Decoding creative decision-making: The influence of social context on the choices art directors and copywriters make about what is novel and valuable in creative advertising.

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DECLARATION

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the researcher alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Signed:

[Signature]

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Dated: March 12, 2011
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ABSTRACT

Decoding creative decision-making: The influence of social context on the choices art directors and copywriters make about what is novel and valuable in creative advertising

This was an action-oriented study of the concrete experiences of a peer group of mostly middle-level male art directors and copywriters (collectively known as ‘creatives’) engaged in decision-making at the evaluation end of the advertising process in some of the world’s largest advertising agencies. The emergent focus was on how they perceived and interpreted concepts of novelty and originality, and planned and negotiated their version around what was generally considered to be a complex, ambiguous and uncertain social process.

As is appropriate for an exploratory study, empirical material was derived from both literature and from grounding in practitioner experience, and reported via a combination of informant accounts and reflective researcher observations. Fieldwork was conducted over a three-year period between April 2001-December 2003. Sixty-seven interviews across three sample groups and two agency observations were conducted in major centres of advertising in the US, UK, Europe and Australasia.

A number of social influences emerged from the data, the most significant was that too many decision-makers with contradictory and unclear performance expectations and multiple entities outside the group with conflicting values and different decision-making styles made it difficult for art directors and copywriters to moderate, maintain and manage the standards of novelty and originality they advocated to management, clients and expected of themselves and demanded of their peers.

The outcome of the investigation a coherent naturalistic worldview of the affective reactions of art directors and copywriters to workplace situations, and a workable definition of what it means to be creative in an agency that may help facilitate an understanding of how both agencies and creatives can make themselves more creatively sustainable in future. A conceptual framework of the inter-relationship between the creative process and creative person is proposed.
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This study was the product of issues I have explored though much of my professional life. My personal history, academic work and the field of creative advertising in which I have been involved have intersected and informed one another. It has been my good fortune to know personally and professionally many wonderful people in advertising communities around the world. Some have shared their enthusiasm for the subject, others have contributed to the field in their own right and added their lifetimes of experience to my quest. I am grateful to those friends and colleagues with whom I have been exchanging ideas on advertising for years, and to agency people for allowing themselves to be studied and their work dissected and by discussing their behaviour the findings uncovered. I am indebted to those antagonists who have listened, provoked and challenged, and unwittingly contributed in many ways. I have been blessed with the guidance of excellent supervisors and mentors. Special thanks to Professors John Philip Jones and Peter Horsfield for their unwavering faith in me, and for being supportive and interested in talking though some of the more challenging issues. Special thanks to my husband Ted Powell, without whose unerring patience, encouragement and support this dissertation would not have been possible.

This paper is dedicated to the advertising art directors and copywriters around the world who took part in this research and whose voices are rarely heard and whose unrelenting toil provides colour to our daily lives. They do what they must and what is expected to earn a living – sharpen their pencils, boot their computers, make phone calls – and produce ads.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Statement of Topic
The researcher’s Master of Arts thesis [Appendix A Abstract: The Relationship Between Environment and Outstanding Creative Performance in Advertising] and subsequent book chapter titled ‘The Emperor’s New Clothes: A view from Australia on the Creative Process’, in Jones (2000) International Advertising: Realities and Myths (pp. 207-218) investigated the relationship between environment and outstanding creative performance in Australia between 1993-6 and found the performance of art directors and copywriters ranked higher by peers if they worked for a multinational agency. Causal factors were outside the scope of the research question and the reasons why never satisfactorily resolved, but it did suggest that social context played a key role in determining perceptions of their performance. The topic of this thesis that social context influences the choices art directors and copywriters make about what is novel and valuable in creative advertising evolved out of this earlier research and twenty years professional engagement with the international advertising community as a practitioner and educator.

Colleagues with whom the researcher had continuing professional associations with in Australia/New Zealand, UK/Europe, USA, and Asia and who worked in these types of agencies reported significant changes taking place between the completion of the earlier research and commencement of this investigation. Art directors and copywriters appeared most affected by a shift in emphasis from creative authority to financial accountability: they felt their expertise was no longer valued and were unsure of their place in the new enterprise. Too much was expected of them in too little time and their judgements about what they considered novel and valuable were constantly challenged on new criteria. The theoretical stance that creativity in advertising is contextually bound by social process was, in a sense, ‘given’ through these informal discussions and with colleagues over this time.

1.2. Research Questions
The aim of the research was to describe how a peer group of mostly middle-level\(^1\) male art directors and copywriters in some of the world’s largest advertising agencies behaved when confronted with choices they made, or were made, about their work at the evaluation end of the advertising process. The researcher wanted to know why they saw

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\(^1\) Agency insiders frequently use the boxing metaphor ‘middleweight’ to describe this group (see page 8)
their version of novelty conflicting with others in the first place, the strategies they used to influence a decision in their favour, and how they organized themselves to be professionally creative in what is generally described as a highly ambiguous workplace context. These statements were broken down into the following research questions:

1. What conditions, contexts and situations in multinational agencies influenced and shaped decisions art directors and copywriters made about novelty and value?

2. What was the nature of the interaction between art directors and copywriters and other decision-making groups? How did accommodating different standards of novelty and value influence their actions, and what were the behavioural consequences?

‘Decision-making can depend partly on operant variability’, stated Neuringer (2002), and the question inventory was expanded to include the following broad variants:

- Measurable attributes such as adherence to rules, role descriptions
- Organisational features such as resources, procedures, structures, systems, processes, and measurements
- Political, economic, cultural, social, economic, textual structures
- Interpretive constructs such as symbols, assumptions, values, beliefs
- Underlying motivations and behaviors
- Cultural values such as age, time, ethnicity, power-distance
- Group interaction contingencies, including ability, motivation and role perception, situational contingencies

1.3. Conceptual Framework

Social group theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Sherif & Sherif, 1953) provided the general conceptual framework to test the assumption that the choices directors and copywriters make about what is novel and valuable is engendered, facilitated, compromised and constrained by social negotiation at specific stages of the decision-making cycle, and by levels of interaction both within their peer group and with outside groups who have a vested interest in the outcome. Three diagrams are used throughout the report to describe the contextual elements of creative decision-making [Figure 1: System-levels of creative decision-making; Figure 2: Competency levels in creative decision-making; Figure 5: Situational attributes of creative decision-making] because no one model has managed to
capture the complexity of all its features within one framework, or encompass all the elements involved (Nemiro, 2004: Albert, 1985).

Figure 1: System-levels of creative decision-making is an adaptation of the matrix developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and represents the manifold interactions of how decisions are made at different levels of authority. It provided the initial framework for operationalising the motivations and expectations of agency decision-making groups, and how they interact with each other at system level. Implied within each level is some degree of social, political and economic inequality underneath. In other words, performance expectations above influence the motivations of those below. Stratification was generally based on divisions of labour and cascading levels of authority, and was relatively stable and impervious to change.

Advertising networks employ thousands of skilled workers globally, and to keep them engaged they are formed into manageable groups (organisations), and then further into task-specific sub-organisations or groups (project teams and departments). The matrix was instructive in locating the levels of interaction between art directors and copywriters and account handlers and creative directors, and levels of influence beyond. In large agencies there are more decision-makers, and levels of interaction between and within levels - and more opportunity for disagreements over what is considered novel and valuable. The levels are briefly described below and set the scene for described events in Chapter 5 [Findings].

Figure 1: System levels of creative decision-making
Within this framework, creative decision-makers (art directors and copywriters and account handlers) present their interests in order to reach an agreement on what constitutes novelty and value. Each level has its own unique dynamic and dependencies, style of thinking and normative ideas about how advertising works, and this sometimes leads them to make decisions about what is novel, original and valuable irrespective of any strict sense of validity (Naremore & Bratlinger, 1991).

**Individual, group and collective level**

Evaluating the usefulness of an advertising project or campaign in terms of novelty and originality typically occurs at *sub-group, group* and *collective* level, but with some *organizational* and *community* intervention. Art directors and copywriters located at *individual, group* and *collective* level (1) are closest to the decision-making action. As *individuals*, they frame and reach a decision based on their performance history and experience, level of training, skills, interests, values, and moral or ethical development, then present it to the *collective* (peers, award judges, creative directors) for their tacit approval. The authority of the *collective* lies in its power to dominate, police, protect and control standards, and art directors and copywriters trust and believe in the unique abilities and perspectives of the collective to set standards. Their judgment confers legitimacy, status, esteem, and the promise of reward for art directors and copywriters who desire to work hard and well for the sake of the collective. It is here that art directors and copywriters jostle for space in which to earn their reputation. The collective thus exercises a dominating influence on how art directors and copywriters interact with each other, and their acceptance of these standards becomes the true test of their creativity. (Powell, 1997).

**Sub-organisational level**

Account directors and handlers and creative directors located at *sub-organizational* and *organizational* levels are responsible for managing creative, client, consumer, and agency expectations. They can and do have opposing interpretations of what is novel and valuable because their views are mediated by both the creative presenting the work and the client paying for the agency’s service. Judgments made by art directors and copywriters at *group* level therefore bear the immediate consequences of their evaluation.

Art directors and copywriters are part of, but not members of, the wider ‘account handling team’ – although their contribution to the successful outcome of the agency product is essential (Hogg & Scoggins, 2001). Whereas account handlers generally stay on
a particular client’s account, art directors and copywriters may work on a number of accounts and at different times and stages. Sometimes art directors and copywriters are asked to work on a particular account if the management team likes them and admires what they do.

Organisational level

Multinational advertising agencies were selected as data collection sites because these types of agencies provide a model of how business is conducted in Western advertising, and how art directors and copywriters are expected to think and behave. Their authority and influence extends from higher and wider levels where they conduct international business through networks of local, regional and national offices down to the lowest level of group decision-making [Figure 1: System-levels of creative decision-making]. This can involve a dozen or so groups and individuals at management level servicing large, complex and multi-varied accounts.

While art directors and copywriters, creative directors, account handlers and planners, and client representatives on different levels of authority share common goals and objectives and may be in concert in terms of planning, cooperating communicating expected outcomes, they may also analyze the same information differently, depending on their level of competency. The hierarchy of competencies in Figure 2 [Competency levels in creative decision-making] is an adaptation of one developed by Elspeth McFadzean (2002) and attempts to provide some logical structure and sequencing to decision-making by competency. These competencies are amplified in Table 1 [Primary structural influences on expertise and performance] in the next chapter (page 25) and further linked to notions if social competence and cognition in writing up the findings.
Figure 2: Competency levels in creative decision-making

Adapted from McFadzean, 2002, page 472

The central premise of this model is that individuals with higher levels of competencies expect higher rates of return for their efforts because creative talent is generally considered to be inborn, not the product of professional training and development and they are prepared to take greater risks. This would place art directors and copywriters with their highly developed cognitive and problem solving skills at the top end of the stairway [Levels 4 and 5].

Acting and thinking in a creative way is perceived as higher in legitimacy and more important than efficiency in coordination or production on this scale, and this poses a problem for account handlers imposing authority. Art directors and copywriters described account handlers as more process-driven and outcome-oriented, and enacting more practiced routines, and it could be reasonably assumed that they would sit around Levels 3 or 4 on the stairway. By definition, competency in coordination involves people-related activities and managing teams and processes than solving problems. Creative Directors and senior art directors and copywriters span not only more functional levels [Figure 1:
System levels of decision-making] but enact a more complex behavioral repertoire of emotions, intuitions and self-awareness at a higher level of competency than both middle-weight art directors and copywriters and account handlers on the hierarchical scale.

While the matrix was instructive in showing how art directors and copywriters and account handlers might work together in principle in an efficient and cooperative manner, art directors and copywriters in the study reported it rarely happened in reality. There was often conflict of interest and resistance at the boundaries between them and managers at different levels of development, authority and competency. Handlers were rewarded for delivering outstanding results at their level, and art directors and copywriters at the top of the competency scale for outstanding performance. The disparity in reward allocation for competency was an overarching theme in informant accounts.

Researchers in the pragmatic paradigm look for causal effects from a number of different perspectives, however, the researcher believed that by examining the responses of art directors and copywriters alone and not treating them and handlers as competing game players would mean none of the behavioural nuances the researcher sought to understand would be overlooked. A singular view was also useful in that the researcher didn’t need to question or tolerate the complexity and incompleteness of conflicting accounts.

The investigation touched upon the interaction between clients and account managers but only to the point that their actions influenced the mental image of art directors and copywriters as so-called creative entities. A distinction, however, was made between development levels and working styles because there was evidence in the literature that novices and experts approach and interpret decisions differently. Prolonged and intense experience through practice changes the way experts approach a solution and how they use their knowledge (Ericsson et al., 2006; Iasken & Dorval, 1993; Chi et al., 1988). Experts have highly developed technical and social skills, and are able to work with authority and autonomy, performing several tasks at one time with a level of automaticity, and are more accurate at evaluating solutions. Middle-level art directors and copywriters, on the other hand, typically perform specialized singular tasks with knowledge and skill. (Sennett, 2009; Hogg & Scoggins, 2001; Simonton, 2000; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Ford, 1995; Amabile, 1988). The researcher sought to build on these differences by describing how a peer group of art directors and copywriters of approximately the same career age and professional status who were neither novice or
expert behaved when they made - or judgments were made, about their work, and how aggregates of these decisions shaped their performance expectations.

The group of art directors and copywriters under investigation had an average of ten years deliberate practice in creative advertising and were generally considered emerging experts in their field. They didn’t have enough novel or original work in their portfolio to move to a higher level of authority and were described by their peer group as mid-career or middleweights. At this development level, they were considered neither amateur nor master but in the middle ground that English social thinker John Ruskin described as both ‘defiant and doomed’ (Sennett, 2008). Doomed because at their functional level they work under persistent uncertainty, and are unable to exercise influence over a decision, or enforce an agreement on novelty and value, or take ownership or control outcomes. Robbins (1996) describes the place art directors and copywriters occupy as ‘the large, impersonal and ambiguous middle-ground of organisational life where the facts don’t speak for themselves.’

The researcher avoided making a distinction between types or levels of creative ability, assuming instead that this cohort of art directors and copywriters are by definition creative because they work in the creative department, and have accumulated sufficient technical, procedural and intellectual knowledge and a level of competency to be creative within their scope of work. Copywriters provide text for print and screen ads and scripts for TV and radio advertising, and art directors the pictures, but they collaborate equally when developing concepts. Although crucial to their performance, the researcher was also less interested in the measurable outcome of project or campaign in terms of creativity, novelty and originality because original and creative outcomes aren’t always considered novel - and novel outcomes are not always necessarily creative by some measures. Nor does the research illuminate how art directors and copywriters confer judgment or make choices between alternative courses of action. Instead it focuses on how they defend the choices they make based on social testability, and in contexts where the product is difficult to evaluate and where negative feedback is likely. Only the broadest outline of the relations between measures of creativity, the client/agency relationship, and advertising/mass media and the shadow of the wider economic context are provided because the research attended primarily to their influences on creative decision-making.

The challenge for the researcher was to uncover and interpret the complex of behaviours within a largely unobservable multi-level, context-based, process-oriented situation where the product outcome was ambiguous and unspecified, and where art directors and
copywriters were differentiated from other groups in terms of discipline, level, competency and development. The researcher anticipated that uncovering the social characteristics of decision-making situations in which they found themselves would provide clues as to why they acted as they did when their version of novelty was under threat, and make their behaviour tangible, understandable and reportable.

Decisions made about what and how to report were tied up with what was appropriate to the outcome of the study and practicable for the researcher. Of consideration was the time gap between the interviews (2001-3) and writing up the results (2009-2010) and the researcher had to consider if changes that had taken place in the advertising industry were significant enough to alter the findings. This is discussed further in Chapter 6 [Conclusions].

1.4. Research Summary

Reading into the field assisted in clarifying the focus and in determining a broad set of research questions. The research literature provided a point of reference on which to build the theory that social context influenced the choices art directors and copywriters made about what was novel and valuable in creative advertising. The review of the literature in Chapter 2 [Literature Review] contextualized the investigation within the current state of knowledge and evaluated its value to the body of knowledge.

Various social research methods, approaches and strategies used to investigate attitudes and perceptions among decision-making groups were compared and evaluated in Chapter 3 [Methodology]. A qualitative or naturalistic method was selected because it allowed for the investigation of situations from informants’ points-of-view and for emergent theory to guide data collection. Data collection techniques were tested. Observations were found to be unsuitable because the data the researcher was anticipating was not readily observable. In-depth interviews were selected as the best way to collect this kind of data because they allowed the researcher to analyze first hand informant accounts and make sense of their activities.

Fieldwork was based on face-to-face interviews across three sample groups and conducted over a three-year period between April 2001-December 2003. Reported data came from a primary Creative sample of sixteen copywriters and seventeen art directors identified at the transitional development stage between novice and expert and employed – or recently employed in the creative departments of large multinational advertising agencies for more than six years and were of similar career level and experience.
Two further samples (Creative management and Independent commentator) of similar size and composition were introduced when it became apparent that the information the researcher had anticipated would not emerge from the single Creative sample. They were interviewed using a set of expectation questions. Data from these samples was used to support or refute claims made by the primary Creative sample in analysis, and to confirm the accuracy of the researcher’s interpretation in Chapter 5 [Findings]. Sixty-seven interviews in total were conducted across the primary and secondary sample groups in major centres of advertising in the US, UK, Europe and Australasia. The total number of interviews conducted, including the additional twenty-eight interviews from the Independent commentator sample, was ninety-five. Theoretical explanations of creative decision-making behaviour were thus inductively grounded in empirical data from these three sample groups.

The sample composition and size were determined by scope of the research question and were considered reliable based on the researcher’s previous experience in the field and that of other researchers. Selection was facilitated through reputable recruitment companies in each geographic location to ensure that the researcher was not in a dependent relationship with either agencies or informants. The ethics of conducting research on human subjects was addressed prior to the commencement of fieldwork, and appropriate steps were taken to ensure that the research did not harm or exploit those who participated.

Recorded field notes and whatever site documents were available were gathered. An interview schedule and broad set of questions ensured nothing important was overlooked. Interview questions had features in common but varied slightly to accommodate each group, they were not always presented in any fixed order or in the same wording. The role of the researcher was evaluated as research progressed to ensure that no exogenous meaning was imposed on classifications. Half of the interviews were recorded on audiotape and when data began to replicate the researcher reverted to note taking for the remaining interviews. Coding and data collection as a result happened simultaneously, and a general typology of decision-making was developed and redeveloped as research progressed. The researcher was committed to ethically responsible research and took appropriate steps to ensure data was stored securely and that the privacy of informants was guaranteed.

Getting a grasp on what art directors and copywriters understood as creative, novel and valuable, and how they advocated their version to account handlers and client
representatives, and negotiated it through the creative decision-making cycle was inductively drawn from interviews in Chapter 4 [Data analysis]. Common themes were located and inspected, and a provisional explanation of creative behaviour constructed by testing a set of causal links.

The first stage of analysis [Chapter 4: Data analysis] involved sorting, grouping and organizing data from Creative interviews into meaningful categories and systematically and progressively identifying and naming shared behavioural features [actions/interactions] that clustered around contexts, conditions, situations [Figure 4: Situational attributes of creative decision-making]. Data was manually collapsed in a matrix of possible attributions derived from testing. Attributes included: (1) intervening social contexts and conditions, (2) situations in which interventions occurred, (3) actions and interactions that guided interventions, (4) the behavioural consequences [Figure 5: Categories of Attribution]. Categories were ranked in terms of frequency and resonance, rhetoric and intensity, and later on a positive negative scale to determine their significance to the group. Rhetorical saturation was considered achieved when no further new codes or categories could be found or identified.

The second stage involved systematically coding interview data from creative directors and account handlers in the Creative management sample into the same categories and cross-referencing and comparing the labels both sample groups put on these events, conditions, contexts, situations, actions, interactions and behaviours.

Verbal reports revealed nested levels of interrelated contexts, and a provisional list of features-in-common was compiled that fitted the observable facts. From these reports the researcher was able to create an account of the social setting and to report on what art directors and copywriters understood as central, distinctive and enduring about the relationships they had with each other and other decision-making groups when it came to evaluating the novelty and value of a project or campaign. Tentative hypotheses, after-the-fact ethics and dilemmas were contested in writing up the results once the accounts were on the ground to see.

Cumulative evidence increased the definitional clarity and probability that the working hypothesis was sound. In writing up the findings [Chapter 5: Findings] sufficient causal relationships were found to tentatively support the working hypothesis that that social context in multinational advertising agencies influences the choices art directors and
copywriters make about what was novel and valuable, and that aggregates of decisions shape their performance not ability.

Interviews provided a reasonably detailed account of the social organization of the decision-making situation and group processes, and provided evidence of how art directors and copywriters acquire the necessary expertise to coordinate their activities, negotiate their way through the decision-making process, and how they come to share a common appraisal of their circumstance. Interviews illuminated some previously hidden and unremarked underlying actions - too many decision-makers with contradictory and unclear performance expectations and benchmarks, and multiple entities outside the group with conflicting values and different decision-making styles caused the failure of all parties to agree on and enforce a common standard of novelty and originality and this caused varying degrees of disunity, performance anxiety and decreased motivation. Value statements made about novelty and value were shifting and ill-defined because decision-making groups were unable to agree on what constituted a measure and this had implications for conflict, competition, collaborative interaction, cooperation and bargaining. In Chapter 5, the researcher uses narrative explanations and impressionistic tales to make visible the socially constructed and organized contexts in which these judgments were made.

In the final chapter [Chapter 6: Conclusions] the researcher considered the origins and value of the illusion and inference of creative ability and calls to question the viability of agencies of the future as so-called ‘creative’ environments. Some generalisations and value statements are made about the state of affairs in relation to the population as a whole.

1.5. Purpose and Contribution
In concluding the previous study, the researcher stated that if we are to fully understand the nature of creative work in advertising agencies it needs to come from a deeper level and with representative creative voices talking about what is going on (Powell, 1997: 162). Creative researcher Cameron Ford (1995) concurred by stating that traditional concepts of creativity need to be expanded to account for the quintessentially social nature of creative action in organisational settings and that this is best understood in their terms. Sasser & Koslow (2008) in an overview of advertising creativity research noted a general lack of studies using working advertising creatives. They proposed that the practitioner world is full of creativity and inspiration for research. The researcher
anticipated that reporting on the complex of social and cultural interactions at the most descriptive and least inferential level of decision-making would compensate for the significant holes in data from the researcher’s previous study and ‘prompt a new paradigm of original creativity research’ (Sasser & Koslow, 2008) by adding the interpretive voice of practitioners to the body of knowledge about advertising.

Over the past three decades the word ‘creative’ has become an honorific label attached to a wide range of individuals, situations and products in advertising. In part, this can be attributed to the fact that in Western culture we have come to believe that creativity begins and ends with the person, and the influence of other factors often ignored. The researcher anticipated that moving the perception of creative activity in advertising away from the popular romantic and traditional perception as some divine, mysterious and unexplainable talent and towards the product of group interdependency would challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions about what is central, distinctive and enduring about the relationship between art directors and copywriters and the organizations they work for, and provide a plausible readjustment or reconstruction of the definition of their activity.

Nowadays, creativity is widely believed to be essential to meet the demands of the competitive global marketplace, and there is consensus in the research and business communities that knowing how creative people operate holds enormous potential for scientific investigation. Because of the variables and difficulty in accessing suitable collection sites, few researchers to date have taken up the challenge. A fuller account of these difficulties can be found in Chapter 3 [3.5: Data Collection]. Creativity researcher Howard Gardner (1993), however, concedes few question the legitimacy of such an undertaking because of the value and importance Western culture in particular places on creativity and innovation.

The ultimate value of this kind of research is that it seeks to resolve problems created by new developments in organizations. Over recent years there has been a shift in professional legitimization from a reliance on social origins and character values to a reliance on rationalization and efficiency in advertising. Departing from what is now perceived as a normal window on ‘true work’ risks challenging the notion that management know best (Vincente, 1999). Certain claims made by informants and the researcher may challenge what agencies have spent decades developing and supporting, and in particular those with a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Work shapes
the capacity and dignity of art directors and copywriters, and the researcher believed, how they perceive their time and contribution valued and how they made sense of their world would be a useful addition to other types of knowledge about advertising. Observing the interplay between the observable social and cultural relationships, social rules and structures that shape the interactions between groups of art directors and copywriters and account handlers could provide some insight into the affect these social ties have on shaping the future of creative populations. The research was pragmatic in approach in that it attended primarily to commonsense knowledge, and this makes possible a ‘reverse flow’ of knowledge about workplace conditions that might be perceived as useful to agencies and groups of art directors and copywriters willing to harness its insights and make appropriate interventions.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Finding a suitable framework to collect information about how a group of art directors and copywriters with low levels of authority [Figure 1: System-levels of creative decision-making] and high ideational competencies [Figure 2 Competency levels in creative decision-making] negotiate products that are hard to define and measure with process-driven account handlers with higher levels of authority but lower levels of competency and who have conflicting standards and loyalties, and in agencies that aspire to be hubs of innovation yet act more like institutions was difficult. This prompted the development of a framework [Figure 3: Components of creative decision-making] to notionally link all possible elements into a unified view, with novelty at the core. It helped focus the reading towards the cognitive aspects of the decision-making and the research question as opposed to trying to describe the behaviour of art directors and copywriters within pre-determined categories of attribution that may or may not have been accurate or appropriate.

**Figure 3: Components of creative decision-making**

Cognition is a critical antecedent to the production of novelty and its evaluation and is generally considered to be the function of three components – expertise, creative thinking skills and motivation. One component is as critical as the other, and while there may be disagreement about where the exact boundaries of these components lie there is general agreement that motivation is immediately influenced by the other two (Amabile, 1998; Simonton, 1995; Csikszentmihalyi, 1995).

![Diagram showing the components of creative decision-making](image)

Source: Adapted from Amabile (1998)

The review involved searching through databases using these key words and following reference links and consulting with colleagues regarding sources that may
have been missed. It was initially confined to a fifteen-year period (1995-2010), but on occasions went back earlier to identify where certain thoughts came from.

2.1. Literature and Knowledge

*Creative thinking*

Art directors and copywriters use a combination of generative intelligence, cognitive ability, domain-specific skills, proficiencies and knowledge about advertising to create novel solutions to marketing problems and opportunities not available to account handlers and client representatives whose job it is to market the product. Doing it well is generally assumed to be the result of extraordinary *creative* thinking ability.

The body of knowledge on creative thinking is generally considered too vast to encompass with any consequence (Mumford et al., 2002; Sternberg, 1999; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Sternberg, 1995; Gardner, 1993; Gruber & Wallace, 1990; Amabile, 1983; Boden, 1982) but given its significance to the production of novelty in advertising it would be inadmissible not to include a summary. The major research areas, contributors and major outcomes were systematically converged, summarized in a series of tables in Appendix C [*Summary of Research into Creative Activity, 1952-present*] and present a unified view of creativity activity as a reference and point of departure for this research.

Much of the literature appeared in the late 1980s and across a number of research disciplines (education, psychology, sociology, neuroscience, mathematics) and paralleled newfound interest in organizations as sites of innovation. Contemporaneous literature on advertising creativity bears the influence much of this work. Researchers Simonton (2000), Ford (1995), Amabile (1988), Barron & Harrington (1981), Rothberg & Greenberg (1974), Razik (1974) and Hallman (1963) attempted to categorize the volume of contributions and Appendix C *Summary of Research into Creative Activity, 1952-present* is substantially built from these indexes. It lists researchers who have made important and distinctive contributions and are variously cited in the report. Chronological reading of Table 1 *Major Research Areas* [Appendix C] shows how research interest has been influenced by social change, commercial imperatives and economic applicability. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1996) is one of a handful of creative researchers to address creativity within the professions, but only briefly mentions advertising in the notes section of his book *Creativity*. The lack of interest in commercially applied creativity
in the research community up until this time, indicated that the kind of creative activity in advertising agencies was not the kind organizations wanted.

Creativity remains one of life’s mysteries and is one of the most complex to describe. What is known is synthesized and thematically linked in a series of tables in Appendix D [Traits, means and motives associated with creative acts]. While there has been considerable progress in understanding the cognitive aspects, there is still no reliable procedure or method for evaluating creative ability, or systematic measure, psychological explanation or logical description (Torrance, 1995; Gardner, 1993; Shalley, 1991; Callahan, 1991; Khatena, 1982; Boden, 1982; Perkins, 1981). Researchers have tried to establish a physiological basis for cognition and emotion, but no one has yet demonstrated that mental functions can be wholly explained by mapping the neural pathways of the brain. Creativity may never be fully explained as a single functioning entity. ‘This does not bother me at all’, said E. Paul Torrance (1995: 43) who spent years studying the phenomenon, ‘… even if we had a precise definition of creativity, I am sure we would have difficulty putting it into words.’

Harvard University Professor, David Perkins, an eminent researcher in the field, similarly concluded creativity is ‘whatever people who produce creative results have, in the same way that intelligence is the stuff that people have that lets them think intelligently’ (Perkins, 1981: 24). Weisberg (1986) described it as ordinary thinking involving memory.

The search for a single explanation has given way to an understanding that multiple factors are involved. What is known is that creative thinking involves linear (logical problem-solving), intuitive (insight and intuition and a change of perception) and componental dimensions (the process is one element among an entire set of abilities, skills and personality traits), and is influenced by psychological, cultural, physical and intellectual and environmental factors (Nemiro, 2004; Runco & Sakamoto, 1999; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Sternberg, 1995; Gardner, 1993; Amabile, 1983; Perkins, 1981, Hallman, 1963). The sum of the parts summarised in Appendix C (Summary of Research into Creative Activity (1952 - present)) tends to support this observation, and would be consistent with the researcher’s observations as both a practitioner and researcher.

It is uncertain whether the ability to think creatively is genetic in origin or a function of the nervous system. Evolutionary theory argues that it serves a primal function. Sigmund Freud (1924) and Desmond Morris (1963) believed that creative thinking
has a biological basis and adhered to universal laws that were amenable to analysis and calculation. They contradicted the earlier and popular notion of creative thinking as the prerogative of supreme beings by suggesting it was the result of neurosis or failure.¹ Freud added that the urge to create was caused by frustration and was a substitute for more normal activities. Desmond Morris (1963) in his book *The Biology of Art* (Methuen, London) advanced this hypothesis by suggesting that creative thinking only manifests in groups that have all their survival problems under control. Neuringer (2002) put a more pragmatic spin on this theory decades later, suggesting we are hard-wired at birth to attend to new, random and unexpected events and stop attending to habitual or repeated ones when we perceive a threat, or our surplus nervous energy requires an outlet. Issues of nature are never fully able to explain why people act as they do. Evolutionary theory does provide some clues as to why advertising art directors and copywriters may be more primed for novelty than client representatives and account handlers. There would be no disagreement among art directors and copywriters that being alert to new creative opportunities is likely to maximize the number available to them. A number of informants provided examples of how they were able to use an unexpected opportunity to break new ground and create something new.

For much of history, the creation of new and novel ideas and objects was considered a God-given gift – a higher evolutionary calling for special individuals with a range of unexplainable talents and attributes.² Creative thinking as an *ability or trait* only granted to a few and statements regarding its origin rely heavily on empirical definitions of individual differences (Cianciolo, 2006; Henry, 2001; Gardner, 1999; Powell, 1997; Amabile, 1983). However plausible, the dramatic extreme was not borne out by available evidence in the literature reviewed. Heroic exemplars both positive and negative, Mumford et al. (2002) state, can be a hindrance because they focus too much on the efforts of specific individuals who are not available, unwilling or alive to speak for their work. Creativity researcher Cameron Ford (1995) suggests our love affair with gifted creators has distracted us from the pursuit of truth. There is strong cultural resistance to measuring the unexplainable act in all its universal manifestations – life, conception, inception, origination, genesis, universe cosmos and art. Said Freud (1924), there is a kind of ‘rigid certitude’ and a ‘denial of reality’ (against weight of evidence) that comes from not knowing the answers and pervades much of Western thought.
While there was no evidence in literature to support the idea that being able to create novel projects and campaigns in advertising is a divine and special gift, charismatic individuals who produce work of note are frequently featured in the advertising trade media, implying a level of aesthetic authority over the production of novelty and with genius or giftedness being the most obvious explanation. The term guru or gun is frequently used in these texts to associate standards with special ability - as the following headline and sub-headline shows: ‘Goodbye boys! Advertising guru quits to form new agency: Brains behind FCUK and Wonderbra campaigns departs firm. Yesterday advertising guru Trevor Beattie showed that he had lost none of his power to shock, stunning colleagues and competitors.’ (Owen Gibson and Stephen Brook, The Guardian, Friday 6 May 2005). There was general agreement in this literature that advertising practitioners publically talk about someone or something in a way that makes them seem important or better and this has historically been part of agency culture (Nyilasy & Reid, 2007; Arden, 2003; Powell, 1997; Tunstall, 1964). ‘Celebrity culture pervades many sectors of society, including advertising, said one informant, ‘and the [advertising] industry is always looking for divas’. Of this tendency, Sennett (2008) commented: ‘Since there can be no skilled work without standard, it is infinitely preferable that these standards be embodied in a human being than in a lifeless, static code of practice’ (page 80). But he warns we should be suspicious of inflated claims of creative competency because part of their allure lies in the conviction that talent alone can take the place of experience and training, timing, and situation. The researcher’s observation and that of some informants in the study was that art directors and copywriters ‘talk up’ what they can do because they don’t always have the opportunity or resources available to them to demonstrate what they can do. Tunstall (1964) described this as overinflated grandstanding: An outward expression of a disenfranchised group justifying the marginal nature of their activity. This was generally consistent with the findings of the research.

Retrospective accounts of extreme creative acts summarised in Appendix D [Genius and Myth-making] exaggerated the freedom, informality and glamour of creative work and overlooked the more mundane aspects. Rarely was the considerable investment in time and effort, tacit and procedural knowledge, the effort of others, the cyclical nature of timing and events, the serendipitous nature of fame, fortune and success made evident in these accounts. ‘Genius’, stated Anders Ericsson, professor of psychology at Florida State University and editor of The Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance (2006), ‘is laboriously constructed from genetic
potential and activated and realized only through environment and experience’ and this was evident in informant accounts.

Creative thinking ability in advertising has long been regarded as intrinsically individualistic and the product of distinct cognitive, behavioural and personality characteristics. Searching within the person for behavioral causes [Trait theory] is the dominant perspective in the fields of education, neurology and psychology because these characteristics have been found to be reasonably consistent in aggregates of people across all fields of creative endeavour, and most notably associated with superior performance. The stereotype of the emotionally expressive, flexible, energetic and courageous art director or copywriter was put to test in an experiment conducted by Kilgour and Koslow (2009). Using divergent and convergent idea generation techniques on a small group of art directors and copywriters and account handlers, they found that variations in cognitive ability and knowledge autonomies cause them to self-select their profession based on cognitive ability. This was consistent with the observations of David Perkins (1981) who observed creative people choose to do what they are good at. A number of informants in the study also spoke about being motivated to work to their strengths in selecting creative advertising as a career. The table of behavioral traits that facilitate motives associated with creative acts in Appendix D shows how researchers have explained the manifestation and development of expertise in those who self-select for a career in creative advertising typically based on personality traits or cognitive preference, and provided substantive evidence that ability was just one factor in the creation and production of novelty in advertising.

Interest in the commercial application of creative thinking in industries like advertising evolved from the systematic study of workplace proficiency in the fields of applied and industrial psychology after World War II and began with a landmark presidential address to the American Psychology Association in 1950 by J.P. Guilford, a psychologist at the University of Southern California and pioneer in the field of creative research. Given its economic potential, Guilford expressed dismay at the lack of research being conducted. Underpinning this early interest was a growing fascination with the working of the human mind and how the mental capacity of workers - like art directors and copywriters, could be developed and utilized. Periods of intense research activity followed, most notably linking the idea that creativity and innovation could give organizations, such as advertising agencies, global market and economic advantage.
Interest in enhancing creative ability in organizational settings has been progressive, incremental and evolutionary rather than radical, and evolved from the cross-pollination of ideas/applications in diverse disciplines that have carried over into advertising. Evidence of managerial interest appeared in the 1980s when innovative companies were making money. In marketing and advertising, it was a time when new thinking was needed to create and build brands to help their client’s businesses compete in a global market. The notion that solutions to marketing problems lay beyond the rational and the normal was appealing to advertisers seeking a competitive edge. Much of the discourse in management literature stressed the culture of the organization as the crucial dimension for creative success, and attested to the economic benefits of enhancing the creative thinking skills of employees as a necessary step to achieve competitive advantage (Staw, 1990; Evans & Russell, 1989; Amabile, 1988; Schein, 1985; Shalley, 1995; Drucker, 1985; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Peters & Waterman, 1982). In management literature where advertising was mentioned, the behaviour of art directors and copywriters was generally treated as unproblematic, and issues addressing their concerns largely ignored. From the management perspective, motivation to be creative was enough as long as adequate resources were provided. Creative decision-making was a process like any other that with careful management could be controlled and managed. Because of this surface treatment, how art directors and copywriters arrived at and negotiated a solution that satisfied them and other stakeholders in terms of novelty and value was never clear.

The predominantly genetic explanation of creative behaviour that defined understanding in the decades following World War II gave way to the belief that social environments were strongly associated with creative acts in the 1990s (Ericsson, 2006; Ford, 1995: Cianciolo, 2006; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, Amabile, 1995; Damanpour, 1995). Rousing claims that creative thinking was the lifeblood of innovation and the single most important source of economic growth were made by industry and government leaders like Tony Blair who declared in 1999: ‘In the twenty-first century we are going to see the world economy dominated by the exploration of creative minds’ (cited in Fletcher 1999: 4). Creativity was no longer viewed as the frivolous artistic pursuit of a few gifted individuals, but a valuable market-driven commodity. Forecasters have even predicted that future developments in technology to automate less complex jobs and increase global competition will create more demand for higher levels of expertise, and put a further premium on creativity and innovation in business (Hunt, 2006; Mumford, 2000).
The premise that everyone has the ability to think creatively if not prevented from doing so was significantly influenced by the popular step-by-step problem-solving procedure brainstorming developed by advertising man Alex Osborne in 1953, and a psychological research centre, the Institute of Personality Assessment Research (IPAR) whose work focused on personal influences and motivations behind creative acts. The primary motive was typically that if a characterization and measure of competency was found to be transferable and replicable then capacity could be developed in others, and skills and output improved [see Appendix D Methods of Improving Creativity]. The desire for improved productivity and innovation provided agencies with compelling economic incentive to adopt these techniques. They remain popular because they appear to offer a level of control over a resource that has yet to be adequately accessed or explained (Ford, 1995). Their empirical record, however, is inconsistent and their use limited in advertising because they overestimate the role of individual attributes and underestimate the role of the situation (Nickerson, 1999). Within the context of this study the abilities these procedures claimed to enhance - lateral thinking, ideational fluency, remote associations, insight⁵ - art directors and copywriters are assumed to already possess. The orientation of this literature was sometimes conceptually difficult to move away from – not because it was right but because of its influence.⁶ It was both enriching and polluting as empirical data.

Because of its cultural significance, it is easy to overlook the fact that creative thinking was a twentieth century cultural phenomenon. The word ‘creative’ was not found in leading dictionaries until the latter part of the last century. Placing high value on skills that are invisible and out of reach thus became a carrier of personal power and influence for art directors and copywriters from the 1980s onward, inferring advantage beyond the normal and rational (Fletcher, 1999; Naremore and Brantlinger, 1991). The expectation that advertisements should be novel and original is a more recent phenomenon and seen as the inevitable result of the creative process. Three decades ago the word ‘novel’ or ‘original’ was not found in the advertising vernacular yet it is interesting to note that these early advertisements are still held up as examples of creative ability. ‘Creative people get paid to be creative’, said Paul Arden, … ‘so in order to justify their salaries, they need to be seen to have clever ideas’ (2003: 36). Nowadays, a novel advertisement is a socially recognised achievement, the property of our society, culture, and historical period and not solely that of the art director or copywriter as creator.
The words *creative* and *art* also came to be closely linked in advertising’s short history. Artists like David Hockney and Andy Warhol became popular and were considered better creative thinkers than others, they challenged the boundaries between art and commerce and this carried over into advertising. Advertising was a transitory way for people like novelist Peter Carey and film director Ridley Scott to earn a living, so there is some justification in advertising creatives identifying themselves as special in this regard.

Bringing an advertising idea into existence involved imagination and is by definition ‘creative’, and for art directors and copywriters a certain snobbish cachet is derived from the assigning of the word to their professional activity. It bolsters the relative value of their authority and professional opinion in a way that was catalytic to the style and content of their work. People who created the pictures in ads became known as ‘art directors’, and ‘copywriters’ wrote words in a way that was loosely associated with literary writing. Both worked in the *Creative Department* under a *Creative Director*, and produced *creative* work, and by implication were considered *creative*. Agencies too exhibited their own self-belief that creativity provided a competitive edge by having a department dedicated to this goal (Warner, 2004). So art directors and copywriters became not one ‘creative self’ but several corresponding to widening circles of influence. The mere act of categorizing themselves as creative was sufficient to lead them to display ingroup favoritism and differentiate themselves from others on some valued dimension (Turner and Tajfel, 1986). Being called *creative* also granted them latitude to harbour a range of opinions, beliefs, and values that related to their profession. As a consequence of the association and assignation of the title *creative* you won’t find a person in the *creative* department of an advertising agency who is not by definition *creative*. Like the word ‘intelligence’ it has become an honorific label used to cover a range of individuals, abilities, situations and products, and from simple problem-solving to the expression of an individual or group (Gardner, 1993).

In summary, little is known about creative thinking in advertising despite decades of intense empirical inquiry and investigation. Researchers are generally frustrated by the elusiveness of the phenomenon and this has hampered the search for a clear and unambiguous definition of novelty as a by-product of what is commonly referred to as a creative thinking process in this investigation. What is known is that as an entity it is complex, multi-faceted and has mechanical, social, cognitive and systematic aspects that may or may not have anything to do with advertising art directors actually *being* creative but, as Perkins (1986) states, with being good at what they
were born to do. As a consequence, all the researcher had to draw upon when describing the creative ability that leads to the production of novelty was a strong, impressionistic consensus and general agreement that it is difficult to pin down.

**Expertise**

Expertise was easier to describe than cognitive ability because it develops over time and evolves through experience, training and social negotiation in fairly sequential steps. The research field of expertise and performance was developed as an area of interest in tandem with management needs for a productive and innovative workforce, and held significant potential for understanding how and why art directors and copywriters think and act as they do. The premise of much of the literature reviewed was that practice and other forms of preparation are essential for the development of creative thinking ability (Ericsson et al., 2006; Gioia, 1998:29; Sternberg & Tardif, 1995; Amabile, 1983). The timely appearance of *The Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance* (Ericsson et al., 2006) a definitive handbook on expertise and expert performance provided the researcher with a comprehensive overview of research in this field at a time she was searching for a suitable framework in which to posit the emergent theory that situational factors had a role to play in shaping creative performance in advertising. The *Handbook* was useful in identifying the role social systems play in influencing choices art directors and copywriters make.

Ideational fluency stands in ambiguous relation to expertise in advertising because art directors and copywriters don’t work to a handbook or methodology and appear to produce exceptionally good results with the help of ‘outstanding’ ability, years of experience in the field, and instructional study in the form of socially circulated practice (Alvesson, 1998). It raised the question what are the behavioral characteristics of art directors and copywriters who prefer to go out on a limb and choose extreme options in situations where their ability is being continually tested, and can these characteristics be considered *prima facie* creative or not?

Table 1 [*Primary structural influences on expertise and performance*] locates creative expertise as a tangible asset in which art directors and copywriters invest their intellectual capital in the service of the agency and their profession. It is substantially drawn from Ericsson *et al.* (2006), a review of creativity by Barron & Harrington (1981), and the literature review from the researcher’s previous study (Powell, 1997).
It summarizes the primary structural features used to build a profile of an art director and copywriter in advertising in Chapter 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1: Primary structural influences on expertise and performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aspect</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
People with high sensitivity to non-verbal cues are not necessarily those who appraise their own skills highly. Performance has been found to decline with age. Riggio & Riggio 2001

Economic

A form of human capital and influenced by having access to the best materials, resources and knowledge. Stimfert, Gustafson, Sarason, 1998; Schumaker, 1997; Brown, 1989

**Motivation**

Creative work is quality-driven work and there is a standard of excellence implicit in judgments that inspire art directors and copywriters to improve rather than get by. There is no sense of accomplishment without the intrinsic desire to do something well. Motivation, researchers agree, has a greater influence on performance than creative thinking (Amabile, 1998; Csikzentmihalyi, 1996; Simonton, 1995) and is harder to explain than both creative thinking and expertise because it involves a degree of intentionality, ambition and skill, which is probably why it received less attention than creative thinking in the literature. The functionalist approach of much of the literature reviewed on motivation emphasized the effect social environment had on shaping group decisions and generally appeared serve managerial interests (Thompson & Choi, 2006; Mintz & Geva, 1997; Ford, 1995; Augoustinos & Walker, 1995; Payne, Betterman, Johnson, 1993, West & Farr, 1990). How decisions were framed in the first place was largely unexplored, suggesting an opportunity for the researcher to contribute to the body of knowledge in this area. The worker/employee/occupational perspective on how group differences could be resolved based on notions of diligence and cooperation was also flagged as an area of significant potential for understanding how and why creative people, like art directors and copywriters, think and act as they do when making decisions (Gioia, 1998; Mintz & Geva, 1997; Sternberg & Tardif, 1995).

Employee motivation in response to workplace events was a central theme in some organizational literature, but received less attention in management and advertising texts because organizations were frequently cited as the most obvious explanation for reduced productivity and job satisfaction, and increased stress and staff turnover (Harvey & Dasborough, 2006; Brown, 1989). Stimulated by problems of competition, resource depletion and change management much of the research on intergroup motivation was concerned with how to get people to cooperate (Bornstein, 2001; Bunderson, 1998; Ford & Gioia, 1995; Abbott, 1988). The question of whether there were discernible social network characteristics associated with higher and lower levels
of motivation in this particular cohort of art directors and copywriters, and whether it could be legitimately enhanced by improving network conditions, is discussed in Chapter 6.

Much of this literature takes a one-size-fits-all approach to decision-making with a focus on streamlining processes to facilitate an efficient rather than an optimal outcome. The motivational effect of payoff structures rather than the effect of communication on conflict resolution, some suggest, is why management perceptions about conditions at group level may be far from accurate or complete. (Bornstein, 2002; Ackroyd & Thompson, 2000; Symon & Cassell, 1988; May, 1975). Literature concerning the motivation of workers is presented in Tables 2 – 5 [Table 2: Primary motives associated with creative acts; Table 3: Social forms that encourage the occurrence of creative acts; Table 4: Modes of exchange and the occurrence of creative acts; Table 5: Group dynamics that encourage the occurrence of creative acts] on pages 27 -29.

Social networks play an important role in the organization of some significant economic relationships in advertising, and the idea of networks of expertise as a form of human capital to be exchanged and resourced is a more recent research perspective (Perry-Smith, 2006; Sternberg & Tardif, 1995; Burt, 2004; Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003; Amabile, 1998; Goldfarb, & Brackfield, 1990). Said Csikszentmihalyi (1996), ‘creativity does not happen inside peoples heads’ but in their social network (page 23). Hargadon & Bechky (2006) pointed out that most major achievements in history have been collaborative and the products of momentary group processes rather than the single insight of an individual. A natural consequence of this line of thought was to find ways to enhance the environment and increase the possibility of creative thought occurring [Table 3: Social forms that encourage the occurrence of creative acts]. Interest in workers doing creative or novel things, being curious, playful, and motivated by variety and new experiences was treated as more state-of-mind, and associated with notions of personal ambition, self-interest and achievement, recognition and acclaim, dedication, risk-taking and independence [Table 2: Primary motives associated with creative acts]. Behaviour that does not necessarily fit comfortably within standard management diagrams because they advance personal not economic interests, and not necessarily the immediate needs of an organisation – although the two are interconnected as Tables 3-5 show:
**TABLE 2: Primary motives associated with creative acts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motives</th>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>Supporting Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>Enjoys variety and is open to new experiences.</td>
<td>MacKinnon 1962. 1967; Barron 1966; Pelz 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-interest</td>
<td>Self-sense of creative specialness (neural epicentrism)wired at birth to intuitively want to express this specialness.</td>
<td>Goffman 1959; Cuthbert &amp; McDonough 1980; Gordon 1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superiority</td>
<td>Seeks dominance and has a high need for leadership and power.</td>
<td>Austin &amp; Peters 1985; MacKinnon 1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition and Acclaim</td>
<td>Public presentation.</td>
<td>Snyder 1987; Simonton 1995; Giles 2000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 3: Social Forms that Encourage the Occurrence of Creative Acts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discretion</td>
<td>Tasks have limited structure and individuals are given choice over work methods.</td>
<td>Andrews 1967; Pelz 1967; Andrews and Gordon 1970; Amabile 1984</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 4: Modes of Exchange and the Occurrence of Creative Acts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective Leadership and Mentoring</td>
<td>Empowerment-oriented leadership that is supportive, participative. Unobtrusive, outcome oriented with clear direction, where the leader serves as a role model.</td>
<td>Pelz 1956, 1967; Andrews &amp; Gordon 1970; Torrance 1983; Amabile 1984; Simonton 1984; Conger 1995; Stein 1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change-oriented management</td>
<td>Management is receptive to creativity and change efforts.</td>
<td>Gordon 1972; Dutton &amp; Dukerich 1991; Cummins &amp; Worley 1993; Warner-Burke 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Reward System</td>
<td>Rewards are outcome oriented, equitable, and related to status.</td>
<td>Csikszentmihalyi 1996; Csikszentmihalyi &amp; Sawyer 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate Resources</td>
<td>Organisation supplies necessary funds, facilities, time, and personnel to support creative efforts.</td>
<td>Amabile 1984; Csikszentmihalyi 1996; Csikszentmihalyi &amp; Sawyer 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity is recognised, accessed, applied, managed and understood</td>
<td>Creative training is effective for certain personality types.</td>
<td>Amabile 1983; Evans &amp; Russell 1989; Henry &amp; Walker; 1991; West &amp; Farr 1990; Qvale 1995; Woodman 1995; Stacy, 1996; Henry 2001; Bjorkergren 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Basadur et al. 1982, 1982; Kabanoff &amp; Bottger 1991</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 5: Group Dynamics that Encourage the Occurrence of Creative Acts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective Communication networks</td>
<td>Frequent contact with networks of people at different levels of an organization enable creatives to influence others’ evaluation of creativity.</td>
<td>Pelz 1956; Andrews 1967; Simonton 1984; Brass 1995; Sethia 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group dynamics, identity and social behaviour</td>
<td>Identity theory, cultural complexity, social psychology, interpersonal relations, socialisation around decision-making.</td>
<td>Freud (1924); Lewin 1947; Bion (1968); Marslow (1970); Klein &amp; Gould 1973; Ahne 1997; Albert &amp; Whetten 1985; Amabile 1983; deBoard 1991; Csikszentmihalyi &amp; Sawyer 1995; Dahler-Larsen (1997); Parker 2000; Steiner &amp; Berelson 1964; Tajfel 1982; Whetten &amp; Godfrey 1998; Sethia 1995; Ackroyd &amp; Thompson, 2000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was interesting to note that much of the recent literature on the evaluation of advertising creativity has come from the discipline of marketing and assumes that creativity like other agency activities can enhanced with proper management. The need for a supportive and nurturing environment as a necessary condition for art directors and copywriters to improve rather than get by resonated strongly in advertising texts authored and edited by reflective practitioners, some of whom were academics (Nyilasy & Reid, 2007; Earls, 2002; Myerson & Vickers, 2002; Berger, 2001; Jones, 1999; Butterfield, 1999; Alvesson, 1998; Isaksen & Dorval, 1993; Bullmore, 1991; Wackman, Salmon & Salmon, 1987; Millman, 1985; Dobrow, 1984; Ewen, 1976; Adams, 1971; Tunstall, 1964). Much of the literature focused on the relationship between the client and agency and assumed there was a natural and unproblematic conduit between the client and creative. The relationship between the creative and account handler has received less attention. Sasser & Koslow (2008) noted access to relevant subjects has been the greatest methodological constraint for many researchers, suggesting cross-pollinating scholars and practitioners would enable more knowledge sharing and inspire new research. Some small-scale studies, ethnographies, and occupational narratives explored how advertising practitioners, including art directors and copywriters, organized and advanced their concerns in advertising agencies, and inform this investigation (McLeod, 2009; Verbeke et al., 2009; Caves, 2008; Hackley & Kover, 2007; Hill et al., 2007; Hargadon and Becky, 2006; Nixon, 2003; Caves, 2002; Hogg & Scoggins, 2001; Kover and Goldberg, 1995).

Agency insiders naturally engage in a high degree of industry self-monitoring, and conversations within the creative community on issues important to them tend to take
place in the columns, editorials and letters of the trade press rather than academic journals.’ First-hand accounts in advertising trade journals and periodicals provided the most comprehensive picture of the lived experiences of art directors and copywriters, and were drawn upon anecdotally in Chapter 5 [Findings]. Chronological reading of these journals and periodicals provided some historical continuum to events and situations described. Contemporaneous accounts were important because the values, attitudes, perceptions, norms of behavior and adopted roles the researcher was reporting on can shift over time. They were useful in confirming that knowledge was current despite the time lapse between starting and completing the study.

2.2. History

The modern advertising agency is a relatively unique business model and evolved largely by accident (Tunstall, 1964). The first creative agencies were media booking agencies that saw there was money to be made by designing the ads they placed. Early agency owners like David Ogilvy, Bill Bernbach and Leo Burnett who created the ads were interested in advertising and their writing on advertising and its place in the world emphasized a practical approach. They turned the art of making ads into a business, and agencies came to be perceived as forward thinking creative organisations. Between the 1960s and the 1980s agencies benefited from increased profits and growth fuelled by liberal politics and vibrant economies and creativity became synonymous with this growth. Art directors and copywriters exhibited an attitude of historical certainty assuming that their consent as a power group had a universal validity and that there was a fixed hierarchy of taste (Warlaumont, 2001; Bartlett, 1993: Tunstall, 1964). From their discretionary position as ‘advertising auteurs’, art directors and copywriters could make decisions based on their experience alone – they did not have to seek permission, and there were minimal authorized checks and balances. Art directors and copywriters who worked hard and well were rewarded with automatic seniority and increased pay. There was relatively little recorded history or archival endowment, intellectual tradition or point-of-view regarding advertising heritage over this time, said Jeremy Tunstall in his book The Advertising Man: In London Agencies (1964): ‘The literature that advertising men in Britain had so far managed to produce about their work shows just how absurd it is to claim professional status’ (page 252).
The concept of production and efficiency in advertising changed in the 90s, due mainly to organizational restructuring, major technological events and global, hyper-competition. Clients began to require evidence of the efficacy of creativity strategically attuned to their economic imperatives, and not statements from their agencies about its desirability. Spending was now carefully monitored, and potential gain in real terms carefully compared with a wide variety of other media options. The discriminatory power of art directors and copywriters to objectify, define and control the creative product diminished. Resource depletion progressively stagnated their share of the wealth and seniority was no longer assured. Reports released by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) and the Advertising Federation of Australia (AFA) in 2004 showed a fall in creative remuneration levels in the UK and Australia. Advertising commentator Lara Sinclair said of the decrease, ‘… 13 years ago creative directors were paid almost double their marketing counterparts, this has slipped dramatically …’ (‘Agency pay rates stagnate’, The Australian, September 23, 2004, page 21). The legacy of these structural changes was an enduring theme in informant accounts but was less reported in the trade media at the time.

Many agencies that cared about quality work were progressively absorbed into a few dominant firms, and gave up once strong creative reputations for the sake of growing their businesses. Their financial strength and focus now lay in establishing stable, profitable, long-term business relationships with media owners and client companies. Cost cutting and price competition factors saw client companies and their agencies shift their focus from creative excellence toward strict cost-controlling measures. General themes included the provision of strong strategic thinking, the creative use of media as a vital element of advertising, and how creative activity could be controlled and managed in the agency setting. (Hogg & Scoggins, 2001; Feldwick, 2000; Jones, 1999; Quinn, 1999; O’Malley, 1999; Staveley, 1999; Steel, 1998).

Social pressures have pushed advertising through several cultural evolutions in a broadly predicable fashion, and this has inevitably produced a shift in meaning in literature produced by advertising practitioners.8 Alvesson (1993) echoing the cryptic tone of Tunstall thirty years on, described art directors and copywriters not as ‘gurus’ or ‘guns’ but as ‘knowledge-intensive workers’9 and this highlighted the progressive shift in emphasis from unbridled creativity to accountability and objective measurement. Alvesson further described agencies that once laid claim to being ‘hot-beds of creativity’ as large, autonomous, self-regulating and self-perpetuating institutions full of people who claim certain traits, produce good results by applying
skills that are in demand to produce work in the most effective way to short-term criteria based on market needs. He further added that advertising did not correspond to strong criteria for being named a ‘profession’ because it was not as systematic as scientific-based activities, did not require long formal education, or invoke social sanctions or ethical rules as do physicians, dentists, psychologists who truly qualify as professionals.

Burdened by increased competition, resource depletion and change, agencies now demanded accountability from all the resources allocated to client accounts including creative. Agency management appeared less concerned with the process of creation, favouring instead structured processes with calculable returns. Some began to question the intangibility of creativity as a measure. Creative expertise was no longer valued, and art directors and copywriters were no longer sheltered from the clients and their influence. Said Carolyn Marshall editor of Campaign (UK) magazine reflecting on the changes that had taken place just prior to this research commencing: ‘Politics, lack of commitment to great work, disrespect between departments, settling for a good idea, not enough money – too much money, too many meetings and too little time are negative forces that hold an agency [creative] culture back.’ (August 17, 2001).

Greater media choice and the development of digital technology posed a further challenge to the traditional advertising creative mindset that revolved around the 30-second television commercial. Nowadays, creative emphasis is placed on brand ideas that communicate consistently across different media platforms. This has changed the nature of the task, widened their scope of work, and created new creative opportunities and ways of doing things for art directors and copywriters.

It is against this backdrop of efficiency and accountability, technological change, the enduring creative legacy of the 1980s, and the organizational mandate for an efficient rather than an optimal performance that art directors and copywriters as evolving creative entities describe their circumstance in Chapter 5 [Findings].

2.3. Advertising and Society

The nature of commerce with its Western, capitalist, monopolistic, global focus has always been intellectually problematic to students of popular culture. Critics in our information-rich society are not shy of expressing forceful opinions about the controlling power of advertising and it has become an inviting terrain for the cultural
studies movement. Said advertising writer Jeremy Tunstall: ‘The ‘black art’ of advertising has been a popular scapegoat for many ills in society and now it seems creativity itself is responsible’ (Tunstall, 1964:11).

Advertising art directors and copywriters are primarily engaged with client needs and dictates as to the kind of ads they are expected to produce, and generally remain disengaged from the wider social and cultural implications of their activities. Carol Moog (1990), clinical psychologist and advertising consultant described entering the advertising industry with her semiotic ideals and finding advertising creatives going about their work largely oblivious to the analysis of their work, unaware of or unmoved by the hostile intellectual atmosphere outside the agency, or how similar/dissimilar they were from other creative industries in terms of their development and structure. What critics considered fertile ground for revolution was a fact of life to art directors and copywriters, said Warlaumont (2001): ‘Advertising is a malleable industry and has been able to move in a variety of ways to avoid most of the slings and arrows of its critics’ (p. xvii). Naremore & Brantlinger (1991) put forward a theory that the majority of advertising critics resent novelty and prefer commonplace, and this would probably represent the world-view of art directors and copywriters in advertising. However, by entering the industry they consciously or unconsciously choose to play a particular role in the construction and maintenance of advertising products and this implies some moral responsibility for the outcome.

Advertising criticism rose in popularity along with the globalisation of brands and the pervasiveness of the advertising message. There were at least three debates each with very different concerns, tensions and critical theories. One focused on the nature of advertising as a cultural industry and its role in global economic, political and cultural structures and movements. Critics argued that the cost of advertising inflated prices, was so persuasive in nature as to be dishonest. Cultural theorists assert they do this by creating mass audiences for products, controlling consumption, and using psychological methods of persuasion to create universal appeals, notions and desires. The first debate focused on the content and texts of advertising (semiotics), their cultural roots and social implications. A second incorporated the broad area of cultural studies, which looked longitudinally at advertising from within the context of popular culture and audiences’ engagement with it. The main issues were US brand dominance Western values and notions of consumer identity and this has created a general ground swell of resistance to what was perceived as commercial colonisation

A new generation wise to advertising strategies bridged the gap between the abstract Marxist ideals and the concrete world of advertising production by creating a more active dialogue with the advertising process. Cultural theorists now argued against the overly deterministic or apocalyptic tone of Post-Structuralist and Post-Modernist criticism (Pratkanis & Aronson, 2001; Klein, 2000; Kilbourne, 1999; Fiske, 1997; Crossen, 1994; Cunningham & Turner, 1993; Adorno, 1991; Fiske, 1989). With the advent and growth of digital technology, new relationships emerged between advertising and consumerism and approaches were now more oriented to living in a consumer society and criticism less radical in response.

Nowadays products and their promotion have become part of social discourse and their promotion a language we understand. The notion of the advertising industry creating and maintaining passive, one-dimensional audiences has been replaced by a world in which consumers knowingly interact with powerful household brands through digital media channels. Consumers have thus gone from blaming advertising to begrudgingly accepting their role in the process as anything but passive (Naremore & Brantlinger, 1991; Williamson, 1990; Moog, 1990).

2.4. Summary and Evaluation

A number of research studies conducted in the period between the researcher’s previous and current investigation attended to the functional aspects of the creative/advertising process and how it could be effectively managed and facilitated. How art directors go about their work, however, remained largely unreported and this hindered the researcher’s understanding of the creative department as a social enclave. Explanations put forward as to why art directors and copywriters have been either unable or unwilling to put themselves forward are: (1) declarative knowledge is harder to articulate than procedural and strategic knowledge and makes it difficult for art directors and copywriters to organize their thoughts and feelings into meaningful statements; (2) as ‘knowledge-intensive workers’ they don’t emphasize this kind of knowledge as their contribution; (3) and agencies do not encourage art directors and copywriters to put their activities up for close scrutiny by others and risk finding them less special (Sennett, 2009; West, 2000, 1996; Fletcher, 1999; Gould, 1999; Alvesson, 1993; Polkinghorne, 1988). Nyilasy & Reid (2007) also pointed to an academic-practitioner gap in advertising literature, finding that when practitioners
wrote about the visible and tangible aspects of their practice they were often portrayed by academics as ‘empty vessels’ (page 437), and it raised the question of whether knowledge derived from the experiences of art directors and copywriters would be considered reliable in this investigation.

The literature reviewed was segmented and broad, and sometimes engaged the researcher conceptually in disciplinary fields that were not her own. Knowledge about how groups are selected, develop and behave in decision-making contexts were notionally linked to rule-making, collaboration, conflict and resolution but the connection was not always evident. Finding connections was sometimes daunting for the researcher looking for definition, and the researcher could never be certain that all the intended meaning had been accurately captured. Robson (1997) and Csikzentmihalyi (1996), however, point out all researchers grapple with this problem, adding that it is only by crossing disciplinary boundaries that new connections are possible and new paths discovered.

Chronological reading of trade journals signalled the voice of art directors and copywriters in the trade press has progressively become silenced by change and economic uncertainty. The subtext that surfaced from informant accounts was that they would rather sacrifice short-term goals and remain employed than lobby to improve conditions. Without adequate voice, how they felt about their situation remained unresolved and this provided the researcher as an informed observer with the opportunity to put their collective concerns forward without penalty.

While literature from a number of world-views not related to advertising made salient aspects of collective group processes and reinforcing activities associated with the persistently complex creative decision-making situation, the mental image of middleweight art directors and copywriters as creative entities, and the nature of their interaction with others in the decision-making frame and how they resolved ideological differences was never fully apparent because choice is filtered through an imperfect perceptual group process. Residual status was given to quantifying and qualifying what was known and avoiding the obvious and often the result was a paradigm-shift determined by the bounds of social, cultural, and historical precedents in this particular field (Stark, 2007; Mieg, 2006; Turvey, 2002; Perry-Smith & Shalley 2003; Cuba & Cocking, 1998) Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin, 1993, Amabile, Goldfarb & Brackfield, 1990; Amabile, 1983, Ford, 1995).
Herbert Simon (1976) was one of the first to look at ways in which the actual decision-making process influences decisions and to discuss the concept of organizational decision-making in terms of emotion, uncertainty and constraints. He proposed in his theory of bounded rationality (a theory of strategic interaction) that the rationality of a decision was limited by the information made available, cognitive limitations of the mind, and the finite amount of time decision-makers have to make decisions. Art directors and copywriters in this study frequently reported having too little information and time, and Simon’s theory is an interesting one in that it got to the core of the art directors and copywriters dilemma and that was limited capacity of the human mind to compute a finite number of available alternatives in a short space of time.

Said Albert (1998) of the search for a proper definition of creative decision-making activity: ‘it is a utopian search because of the constant changing and broadening of its definition — which has come to encompass many unrelated elements — renders it an unintelligible concept’ (p. 60). This made the study of art directors and copywriters as a decision-making enclave a subject to engage with rather than find answers because the knowledge base remains largely unresolved and uncontested.
ENDNOTES

1. The excitement that characterizes manic-depressive psychosis, Freud argued, creates greater energy resource and a greater tolerance to fatigue, conditions that favour extreme productive activity and multiply the opportunities of creative expression and creative realization.

2. The ‘messenger from God’ theory came down from the Greeks, who believed gods breathed creative ideas into uniquely creative people (the word inspire comes from the Latin word to breathe in).

3. During WW1, Guilford was employed by the U.S. Airforce to develop creative ability tests in order to identify recruits who in an emergency would respond in an original way to save themselves and their planes.

4. These procedures draw heavily on the theories of Sigmund Freud who first coined the phrase ‘free association’.

5. Left brain-right brain (Edwards, 1988); Lateral thinking (deBono, 1970); Synectics, Gordon (1961)


9. Peter Drucker author of a number of key management texts coined this term.
CHAPTER 3: METHODS

A theoretical picture of art directors and copywriters as creative entities and their role in the decision-making process and place in their world emerged from the literature. The next step involved designing a set of procedures that would allow art directors and copywriters to describe in their own words: (1) what conditions, contexts and situations in multinational agencies influence and shaped decisions about novelty and value, how they perceived and interpreted concepts of novelty and originality, and why they saw their version of novelty conflicting with others in the first place; (2) the nature of their interaction with other decision-making groups, how they accommodated the standards of others, and how it influenced their actions and the consequences of these actions. The aim was to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of this cohort of art directors and copywriters and to make their world-views tangible and reportable, and ensure as much as possible that the data could be replicated under similar conditions.

This chapter provides an overview and summary of the methods, approaches, strategies and techniques used to collect this data from interviews. Data storage and the ethics of conducting the research are also addressed.

3.1. Qualitative Methods

Of the research methods available it was evident that a qualitative or naturalistic method was best suited to examining and interpreting the complex of social realities that surrounded creative decision-making. The method enabled the researcher to collect data from multiple sources and draw from these sources themes and patterns in creative behaviour that could be inductively tied to contexts and situations in analysis. The researcher acknowledges that no one single truth can emerge from this research situation using this method, but believed that what art directors and copywriters said in interview would provide clues about the underlying cognitions of their group experience, and produce socially robust generalizations about contexts and conditions that would add richness and depth to the researcher’s understanding about the situations they found themselves in.

The challenge for the researcher was to design the research so that informants could report on situations, events and behaviors in their own words – and through their own experiences share knowledge that was not immediately accessible or readily shareable through other methods. Trying to make qualitative data collection as rigorous and progressive as quantitative data challenges what Robson (1993) called, the logic (and
popularity) of *statistical inference*. Qualitative methodology, inductive analysis and semi-structured interviews are considered to be unreliable by some measures because they allow informants to determine key issues, but the researcher took the stance that qualitative data represents a healthy equilibrium between basic research orientation and pragmatic applied research (Hunt, 2002b). The data collection techniques considered were observation and interviews.

**Observation**

Observing a sample of art directors and copywriters at work in the agency context, the researcher believed, would reveal in a disciplined way the practical circumstances, roles, activities, events, sequences, motivations and goals that influenced their actions. One pilot observation was conducted in 2002 to test the methodology. Six agency professionals were observed at work in the local office of a multinational advertising agency. The sample consisted of one art director, copywriter, creative director and managing director, and two account managers involved in making decisions about creative work prior to the work being presented to the client. The pilot observation was conducted in an agency where senior management were known to the researcher and were aware of her intentions and could sponsor her activities. The observation involved:

1. Entering the agency and getting to know informants.
2. Observing, recording and analyzing their interactions with each other.
3. Keeping contemporaneous field notes as information was gathered. The observation checklist was left open in order not to pre-specify themes and miss something relevant. The researcher undertook to keep intrusion into their work schedule to a minimum of two days. Agency management was kept informed as research progressed, and were given the option to withdraw at any stage without prejudice should unforeseen emergent outcomes become disagreeable to the company. The researcher agreed not to disclose or identify the agency as a condition of intent.

The researcher found no disciplined way to ‘observe’ their activities because art directors and copywriters worked on multiple and different projects at one time and on computers; they did not keep or work traditional hours; were often not at their desks or out of the office; and discussed and negotiated things with the other interest groups by email and telephone. Persistence, motivation, cognitive ability, being persuasive and appearing creative were also hard to capture in observation and presented difficulties for the researcher in determining what observations were important to record. The mere presence of the researcher may have contributed to what they chose to disclose or
withhold, and there was danger in assuming to know what things meant to them and to others just because the researcher had seen or observed them (Emerson et al., 1995). Observing them in action did not reveal any significant clues about their practical circumstances and there was no objective probability that any meaningful causal links between their situation and behaviour could be made from any future or additional observations.

The researcher concluded that interpreting behaviour is a conscious, reflective process and cannot be readily observed or measured by observation alone. Factors such as rate of change, time frame, sense of place and the continuing evolution of organizational cohorts also precluded such a linear approach. Attitudes can change over time, and there were no appropriate markers to know whom to follow and how longitudinally. As a data collection technique, observation had limitations and planned observations were removed from the research schedule.

**Interviews**

First-hand explanations of the decision-making situation were ultimately extracted from depth interviews. The method was considered the best way to understand the values and motives art directors and copywriters attached to their actions because it allowed informant attitudes, perceptions and feelings to direct the focus of the investigation. The researcher anticipated that asking them to retrospectively describe situations they found or saw themselves in, and asking questions about how they acted in these situations would uncover the circumstances that triggered their affective reactions to situations and events.

Four interviews were conducted initially and constituted an abbreviated pilot study. Two creative directors, one copywriter and an art director were interviewed in London in 2002. All were known to the researcher and understood that the purpose of the interviews was to test the data collection methodology. The pilot study provided insights into how art directors and copywriters at different levels of authority, experience and competency might report on events and gave the researcher an indication of what information was likely to be offered or withheld in interview. Creative directors produced socially robust generalizations about creative group behaviour based on reflective observations whereas the younger art director and copywriter were more motivated to describe the day-to-day activities and the issues the researcher wanted to investigate. This was consistent with the researcher’s previous observations that art directors and copywriters with high levels of problem-solving ability also have highly developed skills in planning, cooperating and
communicating and are capable of effective behaviour in social situations (Powell, 1997). This was also supported in the literature [Figure 2: *Competency levels in creative decision-making* and Appendix H *Scale of Proficiencies*]. Interview questions thus became more focused around issues the middleweight art director and copywriters raised that related to the research question. Data from these interviews were retrospectively drawn into the interview inventories once the researcher was confident that the research design would guarantee as much as possible their generality.

### 3.2. Interpretative Approach

An interpretative approach allowed the researcher to treat their interpretations of situations, events and behaviours as a topic of empirical inquiry - as opposed to attempting to produce an objective record of situations and events (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The procedure was not directed at formulating a hypothesis, arguing a point, or engaging in discussions of theory, but exploring the multiple truths apparent in their world, and understanding what their experiences and activities meant to them. By paying attention to their commonplace activities, the researcher was able to learn about them as phenomena in their own right, and produce a theoretical construction of conditions, contexts, situations and their affective actions and reactions.

The researcher acknowledges that in interpreting scenes and actions of their ‘world as it was perceived’ that her understanding can only be considered *implicit* not explicit, and that elementary statements about contexts, conditions and situation are open to question, and interpretations easily disproved. Supporters of this approach argue that all social knowledge and experience is to an extent shaped by preconception and embedded with bias and should just be accounted for in the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bogdan, 1984). This was the stance adopted.

### 3.3. Hypothesis

While the nature of the research focus and methodology precluded a definitive hypothesis prior to data collection, the familiarity of the researcher with the group and previous involvement in the field assisted in the formulation of a working hypothesis: that the choices art directors and copywriters made about what was novel and valuable in creative advertising were engendered, facilitated, compromised and constrained by social negotiation. As the number of situations fitting the evidence grew, emerging theory was developed and tested.
3.4. The Researcher

No literature was found on appropriate strategies and techniques for interviewing creative types, and this in part determined the role the researcher played in data collection. Evaluating what activities might be meaningful to this particular sample of art directors and copywriters required an implicit understanding of their group experience and the researcher assumed the role of an informed observer. The researcher’s working knowledge of the creative department made it easier to interpret what was being said in interview, and to make sense of their actions and activities in a short space of time. The majority of informants were unknown to the researcher, however, within the advertising community there are degrees of connectivity (people and agencies) and there was a general feeling of ‘mutuality’ – that we had something in common in terms of interest and experience. Said Goffman (1972), responses to interviews conducted by a complete stranger however relaxed and friendly, can never provide a valid picture of their way of life. This ‘connectivity’ gave the researcher ready access to informants and little time was required to establish rapport during the initial contact period and in interviews. The researcher was aware this familiarity could compromise or influence subjectivity in relation to the emotive potency of informants opinions. Burgess (1984) suggests that examining a situation that is well known to a researcher is legitimate provided that this familiarity is recognised and does not markedly inhibit or prejudice the study. Rather than attempting to erase all personal traces from the work, the researcher chose to explicitly detail her role, formally acknowledging what she brought to the enquiry, and maintaining a degree of distance from informants during interview to ensure that her intentions were not self-biased.

3.5. Data Collection

A persistent problem identified in collecting this type of data was the general reluctance of creative practitioners’ to speak about their work in progress, or in retrospect when they see no perceived significance or personal benefit for doing so. Some researchers in the field reported that creative people find it difficult or impossible to report verbally on their experiences, preferring instead to use narrative explanations and case stories to explain what they do. Others reported creative people disliked being categorized, pinned down, confined, revealed, validated and ultimately being subjected to control (Sennett, 2009; Sasser & Koslow, 2008; West, 2000, 1996; Czikszentmihalyi, 1996; Amabile, 1995; Fletcher, 1999; Gould, 1999; Alvesson, 1993; Polkinghorne, 1988; Kramer, 1983; Barron, 1958). Agencies have also been known to be indignant at the prospect of
allowing their expertise to be investigated, and with good reason psychologist and organizational consultant Daniel Cappon asserts:

… the more intuition-sensitive the company, like advertising …, the more they shut their doors to such inquiry. These were largely companies dealing directly with people and services, where science is minimal and "flying by the seat of one's pants" is maximal. Sure they used market research. But clearly they felt the public would lose faith in them if they were found to be running on gut feeling as well. *(Psychology Today, May/Jun 1993)*

These experiences have made many researchers cautious about moving outside their laboratories and into real-world situations because fieldwork is difficult to control and manage (Amabile, 1995). Devising a strategy to collect data in this research thus involved finding a way to make the events and activities art directors and copywriters described not only rigorous and trustworthy but also accessible and shareable.

3.5.1. Samples

In the beginning, the researcher anticipated that sufficient data would come from a single Creative sample of thirty-one art directors and copywriters across a representative number of networked agency groups. However, it was apparent from the pilot interviews (2001) and pilot observation (2002) that the interaction between art directors and copywriters, and art directors and copywriters and creative directors and account handlers could not be reliably accounted for in a single data collection exercise or set of data. An additional and secondary Creative management sample made up of account handlers and creative directors was introduced to provide supporting evidence on issues that the Creative sample raised in interview, followed by a further sample (Independent commentator) to test the weight the Creative sample group assigned to issues of importance and to triple check the results. In summary, the three samples selected for interview were:

1. A *Creative* sample of a peer group of mostly middleweight art directors and copywriters who create and produce versions of novelty and originality within their frame of reference and put it forward to creative directors and account handlers for evaluation.

2. A *Creative management* sample of creative directors and account handlers who pass judgment on its appropriateness.

3. An *Independent commentator* sample of managers with an understanding of the issues both samples face in creating, producing and evaluating novel and original projects and campaigns.
3.5.2. Sampling Strategies

Purposive non-probability sampling was used to select a representative population of art directors and copywriters in the primary Creative sample. In the process of identifying whom to interview, the researcher relied on another set of experts with specific knowledge of creative populations in advertising. Selection criteria (career age, employment status, agency size) were given to a large and reputable creative recruitment company in each geographic region to reduce the possibility that informants did not directly know of others involvement in the study (other than those who were involved in the pilot observation). The recruiters acted as intermediaries and informal sponsors, mobilising their networks and introducing the researcher to informants based on judgments of typicality.

Relying on intermediaries to select informants can have a significant influence upon the conduct and outcome of field research, Johnston (1998) warns. They can consciously or inadvertently direct the researcher to ‘existing culturally and physically bounded webs of social relationships’ and this was evident in the lack of women recruiters put forward for interview. It was, however, consistent with the composition of samples using a similar sampling technique in researcher’s previous study of outstanding creative performance in Australian agencies (Powell, 1997). Given the observed gender imbalance at more senior creative levels in that study, the researcher had incorrectly assumed that a sample of middle-level art directors and copywriters selected by intermediaries would include more women. There was no way to tell if recruiters were biased towards male informants or those they knew, however, the researcher believed the sample composition would show similar bias had she - or any one similarly connected to art directors and copywriters in agencies, selected the informants based on the same criteria. Perversely, it would be unrepresentative to purposefully select an equal number of males and females in this research context. Since inclusion in this study assumed a perceived level of expertise and not gender, it did raise one important question: if creativity in advertising is a social activity then were there arbitrary social barriers that impeded the inclusion of women in the sample? While the bias towards males may be the result of a complex of factors none of which were satisfactorily resolved in this study, the researcher believed the sample composition was more or less representative. The issue of gender bias was also noted by some informants and commented on by the researcher in 5.3. [Question arising from data] but was not elaborated on in depth because it was outside the scope of the research question.
A *random* approach was taken in the selection and composition of the other two samples [Creative management and Independent commentator] in that each member of the population had an equal and known chance of being selected. Informants invited to participate had worked in and circulated around similar large networked agencies with long histories and strong cultures for a period of more than six years. Some informants were known to the researcher in her professional capacity, others were put forward by informants themselves as ‘worth talking to’. *Snowball* sampling was used as a way to locate information-rich key informants in the Independent commentator sample not known to the researcher. A full list of those interviewed is provided in Appendix G [Sample Summary].

3.5.3. Size

Sixty-seven interviews were conducted between 2001-2003 in the local and regional offices of multinational advertising agencies in five centres of advertising activity (Europe, UK, USA, Australia and NZ) [Table 6: Sample size and summary]. The total number was considered sufficient for determining conditions and contexts as either highly significant or not significant. In the researcher’s previous investigation (1997) a sample of forty proved enough to extract consensus on how environment influenced creative performance in multinational advertising agencies. This experience and that of other researchers led the researcher to believe that a small but highly representative sample would be adequate for interpreting the complex social reality of decision-making in this research.

Table 6: Sample size and composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CREATIVE SAMPLE</th>
<th>CREATIVE MANAGEMENT SAMPLE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MALE/FEMALE</strong></td>
<td>Male 29; Female 2</td>
<td>Male 30; Female 4</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AVERAGE AGE</strong></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NATIONALITIES</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DISCIPLINES</strong></td>
<td>Copywriters 16</td>
<td>Creative Directors 18</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Art Directors 17</td>
<td>Account Managers 17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AGENCIES</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>36</td>
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</tbody>
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Of those invited to take part, one refused and two did not respond. Five were unavailable for interview at the intended time and subsequent interviews were conducted to make up the sample size. Sample sizes in the US were slightly smaller than Australasia and Europe because a 48-hour power outage in New York prevented the researcher from
interviewing the remaining four informants. This was the final set of interviews and saturation had been reached and no attempt was made to make up numbers.

3.5.4. Criteria
The primary Creative sample was highly representative because the pilot interviews and the literature [Appendix E Scale of Proficiencies] revealed that the properties and value ranges experts and novices assign to situations and events appeared different. Close examination of experiences and meaning-making activities required a reasonably similar sample, and the researcher anticipated that if sampling was tightly controlled the research would be able to report on their activities in greater depth and breadth.

The following broad social divisions were used to formalize the criteria for selection in the primary Creative sample: (1) Defining at what point a novice is no longer a novice and determining the degree to which creative behavior is considered reasonable or normal at mid-career or middleweight level, (2) career age, and (3) cultural values and organizational customs.

### Expert/novice
Historically, labels of expertise fall into broad categories of expert and novice, but in literature the researcher could find no label for a single peer group of middle-level art directors and copywriters who were neither novices nor experts. A scale of proficiencies was built from previous research and observations in the field [Appendix H Scale of Proficiencies] to determine what behaviour would be considered reasonable or normal at their developmental level prior to fieldwork commencing to avoid making inaccurate or incomplete causal inferences about the population as a whole. And to determine whether the behavioural characteristics between novice and expert art directors and copywriters were sufficiently differentiated to warrant making the distinction between them and treating them as separate functioning entities in the first place.

Based on the results of the pilot study the researcher anticipated that a cohort of emerging experts who were not yet masters of their own destiny would be more motivated to identify what they perceived as influencing factors and conditions. They would not only want to ‘make sense’ of their world for their own private understanding and mastery of the environment but also share this understanding in order to make evident and rationalize their contribution.
Career age
There was general consensus in the literature that it takes an average of ten years experience to accumulate enough expert knowledge in most fields of endeavour, and the 10-year rule was adopted as a minimum not an average estimate because it takes this long to reach the minimum level of expertise in a field with no significant advantage later. [see TABLE 7: Performance Attribution by Age]. This typically put the age of the primary Creative sample at 30-40 years and ‘hell bent on success’ (Arden, 2003).

Table 7: Performance attribution by age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance attribute</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Researcher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is limited value placed on the acquisition of necessary competence and skills such as visual acuity, speed, and this is evident when expertise is either goes recognized or is in decline.</td>
<td>-/n/a</td>
<td>Ericsson, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World-class creative performance generally remains the province of relatively younger adults.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Simonton, 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at which variables decrease in peaking a career.</td>
<td>30-40 years</td>
<td>Simonton, 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best performance is likely to appear in periods of peak career activity.</td>
<td>30-40 years</td>
<td>Powell, 1997; Simonton, 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at which productivity decreases to half the rate seen at the career peak.</td>
<td>50 years</td>
<td>Feltovich, Prierula &amp; Ericsson, Chi, Hoffman &amp; Lintern, 2006 Ericsson, 2006, Kahneman, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain knowledge obtained through experience compensates for the decline in general abilities with age.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career watershed. In some instance can be a period of reinvention. Focused on repeating early successes. Trying to keep up with the 25-year-olds.</td>
<td>40-50 years</td>
<td>Tunstall 1965: 74; Arden, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at which IQ decreases (typically from 100 to below 85)</td>
<td>65 years</td>
<td>Horn &amp; Masunaga, 2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Youthfulness, drive, energy and enthusiasm are culturally tied to notions of creativity in the advertising profession, and there is a common perception that creativity is the domain of the young – especially among the young. Researchers have attributed the bias to social factors because there is no conclusive evidence that people lose the ability to make judgments with age (Hill et al., 2007; Horn & Masunaga, 2006). Nurturing the young and up-and-coming has traditionally been a priority in agencies and they have tended to treat the career development needs of ‘older creatives’ as less important. The result is that older workers then place less emphasis on maintaining competencies and skills because there is little incentive to improve (Ericsson et al., 2006). If senior art directors and copywriters are not actively involved in deliberate practice or challenging projects, reduced productivity may be perceived as decline in ability and makes them appear less visible, and being perceived as ‘out of the loop’ can cause a level of distrust and suspicion between them. A number of informants in the Creative sample felt they were smarter and more in touch with consumers because in some categories they were closer demographically and psychographically to the dominant consumer market. They felt they were more technologically savvy, and had higher levels of education than senior art
directors and copywriters above them who entered advertising in the 1970s and came from a trade. The responses in interview of a small number of art directors and copywriters show some bias toward their own peer group, but not enough to significantly influence the findings.

The general sentiment of the senior art directors and copywriters interviewed was that while this particular cohort was young and wildly enthusiastic and talented they were rough edged because they had not learned professional protocols that could actually help their work. Hill et al. (2007) reported senior creatives, account handlers and clients in their study similarly disagreed that people in the creative department should be young. Cultural theorist Theodore Adorno (1991) expressed the opinion that judgments made by young art directors and copy reflect what they feel they are capable of doing:

> It is their very youth and inexperience that causes them to present their ideas so forcefully and seriously, and under the mantle of freshness and vitality they are not asked to own up to inexperience or renounce ideals and dreams in a society already in thrall of advertising’ (page 62).

The noticeable economic shift away from those with accumulated experience also evolved in part because middleweight art directors and copywriters not only appeared to have more energy, advanced skills and connections but were cheaper to hire. The age-performance weighting affect summarized in the table below assumes that because middleweight art directors and copywriters are primed to peak at about the same moment the field chooses to recognize and honour its best (Sosniak, 2006) that they are deliberately engaged in improving rather than getting by, getting their work into the public domain as evidence of their contribution, and talking in terms of real-time issues rather than reflecting back on what has been done before [Table 8: Age-performance and weighting affect]. The researcher acknowledged that career age is specific to this time and place and is not likely to be reflective of future workplace contexts.

**Table 8: Age-performance and weighting affect**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age-performance curves vary depending on the domain of achievement.</td>
<td>Simonton 1984, 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output is based on career age not chronological age.</td>
<td>Simonton 1984, 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The age at which one peaks has to link with the moments the field uses to recognize and honor its best.</td>
<td>Sosniak, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum levels of performance are not attained merely as a function of age and extended experience, but rather by deliberate efforts to improve.</td>
<td>Ericsson et al. 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance is reliant on getting work into the public domain where they can be applauded and potential recognized thus increasing their chances of promotion and financial reward.</td>
<td>Powell 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those with highest performance levels may have undergone expertise acquisition at an accelerated rate.</td>
<td>Simonton 2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Increased performance can be due to luck and subsequent decrement attributed to regression toward the mean. Simonton 2006

Decrease in performance can be due to infrequency of engagement in challenging activities and decreased intensity of maintained deliberate practice. Ericsson 1999

Expertise and performance in advertising tends to be reflective of a working career rather the immediate group setting. Powell 1997

**Culture**

Nowadays, art directors and copywriters are not only socially divided by task-related activities but by gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, area of expertise, affiliation, and other personal characteristics. This made for a complex social division when developing sampling criteria for the Creative and Creative management samples consisting of seven nationalities across three geographic regions. While local agencies were heavily policed from their head offices they were typically managed by home nationals. The researcher was aware that local culture at some point might influence what informants perceived as important or unimportant, and what they would keep at a safe distance from criticism. Culture was included as a mediating factor to either reinforce or negate its influence in selecting whom to interview.

The researcher went back and looked at the sample selection criteria for possible cultural variations using the Cultural Values and Organisational Customs Scale [Table 9] developed by Cummins and Worley (1993) as a flag rather than a measure, and came to the conclusion that variations in context orientation, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, masculinity were not significantly different across samples to be an influencing factor.

**Table 9: Cultural Values and Organisational Customs Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key values that influence organisational culture and customs:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. context orientation how information is conveyed and time valued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. power distance how people view authority, status differences and influence patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. uncertainty avoidance preference for conservative practices and familiar and predictable situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. individualism looking out for one’s self rather than the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. masculinity the extent a culture favours the acquisition of power and resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A countries economic development can reflect its ability to manage these customs and values.

(Cummins & Worley (1993), Organisational Development And Change. South-western College Publishing Cincinnati, Ohio, pp. 524-526.)
Informants in both the primary Creative sample and the secondary Creative management sample were distinguished by their paradigmatic commitment to creative advertising and the key cultural values of multi-national globally networked agencies who have historically defined how agencies operate and how advertising in their offices should be done. This was supported by the fact that the USA is considered the cultural centre of advertising activity and knowledge, and the predominant orientation of global agency networks is based on their attitudes and practices and ways of doing business in terms of language, protocols and culture. In other words, agencies may have different organisational assets and capabilities but are likely to be similarly configured and have common philosophies regarding development and diffusion of knowledge (Van de Vijver et al., 1997). The globalization of English as the business lingua franca and the Western business ideal further defined the orientation of the investigation toward Western occupational praxis.

Art directors and copywriters in the Creative sample had moved agencies on average three times, highlighting the apparent ease with which they were able to move between agencies and network groups irrespective of geographic location. This indicated to the researcher that social similarity and not cultural diversity had a greater influence on their behaviour and informant responses were likely to be in concert in terms of planning, strategic thinking, communication and problem solving styles, irrespective of what country or nationality was involved. A ‘universalistic’ approach was adopted in respect to the range of cultural similarities and differences identified within the samples. McLeod et al. (2009) further raised the issue of class in their study of twelve creative teams in UK advertising agencies, but the variable was considered too insignificant to include in this research.

3.5.5. Composition

Creative sample

The primary Creative sample consisted of thirty-one art directors/copywriters: Seventeen were copywriters and fourteen art directors. Twenty-eight worked in sixteen multinational advertising agencies and had been working on highly visible brands for a period of time. Four were ex-agency employees. All informants were/or had recently been involved in the creation, production, support and evaluation of novel products or advertising campaigns. The majority were Caucasian or Western-educated males in their early-middle thirties, and were similar in terms of career age, professional status and interests. They have on average ten years practical experience, and had moved between
these types of agencies once every three years. Career age puts them near the identified ten-year timeline for peak creative performance in terms of expertise, creative thinking skills and motivation [see Table 7: Performance attribution by age].

Modus operandi: Art directors and copywriters are primarily engaged in creative problem-solving activities within the agency. They work in a team of two, supervised by a creative director to produce concepts and solutions for the agency’s clients. The art director is responsible for making decisions about the design of the advertisement, layout and aesthetics, and the copywriter for the words - although these boundaries tend to blur in practice. They use their collective technical, procedural and intellectual knowledge to invent or contrive an idea or explanation and formulate it mentally, reduce its complexity, and execute it in a manner and style that can be reliably assessed as novel or valuable within their group’s frame of reference. After they have come up with initial concepts they produce sketches of digital mock-ups based on their preferences and individual values, and put forward the alternatives to the creative director and account team to review.

**Creative management sample**

The Creative management sample was composed of eighteen creative directors and eighteen account handlers/planners across five nationalities. Informants were generally older, university educated and the sample included more women than the Creative sample. Due to the rapid turnover of work and the cross-functional nature of projects undertaken, the roles of account handler and more senior account director are often interchangeable and overlap (Hogg & Scoggins, 2001) and, in this investigation a decision was made to categorize both as ‘account handlers’ to avoid unnecessary confusion.

Modus operandi: The role of the account handler in the creative decision-making cycle is to ensure client procedures are followed precisely and in the correct order, and that the creative team keep to deadlines through all stages of the preparation. They represent client interests (managers, category managers, marketing directors, and the chief executive officer) and in some cases the audience (the people who buy a product or service) selecting alternatives from choice of options. They are responsible for guarding the brand detail and managing the strategic elements of the account to safeguard its long-term success and the stability of the agency-client client relationship.
Creative directors were not included in the Creative sample because their authority at the decision-making table means something more than occupying a place of honour as a senior creative in their disciplinary peer group. At sub-organisational level they are responsible for managing both creative and client expectations [see Figure 4: System levels of creative decision-making]. This is elaborated further in Chapter 5 (pages 98 - 103). Subsequent interviews confirmed that the researcher’s decision to include them in the Creative management sample was appropriate and was confirmed as fieldwork progressed.

Independent commentator sample

It is generally assumed in any society that there are people who have the cognitive authority to ‘know things’ and are trusted to speak on behalf of others. The names of people ‘worth talking to’ emerged during interviews and over the course of the investigation. The Independent commentator sample was used to appraise the universality and relevance of issues both groups raised and their perceived importance to the research question, and to test arguments of the Creative sample against the general beliefs of the broader community. Some were in a position to provide background information about past and present events, individuals and agency activity not available to the other two groups. While Brown (1989) and Ahrne (1997) support the inclusion of people in positions of authority to give reasonably accurate statements or information about activities, Johnson (1998) advises treating these relationships under doubt and suspicion because one network can cultivate another. The researcher was aware that the names art directors and copywriters put forward were those who would best represent them in improving conditions, and, was mindful of paying too much heed to the data from this sample group. The danger was that these second and third hand accounts ran the risk of imposing a fictional view of reality. These interviews were conducted on an ad hoc basis and as the opportunity presented. Data from these interviews did not contribute significantly to the outcome of the investigation but did clarify where certain thoughts came from, and confirmed that the direction of the investigation was valid as data emerged.

3.5.6. Area

The researcher was unable to find suitable sampling techniques that take into account diverse social levels and geographic locations and data collection proceeded on the premise that data sites were not agency or network or organization specific, but linked more generally to creative decision-making situations and events. The researcher
anticipated that local offices of multinational multi-networked groups would be model incubators for the kind of behaviour she was looking to describe because common purpose, mutual awareness of the boundaries, and the potential for mutual interaction and exchange are weaker when groups are large. Size has the capacity to change the character of entire activities and events because the functional size of any group is limited to about 150 members due to the possible limit of human ability to recognise and meaningfully relate to each other (Feltovich et al., 2006; Hill & Dunbar, 2002; Jackson & Wolinsky, 1996; Burt, 1992; Scott, 1991). Judgments in these types of agencies were likely to be more vulnerable and amenable to more influences because local offices direct, manage and moderate decisions rather than make them. As data collection sites, the researcher anticipated that there would be more agreements and disagreements about novelty and value to record and report on.

As institutions, large agencies typically find it harder to adapt to new ways of thinking than smaller independent agencies, and the researcher believed conditions would remain more or less stable over the period of the investigation (Feltovich et al., 2006; Hill & Dunbar, 2002; Jackson & Wolinsky, 1996; Burt, 1992; Scott, 1991). Burdened by their size, multinational multi-networked agencies act more like institutions, and informants who self-selected to work in these types of agencies had limited experience to report outside these kinds of institutions.

Global advertising spending in 2009 was estimated to be US$445 billion [Plunkett Research]. Multi-national, multi-agency conglomerates dominate the market and employ thousands of people worldwide. The global advertising industry is English-language based, and their rules, financial structures and systems, policies and guidelines are located within Western organisational paradigms. The major international network groups share similar histories, philosophies and cultures and are similar in size, composition and configuration. New York had the greatest concentration of head offices. Local offices in Europe, UK, USA, Australia and NZ are situated close to client companies and support networks (media buying, television production, and so on) but are heavily policed from head office. Art direction and copywriting as creative occupations are historically and culturally rooted in the USA and the richest source of knowledge and experience about creative advertising and sampling there was pivotal to the study.

The thirty-one art directors and copywriters (Creative sample) interviewed were spread across seven agencies in London, Frankfurt, New York, Detroit, Sydney, Melbourne and

53
Auckland. Thirty-eight account handlers/creative directors (Account management sample) and twenty-eight Independent commentators were interviewed across five agency groups and in seven regional offices. All three samples were fairly evenly represented across three geographical regions (USA, UK, Australia/New Zealand) [Table 10: Population by geographic location].

The researcher anticipated that asking this cohort of art directors and copywriters questions about agency conditions and contexts in the most extreme situation (large agencies) in contexts they have little control over the outcome (decision-making) and at a developmental level between novice and expert where their integrity, cohesion and status as creative entities would be most under threat would reveal the micro-political nature of the decision-making process itself, and would motivate art directors and copywriter to reveal truths about their activities and experiences that may otherwise not be evident.

Table 10: Population sample by geographic location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>NO OF INFORMANTS</th>
<th>AV. AGE</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>ETHNIC ORIGIN</th>
<th>REGIONAL OFFICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AUSTRALIA/NZ</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>80% AUST/NZ</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>95% AMERICAN</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK/EUROPE</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>80% BRITISH</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.7. Interviews

Understanding the role social context played in creative decision-making involved asking art directors and copywriters to describe their experiences in a way that was meaningful to them. A semi-structured interview technique with a broad set of questions as a prompt was used to gather retrospective data about situations and events, and gave the researcher more flexibility to guide the focus as data emerged. Interviews as a result, sometimes felt like conversations, but more complex, structured and controlled. The technique had the dual effect of considering art directors and copywriters as collaborators who with the researcher co-constructed a shared reality, and this ultimately helped surface underlying conditions that shaped their behavior that in less collaborative circumstances may not have happened. The interchange between processing information and experience and rational and emotional thought was an important source of insight and revealed more about them than what the researcher could see. The descriptions and stories of their experiences they provided were enriching as data and invaluable indexes to their views and perceptions of the world.
With few exceptions, interviews were conducted in informants’ offices. The time frame was established as one hour prior to interview. It was important they did not feel hurried and at all times felt in control of the time, place and pace of interview, and had enough time to reflect on and adequately consider their responses. The researcher knew from experience in the field that informants seldom adhere to a self-imposed time frame when talking about things they are interested in or are important to them, and interviews generally went longer than the time set and drew to a natural and logical conclusion when there was nothing meaningful to add.

Art directors and copywriters were interviewed as teams or separately, depending on their preference, and the interview technique allowed questioning to be altered slightly to accommodate each informant group and situation. Questions around core research question had features in common but varied slightly to accommodate their different world-views and were not necessarily presented in any fixed order or in the same wording.

3.5.7.1. Techniques
It was crucial to establish rapport early in the interviews to encourage informants to talk freely and to ensure that they felt relaxed and confident. The stance taken by the researcher was that informants knew things about conditions, situations and events that were not obvious and that the researcher was willing to learn from them. The technique appeared to be non-directive, yet in many ways, it was extremely directive - though not in the same way as structured interviews.

Interviews were kept as close to normal conversation as possible to ensure that there was no way that the researcher could anticipate their responses and informants had control over the answers. A series of broad questions round performance expectancies led the conversation toward the research questions and then channelled into more specific ones about contexts, conditions, situations and behaviours. When informants had difficulty articulating thoughts and feelings they were given sufficient time to work through a redefinition and reconstruction of the real circumstance in order not to deprive them of consensual support and validation. When informants answered a question with just a few words or none - or appeared quite categorical in their response, no attempt was made to probe further. It was assumed that a definitive response of ‘none’ or ‘no benefit’ was a conclusive statement in its own right. Opinions expressed strongly on issues were treated similarly. Other thoughts and expressions were progressively realized during the course of a conversation rather than as singular statements.
When informants were unsure of a question or they sought clarification a question was reworded. This happened particularly when a question moved beyond the perceptual limits of their social experience. Not many people asked them about what they felt or thought, they said, and some felt unprepared. Others waited for later answers to clarify previous ones. At times, information that seemed totally irrelevant emerged, and occurred primarily because informants sometimes viewed the researcher in the role normally assumed in her past working life. Points relevant to the investigation but outside the prescribed schedule were added at the end of the interview so as not to prejudice the responses to the set research questions.

At times, eliciting the kind of information the researcher was looking for was difficult as anticipated. Art directors and copywriters tend to work with technical and procedural knowledge and when they had trouble articulating clearly their experiences the researcher suggested they describe a situation or activity within a current or recently completed project and post-rationalise their actions. Most showcased work that got through the approval process and ‘talked up’ what they did rather than answer mundane questions about the procedures and processes that worked against them ‘98% of the time’ (a percentage expressed by one informant in the Creative sample). In part this was because they could see no personal benefit from doing so at the time.

The researcher acknowledged that while the claims art directors and copywriters made about their workplace conditions may be unsubstantiated, incorrect or contain a measure of uncertainty regarding validity, they represent a set of condition-action rules that were meaningful to them and they considered factual. While their accounts technically provided a valid picture, the researcher was never sure if the answers they gave within the context of a current project would have been the same if they were asked to comment on the social conditions from the same perspective as the other sample groups. However, what they did describe enabled the researcher to draw out inferences about particular situations, events and times and assisted in prioritising and ranking contexts, conditions, actions, interactions, situations and behaviours they considered important.

3.5.7.2. Ethics

Selecting whom to interview had to take into account how art directors and copywriters would feel about their activities being investigated, how they would behave under test conditions, and the possible physical and psychological impact of collecting data about them. Would they feel professionally compromised by the comments of their professional colleagues in regard to their collective actions? Would attitudes and
opinions made about their behaviour diminish their professional self-esteem in any way that would cause them to experience embarrassment or regret? No matter how dispassionately discussed, questions involving professions, said Albert (1998), tap into sensitive matters of identity and identification, and can engender intense emotions and feelings of anguish, pride, anxiety, and security sought and secured. The type of information the researcher sought had the potential to create bewilderment, uncertainty, internal conflict, psycho-social isolation, acute and nameless anxiety along with various symptoms of acute depersonalisation if field conditions were not managed sensitively (Garfinkel, 1967). Procedures were put in place prior to the commencement of fieldwork to ensure informant integrity, knowledge or intelligence was not being questioned and that material would be treated sensitively.

The general principles of what ought to be said in interview and published, and accepted notions of right and wrong in statements or actions were guided by British Psychological Society Code of Conduct ‘Ethical Principles for Conducting Research with Human Participants,’ January 2000 (bps.org.uk). ‘Ethical’ and ‘moral’ and ‘proper conduct’ procedures followed included:

- Correct protocols were observed entering, in and exiting the field
- Fully informed individual consent prior to interview
- Group authority was sought and permission to enter the field
- Informant identities were coded in analysis
- Reports/case studies were to be negotiated for different levels of release

Generally, the researcher found those who agreed to take part in the study were motivated by the intended sense of the question. Alvesson (1994) reported in his study of advertising professionals that informants frequently questioned the models their professions have historically been eager to put forward and with no apparent penalty and this was also apparent in this investigation. Having the opportunity to air grievances, intentionally or otherwise, stated Kelley (1973), helps render their environment more predictable and potentially makes it more controllable and understandable.

Gaining access to informants had been identified as a potential problem. Emails were sent explaining the nature of the inquiry and requesting interviews. Through RMIT sponsorship, the researcher stated her interest and reassured informants that it is not they who are being studied but something of which they were part. Informants signed a consent form adapted from the standard RMIT Prescribed Consent Form before
interviews commenced. It outlined the study and stated what the material would be used for. A brief discussion took place about the motives and aims of the research, and assurance was given that the answers provided would not only be valuable but would be treated as confidential. Premature disclosure of the research focus, Goffman (1969) advises, can influence how informants reacted to questions and can limit their answers to stock answers. So the researcher provided ample opportunity for informants to ask questions within the conceptual and theoretical framework without giving away too much in advance and biasing the outcome.

Some comments were of a personal or confined nature and others specific to the site or circumstance of a particular grievance. The researcher avoided appending codes to excerpts that would identify agencies or individuals to avoid violating or damaging their reputation. Protocols were similarly observed by balancing contradictory statements, loyalties and confidences expressed or implied as fieldwork progressed:

- What should be reported and what should be hidden?
- Would revelations cause individual and group distress?
- Would the researcher be creating a level of distrust and suspicion between sample groups when perhaps there is none?
- What are the consequences of violating the assumption that advertising agencies are normal functioning entities?

In considering likely ethical implications, the researcher did not propose the findings would upset informants or their agencies because this was study of a group-in-common not a critical analysis of a particular individual, company, or geographic location and the outcomes anticipated were associated with possible improvement in their conditions.

Because the research design allowed for ongoing reframing of the research question as data collection progressed, there was concern that the outcome could be different from what was anticipated in the research proposal. It raised the question of whether informants who took part would have reacted differently to the questions had the outcome had been known in advance. The researcher went back and listened to all recorded interviews to determine if there was sufficient cause for concern and concluded that the conversations were about commonly known situations and events typically expressed informally between group members.
3.6. Data Recording and Storage

The first round of interviews took place in London and Frankfurt in July/August 2001 and over 32 months ninety-two interviews in total were conducted. Thirty-one interviews across the three sample groups were recorded on tape and systematic field notes kept [Appendix G Sample Summary] because in the early stages it was not clear to the researcher what counted as important in informant accounts. Tapes were dated, and the location and details of persons present were recorded at beginning of each tape. Tapes were not transcribed because, as Psathas and Anderson assert, a transcript is never a ‘verbatim’ rendering of discourse because it ‘represents … an analytic interpretation and selection of speech and action’ (1990: 75). Instead a log was attached to each recording to facilitate cross-referencing in analysis.

No attempt was made in the early stages to put value on or interpret responses but rather the truth was simply acknowledged to be as they described and that their circumstance was progressively realized through these conversations. Contemporaneous entries helped contextualise the major themes sequentially and chronologically within the time and place the research was conducted. They were also used to adjust and monitor research techniques and procedures as data was collected.

As interviews progressed and data began to replicate, the researcher reverted to note-taking for the remainder of the interviews. In-process memos helped carry forward contemporaneous analysis along with data collection, thus enhancing the prospect of data being considered reliable. Data collection took three years, and progressive and systematic memos helped refine and keep track of the key themes, patterns of interactions, general impressions, and then concept to concept in the evolving theory and to ‘see through’ to the underlying reality as collection progresses.

Early interviews highlighted what was going on in the creative department and identifying similarities and differences in perceptions, orientations, opinions, feelings, aspirations of the Creative and Creative management samples. Commonsense knowledge and practices as they made sense of, found their way about in, and acted on the circumstances in which they found themselves were progressively realizable through the course of these conversations.

The same data patterns were largely repeated in Australian interviews [March/April 2003] and after completing forty of the sixty-seven interviews data reached what Glaser & Strauss (1968) call ‘theoretical saturation’. In other words, no additional data came
from subsequent interviews to develop further the properties of the categories in analysis. Additional interviews, the researcher concluded, were unlikely to alter the research outcome. The line of inquiry in subsequent interviews became more focused on filling gaps, confirming the importance and relevance of emergent issues, and statistically determining how wide and deep certain attitudes were across all groups.

When, where and how to exit a field was directly tied up with the foregoing and ongoing research. The pragmatic concerns of leaving the field were not only psychological and social but tactical, because the research process is never devoid of some form of emotional commitment from both sides (Minchiello et al., 1990). In this research situation disengaging from the field was a process rather than a single event. The researcher emailed informants and sponsoring agencies immediately after the interview, thanking them for their participation, time and effort.

Informant titles and location were double entry coded (CW/USA = Copywriter/USA) to avoid identifying informants. Coding in this way enabled the researcher to go back and check for accuracy and relevant contextual information as analysis progressed. A full list of codes used can be found in Appendix G Sample Summary.

Storing data involved the following activities and stages:

1. Audiotapes, copies of emails, consent forms, in-process memos and field notes were stored separately in category folders and on a hard drive.
2. Bibliographic citations were entered at the time of writing.
3. Audiotapes were retained as research data (with the consent of research participants) and were appropriately stored to minimise the risk of corruption.
4. Rather than recording and transcribing interviews verbatim, the researcher made notes according to specified categories and recorded them directly into a matrix of attributions [Appendix F Attribution Matrix].

3.7. Summary and Evaluation

The researcher concluded that the qualitative line of enquiry and the relatively small sample size was no impediment to deriving conclusions about conditions, contexts and situations. It provided clues about the underlying cognitions of the group experiences of art directors and copywriters and produced some socially robust generalizations about the contexts and conditions that influenced their behaviour. The researcher found no impediment in accessing informants, and those who agreed to be interviewed were
motivated by the intended sense of the question. They aired their views without fear of penalty, in part because their grievances were universal to the group. They wanted to be heard and this is made salient in Chapter 5 [Findings]. Sampling techniques encouraged them to express their thoughts and feelings and this added richness and depth to the researcher’s understanding of their situation. The working hypothesis withstood variations and yielded the same results. While the outcomes cannot be said to representative of the total population, the researcher believed that is likely to be so but with some variations.
1 Researcher Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (1996) found in his study of 91 eminent people across the arts, sciences, business and government that the rate of acceptance varied among disciplines. Out of writers, artists and musicians, less than one third approached accepted. Barron (1958:66) found in his studies, creative individuals became highly indignant at the prospect of allowing their talents to form part of a research project; Paul Feldwick (2000) and Kramer (1983) similarly expressed difficulties encountered by researchers in accessing information from creative groups in advertising.

2 Glaser and Straus (1968: 106) refer to this the ‘constant comparative method’.
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

The aim of analysis was to uncover the webs of social significance that surrounded creative decision-making in multinational agencies and to make the behaviour of this particular cohort of art directors and copywriters understandable and reportable. Their attitudes and beliefs about proficiencies and competencies, measurements of novelty, originality and quality, notions of control and risk taking, shifts in levels of aspiration, persistence and motivation, and estimations of their own success and that of others, were progressively broken down into smaller parts to establish some causality between described thoughts, behaviours, actions and events.

In this chapter, the researcher describes how data from recorded interviews, field notes and site material was sorted, grouped, organized into meaningful categories, then systematically and progressively identified and named in terms of shared characteristics that clustered around contexts, conditions, situations.

4.1. Inductive Analysis

In the beginning, the researcher worked closely with field notes, in-process memos and a random selection of twelve of the thirty-two recorded interviews and notes taken from the primary Creative sample across three data collection sites in the UK, USA and Australia. The focus shifted back and forth between the key claims informants made and the researcher's interpretation of their meaning. Themes (ideas, thoughts and feelings) about events and situations that appeared to convey a particular meaning to art directors and copywriters were inductively drawn into categories.

The researcher was mindful that even with good faith and intention that her tacit knowledge and conceptions about the emergent picture could interfere with the interpretation of their experiences and potentially influence the outcome. There was always the possibility that conclusions made could be false even when all of the premises were found to be true. Supporting evidence was reviewed against contrary evidence as analysis progressed in order not to support an argument without proof, and to negate the possibility of the researcher imposing exogenous meaning on classifications. A period of reflection over the considerable time between fieldwork and writing up results also helped overcome potential biases. Changes that had taken place in the advertising industry in the intervening period were also accounted for by speaking to agency practitioners prior to writing up the findings and reviewing recent literature, increasing the probability that a similar relation could be found in the data if the investigation was repeated using similar
samples drawn from the same population under similar conditions to convey the same meaning to different audiences. An unexpected outcome of this delay was that the issues informants raised nine years ago were unchanged and confirmed to the researcher that they were structural not social.

4.2. Coding and Categorizing
Field notes were analysed first. Coloured labels were appended to themes that repeated and resonated frequently and with intensity and denoted their significance or importance to the Creative group. The same codes were attached to literature and in-process memos and marginal notes and cross-referenced. Shared characteristics and differences were ranked and weighed according to number of times they were mentioned (frequency and resonance), the strength of the presenting argument (rhetoric), how deeply it was felt (intensity) and later in terms of whether informants viewed a particular context or situation positively or negatively. The researcher then listened to a selection of recorded interviews [see Appendix G: Sample Summary]. Memos were appended to the contexts in which these described behaviours occurred and did not occur.

Where informants used their own terms and semantics (words, sentences, dialogue, linguistic cues) in context sensitive situations their responses were manually cued to codes and categories in terms of their sensitivity or specificity to a theme. In doing so, the researcher acknowledges that if the task was given to another coder they may code or collapse the same data into different codes making it harder to repeat the procedure with the same outcome.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) developed a Paradigm model to analyse prototypical problems of cooperation and competition between decision-making groups. It consisted of theoretical terms that carried limited empirical content but accounted for most of the micro-sociological processes, variations and causal links between actions and events described by informants. The researcher believed there was little risk that data would be forced by its application and the features were adopted as the overarching interpretative framework for interrogating emerging data.
Figure 4: Situational attributes of creative decision-making in advertising.

Overlapping coloured circles represent the relation between the contexts and conditions and actions and interactions between cooperating and competing decision-making groups. The dimensions located outside are the mental steps involved in selecting and negotiating alternative courses of actions based on needs, preferences and values at various stages of the decision-making cycle. Implied within this diagram is a relationship between some probable situational cause, and the occurrence of a behavioural effect.

Attributes in this diagram that appeared significant and important to art directors and copywriters were then further collapsed into categories of attributions in Figure 5 [Categories of attributions]. The category structure was simple: the basic unit was the relation conceptualised in columns of causes (conditions, contexts), and rows of effects (actions, interactions), but the process of building the matrix was complex and dynamic.

Source: Adapted from Earle, 2007; Csikzentmihalyi, 1996; Robbins, 1996; Fibel & Hale, 1988; Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Blumberg & Pringle, 1982).
Some features had more than two values so the method was highly sensitive to the way in which each attribute or cause was coded. For example, the categories confirmed what the researcher had observed in pilot interviews that the responses of creative directors were more related to account managers than subordinate art directors and copywriters, and ultimately resulted in merging them into a single sample (Creative management) without losing definition or meaning.

**Figure 5: Categories of attributions**

| Columns | Causal conditions and contextual factors | Value ranges and properties that affect decisions:  
(1) Achieve what they set out to do; (2) have the ability to change things; (3) get people to understand what they are trying to accomplish; (4) get and give support and encouragement; 
(5) maintain relationships.  
The Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale, (GESS), Fibel & Hale, 1988)  
Profession, regulatory bodies  
Economic, cultural and political authority  
Standards of quality and value |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Rows | Actions and interactions | Goal-oriented activities and action strategies that guide choices:  
Attitude: what they feel about the situation.  
Motive: the reason for doing something or behaving in a certain way.  
Intention: what they plan to do or achieve.  
Interest: what turns their attention.  
Experience: the level of involvement in their activity  
Expectation: their mental image of what will happen (McShane & Von Glinow 2000:405). |
| Table | Social Contexts (colour coded) | Primary structural features perceived as causing an effect:  
External and uncontrollable (red = economy, field, profession) |  
Internal and uncontrollable (yellow = cultural context of the domain/agency)  
Internal and uncontrollable (green = social context of the creative community/department.  
Internal and uncontrollable (blue = speech and behaviour)  
(Pearl, 2000; Weiner 1986; Kelley, 1971; Heider, 1958) |

The matrix prompted key relationships to compare as categories emerged. Tentative connections were made between attributes and statements of relationships. Some categories were revised and modified and detached from others as theory was generated. New dimensions were added to the relationship between sets of codes drawing attention to aspects warranting investigation or comparison. Some connections did not result from a cause. When data began to repeat and overlap, the researcher went back and listened to the remaining recorded interviews and interview notes from the Creative sample until a generalised and complementary account of Creative group behaviour emerged and no further new codes, categories or links could be found or identified. The researcher evaluated the utility of the codes and her ability to systematically apply these codes to the secondary Creative management sample, and ultimately the same process and codes were applied to facilitate cross-referencing and comparison between the ranked category features and emergent theory.
4.3. Triangulation

The second stage involved the researcher worked closely with interview field notes, in-process memos and a similar sample of recorded interviews from account handlers and creative directors in the Creative management sample to gain further insight on the conditions, contexts and situations art directors and copywriters described. Labels both sample groups put on the actions and interactions and behaviours within these conditions, contexts and situations were cross-referenced and compared. Testing the strength of claims made by both the Creative and the Creative management samples against the collective beliefs of the wider community as represented by the Independent commentator sample also helped confirm that the researcher’s interpretation of their (art directors and copywriters) meaning was accurate from their vantage point. While some researchers cast doubt about the reliability of comparing informant accounts in this way (Hallman, 1963), others believe it a methodologically reliable way of enhancing the authenticity of this kind of data (Minchiello et al., 1990; Abercrombie, 1988). In this research situation it helped counter any tendency of the researcher as an informed observer to underestimate or overestimate the role of an event or situation and bias towards a specific outcome. The responses of account directors and creative directors in the Creative management sample were ranked and weighed according to their level of agreement/disagreement on particular issues, and on the ranking of a feature relative to numbers across the other sample groups [Creative and Creative management]. Looking at the situation from three vantage points provided a more detailed and balanced picture of their situation and explained more fully the richness and complexity of creative decision-making behaviour. It gave the researcher better purchase on the research question and served as a conceptual bridge to ascertain where differences lay and to what could they be attributed.

4.4. Key Area Analysis

The continuous interplay of coding, categorising and analysing and match theory against emerging data from the three samples made salient features of their experience. Creative informant accounts of the relationship between the creative enterprise and the agency environment were largely undifferentiated and little modification was required to accommodate variances. Some questions registered significant response from art directors and copywriters and modest response from account handlers. For example, art directors and copywriters were more animated than account handlers by the politics of the decision-making process, and this appeared to be inversely related to the lack of power Creative informants felt they had over a situation to effect a positive change in their circumstance. Some features were collapsed into other categories when they
became indiscernible. For example, the researcher identified in the previous chapter there was minimal variation in inter-cultural values between informant groups across the three regions on the cultural values scale in Figure 9 [Cultural Values and Organisational Customs Scale] and this rendered cultural attributes as largely insignificant because organisational culture appeared to override local culture and did not appear to be an influencing factor on behaviour [this is elaborated in 3.5.4. Criteria]. Features that overlapped or became too small or too weak to define were reviewed and either re-ranked or excluded. Care was taken to ensure that the key issues art directors and copywriters raised in interviews were fairly represented across all samples and not unnecessarily biased toward the Creative sample or a particular outcome. For example, the gender bias towards men in selecting the Creative sample raised issues of reliability and was examined to determine whether or not the final hypothesis applied [5.3. Question Arising from the Data]. The researcher was mindful of assuming any significance because statistically speaking the sample was quite small and did not claim to be representative of the creative population.

Because this was essentially a study of behaviour in a single group, the maximum number of possible relations and variations that fitted the observable facts were considered prior to analysis. The following underlying attributes had a logical rather than statistical representativeness and were treated as pre-coded entries [Table 11: Pre-coded attributions].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development/traits</th>
<th>Memory, learned associations and experience. They have similar performance histories, levels of knowledge and skills, moral or ethical development, and values.</th>
<th>Generalized Expectancy of Success Scale (GESS), Fibel &amp; Hale, 1988</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Motivations and expectations</td>
<td>Figure 1: System-levels of creative decision-making</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Age, competency and proficiency | Age at which art directors are no longer considered novice. At their competency level they expect higher return for their effort. | Figure 2: Competency levels in creative decision-making  
Appendix E Scale of proficiencies  
Table 7: Performance attribution by age  
Table 8: Age-performance and weighting affect |
| Maleness          | Representation of males in the primary Creative sample.                                                                                                                                 | Appendix G Sample summary |

Unknown attributions or variables included: (1) Collective point-of-view on cultural change, policy implementation, management, and so on. (2) Time and place also had their own dimension and played a major part in determining the relations between political, social, cultural practice and had more effect on them than they have on it at both a micro and macro level (Althusser & Balibar, 1970). (3) The sum of a variety of
self-images described within the decision-making frame. In terms of properties, these 
attributes accounted for in Table 11 [Pre-coded attributions] were essentially individual 
differences and considered largely controllable because behaviour is predictable in 
groups whereas these variables were uncontrollable and were open to manipulation. On 
major issues there were no distinction between novices and experts but on issues of 
control there was.

ENDNOTES

1 Economic practice involves opportunity cost and budget constraints, efficiency, exclusivity, marginalism, 
utility, economies of scale, divisions of labour, equipment, globalisation and the philosophy of the firm. 
CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

The research found that the choices art directors and copywriters made about what was novel and valuable in creative advertising were engendered, facilitated, compromised and constrained by social negotiation both within their peer group with and outside groups who had a vested interest in the outcome. Significant was the frequency and intensity of pessimistic claims made by informants in the Creative sample about the limited possibility of successfully negotiating their version through the decision-making process. The overriding theme centred round how art directors and copywriters saw their version of novelty conflicting with the expectations of other decision-making groups. The fractious nature of the interaction between art directors and copywriters as aesthetic power-seekers, account handlers as the client’s representative in the agency and creative directors as power-brokers had a significant bearing on how they explained, described and justified their actions. Failure to agree on and enforce a common standard of novelty and value with handlers caused varying degrees of performance anxiety and decreased motivation and received most rhetoric. Responses cued to situations where performance benefits and rewards were perceived as minimal were often most intense: Agreement within the creative group by comparison was more stable and positively associated. Contexts and situations outside that were unstable, external and frequently mentioned by art directors and copywriters as areas where they felt they had little control.

The method of self-reporting on levels of aspiration, persistence, motivation and on estimations of success made it difficult at times for the researcher to know whether art directors and copywriters were exaggerating conditions in order to make their situation seem worse, or whether they had chosen to remember the bad and forgotten or blocked out the good, or attributed factors wrongly. It raised the question of whether perceived negative and limiting influences applied across the entire population, or to this group alone. Hogg & Scoggins (2001) and Hackley and Kover (2007) similarly noted the ‘us against the world’ mindset in a general population of art directors and copywriters in their samples. The researcher had also observed the same rhetoric and intensity in pilot interviews, and this gained traction in further interviews across all samples. No significant variation could be found in geographic locations other than those that could be attributed to experience and disposition. Metaphors of war, games and theatre resonated strongly in accounts to describe the execution and enactment of power and control, and set the scene for how they described events.
Some unremarked conditions and contexts included the unspoken rules, norms, beliefs and moral attitudes of the collective that held them accountable and presented them as a unified force, the hysteria of change and peer pressure, social status and professional integrity, and the covert nature of their expectations. On a personal level, some informants touched upon the personal cost of these pressures on their working life. They described who they worked best with and against, when to stand ground and to acquiesce, the emotional need to stay or go, getting hired and fired, fear of rejection, and who to trust and distrust. This was particularly apparent in informants in New York, some did not see themselves working in advertising long term because of the performance pressures imposed on them.

Informant accounts provided insights into how art directors and copywriters and handlers accommodated different standards of novelty and value, how the decision-making process itself influences their actions, and the behavioural consequences in certain contexts and under certain conditions. The researcher’s interpretation of their collective experience was drawn from the sixty-seven interviews conducted, and conversations with people in agencies around the world who had intimate knowledge of decision-making processes and procedures and whose insights provided a sense of validity to the findings.

Brown (1989) suggests that conflict is little more than interpersonal behaviour on a large scale, and rather than assuming that what the researcher had seen or heard was dysfunctional, the stance taken was that while the relationship between art directors and copywriters and account handlers and creative directors carry clear power and status differences, conflict between them is a natural process of generating cultural distinction in agencies. The validity of this statement is questioned in concluding the study.

Social environments have been strongly associated with creative performance by a number of researchers who have highlighted the importance of taking into account all the characteristics of the social condition when describing behaviour (Ericsson, 2006; Cianciolo, 2006; Gould, 1999; Ford, 1995; Bourdieu, 1984). The researcher could find no method for analysing data from decision-making groups with different expectations of an outcome and no shared goal. As a consequence, the conflict that played out in the accounts of art directors and copywriters both informed and infected the discourse at times in terms of lucidity and fair-mindedness. Describing how a single sample of art directors and copywriters framed and defended the choices they made based on social testability in situations where negative feedback was likely raised the inevitable question of whether the good work account handlers and the agencies did in planning and research and looking after clients would be sidelined. The deep-rooted and long-standing
disposition this group of creatives had towards account handlers was considered simultaneously in describing situations and events. The cause-effect relationship between them was, however, considered an aggravating factor for instability rather than a necessary or sufficient condition of conflict. A future researcher may choose to build a comparative study of both groups using the same principles of social group theory.

Consensus was among the final tasks attempted, and then only after a standard had evolved from the Creative sample with respect to what should and should not be part of the concept. Based on their accounts, the researcher concluded that while there were other factors involved, (level of authority, cognitive ability, technical and procedural skills, development level and expectation of the outcome) the choice art directors made between getting work right and getting it done was the condition that shaped their behaviour, influenced their actions, and their perception of themselves as functioning creative entities. Behind this statement stands a deeper point about practice and standards that informants raised in their accounts. Getting it right involved meeting group standards of novelty and value and engaged them in the creative advertising community itself. Correctness was notionally expressed as the perfect technique constructed in accordance to standards and principles: The copywriter obsessing over a comma until the rhythm of a sentence was ‘right’, and the art director over the lighting until a desired mood or ambience was created in a photograph. Getting it right meant to be curious, to investigate and to learn from ambiguity and was notionally attached to the parallel concept of excellence in that art directors and copywriters could see no room for improvement once a decision had been made. Getting it done involved accommodating the standards of account handlers seeking to prosper by the acquisition of their jurisdiction. Both revolved around the concept that it has to happen in a certain way with one action leading to the next. One was based on correctness and the other on practical experience.

The literature provided the conceptual framework for understanding how art directors and copywriters with low levels of authority and high ideational competencies might collaborate with process-driven account handlers and resolve their differences in an ambiguous decision-making context, and lends intellectual rigor to the narrative drawn from interviews. From informant reports the researcher was able to create an account of what this particular group of art directors and copywriters felt was central, distinctive and enduring about their relationship with peers, account handlers and creative directors and how they advanced their concerns in what is considered a highly ambiguous socio-political workplace context.
In presenting the findings, multifocal narrative is used to capture the social dynamics of the creative decision-making context. Not all informants have equal voice - some have no voice other than to add to the body of evidence in described situations, contexts, conditions in the researcher’s narrative. Collectively they describe how a group of ‘defiant and doomed’ mostly male middleweight directors and copywriters with low levels of authority [Figures 1: System-levels of creative decision-making], high ideational competencies [Figure 2 Competency levels in creative decision-making] and ideologically isolated from the rest of the agency negotiate novel products that are hard to define and measure with process-driven account handlers with higher levels of authority, lower levels of competency and conflicting standards and loyalties, in agencies that aspire to be hubs of innovation yet act more like institutions.

Analytic subdivisions in the form of discursive commentary interject the narrative to look beyond the words of informants in describing people and events. It is here that the researcher as an informed observer attempts to reconcile observed behaviours and events. The reporting style foregrounds the social dynamics that revolve around the situated character of informant accounts and is at least partially ethnographic in that the community is in some part the researcher’s own and the researcher already had considerable knowledge of the general context in which the study was located.

The described conditions, contexts and situations in multinational agencies in 5.1. [Getting it Right], provided the contextual frame for describing the underlying micro-political nature of the relationship between art directors and copywriters and account handlers in the second half of the chapter [5.2. Getting it Done]. In essence, what follows is a description of how the battle for the preservation of standards of novelty in advertising is conducted.

On occasions, creative directors as senior members of their disciplinary peer group speak from their once incumbent position as middleweight copywriters and art directors, in part because as Bourdieu (1984) states, ‘our instinctive narrative evolves from the choices we make about our existence.’ While the intended research focus was on middleweight art directors and copywriters, the researcher found creative directors too wanted to ‘make sense’ of their situation for their own private understanding. Their narrative revealed similar deep-rooted and long-standing dispositions that appeared to spring from the early stages of their professional development. In large agencies, creative directors are not always in control of key relationships or in a position to advance their own concerns, and they too can be similarly affected by the guiding presence of an Executive Creative
Director above them and within the context of the research question described the middleweight art director and copywriter’s dilemma, in part, as their own.

In other places, the unexpected voices of local office managers as Independent Commentators interject the narrative from their incumbent position as account handlers to clarify a point and identify existing culturally-bounded webs of social relationships that would otherwise not be evident. They too were similarly affected by the guiding presence of a head office that provided economic direction but little guidance on how to deal with factional fighting between art directors and copywriters and creative directors and account handlers and the behavioural aftermath on the ground in their branch offices. They have a vested interest in art directors and copywriters getting it right and done because they were often judged by their holding company bosses by their ability to manage creative talent as well as delivering the bottom line.

The researcher considered whether the voice of management would overshadow that of art directors or copywriters in writing up the findings and concluded that while middle-level art directors and copywriters where most affected, the issues they raised were structural and not unique to the Creative group. Senior creatives, creative directors and managers were similarly affected but in different ways, and including their interpretations of situations and events in the creative department provided a richer and thicker description of what was going on.

The collective narrative locates the negotiated boundaries and conditions of creative practice, and makes evident how art directors and copywriters frame and defend choices and act in a coordinated way to achieve their goals. It defines the tasks art directors and copywriters perform, the relationships they manage and how they deal with notions of success and failure, the choices they make about what to put forward and withhold, when to step forward or back, speak or stay silent, defend or attack, and describes how they feel, think and behave when confronted with choices about their work, and the strategies they use to influence a decision in their favour and the consequences of these actions.

The researcher acknowledges that not all features have been adequately differentiated and for every statement there is a contradictory argument. The explanation is an interpretive endeavour and outcomes speculative (and ongoing) rather than deduced from absolute laws and principles. It is the researcher’s interpretation of occurrences described by this particular group of art directors and copywriters and is contextually bound within a particular time and place(s).
5.1. Getting it Right: Contexts, Conditions and Situations

All occupations strive for professional status because ‘professionalism sheds light on the fact that what is really at stake is not just a problem of communication disturbances, personally held attitudes … but the social status of an occupation’. (Nyilasy & Reid, 2007: 440)

What conditions, contexts and situations in multinational agencies influenced and shaped decisions art directors and copywriters make about novelty and value?

The overriding theme that emerged from Creative interviews was their motivation to improve rather than get by. Middleweight art directors and copywriters were intrinsically motivated to make each concept or solution more novel and/or original than the last, and this goal aspiration fitted within the rules and values of their group - and especially when it resulted in positive outcomes that were profitable to them in some way. Their social worth was measured by competency, not level of authority and choosing to ‘get it right’ generally assumed there was no perceived benefit in their status by simply getting it done. Behavioural researchers describe this as goal-oriented behaviour because their motives serve a social function and are notionally attached to potential reward. Art directors and copywriters in the study did not always have a clear vision of what they could do improve their situation or conditions because the nature of project work is random and the outcomes cannot not be anticipated in advance, but based on their knowledge, skill-level and experience they felt it was achievable.

The methods they used to pursue their goal of getting it right and the contexts and conditions that assisted and hindered the attainment of this goal are described in this part of the chapter. Most of the rhetoric that emerged from interviews was focused around five needs: (1) Wanting acceptance and approval of their version of novelty and originality as a benchmark and standard, and the need for an aggregated and substantial body of work as evidence of this standard. (2) To be seen and heard in the form of professional visibility and recognition. (3) The need for influence and to win, (4) and reward for their effort. (5) All of which required active support and encouragement from management.

Getting it right involved a sense of accomplishment and a high degree of intentionality, ambition, skill and effort, and strongest rhetoric focused around who or what they perceived got in their way of achieving this goal. Said Starkes (2003, cited in Deakin et al., 2006) of this behaviour: ‘Few human endeavours exist to which people dedicate so much time, energy, resources and effort – all with the goal of becoming simply the best they can be’ (page 305).
5.1.1. Acceptance and Approval

The researcher observed that Creative informants tended to mirror their personal likes and dislikes to their peer group in interview. What counted as novel and valuable and timeless and what was disregarded assumed that their aesthetic judgment had a universal validity and that there was a fixed hierarchy of taste, and this made judgments about what was right and appropriate more personal. As a consequence, they frequently displayed an aversion toward account handlers who disregarded their aesthetic judgment or did not ‘like’ their work. Exactly what made it ‘right’ was not immediately evident in their accounts but rather amorphously described as something single-minded and compelling. The terms ‘good’ and ‘great’ were frequently used or alluded to in describing its manifestation:

Everyone has their own ideas of what is good. Creatives know it when they see it. If an idea has won more awards then everyone collectively declares they wish they had done it. (CD/CW/NZ)

They want to be much better because they have honed their work and because they have given it more thought. (R/AUS)

Everyone strives to be great … we [art directors and copywriters] know where the bar is. It is easy to be good. You can hit the good mark is easy – everyone knows it. So it is easy to argue about what is good. (CW/USA)

It is hard to be great. It is more subjective. Great shuts everyone up so and we are always torturing ourselves [about reaching this standard]. (CW/USA)

We all want to be the person who does the next big thing. To wait for the call from the Wall Street Journal to talk to the team who did it. (CD/CW/USA)

The notion that making advertisements novel and original distinguishes brands in the marketplace has generated significant research interest over the past few decades and appears to be based on big agency values and particularly related to brands. Knowing what had been done before is thus a critical antecedent to the production of novelty because standards cannot be established independently. So what is novel and original appears to be not so much a standard but a kind of social orientation that guides art directors and copywriters toward display rules to adhere to. This leads art directors and copywriters at lower levels of authority to make critical economic judgments based on the status quo. While novel and original as a standard and benchmark may appear similar, the distinction between them is an important one.

An original idea, project or campaign had the quality of being completely new. The real power of originality for agencies lies in annexing and owning a new area of the domain
and this makes it the standard they aspire to.

Agencies can get quite obsessive [about originality]. (CD/CW/NZ)

It is more important to show originality than solve a problem. (ECD/AD/UK)

Originality involves taking a prototypical problem and coming up with a solution that bears no connection to what had been done before. It requires a constructive imagination, a high degree of collective experiment, trial and error, personal judgment and emotional investment and a great deal of effort and courage to smash boundaries. Even with the right opportunities informants said it seldom takes place without some conflict or disagreement over resources, the choices of means and different sub-goals, and the development of norms to evaluate something new. So destroying what went before and the uncertainty it entailed was a destructive as well as a useful force for art directors and copywriters in the study.

It raised the inevitable question of whether the measurement of originality in advertising was compromised by the certainty that it is almost impossible to reach. There is no known measurement in place for agencies and their clients to judge advertising that is entirely new. Judging groundbreaking work is extremely difficult because, by definition, it often falls outside their frame of reference. While it was seldom achieved, originality was a useful political tool art directors and copywriters implied, because its power lay in the possibility that it might occur (despite the fact that it seldom did) and conditions and situations could be blamed for its absence:

The question of originality is at the heart of every decision I make, but an idea goes further into ‘hostile territory’ once it leaves the creative department. (CW/UK)

Clients come to an agency for the creative. Then they tell the creative department it has to be done this way. We always hope if we hold out for good standards that our clients will eventually, but it is often a standard ‘good enough’ when it goes out the door. (AD/USA)

The following excerpt by advertising man Charles Brower in James Webb-Young’s 1951 book *A Technique for Producing Ideas* takes the view that historically double standards in creative decision-making are inherent in this culture:

A new idea is delicate. It can be killed by a sneer or a yawn; it can be stabbed to death by a quip and worried to death by a frown on the right man's brow. When innovations are in the exploration stage, they need a champion to take them through the rest of the developmental stages. Otherwise the bureaucracy, politics, and people who can only see the fledgling and potential
innovation through today's glasses will smother it or let it quietly die from malnourishment.

Art directors and copywriters in the study felt hampered by lack of opportunity to reach the standard they set themselves. The agency’s clients didn’t always share their creative vision, they said, or require an original solution. And they had to balance these contradictions against their own predetermined standards, and frequently felt that what they were asked to produced was often a compromise and sub-optimal:

Some clients like your work if they have seen it before. From their point of view if it is original then it is not creative. (AD/AUS)

If you work on biscuits it is all about taste, so you end up giving a fresh face to an old problem, and that is more often than not boiling it down to something simple and tangible, creating a bit of disruption and giving it a stylistic treatment. (CW/USA)

Paul Arden (2003) noted a general perception in advertising that novel and original ideas were the result of extraordinary effort: ‘Many [art directors and copywriters] want to be good but not many are prepared to make the sacrifices it takes to be great. It doesn’t mean they are stupid, they just get over taken by those who continually strive to be better than they are …’ (page 13). What often goes unacknowledged is that an agency’s reputation is usually built on one or two charismatic people. Said Harold Mitchell in Campaign Brief (March, 1992) ‘… all through time, out of 100 there would be only five that were great [artists]. And for every 100 writers the same. In advertising it is no different. In the Eighties, the 95% got confused with the 5%. Almost everyone got well paid, and naturally as a result they all thought they were in the 5%.’ Art directors and copywriters in this study felt too much was expected of them and this was a theme that ran through their accounts. ‘Creatives nowadays are not driven in the same way’, said an art director in the USA. In self-selecting to work in the creative department the middleweight art directors and copywriters in the study knew what was expected and were willing to invest time and effort into things they could change, but generally felt anxious, unmotivated, frustrated and primed for failure if this was not made possible, and it influenced how they behaved. Some were motivated by different factors at different times. Others felt indifferent, anxious and ambivalent. A few felt unable to prove their worthiness through the work they produced and spoke about ‘giving up’ because the agency’s goals had become unintelligible to them. This raises the prickly issue of meeting standards that are organised to meet a fixed end. Raising the bar too high was making it hard for them to get it absolutely right. Some preferred goals that were moderate, not too hard or too easy to complete. Others were optimally motivated by
the challenge, however, the rhetoric attached to their public persona as a creative risk-taker was frequently absent when it got down to what really mattered:

I don’t have the courage to push boundaries into new areas [outside advertising] and there is a comfort zone in what I do. (CD/AUS)

Near enough is good enough. I strive to do a good job but I get annoyed with co-workers who push. They have no sense of balance. I want a life. (CW/USA)

No one gets fired for letting an OK job through. Why do a good job when an OK one will do? (AD/USA)

You need to be dedicated to the job or you get found out. It is too easy to tread water in an agency or to be a one shot wonder who has one good idea and then fizzes out. It is the worst industry for rejection and ego. (CD/CW/AUS)

You get to a stage where you don’t want to go through the trauma so you only push when you have a really good idea (CW/AUS).

It is a high profile agency here and there is a lot to live up to. (AD/USA)

While a constructive imagination was needed to create both a novel and original idea, art directors and copywriters were primarily motivated to produce something novel because it was more achievable within the resources available to them. Novelty is more complex to describe than originality because there is no systematic measurement as there is for originality and effectiveness. It cannot be adequately explained in sequential steps, and does not adhere to a prescribed methodology. There is no single set of criteria against which it can be evaluated other than it is novel to the creator. If is too interpretive and subjective and others find it difficult to conceptualise, the intended meaning can invoke social sanctions and punishments (ridicule, sarcasm, criticism and disapproval) as well as rewards for breaking the paradigm.

A big part of our enjoyment of almost anything is novelty. The feeling of unknowingly knowing something when confronted with new information and especially when it is humorous produces endorphins in the brain that makes people feel good about themselves. Making novel connections between two unrelated thoughts or objects not apparent to others, and making something appear from where before there was nothing, and telling yourself that something you know can be other than you assume can arouse emotions of wonder and awe in others. Art directors and copywriters pick up on this effect, believing that getting consumers to laugh or cry makes their advertisements more ‘likeable’ despite little evidence of their efficacy to get them to try or buy more products. Novelty has validity in its own right and in some circumstances. In product categories
such as snack foods novelty can be a better outcome in the short term, as one copywriter in London explained: ‘If you are advertising a can of beans then you’ve got to do something quirky to stand out.’ In the absence of time to deliberate something original, novelty can be a quick fix, as these informants explained:

Producing [a novel solution] reduces the tension [with the client] whereas asking for something new does not. (AD/USA)

The trick is to keep everything the same - but refreshed. (AH/AUS)

I see what I do as inventing new ways of doing the same thing. (CD/AUS)

Art directors and copywriters in the study felt the benchmark for novelty was lower and therefore more achievable within tight deadlines, or where an extension of the look or feel of an established brand was acceptable. As a benchmark it provides substantive evidence as to why art directors and copywriters produce more novel than original advertisements over the span of a productive career. Novelty was a less risky prospect because rational choice explanations could be provided as to its value. A funny, witty headline line is not original or innovative but is adaptively creative, said Hogg & Scoggins (2001), and a perfectly acceptable version of ‘creativity’ in a commercial setting. However, novelty has its own drawbacks in that the effect is often short lived: Overtime it can become style and a standard and indistinguishable from copycats; and seen or heard too often, or in the wrong time and place, can cease to be novel and sometimes annoying.

Informants felt novelty as a goal was sub-optimal. They wanted original work in their portfolio to place them in the top 5% on the performance league. They had originality firmly fixed in their sightline but the opportunities at their level were limited and they found this demotivating. In the short-term, producing novelty added a dimension of interest and excitement to their professional activities and was useful in that it could be passed off as ‘creative’ and by inference confirming of their ‘creativity’ within the agency. Novelty makes people smile or laugh and feel good about themselves and was at least achievable and controllable. It reduced stress and if this feeling could be spread to account handlers and client representatives it reduced tension in the group and made a humorous solution more likely to be approved (Isen et al., 1987).

Clients are always excited by the creative work. It is what they want to talk about to their peers and others. (CD/AD/AUS)

They [clients] get a kick if we produce something [novel], even if it doesn’t get through [approved]. (CW/AUS)
Serial novelty may keep creative people like art directors and copywriters motivated and engaged in their practice, but said Australian art critic Robert Hughes in a 2004 BBC documentary *The New Shock of the New*, conceptually it can tell us more about their limitations. Hughes questioned whether the new and novel as wallpaper to our everyday lives really does matter anymore. Appropriating cultural motifs, sticker art and being or mildly amusing, he says, is a way to say: “I have arrived and I am different”. For advertising art directors and copywriters the production of novelty is a way to be seen and heard. ‘It shows how clever they are’, states Arden (2003), describing novelty as work that ‘on the surface appears clever but has little substance.’ Novelty tends to over promise in its enthusiasm and justifying or explaining it a disguise against failure to produce anything more substantial, states Bourdieu (1984). The prevalence of novel and humorous entries in advertising awards attests to this effect. A novel idea, project or campaign just has to be different not new, and guided by what is technically allowable within the redundancy of the law. The closer it gets to the boundaries of acceptability the greater the chance it will be rejected by account handlers fearful of the reaction of conservative clients, and paradoxically more likely to be accepted and embraced by the creative community as truly groundbreaking.

The role of the art director and copywriter has not changed significantly but the world around them has and this had a bearing on how they described conditions. A number of Creative informants spoke about the effect the ‘sweatshop’ mentality pervading creative departments since the 1990s had on their ability produce a viable body of work. In the 1980s, agencies were considered hubs of creativity, and art directors and copywriters wielded aesthetic authority over the process and were rewarded for doing so. A number of art directors and copywriters too young to have experienced it expressed a desire to return to this idealized time when art directors and copywriters could take greater risks and there was more freedom and fewer controls. The profession had become stricter, they said, and they yearned for the passion and the power of the times based on what they didn’t have now. The desire to turn back the clock thirty years was symptomatic of the general feeling of discontentment many felt about their current situation. The enduring aesthetic legacy of this time was evident in their accounts:

Advertising used to have a mythical quality but now clients are more informed and much of the strategic work is done by them. They are less in awe of the process. Agencies are dealing with layers of people who have the authority to say ‘no’ but not ‘yes’. (CD/CW/UK)

There is a general sense that ‘things aren't what they used to be', especially from a creative point of view. Advertising has become more of a business and they have to be more serious and commercially aware. (AH/UK)
I miss the passion of advertising as it used to be. (CW/USA)

There is no room for own sense of style in an agency as there was in the 80s. (ADAUS)

All good advertising used to come from a gut instinct, but no one works on that anymore. Advertising was a relatively new business and when they [senior creatives] came into the industry and there was no benchmark and no one before or above then so they could write the rules. (AD/USA)

It was easier in the old days. It was a lot less scientific – clients went on a hunch. Now companies have to prove to their boards in some tangible way about what they are doing. There are lots of boxes to tick. (ECD/AD/UK)

When the creative was king [in the 1980s], we’d give the handler an idea so outrageous he’d have to take a pair of brown underpants to the client meeting, and we’d say “Don’t come back unless you’ve sold it. Do you want me to come down there and tell the client what I think of his suggestion?” And we mostly got away with it because the process was all about creativity. (CD/CW/UK)

Stated Sasser & Koslow (2008), researchers often overlook historic precedent in advertising research and this could be true of creative advertising. There is a feasible argument that the creative revolution in advertising in the period between the 1970s and 1980s may have been an aberration on which agencies built their reputation but one that longer exists. Social media driven content may be sounding the death knell on a novel or original idea as the preferred vehicle of communication.

5.1.2. Visibility and Recognition

Always within the decision-making frame was the art director and copywriter’s need to leave a mark on the outcome as evidence of their presence in the agency and the creative community. It was a theme that resonated strongly in their accounts. They wanted others to see what they are doing and where they are going, and a substantial body of work was evidence that standards had been met and they are moving forward and could compete with others for rewards. Acknowledging their social needs made them feel important and this was often implied in their accounts:

Anyone who is good gets recognized for their work (ECD/AD/UK)

Your reel/book tells people who you are. You are judged and you judge yourself on what you have produced. (CW/USA)

Creative recognition is important but art directors and copywriters increasingly have to conform to the industry expectation. (MD/AUS)

Recognition could not always be assured but a body of work aggregated from projects or campaigns offered them public visibility as a measure of their worth. Praise and
recognition, art directors and copywriters said, was the best motivator – more so than money in the short term. The narcissistic tendency for the love and recognition, stated Sherif & Sherif (1956) is generally seen as normal behaviour for a creative types and this was reported on in informant accounts:

Creatives are happy pursuing acclaim and recognition. (CW/USA)

Creative people are egomaniacs and we need compliments. (AH/USA)

The best thing is when a client says thank you. That is the buzz. (CD/CW/AUS)

Creatives are the last ones to get credit, yet we are the ones doing the work. (AD/USA)

Account handlers in the study said they were similarly affected. Some resented that their efforts were not rewarded and under-appreciated:

They [clients] don’t see/appreciate all the work that goes on behind the scenes. They presume the creative did all the work. There is a lot of preparatory work done by the account team but creatives get the kudos. (CD/AD/AUS)

Advertising art directors and copywriters in the study said they were not intrinsically motivated by money, something also supported in literature (Hogg & Scoggins 2001, Powell, 1997; Alevsson, 1994; Kramer, 1982). Money was, however, a powerful tool in that it recognized their aggregated and substantial body of work as proof of their competency within the creative community. It motivated them to work at their most efficient level of production to keep pace or ahead of their peers. A reduction in salary was perceived as a reduction in social status and greatly decreased their incentive to work hard for the benefit of the group. As a form of recognition and reward it did have a strategic element in that art directors and copywriters were motivated to keep score.

The desire for reward and recognition through the accumulation of a permanent and sustainable body of work, state Sherif & Sherif (1956), is in essence a desire for power and control, and influences and engenders a form of territorial and dominance behavior. Schumaker (1997) further adds reward and recognition are culture-building activities. Both perspectives were found to be true in this study and they are discussed later in 5.1.5 [The Creative Department]

5.1.3. Influence
Art directors or copywriters produce ads with the intention of them being viewed as more effective than their peers, and one of the traditional ways large agencies motivate
art directors and copywriters to do this is to place them in competition with each other. Rhetoric was strong and feelings generally divided over how effective this was as a motivational strategy. Not everyone agreed that competition produced better results. Some questioned the duplicated effort and the cost of the substantial investments in head hours that agencies were unable to recoup. They questioned the efficiency and effectiveness of having ten people for example working parallel on the same brief. Some agencies had one creative team working on one brief but across different clients and others had art directors and copywriters pitching against each other. Some informants felt competition was demotivating: others were energized by it:

Dedicated teams work harder. (AD/AUS)

Pitching against other teams does not promote confidence. (AD/USA)

Creative teams dedicated to one account get stale. (CD/CW/UK)

I prefer to work in a competitive environment, but a lot of people hate it. (CD/AD/USA)

Creatives are asking what we are getting out of this? So we spend least time possible. (CW/USA)

One or two teams working on a project is better. Otherwise people have to jockey for positions. (CW/USA)

If you have established brand there is a formula in place and you are looking for a little leap and a fresh perspective can carry it on then [competition] is a really good idea. (CW/UK)

As creative entities within the agency they were socially primed for competition. Informants said they generally expected to and were expected to behave competitively. They were generally motivated to act in this way because being competitive has the potential to earn them respect from others, and in some instances money. Winning gave them a degree of power and defended them against the possibility of being exploited by other decision-making groups, and competing art directors and copywriters:

You get competition between teams because there is a finite amount of work between us. So we are all competing for attention. (CW/USA)

Relationships in the creative department are very competitive. Everyone wants to say they came up with the idea [if it is good]. They are going to want the reward and accolade. (CD/AD/AUS)

Half a dozen ideas, five teams get the brief. You just have to do what you think is best as opposed to what you think is right. (CW/USA)
If you are not winning the pitches you don’t feel like you are advancing. Not accumulating work you are proud of. You are always imagining other people are producing heaps. (AD/USA)

The best way is to be given a project and told if you don’t crack it in two weeks a second team will be brought in. You have some ownership and responsibility to pull it off. Sometimes the team will crack the TV then get other teams to do print etc. If creatives get a win they get moved onto the next new business pitch. It is like the premier striker not playing in each match. (CD/CW/AUS)

The dark side of competition, psychologists suggest, is that it assumes some kind of insecurity of success in that they won’t match up to the ideal. It was apparent from informant accounts that competition between creative teams caused distrust and promoted fear and performance anxiety and made them less accountable to each other:

It used to be that you worked on an account and unless you stuffed it up that is where you stayed, and you maybe made great ads and became famous and built a career on the one account. But agencies have found that if they put five teams on the task they can get more effective work. They get five times the amount of work to look at. So creatives are now less secure. Job security is the lowest it has ever been and it is not as comfortable as it once was. (ECD/AD/UK)

I have a fairly strong opinion about this after producing the campaign for XXXX. We were involved in the planning right from the beginning and it took a lot of time, energy and mental effort to build the whole strategy up from scratch. It took a year and would been demoralizing and soul destroying [in a competitive situation] to have invested all that time and effort and not won. If you can’t crack it fair enough - pull someone else in. Otherwise a dedicated team should be left alone to give it 100% of their undivided attention. If you put a lot of teams on it then there is no real ownership. (CW/UK)

Management was not intervening because competition mobilized a vulnerable, malleable and exploited workforce and made art directors and copywriters work harder - especially when fear of failure were on the horizon. Creative directors were insensitive to their needs, they said, because they were also motivated by their own need to keep standards high. Account handlers had their needs satisfied in that they had more alternatives to present to the client. So for art directors and copywriters individual success in making choices depended on the choices of others in this fully cooperative game.

Other organizational researchers concur management perceptions about conditions at their level can be far from accurate or complete in these kinds of situations (Bornstein, 2002; Ackroyd & Thompson, 2000; Symon & Cassell, 1988; May, 1975), and this was evident in some accounts:
When it is a big campaign we do a ‘shoot out’ and get multiple teams of creatives working on them competitively. They [art directors and copywriters] gripe and complain a lot. (AH/USA)

If art directors and copywriters know they are on a job with other people then they’ve got to try harder. To knock the socks off a brief they’re going to have to work a few hours longer. (ECD/AD/UK)

The disadvantage is that when they know that it is not all down to them sometimes they are sometimes not as responsible. If they think they are going to have to compete then they make more effort. (ECD/AD/UK)

The stakes were particularly high for middleweight art directors and copywriters because they were pitted against each other over work that could potentially increase their self-image or status within the group. Some informants said they sometimes used underhand tactics like hoarding knowledge useful to others in an attempt to ‘win’ the game at whatever cost, and on occasions this was at the expense of members in their task group:

The mood in creative departments depends on who is doing the winning. If things are busy and everyone is on a high, people are sharing ideas and it feels good. When things are down, people hide things. People pinch ideas [he cites the story of one woman who went around others desks after hours]. When you brief 3-4 groups, all are working to as tight brief in the same ball park and there is a likelihood that ideas will be similar. Then there is a bit of tension because one group will think the other pinched it. It can be dog eat dog. Everyone wants ownership and to get that you have to get your idea to the creative director first. The concept of open plan was to improve access. People would get up and move around and see what other were doing, talk or listen in etc. This works fine when things are busy. But when things are quiet, you hear a team discussing an idea the other side of the room and you think it sounds interesting and you start building your own ideas around that. If [art director] and I want to do any real work we go to a coffee shop. (CD/CW/AUS)

Some researchers suggested that power elites commonly hoard rather than share the secret of their success with others in competitive situations, especially where they are rewarded for doing better or there is significant personal benefit (Sennett, 2009; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Wisker, 2001; Fletcher, 1999; Gould, 1999; Garfinkel, 1967). The more important the situation the greater likelihood they will to object to revealing this knowledge.

A hidden dimension of the hypercompetitive atmosphere described is that the majority of Creative informants were male, and frustration and aggression in males has been found to be at its most extreme when motivated by issues of social status and self-esteem and particularly when they are blocked from achieving a goal (Aronson & Steele, 2005). The hormone testosterone, Moir and Jessel (1989) assert makes the male brain less liable to fatigue, less distracted and more single-minded, and in advertising this primes male art
directors and copywriters to win and especially when they feel under threat. As a male-dominated industry it may make their experience as a group different from other creative industries. For example, a higher level of collaboration might be expected in the fashion industry where there is a greater representation of women – but this is only speculative.

With increasing competition between products and brands the need for novel and original advertising has never been greater, yet informants across all samples felt that creative products from multinational advertising agencies in the USA, UK and Australia had become dull, uniform and unimaginative. Said a middleweight copywriter in London: ‘I’m not sure advertising is a terribly creative industry but it can be at its best … every now and again you see some great work and this gives you faith in the industry’.

Creative industries and art movements have a finite time dimension in that every possibility is ultimately exhausted. There is a kind of mathematical inevitability to the number of acceptable solutions to any given problem, and the ratio of what is considered novel, original and worthy has always been considered inversely proportional to the number of contributions. Some informants blamed technology. Opinion was divided on how significant these developments were in terms of novelty and originality but the general consensus expressed by one informant in the study was: ‘Technology is just a new way of spreading the message. It is not changing how interesting ideas are used’ (CW/UK). While ideas were not reliant on technology, informants generally agreed, they had become more dependent on technical resources and tools. Concepts also had to be spread across more media channels and with each new platform came a degree of experimentation to get it right. They refuted the myth that technology saved time or improved their capacity to produce novel and original ideas, but acknowledged that developments in digital technology had significantly changed the way they perceived their contribution valued:

Access to stock shots, the computer and the ease of imaging have had an incredible influence on how creative work is produced. Once we presented drawn thumbnails now clients get to see and expect to see the finished ad. So we have to spend more time at the concept stage getting the ad to look exactly as it will in print. It has limited creativity. (CD/CW/AUS)

Previously you could concentrate on your craft, but these days you have to be expert in strategic knowledge, above and through the line, CRM, FMCG, DM, and Viral marketing. (AD/AUS)

Once agencies walked away from fact based data - now large global agencies want it. (MD/USA)
Now it is scientific rather than instinctive. (ECD/CW/USA)

Some art directors and copywriters said that while they liked to discover and learn new things and acknowledged that getting better at using new technology comes when the tools challenge them, they felt generally unmotivated to invest the time and effort to master new skills when the tools were evolving faster than their ability to keep up. There was no time to experiment with new techniques in these new technologies, and they felt they were always in a catch-up situation and could never be sure that the decisions they made were right, based on the information they had. Having to deploy a portfolio of skills rather than nurture a single ability meant at a time in their career when they could legitimately begin to call themselves experts they felt like novices being asked to master entirely new sets of skills.

It takes a significant amount of time, energy, effort to meet high standards of performance in a commercial setting and the chance of art directors and copywriters building a significant portfolio of laboriously crafted work in the conditions described are reduced when they have to work on different projects at the same time, constantly absorb new facts, embrace technological developments, deploy and develop different sets of skills, sensibilities and discriminations in order to peak at the right time in the right agency with the right opportunities under the right high profile mentor who can vouchsafe and guide them in making the right career choices to reach the highest level within what has been considered less than the normal life span of a career the chances are highly unlikely.

What is often not acknowledged is that forms of creative expertise that lack formal structure have short life spans, and this makes experience in advertising a poor predictor of attainment (Sennett, 2008). In part, this is a consequence of the self-limiting standards and boundaries art directors and copywriters have imposed on their practice. All the practice in the world and never achieving their own pre-determined goal means they won’t progress. As a consequence, the career path of an art director or copywriter typically has a shorter life span compared to account handlers in these types of agencies. This has caused some writers to challenge the credibility of creative advertising as a profession, because it is advanced by the production of quality-driven work evaluated by like-minded individuals, and more strongly associated with craft than business (Tunstall, 1964; Nyilasy & Reid, 2007).

5.1.4. Reward and Achievement

Every profession including advertising is understandably proud of its achievements, and holds a number of individuals and their work up as representatives of the group. What or
who is recognized changes with the vagaries of age, time and place, but there are instructions for displaying behavior and rewards in place. Of their importance informants said:

We are such a small insular group and very introspective which is why we place importance on awards (CW/AUS)

I enter awards to impress myself as much as my peers and award jury – then client. (CD/CW/NZ)

Awards have their merit - 90% of awards are incredibly successful. It is useful to have boundaries to keep you in the frame. (AD/AUS)

Awards are important to some people as a measure of their worth, but there will always be a commercial reality to how good someone is. (CD/AUS)

Advertising award shows monitor and report on how well art directors and copywriters work with reference to the whole population. They are also symbolic vehicles for at least partially guaranteeing that novelty and absolute originality are not entirely incomprehensible (Jamieson, 2007). Consensus, suggests Michael Johnson (cited in Myerson & Vickers, 2002), is important because there are fewer ‘objective’ norms to guide judgements, and award shows avoid the possibility of ridicule or being the ‘odd one out’.

The criteria for award shows is intangible and subjective but there is a judgment in place. (CD/AUS).

Creativity in advertising is determined by 1) Awards 2) Awards 3) Awards 4) Media recognition, notoriety. Awards drive creative pay. Because clients are a lottery (and often philistines) so recognition by your peers is what it's all about. Although explosive commercial success is also nice: Hollywood, 'the Academy', and the Box Office are a good analogy. A corollary of this is that rejection is worse when it comes from your peers rather than the client - the worst scenes in the creative department are when the creative director or group head repeatedly cans your work. (AH/UK)

Self-presentation adopted in 'showing off', states French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984), reveals deep-rooted and long-standing dispositions, and for some art directors and copywriters not wanting to enter brought its own dilemmas. These informants felt excluded because they were seen as unwilling to work hard and well for the collective. Said one copywriter in Melbourne: ‘Awards are like the staple that feeds the ego of creative people and you have to have guts to say ‘no, I’m not going to enter those and feed my ego’ (CD/CW/AUS). There was also the feeling that if those who withheld entering were considered to be in the top 5% that they were selfishly hoarding knowledge in that they were unwilling to share the secrets of their success. Opinion in the advertising community has long been divided on the value of awards, however,
benchmarking standards against their peers outside the agency was seen more positively than competitive pitches within the agency.

One previously unremarked feature of awards raised by a couple of art directors and copywriters was that they did not have the courage to do what they like. Consensus almost always means that other viewpoints were ignored, and this was demotivating for art directors and copywriters seeking a point of difference. A given level of performance was perceived as satisfactory or not depending on the expectations of selected peers and this prevented them from entering original work into awards because they feared being ridiculed. Peers as nominated expert observers generally agree on criteria of what they think is genuinely novel or original within their frame of reference to differentiate contributions, specify standards, and compare alternatives to one another. Awards are judged in a committee by consensus of what is known, and originality isn’t fashionable until it has been approved by the committee’, states Arden (2003). An entirely new contribution is likely to be rejected if there is no measure in place to evaluate its worth because award judges do not want to risk drawing the ridicule of their peers. Judgments of better or worse in creative advertising therefore involve a complicated array of territorial behaviours that are about power and control.

While the creative community expects outsiders to recognise their autonomy in selecting their best for public presentation, there was a lot of signalling between art directors and copywriters in the study as to how objective their judgments were because they had to use their own standards as a reference. Said one creative director in Sydney: ‘If you get a young panel under 30 then their view of creativity is going to be different because they have more of an instinctive grasp on new media’.

Because there is no public agreement or shared perspective on a standard for novelty and value for an advertising idea, it follows that art directors and copywriters must have some code or style to provide a degree of communality between them, and one that advances their concerns internally and makes a level of achievement possible. There was general agreement among informants that if they are to have a chance of winning they must work towards the following criteria: (1) Entries must contain a persuasive element (empathy, emotion, humour, value, credibility) which attempts to alter consumer tendencies (loyalty, trial, change) toward a product, service or institution, idea or point-of-view. (2) It cannot be a copy, reproduction, imitation or translation, and must stay away from formulas, and avoid clichés and fads, personalities and patronising representations, cheap shots, knock-offs, stunts and scams, fads and fashion. (3) It must speak in a distinctive tone of voice and be simple, single-minded, compelling and
believable. By adhering to these rules they collectively come to a common agreement that standards of novelty and/or originality have or have not been met. When a new contribution marginally exceeds their expectation, there is a significantly greater chance that the change will be accepted and passed along to the domain, and included as a concrete example of the new standard in their informal culture. However, a dilemma sometimes arises if too many entries met the criteria because the determination of who wins and loses came down to personal preference, values, experience or taste. A choice has to be made because awarding too many entries risks reducing the intellectual capital of the group, and raises questions among informants about just how objective their choices are because judgments are derived from their own tacit habits and suppositions.

The value of novelty and originality in advertising lies in its scarcity and capacity to influence others, and informants described how expert judges sometimes come to a binding and enforceable agreement to withhold contributions that they considered mediocre or lacked originality so that they are not seen to devalue what they do. A sense of loss was felt by informants when contributions they submitted for awards did not meet the criteria of the creative community:

There are three kinds: the bad and the good are easy to recognise. It is the stuff in the middle that is half working that is the hardest to judge. (CD/CW/UK)

No one expects awards to be given when the standard is so low. (CD/AD/USA)

I’d prefer to think it is hard to get the creative through the approval process because the creative isn’t good. (AD/AUS)

Responding to the demands of the myth that novelty and originality were in short supply carried risk in that judgments became a substitute for true rationality. Accepting a few new and novel works and rejecting many masked the subtle effect of priming that goes on behind the scenes, informants implied. Judges primed to impose standards that were too high to protect their professional jurisdiction had the potential to leave art directors and copywriters vulnerable to defection and exploitation. Paradoxically, mediocrity was also a problem said an account handler in New York, ‘because no one willingly acknowledges their own’ (AH/USA). For lower performers who feared they may not have the skill, or perhaps courage to evaluate something novel or original, lack of opportunity at least gave them a chance to defer judgment.

One of the consequences of awards being non-excludable to community members was that others could be motivated to free-ride on award-winning work. When recognised it explains why there are so many like entries in award competitions. A recent award

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winning beer commercial in Australia was a new twist on the iconic British Airways *Face* commercial (UK, 1989). Budweiser *Whassup* (1999) was similar to a Brazilian campaign. *Energizer Bunny* (1989) had been done three years before for Carling Black Label in the UK. So while there was universal contempt for those who display lack of originality these commercials showed larceny done well is acceptable. It could have led to a state of incomprehension and the questioning of the credibility of judges but it didn’t. Making the distinction between original and timely novel appropriation maximized the payoff for everyone. It removed any direct and stigmatizing responsibility for the judges to award originality and acted as a hedge against checking when their professional reputation was at stake. Long (1999) suggests cultural narcissism has allowed for the development of a blind eye and exploitative nature and this has become institutionalized in societies, and has a similar affect on advertising awards.

Awards provided a stable solution to the group’s internal dilemma that if everyone free-rides then both winners and losers lose their influence and this minimized the chances of others assessing their ability. Most informants acknowledged that awards are a fully cooperative game and that winning depends on knowing the rules, as these informants explained:

A lot of the work [entered in awards] is just borrowed jokes and films, you can see where it is drawn from. (AD/UK)

I’ve been on a judging panel and it is boring when you’re sitting in a dark room looking at commercials for hours on end, something funny comes up I sit up and take notice so it is more likely to get my vote. (CD/AD/AUS)

We worked out that awards judges in award show X tend to select more humorous ads. So we entered something funny and witty to give ourselves a better chance of being selected. (AD/UK)

Sometimes cuteness catches the eyes of the juries – like that “little boy farting in the bath” spot. It didn’t matter what the client thought - the agency did their own version anyway. It won awards. (CD/CW/UK)

Creating a disproportionate number of humorous entries, informants said, helped minimize their loss in terms of the rigorously defended standard of originality. Vicariously claiming a share of the group’s intellectual capacity for novelty had the effect of giving their work greater legitimacy and validation in the short term, but long-term it has the capacity to distort decisions and the division of opportunities (Jackson & Wolinsky, 1995).

In times of uncertainty, art directors and copywriters said, awards help cushion the general feeling of day-to-day underachievement and rejection by turning the creative community’s
best work into concrete examples of the standards they uphold. There were very few contradictions or conflicts that arose between the rational choice winners in the best award competitions because they were the creative community’s most reliable measure of what constitutes quality. Said one art director in Melbourne: ‘Winning metal [an award] in a great award show shuts everyone up.’

Some art directors and copywriters interviewed saw benefit in the jurisdiction and power of awards to police and protect creative standards from corruption by outside influences. Denying clients, handlers and managers the right to enter and casting themselves in a positive self-image serves as an antidote to their general feeling of uncertainty that they felt. This positive feeling towards awards carried over to management and clients who generally liked the profile, and the spin-off was that art directors and copywriters were typically rewarded and recognized for meeting or exceeding standards. Part of the allure of awards was that the acclaim was a route to advancing their future employment/business opportunities, as these excerpts show:

If an idea wins more than one award then everyone wishes they had done it: everyone wants to be able to say they came up with ‘that idea’ if it is good. (AD/UK)

To creatives [awards] are more important because it is getting hard to get any good stuff through in agencies (because of research etc). (CD/CWAUS)

Professionally, we say we want to boost a client’s business, but personally we want to win awards. (CD/AD/AUS)

Awards are not important but they are a good way of keeping a finger on the pulse on who is doing good work. Clients are the first to complain about them but they are the first to look in marketing magazines to see who wins them. (AD/AUS)

Creatives win awards and see this as a way to get a higher paid job ($10,000 leap) and more creative challenges somewhere else. It is a way of making money. (CD/CW/AUS)

Psychologically, awards built on the general belief among art directors and copywriters that the creation of novelty and originality was in jeopardy when their professional integrity was at stake and their reputation was ill-served. Just showing others that they had not lost their touch when system forces implied that as a profession they had ‘lost it’ reduced their psychological stress.

While art directors and copywriters at group level appeared to be able to remain largely emotionally disengaged from the uncontrollable influences of the organisation, awards and the economic environment, they were animated in their accounts by the politics of
the creative department.

5.1.5. The Creative Department

Art directors and copywriters are physically accommodated in a distinct and separate physical location called the Creative Department. While the department is considered part of the agency organisational structure for operational reasons creative and management activities are kept separate. However, a department based on performance and competency publicly acknowledges a disciplinary distinction and emphasizes the cultural distance between them. ‘Quarantining’ their activities within set boundaries effectively marked their territory and had both a positive and negative influence on behaviour as their accounts showed.

Contrived creativeness was a carefully crafted spectacle that kept the myth alive. The knowledge that their beliefs and values were not open to account handlers provided art directors and copywriters with certain psychological advantage. The representation of the creative ideal as different, inspired, autonomous and unconforming was a useful hedge, they said, for keeping handlers outside the boundaries of their activities thus ensuring their continuing jurisdiction over their intellectual endeavor.

Recently, there has been support in the literature for the process not to be isolated within the creative department, but there may be compelling reason why this will not happen on the ground: (1) Networked agencies are too dense with decision-makers and over connected to focus on their least influential workers, and (2) it easier to get a group of mostly like-minded male art directors and copywriters on the career ascent to work harder and be more productive and competitive if you isolate them. It signifies conformity in high-pressure contexts and makes art directors and copywriters easier to manage. There is less likelihood of disruption to the rest of the agency if their activities are contained at group level. From the management perspective, isolating or quarantining creative activity was also about power and control - constraining art directors and copywriters from practicing outside their professional group help prevent them from defecting to other parts of the agency or creative industries and taking their skills with them. As Alvesson (1994) states, isolating them not only safeguards the development of novelty but retains control of its access. There were also economic reasons why handlers didn’t want art directors and copywriters getting close to clients, as one creative director in Australia explained:
If there are twenty accounts in the agency, handlers can offset the risk of creatives from getting too close to the client by balancing the workload in the agency by briefing three groups or different tasks. (CD/CW/AUS)

Optimum performance generally builds on and benefits from best practices established in global monocultures (Ericsson et al., 2006) and getting art directors and copywriters to fall in behind the creative director who makes all the decisions controls the repertoire of responses and makes choices more predictable and conditions more stable. Said one creative director in Melbourne: ‘Creative directors hire on the basis of folios, styles that are compatible with their own. Or, people who are subordinate and won’t argue and who can be moulded into their ways.’ Career patterns of art directors and copywriters, as a consequence, can be quite narrow and rigid. Said as one creative director in Auckland: ‘We have our instructions [as creatives] and we can’t expect much more than a good time and pleasant people.’

Creative tasks are typically short-term problem-based projects based on subjective criteria and not compatible with the cognitive working style of account handlers and planners at lower level of the competency hierarchy [Figure 2: Competency levels in creative decision-making].

Being isolated, creative informants said, had advantages in that it provided them with space to temporarily remove themselves from the pressure of the job, deadlines and office politics and become immersed in their craft. They described the creative department as a safe haven in which they felt sheltered from outside pressures. Within its boundaries art directors and copywriters could display their own autonomous knowledge about how things worked and felt free to pursue their ideal of novelty and originality without fear or ridicule, and sometimes acting as if these principles and actions were right and universal law. Typifying and objectifying skills and knowledge deemed important to the group invoked a sense of group coherence that deepened their commitment to each other - more so than to the agency. They derived their social identity and drew their performance cues from each other and not the agency, and this played a key role in establishing their professionalism, social identity and aesthetic authority:

We all root for the creative because no one wants to be the weak spot in the department and as a group we have collective clout in determining what is good. (CD/CW/USA)

There is a chain of command and everyone falls in behind. (CD/CW/NZ)

We have to fall into line – so many things can go wrong. (CW/UK)

As a social entity, the creative department in large agencies has its own dynamic and worldview that is different in structure to the account handling department. It gives the
illusion that it is isolated, self-sustained, self-sufficient, dedicated to its purpose, and operates independent of the agency social structure. Hogg & Scoggins (2001) observed it as less bureaucratic, less organized and rigid in structure, and ‘looking ‘more like a school art room than a commercial facility’ in their ethnographic account (page 14). Account handlers, they reported, often appeared boggled by the sedate atmosphere and the relaxed attitude of the creative department: ‘To the account people who spend their days rushing around from one job to the next the creative department seemed to lack organisation and coordination’ (page 14). This view, however, is inconsistent with the findings of this study. Art directors and copywriters in the pilot observations did not find the office environment conducive to creative activity at certain stages of the creative/production cycle and especially in competitive situations, preferring to do much of their thinking elsewhere and outside office hours when their were fewer distractions.

Moulding their capacity to others in the creative department implied legitimacy, status and esteem in the short term. Locked behind its metaphoric walls they did not have to express a view about anything at all and were free to retain the notion of their own truth. Embedded within the social structure were hierarchies, roles and responsibilities, and amalgamations and divisions of labour. Strong territorial bonds were formed through rules and interactions, and art directors and copywriters were motivated to behave in ways that displayed the nature of this bond. They took on the social obligations and expectations of the group, and developed roles, routines and rituals and passed them on through formal and informal instruction, practical experience, mentoring, imitation and surrogacy. They tacitly understood how they were to be enacted and they did so largely unconsciously. They also attached labels to judgments of novelty and value and gave them symbolic meaning. Aspiring to meet these mutually agreed standards provided a collective sense of who they were and what they were worth. It shaped their professional identity, enriched and emboldened their practice, and defined their own version of competency and how they should behave as creative entities. The kind of conformity informants were describing was the kind art directors and copywriters generally turn a blind eye to because it did not fit the picture of them as creative entities. It raises the question of how a group of defiant creatives who prized autonomy could become so conforming in their thoughts and behaviour? This was a contradiction that was never fully reconciled within the context of the study, but art directors and copywriters appeared to be able to manage the contradiction because it was in their interest to do so.
Acknowledging that account handlers could never be admitted no matter how aspiring or worthy reduced the possibility of them impinging on the subjective qualities of their culture but it also carried the risk of art directors and copywriters becoming isolated and segregated. This was sometimes evident in the way they behaved toward them. At their level, however, the authority of the handler often triumphed over creative group recourse, and compliance to their expectations simultaneously permeated their relationship in subtle and not so subtle ways, often contradicting the ideal of the courageous, risk-taking art director or copywriter fighting for that point of difference. The subtext was of a group under attack. They felt battered and beaten. If it wasn’t explicitly expressed, then it was hinted.

Causal influences identified in Creative informant accounts were that clients were no longer awed by their abilities and they felt they had lost their aesthetic power to effect influence. They felt marginalized by handlers who questioned their intelligence and closely monitored their activities from an efficiency perspective. Their work was intensively researched signaling to them that their expertise was not trusted. Markets have gotten larger and more competitive and they struggled to find a voice. Planners now did the thinking, consumers were now writing ads on social media sites; and they’d lost their authority over production to digital graphic technology that was available to all. There was no magic any more. There was not enough good work, too much competition, not enough time, and too many processes and procedures. The larger the agency the less able they felt to affect change. They looked to respected role models to ease their fears but found they were either not there or did not have the answers. Imposing aesthetic authority and inferring judgment over what they considered their intellectual property now carried a high risk of rejection and impacted on their confidence to produce what they perceived as quality and original work. What was at stake was the status of their profession and informants implied they felt uncertain what to do and powerless to intervene. There was private acceptance of their fate and conforming to what the agency demanded of them in the short term enabled them to function smoothly and predictably if not optimally to their standards.

On the surface, creative departments sit comfortably within ad agencies. But underneath the relationships can be quite uncomfortable. Then again, if you don’t have a creative department you don’t have an ad agency.

(CD/AUS)

In my experience no good agency can prosper with bad relationships but equally in no decent agency is it all 'happiness and light'. (AH/USA)
The primary factors that encourage motivation and development are autonomy, competence, feedback and relatedness, states Asch (1955), and art directors and copywriters found this within their own group. The sense of security the creative department offered enabled them to deflect some of the negative criticism and threats back onto the hostile environment outside. Informants generally inferred this helped the feeling of rejection and failure. Being simply fearful of ridicule in award shows or being dependent on the job for their livelihood was an expression of this bond. Other researchers had also identified similar characteristics (Ackroyd & Thompson, 2000; Becker, Barnes & Elmer, 1962). Baron (2001) and Abbott (1988) point out that conformity within groups risks creating a culture of dependency that is disturbing from the perspective of the larger society. While their actions help the group they can ultimately hurt both individual art directors and copywriters and their agency. DuCette & Wolk (1972) raise the point that those who feel threatened or feel they have no control over events often place themselves in situations where they have little information about how much control they can exert over their fate and in doing so imply that they prefer it this way and will work to attain such an end.

It raises the question, would a group of advertising art directors and copywriters of approximately the same age, social status and who have similar values and interests provide or accept a perceived wrong decision about what was novel or valuable rather than risk the disapproval of their peer group? Available evidence suggests this is highly unlikely because it would threaten group stability.

The Creative Director

The creative department typically revolved around the expertise of a Creative Director, described as an experienced and impressive role model with strong personal philosophies about what was novel and original, and a dynamic industry presence who was everywhere present in the production. Said one middleweight copywriter in Melbourne: ‘You see their body of work and how effective it is and you feel goose bumps.’ As an adjunct to management, the creative director set the boundaries of work and determined what forms of work art directors and copywriters with different levels of expertise could do and how they were to do it. They set out the terms of work, decided on the tasks that made up a job and their relative importance, and how they were to be accomplished.

While opinions varied from informant to informant, creative directors were variously described as the greatest support, mentor, coach, champion of creative. This cohort of middleweight art directors and copywriters felt the strength of the creative director came
from a learned and practiced ability to accurately assess, judge or decide rightly between creative executions, and apply strategic thinking to enhance the advertising product according to the authority and status of peers and the profession. Their judgment was usually final and without appeal. This inspired both fear and awe in subordinate art directors and copywriters in the study and only rarely did agency management intervene. Irrespective of their creative and strategic ability, their professional status resided in their experience in getting novelty and originality approved and their ability to lead:

I’ve now taken the role of not really being the idea generator. I don’t think that is what my role is anymore. I think my role is to get people in the group to have ideas and to feel they can step outside the box and create something fresh, vital and interesting. (CD/CW/USA)

What I try to achieve now is to create an atmosphere where creatives can operate - that is what is comes down to. (CD/AD/AUS)

The copywriters and art directors who work for me are very emotional about their work, but I can step back and have a more objective view of it. But I still want to be emotionally connected too. (CD/CW/USA)

They [creative directors] develop more commercial nous, and tend to be better able to relate/articulate their ideas to the client's commercial needs as well as having a broader perspective on 'how people work', consumers or otherwise. (AH/UK)

They [creative directors] start to think more like business people. (AH/NY)

They [creative directors] have more control over what they work on and what gets presented. They don't have such a barrier in terms of internal approvals, and will often be able directly to present their work to the client. (AH/UK)

I’ve got a lot braver as I’ve got older. I communicate better than I used to. I’ve learned to do that. I used to communicate through my work quite well, but I have matured and think I can really connect with people. And I can listen. I am a better listener than I ever used to be. That is probably part of maturing. And I expect clients to listen too. (AH/AUS)

The legitimacy of their command affords what Sennett (2008) calls ‘the dignity of obedience’ - something particularly present in those who have been specially trained in a single discipline (page 54), and this was evident in informant accounts:

The creative director is always popping his head in the door to see what we are working on – to check on us. Some people feel comfortable with this but everyone is accountable for what they are producing. (AD/USA)

If the CD does not support it, it doesn’t get through. (CW/USA)
The CD decides what lives or dies. It is subjective but the agency trusts his opinions. (CD/CW/AUS)

If he tells you an idea sucks – it sucks. Maybe because I am still young, I put too much faith in my elders, but they are the only parameter and orientation I have. (AD/AUS)

Art directors and copywriters said they drew their references on what did or did not work from the creative director, and winning their support was an important part of their stories:

Creative directors are there to support our work. They channel you into areas you hadn’t thought of before. They are responsible for raising and/or maintaining the creative standards of an agency in order to attract more clients to the agency. They determine the agency creative style. That’s not to say the creatives always agree with the direction. (AD/AUS)

Our creative director always tries to push us to do something different … we wouldn’t go to an agency where we were not pushed. (AD/UK)

Our creative director helps with ideas and gently leverages us to see what will happen. (CW/AUS)

They know lots of ways of circumnavigating problems and I trust in them to help me fine tune my ideas. This creates a feeling of connectedness. (AD/AUS)

Getting close to the creative director and getting them to endorse their vision and activities was a strategy some middleweight art directors and copywriters used to gain marginal advantage in the short term. Some copied the content and style of their oeuvre to draw attention to their own cognitive ability as a route to more favourable treatment. They ignored their internal signals and went along with what the creative director wanted, deferring to them made them feel more secure and helped deflect criticism:

I place myself close to the creative director so that I can see the opportunities coming. Everyone wants ownership of a good idea and to get that you have to get by the creative director first. (CW/NZ)

Our creative director is English and the English prefer comedy. I know how to write to this guy - I start with a gag and then deliver an endline. Funny is popular and it is his formula for raising client approval. (AD/AUS)

I’m used to the politics involved [in the decision-making process]. I know how the boss thinks and I’ve worked out ways to cut them off before they have a chance to change anything. (AD/USA)

Imitation or the cognitive matching of oneself to a group or individual is a common hedging device in ambiguous socio-political contexts (Sennett, 2008; Raider & Burt, 2006; Sherif & Sherif, 1953). In the short-term it created a positive, self-fulfilling prophecy in that those art directors and copywriters were typically taught more,
encouraged more and gained more. Self-stereotyping in this way is common in organizations, states Brown (1989), and especially in decision-making situations because it reduces the number of variables when time is critical. Withdrawing too far into stereotypes, however, can result in discarding private beliefs in favour of what others consider right, and on occasions this was evident in the Creative sample. Some art directors and copywriters saw themselves acting in and being a product of the Creative Director role and when they talked about the creative director they were in essence talking about a mirror image of themselves - but frequently without acknowledging the bureaucracy involved with getting the job done. The degree to which they identified with the role depended on the attractiveness of the agency as a ‘creative powerhouse’, how strongly the agency favoured novel and original work, and the cultural resources and networking opportunities the agency made available to achieve this goal, and how well these factors fitted their personal ambitions. Only a few, however, found the span of supervision and authority, the normal flow of decision making and implementation up and down the tables of the organization, dealing face-to-face with the inequalities of skills and experience, and issues of facing or ducking issues of authority an attractive offering.

Despite the positive rhetoric, the general expectation of creative directors interviewed was that art directors and copywriters under their command produce novel and original work on demand on a regular basis or as often as required. Art directors and copywriters said that while they were willing to obey, novelty and originality could not always be guaranteed because the tasks given to them often had limited structure or there was too much choice. In some circumstances, the costs and benefits did not merit a novel or original solution and the mandate to produce novelty was difficult to obey:

If an idea is rejected the creative director blames the client and says, “they can’t see good work when they see it.” But if the creatives also do not agree with the CD’s choice, they say, “could have told you that the client would not accept it.” Then the CD often says, “well, I just don’t agree and I am the CD.” He’s used to 12 people hanging off his every word so his opinion is worth more than yours.” (CD/CW/NZ)

If the creative director’s view was fixed and rigid and these standards were impossible to achieve art directors and copywriters said they bore the consequences. When they could not deliver a quality product irrespective of the circumstance, they felt the creative director took a subordinate view of their knowledge and abilities. When creative standards were perceived to be low, they said creative directors sometimes resorted to motherhood statements and cheerleading techniques to encourage initiative, providing concrete examples of novelty and originality to prompt them to raise standards and motivate them to work well:
One famous CD points to award winning work and says, “well have you done this?” (CD/CW/NZ)

After an award show, [one MD] said to the CD “You came third.” If the agency came first, would it be we came first? It was seen as his fault. (CD/CW/NZ)

It is the nature of human adaptation to want to prompt a change in behaviour to meet set objectives, but this strategy was unproductive and paralyzing when art directors and copywriters couldn’t escape from the mediocre work the agency provided, or when they didn’t have all the information, resources or opportunity to produce quality work. So the creative director was seen as both their best supporter and harshest critic, and the worst scenes, informants said, occurred when the creative director as group head and figure of authority repeatedly criticised work. Motivation by threat is a dead-end strategy, said Bourdieu (1984), implying that art directors and copywriters were more likely to respond to the opportunity side of the motivation curve than the threat side. While displaying the attributes of excellence is an ideal weapon in strategies of distinction, Bourdieu suggests, reinforcement creates a measured increase in standards.

When art directors and copywriters perceived the standards set by the creative director were unrealistic, unattainable or unreasonable they described sometimes behaving in a defensive and confrontational manner. When they felt threatened, they became less problem-attuned, their judgment stalled and when provided with less alternatives they said they were more likely to accept tradeoffs than break new ground because they were working to an abstract set of propositions about good quality work that was unachievable.

The skills and knowledge of the creative director were not fixed or enduring and his/her own terms of reference sometimes mirror their incumbent self as an art director or copywriter, and this can change the content of their authority. The practical benefits of an inspirational role model can fall foul when they become distanced from deliberate practice, or too involved. Said one creative director in Melbourne: ‘Creative directors are often not the right people for the job. They still want to write and do things.’ When their peer needs are met, accolades become a reward for skill and commitment, and judgments about what their own work is about, how they should act and behave, and how things should be done become progressively organised into larger cognitive chunks and harder to break down (Hunt, 2006; Ericsson, 2006; Hatano and Inagaki, 1986). They can become immersed in their own ideas, imagination and ways of thinking, and pride in their own achievements can become a handicap without checks and balances to keep them on track (Sennett, 2008). This may go unnoticed until they act ‘out of role’ or
inappropriate to the unspoken expectation of both management and subordinate art directors and copywriters.

Bathed in their own light the creative director can become too comfortable and risk neglecting the higher standard and this can ultimately pose a motivational problem for them (Sennett, 2008; Henry, 2001; Joyce, 1988). Said one account handler in London: ‘Creative Directors are generally powerful beyond commercial reason (like editors of newspapers) and this puts pressure on them and they can be fired if they don't deliver’. Added a copywriter in New York: ‘Agencies are becoming aggressive places … and now they [creative directors] are insecure and more worried about making their own mark than leading.’ They may be conscious that the interaction has become problematic, although they many not know why (Knapp & Hall, 2001). When the internal dialogue between the creative director and his/her work becomes habitual and intuitive and without reference to those around them, a charge of destructiveness progressively threatens their authority. Failure to discuss options or to expose themselves to criticism, or unpack their tacit understanding with colleagues can degrade their authority over time (Sennett, 2009). Competitiveness can also sever the relationship when subordinates knowledge increases and art directors and copywriters become more discriminatory and develop the courage to test their own limits and cast off their uncertainties (Sennett, 2008).

When a creative director is faced off against a wily group of art directors and copywriters his/her authority can be short-lived. Unable to fulfill what they see as their role they will look for employment in a similar agency where their skills, knowledge and way of thinking are readily transferrable, and a new group of art directors and copywriters will be expected to learn from their experience and absorb their performance cues. The cycle may continue without their behaviour ever being called to question because ‘there is no perceived loss in their status in choosing to leave or being fired’, said Arden (2003), ‘it means you are at odds with your company, the job wasn’t right, and some headhunters find this an asset because it shows initiative’. Taking their knowledge and standards with them when they leave can, in the short term, drive down quality and sometimes destroy links to the community and the thinking that builds others in their incumbent position (Sennett, 2009).

In summary, rhetoric was oriented toward the art director and copywriter’s need for acceptance, approval, visibility, influence, recognition and reward. The overriding theme was their intrinsic motivation to improve and meet standards of novelty and value rather than get by. Strongest rhetoric centred around the assignation of values they expected to
uphold, advocated to others, but was seldom possible to reach. Standards thus served a social function in that art directors and copywriters could see no perceived improvement in their status within their group by simply getting the job done.

5.2. Getting it Done: Actions, Interactions and Behaviours

… people who aspire to be good craftsmen are depressed, ignored, or misunderstood by social institutions. (Sennett, 2008: 145)

What was the nature of the interaction between art directors and copywriters and other decision-making groups? How did accommodating different standards of novelty and value influence their actions, and what were the behavioural consequences?

The closest art directors and copywriters came to a conceptual ideal of a perfect performance was when the solution became realized in the form of an advertisement. But before this could happen they had to get external stakeholders to agree on its value. Without their approval the advertisement would not be printed, displayed or aired and their standards would go unrecognised. To get it done art directors and copywriters had to interact with account handlers outsider their group at system and not competency level [Figure 1: System-levels of creative decision-making; Figure 2: Competency levels in creative decision-making]. They had to balance their need to uphold their own standards against their desire to see the work produced and this often involved compromise, collaboration and competition.

Competition between decision-making groups was described as fierce, in part because of the nature of the informants selected for interview and the workplace context in which the researcher chose to report on their activities. Consciously or unconsciously, large agencies have divided mostly young male art directors and copywriters with little power or authority into competing teams pitting against each other over prizes that are conceptual, open-ended, hard to specify, difficult to evaluate, based on social testability, not governed by agreed upon rules and outcomes that are unpredictable. Said a Sydney-based creative director of this practice: ‘Here is the impetus for employing young people … they never give up and they keep pushing and every now and again they will push something through.’
The most intense rhetoric, as a consequence, centred around who or what was standing in the way of art directors and copywriters achieving this goal of getting it right, and it was most directed at handlers who they said were more interested in the commercial/economic value of a concept than in its novel or aesthetic worth.

The uneasy relationship between account directors and art directors and copywriters who had the most to win or lose was a major theme in their described accounts. This was also remarked upon in the literature, as Hogg & Scoggins (2001) stated: ‘… the creative process made an uncomfortable bedfellow for the strict process-driven functions of the organisation’ [page 2]. Handlers had different working styles, came from a management discipline, made decisions at different level of authority and competency, and were less motivated by meeting creative standards and awards. There were moments described where decision-making was generally conducted in a fully cooperative manner and where art directors and copywriters and account handlers were able to achieve by collaborating, but generally the nature of the interaction was described as competitive and conflicting, and often uneasy and fractious.

One unremarked feature identified in the literature and other interviews was the difference in age and experience between middleweight art directors and copywriters and handlers. One managing director in New York felt this had a significant influence on the relationship: ‘Middleweight creatives are serviced by mid-level client service. Bad idea. They are coming up with ideas as important as senior account people. The account people are not experienced/strategic enough. They have little experience in meetings without orientation from superiors. It is dangerous. It allows the myth [that they don’t get along] to continue. I think senior [account handlers] should work with junior creatives. They can manage the ideas and production.’

The general theme that ran through Creative informants accounts was how they organised themselves to negotiate their way around these relationships, manage failure and reduce their losses rather than win. Bornstein (2002) and Klein (1998) said situations like this that involve a high degree of uncertainty and unpredictability, and where negative feedback is likely exemplify conflict in the purest form. Contexts, conditions and situations described by informants as largely unstable and uncontrollable provided the backdrop for the battle over standards and included: (1) unworkable processes and procedures, (2) too many decision-makers (size, strategic direction, collaboration, conflict, negotiation), (3) ill-structured problems and ambiguous feedback rather than single decisions, (4) ill-defined or competing goals (not clear and stable goals) (conflict of interest, non-conforming behaviour, disruption), (5) confusion over status and norms
(uncommon ability and goals, (7) procedural conservatism when the stakes were high (risk and risk-taking), and (8) resource scarcity (time). All caused varying degrees of disunity, performance anxiety, decreased motivation and role and job insecurity, but no one was found to solely determine or influence the other.

5.2.1. Processes and Procedures
Decision-making processes and procedures in advertising are designed to facilitate cooperation between art directors and copywriters and account handlers and to help them overcome some of the difficulties they have on agreeing on the value of novelty. It is an intensive part of the agency work pattern, and one that was taken seriously. The rigid decision-making processes and procedures big agencies imposed on art directors and copywriters were frequently mentioned as having a negative influence on their ability to produce quality work:

The most powerful human inclination [is] to organise and by definition this means to stifle real creativity. (AH/MELB)

No one is really happy with the process. It is dysfunctional. Dos and don’ts just reduce the number of decision-makers - they don’t produce better work. (SAD/USA)

Nowadays, there is a kind of inertia in getting work done because it is working against the creative process. It is never free and easy ... thinking is a free process - but the approval process is not. (CD/CW/USA)

The client pushes the suit, who pushes the creative, who pushes the suit, who pushes the client and they are all pushing back at each other. The client wins because they hold the purse strings. The net result is that everybody in the loop feels compromised and unhappy. (SAD/AUS)

Problem-solving and decision-making are treated as separate activities in advertising but happen simultaneously and cannot be separated from the other without losing meaning: Both involve analysing a finite set of alternatives to an evaluative criterion and one follows the other in a broadly predictable manner. Creative problem-solving involves a small number of art directors and copywriters coming together to solve a problem that results in a tangible solution: Creative decisions-making is the process whereby with creative directors, account handlers and clients come together to evaluate the concept or solution the art directors and copywriter has created. While there are steps common to all decision-making contexts there is a unique point difference in that this approach provides opportunity for both parties to bias results (Stufflebeam & Webster, 1980). The process is described below:
**Creative problem-solving** is the critical antecedent to creative decision-making. It is the high order cognitive step art directors and copywriters take to create new or novel solutions. It does not always require a problem, and can be a challenge, an opportunity, or a situation in which there is room for improvement (McFadzean, 2000). While the steps are variously described, defined and sequenced differently in literature, creative informants in the study generally described them as follows:

Step 1: Information about a particular marketing problem is received in the form of a creative brief, and classified and categorized it in terms of importance, significance and degree of difficulty.

Step 2: Rules about what information is relevant/irrelevant, valid/invalid in the brief, and admissible levels of ambiguity and novelty are considered.

Step 3: Possible alternatives are explored, listed and weighed up the options against mutually agreed standards of novelty and value until a new connection are made.

Step 4: Comparisons are made between the accuracy, efficiency of these connections against the brief and possible personal losses and gains considered.

Step 5: When art directors and copywriters feel the number of new connections they have made meet their standard, they re-rank them according to how attractive they are likely be to the creative director, account handler(s) and clients.

For art directors and copywriters, the category of problem-solving, the amount of relevant information they have available, their level of interest in the outcome, and whether it meets their needs, preferences and values influences their choice. Problem-solving activity terminates when all the alternatives have been exhausted, social needs have been satisfied, and a satisfactory solution has been realised. At this stage the solutions are essentially conceptual and art directors and copywriters decide on a course of action to *sell* their preferred concept to account handlers on the real or perceived value to the client.

During the brief interlude between briefing and client approval, art directors and copywriters in the study felt able to mentally disengage from everything going on around them. Free of external pressures they were driven by an interest or enjoyment in working towards their standards as reward in itself. They were free to experiment and make aesthetic judgments, and apply their skills and abilities to getting the job right. The motivation to be creative derives from this stage of the process, and informants said they were most excited during this phase when insights are gained, the unexpected is
stumbled upon, and ideas illuminated because it involved their imagination and engaged them in their craft. They could choose what to put forward and withhold as exemplars of this standards based on their socially testable criteria and this was self-affirming in that they could prove to themselves and others that they had what it takes to perform effectively:

The thrill is conquering the brief as much as the outcome. (AD/AUS)

Part of the excitement is that you recognise an idea as something novel and new. (CD/CW/NZ)

When you get a brief it is an opportunity to work hard - we can try for ourselves if nothing else. (/AD/USA)

Once I’ve come up with the idea and manage to sell it – I have trouble staying [maintaining enthusiasm] on the job and I’m ready to move onto the next challenge. Success in solving problems is what I’m about. (CD/AD/AUS)

I’m always wanting to get on and solve the next problem. It satisfies my level of thinking. (ECD/CW/USA)

Informants said they often felt let down and demotivated when this stage was over because they could never assume that what they have created would be appreciated or valued by others. What they perceived as appropriate or tasteful, they said, was frequently condemned by the expectations of powerful others fate, chance, luck, and other external circumstances. They were fearful that the concept they thought was novel and appropriate might be rejected. The size and importance of the project or campaign was significant in determining how emotionally attached they were to the outcome. The greater the opportunity to display their ability the more anxious they felt about putting the work forward for approval, especially if they thought that what they had created was not only novel and appropriate but exceeded their own expectations as a possible award winning advertisement:

Work survives by fate and the courage of a client. (CD/CW/USA)

The worst thing for a creative is if you have a great idea and no one gets to see it. (CD/CW/AUS)

A lot of the creative never sees light of day because it wasn’t presented, so clients didn’t get to see what they didn’t want to buy. (AD/USA)
There is a misconception by clients that they are paying and will therefore be privy to all the ideas created by the agency. However, [account handlers] only present the work they approve. They don’t mention ideas they don’t want to sell them. Clients are defenceless and are often surprised by this: “I instructed you to work on my business and you only show me the idea you like?” No business operates like this. (CD/CW/NZ)

Negative and demotivating experiences associated with high levels of creativity in advertising have been similarly noted in other research studies. Hill et al. (2007), Hackley & Kover (2007) and Hogg & Scoggin (2001) also observed the excitement and enthusiasm art directors and copywriters had for a task occurred at the initial briefing and rarely extended beyond their artistic expressions in their studies respectively.

Up to this point, art directors and copywriters have aligned their novel or original concept to the agreed strategy and budget in the hope that it will be liked and supported enough by both the creative director and account handlers to improve its chance of being accepted by the client and approved for production - and realized in the form of an advertisement worthy of putting their name to. It is the stage between the solution being realised through problem-solving and prior to client approval that the art directors’ and copywriters’ concept was most vulnerable to intervention from peers, creative directors and account handlers seeking to prosper from them.

While the research is only concerned with decisions made within the agency, the full gamut of activities are summarized here to show the complex of approvals the art director and copywriter’s work must go through in order to be realised as an advertisement. Bernadin et al. (2008) defined the responsibilities involved in the creative process as follows: ‘One team handles the identification of the problem, another team handles the deliberative thinking, yet another team is responsible for the ‘Eureka’ moment, and still another team is responsible for implementation’ (page 138). The art director and copywriter’s creative performance is then evaluated by peers on a ‘creative’ scale, account handlers on a ‘salability’ scale, clients on a ‘result’ scale, the agency on a ‘billing’ scale, and the end-user or customer on a ‘value’ scale, the outcomes of which are variously viewed as collectively sponsored (client, agency, account team), individually accomplished (art director, writer), collectively created (creative and production team), universally viewed and acted upon (audience/customers) and industry acknowledged (peers/judges).

Creative decision-making
Taking their concepts and solutions to the decision-making table was something art directors and copywriters said they did with fear and trepidation because they could not anticipate the outcome. Deciding on the value and usefulness engaged more than their
cognitive ability and evaluative skills, it involved other groups of decision-makers and at different stages and levels coming together in the anticipation that collectively their judgment of the concept or solution would be more effective than the art director or copywriter’s alone in determining its value and appropriateness. It could be reasonably assumed that an optimal solution would be found if evaluated by a number of interest groups sharing similar goals and objectives, but the opposite was found to be true in this study. Each stakeholder group had different roles, sets of skills and attributes, motivations and expectations, and they systematically determined the merit, worth, and significance of a concept using criteria against their set of standards. One affected the other and, in turn, was affected by them. From art directors and copywriters agreeing or disagreeing on a creative strategy up to the level of account director whose role it is to anticipate which of the proposed alternatives the client will consider appropriate and sign off on the final approach. The chief creative officer, creative directors, peer groups of art directors and copywriters and award judges selected as aesthetic arbiters by the creative community also edited, censored and vetoed versions of novelty and distributed them to the domain to include as part of their informal culture.

Creative decision-making in advertising differs in structure and dynamics to the lateral peer-to-peer and vertical subordinate-to-supervisor decision-making in that the decisions art directors and copywriters make about what is novel and original are essentially conceptual, conscious, deliberate, spontaneous, volitional and experienced. The researcher could find no model to describe a decision-making context were the solution had already been independently established prior to groups coming together other than it appeared to be loosely based on game theory. Concurred one account handler in Melbourne: ‘Agencies and the people in them play win or lose games and that forces the players to tell and test their truth’. Hope and fear appeared to drive the bargaining and voting winning strategy and in their accounts the process often sounded to the researcher like a face-saving charade where everyone was made to feel like they won and lost by a little. The masking of the truth in this fully collaborative game, however, created tension and uncertainty in that art directors and copywriters could never win on creative merit alone, and as one copywriter in New York said: ‘When expectations are different you end up dealing with personalities rather than work.’

The first stage of the decision-making process involved art directors presenting their concept to the creative director who responded by agreeing/disagreeing on the boundaries and goals using his/her own set of measures and indicators. Generally creative directors agreed with the following statement made by a creative director in the UK: ‘To impress me an idea has to not only be hot but appropriately relevant. It has to sell stuff and get
under the imagination of the product.’ The alternative that met the creative directors expectations in order of importance was then selected and evaluated for possible consequences, these included threats to their status as the agency’s aesthetic arbiter and their responsibility for ensuring the agency’s creative standards were met.

Once the creative director had sanctioned their choice(s) it was put into what one informant described as ‘hostile territory’, a place occupied by account handlers and planners who had the power to facilitate and ‘guide’ the concept towards the client and consumers goal in terms of appropriateness. While handlers had no authority to judge the value of the art directors and copywriter’s interpretation of the brief, or to alter it in any way, as guardians of the brand development process they could and did invoke strategies to guide a choice to their preferred direction based on their level of authority, experience, competency and cognitive development. As advocates for the client they held a unique position of authority in that they wielded power over the final approval rights of the work art directors and copywriters produced.

The art director or copywriter’s preferred concept was now a tangible and marketable asset to be negotiated and exchanged, and the art director and copywriter’s concern was now about the preservation of its aesthetic integrity, and getting it approved and produced as evidence of their effort, ability and contribution to the collective.

My first concern is the client will like it - obviously, because it will get made if they do. Then the account team …. (CD/AD/AUS)

If the client did not get it and rejects an idea, handlers, planners and creatives come out saying “what happened?” But in the end it’s all about the creative. (ECD/CW/USA)

Clients blame the people providing the ideas [when an ad does not work]. (CD/CW/AUS)

Their expert judgment, they said, was frequently challenged and overridden and this was particularly insulting and hurtful when account handlers with less perceived competency in evaluating novelty and originality failed to support their choice or to agree on and enforce their standards. One art director in Melbourne likened the rejection to ‘giving birth to a baby at dawn and watching it executed at dusk’. The term ‘killed’ was frequently used by art directors and copywriters to describe rejection and denoted some emotional significance:

Ideas get killed for a whole lot of reasons. The research results don’t match up the strategy. The creative director or the client doesn’t like it. It is a long road for an idea that loses its way and there is no return. (AD/USA)
I am never concerned if an idea is killed for the right reasons (i.e. it is not on strategy etc). (CD/AD/US)
Up until the point the client approves the idea, baby ideas get killed on the agency floor and in our own house and I find that a bit sad. (CW/AUS)

When art directors and copywriters were not invited to the decision-making table and had to put their trust in account handlers to present their choice they sometimes got the impression that account handlers cognitively matched their opinion with the client’s for the sake of the relationship, or did not strongly support the ideas being presented because they did not like or understand what they were being asked to present:

The account handler says: I don’t like it and I can’t sell it. (AD/AUS)

When higher levels [creative directors and account handlers] present work, often the nuances and subtleties [of novelty] are lost. (AD/USA)

If an idea didn’t get through you immediately think they haven’t sold it hard enough. (CD/AD/AUS)

There was no certainty that the client would agree on the choices art directors and copywriters presented. From the handler’s perspective, the client was paying and effectively had control over the creative product. It was difficult for them to sell ideas that were too interpretive or abstract and especially when client representatives did not recognize its worth. Account handlers said clients too feared ridicule, criticism and disapproval up and down their reporting lines, and especially when the agency was unable to provide an objective measure of the likely outcome on which to base a decision. Frequently account handlers came back to tell the art director or copywriter that the artwork they had spent days working on was not suitable and had been rejected by the client.

Whether account handlers would support or reject a concept or solution was easy to predict in some situations, informants said, and at other times it was highly variable, unpredictable, or even random. In large agencies that typically create advertising for major brands, decisions tended to be deliberate and incremental because there was so much money at stake, and rarely did their concepts and solutions survive the process intact. The art director and copywriters acceptance of failure as part of the creative quest was evident in all their accounts:

The biggest issue creatives have to cope with is rejection of their ideas. Nowadays more are rejected than accepted, and in a sense it is getting worse. (CW/UK)
Clients want to know where is my brand? Where is the logo? Where as we're fighting for that point of difference. (AD/UK)

Most of the time we show work saying: “What’s wrong with this?” We’re losing our sense of judgement. (ECD/CW/USA)

To get ideas through nowadays, the stars have to be aligned. (AH/USA)

It is particularly a problem for younger creatives who have less control/leverage over what gets presented and how, and so (along with general inexperience) they have a much lower strike rate than 'seniors'. (AH/UK)

At this stage, creative activity was marginal to account handlers were essentially at the decision-making table to serve clients economic interests. Handlers generally supported (or rejected) a choice based on how well it fitted the brief and whether they thought the client would buy it, and with little reference to the aesthetic sensibilities of the art director or copywriter. A novel idea to an account handler may simply be an effective way of delivering against their client’s return on marketing investment. So the aesthetic standards of art directors and copywriters were often disregarded or rejected. Art directors and copywriters saw rejection as driving down standards and reducing their motivation:

Most of the time you start off thinking something will work and that you are right and then it doesn’t for a whole heap of reasons …. It is a long road for an idea that loses its way and there is no return. (CD/CW/AUS)

I feel quite vulnerable presenting work. Everyone thinks they’re an expert, and everyone has an opinion on advertising. Even a TV director will want to change the concept, or the set builder will be thinking about it in a completely different way. It is scary to stand up and say: “here is the idea I believe in”. Everyone wants to take chunks out of it. (CD/AD/AUS)

It feels like if you get something approved these days you have sneaked it through the net. (AD/USA)

Rejection breeds depression and it impacts on other jobs. (CW/AUS)

When a concept or solution was rejected because the client simply did not like it, or did not recognise it as novel or original within their frame of reference it was particularly hurtful for the creative who had thought of the idea and loved the solution he or she had come up with. They took it personally when handlers wielded their authority and questioned the choices they made:

You are constantly being judged on your creative ability and confronted with people criticising your work and that is very hurtful. (CW/AUS)

…. people frequently feel let down. If the work is great and the results are good then everyone is happy. When it is bad then the creative work is blamed. (AD/USA)
Account management don’t understand the creative agenda - like a small adjustment in type is important to me. I’m not ridiculous about it, but I will fight to a certain degree. (CD/CW/AUS)

Everyone is worried about what the client will think. (ECD/CW/NY)

It is rare for something to get through without changes and a lot of ideas never see the light of day so sometimes for me any victory is a good victory. Let's celebrate before the client changes his mind … (AD/USA)

Rejection was seen as unnatural and an affront to their competency because they had worked through all the possibilities and alternatives and considered the problem solved. Starting again was perceived as time and opportunity wasted, and engendered in some art directors and copywriters interviewed intense emotions and feelings of anguish, anxiety and insecurity depending on the importance and size of the task. They would then go back through steps 1-5 [see Creative decision-making, page 109] again in a fairly predictable way until another agreeable solution was found in terms of standards and appropriateness. Given the general poor uptake on their first choices, art directors and copywriters said they were frequently forced to repeat these steps numerous times. They had already laboriously worked through the alternatives up to this point and resented having to go through what they perceive as an unnecessary charade to convince handlers of their worth. The time and energy it took for very little perceived reward was an overarching theme in their accounts. This is elaborated further in 5.2.7. [Resource Scarcity (Time)]

Some art directors and copywriters interviewed saw rejection as a loss rather than a setback. They described engaging in either risk-seeking or risk-averse behaviour when they perceived a gap between their expectations and achievements because the very existence of an alternative idea required them to make complex strategic decisions about whether to cooperate, compete, or strike a certain balance between cooperation and competition:

You have to learn to compromise. Getting upset because you didn’t get your own way is a route to disaster. (CD/AD/UK)

If you try to ‘push’ all your work, good and bad through it is like crying wolf. You’ve got to know the battles to fight and the ones to lose. (CD/CW/AUS)

There are collective decisions to be made about any job. What we do in advertising is a team effort, but it becomes ‘mine’ when I go out to fight for it. I’ll fight harder if the idea is totally mine. (CD/AD/AUS)

Some clients have a very pedestrian approach. We know they will not buy certain creative approaches. (MD/USA)
In client meetings, creatives are the first to cave into the demands of the client because they want to see work produced. (CW/USA)

Working through the cycle again was initially seen as a self-sacrifice and unnecessarily repetitive and demotivating, but the incentive provided to rework a concept if time and resources were available sometimes enabled them to break new ground and the result was motivation in itself:

Advertising is a very defeating industry … things fail … but you have to be able to come back again. (CD/CW/AUS)

Sometimes they will throw a wobbly [if a concept is rejected], and the next day they will come back all excited with a solution. (MD/AUS)

Their initial reaction is negative in the beginning, but by re-addressing the problem they put forward a new idea. (MD/AUS)

They will go and hide, hurt over it but they often come back and give you a gentle argument if they think you are wrong, their arguments are never immediate. (R/AUS).

When you do get something good through your confidence is up, adrenalin starts other things happening. (/CD/CW/AUS)

The sole intention for a creative is the result. And the result is a great feeling. (/AD/AUS)

The tenacity and mental flexibility of art directors and copywriters under pressure was also noted in the literature [Appendix E Scale of Proficiencies].

5.2.2. Too Many Decision-makers
5.2.2.1. Agency Size

Informants overwhelmingly agreed that too many decision-makers on different levels of authority and with different expectation of the outcome frequently caused their expert judgment to be challenged and overridden. Layers of approval implemented to manage growth and ensure at ground level that no detail was overlooked simultaneously ensured that blame could be shared if the advertising did not reach its objectives. As a consequence they said a lot of defensive and ambiguous actions were taken rather than single decisions made. Too many judgments enacted by different groups of personnel across the agency and client companies was a major source of conflict. Informants said it was difficult to maintain links with all the decision-makers relative to their benefit and this affected the stability of the process. It made it hard for them to exercise their aesthetic authority and to fulfill what they saw as their role in the advertising process when there were so many people involved:

Sometimes the layers of approval stifle creativity. (MD/AUS)
We have to work around so many people all the time. (CW/USA)

After selling it through to the immediate creative director it is out of my hands. Then it goes to four – five layers of suits [account handlers and planners] who try to second-guess what I mean and the client will think. (CW/USA)

When there are so many people involved it becomes a matter of balancing and filtering opinion. (CD/AD/AUS)

Everyone is meddling in everyone else’s business. So it is very rare that everything goes smoothly. (AD/USA)

The buck stops with creative. No one says the ad didn’t get made because the account handler didn’t like it. (CW/UK)

If a client is not being properly serviced [for example when an account handler is missing from a meeting] they say we are not happy with the relationship. Then they reject ideas because they are annoyed with the agency. The creative process is derailed by the lack of a phone call or something not said. (ECD/CW/USA)

The profession had become stricter, multinational agencies too big and process driven and this had made their jobs more complex, and most informants felt their agencies could not unilaterally create a cohesive environment to support and nurture their standards of novelty and value to any great degree because they were constrained by the same bureaucratic procedures and processes as all large service providers:

Big agencies feel like dinosaurs. (ECD/AD/USA).

We rarely get to do great advertising. (MD/USA).

We are always competing with creative hotshots who are more nimble.
It is not a totally happy alliance [for art directors and copywriters] (CD/AD/AUS)

The extent to which art directors and copywriters in the study said they would attempt to exercise or influence control over a decision or engage in politicking to defend their choice depended on the context and circumstance. Strongest rhetoric came from the Creative sample group in New York who felt they had little power over the outcome.
They blamed it on too many decision-makers and a climate of political correctness and conservatism:

US advertising is more strategic, buttoned-up and tight. (AH/USA)

New York is conservative and it is very hard to do good advertising here because the research process takes longer (BH/NY).

There are lots of agendas here to satisfy so being a creative in an ad agency is a long hard road. (AD/USA)
Accounts are so big here - work gets diluted in the process. (CD/USA)

One art director in New York described the budget of one account he was working on as ‘the equivalent of the GDP of a small country’. He said the concepts he created in the beginning were unrecognisable by the time they were signed off by all the decision-makers at agency and client levels, raising the point that while the social networks large agencies cultivate offer competitive advantage by providing art directors and copywriters with access to resources and opportunities, it also affected their productivity and bargaining position relative to others. The same theme resonated through accounts with varying degrees of intensity across all regions over the period fieldwork took place. The perception among informants in New York was that agencies in London were less affected. Said one art director expressing the general sentiment: ‘UK advertising is more rebellious and precocious [and] you can go anywhere creatively.’ The same rhetoric was absent in UK sample. One London creative director suggested ‘creatives have not been quick to complain despite the conditions because they pay so well.’ The sample, however, was too small to draw any definitive conclusion about the correlation between agency size, geographic location and perceived creativeness.

While added resources were seen as useful at certain stages in decision-making, art directors and copywriters in the study did not necessarily agree they produced better results because resource allocations were not subject to their choice and it was not always intentionally or unintentionally made clear to them what the conditions imposed on the allocation rule were. Art directors and copywriters described themselves as often in competition with each other over resources, and were never quite sure whether they put on a project because they were better, quicker, available, or because they were more malleable and amenable. Their self-image as creative entities relative to others in terms of creativity or productivity was never apparent on any measurable scale.

Novelty and originality in advertising have traditionally been defined and compared on much smaller business models, and some large agencies have progressively deconstructed, decentralised, outsourced, delayered and restyled themselves as networks of services to improve their chances of novelty and originality occurring. They have gone through various structural evolutions but many critics have voiced the opinion that they have never successfully integrated creative activities into a workable model [see 2.2. History] and this was borne out in informant accounts. None have separated or outsourced creative indicating the importance of art direction and copywriting as a profit centre:
Agencies are trying all sorts of different management models to come up with optimum output. [Agency] tried breaking creative people into departments – TV, radio, print. But everyone wanted to work in TV. Then they had the ideas department and that didn’t work either. (CD/MELB)

Agencies reinvent themselves around every ten years but they are impossible to deconstruct - not so much agencies but the people inside. (ECD/CW/USA)

There are generations of agencies. Each new generation lasts about fifteen years. Some of these agencies put their creatives in touch with the client others have strong account teams who go out and sell the work. (CD/UK)

5.2.2.2. Strategic Direction

The novel and original projects and campaigns art directors and copywriters produce are essential for advertising agencies to grow their business, and more resources are allocated to the making of advertisements than most other activities. Creative salaries are a major expense incurred towards this attainment and signify the important role art direction and copywriting plays in the agency enterprise. Creative skills are by far the most important criterion used by clients to evaluate an agency. A novel or original advertising concept has the potential to generate sales increases of up to five times, controlling for the same budget, product, distribution, and other marketing efforts (Rossiter & Percy, 1997). Conversely, poor performance reviews cause clients to evaluate the agency in terms of low-level creativity and unsatisfactory creative performance and is a key reason for account moves. The loss of a major high profile account affects an agency’s ability to attract new clients and quality creative personnel.

While Creative informants generally agreed that their agencies promoted amazing creativity to increase their profile and to attract business, encouraged them to seek creative solutions to particular problems or opportunities, and were receptive to their efforts to promote novelty and originality as a benchmark, they felt that agencies were unable or unwilling to invest the time and effort to model their standards and inspire excellence because their top priority was to meet the needs of paying clients. The money clients invest, their anticipated ROI, and the fact that advertising is generally considered to offer poor returns on this investment added to their insecurity (Hogg & Scoggins, 2010; Hill et al., 2007).

‘Creative doesn’t rule anymore’, said one creative director expressing the sentiment of the group, ‘it is harder for us to break boundaries or give things a new twist.’ In part, they attributed the shift in emphasis to increased reliance on research and the presence of the strategy planner competing with them for the intellectual high ground:
The best work used to come from creatives who were good strategic thinkers but now there is the notion that one person can’t do both. (CW/USA)

Nowadays, the creative power is with the strategic account planner. Planning the ad is the expression of the product story. But they have a solid account background and try to satisfy too many criteria. (AD/USA)

Industry changes, they said, had made their job more demanding and complex and engaged them with the politics of learning to work well within these structures and schemes whether they liked it or not as this summary of accounts shows:

In the last ten years, I have seen a huge reliance on research. (MD/USA)

Research has given a whole new meaning to advertising ideas. Clients use it as a crutch because they don’t know. They research everything because the cost isn’t seen as a loss because they are putting their money on a sure bet. It is seen as less riskier option. (CW/USA)

Ideas are researched to death. When you are paying people to sit in a group at 6pm at night you are not going to get a real sense of advertising. (MD/AUS)

Focus groups don’t recognise anything new. (CD/CW/AUS)

How clients interpret research is the problem. Research can be manipulated to get any result a client wants. (CD/AD/AUS)

I’ve seen focus group leaders lead a group of consumers down a path. (CD/AD/AUS)

Research is no friend of good work. (CD/CW/USA)

Ideas get watered down and sanitized by too much research. (CD/CW/AUS)

By the time creatives get to produce work they have lost interest. It is a kind of sucking process. Life gets sucked out of an idea. (/MD/USA)

The most useful research for creatives is attitudinal research [in order to create more meaningful concepts in the first place]. (CD/AD/AUS)

Said one senior creative director in London, hinting at the historic inevitability: ‘Some things never change, the conservatism of clients, timidity of agencies going out on a limb, restrictions of research. These are the things we have always fought about’. Again highlighting that many of the issues art directors and copywriters face are long-standing and structural in origin.

5.2.2.3. Collaboration, Cooperation and Conflict

An explanation of why art directors and copywriters and account handlers don’t always see things the same way can be found in their working styles. Intuitive and emotive
thinking is perceived as radically different from functionalist understanding and formal knowledge (Alvesson, 1993) and leaps of imagination don’t always fit comfortably in standard workflow models in large highly structured organisations. Accommodating the disparate needs and expectations of account handlers and clients demanded an adjustment to the thinking of art directors and copywriters - something they were not always happy about or prepared to do. Many were not accustomed to theorising about their work and if they did it was typically on a defensive basis. They were more attuned to drawing on qualitative and technical information, and using emotive and intuitive thinking to make aesthetic judgments, whereas clients and handlers used quantitative information and declarative thinking, logic and reasoned action to make decisions based on rational and explicit assumptions about what is novel and original. So the evaluations art directors and copywriters made in regard to their own work sometimes come across weak or as unconvincing, or overly ambitious or uncompromising (Stufflebeam & Webster, 1980).

It was also well documented in the literature that people with high sensitivity to non-verbal cues have difficulty report verbally on their experiences. ‘The good craftsman absorbed in doing something well, [is] unable to explain the value of what he or she is doing’, said American sociologist Thorstein Verblen, the first person to link craftsmanship with mass advertising (Sennett, 2009). They do not necessarily appraise their own skills highly, and generally avoid situations in which they might appear to be imperfect or unconscientious and where their pride and status is under threat (Sennett, 2009; West, 2000, 1996; Czikszentmihalyi, 1996; Amabile, 1995; Fletcher, 1999; Gould, 1999; Alvesson, 1993; Polkinghorne, 1988; Kramer, 1983; Barron, 1958). Aesthetic ideals sit closer to art and craft than business and art directors and copywriters are often unconscious of the cues they rely on to make judgments. Explanations to date have a neurological basis. Neuroscientists have suggested that while decision-making may feel like conscious deliberation, choices take shape below the threshold of consciousness, with the brain rapidly integrating sensory input, memory and the probability of reward. Knowledge about how and why decisions are made about whether to use serif or sans-serif typeface or the turn of phrase to attract readers to a page are tacit and not readily retrievable in the IQ format. As a consequence, the means and ends often appear imperfectly differentiated, incompletely related or poorly detailed. Post-rationalising their choices and articulating their thought processes was frustrating and hard given that they have already provided the optimal solution. These difficulties were reported in informant accounts:

The ability to deal with other people does not sit comfortably with someone who is highly creative. (CD/CW/AUS)
Creative people can be quite introspective. They are not articulate. When they hit on an idea that they feel is right they find it hard to sell it. So the biggest friction is selling the creative within the agency. More so if you are pushing boundaries and it always has been. (CD/AD/UK)

The best creative people I know are highly retiring. They can be almost inarticulate in some circumstances. (R/AUS)

The average creative does not take criticism well at all. They have highly sensitive egos and they don’t like criticism in any form. (/AH/USA)

Exaggerating the usefulness of the work under review was mentioned in the literature as one strategy art directors and copywriters used to overcome this impediment. Group behaviour studies show that groups in competition sometimes over-evaluate their contribution as a way of generating cultural distinction (Brown, 1989). Talking up work temporarily halts negative thinking, said Arden (2003), and convinces others (and themselves) that their expertise and contribution is vital to an outcome. Assuming their aesthetic judgment as superior and that creativity no matter how flawed pays ‘stops the rot … [and] temporarily halts …. questioning’ (Arden, 2003) but sometimes had the reverse affect, said handlers. Advocating and protesting too much in some situations drew attention to their competency – and in particular on young creatives who have fewer successes to support their claims.

The exhaustive effort of having to repeat and repeat the decision-making cycle, uphold standards, then defend and sell each evolution to a group of powerful largely skeptical account handlers made art directors and copywriters reluctant participators. The limitation imposed on them by their own community in terms of getting it right may also interfere with the art director or copywriter’s ability to convey their domain-specific knowledge to account handlers in decision-making contexts.

In the so-called ‘skills economy”, states Sennett (2009), what we can say in words is valued more than what we do. And while art directors and copywriters may have difficulty explaining the origins and evolution of a concept, informant accounts and the literature show that art directors and copywriters can be as process-driven and outcome-oriented in terms of planning and communication as account handlers – when they want to. How they conduct themselves no doubt springs from deep neurobiological sources, but it does not mean they have no control or choice over how they behave. They are capable of managing the contradiction between the emotive and rational forces of their nature when it is in their interest to do so. Said one art director in New York: ‘[Nowadays] a learned polished ability with words is more important than creative ability’. These mixed interview excerpts show how far from the creative stereotype art
directors and copywriters are in terms of collaboration:

Creatives understand the politics of the business they work in and work around them (CD/AUS)

To succeed you need strategic integration of the whole agency. A commitment from everyone - otherwise get bogged down in the mire of everything. (CW/NY)

If it is a good idea it is something that an intelligent client will respond to not only as a client but as a consumer too. If they [clients] can see that idea has something unique about it then they are connected. (CD/CW/USA)

If the client respects you and asks for recommendation you have to give some reasons why. You are not just saying ‘I like it. I like it because I think it is good or clever’ but because it is right for the brief. (CD/CW/USA)

Whatever account handlers think we are not expressing ourselves, we have to compromise and work within the limits because we are spending other people’s money. (ECD/AD/UK)

Despite the rhetoric about getting it right, art directors and copywriters in the study did not make choices in a social vacuum, and the accounts above highlight the many contradictions between getting it right and getting it done. At the briefing stage of the creative decision-making cycle they implement the same planning skills as account handlers to classify and categorize product information in order to know which bits of this information are relevant and valid [Figure 2: Competency levels in creative decision-making]. They communicate with each other to accurately evaluate admissible levels of ambiguity and novelty. Strategic ability, being more cued to the business objectives of the agency, having good theatrical skills, many informants agreed improved their chances of getting work through the decision-making process and this made them complicit in their actions. Good inter-personal skills helped to manage, control and direct the expectations of handlers and clients toward their version of novelty thus limiting their losses and increasing their potential gains. One psychological advantage of acting in a cooperative manner was that art directors and copywriters said they were given more and rewarded more as these excerpts show:

I try to sell an idea to account handlers as we go along, involve them in the process, bring logic to the argument. Give them the tools to sell it to the client. (CD/AUS)

It is part of my job to make them [clients] feel involved. I try and get close to their business and get them into my confidence to increase the chance that they will in turn come around to our way of doing things. Direct contact with the client is helpful because I can explain things. Clients seem to enjoy this contact because it is less formal. You have two young and
enthusiastic people who are relaxed and make the process more fun. Collaborating in this way enables me to better manage everyone’s expectations. (AD/UK)

Being creative is a role among a number that art directors and copywriters in the study played. Being perceived as actively independent, more cognitively complex, aesthetic, sensitive, emotional and individualistic were subjective orientations they put forward as signs of their creativity, but they fell short of the stereotype of the independent, introspective, radical, experimental, non-conformist artistic creator they modeled themselves on in that they were instructed by management to use their abilities to produce something that was not only novel but recognisably accountable.

Being well adjusted, interpersonally democratic and sensitive, encouraging, warm, and empathic and able to judge these abilities in others were not behavioural characteristics typically assigned to art directors and copywriters in the literature that promoted creative people as somehow different and special, but did feature strongly in the literature on expertise and performance [Appendix G Traits, means and motives associated with creative acts]. Competency in problem-solving was just one ability available to them at their level of development in McFazdean’s hierarchical model of competencies [Figure 2: Competency levels in creative decision-making]. Art directors and copywriters as empathetic, emotional and self-aware was also strongly supported in the literature [Appendix E Scale of Proficiencies].

Persuasive strategic ability as a core competence (as opposed to formal knowledge) in advertising was also noted in the work of Alvesson (1994) and Hogg & Scoggins (2001) who similarly observed art directors and copywriters generally encountered events, identified problems and made plans to resolve differences with diligence and cooperativeness, and this was evident in informant accounts:

Creatives have changed. They are more level headed, they see the big picture and their thinking is more business-oriented. So we share more information with them than we ever did before. (MD/AUS)

Good creatives have learned to modify their presentations to suit the situation. A great idea packaged the right way has the potential to [win awards] and build our business. (MD/AUS)

There [art directors and copywriters] are different people in creative departments these days. They have to be to cope with the pressures. (CD/AD/MELB)

I’m also a businessman, because I am trying to create within a business community. I’m trying to sell a product. (CD/CW/USA)
Bornstein (2002) and Sherif (1966) state people like art directors and copywriters who modify their actual incentives are sometimes induced by consideration of their private interest to act in accordance with the collective interest. So collaboration between the highly competitive creative group and account handlers on direct appeal to their rationality (bolstered, perhaps, by the argument that what is in the art director’s or copywriter’s best interest is in everyone’s interest) appeared to change their motivation in relation to the collective group goal when rewards, resources, opportunities, effective networks were at stake. Collaborating and cooperating were useful tactics, informants said, for diffusing their fears, reassuring them of their rationality and gaining their trust in the hope that they would be rewarded more:

The process is a bit rough round the edges, very interactive always keeping in mind some idea of where we are heading. (AH/USA)

I try and get them into my confidence to increase the chance that they will in turn come around to my way of doing things. (CD/AD/AUS)

[Account handlers] have to prove to creatives they are working for common goals. The whole agency process is built around trust. (/MD/AUS)

I see my role as making an idea more relevant. Sometimes creatives come to me in advance of seeing the CD. We nurture an idea together. (AH/USA)

However, being perceived as artistically creative, original, independent, chaotic and inherently unstable can make any non-enforceable agreement between groups appear rather futile. Art directors and copywriters said they sometimes strategically chose not to collaborate and cooperate when they were induced to do or say something against their private interest. They would first try to bring the opinions of others into correspondence with what they had done. If that did not work they would not cooperate as a sign of rebelliousness. Not cooperating increased their solidarity in some instances in that their need to be creative came to matter more. The ability to create as a singular and precious resource was often a useful hedge for art directors and copywriters in that uncooperative behaviour could be passed off as a sign of their creativeness without social penalty. So who won and lost in the creative decision-making games in part depended on the art director’s and copywriter’s ability to influence others. For middleweight art directors working in large agencies this level of influence was not always available to them and made winning matter more:

… the politics are frightening, there’s a lot of favouritism, and it’s hard to get a go at the best briefs. (CW/UK)

Those who make it to senior level have a much less stressful life. So the difference in view will depend more on where you sit within the pecking
order (within the agency, and client leverage) than where you work. (CW/UK)

Middleweight art directors and copywriters can be young, enthusiastic and wildly talented they can be rough edged because they have not learned that playing the game could actually help their work (CD/AUS)

By putting their creative expertise in the service of the agency, art directors and copywriters were expected to cooperate with account handlers and conform in an effective and efficient way if successful campaigns were to be created. While both parties were united by mutual awareness of the boundaries between them and the potential for cooperation and exchange, middleweight art directors and copywriters said it rarely happened. Kotter and Heskett (1999) also observed that sharing and caring does not make creative decision-making groups in advertising work better or harder. Allee (1997) found handlers do not necessarily trust art directors and copywriters and since their values were not aligned they would rather not share access. When groups hold conflicting ideas, collaboration is relatively ineffective as a means for making decisions and this is never resolved (Brown, 1988; Festinger, 1957), and was evident in informant accounts:

Even with all efforts to pull together as a team, we still keep getting pushed away from the client. Account directors and planners sit with a big stick and [they] support clients behind the scenes. (CW/USA)

Rhetoric was personal and intense around the control account handlers had on the client-agency relationship, and who controls and who obeys was a major theme in creative informant accounts. Art directors and copywriters saw their lack of access to the client as the key decision-maker as a major impediment to proving to themselves and others that had what it takes to succeed. The intense rhetoric around who controls the relationship was expected, but the volume highlighted its significance as a causal factor for instability in the decision-making group. The voice of account handlers interjects the narrative at this point to provide a balanced picture of events and behaviours the creative group describe. In considering what to include and exclude, the researcher favoured a fuller and richer description is provided in their own words rather than any interpretive account:

Client service advocates for the creative and for client. This can cause friction. Creative don’t like it. (AH/NY)

We measure our work on client relationships. [In an ideal world] creatives would prefer to work one-on-one with the decision-makers. (MD/AUS)

Before we got all scientific, we’d have 50 people working on the business but we would present as one. (CD/CW/USA)
To get to the customer you have to get through the client. The client has all sorts of perceptions about his product and what he likes and doesn’t like. So part of the creative skill is knowing the client as well as the customer. (CD/AD/AUS)

I lean on the creative side, but it doesn’t always work. We have to give [the client] what they asked for. (AH/USA)

Account people are one removed from the idea. Some clients prefer to brief creatives direct, others like to hide behind because they are worried about how creatives will react if they do not like it. (CD/CW/AUS)

Agencies like to have account people because they don’t want creatives upsetting or abusing clients if they reject work. Plus they don’t want the creatives to form strong relationships with the client because creatives move from job to job and there is always a risk the client might move with them. (CD/CW/AUS)

Controlling the relationship and denying art directors and copywriters access was a useful strategy in that it offered account handlers personal competitive advantage. Art directors and copywriters, on the other hand, felt they lacked key information and this was a catalyst for competition and conflict, and territorial disputes. Noted Verbeke et al. (2009), handlers and creatives tend to intentionally or unintentionally simplify knowledge and perspectives, and this can make it difficult to judge and appreciate the others perspective in describing events, and this was often apparent in their accounts:

Sometimes we don’t know if it is the client or the handler talking. (ECD/CW/USA)

We are not as informed as we need to be. They [account people] keep the information for themselves. They want to still feel in control. It is all about control. (/CD/CW/USA)

They want to protect their role - their job. They want the client to feel comfortable and feel secure and often creatives don’t because we are often challenging their thinking amd disrupting things a bit. (CD/CW/USA)

If we were more involved at the beginning of the process, we could weed out strategies that might sound good on paper, or are just not going to work, or don’t have the emotive force needed. We don’t always have this opportunity and it’s a shame. (CW/UK)

Good account people should lead and be a conduit between client and creative. Most are not. They are a necessary evil. They are a buffer between the work. They can let creatives down gently if an idea is rejected. But sometimes they try to second guess what the client will like and this will make their job easier. They dread the phone call from the marketing manager to their boss complaining about the creative work and their service. An account person can get fired for this. A creative person just gets moved onto another account. (CD/CW/AUS)
Withholding of information is a very powerful force. So it [decision-making] is a heady mixture of people, power, money and ideas that make it happen. (CD/CW/NZ)

By siding with clients, Creative informants felt account handlers too became isolated and risked losing their sense of where they belong:

They are more comfortable crunching numbers and writing manifestos than judging creative work. (AD/USA)

They [clients and account handlers] see us as a bunch of opinions and they are not interested in what we think. (CW/USA)

In big agencies, account people are glorified translators/fax machines. (AD/NY)

A lot of account handlers believe they work for the client. They go to lunch with them, sit in on marketing meetings, have cocktails and become mates. They think they are part of the marketing department of X or Y client. By taking sides they are not working for the agency they are losing themselves and their sense of where they belong. (AD/AUS)

Sometimes planners engage research companies or sometimes clients get research done. They can be in ‘bed together’. (CD/CW/NZ)

Account people spend a lot of time familiarizing themselves with the client and his/her business. Visiting factories/going to seminars etc. This makes them valuable and vulnerable – especially if they only work on one account. If an account moves suits can lose their jobs. (CD/CW/AUS)

Said one creative director in New Zealand of the uneasy relationship between art directors as power-seekers and handlers as power-brokers: ‘it seems everyone intuitively knows there is this strange collusion of ignorance going on. A niggling discomfort lurks in the shadows of the relationship, and nobody seems to know what to do.’

The more important the client the greater likelihood, they said, account handlers would want to deny them access. However, there was no ironclad guarantee that hoarding access worked as these accounts show:

More and more they [clients] don’t want to be handled. Less handling allows us [art director and copywriter team] to have a more perfect connection. Once we make this connection we to try to keep the channels open, move things along and keep us informed. (CD/CW/USA)

Direct contact with the client is helpful because I can explain things. Clients seem to enjoy this contact because it is less formal. You have two young and enthusiastic people who are relaxed and make the process more fun. Collaborating in this way enables me to better manage everyone’s expectations. (AD/UK)

Our ECD wants to be with the client all the time, He is passionate and responsible about running a piece of business. He acts like them and
manages the relationship. (CW/USA)

Building relationships with clients gets ideas through. (CD/CW/NZ)

From the account handling perspective, a managed relationship may be preferred by clients who feel they lack the words to express themselves accurately when making an aesthetic judgment. Said Bourdieu (1984): ‘A beholder who lacks the specific code feels lost in a chaos of sounds and rhythms, colours and lines, without rhyme or reason’. (page 214). Inexperience in articulating about concepts and revealing their intent in advance and the very unpredictability of not knowing or being able to anticipate an outcome in advance can be a major impediment in this kind of culture (Sennett, 2008; Cowdroy & de Graaff, 2005; Bernstein, 2002; Hinds et al., 2001; Riggio & Riggio, 2001) and can activate a sense of inadequacy in account handlers and clients, especially if they feel they are not particularly good at actually judging the work. Some handlers saw the need to protect creatives from clients because clients were process-driven and they felt they needed we shield creatives from their influence. Others felt the need to protect their clients from creatives: ‘Initially clients feel alienated, said one handler, ‘they are literal in their heads and sometimes they do not hear what we say. They are marketing people.’

Art directors and copywriters appeared to be similarly motivated to withhold information from account handlers to protect their jurisdiction over novelty and their claim of aesthetic authority, especially in situations when it involved financial or social reward:

If we make it look easy they’re more likely to think they can do it themselves because they are increasingly better educated and more media literate. (CD/CW/AUS)

Creativity is like a secret black box that is supposed to be guarded like the Coke formula by the [creative director] of the agency. (R/AUS)

Being creative is the only unique thing they [art directors and copywriters] bring to the party - their only intellectual property – and they are not going to reveal their secrets to anybody. (CD/CW/AUS)

Our role is to sell to the client not what they wanted, but what they never knew they wanted until they saw it. If we don’t make it look like magic they [clients] might be tempted do it themselves. (CD/AD/AUS) TP

The controlled ability of art directors and copywriters to withhold insightful judgment until the last moment to make what they do look easy could be considered a form of hoarding in that it controlled the negative rhetoric, created a psychological distance between them and account handlers, and kept them outside the boundaries of their activities. Noted McLeod et al. (2007), art directors and copywriters have never made it clear to others how they arrive at an identity through their work that satisfies themselves
or others in the workplace. Implying that non-disclosure gave them a level of psychological advantage in this winner takes all game.

Abbott (1988) argued that all professions protect their jurisdiction by not making explicit knowledge available, but said it must not be too abstract or concrete if it is to be jurisdictionally advantageous for a profession. The problem when they hoard, said Arden (2003) of this observed tendency in art directors and copywriters, is that they end up living off rewards. Monopolising the risk-taking and taking the aesthetic high ground had the effect of artificially increasing the value of art director’s and copywriter’s contribution, and causing them to assume things were true even when they were not, as informants in the Independent commentator sample explained:

They think everything they do is brilliant and they don’t believe there is anything wrong with what they do and they were not willing to change unless the incentive to change was compelling. (AH/AUS)

They [art directors and copywriters] have a common belief in the importance of advertising in the whole scheme of things. If you told them that the world wouldn’t stop if every advertising agency in the world closed tomorrow, they would not believe you. (R/AUS)

Psychologists generally describe taking the high ground on taste as a common response to fear. In advertising it manifests as art directors and copywriters displaying a horror or intolerance of the tastes of account handlers and clients. When their technical and artistic skills go unrecognized they get hurt and upset:

They [client representatives and account handlers] are always going to not understand the sort of work I do because they don’t understand it and they don’t have the courage to go through the process with me. (CD/CW/AUS)

Account handlers can put on a show that they understand creative – some do some don’t. (CW/UK)

They are more comfortable changing things than trying something new because no one is ever fired for letting an OK job through. Occasionally, you get an account director who decides that safe isn’t working for them and they ask us to do something brave. (CW/AUS)

One account handler in New York blamed it on ‘the slight inferiority complex art directors and copywriters have about the essentially commercial nature of their ‘art’.’ Paradoxically, art directors and copywriters were less concerned by what consumers thought because choices of aesthetic, beauty and taste are not usually attributes associated with advertising. Suggesting further that perceptions of novelty and value were contextually bound by context. For example, a client may see the typeface as readable whereas an art director may recognize it as aesthetically pleasing. So while part of their fear arises from not being able
to engage their aesthetic sensibilities (Rohmann, 1999), it also arises from the lack of definition around the parameters of the evaluation (Stufflebeam & Webster, 1980). Of groups who define themselves by taste and have an aversion towards those who are different, Bourdieu (1984) writes: ‘Whereas the ideology of charisma regards taste in legitimate culture as a gift of nature, scientific observation shows that cultural needs are the product of upbringing and education’ (Introduction).

5.2.2.4. Negotiation

The reality that account handlers can and do override their expectation to be creative was hated, rejected and denied by middleweight art directors and copywriters. In particular they resented the constant checking and monitoring of their activities, handlers challenging their course of action and making critical judgments on their work. While there was a general expectation of obedience, handlers often found art directors and copywriters as subordinates resented subordination and unwillingly to obey as a result.

There might be a philosophy on paper but we are not united in what we do. We don’t get to know each other and this is part of the problem. (AD/AUS)

The relationship is not harmonious at all. There is a lot of friction. A lot of stomping and shouting because any good creative wants more than they are allowed and they have to be reigned in. (ECD/UK)

Ideas survive the decision-making process with cunning, guile and good salesmanship. (CD/CW/AUS)

Sometimes creatives will wait until their creative director is on vacation. They will sneak the idea past them [knowing they will reject it] to the ECD just so they will get work produced. (AH/USA)

An associated concept was that of intellectual ownership. Art directors and copywriters owned the expression of the idea but the agency and paying client owned the economic benefit, and therefore controlled its use and collected the proceeds of their creative endeavour. ‘Ownership is very nebulous when everyone contributes’, said an art director in New York describing the territorial disputes it caused and levels of fear and distrust it created. When their work was made available to others it was open to exploitation, and art directors and copywriters as creators could not specify how and when it would be used. For example, a client may want to see the company logo larger on a page and the art director may see it as interfering with the aesthetic integrity of the page. The idea that the art director or copywriter loved in the beginning was frequently one they did not want to put their name to at the end of the decision-making process and they felt their competency compromised. What they ended up creating wasn’t necessarily novel or original but a
heavily censored version. The loss of power to impose aesthetic authority and assert judgment over what they consider their intellectual property impacted on their motivation and ability to produce what they perceived as quality and original work.

When account handlers and clients accepted the same standard of novelty and value it created a joint sense of ownership and collaboration was seen as a force for good. Said one art director in London: account handlers own the work as much as we do. ‘They’ll be saying to their friends ‘that’s my job’ even though their role is different.’ This rhetoric was especially evident among account handlers and senior art directors and copywriters, and while it was less evident among middleweight art directors and copywriters it did indicate that in some contexts relationships improve over time:

Ideas survive with trust and good working relationship. (MD/USA)

Dedicated account people want to sell good work because either they want to feel involved in the creative process (some agencies insist on seeing account people’s reels of what they have worked on) and they want to be head of the company one day. (CD/CW/UK)

A good suit is as excited by the creative as the creatives are. (CD/CW/NZ)

If you trust them you don’t mind their comments. (CD/CW/AUS)

A good account person is also someone you want to get involved emotionally. It is easier to work with someone who is passionate about what you are doing. I try to bring him/her into the process early. I think they have insights that we don’t think about. It is really to get them emotionally involved because then they feel part as opposed to treating them as just numbers people or people who come up with formulas. (CD/CW/USA)

Good account people who are well schooled in advertising and good strategy can get more out of creatives than creatives can get out of themselves. They have as much conviction, pride, [satisfaction] in a great idea and good advertising as we do. A good account leader should lead the team. They will act like it is their idea too. I like it when an account director I respect argues with me. Not all ideas I produce are great, but it is the account team’s role to get it through. (CD/AD/AUS)

5.2.3. Ill-structured Problems and Ambiguous Feedback

Art directors and copywriters, creative directors and account handlers can and do harbour different versions of novelty and use their effort of mind and imagination to make judgments that serve their individual interests, and this was elaborated in informant accounts:

The MD is concerned about making money and keeping the client happy. The planner is concerned his insight will be executed the right way, the account team just want to keep the client happy. (CD/CW/AUS)

They [account handlers] are happy if the client is happy and the business is solid. The agency focus is on the business doing well. The marketing
manager is an expert in marketing not on getting the attention of consumers who could not care less about advertising. (AD/UK)

Everyone comes from a different point of view. Account handlers and planners come from the same point of view [as the client] and the planner works with the account handler on writing the brief and will support an idea if it supports the way his diagrams are worked out. (CW/UK)

Some agencies are account driven/others creatively. They are account driven because account service just want to get a pat on the back. Therefore they are timelines and cost driven. It can be creatively very frustrating. (CD/CW/AUS)

They [account handlers] say it’s their job to question what I do because they work for the client, and the client says question the creatives because they are award driven, ego driven and weird, they always work off brief and off strategy and they don’t care about anything but themselves, awards and reputations. Perhaps in a way it is true…. (AD/AUS)

For bosses, it is quantity versus quality so I often give them something to choose from. (AD/USA)

Account handlers worked to different criterion, operated with higher level of authority, lower level of competency, were typically older and outnumbered art directors and copywriters at the decision-making table. Art directors and copywriters felt handlers were often inattentive to their feelings and emotions because they were motivated by process and time-lines and engaged with getting the job done. Many art directors and copywriters in the study also saw the standards of account handlers as an obstacle to the full development of their creative potential:

There is no common language between creatives and [account handlers]. (CW/NY)

[Account handler] and creative chemistry is an issue. There is an edge to creative and handler antagonism that is inevitable. (MD/USA)

There is nothing more damaging than an account person who makes things happen but does not understand the creative process. (MD/USA)

They [account handlers] don’t understand the creative process, therefore they feel there has to be some logic in there somewhere so they persist. (ECD/AD/UK)

Often you get handlers who don’t know what a good ad is and don’t have the confidence to say ‘yes’. Lots of account people are good administrators but they don’t always have the ability to do the tap dancing. (AD/AUS)

So we often feel constrained by insufficient scope - either by the brief or knowledge of what the client will buy. (AH/UK)

The relationship between creative and client service varies a bit by agency. Creatives in creatively driven agencies are very much in the driving seat
within the agency (but there's still the client). In some they can be rather like downtrodden serfs - but not anywhere that does good work. (AH/UK)

Because of the craft-based nature of their professional activity, art directors and copywriters had a superior view of their role in decision-making, whereas account handlers in some respects saw them as inferior. They had an uneasy feeling that art directors and copywriters based their decisions on unsubstantiated opinion and this causes account handlers to mistrust the decisions they made about what was best for the client. An unspoken and unsubstantiated fear was that art directors and copywriters did not always make qualified value judgments because they were generally less academically qualified than account handlers, and perceived as functioning with relatively modest craft-based knowledge. This niggling doubt, they said, was sometimes exacerbated when art directors put up ideas they liked and considered novel for presentation but without reference to the real aim and goal of the advertising. Some art directors said they sometimes presented ideas that they thought were good but not strategically correct to display their performance potential when there was no other opportunity to do so:

Sometimes I’ll throw in something I know is wrong so that the client will reject it and then I will agree with them. In that way they have some equity over what was presented. (CW/AUS)

I put in a few red herrings that won’t get bought. (AD/USA)

While account handlers said they trusted and believed in the unique abilities of art directors and copywriters, they did not entrust them with the power to effect authority or control over what was presented to clients because their judgments were subjective, appeared to be limited by human rationality and lacked statistical evidence. Economic decisions based on social, cognitive and emotional reasoning handlers assumed would be sub-optimal because they were unable to be proven valid without money being spent on production and media. Some informants also made the observation that clients came to them for advertising not creative solutions:

Interestingly, they [clients] don’t value creativity as much as we would like them to. (MD/AUS)

We try to push for an idea but generally you have a client who is less concerned with what is original or work that has creative merit. (CW/UK)

Marketing department are product guys – sales people and brand managers. They see things from one point of view. (/AD/US)
Advertising writers identified similar dynamics in their observations of creative behaviour. Said Paul Arden (2003): ‘Creatives fail to understand the politics behind it,… it is unlikely that anyone will sanction the cost of something they don’t understand’ (page 96). Jim Aitchison, author of Cutting Edge Advertising: How to Create the World's Best for Brands in the 21st Century argued in Media magazine in 2003 creative judgments are a constrained process of approximation and clients don’t value approximations and remain largely skeptical about the effectiveness of the outcomes: ‘It is absolutely absurd to suggest a client should gamble not just his advertising budget but the future of his brand on the presumptuous inexperience of some yahoo who thinks that his idea should be superior to the product proposition’ (page 21).³ Clients questioned the effectiveness of advertising, Aitchison said, and wanted proof novelty and originality would sell more products. Hogg & Scoggins (2001) similarly noted in their ethnographic account of agency-client relations that client representatives and account handlers viewed creatives (and other production supporting roles) as lacking strategic direction and ‘intellectually challenged’, and needing to be sufficiently monitored at all stages of the process. Noted Sennett (2009), other craft traditions have also been under threat from the modern suspicion of authority in all its forms.

Some art directors and copywriters said they felt procedurally outsmarted by handlers with higher degrees who had more arguments for why their concept would or would not work. They could not supply proof that their version of novelty or originality would be effective other than in some circumstances and for other clients. Another strategy was to draw on the creative community for examples and model their decisions on what had worked for them in the past.

While management might have economic motivations for imposing procedural regimes to improve the possibility of novelty occurring, initiatives like total quality management that try to document and control the process of creative improvement were generally considered ineffective. ‘There are no formulas and there never has been’, said one executive creative director in the UK, ‘each problem has its own dynamic.’ Some art directors and copywriters viewed the highly disciplined rational analytical tools account handlers and clients used to model decisions as a smoke screen that post-facto hid what they perceived as the real creative decision-making process of ‘shooting from the hip’: ‘All good advertising used to come from a gut instinct, said one handler, ‘but no one works on instinct anymore.’

Nowadays, we are fed lots of research and information and it is easy to follow that, but you fall into a trap when you are told and do the obvious.
The gold is in the creative leap. So it helps to be slightly crazy and illogical. (ECD/AD/UK)

While prototypes for making judgments are considered useful in some contexts, solutions are by nature unpredictable and require organisational fluidity and adaptability to emerge (Hargadon & Bechky, 2006; Gioia, 1998). Henry (2001) states, creativity is more likely to emerge at the ‘edge of chaos’ and ‘in the mess between order and disorder’, adding ‘you cannot legislate for it to happen but trust it will emerge’ (page 15-17). Hinton (1997) describes the creative decision-making as an ‘often anarchic, inefficient, meandering process, with many routes down cul-de-sacs before hitting the open road’ (page 9). Art directors and copywriters in the study spoke of having to put more effort into persuasively convincing client representatives and account handlers that their judgment could be trusted, and management that they have performed well, and that they had something worthy to offer and that their knowledge and skills could be relied upon to produce expected results. Fletcher (1997), however, points out, there is no definitive correlation between creative excellence and marketplace effectiveness, because ads and their circumstances, and the ways in which one can be creative, are so varied. ‘A high percentage of campaigns accepted by the advertising community do bear results’, said one account handler in New York, ‘enough to support that kind of advertising to continue.’

5.2.4. Ill-defined or Competing Goals

5.2.4.1. Self-interest

While both parties benefited from the collective defence of novelty as a standard, the best choice for account handlers was not always best for art directors and copywriters and vice versa, and this served as a catalyst for competition and conflict. While the art directors and copywriters in the study acknowledged that everyone around them was trying to make what they do profitable, they did not necessarily agree they were there to solve a client’s problems because of the self-limiting belief system imposed on them by their own community. Middleweight art directors and copywriters in the study appeared less concerned with how effective the advertisements they produced were, and more concerned about the quality and how this affected their status within the creative collective and community. They didn’t see themselves as a disposable economic source to be exploited for profit, but as supplying disinterested service and counsel to their agency and clients for direct and definite compensation.

You never hear a creative say “I want to turn this company around”. (CD/CW/AUS)
I try hard to get an ad looking right to maintain my professional and personal integrity but how it looks to me is more important that what the client thinks (CW/UK).

You are trying to achieve, please and compete with peers in the agency. Peers are the harshest critics. Client satisfaction is a long way down the list. This comes from the entire industry. (AD/USA)

Creatives want to do good work so that they can win awards. They are thinking of their next job. (AH/CW/USA).

Professionally creatives would say they want to boost client’s business. Personally, they want to win great awards. (MD/AUS)

They [creatives] are happy pursuing the acclaim and recognition. (AH/USA)

Putting ‘creative first’ and their lack of concern about power and affiliation marked art directors and copywriters as the ‘odd men out’ in the agency context. Said Paul Arden (2003), most art directors and copywriters are working in a company for what they can do for them, implying that their claim on novelty is based on idiosyncratic preference, biased towards self-interest. They viewed the agency as a place to be exploited, adamant in their belief that the system was there to support them. Using the resources the agency provided to serve their own social interests and to advance their personal agendas rather than the immediate economic interests of the agency. Informants, however, considered self-interest to be more a statement that they are more determined and motivated to invest time and effort to secure their version of novelty than account handlers under the same conditions. Other advertising researchers observed that art directors and copywriters also negotiate competing identities through their work, and weave together the wider social meaning of being a creative industry worker with its connotations of coolness (Hackley & Kover, 2007; Nixon & Crewe, 2004) and this further marks them as different:

The kind of people who are drawn to agencies want to be part of the creative scene. It is like Hollywood. They see all the surface stuff – the glamour, accolades, the public face – not the underbelly. (AD/CD/AUS)

Where you have creative people in a perceived creative business, you will have people wanting to work in the industry because it is more sexy than other marketing/communications companies. (CD/AD/AUS)

I gravitated toward advertising as a career because it gave me a chance to be on the national stage, and to show off my creative abilities, and to be recognised for that creativity (Phil Dusenberry, cited in Vaske 2001: 89).

I didn’t necessarily come into advertising to be creative but because of all the alternatives I was considering it looked the most fun within my set of
capabilities. I consider myself lucky to have found such a lucrative outlet for my ‘unordinary’ talent. (CW/NZ)

When territory, political power, and status and pride were involved some art directors and copywriters described engaging in political actions to safeguard what they had and turning a blind eye to aspects that did not serve their needs. Long (1999) describes this kind of behaviour as a form of destructivity because art directors and copywriters are not acting accountable to the wider system of which they are part but in their own self-interest. Account handlers similarly described this kind of behaviour as ‘irresponsible’ in a study by Hogg & Scoggins (2001). Other writers suggested too much self-interest or goal-oriented behaviour can invoke greed, selfishness, individualism and hedonism, which in the long run will result in not only failing to develop a veridical perception of their skills, but also fail to develop these critical skills in themselves (Knapp & Hall, 2006; DuCette & Wolk, 1972).

5.2.4.2. Non-conforming Behaviour

Account handlers in the study variously described art directors and copywriters as sometimes cynical, negative, self-absorbed, occasionally egotistic and lacking in sensitivity. Creative informants, on the other hand, saw being difficult, frustrated, egotistical and non-conforming as a natural if unwanted reaction when their work or opinion was under attack. This type of behaviour is typically assigned to the stereotype of the frustrated artist in the literature and was also evident in informant accounts:

If you are a creative person you must create. And if you don’t, you destroy yourself. It is why creative people who don’t find the best outlet can be very destructive. (CW/AUS)

I try to create advertising that is going to disarm, disrupt and connect. I do a lot of disrupting. I try to challenge the status quo. (CD/CW/USA)

[Account handlers] want clients to feel comfortable and secure and often we creatives don’t because we challenge the way they think. (AD/USA)

Great advertising is produced in an atmosphere of cheerful anarchy by agencies that are owned or controlled by creative men and women who love what they do. Who truly believe that advertising works. Great advertising is not created in agencies run by numerate cynics who are obsessed with growth and shareholder value and have never had an idea in their lives. (CD/CW/UK)

Art directors and copywriters saw themselves as independent and free to experiment and they strongly associated actions of lawlessness with being ‘creative’ in their accounts. Being quirky and insecure, brash, brilliant and even untruthful and irresponsible
provided them with a level of intellectual advantage not available to account handlers, and was a form of control in that it served to keep them at arms length and outside the boundary of their decision-making activity.

5.2.4.3. Disruption

A level of ‘disruption’ was considered normal, anticipated and tolerated in meetings and in the face of rejection a natural and evolutionary part of the decision-making cycle. Informants in the Creative management sample saw the rhetorical banter and sparring between creative and creative, and account handlers as a positive force for determining performance, clarifying vision, and affecting change. The need for and acceptance of disruption was a part of their informal culture, and this was evident in their accounts:

You need people to clash with … you earn more respect. (AD/USA)

I have the most volatile relationships with the people I work with, incredibly volatile – but it is fun, I challenge them to prove me wrong. (CW/AUS)

Sometimes the pressure gets too much and it ends in a yelling match. (CW/USA)

If the blinds go down and creatives don’t listen, then we’ve lost three weeks and the client is pissed off. They do not give in until they see what they asked for. (AH/USA)

‘All creative people need something exciting to rebel against’, said Arden (2003), ‘it’s what gives their lives excitement – and it is creative people who make client’s lives exciting’ (page 11). ‘The best people can be difficult …. They are single-minded, they have tunnel vision. That’s what makes them good. They are reluctant to compromise’ (page 86). Some art directors and copywriters said that being difficult and disruptive was an effective but underhand tactic they sometimes used when they felt unable to adequately defend their work. Said one art director in Australia: ‘I’ll throw a tantrum if things don’t go my way’, suggesting in some circumstances disruptive behaviour gave him some psychological advantage over junior account handlers in particular who were ill-equipped to cope with these types of outbursts. It had the effect of causing them to withdraw or mute their objections, and thus reducing the number of decisions made about their work. When they did not have the power to change a decision in their favour, art directors and copywriters sometimes turned to destructive action and in some cases insubordination. Misbehaviour and non-compliance were perceived as legitimate actions as long as they are not destructive. ‘War stories’ of rejection dissolving into tantrums when art directors and copywriters did not get their way highlighted a culture fraught with conflict. There were informal and implicitly understood rules governing when and how far misbehaviour was to be tolerated. Significant was the fact that the most extreme exemplars came from larger
agencies with greater numbers of employees. While there is anecdotal evidence of art directors and copywriters standing their ground in competitive situations, this kind of behaviour was not evident among this particular group. At their level, they had limited control over competitive situations and did not play big time hardball because they did not have enough power to ensure these tactics would work. Said a copywriter in New York: ‘There is no room to take chances in this climate. If you piss the agency off, another job could be months away.’

As a tactic, disruptive behaviour helped minimize the corruption of standards by clients and account handlers, and simultaneously created a unitary view of creative activity and kept the myth of art directors and copywriters as creative entities alive. Kotter & Heskett (1992) similarly observed that power elites sometimes intentionally create an atmosphere of potential crisis to create a ‘living embodiment of the culture they desire’ (page 96). Hackley & Kover (2007) in their in depth analysis of creative activity in advertising agencies in New York also concluded that senior art directors and copywriters were complicit in conflict because their sense of professional identity has a substantial investment in it.

Literature on the advertising creative process frequently mentions the presence of cognitive abrasion as a necessary condition for creativity, and while it was evident that disruption is deeply rooted in agency culture, however, many informants said it masked the bigger issues of shifting alliances, reward allocation, unclear boundaries and performance anxieties caused by the lack of a clear and measurable criterion for novelty. From the perspective of art directors and copywriters, lively engagement and tolerating higher than average levels of conflict and skirmishes, inter-group arguments, battles over ideas were considered a natural and positive part of the creative culture but not agency culture. This research overwhelmingly found the art director or copywriter’s willingness to openly discuss, debate or argue a point did not willingly extend beyond the creative group.

5.2.5. Confusion over Status and Norms

5.2.5.1. Uncommon Ability
Institutionalized and ceremonial myths about ‘creativeness’ has spilled over from the arts into advertising, and been adopted by the creative community as formal knowledge. As a way of thinking it is radically different from the functionalist understanding of people who ‘buy art’ and assumes some stratification based on aesthetic taste as well as competency. Middleweight art directors and copywriters in the study in particular saw creative work as an end in itself, and the ascription and association of special ability caused them to perceive that their professional activities were somehow ‘special’.
It caused them to adopt distinctive ‘creative’ characteristics through inter-group comparison, and produce an image of their typified creative self to display the nature of the bond between them, and was evident in their speech and manner. The art director and copywriter’s aesthetic disposition towards novelty and originality shaped their perception of themselves as functioning creative entities. Allusions of special ability sometimes crept into the conversations of middleweight art directors and copywriters as a way of acknowledging the benefits the affectation and association brought in terms of status and reward. Seeing themselves as possessing a special if not unremarked ability to make novel connections and aesthetic choices related to their profession was consistent with what McFazdean describes in her hierarchical model of competencies [Figure 2: Competency levels in creative decision-making]

Filtering informant accounts through the matrices in Appendices D [Traits, Means and Motives Associated with Creative Acts] and E [Scale of Proficiencies] the following characterization of an art director or copywriter within the decision-making frame would look something like this:

They thrive on problems that are complex and abstract and where the solution cannot be anticipated in advance. They are more cognitively able than account handlers to make intuitive leaps or shortcuts and see alternatives quicker, and more intrinsically motivated to put the mental effort into judging things that are fluid, undetermined, and intuited and felt. They have an inquiring mind that appears to others as having a sense of the bigger picture. They pay heed to their inner voice and are more open to new experiences. Their tenacity, persistence drive, and obsessive mental energy to make each contribution novel, original and different in the face of significant obstacles single them out them as ambitious high achievers - tendencies and traits they share with all professional creative/entrepreneurial types. They’re willing to push boundaries because they are involved in work they love. This optimistic overconfidence sometimes causes them to make seemingly riskier decisions without considering all the consequences, and made them appear unusually resistant to the forces around them. Dedication to the job, preference for variety and adventure, risk-taking and independence is significant given the considerable challenges that the pursuit of creativity can inflict. Decisions were often expressed with feeling and appeared fast, automatic and effortless compared to those of the sometimes rational, effortful, rule-governed, detail-oriented, fact-based, ordered, patterned thoughts of account handlers.
This implied sense of ‘specialness’ represented a triumph over group recourse that happens at management level, and was a vehicle of personal power and influence in decision-making in that art directors and copywriters saw themselves as holding a position of privilege. The art director’s and copywriter’s aesthetic was the single dominant aesthetic in advertising, and account handlers at higher level of authority were obliged to define the decisions they made on their terms whether they agreed or not. By inference it made art directors and copywriters feel superior to account handlers, and according to some account handlers this sometimes suffused any rational decisions they attempted to make about the work.

Gardner (1999) points out that most major achievements are collaborative and the products of momentary group processes rather than the single insight of an individual. Some account handlers in the study said they worked hard to make the work successful but their efforts were seldom recognised or acknowledged. Some seeking to prosper from the acquisition of the art director and copywriter’s jurisdiction expressed the opinion that they could equally produce novelty if they were not prevented from doing so. While they aspired to the intrinsic rewards of the role, they seldom acknowledged the competencies art directors and copywriters are assumed to already possess, or the time and effort required in getting the job done.

The subjective ease with which some middleweight art directors and copywriters in the study imagined themselves to be creative was inversely impacted by statements of more senior art directors and copywriters who felt that the word ‘creative’ eclipsed by definition the role of important and useful resources such as logic and method. Senior art directors and copywriters interviewed inferred there was a fair amount of predictability to what they do, and that making decisions about work as it progressed involved sequential cognitive steps like any other problem-solving activity. Some informants went so far as to say that words like 'inspiration' and 'imagination' gave creative people in advertising a false sense of their own worth as well as fundamentally misrepresenting their job to outsiders:

We’re not artists … we have problems to solve. (AD/UK)

Creative people in advertising need a starting point [as opposed to artists and writers]. We need a brief to function as creative people. (AD/AUS)

I think of myself more as a problem solver than a creative person because what I produce is rarely new or insightful: I find interesting ways of saying boring things about products and invent new ways of doing it. (CD/AD/AUS)
Advertising people are sales people and they often lose sight of that. (R/AUS)

Advertising contributes to commerce and that is our part in the world. We provide services to people who provide goods and services. (AD/AUS)

I am grounded enough to know that we are just flogging stuff. By being creative we are just trying to make it more interesting for ourselves. (CD/CW/NZ)

Perceived giftedness or intentionally contrived ‘creativity’ was a useful strategy for displaying competency, particularly when art directors and copywriters and agencies alike were seeking a competitive edge. Being creative also fitted within agencies’ self-image of what good advertising was all about. Rhetoric stating that art directors and copywriters were special and highly different from other employees was important in forming the creative identity of the agency and provided the rationale for clients paying good money for their services (Alvesson, 1994; Alvesson & Koping, 1993). Creativity did not have to be executed or available to be effective, the knowledge that it was available without being seemingly used was the greatest resource of power. So what was considered creative, novel, quality or original was underpinned and exceeded by the desire for power and professional advantage.

5.2.5.2. Uncommon Goals

At their level of professional development art directors and copywriters with their highly developed cognitive skills and powerful problem solving tools and techniques and the power to define aesthetic concepts were motivated to do the job well and its own sake and this ultimately turned their focus to the art of being creative than the business of advertising. The effectiveness of what art directors and copywriters proposed could not be evaluated without money being spent on production and media, and they expected higher rates of return on the risks they took and the time and effort they expended on getting it right. This often put them at odds with account handlers, planners, creative directors and client representatives who were rewarded for delivering results on budget and on time.

I’ve been in meetings where someone has an idea and the client says, ‘I don’t like that one … that one scares me … but that idea is OK. Let’s go with that one’. Then you will see either an account person say, ‘Know what? … you’re right’. Or, they tell the creative department it has to be done this or that way… (CW/UK)

We all face the same kind of issues and are fairly interdependent on each other for success, but with frequent outbreaks of war. In part it’s the ego, in part the stress, and in part the fact that people frequently feel let down (you didn't produce the goods vs. you gave me the wrong brief or didn't sell my work). (AH/UK)
Art directors and copywriters felt clients and account handlers had little idea of what they actually wanted and that clients sometimes made decisions too quickly. They became frustrated with client’s indecisions and reservations and blamed account handlers for making the situation more complex than it was and for slowing the process:

The biggest area of disagreement is about clients. The people in large corporations don’t have the confidence to challenge the idea because they are not the people at the top. They’ll say “I love it, but I’ll never be able to sell it through.” [Account handlers] don’t want the hassle either. The best scenario for them is that the creative is picked up easily and they don’t want anything to get in the way or tensions developing in their relationship with the client. (CD/AD/AUS)

This was also documented in the studies of Hogg & Scoggin (2001), Nixon (2003) and Alversson (1998).

5.2.6. Conservatism and Risk

Challenging the status quo and pushing the boundaries was seen as not only desirable but expected in advertising agencies - more so than in standard service cultures and non-creative organizations but this did not always extend to client organisations, as the following interview excerpts show:

They [agencies] want to get work accepted to score well on the agency/client rating scale and when the stakes were high they became timeline and cost-driven and interested in process because do’s and don’ts reduced the decisions they had to make. (CW/USA)

Clients are more nervous, they want tried and tested and that is reflected in the work. (AD/UK)

Clients talk a lot about taking risks and challenging the norm but it doesn’t happen. Budgets are tighter also and the work is measured and evaluated more nowadays. (MD/AUS)

Clients have done the research. They say ‘follow this formula and it will work’. So you end up with twenty-five financial services ads a year featuring a ‘couple walking on the beach’. (AH/USA)

With most good work someone took a risk and that included the client. That is increasingly difficult to do as companies get bigger. (ECD/UK)

Everyone is terrified. The business is so large. If we lose the account, so many people lose their jobs. (CD/CW/USA)

If you say the wrong thing in a meeting or make a wrong judgment call everyone sees it and everyone’s job is in jeopardy. You are so open to criticism. (CD/AD/NZ)

Most clients are corporate people protecting their own mortgages. They mistakenly see ideas as risks rather than advancements to their careers.
Therefore their motivation is quite different from their brief. (Arden, 2003: 46)

We feel pressured into giving the client what they want. (CW/UK)

5.2.7. Resource Scarcity (Time)

Getting it right and getting it done had time dimensions as well as cognitive and social ones. The frequently noted patience of art directors and copywriters signaled a capacity to persevere with frustrating work, and their patience in the form of sustained concentration was often tested. Sennett (2009) asserts, racing the clock and the invidious comparison of speed, has trivialised craft-based work and distorted its value. Time, informants overwhelmingly agreed, had shamed, embattled, and isolated them from their craft and they felt they were losing the content of quality.

The attribution of time and its use and misuse was a surprise because it did not appear in the literature as a contributing factor, yet it was a recurring theme in informant accounts, demonstrating that influences on creative production cannot be determined unequivocally by social factors alone. It was also a recurring if unremarked theme in the findings of Hill et al. (2007) in their study of senior creatives in Australia, New Zealand and Malaysia. Time pressured art directors and copywriters in many ways and included: (1) the pressure of time on/off task; (2) shortage and loss; (3) the value of time and its acquisition; (4) doing a job well and on time, and (5) the time it took to develop expertise and for it to develop in certain social contexts. As a dimension the factor of time was too extensive to define precisely because it was impossible to reconcile or determine all these material and social consequences. It would be an interesting study to focus on alone.

(1) Time on task

Creating something original, advancing practice and mastering skills required time but Creative informants said this rarely happens in their workplace situation:

I don’t have time to cultivate my craft. There is not enough time devoted to the creative process anymore. (AD/AUS)

Sometimes we have 48 hours to come up with something. (AD/USA)

It is not easy coming up with twenty ideas. (AD/USA)

We worked on a pitch all weekend and to no avail and that is soul destroying. (AD/USA)

It demands thinking and tinkering but there is no time to mull over ideas or take weeks on a project anymore. (CW/USA)
How am I to breathe life into a brand? A storyboard in a week won’t do that… I work best under some pressure and anxiety, it focuses me, but research and tight deadlines kill creativity (AD/USA)

False deadlines and demands on the account side and pressure from nervous people in the creative department created panic. (CW/USA)

Oddly, clients don’t pay for ideas. Agencies charge for other areas such as production and project management with creative thrown in for free (unlike other creative industries) so it is in agencies’ best interest that creative work is executed fast and efficiently to make them more profitable. The workload pressure of working simultaneously on too many projects sets unrealistic creative aspirations, was also noted Verbeke et al. (2009).

(2) Shortage and loss

The substantial probability that they would fail also influenced how art directors and copywriters viewed time because what they thought was novel and valuable would end up as a compromise when there was no time allocated in the budget to do it again. Time was perceived wasted and opportunities squandered if the opportunity was not challenging and no reward was perceived (Jackson & Wolinsky, 1995).

Each time a concept was rejected and the brief changed an art director or copywriter would go back to square one in the problem-solving/decision-making process and prepare the grounds for each alternative, open up new problems, distil and reformat new information, make more intuitive leaps made between disparate thoughts and objects to stimulate fresh thinking until a problem was solved, a standards negotiated, and values resolved and reconciled. The frequently noted emotional flexibility of the advertising art director and copywriter also worked against them in that there were always more possibilities that could be summoned. The time wasted and the effect on the motivation of art directors and copywriters has been reported on earlier in this chapter.

(3) Value and acquisition

The value of time has changed considerably due to the significant changes that had taken place in the advertising profession [see 2.2. History]. Informants said agencies had become increasingly cost and timesheet-driven; clients were more demanding in terms of accountability; processes and procedures were more controlled; workloads were increasing; and the profession itself was becoming stricter and more competitive. Head offices were putting pressure on local offices to improve performance and it was becoming harder to be novel and different with so many like products on the market. There was less time, resources and opportunities to satisfy everyone’s performance needs
and goals. Informants said this caused them to spend more time managing performance expectations, chasing work and protecting their turf than being ‘creative’. Said former M&C Saatchi Melbourne creative partner Paul Taylor of this effect: ‘The traditional agency model is you spend half your time defending what you’ve got and the other half chasing what you don’t’ (The Australian, Thursday October 12 2006). Verbeke et al. (2009) in their study of creative performance in advertising agencies in the Netherlands also noted the amount of time spent on gamesmanship and politics was a distraction rather than a negative effect on performance.

(4) **Doing a job well and on time**

The expectation of having to constantly and consistently perform at such a high level made tremendous demands on not only their skills and abilities but time. Art directors and copywriters and creative directors in the study agreed it took great amounts of accumulated knowledge, time, intense and deliberate practice, mental energy and motivation to make each advertisement new, original and different within the resources available. Said one copywriter describing a line of copy he had written: ‘It all comes down to craft. It took weeks to reduce everything I know down to these few visceral and compelling words.’ They needed time, the said, to produce the best possible work, and generally felt unmotivated and frustrated when this was not made possible.

More time, informants agreed, would provide more opportunity for originality and quality to emerge and alleviate the general feeling of failure. It takes time to experiment, explore options and alternatives and make judgments and forms of preparation are essential if standards of quality are to be met. Art directors and copywriters in the study said they were willing to invest the time and effort into the things they could change, but some spoke of the futility of their endeavor and the high personal cost. This was most evident in the creative sample in New York. One art director said he had no time to enjoy the intrinsic rewards of his creative activity: ‘I sometimes question what I am doing … working weekends … not seeing my girlfriend.’ A small number of informants did not see themselves staying in the profession because they didn’t see their careers progressing in the long term.

Being engaged in creative work was hard in itself. It took a great deal of effort but was intensely satisfying in that it engaged their imagination, hand and head, technique and science, art and craft. Art directors and copywriters derived a real sense of pleasure from the labour of their painstaking efforts, and the slow working through gave them most satisfaction and sense of completeness and their work form.
The time and mental energy it took for art directors and copywriters to get it right in multinational multi-networked agencies was a longstanding issue for Creative informants. Creative work is laboriously constructed and in deliberating their work towards the standard of excellence for which they were intrinsically and extrinsically rewarded was something account handlers who were rewarded for delivering timely results didn’t always understand. Art directors and copywriters in the study said that account handlers were not always sensitive to their need for more time because the networked agency business model was not designed for slow work. Time and its misuse resonated strongly as a negative causal condition for instability in their accounts:

There is no fat anymore, the scope of work is decided upon and then you have to draw up a job number and get in costs and then the client will decide they do not want to spend the money. There is no time to mull over ideas or take weeks on a project [as there was with the commission system. (CD/AD/AUS)

Art directors and copywriters have become marginalised because margins have been squeezed. (MD/USA)

Lengthening the hours of work has resulted in fewer ideas that see the light of day. (AH/UK)

While the time frame in which they were expected to work had decreased, the time it took to get it right had not, they all agreed:

There is not enough time devoted to the creative process. (CW/USA)

The biggest area of disagreement is over deadlines because they kill creativity. (MD/AUS) (GM/AUS)

Meeting their own standards added enormous pressure on them both physically and mentally - more so than was apparent among more process-driven account handlers. High time pressures, high stakes, and increased social ambiguities were causing them to rely on intuitive thinking and to select from a finite number of alternatives, often without adequately weighing all the alternatives. Many abandoned getting it right just to get it done, and there was always a level of ‘flying by the seat of our pants’ said one informant – a dangerous precedent for art directors and copywriters who were rewarded for their performance by both their community and employer.

The drive to produce plenty and deliver on brief and on time irrespective of quality, informants said, often meant there was not enough time allocated to each job to effectively process and compute the utility of every alternative. There was a high improbability that they had perfect and complete information on each alternative at any given time, or knew all the consequences that follow each alternative in order to make a perfect, rational or
optimal decision. When time is short, alternatives can be sub-optimal, stated Heiner (1983) and Simon (1976), because the wiring of the brain makes it susceptible to certain errors and mistakes when under pressure to making decisions. Bernadin et al. (2008) similarly noted that external pressures and working on multiple projects can cause ‘mental fatigue’ in some art directors and copywriters, leading them to be fooled in predictable and consistent ways, and forcing them to adopt rules of thumb that display greater regularity than optimization. Gigerenzer & Selten (2002) suggest selecting the first option that meets a given need – or selecting the option that seems to address most needs rather than the ‘optimal’ – constitutes a satisfactory outcome in most decision-making contexts. Optimal was the goal and satisfactory unacceptable to middleweight art directors and copywriters in the study, they felt their repertoire of creative responses was becoming routinized because they lacked time to do better:

You end up relying on old solutions to problems that are different from current ones you close your mind to new ideas because you don’t have time to think of something new. (CD/AD/AUS)

Sometimes I feel like a pair of hands putting together words and pictures in the environment of an accounting firm. (/AD/AUS)

There is no time for the happy accident anymore. The scope of work is decided upon and then you draw up a job number and get in costs. (CD/AD/AUS)

(5) The development of expertise

Knowledge and skills that are generative, practical, and constructive take time and effort to establish and develop, and art directors and copywriters in the study took great pride in the maturing of their skills. But there are only so many original contributions that could be achieved within the span of a productive career, and as a consequence career age in advertising is shorter than service professions. Many art directors and copywriters worried they didn’t have enough quality work to attract rewards or an equal value pay and status in the next job. This was an overarching theme in informant accounts:

The Creative Director knows you are a good creative thinker, but you need to make something [to prove it]. (AD/UK)

Once upon a time you could get away with one good ad a year. You can’t any more, the agency business has become a very, very tough business [for a creative]. We all have to be very productive, and we can only hope the standard of work is good over big output but with so many people involved anything can go wrong. (CD/CW/AUS)

I need about four or five high profile campaigns a year to keep my book [portfolio] current. I need one signature campaign a year and not too many public failures. The less work I have produced the more desperate I become.
In one year – maybe five pieces that I am happy with – it is always a struggle. (AD/AUS)

I achieve about 30% of the time and I always feel the morning after I could have done it better. (CD/AD/AUS)

Two further unremarked time dimensions were also raised in interview. Informants said that talking to consumers today was vastly different from yesterday, and they could not always rely on past knowledge to find solutions because they were constantly expected to adapt to emerging consumer insights, as one creative director in London explained: ‘Talking to a twenty one year old about alcohol today is totally is different from ten years ago’. Keeping up with trends over the course of a productive career would require a significant amount of information to be absorbed in a finite amount of time. Nor could they always rely on the brief to stay the same, said one art director in New York: ‘Things are not set in stone and that is frustrating. Account service/planners constantly change the brief and we are already writing and rewriting and trying to distil what they say.’

The nature of creative activity also meant art directors and copywriters could not always calculate how much time and effort would be needed to reach a solution, which resulted in time-on-budget decisions being imposed, and they said they often worked beyond the hours allocated to get it right.

Tests that measure a person’s capacity to manage many problems at the expense of depth suit an economic climate that prizes speed (Arden, 2003), but art directors and copywriters generally felt account handlers and clients had to be prepared to wait until the products they brought to the table were really good. Slow time, said Sennett (2009), allows for ‘stumbling’ on the unexpected and the unforeseen and for reflection and imagination – which the push for a quick result will not. Account handlers didn’t always understand that originality was based on slow learning and on habits for improvement and required a broad time horizon (Posner, 1988; Sosniak, 1987).

5.3. Question arising from the data

Why there were so few women were put forward by recruiters in the Creative sample to speak on behalf of the group warranted attention. Of the thirty-two informants selected for interview by recruiters only two were women. The lack of diversity was noted both by the researcher and informants. Possible reasons why remain largely uncontested in the investigation because gender was not a variable. Neurological, psychological, economical and sociological explanations have been put forward in the literature, none of which are satisfactorily resolved within the scope of this investigation.
Drawing inferences about the significance of gender bias when the size of the sample was so small can wrongly assume significance, but some theories are summarized briefly below.

**Cultural stereotypes**

There is a long-standing and well-documented male domination in the advertising profession. (Hackley & Kover, 2007; Nixon & Crewe, 2004; Nixon, 2003; Feldman, 2002; Alvesson, 1998; Powell, 1997) which suggests social and cultural barriers may have impeded the inclusion of women in the sample. As the television series *Mad Men* (2008) showed, advertising men on Madison Avenue in the 1950s took on leadership and creative roles that excluded women. The making of advertisements was not generally a role ascribed to women in the 50s and 60s and there is no valid explanation why. But the sum of those early values, customs, traditions and meanings have made it difficult for women to be noticed in the creative department ever since. Hackley & Kover (2007) noted the predominantly ‘white male and middle-class’ environment of US creative departments. Nixon & Crewe (2004) wrote of the heavily masculine ‘macho’ workaholic environment of many London-based agencies. In the Australian journal *Creative Brief* (July/August 2009: 22) rankings by awards – a common measure used by agencies and art directors and copywriters to rank their performance - only five out of the top fifty art directors and copywriters in Australia ranked were women [Appendix B]. As a public display of exclusion it perpetuates the stereotype female art directors and copywriters performance is sub-optimal.

**The glass ceiling**

The ‘masculinisation’ of interests in many organizations has been a contributing factor to the perceived ‘glass ceiling’ for women (Servin *et al*., 2003, cited in Browne, 2006). Melbourne-based creative director Bernadette Doran described a glass ceiling made of ‘layers and layers of middle-aged men’ in the trade magazine *Campaign Brief* (December, 1996). Said Emma Hill from Melbourne agency Clemenger BBDO, women have the requisite skills and knowledge to do the job but that the dominance of men in the creative department creates a ‘blokey’ culture that is unattractive to many women (http://lifeatthebottom.com, January 9, 2009) and this theme resonated strongly among both male and female informants:

I don’t think this is particular to the creative department. As a matter of fact, I think women in the creative industry probably have more chance of doing their own thing and to get somewhere in their career versus women in more left-brain industries. (CD/AUS/female)
One guy said to me: “Women in advertising should be secretaries”. (AD/AUS/female)

I got to work on all the girlie accounts because I was the token girl in the creative department. It’s why you often find more women working in the retail division. (AD/AUS/female)

It is crucial that the best person wins – the sexual differences are simply irrelevant. (CD/AD/AUS/male)

**Nature versus nurture**

Browne (2006), in an article on ‘Evolved sex differences and occupational segregation’, (Journal of Organizational Behaviour, 27, pp.143-162) asserts that we cannot automatically assume that social institutions and expectations are the only barriers and that biologically sex differences need to be taken into account. A number of researchers have found that hormones influence both the development of expertise and performance (Mazur & Booth, 1998; Tremblay et al., 1998, cited in Browne, 2006). Geneticist Anne Jessel (1989) concluded after fifteen years of looking for an environmental explanation and getting zero results that differences in ability have a biological basis, suggesting we have built our so-called egalitarian society on a biological and scientific lie. The hormone testosterone makes the male brain less liable to fatigue, less distracted and single-minded and more focused by its structure than women. Male art directors and copywriters are biologically hard-wired to problem-solving while women’s capacity for concentration and application are sabotaged by the hormone estrogen that appears to suppress these specific skills and especially during the menstrual cycle (Moir & Jessel, 1989). While arguments remain divided and contentious these particular researchers were united in their argument that the brains of men and women are constructed from markedly different genetic blueprints and this makes them think differently.

Occupational measures such as the Strong Interest Inventory, Self-Directed Search and Holland Occupational Themes (RIASEC) consistently report women score higher on personal creative pursuits such as art, music and writing, verbal memory and social skills and that men’s expertise polarizes disproportionately at the abstract thinking and problem-solving end of the spectrum and around ideas, data and things, the implication being that attributes that strongly identify with creative problem-solving and innovation cannot be linked to social factors alone.

It is not because women are not capable [that they leave] but because they get fed up. (AD/AUS/female)

Women use both sides of their brain more efficiently and more effectively than men do. (CD/AUS/female)
Women by nature turn work over fast, and think fast, multi-skill, have different personalities as required. If you are employed in a high turnover agency like retail these skills are valued more. (AD/AUS/female)

Psychological androgyny

Creative researcher Ciskszentmihalyi (1996) observed that highly creative people have higher levels of psychological androgyny than the general population. Suggesting both male and female art directors and copywriters have both the strengths of their own gender and those of the other. Said the one female art director in the sample:

When I take them through an idea and when [the men in the room] have taken ownership it will be accepted. Often I have to deliver it with humour because people in advertising are largely afraid of smart women. (AD/AUS)

Based on the predominance of male art directors and copywriters in the Creative sample we could draw the inference that androgyny is biased towards men. Feminine tendencies such as emotion, insightfulness and intuition for men in the creative department would effectively double their repertoire of responses which may further exclude women already disadvantaged by history and hormones. One research study showed that women who share these androgynous characteristics are more likely to have been exposed to a higher level of testosterone in the womb (Moir and Jessell, 1989).

Self-concept

A meta-analysis of 148 studies of influence ability found women more susceptible to the social pressures within agencies than males, and more persuadable and conforming than men in group pressure situations - and more likely to doubt their judgments, suggesting this may be due to different sex roles in society (Eagly & Carly, 2008). Men’s self-concept researchers have found generally tends to centre round competitiveness, pre-occupation with dominance and superiority over others, persuasion, enterprise, self-interest, independence, hierarchy and the politics of power, preference for risk-taking (Browne, 2006; Joseph, Markus & Tarfarodi, 1992, cited in Browne, 2006). Concepts that strongly correlate with problem-solving and innovation and tend to negatively correlate with a number of stereotypically female traits, such as social affiliation, group interdependence and personal deference (Browne, 2006). Said Nancy Vonk and Janet Kestin from Ogilvy Toronto, women’s natural inclination for deference or ‘letting a confident partner do most of the talking’, the general lack of interest women have in networking and the long hours involved result in women precluding themselves or being precluded from this particular occupational setting (http://lifeatthebottom.com, June 8, 2009), and this was supported in informant accounts:
Men in the business are extremely egotistical, more so than women. Very few women want to put up with the bullshit. (ED/CD/AUS/male)

It is pure ego and image thing and that is why there are not many women at the top. They’re the thinkers, they are the ones who have left the industry and are writing books. (R/AUS/female)

From the male creative perspective, if an idea is rejected it is because the [creative director] or [account handler] didn’t have the balls to sell it through. From the female perspective, they blame themselves - that they didn’t sell their idea hard enough. (AD/AUS/female)

Research presented at the British Psychological Society in 1992 found that male students consistently exaggerated and over-estimate their abilities and intelligence compared to female students (Observer, UK, 1992). They concluded that men forge ahead thinking they are doing right whereas women constantly monitor their lives and take failure seriously. Schubert, Brown, Gysler, and Brachinger (2000) conducted experiments to challenge the stereotype that women in the finance industry were more risk averse than men when conducting financial decisions and found ‘no gender difference in risk propensities’. Risk taking, they concluded, was linked to the individuals’ own competence, or to differences in their risk perception (Schubert, Brown, Gysler, Brachinger 2000)7 and this is possibly genetically determined (Peterson, 1997). The inference to be drawn is that the lack of female art directors and copywriters in the creative department at this level may not be a matter of prejudice and discrimination, but because many women do not see themselves in this role at this point in their lives, and they choose not to go further - or do not put themselves forward:

Women don’t only concentrate on their work, but on their children, schools, and after-hours curriculum. They are not singular. (CD/AUS/female)

It is very hard in a practical sense for women. Having a family and the interruption is definitely more difficult because this is a 24-hour job. (AH/AUS/male)

Brown (2006) concludes it is likely to be women’s reactions to the field rather than obstacles placed in their way: ‘The fact that a woman can be persuaded to enter a non-traditional field does not mean that she will remain, and the more persuasive the inducement to participate in the first place, the more likely that the match will end up being less than optimal’ (page 290). Verna Allee (1997) observed similar patterns of behaviour in her account of the knowledge evolution in Silicon Valley in the 1990s.
5.4. Summary
In this part of the decision-making story, informants described how they framed and defended the choices they made and acted in a coordinated way to achieve their goals, the strategies they used to influence a decision in their favour, and the consequences of these actions. Their narrative surfaces the unconscious contracts and collusive social relations they formed with peers, creative directors, handlers and sometimes clients when the concept or solution they considered optimal was brought to the metaphorical decision-making table. Much of the rhetoric centred round the need to accommodate the standards of these stakeholders and how they resolved and reconciled their power and status differences, contested outcomes, and accepted tradeoffs to get their work approved, and especially when they were in competition with others over resources. The relationships and ties they formed were essential to convince others of their worth, and the general feeling of failure, isolation and alienation arose when they failed to get others to agree or accept their version of novelty and originality. What they felt, thought and how they behaved when confronted with the choices others made about their work was more personal when their professional integrity and social status was at risk, and this was evident in their accounts.
ENDNOTES

1 Hill et al. (2007) similarly found the need to excel was a key motivation among art directors and copywriters in their study of decision-making across cultures.


3 Jim Aitchison, ‘Lunch with Michael Ball was definitely served Hot’, Media October 31, 2003, p. 21.

4 Tendencies and traits attributed to all professional entrepreneurial types - higher general intelligence; intuition, greater ego-strength, courage and tenacity; an inquiring mind, broad general knowledge; and a sense of the bigger picture were drawn from the Generalized Expectancy of Success Scale, (GESS), Fibel & Hale, 1988.

5 Beyond production and other expenses that are easily invoiced and itemized for the client, advertising agencies include a charge for their services. This fee pays for the extensive account management, creative services, research, and media placement provided by the agency, all the hidden costs involved in the production of a quality advertising campaign, and profit margin.


CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

There is an unbridgeable gap between the logic of business management and the laws of the creative world. The art of managing a creative group is to ensure that the conditions are as conducive to good work as they can be, and only then apply the rules of efficiency. For efficiency is the enemy of originality and it can smother talent, which is of its nature non-conformist … this is a lesson which the McKinseys of this world will not learn, and perhaps cannot learn!

(Sir Dennis Forman, former Chairman, Granada Television (UK) 1984)

The statement that social context influences the choices art directors and copywriters make about what is novel and valuable in creative advertising evolved out of the researcher’s professional interest in creative group dynamics and previous work in the field. The research opportunity was unique in circumstance in that the researcher had access to many people engaged in creative decision-making activities in multinational agencies around the world at the time, and anticipated that asking them to describe the complex of social actions and cultural interactions at the most descriptive and least inferential level of decision-making would reveal previously unremarked attributes about the relationship between art directors and copywriters and the agencies they work for. The investigation set out to explore their lived experiences as they negotiated concepts and solutions they considered novel and original through the highly ambiguous creative decision-making process. The researcher wanted to know what social conditions, contexts and situations shaped the choices they made about their work as it progressed, the nature of their interactions with other decision-making groups, and how accommodating their standards influenced what they chose to put forward and withhold and why. The aim was to provide a plausible readjustment and reconstruction of decision-making activity as a route to providing an explanation of why art directors and copywriters behaved as they did in certain contexts and situations.

The research found the social context of the agency shaped their decisions in many subtle and unintended ways. It laid out the terms of engagement, the roles they and others (creative directors and account handlers) played, and prepared the ground for dispute, reconciliation and resolution of differences.

A total of sixty-seven art directors and copywriters and thirty independent commentators in major centres of advertising in the US, UK, Europe and Australasia weighed into the conversation at a deep and personal level. Interviews surfaced the behavioural features of
the setting and sometimes tapped into sensitive issues of identity and identification that engendered intense emotions and feelings of pride as well as anguish and anxiety. But informants willingly put forward their concerns because the workplace wasn’t working for them.

It was the sum of the big and small decisions art directors and copywriters made about what to put forward or withhold, to display or keep hidden, to fight for or to surrender that gave their practice form. In concluding the study the researcher offers an interpretation of the described contexts, conditions and situations that influence their behaviour [6.1.] and the consequences they bring to bear on the decisions they made [6.2.] and comes to some conclusion about the consequences art directors and copywriters bear in accommodating the standards of others.

### 6.1. Contextual Influences on Decision-making Behaviour

Few of the conditions that art directors and copywriters said they needed to make optimal decisions were available to them in multinational advertising agencies. Art directors and copywriters generally felt that the workplace conspired against them most of the time. Contexts and conditions that were external and unstable and over which they had little or no control made them feel variously uncertain, anxious, unmotivated, isolated and insecure - especially when there were implications for reward, status and recognition. Influencing factors that received the most frequent and intense rhetoric were:

1. Changing paradigms
   Their ability to create and produce original concepts and solutions to their standards has been progressively eroded by the pace of change, advances in technology, telescoping of time, resource scarcity, rigid processes and procedures, constant measurement, unrealistic benchmarking and invidious comparison, and over-skilling. All were the inevitable consequence of organisational, technological and economic change that has produced a shift that has yet to be adequately defined or resolved. As agencies have progressively become more institutionalised, art directors and copywriters feel they have less control over the fate of their creative endeavours and are unsure of their current role in the scheme of things.
(2) Standards

Standards of novelty and originality were found to be not so much standard but a motivation to keep moving forward despite the obstacles. Working to standards told others who they were by their agreed measure but masked the subtle effect of priming that went on behind the scenes. The collective exercised a dominant influence on who won and lost. Art directors and copywriters were torchbearers for the largely unspecified standards and tastes of a small number of peers who through luck or good fortune had been blessed with the support, opportunity and resources to produce concrete examples of what the community came to agree was novel and original. Group censorship kept the contributions scarce and played a critical role in how art directors and copywriters perceived themselves as creative entities. Conformity was high and in some situations to a level that made some Creative informants fearful of stepping outside their group. They didn’t have the courage to break new ground due to the self-limiting standards set by their own community. Standards served a political function by creating a culture of dependency that art directors and copywriters generally appeared powerless to resist. Breaking away had social ramifications in that their social status within the group was reduced. Their underlying expressions and styles of knowing as a consequence appeared to be so embedded (tacit) that they have come to believe that there is a right way to think, express themselves and act as part of their group. In times of uncertainty, people make conservative choices and tend to stick with the status quo, said Heiner (1983), and it was evident in the current climate of fear that there were no strong role models in creative advertising willing to stand up and say enough and pull things back the other way.

There were also choices to be made between upholding group standards, and, if survival required, co-operating at the decision-making table. Those who took the high ground on standards generally did so out of self-interest. It paid off in terms of reward when they won, but if they lost it resulted in a state of potential crisis because there was no alternative and everyone felt compromised. The constant monitoring, measuring and benchmarking battered art directors and copywriters into compliance, and by compromising on standards they felt they were losing their point of difference. They were rewarded by performance, not cooperation, and complying had long-term implications on their status within the group as well as their career progression because it was seen as ‘giving in’ to the standards of others.

Lack of progression was also a consequence of standards that were unachievable in their workplace context, and raised a number of questions: Whom do these standards serve? If they are too hard to attain are they appropriate?
(3) Uncommon goals

Uncommon goals also divided art directors and copywriters and account handlers at the decision-making table. Art directors and copywriters employed to use their specialist skills to come up with concepts or solutions expected their ideas to be approved given that they had already worked through all the alternatives at the creative problem-solving stage. Account handlers and clients viewed what they presented as work-in-progress because it was only when a concept was revealed that they could see where improvements could be made. Changes made called to question the competency of the art director or copywriter who saw these small decisions chip away at their professional integrity and the quality of their work.

(4) Access

Art directors and copywriters and account handlers hoarded information, knowledge and ideas, technology and relationships making them unavailable to the other for their advantage. Psychologists describe this as territorial behaviour and a common response to fear. Clients came for the creative but handlers kept art directors from getting too close to them. Handlers structurally aligned their decision-making levels and reporting lines to those of their clients as a route to getting closer, and excluding creatives further. There was a perception that clients who knew little about advertising could be influenced to trust their decisions. Some art directors and copywriters said that when they formed relationships and ties with clients they were better able to convince them of their worth.

Contrived creativeness and displaying their differences could also be considered a form of hoarding. It was a way of saying ‘look at me, I can be trusted and have something worthy to offer.’ It conferred legitimacy, halted questioning, displayed their differences and gave art directors and copywriters jurisdiction over the work they produced while simultaneously denying handlers access. Displaying an aversion toward account handlers who disregarded their aesthetic judgment was essentially territorial in nature and all about power and control. Handlers too hoarded resources as a way of making art directors and copywriters work harder, pitching them into competition with each other over opportunities in a winner takes all game. There was a high risk of rejection and rejection was an affront to their competency, and who won and lost became important because it tapped into matters of status and self-esteem.

The creative director’s merry-go-round of favouritism and pique, in which one art director or copywriter’s opportunity would rise and another’s would fall according to how they attentive they were to the creative directors needs kept them divided, and was another
mark of territorial behaviour. By employing mostly young men and keeping them in a state of feverish uncertainty, the creative director gained their energy without risking their power competing with his/her own. Hoarding was largely passed off as unproblematic in interviews and in much of the literature reviewed, suggesting this behaviour is deeply embedded in agency culture.

(5) Time
Advertising ideas are laboriously constructed and not the product of momentary insights, and racing the clock and the invidious comparison of speed was seen to have trivialised the work, and distorted its value, and causing it to lose the content of quality.

Why art directors and copywriters remain separated from the rest of the agency’s activity was never satisfactorily resolved within the context of the research. ‘Advertising is an odd creative business’, said one art director in New York of their social estrangement. A number of researchers and writers have also questioned why agencies have been reluctant to look at conditions that might improve their creative potential and promote it as a tool throughout the agency and with its relationships with clients (Hill et al., 2007; Deakin et al., 2006; Raider & Burt, 2006; Hogg & Scoggins, 2001; Fletcher, 1999). Given the claim agencies have on creativity, it is in their interest to understand and actively engage with the beliefs that underlie creative practice. Art directors and copywriters, however, felt that management knowledge about the conditions that would improve the chances of improving performance were far from accurate or complete. Given the lack of action, the implication drawn was that is not in their interest to change despite the possible payoff. Scientist Graeme Pearman and former head of CSIRO’s atmospheric research unit came to a similar conclusion about why people are not jumping into action about climate change, suggesting human nature actually conspires to build barriers to change.²

The six managers of local offices [Independent sample] interviewed were aware of ‘the unbridgeable gap’ between creatives and handlers, but at local level their willingness to intervene was limited because they were not autonomous in these areas of their operations. They were constrained by procedures and processes imposed by head office (and their client’s head office) in regard to how decisions should be made. The aggregate of small day-to-day decisions art directors and copywriters had to negotiate in defence of aesthetic standards were of little consequence in New York or London.

The research concluded that large networked agencies that respond to the marketing needs of economy and not a creative economy are a poor match for art directors and
copywriters who place high importance on performance derived from imagination, independence and freedom. Said another senior account handler: ‘It is not really possible to have happy, productive people AND a really efficient bottom-line focused organisation’, and this sentiment generally found support across all samples.

Beyond the rhetoric there was begrudging acceptance that major changes in conditions are needed if agencies want to be the hubs of creativity and innovation they aspire to be. Prevailing management wisdom advocates a collaborative approach based on actively managing differences and implementing processes and procedures over confronting the underlying structural issues head on. The mind enlarging its frame of reference by ‘stumbling’ on the unexpected and the unforeseen as a route to innovation is an alien concept in most process-driven organisations. However, the desire for certitude and the general climate of risk aversion will eventually undermine agencies’ economic performance. Dennis Forman (1984) stated in the opening quote at the beginning of the chapter that the possibility of innovation happening will be reduced because ‘… efficiency is the enemy of originality and it can smother talent, which is of its nature non-conformist.…’

It is interesting to note that a significant amount of recent research on advertising creativity has come from the discipline of marketing with a focus on how art directors and copywriters can be managed, guided and disciplined to produce novel and original advertisements. A paper by Bernadin et al. (2008) was one of a few to acknowledge that while time is a scarce resource in the world of business advertisers need to recognise that part of what they pay agencies for is that period of unobstructed incubation time for truly novel and powerful ideas to emerge. Kotter & Heskett (1999) also challenged the widely held notion that strong cultures enhance creative performance and found it misleading. Creative activity has never been inclusive, democratic or contained within a set of rules, and there is no evidence that it can be taught or distributed to others in a fair and equitable way. Encouraging impulse and ambiguity within realistic time frames rather than constantly pinning them down will motivate art directors and copywriters to push boundaries, but agency culture needs to be built around these actions and statements of intent if they want to be truly creative.

Conditions as they are will benefit few in the long term, and especially affected are middleweight art directors and copywriters at the metaphoric coalface in large agencies in major centres of advertising. Raider & Burt (2006) said that while monopolies may
have revolutionized the way they conduct business, they have also destroyed the traditional blueprint for creative success. Some Creative informants saw this as terminal:

The days of the creative department as we know it are over. (CD/CW/AUS)

The leaders are not here anymore to swing it [the industry] back. (CD/CW/AUS)

After 40 years in the business of creating advertising I am absolutely sure about one thing: When times are tough, publicly quoted advertising agencies become obsessed with shareholder value and creativity goes down the pan and a key tenet for their future success was suddenly withdrawn. (CD/UK)

A fundamental challenge for agencies will be to recognize that they can either facilitate or obstruct novel and original thinking. Cameron Ford (1995) speculated fifteen years ago that when all the facts were known few would want to be creative. Sternberg (1999) also called to question the viability of large agencies as so-called ‘creative’ environments because original thinking seeks to disrupt social agendas rather than advance them. While there was a lot of talk upfront about taking risks and challenging the norm, behind the scenes local office management may be sceptical about the desirability or possibility of this level of disruption for fear of drawing negative or unwanted attention from head office. High levels of original thought do not necessarily unify or sustain an organization and can put a strain on economic resources. Agency initiatives have a greater chance of succeeding when they are rooting for numbers not novelty and it would take a brave manager to stand their ground on innovation over profit. When organisations encounter difficulties after having enjoyed success, states Boxwell (1994), they often do not have the foresight to anticipate changes and fail to develop appropriate benchmarks that will ensure their future success. Which may explain why change has been incremental rather than radical – or not at all.

There is a case for art directors and copywriters as ‘knowledge-intensive’ workers becoming a social enclave to meet their own goals and objectives on their own terms, and according to their own lights. Said Raider & Burt (2006): ‘A plausible case can be made that freedom to develop one’s career may come from, rather than in spite of, boundaries’ (page 225). Work based on project assignments, self-management, and empowerment may be more ideally suited to the profile of a creative individual (Ford & Gioia, 1995). Advantage network structures that are connected to diverse and disconnected individuals and social groups offer a competitive advantage and are more autonomous (Raider & Burt, 2006). Said Bernadin et al. (2008): ‘Well managed, outsourcing can bring the best, specialised creative talent to the development of advertising’ (page 136), but caution if it
is not properly managed it can cause a misalignment of goals. There is also a strong argument that agencies do not need to own their creative any more than Hollywood studios need to own their actors, directors or writers. Long term, it would not be surprising if advertising creative moved to a fully outsourced model like Hollywood creative (Randall Rothenberg, Advertising Age Nov 5, 2001).

6.2. Behavioural Features and their Influence on Creative Decision-making

Loss of power
The backdrop of economic and social changes informants described inflamed rather than ignited problems between art directors and copywriters and account handlers the research concluded. Changes in agency structure and a downturn in the global market in the 1990s surfaced what had been bubbling beneath the surface of the relationship for years. This was further evidenced in the literature. The most significant change had been a shift in power between agency decision-making groups. Planners and handlers had the attention of the client and were defining their own version of what constituted a novel and original solution. In part, this was prompted by advertisers demanding evidence that what the agency was proposing would be effective by their measure. So the relationship between art directors and copywriters and those who advocated for the client’s interests carried clear power and status differences. Art directors and copywriters felt they were no longer in control and were expected to fall in line behind a decision on the premise that the collective heads of everyone at the decision-making table was better than that of the art director or copywriter alone when it came to optimizing results. The mere presence of others ‘meddling’ in the process and trying to achieve too many criteria was never going to be perfect or easy for art directors and copywriters and this was borne out in their accounts. The way in which both creatives and handlers spoke on the other’s behalf in interviews papered over and suppressed the dissenting voice. This is considered a common tactic in crisis communication because it reduces the fear of retribution. It made the robust debate they held in private conversations almost indistinguishable in their verbatim quotes in Chapter 5.

Homogeneity
An advertising workforce that is predominantly white, male middle-class and young raises concerns about social inclusion and loss of talent. There were distinct boundaries between copywriting and art directing twenty years ago. Art directors worked in the art studio - copywriters in the copy room. Nowadays these once separate activities are largely described as one common creative practice, thus proving that changes can be
made without any significant loss of distinction. Researchers generally agree that a highly cohesive decision-making groups are easier to manage and control (Hoffman & Lintern, 2006; Cushner & Brilin, 1996; Heider, 1983) raising the possibility that a homogenous team of art directors and copywriters are more likely to reach novel solutions (as opposed to original) more quickly and harmoniously. Despite the appeal of homogeneity in large agencies, Amabile (1996) points out different perspectives can liberate thinking. Diversity in social background, age and gender may become increasingly important in maintaining the same kind of productive tension in future. Diversity may be harder to manage from an efficiency perspective, but the alternative is a culture characterised by groupthink and this sets a dangerous precedent for agencies that earns their living from new and novel ideas.

The reasons why there were so few women put forward to speak on behalf of their peers remains largely uncontested in this investigation. The lack of diversity in this particular group of middleweight art directors and copywriters makes them more compliant to the needs of management, the research concluded. A considerable amount of research exists on group behaviour and dynamics, but the described actions and events may add to a future survey investigating relationships between coping style, age and gender in decision-making contexts in advertising. Further testing of cause and effect could actually question the validity of the explanation generated in 5.3. [Question Arising from Data].

‘Homogeneity’, states Heiner (1983), ‘taps into our deep social identification mechanisms and can be a dangerous trap in decision-making in that people don’t think outside the group.’ The risk is that no new thinking emerges to keep the group moving forward. This was strongly evident in informant accounts and raised the question: If art directors and copywriters really prize autonomy then why do they not stand up and take the lead?

**Lack of openness**

A lack of openness to collective life was an aggravating cause for conflict. The picture art directors and copywriters painted of themselves was of a tightly knit group isolated from outside influences, converging rapidly toward a ‘correct point of view’ and thereafter being convinced both of their own rectitude and of the inferiority of all competing opinions. Brown, (1989) warns this is exactly the opposite of what should characterize good decision-making process. Howard Gardner leader of The GoodWork Project at Harvard University attributes lack of openness to groups not communicating standards explicitly, and from his observations concluded standards comprehensible to non-experts raised the quality in the organization as a whole. If art directors and
copywriters want to thrive and survive as an artist/craftsman in a commercial setting, it is important for them to develop appropriate rhetorical strategies and forms of symbolism in which the distinct claims about their activities can be brought forward and made clear and credible to others. Developing orientations that are strictly knowledge-based rather than standing behind ambiguous statements of desirability and ability that clearly have no traction with account handlers and clients any more is a step in the right direction. Their expertise will come to be valued to the extent that privileged agencies will be willing to invest in and harness their insights. Then we may legitimately ask how they became effective and whether these abilities can be developed in others?

**A willing workforce**

The advertising industry works on the premise that if they make their profession look fun, exciting and sexy then a willing workforce will come. Nowadays, it is a harder, tougher business and if the experiences of this particular cohort are a measure – those who come may not stay. They were willing to work harder and longer to prove to themselves and others that they had what it takes, and their agencies gratefully harnessed this energy to their advantage, but it raises questions about selection based on exploitability not on competency. This particular cohort wanted good jobs, reward and security, but they were cynical enough to see how little their effort to reach the high ground reaped in terms of reward. Some volunteered that they would trade salary, title, security and promotion for more leisure time and expanded lifestyle options. Taxing or exceeding their resources they said was endangering their emotional well-being. This challenges the prevailing notion that creatives can and will change along with the prevailing trends.

Art directors and copywriters were also complicit in their own circumstance. Isolating themselves psychologically and physically by contrived specialness makes them vulnerable to exploitation and defection. They were driven by the possibility that they might succeed, and the slight brush with creative fame and the promise of the occasional opportunistic chance to show off their creative talents kept them willing and compliant despite the obstacles. Paradoxically, anecdotal evidence suggests that they rarely achieve the same level of achievement if they defect to other fields - and few do. Said one copywriter in London echoing the sentiment: ‘Art directors and copywriters live and die in advertising’, he attributed this to the slight inferiority complex art directors and copywriters have about the marginal nature of their creative work.

The central challenge for agencies now is how to keep middle-level art directors and copywriters long enough in the field to develop appropriate levels of expertise to ensure
their future success. The looming problem they face is a potential talent drain if conditions do not improve. Making art directors and copywriters feel dispensable and exploitable risks losing the best to other creative industries that are less structured and more amenable to their ways of working. One way out of this impasse, Sennett (2009) suggests, is for agencies to value them for what they do rather than what they can do for them.

6.3. Limitations

In decoding decision–making, justice has not been done to all of the elements. It was impossible to make all the connections and as a consequence the narrative is as broad as it is deep. The many unrelated elements rendered decision-making a difficult concept to define. Ironically, the ambiguity inherent in decision-making activity and the frequently noted aesthetic disposition of art directors and copywriters were the only enduring and non-speculative elements. For many arguments there were asymmetric ones. Others remain unresolved. There were issues art directors and copywriters raised worthy of more attention. For example, there would be benefit in knowing if the results would have been the same if sampling had been more inclusive in terms of age, gender, discipline and nationality. And a fuller picture of creative decision-making would be gained from having account handlers talking alongside art directors and copywriters because there are dangers in concluding that what art directors and copywriters said was the only remaining possibility of truth because account handlers were not heard.

At the time fieldwork commenced in 2001, significant changes were taking place that were to fundamentally change the way art directors and copywriters work. They included an increase in the reliance on research tools to evaluate creative effectiveness, reduced advertising budgets, and the growth in new media technology. In reflecting back over informant accounts, the researcher realised that by talking up their circumstance in such an open and frank way they too were coming to terms with their own future, and this adds incrementally to the knowledge base and may be a useful reference point for future researchers choosing to harness these insights.

It is impossible to collect every bit of information that might ultimately be of value because a researcher cannot fully identify and measure the full context of a working life from interviews. No two experiences are the same and no single method grants privileged access to this kind of truth. Independent variables such as rate of change, time frame, sense of place and the continuing evolution of the cohort could not be minimized nor completely accounted for, and it was therefore difficult to conclusively link effect to
a cause. It feels like the surface of the relationship between the art director and the agency has just been scratched and if the study has any value compared to numerical studies, it is rich in voice and description.

Justice has not been done to the wealth of interview data collected. Further studies could be drawn from this material, in particular the full range of differences between decision-making groups and the dynamic between novices and experts.

The significant time span between fieldwork and the writing up of the results was an initial concern given the changes that have taken place in the advertising profession. From the researcher’s knowledge of the current advertising industry, it is proposed that how art directors and copywriters frame decisions and choose to respond has not changed significantly because defending one's territory is social behaviour and bounded by self-interest and control when under threat (Heiner, 1983). This makes cause and effect stable and predictable to the point that the representation could be of any organizational group in conflict with a few contextual modifications.

While attitudes linked to particular socio-cultural contexts can shift and move over time and cluster around particular periods and geographic locations (Simonton, 2001, 2003; Csikszentmihalyi; 1999; Charness & Gerchack, 1996), the researcher did not find significant holes in the original data between interviews (2001-2003) and writing up the findings that would alter the outcome. The researcher believes that any further testing of cause and effect would actually question the validity of the explanation generated (Cook, 1983) and presupposes that the findings are valid for this group within the time in which the study took place.

6.4. What Now?

Accounting for the quintessentially social nature of creative activity in agencies with representative creative voices at the forefront of the conversation challenged the taken-for-granted assumptions about what is central, distinctive and enduring about the relationship between art directors and copywriters and the agencies they work for. The ultimate value of this ‘inside window’ on creative work is that can help to resolve problems created by new developments and makes it a useful addition to other types of knowledge about advertising. It might be perceived as useful to art directors and copywriters willing to harness its insights to advance their future employment prospects and for agencies wanting to make necessary interventions.
Multinational multi-networked agencies typically benchmark the performance of their local offices on dimensions of better, faster, and cheaper. The research found the one-size fits all strategic planning model based on quality, time, and cost value does not work because creating better and quality in the creative department has a longer time dimension. Bernardin et al. (2008) similarly concluded that compartmenting the creative process into levels of approval assured a poor outcome, and this was consistent with the findings of this research. One improvement that might ensure the future success of art directors and copywriters as creative entities would be to benchmark their performance against best practices for creative improvement. The answers will inevitably be the result of future research that will more convincingly address these concerns, but it does raise the inevitable question of what kind of conditions are likely to improve the capacity for new and innovative thinking? In talking up their own condition, a number of informants had a clear picture of the agency they wanted to work for fixed firmly in their sights. The following description emerged unprompted from their accounts. As a model the researcher makes no claim on its representativeness other than it was the product of this group of art directors and copywriters at this particular time:

*The 'mothership' model would be abandoned. The agency would be smaller, more knowledgeable, and have a great creative reputation. Management would provide them with clear goals and strategic direction. Procedures would be structured in a way that gives them control over how they approached a task. Performance outcomes would be clear and objective. They would have direct access to confident and brave clients who desired and supported 'great' work. They would be involved in the early planning stages and work collaboratively with networks of people who shared the same goals and interests and who supported their efforts. There would be less approval levels and they would have control over the decisions made. Creative managers would replace creative directors. Creative directors would guide the creative. Account handlers would be creative and credit would be shared. Greater ownership derived from intellectual capital would fast track them along their career path. Small task related groups who desired to do good work and were in touch with each other’s skills would work together on good briefs offering high visibility. When a concept had been realised management would steps out of the way and allow it to survive. Account managers would never, never have lunch with clients or take them on cruises and would be motivated to sell the work on behalf of the creative. Resources, facilities, time and rewards would be outcome oriented, equitable and related to their status.*
The general perception among informants was that successful smaller agencies were more open to oddity and thought in larger units of time rather than rigidly applying rules and this was also supported in the literature. They provide more freedom and responsibility to tolerate rather than punish mistakes and afford more opportunities to work on motivating tasks to a higher level, and have progressive ideas and procedures for managing innovation (Henry, 2001; Naisbitt, 1994) add: ‘Imaginative sensitivity’, said Bernadin et al. (2008), ‘is important to avoid the danger of ‘strategic convergence … which leads to a lack of distinctiveness’ (page 144). ‘Potential talent’, Deakin et al., (2006) add ‘will not be fully realised in a milieu that discourages the corresponding domain of achievement’ (page 328). Encouraging middleweight art directors and copywriters in particular to explore ideas and try something different in a culture where they feel secure and where they are not punished belongs ‘to the philosophical concept of art than to the social fate of the work and social conditions of their production’, states Adorno (1991: 64). Until this is realised, just getting it done will always feel like a compromise to the art director and copywriters in advertising.

ENDNOTES


2 Heating up the planet: climate change and security. Professor Alan Dupont, Dr Graeme Pearman, Lowy Institute paper 12, 2006.


4 Despite no major breakthroughs creative knowledge is being moved forward incrementally. It took Hippocrates, Aristotle, Darwin and many others before Oxford scientist Bryan Sykes (2001) to solve an evolutionary mystery through examining DNA in 1989.
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APPENDICES


B Campaign Brief. Creative Rankings – Creatives, July-August 2009

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D Traits, Means and Motives Associated with Creative Acts

E Scale of Proficiencies

F Attribution Matrix

G Sample Summary
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Abstract
Master of Arts (Advertising - Creative) RMIT University, 1997

The Relationship Between Environment and Outstanding Creative Performance in Advertising

This thesis examines the phenomenon of outstanding creative performance in advertising. The creative directors from the top ten gross billing agencies in Melbourne were asked to name five creatives currently working in advertising in Melbourne who they considered outstanding. All names were weighted and the ten highest ranking were subsequently interviewed. It became apparent during data collection that further interviews were necessary to verify and validate the results and to add greater perspective to the study. Ten well-known industry commentators and ten randomly selected respondents were thus interviewed. From these forty interviews, a model was built of an outstanding creative in advertising and tested.

A number of significant influences on creativity emerged from the data, the most significant being environment. The relationship between the outstanding creative and environment was thus examined as a means of explaining the phenomenon and became the focus of the study.
## APPENDIX B

Campaign Brief 2009 Creative Rankings

### 2009 CREATIVE RANKINGS

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<td>9. Leo Burnett</td>
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## APPENDIX C

**Summary of Research into Creative Activity (1952 - present)**

### Table 1: Major Research Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Supporting Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measurement</td>
<td>There are reliable tests of cognitive ability that lead to creative output.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Welsh 1959; Parnes &amp; Harding 1962; Goldman 1964; Torrance 1968; Perkins 1981; Wallack 1976; Boden 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Traits and characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>Physical space and emotional blocks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hallman 1963; Pels &amp; Andrews 1966; Hennessey &amp; Amabile 1995; Parnes &amp; Harding 1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neurological</td>
<td>Cognitive, neurological Creative processing and problem-solving, approaches to creative thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motives and Means</td>
<td>High levels of mental energy to complete a task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amabile 1988, 1989; Gardner 1993; Pelz &amp; Andrews 1996; Csikszenmtihaly 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Forms of preparation are essential for the development of creative expertise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amabile 1983, 1988; Csikszenmtihaly 1995, 1996; Gardner 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>Creative people have no more general intelligence than the general population.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2: Major Contributors by Discipline 1960-present

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Supporting Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisational</td>
<td>Creativity is influenced by social change, commercial imperatives and economic applicability</td>
<td>Amabile 1983, 1988, 1995, 1996; Brass 1995; Bjorkgren 1995; Conger 1995; Damanpour 1995; Csikszenmtihalyi &amp; Sawyer,1995; Sternberg &amp; Lubart 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Supporting Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>It can’t be taught</td>
<td>Principles can be learned</td>
<td>Barron 1958, 1969, 1981, 1995; Gruber, Terrel &amp; Wertheimer 1962; Perkins 1981; Amabile 1983; Alkin 1984; Woodman 1995; Ford 1995; Csikszentmihaly 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence, past experience and creative expertise are interrelated</td>
<td>Almost all researchers agree IQ can be used to predict creativity</td>
<td>Guilford 1950; Getzels &amp; Jackson 1962; Sternberg 1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are personality traits peculiar to creative individuals</td>
<td>Self-absorbed, egotistic, lacks sensitivity to others, has a preference for disruption</td>
<td>MacKinnon 1962; Barron 1969; Gardner 1993; Csikszentmihalyi 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a relationship between creativity and performance</td>
<td>Seeks self-promotion</td>
<td>Pelz &amp; Andrews 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance is influenced by environment</td>
<td>Seeks self-promotion</td>
<td>Gardner 1993; Csikszentmihalyi 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity is a neurological ability</td>
<td>There is agreement that logic and creativity are two different mental processes generally in conflict</td>
<td>Welsh 1959; Parnes &amp; Harding 1962; Goldman 1964; Torrance 1968, 1995; Gardner 1984, 1993</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**APPENDIX D**

Traits, Means and Motives Associated with Creative Acts

| Table 1: Behavioral Traits that Facilitate Motives Associated with Creative Acts |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| **Traits**                     | **Descriptions**                | **Supporting Research**          |
| Flexible                       | Explore alternatives under conditions of ambiguity. Feel comfortable when faced with situations that are ambiguous and ill-defined. Mental flexibility allows them to withhold judgment and shift their perspective on a problem, and tolerate ambiguity. Open to new experiences. | Mumford and Gustafson 1988; Henry 2001; Rothenberg 1990 |
| Energetic                      | There is a relationship between levels of performance and ability. Have vast amounts of mental energy. Expend effort in the production of work. Make each contribution original and different. | MacKinnon 1962; Peters & Waterman 1982; Henry 2001; Rothenberg 1990 |
| Strong self-image              | Strong creative self-image. Confident in their ability to produce creative solutions to significant problems as part of every day activity. High internal locus of control. | Pelz 1967; MacKinnon 1962, 1970; Andrews 1965; Gardner 1993 |
| Creative Personality           | Behavioral characteristics: dominance, introversion; autonomy. People who are good at decoding nonverbal cues are better adjusted, less hostile and manipulating, more interpersonally democratic and encouraging, more extraverted, less shy, less socially anxious, warmer, more empathic, more cognitively complex and flexible, more popular, seen by others as interpersonally sensitive, able to judge these abilities in others. | Barron & Harrington 1981; Mumford et al. 2002; Kabanoff & Bottger 1991 |

| Table 2: Means that Contribute to the Occurrence of Creative Acts |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| **Means**                   | **Description**                | **Supporting Evidence**          |
| Education/Training          | Training adds to expertise in the domain. High test scores indicate vocational not creative ability. Education up to Masters degree leads to higher levels of creativity. Intelligence, past experience and creativity are inter-related. Preference for autonomy not deference in learning style. Less attracted to formal training, and less likely to do well. Ideational fluency and attention to cues can be taught. Train certain personality types to withhold judgement. | Guilford 1950; Barron 1958; Gruber, Terrel & Wertheimer 1962; Getzels & Jackson 1962; Perkins 1981; Amabile 1983, 1989, 1995; Alkin 1984; Simonton 1984; Sternberg & Lubart 1995; Sternberg 1985; Woodman 1995; Csikszentmihalyi 1996; Sternberg & Davidson 1976; Ford 1995; MacKinnon 1967; Kabanoff & Bottger 1991 |
| Intuition                   | Prefers intuitive impressions to direct sensory perceptions. | MacKinnon 1970; Gardner 1995 |
**Social competence**

Is capable of effective behavior in social circumstances.
Intense and rewarding social lives
Social monitoring of needs


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**Table 3: Genius and Myth-making**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Debunking mystery and myths</td>
<td>Gardner 1984; Weisberg 1986; Boden 1992; Harth 1993; Ford 1995</td>
</tr>
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</table>

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**Table 4: Methods of Improving Creativity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
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## APPENDIX E

### Scale of Proficiencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art Director/Copywriter</th>
<th>Creative Director, Senior Art Director or Copywriter</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need for achievement. High levels of motivation. Career on the ascent. Demand public recognition and reward for task related activities.</td>
<td>Distinguished or brilliant art director or copywriter, highly regarded by peers. Less need for recognition or acclaim. Demonstrate what they will do rather than what they <code>can do</code>. Have knowledge and experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have knowledge and some experience.</td>
<td>More reflective on their thought processes and methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence-as-reasoning and working memory is important to the development of expertise.</td>
<td>Evaluate the end game position. Reflective of their position in the hierarchy and ongoing career developments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work is a substantive focus and important to their lives in which they are willing to invest time and effort.</td>
<td>Involved in deliberate practice. Demonstrate ability rather than potential. Focus on getting tasks completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in deliberate practice. Demonstrate ability rather than potential. Focus on getting tasks completed. Tactical and reactive in threatening situations.</td>
<td>Know their performance potential and in a variety of forms and ways. Skills become more problem-attuned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generates and responds to potential opportunities by planning but uses fluid reasoning (inductive) to solve problems.</td>
<td>Strategic and proactive in threatening situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not know how far boundaries can be pushed. Less encumbered by systems and structures. Want to make their mark on the world on their terms.</td>
<td>Superior ability to monitor situational awareness. Grasp quickly the significance of information and have increased levels of strategic expertise. Prior experience makes them notice things novices do not and enables them to skip steps in solving problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptual limits are constrained by balancing attention and awareness.</td>
<td>Know how things work and how to get things done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presents large number of options that lack relevance to the solution.</td>
<td>Recognize leverage points as opportunities for making critical change. Understand the significance of information and the dynamics of a situation more rapidly. Present relevant relations before generating alternative courses of action when things are going wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialized.</td>
<td>Acculturated. Organize knowledge in conceptual sets and articulate superior knowledge at a more advanced abstract level.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Works under the supervision of a creative director but can perform daily tasks unsupervised.</td>
<td>Works autonomously.</td>
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Source: Adapted from Sennett, 2008; Hoffman, 1998; Sosnia, 2006; Hunt, 2006; Ericsson et al., 2006; Feltovich et al., 2006; Hinds et al., 2001; Chi et al., 1988
APPENDIX F
Attribution Matrix

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<th>ACCOMPLISHMENT</th>
<th>SUPPORT</th>
<th>ENCOURAGEMENT</th>
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| MOTIVE     | PROFESSIONAL |             |         |               |              |
|            | CULTURAL     |             |         |               |              |
|            | SOCIAL       |             |         |               |              |
|            | BEHAVIOURAL  |             |         |               |              |

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APPENDIX G
Sample Summary

Position legend: CW = Copywriter; AD = Art Director; CD = Creative Director; ECD = Executive Creative Director; AH = Account Handler; SAD = Senior Account Director; MD = Managing Director; R = recruiter; GM = General Manager

Creative sample

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