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ENCODING ADVERTISEMENTS

The Creative Perspective

THE AUTHORS EXPLORE THE "CULTURE" OF advertising agencies using interviews and ethnography. Ethnography is a research methodology often employed by anthropologists to understand a culture, in this case the mini-culture of organizations. They explore the tensions that creative workers in agencies experience in their role as "cultural intermediaries," or those who translate cultural trends given their unique and often privileged place in society. As people who create advertisements—often influenced by marketing research about the latest trends—advertising creators are influential cultural intermediaries.

The authors note that ad creatives are often very aware of the "intertextual" nature of their work, where advertising refers to—and assumes that consumers know about—the latest thing in popular culture such as hit songs, TV programs, and movies. The chapter also highlights the work tensions that advertising creatives face, including tensions with other divisions such as research or media planning. This point foreshadows ideas in the next chapter by Leonard. A key "battleground" is with the client, who frequently may express dissatisfaction with the creative ideas for an ad campaign generated by the agency.

Introduction

Advertising is a potent form of mass communication which is instrumental in providing products with symbolic meaning and developing symbolic associations for brands within consumer culture (Elliott 1999). However the work of advertising agencies and advertising practitioners as cultural intermediaries within this process remains relatively under-explored and under-theorised within the advertising and marketing disciplines. This paper considers the work of copywriters and art directors within advertising agencies, both in terms of critical perspectives on advertising as cultural and social

production (Elliott and Ritson 1997; Goldman and Papson 1996; Jhally 1987), and in terms of recent ethnographic studies outside of the advertising and marketing literature which have explored the work of these cultural intermediaries from anthropological, cultural studies, and sociological perspectives (Cronin 2004a; Dewaal Malefyt and Moeran 2003; Lien 1997; Moeran 2005).

[. . .]

Advertising and the Cultural and Social World

[. . .] Advertisements work through the appropriation and incorporation of social discourses and the meaning structures of the cultural world through what McCracken (1986:74) has labelled as "meaning transfer", and by drawing upon the meanings which reside within the cultural and social world advertising works as a conduit streaming system to transfer these meanings to consumer goods. Advertising has an acknowledged dialogical and intertextual structure (Cook 1992; Fowles 1996; O'Donohoe 1997), which draws upon a multitude of cultural codes, ideologies, and discourses, such as music, books, movies, art, politics, current affairs, and celebrities to construct meaning (McCracken 1989; Scott 1990). Within the context of consumer culture advertising can be seen to "shape and reflect" social reality, by drawing upon patterns of meaning within the cultural and social world to construct symbolic associations for consumer goods, and these commodity discourses become ingrained within popular psyche and shape consumer experiences of social reality (Sherry 1987). Advertisements have become an integrated part of the popular culture which they parody (Olsen 2003), and by drawing upon socially situated codes, myths, cultural discourses, and national ideologies to develop resonant associations for consumer goods, advertisements both constitute prevailing ideologies and construct new mythologies and ideologies for commodities through these dialogical and intertextual relationships (Holt 2004; 2005; Randazzo 1993; Stern 1995; Thompson 2004). Tharp and Scott (1990) propose that advertising does not produce meaning in a top-down ideological fashion proposed by Marxian thought and commodity fetishism (Goldman 1992), or create meaning for the commodity form as Williamson (1978) suggests, but through the interactive flow between marketing institutions and the cultural world meaning is produced through a culturally determined and socially mediated process which is shared and negotiated between producers and consumers (Hall 1980; O'Donohoe 1999; Ritson and Elliott 1999). Interpretive developments in advertising research, such as Mick and Buhl's (1992) "meaning based model" of advertising experience, consumer "uses and gratifications" of advertising (O'Donohoe 1994), and the "social uses" of advertising meanings (Ritson and Elliott 1999) have challenged the hegemonic assumption that advertising "does things" to people, and have demonstrated how consumers are not only advertising literate and competent decoders of advertising, but use the meanings of advertising within social contexts in binding and ritualistic ways which are often unconnected to product consumption (Elliott and Ritson 1995). So while advertising discourse is unquestionably a prominent form of integrated social communication that has ideological effects, the text is not all-powerful or all-encompassing in its reach, and consumers are not merely passive receivers of advertising messages who process intended meanings in the exact fashion intended by advertisers and marketers (Buttle 1991). Indeed, interpretive advertising research has illustrated how consumers often

resist the latent meanings that advertisers and marketers seek to impose upon the commodity form, and subvert marketing messages in both distorting and creative ways (Hirschman and Thompson 1997; Ritson et al. 1996). . . .

Advertising Agencies as Cultural Intermediaries: Linking Corporations to Culture

Advertising practitioners as an occupational group have been labelled "cultural intermediaries" (Bourdieu 1984; Featherstone 1991), as individuals who possess the appropriate cultural, social, and educational capital to construct symbolic meaning and utility for commodities. This group provide the critical link between corporations and the world of culture through the implicit knowledge and symbolic capital they possess about the discourses of culture and society (Thompson and Haytko 1997). Cultural knowledge thus has a central role in the production of advertising meaning (Hackley 2003a), and is instrumental in developing what Lien (2003:173) has described as a "shared cultural repertoire" between producers and consumers. Advertising agencies are immersed within the discourses of consumer culture from which situated cultural knowledge is extracted, and the close links and similarities between the work of advertising practitioners and cultural anthropologists has been explored within advertising literature (Dewaal Malefyt and Moeran 2003; Hirota 1995; Jackall and Hirota 2000; Moeran 2005). These discourses are extracted through both the formal knowledge frameworks of the marketing research and cultural discovery systems of marketing and advertising, and informal knowledge frameworks such as the dispositions and cultural identifications of advertising practitioners which are crucial to the development of commercial linkages between production and consumption within the advertising process (Nixon 2003). Research into advertising production has illustrated how advertising creatives draw extensively upon their personal experiences within the cultural world, and other forms of cultural text such as movies, music, books, and other advertisements with which they have contact in the construction of meaning for an advertisement, and circulating cultural discourses become the raw material for the construction of an advertising message (Cronin 2004b; du Gay 1997; Hackley 2003c; Miller 1997; Soar 2000). Hirota (1995:340) has emphasised how advertising creatives incorporate everyday life into advertisements through their observations of the social world:

In their attentiveness to social activity, and perhaps in their willingness to enter new social worlds, creatives are commercial urban ethnographers of a sort whose subjects are the demeanour, idioms, interplay and foibles of other people. Whatever one's own viewpoint, one learns to discern the settled, taken for granted expectations of particular audiences, the commonplace cultural narratives that provide their frameworks of meaning and the familiar details that symbolise shared assumptions.

The conception of advertising creatives as "commercial urban ethnographers" illustrates how this occupational group attentively observe everyday social activity and incorporate these observations into symbols of mass consumption by weaving cultural narratives and shared meaning frameworks through the stories of consumer goods. Soar (2000:434) has emphasised how cultural intermediaries occupy "front row seats" in both the

production and consumption and the encoding and decoding of meaning, and this dual situated positioning enables advertising creatives to selectively reflect social worlds and cultural values through advertisements, in what Marchand (1985:165) has described as advertising's "social tableau". Consumer research knowledge, codified by advertising agencies and constructed with a commercial imperative through qualitative research techniques also has an important function in the production of an advertising campaign. Hackley (2002) has argued that the cultural knowledge gathered by advertising agencies through consumer research is a major dynamic in the production of advertising's ideological power within consumer culture, and has elsewhere described how "advertising agencies can be seen to be operating in the engine room of a panoptic marketing system" (Hackley 2000:246). Hackley draws the panoptic metaphor for advertising agency practice from the work of Foucault (1979:204), who described how the panopticon functioned as a laboratory of experimentation and power within a society which through mechanisms of observation was able to penetrate into human behaviour and exercise disciplinary power and control over individuals. The metaphor of the panopticon applied to advertising agencies illustrates how they operate as laboratories of power and observation within culture and society, and through the mechanisms of consumer research knowledge exercise power and control over situated consumers (Hackley 2002). Cronin (2004a; 2004b; 2004c) adopts a different perspective, and contends that knowledge within advertising agencies is constituted through the "circuits of belief" that circulate and flow between advertising practitioners, clients, consumers, regulators, and academics. Her perspective draws upon Foucault's (1980) analysis of the production of knowledge and power within society, and explores how knowledge circulates and flows between these different groups. Cronin argues that this knowledge does not solely reside within the locale of any specific group or set of "experts" such as an advertising agency, and therefore consumer research knowledge does not necessarily provide an advertising agency with power over consumers. While knowledge may circulate and flow between these different groups within society as Cronin's insightful analysis highlights, advertising agencies have a pivotal role in channelling and directing this knowledge for the purposes of developing culturally based consumption meanings (Thompson 2004), and consumer research knowledge can be seen to have a formational role in the construction of advertising's ideological power and resonance. The production of an advertisement is a socially constructed and mediated process which is developed through the discursive interactions of a large group of individuals such as account planners, copywriters, art directors, clients, photographers, commercial directors, and consumers (Whose voices are represented through research findings), which coalesce in the development of an advertising campaign (Hackley 1999a 2001; Shankar 1999). The discourses of these different groups complexly intertwine in the campaign development process, and the social interactions and negotiations between these various groups impact upon the content and structure of the advertising texts produced (Clarkin 2005; Moeran 2005). The imperatives of clients are often dominant within this process as advertising agencies are often highly economically dependent upon the business of their clients, which creates asymmetrical power relations between advertising agencies and corporate clients as various studies have explored (Alvesson 1994; Hogg and Scoggins 2001; Lury and Warde 1997). Advertising agencies therefore hold a pivotal position of mediation between corporate clients and the cultural world, and have an instrumental role in connecting and fusing corporate ideologies to the cultural discourses and national ideologies that circulate and flow within consumer culture (Cronin 2004a; Holt 2005).

Research Methodology

The research reported in this paper adopted an interpretive approach to advertising production (Hudson and Ozanne 1988), and an ethnographic study of seven weeks duration was undertaken within an Irish advertising agency during which the first researcher conducted non-participant observation. The use of ethnography has gained much popularity within the social sciences (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Schwartzman 1993), and has also been widely embraced by marketing and consumer research studies (Arnould 1998; Elliott and Jankel-Elliott 2003; Kozinets 2002; Ritson and Elliott 1999). This particular paper will focus on one segment of the overall study and develops an analysis of five ethnographic interviews which were conducted with copywriters and art directors during the course of the ethnography. Three interviews were conducted with paired teams of copywriter and art director, who worked together in developing concepts for advertising campaigns, and two interviews were conducted with a copywriter and an art director separately. A total of eight creative advertising practitioner's responses are analysed and reported upon. The interviews varied in length from 45 minutes to over one hour, and were subsequently transcribed into over 40,000 words of interview text. This paper adopts a discourse analysis approach to the interview texts, drawing upon approaches within discursive psychology (Hackley 2000; Potter and Wetherell 1987; Potter 2003; Wetherell 1998; Wood and Kroger 2000). Discourse analysis is a theoretical development within social psychology which involves the close study of language in use (Taylor 2001). This perspective proposes that social worlds are constituted and constructed through the talk and language that people use, and discourse analysis explores patterns and recurring features across language. As advertising is an institutional practice which is constituted and constructed through language, it is a particularly rich site to excavate through discourse analysis (Cook 1992; Hackley 1999b). The discourse analysis approach has a commitment to studying social texts for their structure, such as how arguments are built within the texts and the features and recurring themes, metaphors, and tropes that seem to recur; their function, such as the purpose that these versions of events serve and the consequences they have; and their variability, such as variations that are present both within the same account and between different accounts, which can often give some insights into the function of the text (Elliott 1996; Hackley 2003b; Maclaren 2002; Wood and Kroger 2000). The discourse approach seeks to explore how accounts are built and how patterns are operating within the discourse at hand by focussing upon the categories of the participants as they orient to them within the interaction as opposed to the pre-conceived categories of the analyst. A central feature of the discourse approach is the identification of the "interpretative repertoires" that are used by informants to describe and account for particular actions, events, or ideas (Hackley 2003b). 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.

This paper explores the interview texts generated during the ethnography for their structure, function and variation and identifies the interpretative repertoires, or ways of talking about their work and the metaphors and sets of terms which are drawn upon by advertising copywriters and art directors to describe the processes and practices in

which they engage. Guidelines for analysis and interpretation from within the consumer research tradition were used in the development of the analysis of the interview texts (Spiggle 1994), which are broadly commensurable with analytical approaches and conventions within discursive psychology (Potter and Wetherell 1987). The interviews were coded and interpretative repertoires identified and developed from the interview transcripts.

Feeding the Cultural Brain: Creatives' Appropriation of Cultural and Social Discourses

As the theoretical framework highlighted, advertising discourse is dialogical and intertextual in structure (Cook 1992; Fowles 1996), and it was interesting to explore within the interviews how creatives worked other areas of cultural discourse into advertisements. These intertextual discourses are bound up with the ideologies of the culture and society which they embody through their "social lives" (Appadurai 1986), and encoding these cultural fragments within an advertisement constructs cultural ideologies and values for a consumer good. One of the creative teams, P and M, described how they would develop advertising ideas from cultural referents and used the metaphor of a plant to describe how their brains would "soak up" research information and nutrients from other areas of cultural and social life. In this extract, M, the copywriter, describes how other areas of cultural discourse aid the development of creative ideas:

M: I'd watch . . . not as many movies as I'd like to really but definitely watch as many as I can and listen to music and just try not necessarily stay kind of on the edge of things or like relevant or keep up to date with what's kind of happening but just kind of try and keep feeding that kind of creative part of your brain with like kind of new stuff you know? New kind of innovative movies and good music. I mean often I'd just locate and I'd hear a piece of music that I just think has the right atmosphere or something if I'm working on something like a brief and I'm not really getting anywhere with it and I hear a piece of music that to me just has the right atmosphere I think well I don't even know what the commercial is going to be or I don't have the idea but I just think that piece of music somehow seems to . . . has the right tone for that product and what we're trying to do with it I sit in a room and listen to it and try and put images to it you know what I mean and see if that helps you kind of think of something. So definitely yeah other areas of creative work can help. And again it's like I was saying about whether it's research material of whatever it's all information to feed your brain with that will hopefully help you produce something.

M's account provides a rich conception how advertising creatives develop ideas through their contact with the discourses that circulate within consumer culture. He describes how he watches movies and listens to music, and while he denies that it is necessary to "stay on the edge" of things within culture, he acknowledges that it was important to keep "up to date", and he draws upon a metaphor that was commonly used by creative teams of how it was important to "feed your brain" with new cultural material to develop advertising ideas. Another art director, A, described how it was important in

her job to listen to music and watch a lot of television to know what was "out there", and this material was pivotal to the development of ideas within the creative process. Other studies of advertising producers have explored how cultural discourses are used as raw material to develop advertising meanings (Clarkin 2005; Grant 2004; Hirota 1995; Soar 2000), and the creatives interviewed within this agency described how this cultural material provided inspiration for the production of advertising. Interestingly, M acknowledges the formational role that consumer research can play in the development of advertising ideas, which illustrates the usefulness and relevance of Hackley's (2002) "panoptic" metaphor to the theoretical conception of advertising agency practice. M's account gives an example of how creatives intertextually weave these cultural sources, in describing how he will listen to music which he thinks has the right atmosphere, and how he puts images to the music to develop the advertising idea. It was particularly interesting that M was the copywriter within this team, who was primarily responsible for developing the words and dialogue in the production of advertisements, yet talked of putting images to music to develop advertising ideas. It became apparent within the interviews with creative teams that the lines of demarcation between the tasks of copywriter and art director often became blurred within the creative process, and copywriters and art directors would work interchangeably on different aspects of image and text to develop the initial advertising idea, and having accomplished this task would then bring their individual copywriting and art directing skills to bear upon developing and producing the finished advertisement. M's account demonstrates how cultural resources such as movies and music are fed into the creative development process through the personal and cultural identifications of copywriters and art directors (Nixon 2003). Another creative team, R and C, provided an insightful account of the ways in which they drew upon these cultural resources in their work, and how they appropriated other areas of culture for advertising messages:

R: Like I flick around the TV channels all the time . . . I'll watch anything . . . and stuff that shouldn't necessarily interest me but I do . . . again it just helps . . . it's incredible, particularly when you're working on concepts it's amazing how often something you watch two weeks ago . . . you know? . . . Kind of . . . can certainly be the inspiration . . . or if it's a book you read or . . .

C: Or just flicking through magazines . . . [R: Magazines yeah] . . . or photography books or anything that kind of gives you different ways of looking at the world or people. It's not necessarily that you'll find the perfect image in a photography book and you'll be able to stick your logo on that . . . [R: But it's usually the thinking behind it] . . . exactly yeah . . . if we were looking at a pint of Black Beer¹ in that way you know what would come out of it? What would we have to say about it? So that kind of thing can help even like reading a novel some kind of phrase can stick with you that sums up the moment or sums up the person and you realise what's going on with him . . . So you just have to constantly be kind of on the lookout for things . . . it's quite . . . it's much harder to come by it on purpose then it is by accident you know? Like when you've got a deadline and you know you're running out of time and you're flicking through all these books and you're going "There's nothing happening!" . . . and then

another time you might be on a bus just not even thinking about it and you see something that's kind of interesting.

This account offers some insights into the cultural dispositions of advertising creatives, and the implicit and idiosyncratic methods with which they approach their work. All of the creative teams interviewed, as "cultural intermediaries" (Featherstone 1991), had high levels of interest in all aspects of cultural discourse, such as movies, music, books, and television, and through their work they filtered these cultural interests and identifications into the generation of symbolic ideas for advertising campaigns. R describes how he will "flick around the TV channels" and "watch anything" as it helps him when he is working on developing advertising concepts. C's account explains that while creatives do have engagement with other cultural forms, they do not simply seek to "find the perfect image in a photography book" and "stick your logo" on that. R interjects by stating how the creative teams are interested in "the thinking behind" other forms of cultural discourse, which was also drawn upon by other creative teams in describing how this cultural material was utilised within the creative process. Interestingly, C describes how as a creative "you have to constantly be kind of on the lookout for things", and this description of the work of creatives positions them as cultural "magpies" (Clarkin 2005:70), on the look out for shiny cultural signifiers with which to develop their work and incorporate into advertising messages. C describes how the process of finding these cultural signifiers is harder to come by on purpose than by accident, and he describes how he can be "on a bus" and see something interesting. Another copywriter, R, described how he would "hang around" a hairdresser's shop when writing ads for that client, and would watch the ways in which consumers would interact with the hairdressers in the shop and the rituals in which the consumers would engage in having their hair cut and then fed these observations into the development of advertisements, which was a good example of how cultural creatives idiosyncratically adopted the methods of the anthropologist to produce advertising ideas (Dewaal Malefyt and Moeran 2003; Moeran 2005). These accounts demonstrate how creatives incorporate the raw material of the everyday cultural and social world into advertising concepts, developing advertising ideas through a reflexive awareness of other cultural forms and the situations they encounter within the course of their everyday lives (Clarkin 2005; Hirota 1995; Miller 1997; Soar 2000).

"Fighting" and "Battling" in the Advertising "Game"

The metaphors of "fighting" and "battling" were often drawn upon in interviews with creative teams in describing the struggles they would encounter in trying to have their ideas accepted, and many talked about the advertising process in terms of a game which they played with both clients and other advertising practitioners within the agency. M, a copywriter, provides a particularly rich example of how the fighting and battling repertoires were drawn upon by creative teams:

M: From a creative point of view you should be looking to try . . . not do an award winning ad every time cause you'd just drive yourself bonkers then but to always try and make sure there's something in that ad you think "Well that's quite good . . . that's a different way of looking at it . . .

there's some element of originality in there" . . . And the best ad people are all the time pushing themselves kind of for that which then hopefully carries all the way through because if you do believe this piece of work is good then you kind of fight for it along the way and there is in this game a lot of fighting for your work. Other people have other priorities and in some ways they'd like the easy answer because the Marketing Manager's got the Marketing Director to answer to who's got an MD to answer to and if they do something kind of different they might have to go up and explain themselves and they mightn't want to or they mightn't feel comfortable about doing that . . . you know? . . . But often the best ideas are the ones you're not entirely comfortable with and so you have to be prepared to kind of go and do battle for your work.

Within this account, M emphasises the importance for creatives to have an "element of originality" in their advertising ideas, and how the best advertising people continually "push" themselves to achieve this. This was a common pattern across the data, as copywriters and art directors talked of their high levels of personal investment and involvement in their work, and described how they pushed themselves hard to develop original and exciting advertising ideas. M describes how if he believed a piece of work was good he would "fight" along the way for it, and uses the metaphor of a game to describe the advertising process. He then describes how "other" people within the advertising process have "other priorities", and uses the example of how the marketing manager of a client firm may not be willing to "go up" and "explain themselves" to a marketing director higher up the chain of command, and would prefer to have the "easy answer" in developing a campaign as opposed to taking a chance on a challenging or innovative new idea. He describes how as an advertising creative, you have to be prepared to "do battle" for your work. Other studies into advertising production have similarly identified battles and power struggles within the creative advertising process, both between different practitioners groups (Hackley 2000; Hirschman 1989), and between advertising agencies and their clients (Alvesson 1994; Lury and Warde 1997). Within these interviews, creative teams drew upon the battle and fight metaphors to describe how they strove to have their ideas and creative visions for advertising campaigns accepted by both the client and other practitioner groups within the advertising agency, and continually pushed for the development of advertising ideas which they perceived to be original and challenging. The creative teams reported how innovative or new ideas within the creative process could be met with resistance, often because clients or other practitioners were unfamiliar with a particular concept or were uncomfortable in experimenting with new concepts. While these battles were occasionally but not consistently described in volatile terms, they indicated how advertising creative teams struggled to have their creative visions for advertising campaigns realised by clients and other practitioners within the advertising process, and the barriers they would encounter to innovative or challenging advertising ideas.

The Ideology of Science in the Advertising Process

The prevalence of scientific and managerial ideologies to measure and evaluate advertising through scientific means has historically been an integral part of the advertising

process (Frank 1997; Holt 2002). This process is often laced with uncertainty for clients (Lury and Warde 1997), and measuring and pre-testing audience reactions to advertising are often mechanisms which are used to reduce risk and uncertainty. However, as advertising is a process which is highly dependent upon the ingenuity of human creativity (El-Murad and West 2003; Hackley 1999b), the use of techniques for the objective measurement and evaluation of advertising can be a source of frustration for creative teams, and the clash between creative and managerial ideologies has been observed both historically and within contemporary advertising practice (Frank 1997; Hackley 2003c). In interviews with creative teams, they constructed clients as subscribers to the ideology of science, by seeking to evaluate and test advertising and make the process more measurable and safe for managerial purposes. This was particularly evident when creative teams talked about evaluation processes such as advertising copytesting (when advertisements are pre-tested with audiences to gauge the likely consumer response to the commercial), as D, an art director, described

D: A mountain of research comes back about that thick on what they thought of your commercial and it's even got a joystick thing like where . . . pull back when you think it's really good . . . which part of it you think is crap . . . so you get a graph . . . You see 25 seconds . . . yes . . . look you've hit the . . . fu**ing . . . like . . . now that is just taking research to the point of . . . it's just . . . God like! . . . Does anybody believe in their gut anymore? . . . You know like? . . . You can't . . . it's not a science . . . it's advertising. Clients would like to think there is some way you can process it and turn it into a science but if you were to do that where would the creativity go? I think the danger with a lot of research to my mind and I can't really find anybody who can disprove it to me is you end up doing middle of the road stuff to keep everybody happy and that's the danger of research and creatives I think all over the world are pretty scared of research because . . . what's it going to do to our ad?

In this account, D describes how a "mountain" of research comes back from copytesting sessions on what consumers thought of "your" commercial. It was interesting that D uses the metaphor of the "mountain" to describe this research, illustrating how he perceived the magnitude of the research process. He describes the process through which audiences are shown the commercial and evaluate it through the use of a "joystick thing", and he rhetorically asks during his account in frustration "Does anybody believe in their gut anymore?" He then draws upon a common pattern across the interviews with the creative teams, in describing how advertising was "not a science" but that clients would like to turn it into a science. This was a particularly good example of how the creative teams constructed the clients as subscribers to scientific ideologies which they felt removed the creativity from advertising campaign ideas and sought to make the advertising process less uncertain and more predictable and measurable. This was a dilemma for the creative teams, and D describes how the danger with research is that the team end up compromising and producing "middle of the road" campaigns to keep all the participants within the process satisfied. Other creative teams metaphorically described how advertising would enter a "tunnel of mediocrity" once processes of evaluation and testing of advertising began, in which any element of risk or uncertainty was removed from the advertising campaign. The concept of risk within the advertising

process has been explored by El-Murad and West (2003), who found that creative teams felt freer to take creative risks with less important clients, and from this they hypothesised that larger clients probably received less creative advertising. The interviews conducted within this study also revealed a similar pattern, in which creative teams described the advertising process for larger clients as having rigid structures and research filters in place, which could often lead to what they regarded as a dilution of the creative product. The teams described how ideas in the creative process for larger clients would be "eaten away" by research with the result that the end-product would become unrecognisable to the original idea conceived by the creative team, and the advertising would become bland and predictable under the paralysis of copytesting and research. Another copywriter, B, drew upon the analogy of poetry to describe the process through which client's copytested creative advertising work:

B: They analyse it and analyse it and analyse it . . . like a poem that is over-analysed . . . eventually it's not a poem anymore.

This pattern was drawn upon frequently in interviews with creative teams. It was a dilemma for these cultural practitioners as the research tools used by clients within the advertising process "killed" advertising ideas as they perceived it, yet clients sought to engage consumers with these advertising messages. For creative teams, the processes of copytesting sapped the creativity and spark from advertising ideas, yet these processes of scientific evaluation were a dominant and modernist ideology which prevailed within the advertising process. Some of the informants conceded that clients would be spending vast amounts of money on advertising campaigns, which were essentially intangible processes, and had a necessity to try to eliminate risks and uncertainties. However, paradoxically from the creative perspective these processes of testing and evaluation often resulted in the production of advertising campaigns which were "middle of the road" that did not offend consumers yet did not engage them on any level either. These processes often caused much frustration for creative teams, who felt their work was destroyed by these scientific and managerial ideologies, and one creative team described the "heartbreaking" process in which their work would enter the evaluation process. This was a clear example of the symbolic capital of creatives clashing with the economic capital of clients, a distinction drawn from the work of Bourdieu (1993) in his analysis of the field of cultural production for literary and artistic works, which has also been applied to advertising agency practice (Moeran 2005). In his account, D describes how creatives all over the world are "pretty scared" of research, and asks rhetorically "What's it going to do to our ad?" This was an interesting comment, as it implied the creative team had ownership of the advertisement, and other studies into advertising production have similarly explored how ownership of the advertising idea was an issue of contention within the advertising process (Hirschman 1989; Hogg and Scoggins 2001). The ideology of science repertoire that creative teams drew upon demonstrated the prevalence that the managerial processes and strategic imperatives of clients have within the advertising production process, and how the creative imperatives of copywriters and art directors are often eclipsed and silenced as a result.

Clients in Control: The Holders of the Purse Strings

A repertoire that was commonly drawn upon by creative teams was that clients were the sponsors of the advertising campaign, and ultimately had control of the development of the process. The asymmetrical power relationship between advertising agencies and large corporate clients is a topic that has been explored within advertising literature (Hogg and Scoggins 2001; Lury and Warde 1997), and this power relationship was particularly evident in interviews with creative teams. Some of the teams described a sense of responsibility to the client, as it was the client's money which was at stake in the development of a campaign, and these creatives described how they would want to do their best for the clients concerned ("Good clients get the advertising they deserve" was a set of terms used by one art director to describe this relationship). However, there was considerable variation in how the relationship between the advertising agency and the client was described. While some creatives appreciated the client's money was at stake in the process, others resisted the control that clients often exercised, as one copywriter R explained:

R: There's always like tales of the golden years of advertising where advertisers had a say and they'd more money and you know you hear tales of agencies in London who still do it like . . . "If you don't like what we're saying then go somewhere else!" . . . You know what I mean? Saatchi's used to do it like "We're right and if you don't think we're right then f**k off because this is what we do best" . . . And there's a certain amount of that with clients as well you'd like to think "Look we don't tell you how to run your bank or what interest rates to cut so don't tell us how to write ads". But you have to understand it's their money . . . they're the ones in control . . . they're the ones who say yes or no.

In this account R describes the "tales of the golden years of advertising" drawing upon the folklore of the stories of the advertising industry, when advertising agencies had more power within the agency-client relationship. He then offers the example of a bank, and how the agency does not tell the bank how to run their operations or what interest rates to cut, so the bank should not tell the advertising agency how to write ads. However, he concedes within his account that it's "their money" which funds the process, and that "they're the ones in control" and "the ones who say yes or no". In this sentence, R concedes to the power that the client has within this relationship. There was variation in how creative teams described the power relationship between the advertising agency and corporate clients. Some creatives expressed frustration at the rigidity that this relationship often imposed upon their work, such as R, while others described a more fluid and open relationship with the personnel of large clients that they had worked with for a long period of time. However, there was a common acknowledgment across the interview texts that larger clients in particular had a controlling and dominant influence upon the creative process. This power relationship was manifested within the practices of the advertising agency, and the teams described how client processes and ideologies for developing and evaluating advertising ideas, such as "Idea Understanding Tools" and "Ways of Brand Building", were dominant mechanisms for developing campaigns within the advertising process, which illustrated the extent to which the advertising agency was subservient to and economically dependent upon the larger corporate client.

Discussion and Conclusions

This paper has provided some empirical insights into the work practices of copywriters and art directors within an Irish advertising agency and the processes of advertising production in which they engage. Advertising creatives clearly draw from their cultural knowledge to construct advertisements in the fashion proposed by Hackley (2002) and Soar (2000), and the discourses of the cultural and social world become the raw material for the social construction and cultural constitution of advertising meaning. These cultural and social discourses embody the ideologies and values of the culture and society from which they are extracted, and when appropriated by advertising creatives these meanings become encoded and embedded within the structure of advertisements for commodities. Copywriters and art directors perform the role of what Lévi-Strauss (1966) described as "bricoleurs", weaving different and unrelated threads of cultural text together within a commercial tapestry. These commercial tapestries are constructed through the cultural and social capital of cultural intermediaries, who are dually situated as both producers and consumers of meaning within consumer culture, and they employ this situated knowledge to construct culturally resonant advertising (Cronin 2004a; Soar 2000). . . . The production of an advertising campaign is a socially constructed process, which is developed through the discursive interactions of a wide variety of different groups, each with their own set of ideologies and agendas. Advertising as an institutional practice provides a fascinating point of intersection between the creative and managerial ideologies of different practitioner groups within the advertising process, as anthropological based accounts of advertising practice have explored in-depth (Dewaal Malefyt and Moeran 2003; Moeran 1996, 2005). Lien (1997:51) for example has noted how latent conflicts between clients and creative teams and between aesthetics and commerce are embedded within the social structure of advertising agencies. The findings reported in this paper provide some empirical support for this proposition. Creative practitioners in advertising agencies occupy a cultural industry which is driven by the economic capital and strategic imperatives of their corporate clients, and have to try to negotiate their symbolic capital within the advertising process. However, they find they are often constrained in their work by the scientific ideologies of larger clients and by the power relations of economic dependency that exist between the advertising agency and the corporate client, which often results in a frustrating creative dilemma for these occupational groups (Hackley 2003c; Hirschman 1989). The advertising field could therefore not be considered an "art world" (Becker 1984) in the conventional sense of artistic production and aesthetic expression, as it is a form of sponsored creativity which is primarily motivated by the commercial agendas and strategic marketing objectives of corporate clients. So while advertising is often considered to be a culturally creative and socially expressive form of discourse, it is sponsored, shaped, and constituted through multinational corporate ideologies which can have a dominant influence upon the finished advertisement that is produced. The research reported in this paper has focussed upon the perspectives of Irish creative practitioners within one advertising agency. Future research could explore the perspectives of cultural creatives in other research sites across different cultural contexts, or examine the perspectives of different practitioner groupings within advertising agencies such as account planners, account handlers, creative directors, and media planners to understand the practices and processes in which they engage. Another possible route for future research would be to ethnographically follow

the campaign development process for a particular product or brand in order to investigate how campaign ideas evolve and how advertisements come to constitute particular cultural meanings, ideologies, and mythologies through the development of this process. The wealth of new ethnographic and anthropological perspectives on advertising and marketing production has demonstrated the value of ethnographic insights into advertising and marketing based phenomena (Dewaal Malefyt and Moeran 2003; Lien 1997; Mazzarella 2003; Moeran 2005), which make this a particularly fruitful and exciting avenue for future research studies within the advertising and marketing disciplines. While the research reported in this paper has relied primarily upon interview data with copywriters and art directors, it is hoped these findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of the role and work of cultural intermediaries within consumer culture and the processes of advertising production in which these creative practitioners engage.

Questions

- 1 How are creative advertising workers a form of "cultural intermediaries"?
- 2 How do creative workers search for and use the "raw data" of culture in advertising?
- 3 Why might the creation of advertising be considered "battles" or "games"?
- 4 How does the ideology of science create tensions in the creation of advertising?
- 5 In what ways are the latest cultural trends—visual styles, cultural icons, songs—used in recent advertisements?

Note

1. The name of the product mentioned in this account has been changed for the purposes of confidentiality and anonymity which was agreed between the first researcher and the advertising agency prior to conducting the research.

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