar kind of thinking. In their construction of Irishness as intuitive and visceral, respondents draw attention to supposedly 'innate characteristics of the individual as a member of an organic community, a *volk*, distinguishable from other such *volks* by the unique cultural attributes that each individual in the community shares' (White 2005: 89, author's emphasis) and therefore arguably maintain some variant of cultural nationalism.

8.6 Weighing Alternatives

Above, I presented three explanations for the centrality of cultural identity in respondent accounts and highlighted the interrelatedness of these. Nevertheless, given that cultural perspectives cannot be divorced from occupational imperatives, I suggest that the first and second explanations are more compelling (and certainly less speculative). I have highlighted that the construction of producers 'as subjects' is beyond the scope of this dissertation and would necessitate comprehensive research of respondent biographies, past education etc. Hence, while this work offers some support for a theory of 'banal nationalism' (Billig 1995) that entails unspoken assumptions and is almost subliminal in nature, to move beyond the suggestion that some notion of cultural authenticity may reside beneath the discursive consciousness of practitioners would be to draw myself into a dubious psychological debate that is of little relevance to the data at hand. My examination of cultural identity here, however, is grounded in occupational discourses and roles and cannot be interpreted independently of the vested interests of these workers. Borrowing from Titley (2006), I suggest that advertising producers display a kind of 'economic calculus' in their use of cultural identity. This is not to deny the persistence of cultural beliefs but rather,

emphasises the imbricated nature of economic and cultural calculations. It highlights, in other words, that cultural decisions by these workers are also always 'quintessentially commercial calculations' (Nixon 1996: 197) [174]. In line with Cronin (2004a: 64), I argue that advertising is an industry based on discourse and discourse management in which promotional rhetoric is especially important. I am less convinced by the third explanation above because, considered independently, it gives inadequate attention to the commercial imperatives of these producers. As such, it does not matter *per se* that practitioners 'believe' in the positions they adopt and the perspectives they advance in explaining themselves and their work. Rather, their various discursive strategies (principally the claim to 'know'[175] Irishness) are designed to cultivate an impression of professionalism and expertise and 'to bolster their status as creative thinkers and autonomous practitioners' (Nixon 2003: 91). My interest lies, therefore, not in proving or disproving the spurious idea of 'authentic Irishness' but rather in revealing how Irishness is discursively constructed and tactically and strategically employed by practitioners in this field. As Foucault suggests, 'Truth isn't outside power [...] Truth is a thing of this world; it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint' (1980: 131). As such, it must be remembered that the first customers of advertising agencies are not consumers but clients and as such, 'what counts as *true* in this arena is determined by the degree to which it is *true* to advertising's commercial imperative' (Cronin 2004b: 341, author's emphasis).

Irish advertising practitioners are versed in commercial discourse, borrow much from the vernaculars and methodologies of the social sciences and are acutely aware of the dominant ideologies and mythologies circulating within their worldwide industry. Yet they are equally cognisant of structural changes and intensified competition as well as increasingly discerning, demanding and reflexive audiences. It is well known that

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[174] Similarly, Bernstein's (1997: 531) idea of "identity deployment" as a form of strategic collective action reflects the calculative and purposive discursive strategies of these workers. While Bernstein's interest is in social movements, her analysis not only highlights the strategic mobilisation of identities but also pays particular attention to 'the structural relationship between identity and mobilisation' (ibid. 561).

[175] While cultural 'knowing' is of particular concern here, different kinds of 'knowing' are revealed in Sennett's highly influential *The Corrosion of Character* (1998: 87), such as 'knowing how to play the game' or 'knowing the right time to jump shifts'. Similarly, Angela McRobbie (1999: 28), referring to editors and journalists for teen magazines such as *Just Seventeen*, draws attention to the putative importance of a 'shared sense of knowingness'.

advertising expropriates cultural meaning in order to create resonant communication, and therefore that cultural understanding is clearly essential for interpreting ads (cf. Scott 1994; Hackley 2002, 2005). More importantly, however, I have revealed how cultural knowledge crystallised and reified as cultural identity offers advertising workers a powerful means of regaining some measure of autonomy. Just as social scientists realised that the emergence of nationalism met a vital social need in the nineteenth century (Townsend 2004), advertisers have become aware that cultural identity, in an era of seemingly relentless globalisation, is a powerful resource in the quest for authenticity, difference and autonomy – not merely for individuals but equally for regional enterprises dominated by multinational entities. Moving beyond this, this dissertation draws attention to the routinisation of particular discursive and representational patterns of Irishness and highlights how actors' practices are essential in the construction and reproduction of discourses and systems (cf. Moriarty 2006b). The case studies presented demonstrate that cultural identity is not 'something we have, but is rather constituted through dynamic, relational processes, as something we do' (ibid. 31).

Sean Nixon (2003) has examined the valorisation of creativity in British advertising and described how the privileged position of creatives in London advertising agencies in the 1990s 'owed much to the way developments within the sector in the 1980s had enhanced the standing of creative jobs' (Nixon 2003: 39). In examining some 'local conjunctural factors', including the end of the boom in advertising expenditure at the close of the 1980s and the wider political project of Thatcherism, Nixon moves to explore how two London agencies – Bartle Bogle Hegarty (BBH) and Howell Henry Chaldecott Lury (HHCL) – responded to these changes. Importantly, he illustrates how 'both agencies made much of the unique kinds of expertise and know-how that they could bring to their claims. Central to this was a presentation of agencies as, above all, the purveyors of creativity [...]' (Nixon 2003: 41). Unlike Nixon's respondents who worked within the inner sanctum of global advertising, however, the Irish advertising industry is comparably small and somewhat peripheral. While creativity served as a strategy of distinction for the London agencies in Nixon's study, I suggest that cultural knowledge increasingly serves a similar purpose for the Irish agencies examined here (although creativity remains a key resource for all advertising agencies).

Ireland has become 'a prosperous First World economy whose culture is increasingly being recruited to the global capitalist enterprise' (Mathews 2005: 10). As such, the Irish 'neo-revivalism' (ibid. 11) of the Celtic Tiger period is comparable to Moeran's (1996) description of resurgent cultural nationalism in Japan driven by successful businessmen (rather than politicians or intellectuals). Unlike Japan's recent 'counter-Orientalist discourse' (Moeran 1996b: 106), however, it seems that Celtic Tiger Irishness is firmly embedded in global neo-liberalism, thereby signifying a kind of globalisation 'from within'. It suggests that 'the local is not vanquished by the global but awakens with it' (Holton 2005: 117). Mediating this process, and perhaps to resist the complete co-option of Irish culture into mainstream global culture, Irish advertising agencies are increasingly concerned with promoting cultural uniqueness; it has become the basis of their very *raison d'être*. Importantly, this highlights how these workers, or what Bauman would call 'intellectuals', must vie for their 'share of market' with other competitors, following common rules of the competitive game' (1992: 100). Consequently, advertising producers 'have been pushed towards serving the interests of consumer markets that thrive on cultural diversity opportunities' (Moriarty 2006b: 53). The case studies presented in this dissertation demonstrate that the expert knowledge of these workers is increasingly expressed as an 'intuitive' understanding of cultural identity and an ability to recognise 'authentic' expressions of this. In doing so, my work supports Hackely's (2002: 219) suggestion that 'this kind of understanding is earned from research strategies that are idiographic rather than nomothetic, experiential rather than objective, and judgmental rather than inter-subjectively verifiable' (Hackley 2002: 219). Paraphrasing Lien (2004: 60), I suggest that the Irish advertising profession evokes an image of Irishness as unknown territory, but one to which the advertising profession may provide a map. In pushing cultural identity to the fore in their expert offerings, I argue that these workers can be conceived as 'brokers of identity' (Finlay 2000: 35). In this process, as Chapters 6 and 7 suggest, essentialism prevails despite the promotion of Irishness as protean and contested. Hence, 'far from opening Irishness to multiplicities of identities' (Moriarty 2006b: 111), in the process of producing advertising these practitioners easily regress 'to archaic states of pre-individual existence, a tribal consciousness to which one can appeal psychologically all the more effectively the less it actually exists' (Adorno [Levin] 1985: 122).

8.7 Conclusion

The phrase 'knowing what it means to be Irish' in the title of this dissertation is taken from a television commercial for MasterCard as part of its 'Priceless' campaign. My reason for employing this line, as highlighted in the Introduction, was to draw from the powerful discourse of authenticity it espouses and in particular, to explore the framing of cultural identity as intuitive and visceral. In highlighting the centrality of some notion of cultural identity in the production of Irish advertising, this dissertation has explored the assumptions underlying the identity statements of practitioners, the affinities between the discourse of producers and wider discourses of identity and finally, has attempted to explain why the idiom of identity has become crucial to the expert standing of these workers.

As Chapter 6 suggested, respondents' assumptions about cultural identity function as cognitive and creative shortcuts in producing advertising campaigns. More importantly, the conversion of these assumptions discursively into an 'intuitive' sense of Irishness functions not merely to suggest cultural and emotional proximity to 'Irish' audiences but also has the effect of mystifying the expert knowledge of these workers rendering it esoteric and non-transferable[176]. 'Knowledge rendered mystical or obscure [...] is effectively rendered scarce and, potentially, similarly powerful to those who own and understand it' (Hackley 2002: 214). In a world of seemingly relentless globalisation and with global consolidation of advertising and media, cultural identity has undergone something of a renaissance. Far from drowning in waves of global culture, difference has been pushed to the fore amid signs of concomitant and resurgent nationalism. Hence, 'cultural homogenisation and heterogenisation are not alternatives or substitutes; rather, they tend to come together' (Cowen 2002: 16). Celtic Tiger Ireland represents an example par excellence of the complexities of the current conjuncture. In one sense, the present interregnum suggests an 'opportunity to begin to re-imagine Irishness' (Moriarty 2006b: 102) and an occasion where the putative rootlessness and ambiguities at the heart of Irish identity offer grounds for cultural reinvention. Generally, the discourse of advertising

[176] 'Particularist goods, even when they exemplify a good that is objective or universal, have this particular characteristic of being, so to speak, non-transferable' (Appiah 2005: 227).

practitioners in this dissertation suggests a celebration of contingency, a willingness to embrace elastic forms of representation and a recognition of uncertainty, contestation and ambiguity. At such times, their collective position on identity is akin to Bauman's 'identities are more like the spots of crust hardening time and again on the top of volcanic lava which melt and dissolve again before they have time to cool and set' (Bauman 2000: 83). On the surface, the language of respondents implies an acceptance not of a singular Irish identity, but of multiple narratives of Irishness, each refusing finality. Practitioners appear to celebrate freedom from the bonds of history, describing emancipation from an oppressive past characterised by the insular and ascetic authoritarianism of institutions like the Catholic Church. In contrast, they celebrate the apparent freedoms of the present, characterising the current epoch as one of enthusiasm, confidence, progressiveness and "forward thinking". Contemporary Ireland appears liberated and liberating and replete with possibilities and Irishness emerges in the postmodern 'play of signs' signalling openness and malleability.

At the same time, however, this dissertation indicates the tenacity of inherited beliefs and values and highlights the subtexts of 'authenticity' that linger within pronouncements of 'change'. This work emphasises how the past can prove 'highly resistant to efforts to make it over' (Schudson 1989: 107). Frequently contradicting themselves, the inscription of the past in the discourse of these practitioners reveals itself in the shallow pool of terms they draw upon when describing Irish culture. Indeed, their proclivity for psycho-social terms such as "mentality", "mindset" and "psyche", implies fixity much more than flux and casts doubt upon their embrace, indeed "celebration", of cultural change in Ireland. The views of Irish advertising practitioners, like advertisements in general, suggest an 'alreadyness' of 'facts' (Williamson 1978: 42) about ourselves and our society and here an idea of resistant cultural frameworks is made manifest. Equally, this draws attention to the routinisation of discursive and representational forms of Irishness and highlights how practices are essential in the construction and reproduction of discourses and systems. I have suggested that Irishness (as it is constructed by these workers) has been injected with (post)modern sensibilities and confidence but that it remains essentialist nonetheless. If anything, globalisation is encouraging of this. As Moeran (1996b: 108) suggests; 'the very structure and function of media today encourage the kind of

essentialising and dichotomising discourse about the Other that I have criticised'[177]. Ironically then, their countless dealings in global signs and symbols may render advertising practitioners more inward looking and hence, one might concur with Luke Gibbons (1996: 3) that 'it is often the integration of Ireland into the new international order which activates some of the most conservative forces in Irish society'. Advertisements, I suggest, are among the best examples of corporate plundering of the past in the service of the present. While advertising is always 'of the moment' so to speak, the manner in which meaning is produced in these commercial texts is heavily dependent upon the availability of shared cultural codes. Hence, while the "search for a usable past" is chronic, as the constructivist literature on memory has demonstrated, "usable pasts" are not all that easily found or invented (Brubaker 2004: 163). While Celtic Tiger Ireland has indeed become something of a cosmopolis, this dissertation highlights that inherited norms and values have not dissipated in the epicureanism of the age.

In addressing 'the complex articulation between the cultural and economic in the discursive construction of Ireland in the era of globalisation', Fagan proposes to merge 'political economy and cultural studies approaches into a new cultural political economy paradigm' (2003: 111, 113). In some respects, this is comparable to Moriarty's (2005, 2006a, 2006b) conception of Irishness as a 'regime of representations' (Hall 1997) and her suggestion that a dialectical approach is necessary to understand debates about cultural change in Ireland through consideration of the interrelationships of discourses, narratives and the constitution of identities. This recognition of mutually imbricating processes in the construction of nation and nationhood is undoubtedly correct. While wholly supportive of such suggestions, in this chapter, however, I separated three explanations accounting for the salience of cultural identity in the discourse of my respondents for analytical purposes. While acknowledging their interconnectedness, I nevertheless argued that the structural and instrumental explanations are most compelling. In this respect, I suggested that the idiom of identity facilitates emotional proximity to audiences and therefore helps in the more efficient and effective realisation of instrumental goals.

[177] Likewise the turn towards ''Integrated Marketing Communications' (Schultz et al 1993) reflects managerial interest in coordinating different media channels to optimise the effectiveness of marketing communications programmes' (Hackley 2005: 15). Arguably, this demands even simpler ideas that are communicable across media channels and therefore the focus on 'integration' implies a reductive logic.

Perhaps more significantly, I further argued that it has been the globalisation of Irish advertising that has largely reactivated the salience of cultural identity, describing this as 'a structural explanation of a cultural phenomenon'. It is commonly accepted nowadays that globalisation is producing a reactionary mobilisation of cultural/national/ethnic identity; that globalisation begets identity as it were. What I am demonstrating in a direct way, however, is that cultural identity also has a premium value. Against resorting to the use of identity to explain *itself*, I have therefore favoured a structural/instrumental explanation. Clearly, the significance of identity in my research is to some extent a consequence of the nature of my questions. As Nixon (2003: 11) expresses it; 'what the practitioners said and how they presented themselves was palpably produced in part by my promptings [...]' Nevertheless, these workers also appear to have a facility for the language of cultural identity as it pervades their entire discourse.

While the analysis in this dissertation has been somewhat selective, I believe that it constitutes an important contribution to a virtually absent field in Irish sociology. Writing in 1991, Bell noted the veritable absence of film studies in Ireland suggesting that Irish media studies 'remains in its infancy' (1991: 88). In his analysis, Bell does not mention advertising – an omission that in my opinion makes it more, not less important, particularly in light of its putative social and cultural significance. The situation has improved significantly since then, however, Bell's analysis retains some currency. This dissertation has attempted to redress this research deficit and has advanced a grounded, empirically sustained analysis of the importance of cultural identity in the production of commercial Irish advertising at a crucial juncture in Irish history. My analysis offers a unique perspective on Irish advertising positioned between globalising and localising currents. This dissertation suggests that Irish advertising is promulgating new forms of Irishness but that practitioners are chameleonic in their articulation and deployment of cultural identity; on one hand, identity is constructed as fixed and essentialist – an undeconstructable black box with one face; on the other hand, identity is considered fluid and manipulable – a source of infinite possibility and endless combination. Corralling the various meanings of Irishness and, more importantly, *knowing what it means to be Irish*, are Irish advertising practitioners, conceived here as 'brokers of identity'.

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Appendix 1: Respondent Profiles[178]

Case Study 1: Heineken

Name: Orlaith Blaney
Age bracket: 30-40
Gender: Female
Advertising agency: McCann-Erickson
Occupational title: Managing Director

Name: Stephen Bogan
Age bracket: 30-40
Gender: Male
Advertising agency: McCann-Erickson
Occupational title: Account Planner

Name: Shay Madden
Age bracket: 40-50
Gender: Male
Advertising agency: McCann-Erickson
Occupational title: Creative Director

Name: Jacco van Der Linden
Age bracket: 40-50
Gender: Male
Company: Heineken Ireland
Occupational title: Marketing Manager

[178] As highlighted, several chapters include interview excerpts with advertising workers that were not involved in the production of the above campaigns but whose views were deemed pertinent to my analysis (such as members of the Board of Directors of the Shark Awards).

Case Study 2: Today FM

Name: Martin Cowman
Age bracket: 40-50
Gender: Male
Advertising agency: Cawley Nea/TBWA
Occupational title: Creative Director

Name: Diane Tangey
Age bracket: 30-40
Gender: Female
Advertising agency: Cawley Nea/TBWA
Occupational title: Account Manager

Name: Sara Falconer
Age bracket: 30-40
Gender: Female
Company: Today FM
Occupational title: Marketing Manager

Case Study 3: Smithwick's

Name: John Fanning
Age bracket: 60-70
Gender: Male
Advertising agency: McConnell's
Occupational title: Agency Chairman

Name: Gerry Kennedy
Age bracket: 50-60
Gender: Male

Advertising agency: McConnell's
Occupational title: Creative Director

Name: Karen Hand
Age bracket: 30-40
Gender: Female
Advertising agency: -
Occupational title: Freelance Planner

Name: Saibh Hooper
Age bracket: 20-30
Gender: Female
Advertising agency: McConnell's
Occupational title: Account Executive

Name: Maura McGinn
Age bracket: 30-40
Gender: Female
Company: Diageo
Occupational title: Marketing Manager Smithwick's

Appendix 2: Elements of the Creative Brief

There are numerous books, articles and online sources offering advice on the writing and contents of creative briefs. Generally, creative briefs are constructed with the intention of answering the following kinds of questions:

What is the purpose of the project?
Who is the audience for this piece?
What is your core message or unique selling proposition?
What is the single point you want your audience to walk away with?
How will your audience benefit from what you're selling?
Who are your competitors, and how are they representing themselves in the market?
What are your limitations (budgets, timelines, branding guidelines)?
When do you need it?
How many do you need?
(http://www.sangereby.com/how/howprofile3.asp)

Given the need to answer the above questions, creative briefs generally include the following broad categories: a *header* (broad information that tells the reader who wrote it, when it was written and for whom and its purpose); *media strategy* (an outline of various media to be included and reasoning); *background* (an indication of the product's market, recent trends and competitive strategies); *support* (a list of product details, comparative data of similar products, test results, consumer research) and; *compulsory requirements* (specific company, brand or product features/attributes that must be included in the creative execution e.g. company logo, colours, product placement etc.) (http://www.msu.edu/~conkli30/Genre%20Analysis.htm).

The above elements largely involve industry-specific input by advertising personnel and clients and are therefore difficult to deduce by merely examining texts. Thus, in surmising brief elements, I restricted my analysis in case studies to three specific components: target audience, proposition and tone of voice.

Appendix 3: Conceptualising Creativity in Advertising

As with other researchers of production in advertising (such as Hackley and Kover 2007; Kelly et al 2005; Nixon 2003), creativity assumes importance in my work. While creativity has been somewhat relegated in this dissertation, I have attempted to address this subject on other occasions (see below). Indeed, while 'identity' is prioritised in the present work, I have long been struck by the close affinities between these concepts[179]. In the contemporary world, ideas about the self and development, and particularly the view of identity as a reflexive project (Giddens 1991), imply an enhanced role for creativity. Likewise, creativity (along with 'flexibility') looms large in accounts of organisational change and enterprise culture (du Gay 1996). In advertising, creativity is considered an 'asset' and a 'competitive advantage' of agencies. Despite its ostensible import, however, creativity assumes an ill-defined form in many studies of advertising, including noteworthy ethnographies such as those of Miller (1997), Moeran (1996a) and Tunstall (1964). Creativity is presented as self-explanatory and described in artistic, performative and symbolic terms. In attempting to conceptualise creativity in this field, I have gained much from the work of Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi and Gardner (1994), whose novel approach emphasises the combined importance of Domain, Individual and Field Interactions (DIFI model). Essentially, these authors insist that creativity is not simply the preserve of the individual but like all behaviour and knowledge, is also shaped by social processes. Thus, one should not consider the creative individual in isolation from the influence of domain and field. In the DIFI framework, *individual* refers not only to subjective dispositions and unique abilities but also to the learning curve through which an individual passes. *Domain* refers to the symbol system or the body of knowledge and practices in which the individual performs. Finally, *field* refers to gatekeepers, judges and institutions that are called upon to evaluate and appraise creative work in a particular discipline. The three interrelated elements of this systemic model (domain, field and individual) are depicted as nodes of a 'creative triangle', which defines creativity in context.

[179] Creativity and identity, while they have been contemplated in various guises perhaps since time immemorial, both owe their broad acceptance into academia not to the social sciences but to psychology.

The importance of context in defining creativity has also been addressed in Becker's (1982) highly influential *Art Worlds*. Becker was also among the first to indicate that art is the result of collective activity and should not therefore be viewed simply as individual achievement. This is equally the case in advertising, where the locus of creativity is often difficult to determine. While the 'Creative Department' is charged with generating ideas and developing campaigns, practitioners here receive input from other departments, such as client services and media, and even occasionally from clients themselves. Hence, wholly individualistic[180] conceptions of creativity are of limited value in this industry. In the process of producing advertising, multiple actors collaboratively produce texts in a dialogical process that is sponsored, functional and temporally constrained. Clearly, advertising creativity does not occur within an infinite timescale or temporal vacuum as might be the case for other creative endeavours. Furthermore, the extent to which a concept is deemed creative is secondary to its strategic objective(s). As Jones (1999: 237) expresses it; 'a commercial is nothing more than a piece of paid-for communication that has a behavioural objective'. Advertising ideas must be suitable, relevant and timely and they must connect or resonate with an identified audience. For all intents and purposes, advertisers are required to think outside the box and simultaneously remain within it.

While systems and procedures in advertising attempt to reduce personal bias and rationalise production, irrational processes are often key to decision-making in this industry. Ulterior motives, past decisions, intuition, interpretation, bias and personal relations continually shape the production process. Likewise, creativity in advertising is much more haphazard and cyclical than linear models oftentimes imply. Ideas are generated, presented, re-worked, re-presented, modified and often cast aside after considerable time. While 'eureka' moments can occur in advertising, a notion of incremental creativity through trial and error is perhaps closer to the actualities of commercial production in this field. In a similar vein, Ludwig Fleck's *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact* (1979) depicts scientific discovery as a long,

[180] The work of Howard Gardner has been chiefly concerned with the creative individual. Nevertheless, Gardner (2001:130) has recently suggested that the study of creativity demands at least four levels of analysis: sub-personal (genetics and neurobiology), personal (psychological, cognitive, personality, motivation), impersonal (domain) and multipersonal (field).

complex process that includes detours, contingency, trials and errors. Likewise, Thomas Cech (2001: 5) argues that few scientific discoveries are made in a straightforward, linear way but rather follow 'a crooked path' – a metaphor that I believe has great descriptive merit in relation to creativity in advertising. Furthermore, it must be remembered that the advertising agency's primary audience is not the consumer but its client. Consequently, as Evans (1988: 10) has highlighted, 'the selling of ideas and their get-up to the client often draws on as much creative thought and flair as the creative solution itself'. Hence, a notion of 'performance' must be included when conceptualising creativity in this field. While creativity is commonly constructed as positive and empowering, my research challenges such unqualified assumptions. Creativity can mask relations of power in organisations and institutions and when married to ideologies of workplace flexibility and mobility, can often disguise new processes of social exclusion (see Greco 2005; Adkins 1999). In advertising, creativity is championed yet it is also exceedingly difficult to define and deduce. While it is generally expected to challenge convention, it rarely seeks to undermine norms.

> Creativity must fit with prevailing structures in order to be recognised as such. It must be seen as positive in a particular way. Challenges to convention can be creative but they can also be mad or criminal or dangerous or stupid or simply irrelevant. The analytical issue is to identify the arbiters of creativity and the standards by which it is measured (Reynolds Whyte 2001: 131).

The above ideas along with a desire to approach creativity in advertising critically and circumspectly culminated in the following conference paper.

Order in the guise of disorder: creativity in Irish advertising[181]

Paper delivered to the British Sociological Association (BSA) Annual Conference
21-23 April 2006

Introduction

Good morning. My name is Neil O'Boyle and I am a doctoral candidate in Sociology at Trinity College, Dublin. As you can see from the title, I am going to talk to you today about creativity or specifically, creativity in advertising. However, let me first highlight that I have changed the title of this paper to bring it more in line with the overall thrust of the conference. Plus, to think that I could cover identity *and* creativity – perhaps two of the most definitionally ambiguous and contested concepts in social theory – in the next twenty or so minutes was not merely ambitious but utterly ludicrous!

What I want to do in this paper is to narrow my gaze to focus on creativity in advertising, and to examine this from the perspective of order/disorder. In this paper, I partly draw upon empirical data deriving from in-depth interviews with Irish advertising practitioners, however, it is also shaped by my own experiences, observations and tacit knowledge as a past practitioner in Irish advertising.

As we are all aware, both society at large and academics in particular, have long been interested in advertising. According to Williamson (1978: 188), 'advertisements are one of the most important cultural factors moulding and reflecting our life today'. However, academic interest in advertising, it would seem, has been preoccupied with

[181] The original title of this paper (and the one that appears in the BSA Conference Programme) was 'Consensual creativity and conformist identities in Irish advertising'.

documenting its purported effects rather than exploring the elusive nature of its production. In a word, it would seem that researchers have been content to study the 'ends' without exploring the 'means'. I have sought to redress this imbalance and my work focuses on producers, rather than consumers, of advertising. My research is not entirely unique in this respect and follows a recent shift towards ethnographic and micro-orientated investigations of internal processes in marketing and advertising institutions (Lien 1997; Miller 1997; Moeran 1996a).

What is creativity?

Attempting to conceptualise or define creativity is a rather difficult task and I will say only a few words on this very complex subject here. For a long time, notions of creativity derived principally from research on personality traits using sophisticated psychometric techniques. Thus, the great bulk of work in this area has largely come to us from psychologists who were concerned with exploring the 'creative mind' of the individual. Since the 1970s, however, researchers have increasingly looked at *context*. Csikzentmihalyi famously asked not what creativity is, but *where* is it? Csikzentmihalyi's intervention in this debate was to argue the existence of 'different kinds' of creativity which depended not so much on the particular cognitive abilities of individuals but more on the particular functions of creativity in different contexts. Since then, researchers of creativity have argued that an adequate theorisation must give attention to both the individual and the specific site of investigation. In this vein, I find Feldman, Csikzentmihalyi and Gardner's 'Domain, Individual, Field Interaction' model of creativity as outlined in *Changing the World: A Framework for the Study of Creativity* (1994), exceedingly useful. The great merit of this model is that it acknowledges the interconnectedness of individual ability, the requirements of the work performed and the broad field of actors that curtail and evaluate creative practices and hence, it posits that our understanding of creativity emerges from these various interactions. Nevertheless, Feldman, Csikzentmihalyi and Gardner concede that their interest is in 'big C' rather than 'little c' creativity. (This is similar to Liep's (2001) distinction between 'habitual' creativity and 'true' creativity, the latter suggesting a more transformative kind):

> The meaning that is of primary interest to us here is creativity as the achievement of something *remarkable and new* [...] In other words, we are concerned with the kinds of things that people do that *change the world* (Feldman et al 1994: 1, author's emphasis).

I would suggest, however, that it is the latter variant, or 'little c' creativity, that more accurately describes creativity in advertising. My interest here is not primarily to contest the use of the term 'creativity' in relation to advertising (though I go some way towards provoking such a debate) but rather, to present a more grounded and circumspect conceptualisation derived from the accounts of practitioners. Creativity in advertising, I suggest, is of a highly regulated, sponsored and restrictive kind. Rather than inventing, changing or creating the world anew, the advertising practitioner 'works by reframing the mundane world' (Hastrup 2001: 42).

Creativity in advertising

As any account of advertising will reveal, creativity is considered fundamental in this industry. While creativity was always important to the work of advertising agencies, in the 1980s it was given renewed significance, attributed in large measure to the advance of so-called 'third wave' agencies in Britain as Frank Mort (1996) and Sean Nixon (1997, 2003) have described. Creativity remains a crucial resource for advertising agencies, as a quick glance at any advertising agency website will reveal. Nevertheless, research on creative processes in advertising remains sparse:

> You can read a million words about advertising agencies and never encounter a single sentence devoted to how they think of things [...] you will learn what they did *before* they had an idea, and you will learn what they did *after* they had an idea. But the one thing you will never learn is *how* they had an idea (Bullmore 1999: 52, author's emphasis).

However, some findings suggest that advertising creatives engage in one-on-one dialogues with an internalised target consumer (Reid et al 1998) as well as employ

methods such as role-play, personal analogies, projective techniques and personification, which appear to better enable the creative to envision the world as consumers experience it (Lannon and Cooper 1983). As advertising creatives are encouraged to adopt the position of the consumer (or more specifically the 'target audience') when producing advertising, their 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu [1984] 2000) or 'stocks of knowledge' (Habermas 1987) are deemed important, reminiscent of Borofsky's (2001: 68) suggestion that creativity is culturally defined and culturally framed. Thus, against imposing an artificial separation between the public and the private as bureaucracies traditionally encouraged, it is precisely the union of these, I suggest, that has given rise to the description of advertisers as "cultural intermediaries" (Bourdieu [1984] 2000; Featherstone 1991).

In common parlance 'creativity' is often associated with divergent, critical thought and is constructed as something challenging, unconventional and new, perhaps at a stretch, something bordering close to "disorder". In this respect, the 'Big C' interests of Feldman et al are arguably reflective of the common perception of creativity. However, creativity in advertising, I suggest, is very different. In advertising, it is the agency's responsibility to deliver what the client *wants* first and foremost and for all intents and purposes, this may *not* be creativity (in the groundbreaking, transformational sense). I want to examine this proposition more closely now by investigating 'creative' processes in advertising as described by practitioners. I will not look at *all* aspects but just those that strike me as particularly relevant to our discussion of order/disorder.

Linked to associations with 'youth' and 'newness', advertising is frequently constructed – both in internal and external discourses – as a site of constant flux and change. 'Partly due to its constant promotion of novelty, advertising is imagined to be the sign of the times, representing the leading edge of social change' (Cronin 2004a: 34/5). Organisationally, agencies have drawn much from management discourses, which promote 'flexible' business (Alvesson 1998) and models of 'commercial enterprise' (du Gay 1996). In explaining his personal philosophy of how advertising should function, for example, the following comments from an account planner in an Irish agency reveal an explicit belief in both flux and adaptive business:

> "I think everyone should take an heuristic approach and the best people and the best companies tend to do that as well [...] nothing stands still so you need to have models that are fluid and I think that's pretty much our approach as well".
> (Interview SB: Account Planner).

As the above quotation implies, a language of 'flux' and 'flexibility' is evident in industry discourse. Beliefs, such as the 'pace of social change [is] much faster than in any prior system' (Giddens 1991: 16) infiltrate advertising discourse and are evident in the writing of industry gurus and specialists. Theodore Levitt (1983), for example, has argued that companies that do not adapt to the new global realities will become victims of those that do. This resonates with a description of her work by an Irish account executive:

> "I think you constantly try to improve and I think you're in trouble the day you stop trying to improve, and I guess it's constant change, constant innovation [...] I think it is about constantly, constantly looking at new ways of doing things".
> (Interview DT: Account Executive).

However, the first practitioner implies that there is often an *imperative* to change (especially among marketing managers), which has less to do with brand needs and more to do with his or her personal need to be *perceived* as proactive and responsive:

> "New people come in, want to change the game, establish themselves and that's what happens [...] bear in mind the average time for a marketing director to stay in his office is about, well slightly longer in Ireland, but it tends to be a year and a half to two years so they want to make a mark and the best way to make a mark is to make a change. Otherwise you're just paddling water".
> (Interview SB: Account Planner).

The language of flux by practitioners is explained by the need to appear contemporary and up-to-date. In reality, change is heavily rhetorical. Referring to Norwegian

marketers, Marianne Lien detects 'a certain discontinuity between discursive images and day-to-day action' (1997: 236). Hence, Lien suggests that marketers tend to emphasise change at the expense of continuity. Indeed, in his famous ethnographic study *The Advertising Agency Man in London* (1964), Jeremy Tunstall suggested that practitioner anxiety derived from a 'constant need to find new ways of selling old products and new ways of satisfying new variants of old wants'. The implication (in Tunstall's comment) is that the medium and the delivery may change, but that the message largely remains the same. A similar sentiment is conveyed in the following comment from an Irish account executive:

> "Advertising messages don't really change from decade to decade. We're all kind of saying the same thing [...] the message doesn't really change from decade to decade. But I think the creativity is how you say it".
> (Interview RO: Account Manager).

When asked to describe the creative process from inception to campaign development, creatives describe a kind of incremental process, which offers support for Howard Gruber's criticism of the common belief that creative 'insights' arrive from unknown sources and his argument that insight is better thought of as the end of a long process. Gruber's pioneering and intensive long-term study of Darwin, for example, redefined creativity as long-standing, heterogeneous work rather than the product of individual cognitive processes or personality (Gruber 1974). There is a sense in which creativity is "hard won" in the advertising industry and that while an idea may come spontaneously, production is normally long and arduous. Thus, we might suggest that creativity in advertising is not really about pure moments of eureka (although these do occur) but is a more protracted process entailing the cultivation and refinement of an 'idea'. In the following quote, an Irish creative draws a parallel to completing a "mathematical anagram" – a comparison, perhaps, that many people would find surprising:

> "It never comes as just, as a spark of inspiration [...] like every great creative will tell you they just work their ass off to get to that [...] it's sitting down and working and working and working and working and it's using your brain, in the same way as you'd work out a mathematical anagram".

(Interview DO: Creative).

It bears highlighting that among the numerous constraints that advertising practitioners face, time and money are foremost. In respect of the former, a typical advertising agency in Ireland will produce approximately three hundred texts per week. Beyond the constraints of time itself, commercial imperative is crucial in advertising. Indeed, while practitioners often favour qualitative research and the softer language of 'culture', it is a quantitative logic that dictates at the final count as economic investments must produce economic returns. Reflecting the somewhat positivistic tone of the previous remark, in the following passage an Irish account planner employs a purely utilitarian logic and is somewhat scathing of creativity 'for its own sake' in advertising:

> "Creativity means nothing to me unless it sells. That's the end line. If we don't have that then we should close down shop and become an art gallery [...] creativity is the means to an end [...] it's about selling more or getting people to buy your particular brand versus other brands more often. If creativity doesn't do that it's absolutely meaningless and it doesn't have any role whatsoever in an advertising or business context. It belongs in a very worthy other area of art, of challenging human perceptions, of moving the human mind on, but it doesn't have any role in advertising so it's contingent creativity I think is what I'm driving at".
> (Interview SB: Account Planner).

As the above attests, profit maximisation and economic margins always lie behind the aesthetic ingenuity of advertisements. In my experience, practitioners in general and 'creatives' in particular, are surprisingly hesitant to describe their practice as an 'art form'. Indeed, many are cynical about their profession and somewhat condescending towards creativity in advertising generally. Others in the industry, however, are more reluctant to demean it. In the following passage, a representative of the Institute of Advertising Practitioners in Ireland (IAPI) draws upon what he considers the more legitimate art world to explain creativity in advertising. (Interestingly, Picasso is the favoured choice of several practitioners):

> "Well there's a crude way of devolving advertising creativity from other artistic expressions of creativity in that in those instances – sculptors, artists, whatever – in many instances it's creativity for its own sake [...] Advertising creativity is different in that it is creativity with intent, creativity within a framework. Advertising creatives do not have free reign [...] the creative idea is not a piece of artwork or a concept in itself, it is a concept which is integrated with a product or a service or whatever it may be. But its job is to promote the product, not itself. So if you take an analogy with a painting for example. Picasso painted Guernica – an extraordinary piece of work but it was a political statement, it had an agenda. I mean that is very much how advertising works [...] The functionality has to be fundamental".
> (Interview JH: IAPI Representative).

The intention of the above practitioner is clearly to validate creativity in advertising through comparison with the more legitimate art world, however, he concedes that in the end 'functionality' is paramount. Interestingly, although science is often pitted against creativity, the 'scientific' component of advertising creativity is arguably more important than artistry and aesthetics. Debates about creativity in advertising, like that in other domains, have been conducted in light of the historical tensions between rationalism and romanticism or more commonly, art and science. In advertising, this manifests in a perceived friction between artistic ideologies and management ideologies (or those of the 'suits' and those of the 'creatives'). Romanticism suggests a kind of artistic suffering for art's sake that is perhaps largely irrelevant in advertising. Irrespective of critical position, however, it is clear that an unhelpful antinomy often exists between art and science; the latter associated with discovery, the former with creation. Nevertheless, it should be noted that both art and science entail communication and discovery, be this of the inner world of subjective experience or the outer world of socially constructed reality. Both require encoding into semantic meaning and both entail discrimination and serendipity. 'The work of art is just as much or as little an empirical fact as the structure of a molecule of carbon; the empirical facts of science are just as much a question of choice, or of chance, or inspiration as a work of art' (Read 1960: 164). Gardner (2001) likewise posits a link between art and science suggesting that in both realms people are struggling to create a language, which does not yet exist. Irrespective of the

persuasiveness of such a notion, I agree that a simplistic and reductive distinction between art and science is misleading and unhelpful. Instead, it is perhaps plausible to argue that advertising contains elements of both art and science although it is neither in the pure sense. In *The Mirror Makers* (1984) Stephen Fox documented the gradual dilution of creative flair in advertising in the late 1960s and the shift to an era characterised by a prevailing scientific ethos and corporate anonymity. Despite the reinstatement of creativity in 'third wave' agencies in the UK as documented by Mort (1996) and Nixon (1997, 2003), the scientific standpoint remains strong. In the following quotation, for example, what begins as an argument about the indispensability of 'creativity' ends with the quantitative logic of accountancy and capitalist economics:

> "Oh creativity is essential but I think it's definitely becoming more scientific, absolutely no doubt about that. All of the major companies have developed more scientific models, more scientific-orientated models [...] Diageo, Unilever, Proctor and Gamble [...] anywhere where money is spent, look at it just in terms of accountancy, it's about investment. Advertising is fundamentally an investment, people want a return on investment [...]"
> (Interview SB: Account Planner).

In addition to the constraints of time and budget, advertising is also subject to various 'conventions'. This word has a double meaning in advertising because firstly, conventions refer to perceptions of 'common' knowledge or 'custom' and secondly, work is subject to various professional conventions, including the length of commercials, media formats, the specific use of logos, colours, etc. On creative briefs, these are often referred to as 'mandatories'. Conventions are useful because their existence highlights in a pronounced way the highly restrictive nature of creativity in advertising. While one could undoubtedly find advertisements that stretch the borders of the acceptable (e.g. Benetton), only a very small proportion of advertising can be considered risky in the sense of running foul of standards of public morality or decency. As Whitehead (1973: 58) suggests, advertising agencies prefer to 'follow the line of least resistance rather than seek to challenge or work against existing tendencies at all directly'. The more specific an advertisement is, the more it can be perceived as alienating consumers outside of its particular focus. While Löfgren

(2001) has highlighted the general tendency to regard creativity as inherently positive, I would suggest that creativity as a 'challenging or controversial newness' is often precisely *not* what clients are looking for. Unsurprisingly, creatives frequently hold conservative clients accountable for poor standards of creativity:

> "[Clients] know that safe will work. It may not work as well as daring but it may also not fail as miserably as daring could fail".
> (Interview NM: Creative).

Despite this tendency to accuse clients of conservativeness and a reluctance to 'take risks', creatives themselves frequently betray a conservative streak as the following comment from the same creative suggests:

> "I think if you're out of step with everyone else then that's going to be another layer that the public or your target are going to have to try and get over in order to get your message. So if you're a hippy to the core it's going to be difficult to advertise the privatisation of Aer Lingus".
> (Interview NM: Creative).

I would suggest that "being in step" pushes advertising towards conformist, status-quo representations and that in appropriating research 'insights' and devising campaigns, practitioners tend to look for 'averages' and a means of gaining entry into what they perceive as 'popular consciousness'. To capture the imagination of 'average audiences', advertising provides a window on an ideal world. Schudson (1993: 215) suggests that advertising functions as a form of 'capitalist realism' that does not represent society as it is but as it should be according to capitalist ideals. As such, commercial advertising generally avoids the more troubling aspects of society and culture. The ideal world of the ad is one in which order and harmony prevail and therefore, it is hardly surprising that commercial advertising tends to steer clear of problematic subjects.

> "Talking politics and religion – they're the two no no's. So you try to steer clear of them and make everybody happy and very often that makes for a bland end result. It's just some of the minefields you have to step through".

(Interview NM: Creative).

As the above excerpt (and several previous ones) clearly indicates, standing above the individual preferences of the creative advertising practitioner is a client that is ultimately paying for the work produced. As a consequence of this, power is perhaps the most significant variable in advertising production. Researchers on creativity such as Brannigan (1981) and Schaffer (1994) also highlight that power relations and the control of resources are of the utmost importance among the conditions for creativity. While advertising agencies are generally subject to asymmetrical power arrangements with clients, worldwide consolidation within the advertising industry is arguably also undermining the creative autonomy of regional agencies (such as those in Ireland).

> "There are now three main agency networks which own pretty much every agency [in Ireland] so there has been a lot of streamlining in terms of what they are allowed and not allowed to do".
> (Interview JH: IAPI Representative)

In tandem with agency mergers, Irish advertising agencies are increasingly required to work on global accounts. Despite offering economic incentives, asymmetrical power relations (in respect of control of content) can be intensified under these conditions. While 'cultural tailoring' is deemed crucial in global advertising, this process is often much cruder and haphazard than one might expect. The following 'typical scenario' between an Irish agency and its global client constructed by the managing director of an Irish advertising agency suggests that in practice, this can involve simply "choosing" the foreign-produced work that "hurts least":

> "Here's a reel of international ads that we have produced globally [...] which ones do you think will work in Ireland?" [...] And you can't influence them because you can't make the ads and there's no point in writing a brief because actually, maybe half the ads won't fit it anyway so we'll just go with the one that hurts least!" [Laughs].
> (Interview OB: Managing Director).

In the above passage, the implication is that while Irish advertising may be in the midst of a boom period, the work that agencies are required to perform has become increasingly concerned with post-production and 'cultural tailoring' rather than conceiving of campaign ideas. In this model, I suggest that 'creativity' appears a rather dilapidated, malleable and weak notion. In my research, I often detect a palpable reluctance on the part of some advertising workers to describe their work as creative and certainly they are hesitant to describe it as an art form. Ironically, these feelings are strongest among those practitioners referred to as "creatives". In light of this very brief examination, my tentative conclusion is to pose a question: Is 'creativity' a misnomer in advertising and would a more mundane word, perhaps simply 'production', prove more useful?

From the perspective of order/disorder, I suggest that 'order' is unquestionably closer to the reality while notions of 'disorder' are closer to the rhetoric of this industry. While the various interview excerpts provided in this presentation paint practitioners as humble and grounded and willing to describe the mundane and humdrum actualities of creative production, it would be naïve to imagine that they would adopt the same perspective when presenting to clients. In seeking to legitimate their expertise and present their ideas as 'fashionable' and 'up-to-date', it is likely that advertising workers would not entirely abandon notions of newness, change, disorder and flux, as these are helpful to their interests. In one sense, the persistence of such ideas may reflect something of a postmodern condition; 'those whose gaze was formerly directed by images and figures of order, coherence and systematic unity, now learn to look through new cognitive frameworks emphasising disorder, ambiguity and difference' (Featherstone 1991: ix). I prefer, however, a more strategic answer, summed up best by Eliphas Levi: "Order is never observed; it is disorder that attracts attention because it is awkward and intrusive".

If we imagine the advertising industry as a body of water – let's say an ocean – I suggest that the surface represents the commercial discourse of practitioners, industry literature and promotional rhetoric. This appears a site of constant change; it is the tumultuous terrain of fashions and fads in apparent ceaseless flux, rising and falling like waves in the ocean. In other words, something approaching what we understand by 'disorder'. But deep beneath this, something closer to a stagnant pool can be

discerned. Beneath, it moves slowly and sluggishly. From decade to decade advertising largely says the same things, uses many of the same strategies and merely does so with greater technique and sleeker methods. Styles and appeals are rehashed, products are given facelifts, brands evolve but rarely reinvent.

It is therefore creative constraint rather than latitude that largely defines creativity in advertising and we are forced to acknowledge the paradox that in an industry where creativity is championed, it is also heavily censored and regulated. Despite the rhetoric of practitioners, the language of flux, disorder and newness; a picture of risk minimisation, consensus, convention and for want of a better word, 'order', emerges.

Thank you.

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Postscript

Subsequent to presenting the above paper, I reengaged with various studies of creativity in advertising, most notably that of Nixon (2003). Nixon's work links transformations in the British advertising industry in the 1990s (and in particular the valorisation of creativity) to a 'new salience of creativity [...] in the transformation of Western economies' (Nixon 2003: 160). However, Nixon's work is also concerned

with interrogating 'the very idea of creativity itself' (ibid. 161). In doing so, he presents a judicious analysis that draws attention to the highly restrictive and regulated nature of creativity in advertising. Referring to cultural production in general, Preston (2005: 73/4) likewise highlights the restrictions that always attend the autonomy and agency of the individual producer:

> [...] such artistic autonomy is always relative and the cultural worker's freedom is double sided. The production and communication of culture is generally preconfigured by the institutional structures and incentive systems and by the evolving grammars, codes and conventions, as well as technical modes and resources, that are socially available and shared between the creative originators, gatekeepers, intermediaries, and intended audience.

Preston's description is useful not merely because it draws attention to the various and multiple parties involved but also because it highlights that intelligibility and understanding is fundamental to this process. Applying this to advertising, one might concur that creativity in this field 'can be seen to hinge on the extent to which cultural meanings can be extracted from the consumer's milieu and re-formed in juxtaposition with marketed meanings' (Hackley 2002: 215). This implies that despite the vestige of art in its conventional understanding, creativity in advertising is driven by commercial imperatives. While creativity is often described in existential and metaphysical terms – 'a way of being' (Gardener 2001: 129) – remembering that this is a core component of a goal-driven *occupation* is fundamental to how we should apprehend creativity in this field. This is not to suggest that individual abilities, beliefs, values, etc. are unimportant; on the contrary, these are vitally important. What demands emphasis, however, is that unlike many other creative endeavours, advertising is not motivated by ontological questions or existential crises but by commercial imperatives. It is, as Kelly et al (2005) suggest, a 'sponsored form of creativity' that is innovative and specialist but rarely transformational.

> It has been a central contention of this book, in line with other contemporary critical thinking, that creativity is not best thought of in the quasi-mystical terms often favoured by advertising people or, for that matter, as a general human capacity for invention and novelty that they also made recourse to.

> Rather, I have deployed the term to refer to the rather more modest – but none the less hard to achieve – innovations within the cultural practices of advertising (Nixon 2003: 162).

In a sense therefore, we might suggest that an effective advertising creative is rather like a good comedian[182]; he aims to capture the interesting in the mundane, the spectacular in the ordinary and present the familiar in unfamiliar ways. His creativity is less inventiveness per se and more the ability to spot interesting and unfamiliar connections in everyday scenarios. In this sense, the words of Martha Graham (quoted in Gardener 1993: x) are fitting: "The difference between the artist and the non-artist is not a greater capacity for feeling. The secret is that the artist can objectify, can make apparent the feelings we all have".

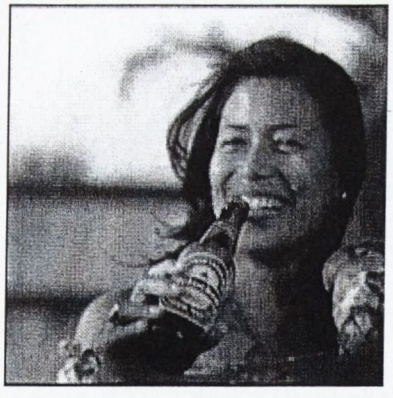
[182] As one of my respondents put it: "I suppose a parallel would be the humour of Billy Connolly. He has people rolling around the aisles and he's never doing anything other than relaying small everyday little bits and pieces [...] but how he says them and how he delivers them makes you look at them again and go; "God yeah, shaving is really funny!" And to be able to take any little idea like that and make it relevant to people, to give it some relevance, then it works. If it does that it's working" (NM 04.10.04).

Appendix 4: Advertising Images

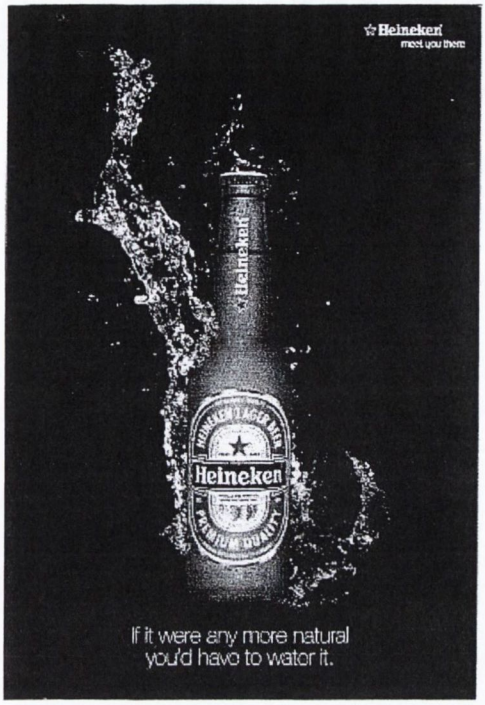
The following are various images taken from the adverts examined in this dissertation. While the visuals here are obviously important, I have relegated them to the appendix so that the discursive accounts of respondents are given priority, as it is from these that the analysis presented chiefly derives.

Case Study 1: Heineken

1. Nervous 'hero' in back of car in 'Cuba' commercial



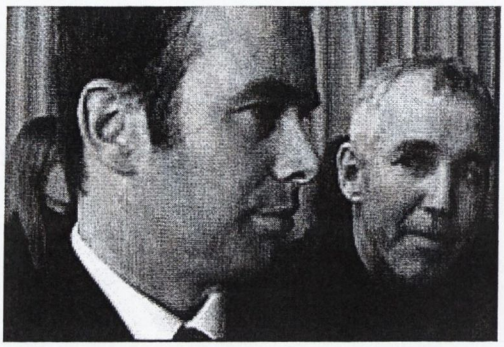
2. Attractive young woman enjoying Heineken at end of 'Cuba' commercial



3. Heineken 'Meet you there' advertisement

4. Heineken Green Energy (Transformers) 'Edenmore' commercial

Case Study 2: Today FM



1. Today FM 'Ray D'Arcy' commercial

Case Study 3: Smithwick's

"Grandad" TV.

1. Smithwick's 'Granddad' commercial