



“Anything you can do we can do better”

An exploration using the method of grounded theory  
into whether successful creative dyadic teams share  
any characteristics with one another.

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.

CJane Berney

July 2012

## Acknowledgements

When I took my first job as a juniour copywriter, I assured my disillusioned mother that at some point I would fulfil her earnest wish for me to go to university. This thesis is dedicated to her.

This work would not exist without the relentless belief and illumination of my supervisor. Nor would it be in professional form without the patient IT skills of my husband.



## Abstract

Until the 1950s, advertising agencies followed the creative model based on the individual skill sets whereby the creators of the advertising, the copywriters and art directors functioned as separate entities. This model changed in the late 1950s when Bill Bernbach proposed that by combining these two skill sets – copywriting and art direction - creative and organisational outcomes could be improved (Levenson, 1987). Over the ensuing decades the dyadic “team” approach has been adopted by advertising agencies around the world.

While group and team work occurs in many professions, the dyadic “team” relationship seems to be unique to the advertising industry. In other commercial sectors, professionals work individually, developing their careers without relying on the attributes of the dyadic team. In the advertising industry, they function as a unit, are frequently hired as a “team”, and may work exclusively with each other for a number of years.

Why do the majority of agencies continue to seek out, support, celebrate, reward and sometimes almost deify creative teams? This research seeks to explore whether successful creative dyadic teams have any characteristics in common. In the context of advertising creativity, is there any validity in the suggestion that “anything you can do we can do better”?

I harbour no expectation that a list of secret ingredients will be uncovered during the course of research, but rather seek to explore and better understand the composition of the team and how it functions. What seems important is what occurs during the process of the team members working together, as their individual beliefs, values, and assumptions intersect within the creative environment and practice.

This qualitative research into dyadic teams uses semi structured interviews with the participants, contextualized by ethnographic observations of their environment, organisation and agency peers. Using grounded theory, themes within the data have been identified, analysed and discussed.

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## Chapter One: Smoke and mirrors and double acts

The aim of this research is to explore the characteristics of successful creative teams in the advertising industry in New Zealand over the past twenty five years. I will achieve my purpose by conducting a finely nuanced analysis of the relationships in several dyadic teams working in the industry and this exploration will allow me to understand the interplay of team members in the environment of their creative work.

This research is significant because it scopes a field of New Zealand work that appears to have limited research, and furthermore in holding a mirror up to the advertising industry offers insights to the practitioners within it, while contributing to the expanding knowledge of the way that creative teams work.

### 1.1. Background to the research

This section serves to situate advertising and its practitioners within culture. Advertising is reflexive in that it is seen to reflect, absorb and return the culture to its constituents. Popular culture or “entertainment that is produced by the cultural industries, composed of symbolic content, mediated widely, and consumed with pleasure”(Fowles, 1996.p.11) informs advertising and advertising is informed by that culture: the two are inextricably connected as they both feed and serve one another.

The practitioners who are making and circulating advertising texts are identified in Nixon’s (2003) discussion of advertising creatives as “cultural intermediaries” and “taste shapers” in a post modern culture (p. 26). For the purposes of this thesis I shall rely on the term of “cultural intermediaries” as it seems to more clearly reflect the proactive nature and participation of the creative person in advertising and their influence on popular culture. In my experience, the term “creative managers” seems to portray someone less involved with and unconnected to the ideation and creative process whereas cultural intermediaries are actively involved in the process of cultural production and consumption. For instance, advertising creatives function as cultural intermediaries when they produce such iconic examples of the art as the “1984” Apple Macintosh tv commercial in America inspired by George Orwell’s “1984” ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhsWzJo2sN4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhsWzJo2sN4)). This advertisement’s single screening launched the Apple brand internationally and is seen in the industry as a benchmark against which creative work continues to be measured today. It was produced by a film

director<sup>1</sup> and its 60 second length and production values placed it in the genre of advertising as film (Twitchell, 2000). New Zealand is not without similarly creative advertisements that reflect aspects of culture to participants within the culture. For instance, a local creative director is understood to have soaked up both the beer and the local culture in pubs, and through this informal research captured mannerisms, colloquialisms, beliefs and stories to weave into the memorable Toyota television commercials. The campaign reflected New Zealanders to themselves in a way that both celebrated and situated them, tapping into the national psyche of the time.

As the examples above demonstrate, advertising creatives function as cultural intermediaries when they tap into popular culture (Hovland & Wolburg, 2010) in this way. Sometimes, cultural intermediaries create new trends that the culture may adopt. For instance, Ogilvy (1983) broke the American taboo of showing women drinking alcohol and the American beer “Budweiser’s” campaign introduced the phrase “wassup” so firmly into everyday speech that it is now part of the American lexical landscape (personal communication, 2011).

Schudson’s (1984, p. 214) theory of “capitalist realism” views advertising agencies as organisations who present an ideal of society, glorifying the “pleasures and freedoms of consumer choice” (p. 218) within the context of capitalism. A contrasting view is that advertising is a capitalist machine designed to manipulate naive consumers to separate them from their money (Fowles, 1996; Twitchell, 2000). Van Maanen (2010, p.240) posits that “the shameful truth of any research trade is that we traffic in communications and communications implies that we intend to alter the views of our readers”. While Van Maanen is referring to research, this view could also be applicable to the objective of advertising in that those who create the messages are intending to alter the views of their readers and consumers.

Cronin (2004, p. 73), however, does not view advertising as having the same degree of influence on culture and consumer behaviour as Van Maanen does and suggests therefore that advertising practitioners’ understanding of their industry may be viewed as “promotional beliefs and invested understandings which apprehend advertising as an ideal rather than as a mirror or distortion of the social”. These diametrically opposed views reflect the complexity of the advertising industry, which polarises, engulfs, and at times, illuminates its constituents and society. Bilton’s (2007, p. 146) view of the consumer as an “active collaborator in the creation of meaning and values” imbues the

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<sup>1</sup> Ridley Scott – much awarded film director of films including “Alien”.

consumer with more participation and discretion. This position aligns with the idea attributed to Ogilvy (1978) that the consumer is not an idiot.

#### **1.1.1. “Will you be mine?”**

Each year between 20 and 30 of my students, having completed their Bachelor of Communication Studies, attempt to enter the advertising industry as “cultural intermediaries” (or, to use the industry terminology, “creatives”) who have chosen roles as either copywriters or art directors. Informal class discussions show that these students are motivated by their ability to generate ideas, a passion for advertising, adeptness with language, as well as an attraction to what appears to be a glamorous and enthralling industry. No matter what drives these students into seeking creative roles, the challenge that each faces is that of working in a team of two. In relation to teams of two I use the word “challenge” advisedly, because multitudes of perceived faults can be overlooked when they are dispersed through larger groups, whereas problems caused by the one other member of a team cannot be avoided. Through the prior two semesters of the academic year I have observed the students size each other up and select team mates for their creative assignments. Based on imperatives from the industry, we understand that advertising agencies are seeking creative teams composed of copywriter and art director. Young creatives determined to enter the industry understand that two things will make them stand out: first, that they have a portfolio of work that distinguishes them from the competition, and, second, (and possibly more importantly) that they have already found a compatible and talented team-mate.

#### **1.1.2. Together, at last**

While the dyadic team model has been in practice in the advertising industry for over 50 years, the original model was based on the individual skill sets of the copywriters and art directors functioning as separate entities in creating of the advertising (Nixon, 2003). In some cases they would work on different floors of the agency, having only minimal contact with each other. The writers would craft the words or copy, and the completed text would be passed on to the art directors who would add design, illustration or photography to complete the advertisement. Collaboration was not at that point a strategy in ideation. This model of skill separation changed in the late 1950s when Bill Bernbach, the legendary co-founder of the American advertising agency Doyle Dane Bernbach, proposed that by combining the two skill sets of copywriting and art direction, that creative and organisational outcomes could be improved (Dru, 1997; Levenson, 1987; Nixon, 2003;

Veksner, 2010). One of the earliest records of this development was noted in an interview with one of Bernbach's peers, George Gribbin, founder of Young and Rubicam USA who recalled that "it wasn't pictures separated from copy, it was all mixed together," (Higgins, 2003, p. 56). Over the ensuing decades the dyadic team approach has been adopted by advertising agencies around the world, and by the mid 1970s it was the accepted practice in Britain (Nixon, 2003).

### **1.1.3. Immersion therapy**

I come to this research with more than 35 years of experience as a copywriter in the advertising industry. This history has influenced my approach to my research in three ways. First, it is part of an advertising creative's mandate to both interpret and create meanings around products and services. Second, as Nixon (2003) has suggested, lived experience of the products must inform an advertising creative's work such that a phenomenologically based analysis embracing Deetz' three principles: knowledge, subjectivity and language (as cited in Littlejohn & Foss, 2008, p.36) seems a natural pathway for this research. Thirdly, as a communication practitioner, I seek the rich descriptive nature of language with its meanings and metaphors, and this too has guided the direction I have taken in this "cultural study of one's own people" (van Maanen, 1988, p. 106).

Because of my credibility as a former practitioner, I asked the research participants to trust me with the intimacy of their dyadic relationships, and to "confess" (Geertz, 1973, p.346) parts of their lives as creative teams. I need to make transparent that in my experience as an advertising creative many of us learned to view quantitative research as the diminisher of fresh ideas. The account service team would present research statistics that seemed to constrain rather nourish innovative thinking. The truths that I am seeking will be mined from qualitative data comprised of informal semi-structured interviews, rather than analysis of numerical data which I feel is less capable of conveying the subtle nuances that exist in both verbal and non-verbal communications between the dyadic team members.

### **1.1.4. Out of my hands**

My first job as a copywriter was as a junior assigned to work with Adam<sup>2</sup> a junior art director at the world's oldest advertising agency, Leo Burnett. Adam<sup>2</sup> and I worked well together but it is fair to say that we behaved more like children in a kindergarten than the creative director, who was our line manager, might have been aware of. The creative

director probably set about establishing an environment that seemed like a play room. It was a non-competitive environment designed to nurture our creativity and our development (Nijstad & Paulus, 2003). We felt comfortable tapping into our imaginations as we tackled our first creative briefs. It seemed that the trust that we shared with each other enabled personal disclosure and this in turn taught us the importance of trust in the dyadic team, a factor that is acknowledged by practitioners (Nixon, 2003; Veksner, 2010).

My second experience in a creative team was the antithesis of the one shared with Adam<sup>2</sup>. I was recruited on my own, a practice that occurs less frequently than does the hiring of teams. As I recall, I had little concern as to what would happen to Adam<sup>2</sup>, my incumbent art director. We remained friends, and over the decades he forged a career as an award winning illustrator, so I do not feel that our separation hindered any creative achievement on his part. My next art director was an anxious designer named Byron<sup>2</sup> and through my time with him I came to appreciate how I had worked with Adam<sup>2</sup>. There was a friction that was indefinable but enough to curb my inclination to share ideas with Byron<sup>2</sup>. The relationship felt unstable and I neither felt sure of him nor experienced the natural trust that I had shared with Adam<sup>2</sup>. Despite being officially designated as part of a team with Byron<sup>2</sup>, I began working on my own. I cannot attribute fault to either of us because the necessary ingredients of a fruitful partnership were not there and therefore we could not build a connection that allowed us to work together successfully.

#### **1.1.5. When a hero comes to town**

My third early career milestone occurred when I encountered what I have come to call and will refer to in future chapters, the “hero relationship”. I was still a junior copywriter when I was hired to work with Claude<sup>2</sup> an art director whose reputation as an award winning, eccentric creative character (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996) preceded his return to New Zealand.

Over a period of fifteen years my respect for and trust in my creative partner developed. While he was senior in both experience and years, Claude<sup>2</sup> did not make me feel inferior in any way. This approach enabled a trusting environment in which I felt I could share my ideas with him, without fear of negative reaction. While we had many volatile confrontations over creative work, in the majority of cases the result was an improved product. We shared time together socially while managing our own personal relationships which saw Claude<sup>2</sup> marry and have a son while we continued our professional partnership

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<sup>2</sup> Art director's names have been anonymised



across three different agencies. His wife had worked in an aligned industry and therefore she had an understanding of the complex demands of an advertising creative's life.

The experiences of dyadic teams that I have recorded from my own career contextualise and validate the concern of the research which is expressed in the research question that follows in the next section.

## **1.2. The research question**

Having worked within and also having coached, taught and supported creative teams over the past 30 years, my abiding interest is the interplay between the team members and the elements that constitute the relationship. I may surmise, based on experience, that trust is a critical element in successful teams, yet I cannot prove it. I could propose that having sympathetic interests serves to strengthen the rapport within a dyadic team, or that shared life experiences enhance the durability of a team, but I could be a lone voice. And furthermore my voice could be wrong. These philosophical musings form the overarching question which is the basis of my research for this thesis: “‘Anything you can do we can do better’. What are the characteristics of successful creative teams in New Zealand advertising agencies?”

My interest touches on the factors that contribute to those teams who function well together, and those who clash. This extends to the differences between dyadic teams who fail, and those who succeed in their professional endeavours. I have experienced both and while in retrospect could identify some of the markers, I am certain that I could not have accurately forecasted the relationship outcome of any of the dyadic teams I have worked within. My questioning leads me to consider whether there are identifiable similarities or reliable factors that might be present in dyadic teams. To uncover these characteristics will, for my part in the development of advertising creativity practitioners, add a more robust measure to my teaching, and assist those prospective creatives in their teaming into the advertising industry. Furthermore, the results of this research may inform industry practitioners, managers, observers and theorists.

In order to answer the research question I will begin by investigating the role of creativity, as this is the practice that these teams excel at, and how it has evolved in the advertising industry. Within this context, I will also discuss the interplay between advertising and culture, as well as the environments that the dyadic teams must function within.

In Chapter 3 I will focus on these teams who seem to exemplify that “anything you can do we can do better”, and explore the genesis of their role in the advertising industry. The method and methodology applied to this research is discussed in Chapter 4, with the data presented in Chapters 5 and 6. My findings and conclusions are contained within the final Chapter 7.

## Chapter Two: Madmen and cool women

This chapter presents a context of the advertising industry, including a brief history with reference to the development of the role of creatives in advertising, the impact of advertising on culture, and an organisational view of advertising agencies. This section describes the development of the modern advertising industry (1950 – present time), as well as the practitioners and their roles within it.

### 2.1. The creative advantage

In the 1940s and 50s the role of most advertising agencies was as a means to “sell” media space to businesses who had products and services to sell therefore advertising agencies could be viewed as agents of media (Cappo, 2003; Ogilvy, 1983; Pratt, 2006). The agency’s primary source of income was through the commissions that they took from the sale of media. The commission of between 10% and 15% of the media covered the cost of the production of the advertising which carried simple sales messages and the notion of focussing on creativity as a primary advertising strategy was still to be developed. However, as consumer’s incomes increased, advertising developed to appeal to their disposable funds, and with more businesses using advertising as their sales tool, the advertisements or “cultural products” (Schudson, 1984, p.5) needed to be distinctive to compete against similar products and brands. This provided the opportunity whereby creativity could be applied to sell products. By creativity I am referring to the novel ideas, images, words that are presented in a way that distinguished them from ordinary sales messages conveyed by sales people. This required expert creative practitioners, known as copywriters, finished artists, and designers.

In the 1980s and 90s there existed an industry understanding that the most profitable decision for agencies was to put their clients “on tv” as the return and profit from this strategy was large (personal communication, 2008). This also offered a greater audience and landscape for the advertising creativity being developed for this media. Nixon (2007) cites the “creative revolution” in Britain in the 1980s as being the turning point for creativity in agencies, and at the same time television was opening up opportunities for creativity on a grand scale. This was, according to Hesmondhalgh the beginning of “creative advertising” (Hesmondhalgh, 2007, p. 282), marking a cultural shift from the agencies operating as sales machines to creating and communicating advertising that

tapped into culture and influenced the consumers who experienced it. This shift, from sales machine to creative advertising also meant that agencies could offer their creativity as a product, therefore creativity became a commodity that clients could choose from a growing number of advertising agencies at the time. The agency as a commodity is not to be confused with “commoditization of creativity” which Torr suggests is mechanizing the creative process whereby the thinkers and doers are separated (2008, p. 21).

Creativity as a product continues to be recognised and highly valued and today clients may select from “hot shops” that specialise in creative services, as well as agencies that specialise only in media. These choices enable the client to select the combination to meet their marketing objectives as well as their creative aspirations. Clients regularly review their agencies, often every two years, which places additional focus on the creative product as well as effectiveness of their agency (Pratt, 2005). It is not uncommon for industry media to report a client following senior creatives to a new agency, which at times, may be the agency that they have chosen to establish. Multi-national agencies who need to rationalise creativity with effectiveness may be seen to sacrifice the former in order to achieve profit imperatives. As suggested previously, advertising creatives determined not to have their interpretation of creativity compromised or commoditized may resign to establish agencies that allow for the “unpredictable nature of creativity” (Torr, 2008, p. 21). According to Townley and Beech, a parallel situation occurs in the music industry where, artists make decisions between creativity and commerce (2010, p.26) whereby some may choose to forgo creative freedom, in this case, for commercial return. Those who choose to follow their creative standards do not necessarily achieve commercial success however creative teams can and do expect financial rewards as a measure of their success. This will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

## **2.2. The makers and the shapers**

While advertising agencies position themselves as offering differentiated approaches, most would agree that advertising’s role is to help develop market demand for a client’s product or service and to act as a selling mechanism for it ( Bedell,1952; Dru, 2006; Hegarty,2011; Hesmondhalgh,2007; Newman,2006; Ogilvy,1983).

The people who have influenced the advertising agencies, which have in turn influenced culture and consumers, were originally focussed on the business *of* advertising, rather than creativity *in* advertising. In the USA and Britain, many of the foundation agencies

were managed by people who today are recorded as industry legends with their names representing the companies: these include David Ogilvy, Leo Burnett, Raymond Rubicam. A change was signalled when Ned Doyle, Mac Dane, and Bill Bernbach established Doyle, Dane, Bernbach, the agency that would come to be recognised worldwide as a leader in creativity (Hegarty, 2011) and where the concept of the dyadic team in advertising was first introduced and practiced.

In New Zealand, the multi-national agencies such as Leo Burnett and Ogilvy established themselves alongside some staunchly home-grown agencies. In the 1970s, two agencies, Colenso and MacHarmans, focussed their efforts on selling their creative products, often breaking with traditional advertising practices to do so. Both would eventually become part of global networks with the former retaining its Antipodean title. In the same decade, 12,000 miles away in Britain, Charles and Maurice Saatchi established Saatchi and Saatchi worldwide with a clear focus on creativity. After acquiring the New Zealand agency “Campaign”, also a creatively-led company, they opened their eponymous New Zealand offices in the mid 1990s. As part of the development of the Saatchi and Saatchi brand, Charles Saatchi announced that he was insuring their UK creative department for 1,000,000 pounds which, in the 1970s was seen to represent a demonstrable investment in creativity (Hegarty, 2011, p. 135). While Saatchi didn’t enforce the insurance policy, the strategy served to emphasise their position as being creatively driven and the value that they placed on those who created their advertising campaigns. Although advertising was seen as the primary solution to business and marketing problems, practitioners today suggest clients need creativity that extends beyond advertising (Dru, 2006; Hegarty, 2011; Newman, 2006; Ogilvy 1983). This in turn places more demands on the cultural intermediaries or “creatives” who are responsible for developing ideas that are both innovative and original.

### **2.3. The power and the glory**

This section examines the power of advertising as a social institution as well as its power to create meaning. Advertising permeates society, it is ubiquitous and it “helps define

behaviour of people involved in the advertising. It also teaches us how to participate in consumer culture” (Hovland & Wolburg, 2010, p. 6). Over the past sixty years advertising’s influence has developed as the media channels and the consumers receiving the messages have increased in number. Perhaps the most established ritual and institution in the world, that of marriage has been influenced by advertising. In the early 1940s DeBeers Diamonds engaged the American advertising agency NW Ayer and Son to market their diamonds as symbols of love and commitment. In other words, “diamonds had to be made ritualistic, totemic, metaphoric. They had to be made so meaningful that they could be bought to be given” (Twitchell, 2000, p. 92.). In 1947 the agency introduced the slogan “A Diamond is Forever” which remains as part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century’s lexicon, having also been assigned as a title and song for a James Bond movie. The culture of art was also called upon whereby Picasso and Matisse’s masterpieces were utilised to associate with this precious product which has become intertwined with cultures around the globe.

In the documentary “Art and Copy”, a creative director described advertising as “Art serving capitalism” (Pray, 2009). While cultural intermediaries, or “creatives” call it craft and art, its critics suggest advertising is unimaginative manipulation that enforces consumption. According to Schudson “advertising is an omnipresent system of symbols, a pervasive and bald propaganda for consumer culture” (1984, p. 5). I have alluded to the fact that advertising has polarized practitioners and consumers since its inception. According to Newman (2006, p.Xvii) its role is as “a transmitting device between marketing and consumer – it translates a rational marketing into a different and more compelling language.” The crafters of that language are considered to have the ability to influence, however as I suggested earlier the notion of the innocent consumer being dragged mindlessly to the cash register has been replaced with that of the consumer as the one who determines their choice and therefore their actions when responding to the cultural products or advertisements (Ogilvy, 1983; Schudson, 1984). According to Bilton(2007, p.4),creative ideas must have value or meaning, in other words, they must have a purpose and a role to play in the advertising process.

As an agent of business, advertising has a critical, functional role within the commercial context in that it operates as a mechanism to ultimately deliver profits to the owners of the businesses that it serves: both the agency and the agency’s clients. Advertising has a less clinical, more symbiotic relationship with culture. They both support and feed from their respective forms, with the media as their communication and distribution channel. Hesmondhalgh takes the view that advertising is a cultural industry on its own that has

increased its presence through the media thus adding to the commercialisation of cultural lives (2007, p. 278). The line between advertising and culture is often blurred as Twitchell suggests that “our needs are and have always been cultural, not natural” (2000, p. 15) and that commercial culture is replacing the arts, literature and invading our lives. As Nike’s “just do it” became emblematic for anyone with a notion of achievement, advertising has influenced many aspects of language and life, being elevated, in the eyes of Marshall McLuhan to “the greatest art form of the twentieth century” (cited in Twitchell, 2000, p.4).

Advertising attaches meanings to products and services, creating stories around them in order to communicate with different audiences (Hegarty, 2011; Hovland & Wollburg, 2010; Newman, 2006; Twitchell, 2000). As noted earlier, the creators of the advertising therefore carry the power to influence, determine and develop social scripts in consumer’s lives, which in turn can influence social or cultural change. Nixon’s (2007) thesis suggests that creative practitioners’ own cultures inform the advertising that they create and that there is a type of circuitry between the two. This has a correlation with the types of people who become cultural intermediaries or creative practitioners in that they have lived experiences that they can call on in creating their advertising work.

## **2.4. Behind closed doors**

The final section of this chapter focuses on the culture of the advertising agencies and foreshadows my data seeking to understand agencies as cultures.

Status, hierarchy, and “corporate status markers” (Frost et al, 1991, p. 64) all exist within the agency organisation as do symbols both physical and represented. These cultural symbols are visible within the agency whereby awards and work are frequently exhibited in the reception area of the building to communicate to all who enter, and to remind employees of the “winning” culture of the organisation. The artefacts, values and underlying assumptions (Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg, & Martin, 1991, p. 252) that comprise organisational culture are not only resident in advertising agencies, some are employed within the process of advertising. For instance the more visible ones such as values may be tapped into in the development of advertising. For example social marketing draws on prevailing social values to influence how the consumer thinks about drink driving and other macro level social concerns such as exclusion of some ethnic groups from healthcare.

When McLeod, O'Donohoe and Townley (2010, p. 115) discuss advertising, they concur with Van Maanen's view of organisational culture in that the advertising industry is comprised of informal, implicit and variable strategies of organizational socialisation which sees a less structured environment in which the various players in different departments must function. Less structure does not eliminate the need completely as Bilton asserts that creativity requires boundaries in order to function effectively therefore "working within the rules of the game in order to reinvent them" (2007, p. 88). Nixon's earlier investigation of the UK agency structure revealed a similar approach whereby creative directors separated, and therefore protected the creatives from the rest of the agency, with one creative director installing a sign that read: "Us-this way, Them – that way" (2003, p.109). Bilton (2007, p.30) reports that while historically the creative department has been separate from management, there is a move from this divisional approach to integrating them more closely with the account management and planning function, which suggests a mutual dependency.

While McLeod, O'Donohoe and Townley (2012) divide agencies into "creative" and "service" categories, integrated, total communication or full service agencies have been the norm since the 1970s (Dru, 2006; Pratt, 2006). Pratt (2005) uses the recognised industry term of "full service" to describe what constitutes an advertising agency. Following this view, full service represents the range of skills and services they deem essential to the advertiser: creative, account management, media and production, with more recently the addition of public relations, digital and new media.

As the industry has developed, advertising agencies have experimented with different organisational structures to valorise their philosophical approach both to the business of creativity and creativity in business. Some creative departments, therefore, run with less formality than others in both their organisational (that is, both in management and in systems design) as well as their physical (the layout, floor plan, furnishings, decor, and ambience) aspects. In Australia, for example, Saatchi utilised "round table" meetings that involved all the disciplines: client, account director, planners and creative (Newman, 2003) similar to the egalitarian structure proposed by Ogilvy (1978, p.89). In the UK, Saatchi and Saatchi eliminated the role of the account service and put creatives in direct contact with clients (Hegarty, 2011). This approach failed Hegarty reports as, "letting creatives loose on relationships with clients was madness. We'd argue, walk out of meetings, constantly disagree and we were hopeless at meeting deadlines" (2011, p. 137).



While both the accounts and media departments are structured around hierarchical organisational models, within the advertising agency most creative departments have both functional and spatial separation, and therefore the creatives work in less formal spaces and usually not in the same environment as the client service and media people (Pratt, 2006). Hackley and Kover assert that while agencies have trialled various systems to control their interface with art that the creatives would resist many aspects of management (2007, p.69). Within the advertising agency there exist the concepts of work and play, with the suggestion from various participants within the organisations that the account management “work”, while the creatives “play”. The former group’s belief that they are the workers is not shared by creatives, many of whom suggest that they work extremely hard (Nixon, 2003). While other departments may view creatives as operating without structure or constraint, there is in fact a considerable degree of self management in all departments due to the high risk/high return genre of the advertising business.

The account or client service department are client facing therefore they are the front line and in the majority of agencies it is their role to “sell” the creative product. Their name reflects their wardrobe, in that historically they would wear suits. Today there is a less formal requirement, but nevertheless “creatives” and “suits” differentiate themselves through their dress code and behaviour as well as their disciplines. This suggests that specialisation is a necessary aspect of the advertising industry, and that objectivity must not be clouded by the distraction of different disciplines. The project team model challenges this, transcending the departmentalised approach with the objective of allowing all disciplines to contribute to the creativity of the agency (Nixon, 2003). There are two iterations of the project team; one that draws together all members of the agency’s disciplines to work on the client’s business, and one that establishes the wider project team but excludes the creative teams who, in this approach, are seen to be more valuable by working outside of this greater group.

Over the decades the industry consensus (Dru,2006; Hegarty,2011; Newman,2006; Ogilvy,1983) is that creativity is what distinguishes and is the agency’s “only exclusive asset” (Groesbeck, 1964, p. 342). The people who are responsible for the ideation, the creation of this advertising work are the “creatives”. As identified earlier in this section, tension between “creatives” and “suits” has been noted (Bilton, 2007; Nixon, 2003; Ogilvy, 1983) and this ongoing friction between business drivers and creative drivers can influence the cultural intermediaries who must attempt to operate within this “inherent instability” (Hackley & Kover,2007, p.67). The “creative/suit” relationship is part of the informal induction process for agency employees. They understand this division is a

traditional aspect of advertising culture, and depending on their roles, they will develop their behaviour and attitude accordingly.

Chapter Three explores creativity as a practice and how it is experienced and shared by the dyadic team through team and group theory. The self, creative and social identity is also discussed.

## Chapter Three: Inside stories

The purpose of this research is to explore whether successful creative dyadic teams share any characteristics. This research occurs within the context of advertising creativity and the successful dyadic teams whose creative practice is responsible for promoting products and artefacts. This chapter, therefore, explores the context of the research moving from creativity as an abstract concept through ideas concerned with the way teams use creativity towards an exploration of the way these notions work together to construct the self of the creative worker.

The process of surveying the literature for this chapter has shown that although there is considerable literature on creativity in art, business, psychology and team work (Belbin, 2010; Bilton, 2007; Boynton & Fischer, 2008; Miller, 2008), there is a scarcity of research on the dyadic creative team in advertising (Egan, 2005, Torr, 2008). This is a gap that this research seeks to fill.

### 3.1. Ways of being

This section opens with a discussion on creativity with leading theorists' views considered. Theories of creativity have evolved from Koestler's (1989) explication of creativity as an elegant act celebrating the elusive nature of creativity on the one hand, through to a prescriptive problem solving model. Either perspective would be in accord with Czikszentmihalyi's (1996, p. 56) view that creativity is the property of a complex system, and that those working within it must be capable of adaptation across different situations and circumstances. The process of ideation has been systemized to a series of steps that differ in number and context but range from Herman von Helmholtz's original three stage "saturation, incubation, illumination" (Torr, 2008, p.107) through to Young's five step, and Rossman and Osborn's seven step models (Torr, 2008). It could be suggested that Koestler's concept sits more naturally with those intimately involved in the creative process; the creators, while the systemized description could have been developed by those managing those who are making and doing the "creating".

This research is based on the assumption that in the advertising industry it is critical that creativity has a specific outcome, and therefore there is no allowance for creativity for the sake of creativity because this is deemed an impractical indulgence. According to Torr

(2008, p. 130) the logical extension of this argument would be that creativity has no demonstrable value. Advertising agencies and dyadic teams base their economic futures on the outcomes of creativity, and therefore in the context of the advertising industry creativity will always be operationalised for financial return. Bilton's (2007, p.3) view of creativity has two aspects: on the one hand, that it is novel and on the other, that it requires an environment in which it can occur. In the context of advertising, Bilton's view presents a certain tension, between creativity being a critical element, tempered by the requirements of business through budgets, deadlines, briefs, and individual satisfaction in the work performed. This notion is developed in the section following.

Amabile is central to my understanding of creativity in this research. Her theories provide practical utility to the creativity being explored. According to Amabile (1996, p. 38) creativity may be defined as a "novel, appropriate response to a heuristic task". Viewed in the advertising context, creativity designed to meet a specific client brief could be required to be both novel and appropriate, however by its nature it could be described as algorithmic in that there is a clear pathway led by the brief and the set of objectives to be achieved. The ideation process could be seen as heuristic as it is open ended. What is created may well be unexpected and outside of the brief, however there is a known pathway: for example developing an online campaign where the parameters of the medium are familiar to the creative team. Bilton's (2007, p.5) process based definition of creativity as "an unexpected combination of elements which provides a surprising solution to a problem" supports Amabile's practical approach in that there is an objective and an end point.

Amabile (1998, p. 78) suggests that there are three components to creativity: expertise, creative thinking skills, and motivation. Amabile's (1998) theory of intrinsic motivation is of relevance to this research because the inner drive of many of these dyadic teams is part of their success. By way of an example, creative teams may be motivated financially, in other words, extrinsically, but if they are not personally engaged and motivated this could result in an absence of passion in the work and, it is fair to say, that passion is the fuel for many to function successfully in advertising. Following Amabile's intrinsic motivation principle, creativity is influenced by the following factors: "challenge, freedom, resources, work-group features, supervisory encouragement, and organizational support"(1998, p.81). In terms of the dyadic team the "challenge" that Amabile suggests could also be viewed as the ability to match the individual with the assignment. This could be described as an art in itself as it is a creative process that must occur prior to creativity between the dyadic team being able to be initiated. The person responsible for this is most likely to be

the creative director, who will have themselves functioned within a dyadic team. In the context of dyadic teams in advertising, this “challenge” principle is applicable in that a mismatched team would result in less motivation on behalf of each of the constituents if the person<sup>3</sup> responsible for connecting them did not comprehend their capabilities.

In viewing creativity in the context of advertising, the product of the creative process needs to be, according to Amabile, “useful”, therefore that it must meet the client brief and be able to be implemented within the constraints of budget, time and other corporate requirements. Amabile’s (1996) view of creativity concurs with that of Milliken, Bartel and Kurtzberg who propose “fluency, flexibility, originality and usefulness as defining qualities of the creativity of a group’s product or outcome”(Paulus & Nijstad, 2003, p. 34). Contrasting Amabile’s more theoretical view of creativity is Torr’s (2008, p. 129) notion of creativity where perspective and origination are replaced by the view that unless the creatives can demonstrate their worth or “instrumental value” that they are worth nothing and if they are worth nothing they are in fact not defined as creatives. This suggests that creatives are only as good as their last campaign, providing that it was seen to be successful in its meeting of the agreed brief. Another way of viewing this could be that the practitioners are deemed to be authentic for as long as their creativity is demonstrably worthwhile. This discussion foreshadows further development of the creative self later in this chapter.

While early research into creativity had an individualistic focus (Fliaster & Schloderer, 2010; Townley, Beech & McKinlay, 2009) suggesting that an individual creates the idea prior to sharing it with anyone else including their team partner, more recent work has identified that collaboration or a collective endeavour is frequently the basis for creative ideas. Collaboration and learning between the team members the result can result in the generation of new ideas (Fliaster & Schloderer (2009, p.6). Within the dyadic team the individuals who are taking the roles of “adaptor” and the “innovator” (Bilton, 2007, p.25) can metaphorically change hats during the creative development of a campaign; this can mitigate irregularity in the process and therefore allows for individual peaks and troughs of creativity. According to Bilton (2007), once roles are taken they do not frequently change, but through personal observation and experience of the dyadic team, these roles are capable of being exchanged from time to time without compromising the primary roles as copywriter and art director. This suggests that with a team of two there is more

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<sup>3</sup> It is common practice in New Zealand for this to be the responsibility of the creative director

likelihood of balancing output so that there is a more consistent creative flow which is critical within the constraints and demands of the advertising industry environment.

### **3.2. Working it out**

Group and team theory has at its centre that of diversity of roles, or in other words, the importance of the role of each member within the team. Egan (2005, p. 208) supports Csikszentmihalyi (1988) on the importance of team in the creative process as well as the importance of team diversity. The concept of “innovators” and “adaptors” (for discussion, see, Bilton, 2007, p. 24) is useful in considering creativity in a business setting.

“Innovators” and “adaptors” suggest the idea of complementary opposites working together in the exchange of ideas that produce the creative outcome. Along with the concept of innovators and adaptors it is useful to include Guildford’s (1950) four stages of creativity: preparation, incubation, inspiration, and evaluation. Applied to the dyadic team, the copywriter provides the words for the advertisement while the art director selects type, imagery, colour and design elements. In this case they are both working simultaneously as adaptors, but during this process should one of them develop an innovation to the original idea, they will jointly evaluate it and if it is seen to be worthy, adapt it.

Belbin (2010) based his team role theory on nine clusters of behaviour. The characteristics of each cluster, ranging from the “shapers” necessary to maintain momentum of the team through to “plants” who solve problems in an unconventional manner have similar attributes to “innovators” and “adaptors” in the different ways that the individuals can work together for the mutual success of the team. There is a relationship as well with the theory of “divergent” and “convergent” thinking reported by Milliken, Bartel and Kurtzberg (as cited in Paulus & Nijstad, 2003) whereby the innovation stage could be likened to idea generation. Convergent thinking also has similarities with the role of the adaptor, selecting and adapting the ideas to be developed and ultimately produced.

Bilton’s (2007) work on creative partnerships suggest they are defined by mutual dependency and while not specifically relating to dyadic teams, he posits another characteristic, that of multitasking. This is relevant in the creative department of an advertising agency as writers and art directors, while viewed as specialists, may switch craft roles on an assignment, so that the writer in this case may propose the look or design of the advertisement, and the art director contributes to the text or copy. This type of role

flexibility may happen on a project by project basis, or randomly and does not concur with Bilton's observation (2007, p.25) that team roles are set as "once an 'idea generator' or 'resource gather', always an idea generator or resource gatherer". This is not to suggest that creative roles are rigidly followed but rather that the individuals have primary responsibilities within the dyadic team.

Bilton (2007) and Higgins (2003) report that creative teams are founded on a number of elements essential to their survival in the industry. Among these essential elements are mutual respect and trust, which allow for a safe space in which to share and develop, nurture, and nourish the new ideas which are the currency of creativity in the advertising industry. An emphasis on aspirational but abstract ideas like respect and trust could well convey an image of gentle, agreeable relationships but these are not ideal for stimulating creativity within the dyadic team. Bilton (2007) suggests one outcome of the evolution of the relationship, much like a marriage, can occur when the partners become so comfortable with each other that their life becomes a non-eventful experience which can result in "groupthink". Although it is possible to argue with Bilton's interpretation of "groupthink", it is nevertheless fair to accept his argument that complacency can pose a crisis for the partnership with the result being that "the team's capacity to innovate will thus follow the familiar upward and downward curve associated with organisational lifecycles" (Bilton, 2007, p. 33). While within the landscape of a traditional marriage this comfort level can be acceptable, for a creative partnership it can influence its future success should the ability to generate fresh creative ideas be threatened.

As foreshadowed earlier, another way of viewing the dyadic team relationship is as that of a marriage. This is not a new discovery: rather, it is referred to by the teams themselves and in industry<sup>4</sup> literature. Marriage may be defined as a "central way of organizing social and personal life" (Coontz, 2005, p. 24). Blankenhorn (2007, p. 91) focuses on a key differentiator in terms of this research, when he states that marriage is:

socially approved sexual intercourse between a woman, and a man, conceived both as a personal relationship and as an institution, primarily such that any children resulting from the union are- and are understood by the society to be- emotionally, morally, practically, and legally affiliated with both of the parents.

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<sup>4</sup> Note: Industry literature here refers to the publications produced by advertising agencies about themselves and for themselves. The expression "marriage" is not based on any academic research but is nevertheless a trope that occurs regularly in the way that advertising creatives define themselves. For example advertising publications such as Campaign Brief and Admedia when reporting on creative teams have described their partnerships as "marriages".

Across continents and cultures marriage is viewed as a formal relationship between a couple, that is recognised socially and legally by the culture or society in which they live. In the context of New Zealand and for the purposes of this research it is identified as a series of transactions between a heterosexual couple for a variety of rewards, some tangible such as sex, family, progeny, family, property, and some less tangible but no less important, such as protection, kinship, position, cooperation, support, happiness, companionship, fulfilment. This relationship is recognised in law, and if the couple so choose, by their religion and church (Blankenhorn, 2007; Coontz, 2005; Houston, 1970).

The metaphor of marriage within dyadic team research is not a novel concept. McLeod, O'Donohoe, and Townley (2010, p. 115) note that "creative teams who tend to be hired and fired together" therefore have careers and lives that are intertwined with one another as closely as that of marriage. Nixon (2003, p. 127) suggests that this metaphor helps to:

articulate the sense of familiarity and closeness based upon the enduring and long-term nature of the bond. It also captures the mundane and routine dimensions of the relationship and the petty niggles-such as putting up with someone else's taste in music- that stem from such enduring and close proximity.

The marriage metaphor will be more fully explored and discussed in the following chapter four.

### **3.3. Double acts**

In advertising creativity, dyadic teams are the norm (Higgins, 2003, p.54; Nixon, 2003, p.116) and their composition as writer and art director is well established. Bill Bernbach's dyadic model has been emulated by advertising agencies around the world, to the point that in many countries agencies will only hire creative teams. While this could be viewed as marginalising of individual copywriters and art directors (Veksner, 2010, p. 39) the collective model dominates in the advertising industry's selection of creative teams. In other words, in the advertising industry, the writer and art director function as a unit, are frequently hired as a "team", and may work exclusively with each other for a number of years.

No relationship, marriage or creative team escapes some form of conflict. Though conflict can be viewed as a potential barrier, Egan proposes that there are benefits to the creativity process through some "productive conflict" and that this can develop team creativity



through its frisson (2005, p. 219). Bilton (2007, p.40) concurs with the value of “creative friction” in a team. Chirumbolo et al’s (2005) research into the challenges to creativity faced by teams shows that mutual production blocking is the most prevalent, followed by evaluation apprehension and free riding. Individuals with a high need for closure show a correspondingly low degree of creativity which could be interpreted as a lack of comfort, confidence or affinity with the process, which is not an exemplar for a successful dyadic team. A high need for closure by one member of the team can also be seen as a barrier to creativity for the partnership as successful dyadic teams are often required to invest considerable time into the generation of hundreds of concepts prior to focussing on one to develop and this requires both commitment and dedication.

Ogilvy writes that it “...is as difficult to sustain happy partnerships as to sustain happy marriages” (1978, p. 89), suggesting that successful team work does not come naturally or easily, but rather, is the product of thoughtful hard work. This research focuses attention on the creative processes in successful (as measured by peer esteem) dyadic teams in the creative departments of the advertising industry, and interrogates the foundations of their achievements. It is perhaps not surprising that through the interview process that these successful teams appeared to be, as Ogilvy suggests, happy teams.

Team theorists have speculated that team identity, as well as the connection between the team members, is critical in that the team members are motivated to keep the team functioning and successful, supporting each other in this endeavour while not sacrificing individuality (Janssen & Huang, 2008, p. 84). This connection and commitment is also demonstrated when the teams socialise, as this has been shown to result in the teams engaging in more creative processes (Gilson & Shalley, 2004, p. 465). In the advertising industry, for the dyadic team, this occurs frequently due to the hours that they are often required to commit to their work (Torr, 2008). As noted earlier in this chapter, it is not unusual for teams to work several weekends in a row, and into the night to meet deadlines for creative briefs. What drives them to these extremes is discussed in the following section.

### 3.4. Beneath it all

Whether viewing teams or individuals, the internal or creative self provides the core drive and motivation that can influence their level of success as a team, and a review of such literature will close this section.

Creative teams in advertising have specific functions to perform for the client, the agency and the projects and these functions rely on creativity to drive them. Creativity is not a straightforward concept. It has been described as a process (Bilton, 2007, p. 39) and viewed through a more personal lens as an “expression of self” (Hegarty, 2011, p. 21). It is an assumption of this research that creativity underpins all, as Koestler (1989, p. 178) suggests:

The creative act, in so far as it depends on unconscious resources, presupposes a relaxing of controls and a regression to modes of ideation which are indifferent to the rules of verbal logic, unperturbed by contradiction, untouched by the dogmas and taboos of so-called common sense.

The following section briefly explores in both a positive and negative manner the challenging environment where the dyadic teams function. According to Ogilvy “when people aren’t having any fun, they seldom produce good advertising”(1978, p.88). While fun may be viewed by some as not having a critical role in business, it could be seen by those involved in advertising as integral to the creative process. Paulus and Nijstad (2003, p.332) note that if a team are working in an environment where creativity is not recognised or valued, this will, unsurprisingly have a negative impact on their creativity. This is supported by Amabile’s view of environmental obstacles to creativity suggested as “interpersonal or intergroup competition within the organisation fostering a self defensive attitude”(1996, p. 232). In Chapter 2 I alluded to Nixon’s (2003, p.108) study which reported that the creative director’s role also involves the protection of the creatives by separation from other departments within the advertising agency. A contrasting aspect of the creative director influencing the working environment is discussed later in this chapter. According to Amabile (1998, p.82) in order to provide an environment that supports creativity “you must create mutually supportive groups with a diversity of perspectives and backgrounds” in order to “combine and combust in exciting and useful ways”. Furthermore, external surroundings such as competition, constraint and criticism can have a negative effect which thereby inhibits the creative process. However the external environment can be composed in a more positive manner as Amabile suggests

that extrinsic motivators can include “reward and recognition for creative ideas, clearly defined overall project goals, and frequent constructive feedback” (1996, p.117).

Maslow’s (1968) hierarchy of needs suggests that individuals can only be intrinsically motivated when their other more primary needs are met. Team members can be seen to draw on this from their external primary partnerships such as marriage which in effect provides a safety net or foundation for them. Intrinsic motivation has been proposed by Amabile, Paulus and Nijstad, and Torr as a key component in organisations focussed on developing creativity therefore it is questionable as to how this functions in creative departments where teams compete against each other. Nixon (2003, p.111) reports that some creative directors deliberately establish competitive environments setting team against team to compete for briefs and that in one of the agencies he researched the environment was ironically named the “play pen” (2003, p.111). By contrast, in New Zealand a multinational agency named the place that creatives fight for their reputations and success, the ‘Bear Pit’ (personal communication, 2012).

Within this competitive focus, Rogers, Koestler and Crutchfield (Amabile, 1996, p. 91) have proposed that creative thinking is enhanced by freedom from extrinsic constraint, because while intrinsic motivation aids creativity, extrinsic motivation effects the opposite. Following this environmental theme, research by Gilson and Shalley into the creative process identified that if an environment has an expectation for creativity, that those within it will respond by behaving in a more creative manner (2004, p. 465). Interestingly Townley, Beech and Mckinlay (2009, p. 945) suggest that close monitoring can destroy creativity. Continuing this view Paulus and Nijstad report that an environment “where new ideas are valued but in which there is no excessive consensus seeking, appears to be the most beneficial for creative performance” (2003, p. 330). Therefore it is the careful balancing of elements such as creative freedom, motivation and expectation that can influence how successfully the dyadic creative team perform.

In summing up this section, theorists Bilton (2007), Boden,(1992)and Maslow (1968 ) have stated that creativity is based on two contributing parts, described differently, but essentially a dualism. Milliken, Bartel, and Kurtzberg cited in Paulus and Nijstad (2003) and Stroebe and Diehel (2003, p. 35) suggest that the process of creating involves “divergent and convergent processes” for the generation of ideas from which the most practical must be selected for implementation. That there are dual components involved in the creative process is apparent. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) considers the creative personality as being represented by paradoxical traits, always in pairs. Kirton’s (1984)

theory of complementary opposites, or “innovators and adaptors” (Bilton, 2007, p.24) and Bilton’s (2007) suggestion that creativity consists of innovation and value or fitness for purpose continues the dualism. Perhaps it was Bill Bernbach’s dual interests of art and speech writing (Higgins, 2003) that motivated him to combine the skill sets of writers and designers and as a result change the way advertising agencies select and manage their creative departments (Levenson, 1987).

There are parts of the self which exist only for the self in relationship to itself. We divide ourselves up in all sorts of different selves with reference to our acquaintances. We discuss politics with one and religion with another. There are all sorts of different selves answering to all sorts of different social reactions. (Mead, 1934, p.142)

Mead’s theory of the different selves that people present to each other is relevant to the dyadic creative team who need to manage a mutual partnership which has a value beyond that of “acquaintances”, as well as other relationships within their professional sphere. The creative self is an integral element of their existence as a human being. Through Mead’s (1934) view of the many layers of selves that make up the individual, he suggests that “specifically social expressions of intelligence” (p. 141) reveal an individual demonstrating a significant empathy for others. Interestingly, this ability to put oneself in the place of others is an essential skill in the creative process of understanding the different demographics and psychographics of markets for the products and services that they develop advertising for (personal communication, 2008).

When Hegarty (2011, p. 21) states “creativity isn’t an occupation, it’s a pre-occupation” he is demonstrating, from both personal and professional experience, that for a creative working in advertising their role is not a job, it touches and at times rules their lives and therefore their “selves”. These aspects of self have provenance in a broad range of research including philosophical, biological, psychological and sociological fields. The latter two have significance for this research which follows phenomenological principles therefore the conscious experience of the self is seen as both reflexive and subjective. According to Gotsi, Andriopoulos, Lewis and Ingram (2010, p. 783), creative worker’s identities or selves are in a continual state of negotiation, construction and deconstruction. This relates back to Torr’s view discussed earlier, as to how the identity is linked to self worth through the roles taken.

In terms of identity in the advertising industry, the teams being researched are known as “creatives” (Hackley & Kover, 2007, p. 63; Nixon, 2003). Utilising role identity theory in a

creative behaviour context, Petkus (1996, p.191) suggests that role identity, role performance and role support are inter connected. In the dyadic team the partners reinforce each other's identity as creatives, and, as identified in Chapter 6 their determination in their early careers to become creatives sees them motivated to maintain and preserve this identity as long as they are practitioners within this industry. According to Hackley and Kover (2007) this can result in the creatives feeling "marginalised" on the one hand and yet "proprietary" about their work product (2007, p. 65).

Following Thoits and Vishup (cited in Ashmore & Jussim, 1997, p. 106) social identities or selves are "socially constructed and socially meaningful categories that are accepted by individuals as descriptive of themselves or their group." Therefore in viewing the creative self, the identities of the constituents of the dyadic team have both individual and collective identities or selves. According to Elsbach (2009, p.1044) creative worker identities may be "person based" and "role based". She suggests that if artists or creatives are working in groups that they have less chance of gaining recognition as their individual identity is diluted by that of the group. I am reminded of statements made by two young creative teams (personal communication, 2011) when coaching students as copywriters and art directors. They emphasised the importance of developing their own "brand identity" to represent their combined service offering to the advertising industry. This could be viewed as a strategy towards establishing identity within the group, in this case, the creative department. While this identity represents them, should their identity be communicated externally through their creative work this has the potential to manifest a certain tension if it overwhelms that of the brand voice. Much has been reported in industry texts about "tone of voice" and "brand voice" speaking through the advertising. Simmons suggests that "a writer develops a persona that is close to their real self but is different in that it is a writer's persona. It exists slightly outside the person" (2003, p. 193). This suggests a careful balancing that is managed by the creative through their work.

Within the industry, creatives have at least three channels for identification and recognition. The first channel allows for retrospective recognition through trade publications such as Admedia, Stop Press, Campaign Brief that showcase new campaigns and the teams of people who created them; secondly through national and international awards, and thirdly through word of mouth and industry conversations which occur daily. It could be suggested idealistically, that the recognition should be based on the commercial results of the advertising in that it achieves its set objectives. That said, for those established creative team's work that does have identifying attributes or "signature styles" (Elsbach, 2009) which may be evidenced, for example, by the film production

companies that the dyadic team select to impart a distinguishing look to a television campaign. By way of example, one of the interview subject's hallmarks was "slice of life" treatments which at times were a direct reflection of what was occurring in his personal life.

As the individual selves transition from the "I", to "me", through to the "we" of the dyadic team, Mead's perspective of the difference between "I" and "me" suggests the latter "self" being adjusted through personal and professional interactions (Stevens, 2002, p. 251). For the dyadic team, the individuals are involved in a dynamic process of reframing the "me" as they become a part of the necessary "we". When the two individual "selves" join together as a dyadic team there is also a partial adjustment of the individual "I" to allow for the existence of "we". This point is discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6. This transition can be seen in another recognised partnership, that of the institution of marriage which is a theme that is explored through this research. In other words, a transition occurs from personal, individualistic to the collective identity to allow the relationship to exist. For the dyadic team to not simply exist but function successfully there needs to be a continual balance and negotiation of the creative selves: the individual "I" and the collective "we". For those dyadic teams where this exchange does not occur, it seems that it is unlikely that they will have a long term professional future together, as the principles of sharing are not permitted to exist. I am not suggesting that if they separate and negotiate different creative partners that they may not be motivated to participate in a more positive manner. There is no reason why the dynamics of the new relationship would not foster a more positive and mutually supportive outcome.

Self categorisation and social identity theory have relevance to the creative self through the collective behaviour of the dyadic team, framed as the "we". Viewed through Turner's theory of self categorisation (Ashmore & Jussim, 1997, p. 116) the individual's characteristics, attitudes and behavioural norms are replaced by those of the group, or in this case, the dyadic team. While a healthy ego can aid creatives in the advertising industry, an individual's ego that supersedes that of the team does not support the team's mutual success. This notion is supported by Ashmore and Jussim (1997) who report that in social groups "each person's egotism is therefore a potential threat to group stability and equity, which is why group norms may oppose and constrain egotism" (p. 212).

In viewing the creative self, while their identity is individually that of an art director or copywriter, collectively they are a creative team or partnership. The corollary of this sees established, successful advertising practitioners choosing to share their name with their

advertising agency: David Ogilvy, cited earlier in this chapter is one of the most high profile individuals to do this. In New Zealand, an awarded creative team, known by their Christian names, branded their new agency as “Josh and Jamie”. This reflected the personal, personable, informal culture of the dyadic team and the agency, while also communicating an ironic statement to the more formal corporate sector. As to the hierarchy of their other selves or identities such as partner, husband, wife, mother, artist, writer, evidence of this may be found in the Data Chapters that follow method and methodology, which is presented in the next Chapter Four.

## Chapter Four: Method and Methodology

The purpose of this research is to gain understanding about the phenomenon of creativity in dyadic teams. In this chapter I present the method and methodology utilised in seeking to answer the research question which sets out to uncover the characteristics of successful creative teams in New Zealand advertising agencies. The explication of why qualitative research was chosen for this research is presented in the first section, followed by the processes and experiences of both data gathering and data analysis.

### 4.1. Qualitative research

The research takes place within the context of the advertising industry among those who practice or have practiced creativity. Communication is a primary channel employed by these practitioners who are seen as experts in their field. In other words, they develop concepts, utilise metaphors, and through their craft play with the subtlety of language and image. Therefore it is essential that the methodology used in this research allows for the nuances and the pauses as much as the words spoken. I have applied qualitative research for its ability to allow for “the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of things” (Berg, 2009, p.3). Coming from an advertising creative background myself, I need to make transparent my inclination towards the qualitative method: much of advertising is grounded in the telling of stories, therefore the capturing and gathering of stories as a method of research has a natural fit. Furthermore, through my work in advertising I have attended focus groups, analysed briefs, interpreted the needs and wants of target groups in the process of developing advertising campaigns. Phenomenology, or lived experience, is critical to qualitative research as it allows for a personal, multi dimensional view of the world as experienced and shared by the interview participants who have achieved expert status in their field by way of national and international award, peer recognition, and their consistently high calibre of creative work. Interpretive phenomenological analysis offers the researcher the opportunity to learn from the expert participant’s own experiences, thoughts, aspirations and insights as they reflect upon and respond to the research questions (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005).

Qualitative research has allowed a level of interpretation and reflection which have resulted in a richness of material that I suggest could not have been possible if placed under a quantitative model. The “fluid, evolving, dynamic nature” (Corbin & Strauss,



2008, p.13) of the qualitative approach also seems to be analogous to that of the advertising industry which is the setting for this research. That the participants in this research are creatives, and that I have had a career as a creative is a further argument for the qualitative approach because the placing of self in this case is overt, and has allowed for reflexivity. I was aware of myself in the interview process, recognising and relating to particular experiences recounted by the research participants. Corbin and Strauss suggest that such interpretive research can be viewed as being co-constructed (2008, p. 31) between the researcher and the participants; a form perhaps of agreeable collaboration which I prefer over the view discussed by Bryant and Charmaz (2007, p. 425) whereby reflexivity replaces objectivity and the “participant is seen as gazing at the back of the researcher”. Both the participants and I would view this as disrespectful of their places within the research process and their respected positions within the advertising industry.

The analysis I have taken follows that of Geertz (1973, p. 5) in that it is interpretive, in search of meaning. The meaning to which I refer to here requires seeking beneath the surface, listening to the practitioners of creativity, rather than observing and reporting, to attempt to interpret what was occurring through what was being said as much as what was left unspoken through the semi-structured interviews that I conducted with the ten participants. While each of the six interview meetings lasted on average one hour, it provided me with an intense set of impressions to work with that revealed the subject’s “perceptions, ideologies and unwitting assumptions”(Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 324).

Although reflexivity could be seen to dilute the research through infusing too much of the researcher’s personal feelings, I propose that my professional experiences in the advertising industry enhanced my ability to interpret data and draw insights as they emerged. I bring to this research over 30 years as an advertising copywriter where interpretation of concepts was critical as was the ability to depict ideas and stories through descriptive writing. Therefore Geertz’s (1973, p. 9) concept of “thick” over “thin” description was selected for the illumination offered by the former: thick description is not about reporting the minutiae of experiences but rather being able to place them under a metaphorical microscope as to decipher, uncover, interpret. Whereas Geertz talks of thick description, Moeran (2006, p. 115) proposes the practice of “thick interpretation” in that there are many layers to discover, consider and place, and I have applied this approach through the interpretive phases of this research. While the terrain of the research journey I am taking may seem as familiar to the reader as it is to me, I am prepared to uncover aspects that are both novel and unexpected.

Corbin and Strauss have suggested that both structured and unstructured interviews can facilitate qualitative research (2008, p. 199). Berg refers to standardized, semi standardised and unstandardised interviews with the main difference between the three approaches being the degree of rigidity and formality (2009, p. 104). In seeking to answer the research question I knew I needed to start with questions that allowed for responses that contained layers of meanings for me to identify and work with. I needed to be able to probe topics as they arose, and to adapt should a direction of interest be suggested by the participants. The semi-structured interview approach allowed for flexibility during the actual interview placing me, the researcher, viewing “the world from the subject’s perspective” (Berg, 2009, p.107) rather than from the less interactive position referred to earlier. It also provided permission to respond and improvise with a safety net beneath all of us through the experience.

The notion of reflexivity was introduced earlier in this chapter, and deserves further mention here. Through the interviews and participant observation I was aware of the possibilities and the power of reflexivity (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) which has naturally coloured some of my reporting, but I do not believe has had a negative impact on the interviews. Instead I propose that my reflexive stance has enhanced the calibre of the research because, given my background in the advertising industry, I do not believe that I could have approached it authentically in any other way. As stated in the following section on data gathering, the New Zealand advertising industry is small with hundreds rather than thousands of people employed in creative departments, therefore most people working within it know or know of each other. The interview participants and I were all aware of each other through our industry connections. I made it clear with the interview subjects that they were assisting me in my academic endeavours and this is apparent in some of the conversations prior to and following the interviews (personal communication, 2011).

Initially I had an acute awareness of the importance of maintaining a degree of distance in relation to both the interview process and the analysis. In the process of data collection and analysis, however, I could see that my professional experience served to assist my interpretation as suggested by Corbin and Strauss when discussing the topic of sensitivity (2008, p. 33). As a result, there was no need to familiarise myself with the industry or the roles as Moeran (2006) had in his ethnographic study of a Japanese advertising agency. Moeran suggests it can take up to three months for those subjects being observed to allow themselves to behave naturally, and in a sense drop their “facade” (p. 141). During the interview process with the senior creatives it seemed to me that we shared a sense of being

on the same side rather than being adversaries or vessels from which information was extracted, with little respect or empathy for the information. My intent was to honour and respect the meanings that the subjects gave to the experiences they shared; my understanding enhanced the insights and heightened the importance of the properties and the concepts shared through the interviews.

## 4.2. Data Gathering

In this section the process of data gathering is presented, with supporting data set out in appendices. When I embarked on this project I expected to be able to source more research material by way of published books and journal articles but I discovered that while there is considerable literature on the topic of creativity and of teams, there is a small pool of information and research that relates to the dyadic team in advertising. To gain data in order to answer the research question I needed to meet and interview the people who were functioning creative teams who met the criteria that I had defined for “success” in this context.

### 4.2.1. Participant selection

One of my primary criteria for selection was based on success and recognition by peer and industry, within this I strove to have a representative gender sample of the types of teams represented in the New Zealand advertising industry. I sought to obtain what I felt was a representative sample of advertising teams for this research. For example, one of the teams selected is also in a traditional legal marriage to one another as well as working together as a creative team. A creative team in a personal marriage relationship with each other is rare in the advertising industry. As the table below shows, the gender breakdown in the industry is predominantly male.

Creative and gender breakdown provided by CAANZ – Communication and Advertising Agency’s Association of New Zealand (Sept, 2011)

|  |      |
|--|------|
| Total number of people employed in NZ Ad Agencies:       | 1330 |
| Female:  | 726  |
| Male:  | 604  |
| Total number of people employed in creative departments: | 195  |

Female: 47

Male: 148

By default the pool of creatives tends to result in male teams. In this research, of the five teams interviewed, two are same sex male teams. Two are male/female and one team is all female.

Utilising the criteria outlined in Appendix a I composed a list of eight dyadic teams in the Auckland advertising industry to approach for interviews. I was eager that the teams chosen represent the industry composition; same sex teams, opposite sex teams and one team who were married to each other which though rare, I believed would add rigour to this research because it is an authentic reflection of the industry at the time of this research. Perhaps not surprisingly, in the concept 'relationship as a marriage' the married team recorded the most dominant coding. Data gained from this interview also offered some useful insights.

Through personal experience I was aware of how time poor senior creatives can be, and I was prepared to allow several months in order to negotiate with them to arrive at my group of five. I contacted them initially with a personal phone call, and followed this up with a personal email. I found it reassuring that every approach that I made resulted in a positive, supportive response from the individuals and that the only challenge to the data gathering phase was finding a time and location that suited the participants, and in only one case was it necessary to re-schedule the meeting.

- Email to participants: appendix b

## The Interviews

I conducted a total of six interviews; four with teams of two, and the final two separately. Ben and Bill were a successful, well known creative dyadic team. That this team could not meet at the same time had more to do with their now living in different parts of the country than a reflection of their relationship. In fact they were planning to get together socially a few days after the first interview.

- Semi structured interview questions: appendix c

To provide some context, and also to ease into the more substantial questions, I decided to begin with four 'background' questions. I found that this approach allowed the interview subjects and the researcher to open up and relax into the sessions. I had asked them for an

hour of their time and did not want to extend this unnecessarily, and so appear to take advantage of their generosity of spirit.

Semi-structured interviews allowed me to explore the thoughts, feelings, reflections, and opinions of the subjects as they considered and responded to the questions. My objective was to understand and report on the lived experience of the teams. In four of the cases where participants were interviewed as teams, two of the meetings took place at their agencies, and two at private meeting rooms in AUT's School of Communication Studies. The fifth team needed to arrange interviews at a separate time and location; one of these interviews took place at the subject's private residence, and the other at his work place. Through these situations I observed two teams and one single within their advertising agency environment which enabled me to observe the "lived experience" in an authentic manner. Through this research I have also sought to explore the culture of each team. Schein (as cited in Frost, Moore, Louis et al, 1991, p. 249) questions whether in defining culture it should be viewed as a "set of shared behaviours, skills, perceptions, expectations, symbols, beliefs, values, attitudes, assumptions, feelings or mental models". Through investigating the dyadic teams' motivations and view of their work, and their relationships my aim was to uncover their beliefs, values and assumptions.

#### **4.2.2. The interview process**

Although Corbin and Strauss (2008, p. 28) suggest that interview subjects sometimes reveal more once the recorder is switched off, this did not seem to occur in the interviews I completed and I suggest that this could be due in part to the familiarity that they have with the technology associated with their roles in advertising. A further explanation is that the interview session was designed so that the deeper, open ended questions which in a number of instances resulted in revealing conversations, were placed later in the interview session, when the participants had become more comfortable with the process.

Once each interview was completed I transcribed it, listening "lightly" to the discourse and holding back from drawing any presumptuous conclusions. I wanted each interview to be able to live and breathe on its own, not to be shaped by my hand in too quick an effort to find a reliable theme, concept or meaning. Corbin and Strauss assert that one way of working with data is to let it guide the researcher (2008, p.198) and as I found the "rhythm" of the data, it seemed that this occurred naturally through the process.

### 4.3. Data Analysis

In seeking to answer the research question, in the context of my previous history and involvement with the advertising industry, I took some time to consider what themes might emerge. If there was a hypothesis to test, this would then determine my taking a deductive approach (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010). As tempting as it was to propose a hypothesis about successful creative dyadic teams, I was more attracted to, and more comfortable with, the dynamic journey of discovery offered by grounded theory underpinned by inductive reasoning (Berg, 2009). Developed by Glasser and Strauss (2008), grounded theory “links the researcher’s developing concepts in stages and phases, as they change over time or appear in different forms” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010, p. 229). Using this inductive methodology allowed me to work with the raw data; to immerse myself in it, to consider, reflect and uncover the material relevant to the research question. Through listening to and then reading the data, the variety of responses and actions that the subjects shared about their experiences (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) in the advertising industry, the nuances that emerged and themes that occurred frequently were coded through identifying words or terms – such as “suits”, and themes or sentences, such as “like being married” when describing their relationships. I grouped ideas or conceptual clusters (Berg, 2009, p.349) to ultimately become categories. The category that took shape the most noticeably was that of “Relationship as a Marriage” with data being captured in four themes: “commitment”, “companionship”, “protection” and “co-operation”.

The coding process was influenced to some extent by my participation in the advertising industry, and drawing on personal experience is affirmed by Corbin and Strauss who say that “the experiences of whoever is engaged in an inquiry are vital to the inquiry and its implicated thought processes”(2008,p. 4). This perspective gave me a sense of authenticity and liberation as I proceeded with analysis. Following Corbin and Strauss, the data collection and analysis were interconnected, that is, there was a sense of travelling between the concepts as patterns emerged, themes developed, were added to, reflected upon, and reshaped through the iterative process of data collection and analysis. By way of example, “Rites of passage” emerged as a new and dominating category alongside “Relationship as a Marriage”. According to their properties and dimensions, data was organised into a growing collection of categories.

Corbin and Strauss (2008, p.160) propose the higher level concepts be defined as “categories” or “themes”, with both lower and higher level “concepts” representing the interpretations drawn from the data. Due to the nature of this research into creativity, I

have named “categories” as “super concepts” as this description is more in keeping with the language of creativity. Therefore “categories” are referred to as “super concepts” from here on.

Concepts emerged through a coding process that was based on repetition, recurrence and passion. Repetition in the context of the coding refers to the number of times participants referred to associated ideas within an interview. Whereas recurrence was based on the number of times that a particular idea occurred across all of the interviews from all of the participants. A participant might refer to an idea only once, but if that idea was mentioned with strong emotion and high emphasis the “passion” was coded. Using these three ideas I was able to establish five concepts that initially seemed to be the natural resting places for the data and feel that I can defend the rigour of the foundation of the concepts. These five concepts: “Relationship as a Marriage”, “Rites of passage”, “After Hours”, “Humour”, and “Boundaries” did not seem adequate for the themes that emerged and began to dominate as I continued to work with the data. The more time that I spent with the data, the more it seemed that there were another two concepts in which data seemed to be more naturally housed and this brought the final number of concepts up to seven with the addition of “Formations of the creative self” and “Ritual and ceremony”.

#### **4.3.1. Original coding chart with seven concepts**

The chart below depicts the original seven concepts with the coding completed.’ “Relationship as a marriage”, and “Formations of creative” self represent the two most dominant concepts.

|                  | A                 | B  | C      | D                                  | E                    | F  | G                   |
|------------------|-------------------|--|--------|------------------------------------|----------------------|--|---------------------|
|                  | After Hours       | Relationship as a marriage                   | Humour | Rites of passage                   | Boundaries           | Formations of creative self                          | Ritual & ceremony   |
| 1                | XXXXXXXXXX        | XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXX   | XXXXXX | XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXXXX       | XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXX | XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXX | XXXX                |
| Kate and William | 8                 | 32   | 6      | 23                                 | 16                   | 47   | 4                   |
| 2                |                   | XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXX                         | XXXX   | XXXXXXXXXXXX                       | XXXXXXXXXXXX         | XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXX                 | XXXXXX              |
| John and Janet   | 0                 | 16   | 4      | 10                                 | 9                    | 29   | 6                   |
| 3                | XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>X | XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXXXX | XXXXXX | XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>X                  | XXXXXXXXXXXX         | XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXX | XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXX |
| Lenny and Freddy | 13                | 36   | 8      | 25                                 | 11                   | 42   | 15                  |
| 4                | XXXXXX            | XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XX           | XXXXXX | XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XX | XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXX | XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXXXX         | XXXXXX              |
| Helen and Olivia | 7                 | 26   | 6      | 26                                 | 16                   | 34   | 6                   |
| 5                | XXXXX             | XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XX                           | XXXX   | XXXXXXXXXXXX                       | XXXXXXXXXXXX         | XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXX                                 | XXX                 |
| Ben              | 5                 | 14   | 4      | 9                                  | 7                    | 28   | 3                   |
| 6                | X                 | XXXXXXXXXX                                   | XXXX   | XXXXXXXXXXXX                       | X                    | XXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXX                           | XXXX                |
| Bill             | 1                 | 8  | 4      | 11                                 | 1                    | 20   | 4                   |

**Figure 1 - Original coding chart**

As I recognised patterns and similarities and connections between these concepts I was able to revise them to become three ‘super concepts’: “Formations of the Creative Self”, “Relationship as a Marriage”, and “Rites and Rituals”. “Rites and Rituals” became a composite of the two concepts “Rites of passage” and “Ritual and Ceremony” which had a number of strong correlations. “Formations of the Creative Self” recorded a total of 200 references, followed by “Relationship as a Marriage” with 132, and “Rites of Passage” with 104. The remaining three concepts: “After Hours”(34), “Boundaries” (60), and “Humour” (32) all of which had less repetition and recurrence were integrated where relevant into the “super concepts”. “Formations of the Creative Self” retained its original quota of references at 200, however “Relationship as a Marriage” resulted in 119, and “Rites and Rituals” with 83. Perhaps some might suggest this process was unnecessarily exhaustive, but I found that through this process and its forced immersion that the resulting data are more robust and defensible.



#### 4.3.2. Coding chart presenting the three “super concepts”

|                         | Three Concepts                         |                             |  |
|-------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--|
|                         | Relationship as a marriage             | Rites and rituals           | Formations of creative self                          |
| <b>1</b>                | XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXXXXX | XXXXXXXXXXXXX               | XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX<br>x  |
| <b>Kate and William</b> | 32                                     | 12                          | 47   |
| <b>2</b>                | XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX                  | XXXXXXXXXXXXX               | XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXXXXX               |
| <b>John and Janet</b>   | 16                                     | 10                          | 29   |
| <b>3</b>                | XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXXXXX | XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX       | XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX<br>xx |
| <b>Lenny and Freddy</b> | 28                                     | 19                          | 42   |
| <b>4</b>                | XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX<br>xx            | XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX<br>xx | XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX       |
| <b>Helen and Olivia</b> | 22                                     | 22                          | 34   |
| <b>5</b>                | XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX                  | XXXXXXXXXXXXX               | XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX<br>XXXXXXXXXXXXX               |
| <b>Ben</b>              | 13                                     | 9                           | 28   |
| <b>6</b>                | XXXXXXXXXXXXX                          | XXXXXXXXXXXXX               | XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX                                |
| <b>Bill</b>             | 8                                      | 11                          | 20   |

**Figure 2 - Coding chart - three “super concepts”**

As noted earlier, to interview five teams involved six interview sessions. The seven original concepts with six sessions could be revised to five sessions by simply adding the coding of the fifth and sixth interview subjects together. However I do not believe that this combination would provide an authentic reflection so have kept them coded separately. The reason for this, I suggest, is due to the interaction and communication that occurred between the teams during the interview process which generated their responses and comments that were distinctively different from those that occurred when the final fifth team were interviewed individually. In other words it is the composition of the team and their unique dynamic that generated the responses that were then coded. If any of the other four teams had been interviewed individually, I suggest that their responses would not be the same as those if they were interviewed together as a team. Therefore the coding and concepts in the chart are set out as true reflections of the interviews and of the data.

Neither the recording nor the transcription could adequately capture (for instance) the contained emotion of the discourse between one team when recalling the impact that her having a child had on their personal and professional relationship, and in an effort therefore to “paint conceptual pictures that add to the understanding of an experience” (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 262), I used memos throughout the research process to both record the lived experience and to assist me in identifying possible patterns in the data. Memos functioned as observational notes that I made after each interview, and could capture important elements that affected the data such as the environment in which the interview occurred, or interactions between the participants. Moving between the data and my memos of the interviews and the notes as I transcribed, I came to understand that “if data are the building blocks of the developing theory, memos are the mortar”, (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010, p.119).

I have included two excerpts from my memos that I used during the coding process. The underlines allowed me to capture the essence of the concepts in the interviews.

#### **4.3.3. Methodological Note:**

When Olivia is identifying that her incumbent partner is “wishy washy” and she “wants that girl” who is Helen, it’s their inner drive propelling them. While this was originally coded under “Rites of Passage”, it seems to sit more naturally with “Formations of the Creative Self” as Olivia is clear that to complete the team she needs Helen. Helen’s description of “rotting away in suitland” and the impact of the stress sits under “Formations of the Creative Self” as she views it as the antithesis of what she knows she wants to be: a copywriter.

#### **4.3.4. Memo:**

This is the early part of the interview with Helen and Olivia and represents Helen’s story of how she became a team with Olivia. She is referencing her conflicting formation of creative self; she is describing her lack of confidence and sense of place in the industry and in her role as a creative; yet despite her lack of confidence and her desperation to get into the industry she’s clear that she’d “never work for free”. She is devoted to her partner Olivia and acknowledges this when she explains the process she went through which was obviously taxing for her:

Helen:... now that they all work for free...I’d never work for free...so it was ...and Olivia was the creative p.a and I went ‘Ooh that girl seems cool’ but they didn’t hire

me until after that...I was just a meek little scared little mouse and wrote lots of long copy and newsletters and didn't say boo and so needless to say when the time was up it was 'yup give us a call after Christmas' ...they actually called me in late January and said "there's an account executive role going on the retail account you might, it's quite a good foot in the door if you do want to work here" and 'cause I'd decided I loved the agency and wanted to stay there so I just went in for the interview and thought sounds quite good actually. Which it wasn't. But I didn't know any better. They were offering \$30,000 starting salary which sounded brilliant after my years of being a student so I thought yeah I'll do it as a foot in the door. So what I used to do...there was a juniour team in there – he's really good...he's great. But he was a naughty little first year working juniour creative then and they had egos up to here and they were like 'we just do brand' and part of their job was the retail crap buy two or more and save radio spots and they used to give me so much shit as a little scared account executive so that what I used to do is just write the radio ads myself 'cause I was like it's too hard to brief it in. And I just kind of like made sure that a few people knew that but really it was Leisa who then actually got me the job..."

Some of these conversations are referred to further in Chapter 5. These memos offer essential context when arranging the concepts into an explanatory scheme (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The insights offered through these memos provided me with the data with which to build concepts. The memos allow the participant's voices to be present, their stories, beliefs, and attitudes to be captured, recorded and translated into themes and concepts.

This chapter has outlined the methodology of this research, using grounded theory in which to mine the data for truths and allow these truths to emerge through repetition, recurrence and passion. Semi structured interviews provided the material to mine, with reflexivity and sensitivity offering dimension and context. Through my intense involvement in the research process, my experience with the research topic, and my continuing association with the advertising industry through my research and teaching, I suggest that this work is both robust and defensible.

In the following two chapters I will present the data findings and analysis drawn from the six interviews of the ten participants in this research.

## Chapter Five: Two can play at this

The following two chapters explicate the concepts that emerged from coding the data.

The coding process originally revealed five themes but in the course of working with the data, the five were reduced to three “super concepts” called “The Relationship as a Marriage”, “Rites and Rituals”, Formations of the Creative Self.

This chapter unfolds the themes associated with the “super concept” the Relationship as a Marriage” and ranges in its exploration from the broadest ideas of how the working relationship of the dyadic team could be similar to a marriage, down to the minutiae of what makes the “marriage” work.

The “super concept” “The Relationship as a marriage” contains sub themes of “After Hours”, “Humour” and “Boundaries”, showing how these concepts are indicative of the factors leading to successful dyadic teams.

### 5.1. What is this thing called love?

Throughout this chapter and this thesis I refer to the dyadic relationship using the metaphor of marriage, which is a term that emerged from conversations with the participants themselves as well as being used by other scholars (McLeod, O’Donohoe, Townley, 2010, p. 115; Nixon, 2003). As I have already said, the term is often used within the advertising industry when describing creative teams (personal communication, 2011). This is an over-arching theme that seems to aptly convey that these dyadic teams are involved in more than simply a professional partnership and that their relationship carries the hallmarks, symbols and stories of marriage. By employing this metaphor I have examined the dyadic teams’ interactions, connections and partnership through the lens of marriage.

This section opens with the definition of “The relationship as a marriage” in the context of the dyadic team, their other relationships, and the advertising industry.

## 5.2. Developing relationships

For the purpose of this thesis, “relationship as a marriage” for the dyadic team will be read as non-sexual transactions between two people for mutual professional reward. The couple, in this case a dyadic team, do not inhabit the same home, but do share an office or other venue (kitchen or cafe are two examples given by the participants) for their professional interactions. The gender of the two people involved in the “marriage” may be same sex or opposite sex but as their relationship is not of a sexual nature, I have not factored gender into the research.

One of the defining characteristics of marriage is that it is a relationship that has been recognised and approved by society, and in the case of the “marriage” of the team, formal recognition and approval is also evident. For instance, the partnership may have been initiated and implemented by a marriage “broker” (in this case a recruitment agent) who has arranged the introduction of the two creatives. The relationship carries an implicit endorsement by that broker and as the investment in senior creative teams often equates to six figure salary packages, there will be a contractual agreement between the broker and the advertising agency to protect the agency should the team not meet the company’s key performance indicators and expectations. These expectations are less likely to relate directly to profit and are more likely to be aligned to developing the creative profile of the agency or solidifying the creative department.

The dyadic team partnership, in this context, is also endorsed by the agency. The agency’s position in the industry enhances theirs, while their success and achievement adds to that of the agency. This can be seen as a form of “win win”, mutual benefit, or direct reciprocity (Nowak, 2011). Taken on a wider scale, couples who are introduced by friends, family or colleagues bring with them the perceived endorsement of the party who was responsible for their meeting. This can be seen as a form of credentials in that the party making the introduction is providing their tacit approval of the person and the prospective partnership. Whether the dyadic team’s partnership has been arranged, or has occurred less purposively, the advertising industry recognises and accepts the “marriage” of the team for as long as it may last. Of the five teams interviewed, the length of the partnerships ranged from three years to more than fifteen years.

In most cases, the data reflect the positive, nurturing aspects of marriage rather than destructive elements that can contribute to the erosion of a relationship but it is perhaps a limitation of the research that I did not focus on dissolved partnerships. My interest was

purely in successful dyadic teams and an enduring, working relationship is a distinguishing characteristic of such teams. The data, therefore, were never likely to capture many negative aspects of the relationship.

There is a “location of self” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 165) when the creative teams define themselves within their partnership. They describe themselves as being involved in a “marriage”. Lenny and Freddy, for instance, choose to describe themselves as an “old married couple”, discussing their partnership as being “no different from a marriage” (personal communication, December, 2010). The similarities extend to a mutual understanding that, “If he’s grumpy I know how to handle him and if I’m grumpy he knows how to handle me”.

This professional “marriage” can affect the primary personal relationships of the team members to varying degrees. The professional relationship is intense and satisfying, but it exists in the context of, and alongside personal family life, and that interplay was seen by my participants to be very important. The role of family could be seen as both a springboard and a foundation for the creative team member. Family support provided a comfort level that allowed the security to play and therefore attain fresh insights and novel approaches. Those participants with spouses and children acknowledged that they were fortunate that their families understood the advertising industry and its exigencies. The robustness of the relationships meant that the absences for business travel, international conferences, and lavish events meant that family life was not compromised or threatened. Although the family relationships were strong, at some point the families of each creative team inevitably experienced the impact of the dyadic partnership. Janet deliberately separated her work and personal life. She put it this way, “Some people treat their creative partnership as an escape from all that stuff. But for us it’s kind of like part and parcel of it” (personal communication, January, 2011). The nature of creative work is not confined to traditional eight hour working day. Each of the participants interviewed have developed their own ways of managing this situation, some by ensuring they are home with their families at an agreed time, or through an awareness and recognition of their professional lives impacting their personal time. For instance, Lenny and Freddy elect not to see each other on the weekends, but married team but Kate and William, occasionally bring their work home.

### 5.3. Contract of a kind

The marriage related behaviours of the dyadic team identified through the interviews are captured within these four main groupings:

- Commitment
- Companionship
- Protection
- Co-operation

The following sections explicate each marriage related behaviour in the context of the dyadic team.

#### 5.3.1. Commitment:

In the sense of loyalty and not wanting to let your mate down is something that drives us, you know I think that's something that's driven us, you know when the chips are down, we'll always have each other (Freddy, personal communication, December, 2010).

Commitment is expressed through the team member's allegiance to each other and to their partnership. The partnership itself is the recipient of their commitment and its success can be influenced and determined by this factor. Through the obstacles and challenges that the partnership may face, it is the dyadic team's commitment that allows them to negotiate their way through challenges to maintain its success. Freddy illustrates their mutual commitment:

We've got the same values, the same morals, the same sense I think of what's right and wrong, I think that's really important, we're both sort of family guys, we're both married with kids and all that sort of stuff and that's the most important thing for our lives (personal communication, December, 2010).

Lenny and Freddy are recognised in the New Zealand advertising industry for the durability of their relationship and their commitment to each other, and to their partnership. When they discuss their relationship, they frame even the story of how they met as a marker of their commitment to one another. The story that they tell of their relationship is one of longevity and no sense of an end in sight. In fact there is a nuance of predetermined destiny for these two. Their fathers knew each other, and valued one another's company, well before this team met. This team's professional relationship began

when they were both completing their university degrees. Lenny identified Freddy as “the only guy in the class who seemed to have the ambition to have a job when he got out of there” (personal communication, December, 2010).

The teams interviewed seemed to have clear goals that they set, achieved and reviewed. Their plans provided a map for their career path that may involve them moving to different agencies and different locations both nationally and internationally. Lenny and Freddy set themselves the goal of being “the most awarded team in the first year”(personal communication, December, 2010) . In this situation, the goal is a form of a commitment that the team have made to each other. It could be seen as an unwritten contract, an agreement that binds the team, and propels them forward. Viewed in this way, it could be seen as a symbol of the traditional wedding with mutual vows.

Commitment to the dyadic relationship was not always easy for my participants. Bill and Ben found that their commitment to one another was tested in a difficult business situation “And Bill and I looked at each other one another one day and said ‘we can’t do this anymore, we’re breaking rules’” (personal communication, February, 2011).The rules they are referring to are their own, and were three pronged, “...do great work, have a good time, make some money” (Ben, personal communication, February, 2011). In an industry where creatives are expected to break the rules, Bill and Ben still adhered to the commitment that they have established between themselves.

Commitment is also demonstrated by supporting each other’s ideas. The successful performance of the team is influenced by the ability to feel comfortable enough with their partner to share concepts and ideas that will not be judged negatively by them. Janet explains the importance of having:

...that openness between you that anything can be said because that anything is the thing that becomes the best idea often and if you hold it back you’ve lost some of your best work (personal communication, January, 2011).

Without this supportive situation, teams may dissolve. Furthermore, early ideas require patient incubation if they are to develop and grow. The determined nurturing of ideas by the team, in what could be seen as parenting roles, is important to their growth and future success.

This research has shown that creative teams were obliged to carry out their work in extremely stressful environments. They were balancing deadlines and the expectations of



clients, creative directors, account managers and themselves. Freddy explains: “You’ve got to put in the huge hours and the crazy all nighters to come up with the stuff that gets you awards so it’s just trying to work out how you can do that and have family as well” (personal communication, December, 2010). Creative work has to be delivered to deadlines, budget and quality standards so the relationship needs to have its own way of managing these factors. A number of the teams speak of the importance of being united, committed to the team, and viewing client or account management confrontations as a ‘them and us’ situation. Janet and John demonstrate their commitment to their dyadic partnership through mutual support which is necessary when the boardroom environment becomes confrontational “...because there’s only two of you and there could be ten people on the other side arguing against you so you have to stick together and try to get that argument forward” (personal communication, January, 2011). This dyadic team reported that their peers in the agency accused them of being intimidating. The team itself does not accept that it projects an image of intimidation, but is prepared to concur with the prevailing opinion if it serves their work, and their career trajectory. In this respect their commitment to one another includes accommodating negative opinions from outside the dyadic team. In some cases, the commitment of team members to the relationship means that members play roles in public in order to achieve a particular goal. Lenny and Freddy had an agreement that they would rarely disagree with one another in front of outsiders unless they chose a deliberate strategy of “good cop, bad cop” (Freddy, personal communication, December, 2010) for example.

Marriage is traditionally framed in terms of “monogamy” and “exclusivity”. In the terms of this research, monogamy refers to commitment to the professional partner, to staying within the relationship and not relinquishing it for another partnership. Coontz (2005, p.309) portrays marriage as the “highest expression of commitment in our culture” and that commitment is an emergent theme in my interviews. It is reflected in two situations where team members were departing for maternity leave. One of the teams was comprised of two females, the other, male and female. In both cases they had been involved in the process of finding a temporary replacement partner. Janet’s concern for consistency for John in her absence illustrated a genuine consideration for him. She was seeking as secure a process as possible for him. When she talked about her leaving for this period of time, John responded by saying “no not feeling abandoned at all” and “damned inconvenient really” (personal communication, January, 2011). There seems to be a subtle undercurrent of sarcasm which may be masking his possible feelings of abandonment. Although John’s comment about his partner’s departure to motherhood was made in a

sarcastic manner with accompanying laughter I wondered if there was more truth to this statement than was being shared at the time. His commitment to his partner Janet is expressed, I suggest, in terms of his not wanting to display his disappointment in her departure. Instead, he laughs it away so as not to betray the truth of his feelings at this impending change. It seems he is protecting both himself, and her; in other words, the partnership. He has no choice in the situation and does not appear to want to add to the complexity of it through displaying a negative attitude.

As with any partnership that is functioning well, changes to its structure can be unsettling for both partners. Even if the change is instigated in the team, it could be construed as a lack of commitment to the partnership. Pregnancy and a new baby is a deliberate statement about the individual's future and a new commitment outside the dyadic creative team, and the change may generate a variety of issues for the team members. Both were aware of the challenges of finding a creative partnership that met their respective professional needs and if there is an intention, as is the case with both of these teams, that they can team up again in the future, it places stress on both the incoming or temporary partner and also on the incumbent who has the expectation of being reconnected. This may have a deleterious effect on the creative output of the temporary partnership. The temporarily abandoned partner may not wish to threaten their original team partnership by forming a stronger and potentially more successful partnership. This type of competition is seen as one of five killers of intrinsic motivation and creativity (Paulis & Nijstad, 2003) and therefore can challenge the commitment of all parties involved.

When Helen and Olivia discuss Helen's departure to become a new mother, the climate in the interview shifted noticeably and quickly from relaxed informality to unexpressed but complex emotions. When I asked whether Olivia was involved in the interview process for replacing Helen while she was taking maternity leave, Helen replied, "No, that's too weird" (personal communication, December, 2010). I noted that this exchange contained nuances of crossing boundaries. Clearly, to be involved in picking a new partner for the partner you are still committed to, was too difficult especially in light of a hope that the replacement would not be an improvement on the original partnership.

Helen and Olivia each convey despair and disappointment, drawing strong parallels to the ending of a marriage: they had not considered this change occurring within their partnership and they both describe it with clear emotion.

Helen: It was very sad.

Olivia: Very sad, it's heart wrenching.

Helen: Like breaking up a marriage.

(personal communication, December, 2010).

This demonstration of commitment is reflected through their shared disappointment. For Helen it is the ending of a chapter of a partnership and for Olivia it brings with it the challenge of working with a new partner, and the knowledge that things will never be the same as they were. It will be up to them to determine the shape of their new professional relationship, while their personal friendship and companionship will also shift due to Helen's new commitments as a mother.

When Olivia recounted interviewing potential creative partners to replace Helen during her pregnancy leave I detected similarities with Janet's views on the subject. Olivia commented that through the interview process she felt that "no one was good enough" (personal communication, December, 2010). Months later, with her baby born, Helen portrays her situation, "Now that I've dipped out and it's all sad and apart" (personal communication, December, 2010). That they still intend to find a way to work together in the future, shaping their personal commitments around those professional, is a testament to their shared dedication and commitment. Lenny and Freddy, while obviously committed to each other in terms of partnership, are also realistic about their commitment to their families; Lenny emphasises that being "a great dad and great husband" (personal communication, December, 2010) is more important than being a great creative.

John and Janet, who both have young families, choose to spend time apart on weekends as do Lenny and Freddy. It was not apparent whether this decision was led by the creative partner or the spouse, but there seemed to be an accord with each team that this arrangement is desirable. Among my participants, it seems that if there are children, the teams will choose to socialise separately on the weekends but that in no way detracts from their connection during the week, and, in fact, the interlude could be seen to invigorate or refresh their creative focus.

When the commitment is strong there seems to be a direct correlation to the impact of the loss of a partner should circumstances (such as pregnancy) necessitate it. In the American documentary film "Art & Copy" (Pray, 2009) one of America's most awarded creatives speaks of the loss he experienced when his creative partner of 14 years announced he was

leaving him. He hadn't expected it and took some time to recover, even changing cities in the process.

### 5.3.2. Companionship

For the purposes of this thesis, companionship is taken to be the shared experiences and understandings between the two partners. Companionship was a theme that emerged consistently throughout my data gathering but it did operate at varying levels of intensity and expression with different teams. Perhaps because of the importance of a positive connection between the members of the team, there is a reliance on the other that could amount to "mutual dependency" which, according to Bilton (2007, p. 27) is due to the "individualisation and specialisation of creative work both within and across creative teams". The mutual dependency that occurs within these successful creative teams serves to enforce the partnership, which the participants discussed in the context of it being a relationship because of the time spent together.

It is the nature of the advertising industry and the expectation of employees within it that dyadic teams sometimes spend more time with each other than with the primary relationships- spouses, children, partners, in their lives. The companionship that is established is the foundation that holds them throughout the demands of extended hours, late nights, and weekend work.

Companionship is reflected in the rituals of social gatherings and regular coffee breaks. Olivia notes that some people were jealous of the relationship in her team: "That's a big ask, to work together every day and yet still be able to socialise on weekends and stuff like that" (personal communication, December, 2010).

Not all of the teams chose to socialise with each other out of hours, on weekends. As noted earlier, Lenny and Freddy who have a strong rapport, chose to spend their weekends with their families, whereas Helen and Olivia, and also at times, Bill and Ben, would socialise with each other out of work hours. Now that they're not working together full time they still connect and socialise on a regular basis. Ben of Bill; "He's the best company" (personal communication, February, 2011). Freddy and Lenny's commentary highlights the companionship that they so obviously share:

Freddy: And when he walks in every morning I go 'Oh cool it's good let's rip into it' and when he's away oh fuck this is a bit boring it's not as fun without him there...

Lenny: You need a wing man...

Freddy: That's what I love about this business, you get to have a mate with you all the time to shoot the shit, to bullshit...

Lenny: It's a lot easier with somebody at your side (personal communication, December, 2010).

The shared understanding that underpins companionship has dual benefits. First, the partnership is cemented, and there is an efficiency in the creative process as the team members do not always have to spend time working out how to interpret one another. William describes his connection with Kate as having a sense of "where she's taking things or might take things" (personal communication, October, 2010). This understanding of one another has been established through prolonged companionship, and it serves them well. For the dyadic team, the responsibility for the agency's creative product places high levels of stress on them therefore a level of openness and companionship supports them through the working process.

There are some obvious rituals associated with the theme of companionship. Some are more relevant in this context as they appear to anchor the companionship. Ben would buy their morning coffees and this would signal the beginning of the working session with Bill. That session would be opened with grounding preliminary conversation around their own interests: for instance, what was on the television the evening before, and the latest sporting event. Each would allow the other to present his own view, and despite having limited interest in the subject, they would patiently listen and comment as a considerate companion would. Bill reflects, "We just enjoyed each other, getting off on each other I suppose. ....like a couple of old married people, he'd bring coffees, we'd sit and talk...." (personal communication, March, 2011).

It seems that for the teams it is the small things that add up to the concept of companionship: the sharing of a morning cup of coffee or a passing comment about a new staff member. In all of the teams there was reference to unspoken understandings, short hand language, shared understandings and meanings; the culture of the partnership that becomes rich and ingrained and therefore makes change (of partner) a significant event to adjust to. Without companionship to anchor the commitment the relationship may lack strength and rigour and as a result when faced with major challenges, may not have the resilience to survive or succeed.

Commitment and companionship can be seen to provide a secure foundation for the relationship. It functions at different levels in the different teams but is evident in their choice to spend enjoyable time with each other.

### **5.3.3. Protection**

This section on protection as one of the primary marriage behaviours in the dyadic team opens with an example of this in practice. In this case, Helen and Olivia had agreed to take a team position at an advertising agency but when they decided that it was not the optimum move for them, they did not take the role. As a result of their decision, the agency's Creative Director chooses not to talk to Olivia when they attend industry events. Olivia accepts the perceived punishment while Helen is still being communicated to by the Creative Director. She sees them as 'one' even though the sleighted Creative Director sees the dyadic team as two, communicating two quite different responses to them. By having Helen maintain open communication channels with this influential creative director they are protecting their team through ensuring that they can benefit from future networking opportunities in an industry where reputations can be harmed by those in positions of power.

A contrasting example of protection occurs when Lenny and Freddy are discussing their creative roles. Lenny talks about cracking the idea to make sure it's "water-proof" (personal communication, December, 2010), and Freddy interrupts, correcting the term to "water tight". Freddy is the writer in this relationship and one interpretation of this interaction could be that he's making sure that his partner is communicating appropriately in terms of representing the image of the team. This could be seen as a demonstration of the depth of the partnership and possible roles within it. Here, it seems that Freddy is taking on the role of 'elder' or protector. He has a degree in English and is the senior in the partnership, but this is not demonstrated through overt dominance or superiority but rather, it seems to me, by ensuring that statements are conveyed to the team's mutual benefit. He does not reprimand Lenny for using the phrase "water proof", which could have been an accurate if unexpected description of the subject. Lenny's response is not that of one who has been corrected but one who has been supported and protected. It is a moment that speaks of their rapport.

Protection of the other partner can also be seen as protection of the partnership. Situations where one partner protects the interests of the other can be declarations of commitment, but also self preservation. If a partner's actions could threaten themselves or

the team, the other can and does step in to balance the situation. The individual is no longer simply an individual but part of a team therefore they are each the team, jointly and severally and the protection extends to each other and the team equally.

#### **5.3.4. Co-operation:**

The fourth marriage behaviour is that of co-operation. Co-operation functions when two individuals agree to interact in a given way. It is, according to Novack (2011) the foundation of creativity and a critical success factor. When a dyadic team is working towards an agreed outcome, co-operation is essential. They share a common objective, “...trying not to tread on each other’s toes” (Janet, personal communication, January, 2011). The teams interviewed demonstrated their individual application of this behaviour. Kate describes it as “each one knows when to step up and I suppose take one for the team” (personal communication, October, 2010). The inference here is that there is a mutual understanding that one team member will absorb the loss in order that the team can continue to function successfully. In discussing Levi-Strauss’ model of exchange, Doja (2010) suggests that it is this type of exchange that supports functioning order. The durability of the team ensures that this process of exchange will be unbalanced and that there will be times to come when the other member will contribute in the appropriate manner. John explains:

Like a successful marriage, because they’re opposites they balance each other out, you’ve got to have the opposites which is frustrating sometimes but necessary because if you have two people who are the same you’d end up with same bland stuff wouldn’t you, you wouldn’t end with any sparks or interest (personal communication, January, 2011).

The relationship is described in the context of a marriage with its associated challenges in terms of compromise and balance. In this instance the outcome is the creative product: the sparks that can be one of the elements of their success. William suggests “generosity” as an important ingredient in a successful working partnership and as he does I consider if there are implicit conditions or expectations woven into his statement about the “symbiotic relationship so by you being generous for things that might benefit me, I will then in future find things that benefit you...” (personal communication, October, 2010). In this case generosity may be conditional, so there is a reciprocity occurring between the two. When this reciprocity is mutually agreed and does not become unbalanced, the team can function positively. Through co-operation the team can enjoy success and through

their individuality generate more viable creative ideas and work. Accordingly, Kate believes that through their combined success they can “succeed jointly then that’s great for both of us” (personal communication, October, 2010).

While there may be an intention to co-operate, if one team member feels uncomfortable in sharing their ideas, this can create at least two issues: the first is the loss of potentially fertile concepts, and secondly, there exists the issue of imbalance within the relationship which can be an obstacle to their long term success.

There definitely must be the mutual respect and also the understanding...So it is like a partnership in that you do, sometimes you will have to carry the other person for whatever reason and have their back which also comes with, I suppose it’s the listening part as well (Kate, personal communication, October, 2010).

The teams co-operate through their respect for and understanding of another. When co-operation is not exercised the result can be an imbalance of power, which poses a potential threat and destabilising influence for a team that has not agreed to this being an aspect of their partnership. For instance, should both team members pursue one position in an agency, they could be seen to be vying for power. It is here that the situation of the dyadic team versus the individual comes into stark contrast. It is how the team negotiates these challenges, which will occur through their joint careers, that can distinguish their future success.

Balance of power may be determined by more subtle characteristics of the individuals in the team whereby one partner for example, takes responsibility for meeting deadlines or leading the presentation of their work. In the case of the dyadic team, the art director can have additional power over the copywriter in the partnership. In the married team, William explains he sometimes had to “flex his muscles to get a view across” (personal communication, October, 2010), acknowledging that as the art director he has a greater degree of power than his partner. This power is related to the visual aspect of their creative work. In this process, the team create a concept that, unless it is only going to be presented in a written format, such as a radio script, the art director can determine which concepts are visualised for the approval of the client. The ‘power’ rests with the person capable of visually presenting the creative work in a format that begins the process of approval. However in the case of this team William says:

I’m not threatened by Kate trying to take my job, or supersede me or vice versa, it’s just about the craft, and about the ideas as opposed to doing stuff because you’re



trying to flex your...take your lead in the job situation (personal communication, October, 2010).

Balance of power does not have to carry with it the traditional negative connotations, of relinquishing of power if it is anchored by a mutual agreement to co-operate. In the interviews, half of the members of successful partnerships portrayed their partners as equals, though in the case of Ben, William and Helen they placed themselves as being the less dominant within their respective partnerships. This occurs where there is an agreement to co-operate, where one may shoulder more of the load at an agreed time.

And in a funny sort of way I'm kind of the juniour in this relationship, because Kate's been a creative director far longer than me and has had big global experience. In any normal situation if you were a man you'd be my boss (William, personal communication, October, 2010).

When William refers to being the 'juniour' this relates to the amount of professional experience that he brings to the partnership in contrast to that which Kate carries. The balance of power within the relationship is reflected with Helen and Olivia as Helen states that Olivia plucked her "out of obscurity" (personal communication, December, 2010) and brought her into the creative department and therefore into their partnership. As long as there is an agreement as to the 'balance of power' between the two, then, like reasonable adults the team can co-operate and make a success of each project. This research has not explored situations whereby one team member carries their partner, but in general observation of the industry, this is not an attribute of success. There are cases where, for what-ever their motivation, team members allow an imbalance to occur so that, as Kate has observed: "there's one person who's good but they're weighed down by the other person" (personal communication, October, 2010).

The data presented in this chapter show that the partners in the dyadic team feel a high degree of comfort in, and acceptance of, their agreed roles within the partnership. In itself, this settled view of the partnership may not echo a traditional marriage, but the elements of a marriage that have been revealed – commitment, companionship, protection and co-operation – are certainly characteristics that are held in high esteem by scholars who write about life relationships (Coontz, 2005).

The jostling and adjustments that can take up and potentially waste time in traditional relationships, are settled and accepted so that the more vital activity of creating can occur. A metaphorical cleaning of the house occurs, with furniture in agreed positions before

play begins. The participants appear to enter the dyadic partnerships understanding that they are embarking on a work relationship that has elements of a traditional marriage and in the expectation that it will also have the longevity of the traditional marriage.

In the following chapter the two other super concepts “Formation of the Creative Self”, and “Rites and Rituals” will be discussed.

## Chapter Six: Interiors and exteriors

The previous chapter explored the super concept “Relationship as a Marriage” in order to define some of the interplay of the creative partnership. This chapter presents the other two super concepts that emerged from my data analysis. The first of these super concepts is “Formations of the Creative Self”, and the second is “Rites and Rituals”.

### 6.1. The creative self

As was foreshadowed in Chapter 4, the process of analysing the raw data into concepts (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) showed that references to the category of “Formations of the creative self” were coded most frequently. “Formations of the creative self” relates to how the individuals situate themselves with their partners and with others in the advertising industry. The creative professionals have learned to present an appropriate “self” in order to survive and succeed within their professional environment. In many cases, those teams with strong connections between them are capable of understanding the real self behind the façade presented to other less involved audiences.

Amabile’s theory of intrinsic motivation could be seen to underpin the “creative self” in that “independence, an absence of conformity in thinking and dependence on social approval”(1996, p. 90) is a hallmark trait of creativity. Following Amabile, my participants exhibited differing degrees of independence of spirit that allowed them to challenge traditional pathways in life.

The “creative self” is the engine room of the participant’s creativity, and seems to influence the behaviour, thoughts and actions of these creative professionals. This is not to say that people who do not take a career in the creative industries do not have the same creative self, but rather that the participants have chosen to channel their creativity into their professional lives.

“Formations of the creative self” also defines the sense of “knowing” shared by the individuals who participated in my research. They chose a creative pathway, without, for at least two of the interview participants, the understanding or endorsement of their parents. Nevertheless they made decisions, with confidence, regardless of limited external support.

The super concept of “Formations of the creative self” is explored through these six groupings:

- DNA: that creativity is part of their coding- whether or not it is genetic
- The sense of knowing: the unspoken understanding, apparent intuition
- Rewards of the role: aspects that are tangible and those less tangible
- Image: how they appear, are positioned in the context of the industry
- Creative experience: who does what, when, where, why and how
- Ourselves together: when two become one within the dyadic team

#### **6.1.1. DNA: that creativity is part of their coding**

If DNA is genetic information, the creative DNA that I am proposing in this section is that which determines the creative behaviour, thoughts and actions of the participants. Creative DNA informs their choices and directions subconsciously. It is part of the participant’s identity, though as to whether or not it is passed on through generations while a compelling subject, this is not explored in this research.

‘Formations of creative Self’ encompasses the spill-over of the creative’s skill and the way that their craft infuses their professional and personal lives. For the teams interviewed, their creative DNA began to influence them early in life. For instance, Ben discovered there was no other decision he could make when it came to choosing a career, as he had always wanted to write and advertising was the first industry to offer him a job (personal communication, February, 2011) His creative partner, Bill, refers to his work being the product of his childhood hobby, and so it could be seen as play, an activity done for the sheer joy, rather than as a means to an end. He recalls that he wrote and illustrated his own versions of “Mad” magazine and gave them to his friends at school: “All I’ve done in my working life was get paid for what I did as a hobby” (personal communication, March, 2011). Bill’s “play” or “hobby” was acted out independently, as something he chose to do of his own free will. This freedom to create is identified by Rogers, Koestler, Crutchfield and Amabile (Amabile, 1996, p. 91) who suggest that creative thinking is enhanced by freedom from extrinsic constraint. In other words, freedom allows the stress free space for creativity to occur. In as much as the participants felt they had no choice but to do what they do, they had to have a degree of autonomy to walk their chosen road.

The infusion of creative DNA was evident when Bill related his entry into advertising. His father was adamant that he would end up living in an attic which Bill considered, “...quite cool. So there it was, always ringing in my ears, that was my Dad’s famous ‘you’ll end up a

beatnik, you won't make any money'" (personal communication, March, 2011). The assumption was made by Bill's parents that choosing a profession in the field of creativity and art equated with poverty. This misunderstanding of the role of the creative in advertising occurred for a number of the participants' families, however it did not prevent them entering the advertising industry. Later, Bill's father questioned, "Why do they pay him so much?" and "So what do you do, Bill?" (personal communication, March, 2011). A similar theme emerged when Olivia recounted her decision to enter advertising when her father advised that she should instead work for herself and start her own business. On reflection she said that, "A lot of it I think was proving them wrong" (personal communication, December, 2010). This striking out on an independent path is a recognised trait of creativity (Amabile, 1996). When describing her husband's view of her profession, Olivia (personal communication, December, 2010) explains "...because I'm the devil working in advertising." This was stated with a wry smile, and could be seen as another demonstration of her coding, combining both playfulness and discipline which is a characteristic of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 61).

DNA guided each of the interview subjects towards their career path. Both Olivia and Helen started their careers outside of the creative department, eager to enter what seemed to be to them a revered environment. For Olivia her goal was clear: "I was, like, I really wanna be a creative"(personal communication, December, 2011). Helen was as determined to become a creative, but had to take a role as an account executive initially which enabled her to develop her copywriting skills: "They used to give me so much shit as a little scared account executive that what I used to do is just write the radio ads myself 'cause I was like it's too hard to brief it in" (personal communication, December, 2011). This statement illuminates her creative DNA in that Helen was driven to move from her place "outside" the creative department. Focussed on moving from the outside in, she ensured that "a few people" knew that although she was an account executive, she really desired to be a creative and undertook copywriting for "retail crap" in order to get started. Helen reflected on this time:

I had huge rashes up both arms I was so stressed; it was the most stressful awful job but I didn't know how to get out of it into creative, you know it was once you're in the other camp you're really, I was incredibly lucky that I got pulled over (personal communication, December, 2011).

As well as working creatively for their agencies, the majority of my participants also chose to create in their own time and space, and to evaluate their own work, rather than relying

on external affirmation. In other words, the freer they were to “be”, the truer to their creative selves they can then be. At the time of data gathering, Bill was writing a film and Ben a screen play (personal communication, March, 2011), and William and Lenny painted at night (personal communication, October, 2010 ). Lenny (personal communication, December, 2010) acknowledged that he’d always been drawn to advertising, but still wanted to be a painter. Janet’s comment illustrated the ongoing creative application beyond their work. “It’s funny how you find that the creative people that we work with: most people have got 3 or 4 streams of stuff that they’re interested in. For me, it’s music and song writing” (personal communication, January, 2011). The extracurricular creative activities I have depicted here were very important to my research participants, but in themselves they did fully express the creative impulse. When Helen discussed the subject of industry awards, she clearly felt that the advertising industry a desirable structure to another side of her creativity. And she said that her partner would go and paint, and that she would write poetry if they “...just wanted to prove that we could be creative” (personal communication, December, 2010).

Throughout this chapter I refer to the well-documented frisson between the creative and account management departments in advertising agencies. The line is most markedly drawn between “creative”, or to use Helen’s term “the other camp” (personal communication, December, 2010) and the account management. The creatives frequently have to metaphorically “fight” account managers in order to have their concept accepted and produced, and this is a defence mechanism that is part of their creative DNA. From the creatives’ perspective they are honouring and protecting an idea, but from account management’s perspective, “...they don’t see you as being passionate and trying to get something good out...they see you as being difficult” (Janet, personal communication, January, 2011). Few make the move, or have the desire to transfer from one side to the other as they view the skill sets as quite separate and unique to their roles.

Creative DNA is also expressed through the teams’ work standards. While reputation is recognised through ‘Image’, there is an acknowledgement of mutual standards which may have formed part of the original attraction for them as a team. This has supported the relationship, as Helen puts it, “I think it’s in both our natures that we wouldn’t ever want to be crap” (personal communication, December, 2010).

### 6.1.2. The sense of knowing

While cognitive judgement is involved in the creative process, the right brain skill of intuition also plays a role. Intuition is individual and collective and applies to two aspects of the team's professional experience: intuition in terms of ideation and creativity, and secondly, in terms of their connection with, and understanding of, their partner. Freddy talks about how this operates with his creative partner:

The details of each year might change and sometimes they're written, sometimes they're unwritten. Sometimes we talk about them, sometimes we don't. When there's big decisions to be made they don't actually take much discussion (personal communication, December, 2010).

In the case of the dyadic teams that I interviewed, there was a "sense of knowing" that flowed between the participants. I perceived the sense of knowing as an understanding and connection that was shared between the two, to the point that they sometimes appeared to communicate without needing to speak. The sense of knowing has developed through their time together and is grounded in their experiences, both professional and personal, aiding them in their creative work together. Lenny described this sense of knowing as, "when you know it's right in your heart, you know you're right" (personal communication, December, 2010). Janet (personal communication, January, 2011) suggested the benefits of this approach as "...you just do that innately which saves you so much time as well." Being able to rely on this mutual understanding frees up the participants to focus on other aspects that face them professionally.

Shared understanding that eliminated unnecessary discussion formed a strong bond between the participants. Freddy speaks of "irrefutable evidence" (personal communication, December, 2010) for their decision that they should work together as a dyadic team. This was not an arrogant position, but rather an expression of intuition honed through decades of their work as creative practitioners. What may have begun in their early years as a glimmer of thought has become a clear, resonating message that they listen to, respect and respond to. Using their sense of knowing, the participants can follow their intuition and break new ground creatively, supported by the confidence in themselves and the origination of the concept, because, as William says, "we knew that was the way to go"(personal communication, October, 2010).

### 6.1.3. Rewards of the role

With substantial salary packages, expense account lifestyles, and elite skills, creative practitioners are viewed by the advertising industry as privileged (Nixon, 2003). For the teams who succeed in the advertising industry, the privileges are represented through financial rewards and creative awards, to the less tangible, but no less important, peer recognition. Ben recalls his team's winning performance: "It was almost embarrassing, we won everything that we went after, cleaned up Axis year upon year"(personal communication, February, 2011). The Axis Awards can be likened to the Academy Awards of the advertising industry in New Zealand. Creatives seek these awards as they can define and legitimise them in a competitive environment.

The financial rewards can present challenges for the individual as some may wrestle with their inner selves as to the ethical or personal value of working in advertising. John recounts how as a young man he decided to enter the advertising industry: "Do I sell my soul to advertising for the money or become a hermit in the hills and paint and try to make money but at the time it was quite attractive to make money" (personal communication, January, 2011). He chuckled when he said this as those who enter advertising are frequently referenced as having "sold out" of the more conservative careers in order to benefit financially.

The financial rewards for those who succeed in the industry are significant. By way of example, the 2011 advertising industry salary survey ('Road to recovery', 2011) reported that Executive Creative Director's annual salaries in New Zealand sit between \$250,000 and \$500,000, and that Senior Creatives earn between \$100,000 and \$180,000. Intermediates earn between \$60,000 and \$90,000 and juniours between \$30,000 and \$45,000. To put this into context, Statistics New Zealand report that the average salary in New Zealand equates to \$69,317.04 while the minimum wage is \$28,080 (Statistics NZ Quarterly Employment survey March 2012 quarter)

While John chose the "attractive option to make money", he had settled his family almost in "the hills" thereby combining the rewarding salary and lifestyle. Rewards of the role were also acknowledged by Freddy when he stated that "we earn it but we don't take it for granted"(personal communication, December, 2010). The pathway to rewards is negotiated by the dyadic team as their success grows. In New Zealand, most junior creatives experience a form of initiation (discussed in more detail in 'Rites and Rituals') as interns where the salaries are lower than the legal hourly rate. What could be called the subcutaneous layer of the creative self was revealed when Helen called herself "a meek



little scared little mouse”(personal communication, December, 2010). While she chose this way to describe and situate herself she also demonstrated a clear sense of her own worth which led her to declare that she wouldn’t ever “work for free”(personal communication, December, 2010). This apparently paradoxical behaviour or “complexity” is suggested as a key trait of the creative’s personality (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 57).

However, rewards are not limited to material or tangible aspects. There is also the reward of recognition from peers and clients for the participants. When Lenny and Freddy’s work was pivotal in winning significant new business, the team felt rewarded by the financial boost that it gave the agency. Lenny describes it in terms of feeling

...treasured by the agency in a way that wasn’t just a team doing whacky ideas and that was what we kind of liked and we also knew that the stuff we were doing that was winning awards was going to be seen by a very small group of people (personal communication, December, 2010).

For this team to feel “treasured” carries obvious significance which may have greater value perhaps, than their salaries at this time. Alternatively this could be viewed as a form of rationalisation for them, that they are earning their place at the agency. This connects with the conscience of the creative through feeling that they have achieved what they set out to do, and met their own standards, which are consistently high.

It would bother me that I just knocked something out and was like ‘Ah, I’m off to the pub,’ I wouldn’t feel good about myself because whatever I did I would like to get that thing which is ‘Wow I can’t believe you did that’ or ‘Wow I never thought of it that way, so yes, I do like the gratification of people pleasing but also once it actually does something people go ‘Wow that really worked’, that’s gratifying (Kate, personal communication, October, 2010).

The opinion of industry peers seemed to be a complex matter for the dyadic teams. Peer approval was important, but only to a point. It did seem that the final arbiter of the value of the team is that of the team of themselves and this was embedded in their relationship and skill sets. A situation in the interviews that illuminated this was the plight of Helen and Olivia whose creative work was winning awards internationally. Their agency flew them to New York to receive their prizes but they preferred to be at the local New Zealand industry ‘Axis’ Awards as it was the “only industry party where everyone’s there and we knew we probably had a pretty good chance”(personal communication, December, 2010). Helen and Olivia’s colleagues offered them limited condolences, as from their perspective,

a trip to New York was far more appealing than an evening in Auckland, but the team acknowledged the greater value to them of receiving plaudits from the people with whom they mixed with regularly. It turned out to be “...the biggest haul we’ve ever made at Axis” (personal communication, December, 2010) for the female team. It seems that recognition and reward carried more relevance when the “winners” were sharing the same environment, as they felt it would be an empty victory to return with gold if there was no one there to acknowledge their award.

Recognition and reward complete the circle of advertising creativity because they are part of the mix that drives the successful dyadic team. These are two of the seven conditions suggested as necessary for creativity to occur (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 330). For the record: training, expectations, resources, recognition, hope and opportunity complete the set. As the team becomes more successful and the awards become more frequent, their glitter, it seems, is not quite so bright. The ability to place in context the award culture was expressed in two different situations by Lenny. “Those awards are only important really to people that don’t have them. Once you’ve got them, they’re great to have, they’re not that distracting lure that causes you to think about only the award” (personal communication, December, 2010). He was referring to the symbolism of creative awards which, once attained seem to lose some of their initial glow and therefore value to the team. Lenny explains:

You know you only need to try and explain what you do a couple of times and you realise that the importance that you put on these awards is really nothing, that no one gives a shit outside of advertising (personal communication, December, 2010).

#### **6.1.4. Image**

There seemed to be a maturity and acceptance with the dyadic teams I interviewed that there is not so much requirement to demonstrate their position, or prove their place within the industry with overt symbols of success. This is not to say that my participants did not live in the upper socio-economic areas, or drive elite brand vehicles, but considering what they earn, their lifestyles are less ostentatious than might be expected. My participants did not appear to place high priority on these lifestyles now that they are successful, and the lifestyles were not the primary attraction for them at the commencement of their careers. Janet’s focus was to “make money and have some fun” (personal communication, January, 2011) as a copywriter, rather than following the academic pathway that she was expected to take after completing her degree.

The data showed that as the creatives developed their craft and position in the advertising industry, the expectations of others, and of themselves, increased. William (personal communication, October, 2010) suggested that there is an expectation that once a “certain level” of seniority was achieved, that this equated to knowing “everything” and therefore that there was no need to develop new skills. In other words, admission of a lack of skills does not support a successful image in the industry. Following this attitude, seeking to develop new skill sets is not an indication of intellectual hunger or professional rigour but rather a sign of weakness. The corollary of this is that with the advent of digital and new media, senior creatives recognise that to stay current, up skilling is necessary. The implication is that younger creatives more familiar with the technology can and will supersede them and in so doing enhance their own professional images.

When senior creatives have achieved their desired position in the industry, they endeavour to protect their position within a competitive environment. The ages of the participants interviewed range from 30s to late 50s and they were all aware of those in their 20s with their eyes fixed on achieving their own creative standing. One of the participants referenced her concern over how some creatives focus on their image rather than the work, which, she suggested can compromise the product “...so you shouldn’t be too self conscious or otherwise you’ll only do ideas that you think are cool” (Kate, personal communication, October, 2010). In attempting to develop individuality they may instead appear to be more similar than they set out to be.

In the desire to be “cool”, creatives wear an apparently dressed down wardrobe to portray the impression of having donned the first piece of clothing they found, when in reality it is a carefully composed image or “studied informality” (Nixon, 2003, p. 142) that they believe will make them more acceptable to and within the advertising industry. For those who have attained a level of achievement in their careers, there is a position of safety when they review those who appear to be focussed on making an impression. Janet explains that it had “all been smoke and mirrors and that’s the thing in this industry I think it’s easy to create a persona or create this imaginary brilliance only for it to all fall down like a house of cards” (personal communication, January, 2011). The successful dyadic teams seem to have experienced the “persona” and “imaginary brilliance” and grown past it. They no longer need the image because they have developed their own brand and it exemplifies them; it is earned, it is well worn.

How the team appear, their career and image management is part of the brand that they create which distinguishes them from other teams in the industry. Strategic selection of

the agency that they work for can enhance a team's position and their rewards. An agency that mirrors their own philosophy and standards will serve to substantiate the team's image in the advertising industry. Early in his career Bill was certain that he wanted to be a creative director. He "...felt ready to be a creative, and I had so much to learn"(personal communication, March, 2011). This aspirational attitude drives many creatives as they see where they want to be and then set in place plans to achieve it. Without aspirations of this nature they may remain as juniour or middle weights, never attaining the success or recognition that my research participants have achieved.

In Bill's early career, he spent three months in the head office of an agency where they wanted to imbue him with the culture, qualities, standards of this agency so transforming him into a living representation of the agency's brand. His reputation within in the industry sees him now as a man not bound to any particular agency. He is very much his own person, but this type of initiation that he underwent in his early career continues to take place at many agencies, where employees are requested to not simply champion, but "live" the brand. Bill is so much is own person that he has, in the manner of brothers Charles and Maurice Saatchi, established his own eponymous agency. This independent behaviour, choosing to separate from the agency's image, and connect more to their own, was expressed again when Freddy recounted the development of their image early in their careers: "...we could have this brand as well which I think unashamedly we've developed over time"(personal communication, December, 2010).

Positioning of the team is achieved through various strategies, and among these strategies is the careful selection of the agencies they are employed by, the type of work they create, and the awards that they win. One of the teams reacted badly to a proposed merger with another agency, feeling that it would damage their own image. They were asked by management to stay, but were concerned that they would be seen as being the "booby prize" (Helen, personal communication, December, 2010) and chose to leave the agency. The risk of being considered as second best did not support the desired, nurtured image of their team in the small New Zealand industry. Conversely when this team was hired by an agency that had significant creative notoriety in the industry, they refer to maintaining the "facade" despite not enjoying the environment because the agency's reputation, however, complemented their image. Helen explains: "Because in advertising you work with such great, cool people and you don't want to do anything shit because they're all going to see it...your name is pretty much attached to it." (personal communication, December, 2010)

The team sees their creative work for client's brands as an extension of their own brand and therefore connected to it. They don't want to "put something shoddy on the table" (Lenny, personal communication, December, 2010) which motivates them, often to work late into the night. While their image is not the only motivation, the teams set their own standards and apply themselves to ensuring that their personal ideals are consistently achieved. As Ben says, "We weren't whores for money, we stuck to our principles, and that infected the entire agency in a nice way, we wouldn't bend over for anybody"(personal communication, February, 2011). Freddy refers to the motivations for the teams:

We just don't want to put shit work on the table so there's all that other stuff of providing for family and all that sort of stuff but at its essence we just know that if we do good work everything else will fall into place (personal communication, December, 2010).

This statement shows a confidence in self that comes from professional experience. The teams interviewed seemed to have consistently high standards, and in the majority of cases this was balanced by the positive experience of the creative process.

### 6.1.5. The creative experience

In the creative experience of producing advertising the teams combine their crafts whereby the visual arena is the responsibility of the art director, and the copywriter is the wordsmith. They are clear about the delineation of roles and share an understanding of what each partner is responsible for. Bill recounted working with Ben, making it clear that he was the ideas person and that Ben was the wordsmith. They both acknowledged that Bill would “pace up and down and say ‘how about this, how about that?’”(personal communication, March, 2011). In the dyadic team, one member may take the role of the ‘pacer’ or ‘worrier’; this is agreed and becomes an integrated part of their dynamic. Kate and William expressed a clear understanding of each of their roles:

We know our own disciplines and our own strengths because I very much come from a writer’s disciplined background and William from a graphics background so we don’t mess with each other’s area of expertise...which I think helps not have conflicts in that William’s not looking over my shoulder trying to perfect my headline and nor am I meddling in the process you’re involved in and I think that actually makes us productive (personal communication, October, 2010).

This clarity of role and responsibility enables the team to focus on the project rather than the less productive and potentially distracting negotiation and shifting of roles. Teams referred to owning their particular territory and “different areas of expertise” (Janet, personal communication, January, 2011). That the dyadic team members own their skill sets and roles is clear, but in addition there is another model, that of the creative hybrid whereby one or both members of the team bring skills in both crafts of copywriting and art direction. This thesis does not seek to explore the concept of the creative hybrid, but it is relevant to note that this situation can be seen to detract from production of the work until there is a clarity as to which partner is bringing which skill to each creative project.

An empathy and understanding of the other’s craft is expressed by a number of the participants. In every team there was a demonstrated respect for their partner. The first time Bill and Ben worked together, which was the beginning of a fruitful career, Bill invited Ben to help him develop a concept for a television commercial. When Bill reflected on it, he appeared unsure as to why he approached Ben but said, “I must have thought he might have been a good team mate, I don’t know, but I said, ‘do you want to come over...and we’ll sort of have a go at it’”(personal communication, March, 2011). This comment blends a type of intuition in that he thought that Ben might be a good partner. It

also has hallmarks of a child's tentative invitation to another, to engage in activity that could be aligned more with the playground than the boardroom. Csikszentmihalyi(1996, p. 61) describes the creative process "playfully light" which could be represented in the throwing ideas between one and other, of using pens and pencils to convey ideas. It also conveys the necessity of that "team mate" with whom he can collaborate and work with. Freddy explained his team's situation at the time of this research:

We've got to a stage now where we're working quite quickly, you get abit more judicious and a bit smarter at rejecting the shit and hopefully you get to the solution faster and that just comes with experience (personal communication, December, 2010).

As well as proven excellence at their craft, there was a clear, demonstrated respect for each other which was a constant in what the teams acknowledged is a turbulent industry. My participants appreciated the skills that their partner brought to the partnership and were generous in their acknowledgement of it. They each appreciated what the other had done in terms of "time served" to arrive at the place that they share together now. There was a balancing of understanding of their domain, without the need to invade it, and yet there seemed not to be any "precious" behaviour.

The teams' shared experiences and learning saw them developing a method of working through the creative process in a way that allowed them to balance their standards with their skill, within the business environment that demands consistently high performance. Ben explained it this way:

You can't be brilliant on everything. You drive yourself mad. It's a brochure. It's a fucking brochure. You're not going to win a Cannes with that. So you do it and you do it to your best ability (personal communication, February, 2011).

When John and Janet discussed some of their advertising work, the process they described had some similarities to that of childbirth or child rearing: "You think all the pain was worth it but at the time you just think...and I suppose they say any good thing is worth suffering for but you think 'Why does it have to be so painful?'"(personal communication, January, 2011). John shared Janet's view acknowledging that "...you forget about it really quick, all that shit you went through...once it's done you see the work you actually forget it...". That they are bringing new ideas into the world and nurturing them into developed entities goes some way in explaining this description. These comments also demonstrated how some of the teams formed their own way of adapting to

the creative process in that there is recognition of the work without residing in the minutiae of the process.

The places where the teams created their work was also discussed. The sensitive nature of the creative spirit, compromised by negative environments, was addressed by Olivia when she explained how the creative ego can be “squashed” by negativity, which can damage their confidence, which in turn impacts on their performance within the agency. If creative directors decide that they don’t like a person, she suggested, “they might as well leave now, because you know no one’s going to help them produce the goods” (personal communication, December, 2010). William concurred: “This is a biological fact, but when people are stressed the first part of the brain that gets removed is the creative part”(personal communication, October, 2010). This undermining of creativity through environmental factors is supported through Amabile’s theory of intrinsic motivation principle of creativity through “win-lose competition within an organisation, expected negative evaluation of one’s ideas”(1996, p. 117).

While the specific point was not probed further in the interviews, all of the participants had at least once in their careers made decisions to move from agency environments that they believed compromised their development. In situations with other teams in the industry, the team might separate if the dyadic connection is not strong and the rejected member will leave the agency to seek the establishment of a new partnership or failing that, a role as a solo creative. They may determine the requirements of their new environment differently as a result, in other words, environment that allows creativity to flourish is an essential factor. As Amabile suggests, the “fewer extraneous difficulties people must cope with in their work the more likely they are to perform creatively” (1996, p. 254).

#### **6.1.6. Ourselves together**

It’s all about your partner because when I worked with X he was fun and great and we had a nice time but he was very much out the door at 4 o’clock to go surfing and ‘let’s just do something that the client will buy as opposed to let’s really push it’, and XX was just so political and was into everything and XXX was very career hungry to the ‘I’ll take any idea we do together and say it’s mine’, so I learned a lot from having those partners...who weren’t what I wanted (Helen, personal communication, December, 2010).



This section opens with a reflection from Helen about the type of partner with whom she could not function successfully. Her rejection of this type of partner was due to the partner focussing on their individual needs rather than the mutual needs of the team. The dyadic team is composed of two individuals who chose to forfeit some of their individuality in order to create and participate in a professional partnership of two. In the early stages of a creative partnership, mutual trust will assist the process, but as the relationship develops and they learn their ways around each other, the benefits are seen to outweigh any perceived negative aspects that could be considered in terms of being subsumed by the other partner. While the skill sets they bring to the partnership are different, it is the blending of them - crafting of art and of copy – that creates the campaign that distinguishes them. William chose to describe his partnership with Kate by using the Zulu word “ubuntu”, which translated means “I am because we are”. He explained,

Anything that you are, we are. And I think that’s a nice thing in a team relationship, so in terms of giving you the space to have a thought, it’s our thought, it’s not my thought (personal communication, October, 2010).

While ego is acknowledged it is also balanced in the team setting and there is an accord between the team rather than the individual: the “our” rather than the “my”. When discussing the concept of team, in the majority of the successful teams there is no room for “I” to dominate. As Ben said, “It doesn’t really matter who’s got the idea, just, best idea wins. Not precious about it,”(personal communication, February, 2011). Ben’s statement seems to suggest that while ego can divide a team of two, the successful teams I interviewed acknowledged the need to manage egos in the partnership. Kate described it as a “blurring of credits and a blurring of egos” (personal communication, October, 2010) in the teams that will last. In these successful teams there has been an agreement to “blur” or to merge to become the one team that can focus on the creative product. The participants seemed to have successfully balanced their area of craft without compromising the mutual objective of the work. They took responsibility for their area of expertise and shared the reward for their joint efforts. Lenny referred to the blending of their skills as a form of “double act magic”(personal communication, December, 2010). It could also be described as the result of their life experiences, their craft and the alchemy that occurs when these two individuals come together to create. Given the same brief and a different partner, it is unlikely that creative result would be the same. It is the unique ingredients of each dyadic team who create, consistently, the work that makes them successful by industry standards.

When all these strands are brought together, not only is excellent work created, the process itself carries with it rewards. Ben said, “If I’m not having a good time I’m not doing a good job” (personal communication, February, 2011). There is a positive experience associated with the creative process in that it is fulfilling. By contrast, these rewards are brought into sharp focus when the individual is without a partner. Helen recounted her situation prior to teaming as “the sad little creative and people would come round and ask ‘when does your partner arrive?’ Every day”(personal communication, December, 2010). For those who have experienced a positive creative partnership and had circumstances change so that they are without one, they are aware of what they are missing, and may seek to replicate it again. Janet sought to return to a traditional creative partnership when she found that her leadership position wasn’t as creatively rewarding as when she had worked with an art director (personal communication, January, 2011). Janet was referring to the experience of partnership in a dyadic team, which she sacrificed when she was promoted to the role of creative director. This is a solo or independent position which is a senior promotion within the hierarchy of the advertising industry. Members of the dyadic team take on ‘junior’, ‘middle weight’, and then ‘senior’ roles. Through promotion, senior copy writers and senior art directors can be promoted to a creative director role which they practise, in the majority of cases, on their own. Kate and William have both held creative director roles, but as they are a dyadic team, they are described as a senior creative team. Janet’s need to be more creatively fulfilled speaks to her recognising her need to be part of a dyadic team and the benefit of collaboration. She contrasted this with her creative partner’s comments when he discussed the issue of creative teams being promoted to the role of a creative director and being “all by themselves” (Janet, personal communication, January, 2011) as well as the complexity of the creative director who has to relinquish their partner and is “split in two being creative director”.

My data show that my participants make decisions as individuals to remain partners in dyadic teams and to forfeit the accolades and positions for the benefits they see in the partnership. ‘Self’ as creatively fulfilled becomes the imperative in that they see the benefits of being a member of a dyadic team.

## 6.2. Practice makes perfect

This section explicates the data I coded as “Rites and Rituals”. The interviews were rich with material that showed creative practice and creative relationships containing the elements of repetition and “magic” that allow for such a label.

Many creative teams in the advertising industry have achieved success only after enduring lengthy socialisation (Amabile, 1996) by passing through certain ‘rites of passage’ that mark transition from junior to senior creatives. Successful negotiation of rites of passage is, in advertising culture, as in all cultures, a mark of having reached maturity and adulthood. My coding showed that the events and experiences that I identified as “rites of passage” fell broadly into three groups: the first, hazing, by members of the culture into which they are entering, was followed, second, by learning and asserting self worth, and thirdly moving on and up within the industry. My participants passed through all three rites of passage on their way to becoming successful creatives, and each of these types of “rites of passage” follows van Gennep’s (1960) model in that they show a transition out of one phase, into an interim position, and then into a new social position.

For the purposes of this research, “Rites of passage” relates to the dyadic team members’ experiences along their journey as creatives within the advertising industry, in other words these are metaphorical milestones along a career path. They are viewed using Van Gennep’s tripartite theory of rites of passage: separation, transition, and incorporation (1960, p. 166). A ‘Rite of passage’ is part of a sequential journey that has an impulsion of its own, as a river flowing in one direction, and the rites may be viewed as a series of initiations along a linear pathway that represents the individual creative’s career. They occur, are experienced and processed as part of their individual as well as dyadic development. They are important because they signify their development and advancement in the advertising industry.

“Ritual and Ceremony” represent the events, practices, interactions that occur as, and may be generated by the two members of the dyadic teams as meaningful experiences. They are sets of symbolic behaviours imbued with significance for the individual and the team, from the regular coffee meetings to the ways that they approach a creative brief. The ritual acts are repeated, some on a daily basis, some less frequently but nevertheless they occur regularly within the pattern of work life. A note: how the team share and discuss the

experience of the ritual or ceremony may differ from how they individually experience and label it. This research does not explore the latter.

### 6.2.1. Rites and rituals

The presentation of this part of the data is set out as it is experienced by the individual, and reflective of van Gennep's (1960) three rites of passage discussed earlier in this section. Therefore this section begins with an external view of the advertising industry prior to the individual's introduction and induction as a creative. This is followed by their entry into the industry, and finally their experiences as their success takes them to new, more senior positions in the advertising industry. Janet's view reflected this process:

When you are like you say on the outskirts rather than the middle of it you watch these people play the game rise to dizzy heights and fall never to be heard of again and there you are, you're still doing your work, you're still getting your awards, you're still kind of doing what makes you happy and you think, 'Well, what's the point of playing the game?' (personal communication, January, 2011).

As my participants made their ways into the advertising industry they experienced both subtle and overt initiations and rites of passage. Lenny and Freddy encountered

...the last few years of the super arrogant creative, the really difficult creatives that would fuck around at work all day and do marginal work and it was really interesting because we were coming along as enthusiastic driven young guys... (personal communication, February, 2011).

Their entry into the industry was affected by senior creatives who did not provide a positive example for the younger team, and as a direct result, Lenny and Freddy were adamant that they did not want to become like the creatives they observed. This rite of passage was an initiation that once experienced the team incorporated into their shared understanding and moved on from.

Entering the industry involved distinct rites of passage, particularly in the situation where there was an imbalance in commercial experience and commitment for one of the partners. Kate's first copywriting position teamed her with an art director who chose to spend most of his time at the local pub playing pool. As an inexperienced junior she was not sure if this behaviour was accepted or part of the culture of the industry, "...but I gave it a year and then said 'look either he goes or I do'. So fortunately he went" (personal communication, October, 2010). This statement reflected the rite of passage transitioning

from one state to the other as Kate moved from the status of a junior to that of a potentially more stable and secure position once her “hopeless art director” left the partnership and the agency

My data showed one rite of passage in the advertising industry which teamed ‘juniours’ with more experienced partners although this initiation was sometimes confusing and even distressing. For example, the junior creatives would be expected to work long hours, often with negligible reward. In New Zealand many creatives make their way into the industry by way of “placement” or “internship” at agencies. While the industry does not publish this data, these positions are paid at much lower rates than traditional roles. It is not unusual for entry level creatives, many of whom have university loans to repay, to be paid between \$250 and \$500 a week, or less (personal communication, December, 2011).

The internship process is regularly experienced by junior creatives and represents a series of transitions or rite of passage that most successful professionals have endured through their career development. Being the “donkeys” (Olivia, personal communication, December, 2010) equates to taking on the lower value, lower budget work that other more senior teams are not assigned to, nor particularly interested in. The higher their salary and position, the more high profile the clients and brands the teams will be assigned to. Unfortunately, despite the negative experience, some creatives may allow or at least observe this behaviour being replicated when they reach positions of seniority. The industry stance is polarised in that there are some senior creatives who believe that it is a necessary aspect of the advertising culture, an initiation of a kind, while there are others who choose to mentor young creatives into the industry, whether or not they can influence their rate of payment by the agency.

The way that young creative teams negotiate their career paths can have a significant impact on their future success. Through balancing opportunity and determination the teams have positioned themselves to their professional advantage and ultimate success. William’s career saw him as the “junior” in his first three partnerships, but he found a way to manage the process as he experienced it.

I was actually quite happy in those relationships because I didn’t threaten the person I was working with and I just learned my craft and they told me what to do and helped guide me, especially the Creative Director (personal communication, October, 2010).

William was able to learn through each relationship and transition through them to gain the essential experience necessary to elevate him from a juniour to a middle level creative. The issue of threat is considered by some senior creatives to be genuine. Once the “juniour” has graduated into a “middleweight” position they can be seen as a threat, particularly as there are a limited number of creative roles available in the New Zealand and global advertising industry. By modifying their behaviour and focussing on continually developing their skills, and by avoiding any possibilities of threatening behaviour, juniour creatives can safely develop their careers within the agency environment. They regularly learned from, and were shaped by behaviours and attitudes that they observed in senior creatives. Olivia recalled that as a juniour,

...juniours are really eager and passionate whereas seniors are a bit kind of over it, and tend to slack off a bit but yet they’ve got this amazing experience that you just learn so quickly (personal communication, December, 2010).

Juniours eventually transition through to the positions of seniors, but their behaviour does not replicate that of the incumbent creatives. Through the rites of passage they experience, they learn to adapt to meet their own beliefs and standards.

In their review of their career to date, Helen and Olivia (they are in their early 30s) showed another rite of passage: the clarification of their direction as a dyadic team. Helen took some time to arrive at her role and acknowledged that it was having her partner Olivia “telling me straight up what you needed from me was my biggest influence...and I think that’s when things got really good” (personal communication, December, 2010).

As they experience the symbolic behaviours of the advertising industry, creatives develop confidence in themselves and their skills. John recalled the changes,

...because when you first start in the industry you’re...embarrassed about showing your ideas but as you get on...get older and wiser you don’t give a stuff, just anything kind of goes... (personal communication, January, 2011).

The initial fear of sharing their ideas is a ritual that many young creatives have experienced and need to manage in order for them to succeed in the industry that they have chosen. For Olivia, initiation into the industry saw her being set achievements to be accomplished before the agency creative director “would make me a creative” (personal communication, December, 2010).

Responding to the culture of their work environment creates challenges and opportunities for the creatives. John made the transition from the discipline of advertising into the specialised field of direct marketing and through the process developed an attitude that underpins his creative approach today: “And I was thinking ‘What have I got myself into?’ But what it did to me was ‘OK, I’m going to have a bit of fun with this’ and I did, I actually found my niche” (personal communication, January, 2011). This rite of passage represented an experience John had little choice in, but through the method he chose to adapt to it, he was able to transition to a more fulfilling level.

The ability to adapt as individuals, and as teams is important, particularly as each agency has a different culture that it cultivates and that distinguishes it from its competitors. Several of the teams interviewed had passed through the same advertising agencies at different times as their careers progressed. While one team might feel aligned with a large, multi-national, awards oriented agency, another could be more attracted to a smaller agency with a family culture.

The initiation process has its own form of motivation for teams when confronted by senior creatives in the industry. As discussed earlier, how they experience and adapt to the attitude can help to define the less experienced teams through, in this case, focussing their determination. When one of my participant teams announced a decision to move to another agency, a well-known creative director told Lenny:

You guys are making the worst fucking mistakes of your lives, you’re really going to regret what you’re doing, you might make some money but you’re going down the plug hole’ and this made us fucking wild but also motivated us to ‘well fuck him then we’re going to prove him wrong’ (personal communication, December, 2010).

This reaction and determination was evident among many of my participants when they discussed their development. The promotion pathway for creatives in the advertising industry allows for junior, middleweight or intermediate and senior creative teams, but the role of “Creative Group Head” or “Creative Director” can in most cases, be held only by individuals which can result in separation of a successful team. This rite of passage was experienced by some of the teams interviewed:

We did our award winning work and elevated ourselves to the next stage in our career which is how we ended up as group heads and not in the partnership anymore which is quite sad. That’s what happens with creative teams, they get

promoted up to creative director and suddenly they are all by themselves (Janet, personal communication, January, 2011).

Breaking up was a rite of passage which moved the team members from one state to the next to achieve professional objectives. If a creative team chooses not to enter the breaking up rite of passage, agencies can be obliged to allow for the creative director position to be held jointly. For instance in the New Zealand industry, two well regarded senior creatives at the Ogilvy agency decided to take different pathways with one “retiring” to his vineyard in France, and the other announced through the media as going “solo” (Stop Press, November, 2011). This statement highlights the recognition of teams in the industry and raises the question of how they survive as they transition to a role on their own. Of the teams interviewed, Bill and Ben are the only team no longer working together as a formal team, however their bond is obvious in the affirming manner that they framed their partnership.

Rites of passage also comes into play through the interaction between the different departments and disciplines within the advertising agency. The friction between account management and creative is referred to more than once by the participants, and is referenced in this chapter. The account management department is the interface between the creative department and the client and therefore can be seen as gatekeepers to the realisation and implementation of the creative team’s inspiration. While the motivation for account management relates mainly to the profit of the agency, the creatives are focussed on developing original solutions to their business briefs. The creative teams interviewed had developed their own methods for managing their relationship with account management, as Janet explained, “We just end up getting really frustrated and shouting at suits until finally they realise” (personal communication, January, 2011).

Anthropological definitions (Kaeppler, 2010; Rappaport, 1979) of ritual emphasise the prescriptive nature of the act. For the purposes of this thesis, rituals are presented as the symbolic sequential behaviours repeated within the advertising industry, the advertising agency, and within the dyadic partnership. In many cases the actors of the ritual carry out a story that was established by players who keep alive the teachings and practices of their forebears (Kaeppler, 2010). In contrast to Kaeppler’s view, the data show that my participants have not inherited rituals, but rather have developed their own. One of these, for example is morning coffee meetings. There is a predictability to each ritual, and my participants tended to rely on them for structure and reassurance. One ritual which is known but does not always meet with their approval is the “open bar” policy in most



agencies. Although Lenny did not like it, he acknowledged that he and Freddy participated:

But the thing we didn't like about the bar was the sad old guys who were divorced and you could kind of tell why, they were still in the office, they were miserable, they were cynical, boring, lazy, they'd be lazy lovers. You know, it was like 'fuck ok got to be careful here' because there seemed to be a theme emerging (personal communication, December, 2010).

The ritual of the "open bar" policy that occurs in most mainstream New Zealand advertising agencies has decades of history behind it, and is seen both as a reward for employees and also as a way to develop team spirit and open communication channels within the departments of the agency. The "sad old guys" Lenny referred to have, however, allowed the ritual to dominate their lives until it becomes quite literally, a "theme" or addiction. This thesis does not seek to explore alcohol as an aspect of advertising culture, but it should be noted that alcohol is an integral and recognised aspect of the industry culture. As alcohol is viewed as a relaxant, in the stressful environment of the advertising industry, some rely on it more than may be seen as healthy. My participants, who have all been successful in their careers, seem to have been able to partake of this ritual and not allow it to negatively influence them.

From the relative security of their current senior positions, my participants reflected on the rituals of their early days. They noted that when a senior creative felt threatened by the arrival of a young creative there were overt and covert subversive practices that the seniors employed to challenge and at times hinder the newcomers. For example, they might take ideas generated by the younger team and present them as their own, therefore enhancing their own creative reputation and standing. A more obvious tactic was overly harsh public criticism of the new comer's ideas. This is a double-edged sword as new ideas are critical to the creative success of the agency, and these are often generated by young creatives. Therefore the juniours must navigate their way through these recognised embedded practices.

Rituals were identified and related to the way that my participants approached the creative process. This is apparent in the majority of the teams and is discussed in a way that is virtually sacrosanct. For Bill and Ben the ritual encompassed ten years of meeting at his home, at the kitchen table:

Never at work. The work was too noisy, people wanting meetings and things so we would always work here. Get here at 9 o'clock in the morning, normally crack the idea by 1 o'clock, go out and have a fabulous lunch to celebrate and that was just the way we worked and we loved it (personal communication, March, 2011).

There was a security in the ritual, a reliability that the team mates shared, in this case for over a decade. While the ritual may have at first been established as a tactic to deal with the agency's distracting environment, it became a choice that was integrated into their daily regime and repeated regularly. Kate and William have established a ritual of rescheduling meetings until they can both be in the same room to be briefed because they believe that it is critical that "both of us are there" (personal communication, October, 2010). Teams work together most of the time, from the initial briefing process through to the dissecting and discussing of the brief, most of my participants saw it as imperative that they do this with each other. The environment for the creative process is selected by the team as it is a prerequisite for the process to commence. For at least three of the teams, another ritual within the work included the sharing of coffee:

Definitely a ritual about it for me, I don't know about John, but we have to sit somewhere and drink coffee. We've tried it in a room, even with food, but it's got to be coffee. Then you have to break the ice for about half an hour, talking about nothing (Janet, personal communication, January, 2011).

The practice was continued with Freddy and Lenny who said that they have "a pretty regimented kind of approach". Lenny explained:

We might have a quick yarn about it and then we'll go our separate ways usually over night and I think every day for the last 11 years we've started it with a coffee down the road (personal communication, December, 2010).

The time that the teams worked individually was typically when they had examined and discussed the brief, and agreed on the next stage: the reflection process to begin. It is at this point that they may choose to go to different environments to start the work.

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) states that while there is no evidence to show that a specific type of environment fosters creativity, there is data to suggest that some situations can hinder the process. Janet describes their working process as having:

...always a bit of a ritual to it and there's a certain place where you work your best and there's got to be an openness...and all that stuff is almost a recipe for success if you wanted a recipe I suppose (personal communication, January, 2011).

Within clusters of rituals in the advertising industry, there are some practices that are perceived in an almost envious way by those external to the industry (personal communication, 2010). These are rituals that are considered to be part of creative's lives, part of the facade of the industry. However in some instances these are replaced by another less glamorous set of rituals that are essential to the success of the team. While those outside the industry view those within it as having indulgent lifestyles, Freddy explained, "...what they don't see, and what our wives see is that most nights at 7.30 or 8.30 after dinner we crack our computers and start working because it's quiet and that's our thinking time"(personal communication, December, 2010). Interestingly, the team did not choose to change this impression, as it enhanced the image of the life of a successful advertising professional. They participated in their own ritual of reflection and ideation after completing their early evening family commitments, which are rituals in themselves. This is the time that the team may develop the ideas that can add another international award to their collection.

For senior creatives who have reached the apex of their careers, the ritual of the award ceremony also has rites embedded within it. Kate explained their experience:

There's always some shit that goes along with winning awards. Because for you to win somebody else didn't win and therefore they're pissed with you and they slag you off on the blog. Do you know what I mean? Winning awards has never been the nice part because there's always something that goes with it that's not happy. And that's quite tiresome (personal communication, October, 2010).

Nevertheless, the advantages outweighed the negative aspects of the award ritual and the participants acknowledged the importance of them to build their creative standing in the industry. They were seen to be a necessary aspect of the advertising culture, and to be associated with.

This chapter closes with an example that combines both "rites" and "rituals". Helen and Olivia reflected with fondness the ritual of award, and the rite of passage for their first award when their agency announced in front of the gathered staff, that they would fly them to New York to collect their two silver awards. Olivia recalled: "I really wanted Helen to go to New York. I started crying, Helen was teary, just about everyone in that room

was” (personal communication, December, 2010). This statement is relevant to the ritual process and it is also a demonstration of Olivia’s commitment to Helen through wanting to share her favourite city with her creative partner, therefore it could also be coded into the earlier “Relationship as a Marriage” super concept. It is placed here as it more explicitly conveys both the ritual and the rite of passage as they occurred in front of two audiences; agency employees, and later at the actual event, resulting in the ritual being observed in a positive context, with the possible outcome of the observers seeking to experience it themselves, and thus continue the repetitive nature of the ritual process. Through their award winning, the team transitioned to a higher position in the industry. This data is interpreted and discussed with conclusions presented in the next, final chapter.

## Chapter Seven: Endings and beginnings

This research set out to investigate successful creative teams in the New Zealand advertising industry in order to establish whether dyadic teams have any characteristics in common that could be classed as precursors to success. In the previous two chapters I have analysed the relationships and explored the interplay of the team members in the environment of their creative practice. I have sought to understand what elements might be at work in order for a team to state that “anything you can do we can do better”. This chapter presents my discussion, conclusions and considerations for further research.

The data have illuminated a number of characteristics of these successful creative teams. They are drawn from the original three “super concepts”: “Formations of the creative self”, “The relationship as a marriage”, and “Rites and rituals”. The richest data cluster around “The relationship as a marriage” which I suspected might occur as it a concept that both the participants and theorists are familiar with, I was however surprised by the ultimate “shape” of the “super concept”. I feel that this result serves to emphasise the value of the research.

In the next section I present the characteristics that I identified, followed by supporting data and conclusions for each of the “super concepts” commencing with the dominant “The relationship as a marriage”.

### 7.1. The relationship as a marriage

My findings show that for the successful creative teams in this research, the partnership bears many hallmarks of the traditional marriage relationship. The stages of a traditional marriage- courtship, honeymoon, family, milestones, and endings - are mirrored in that of the dyadic team relationship. Courtship and honeymoon are imbued with the excitement of discovery and affirmation of their agreement to partner each other. The partners place significant value on their team relationship and demonstrate this by way of attention to and nurturing of it. They honour it through their exclusivity to one another. They rely on the recognition that they attain as a successful team in the context of the wider advertising industry and the agency that employs them.

Family is represented by their immediate partnership, and the wider group of people that they interact with professionally during their partnership. They reciprocate with social

events and support for these accepted members of their group. The “product” of the team marriage, rather than children is the creative work that the team members produce together. This is not for continuation of the family lineage, but for the advertising agency and the clients that they are employed by. Their excellent creative “product” will serve them into their futures by ensuring that they receive significant financial reimbursement by their agency and recognition from the industry.

#### **7.1.1. The hero partnership**

A characteristic of the successful dyadic team is that they rank the dyadic team they are presently involved with as their “hero” partnership. In their view it represents the best of the best in terms of how a dyadic team functions as a creative partnership within the advertising industry. The “hero” partnership is symbolic of and represents their shared values, their shared objectives and beliefs. It is revered by the team and in my analysis is placed on a pedestal by them.

#### **7.1.2. Core commitment**

As my data have shown, companionship is a prerequisite for the dyadic partnership to flourish and is therefore a characteristic of the successful dyadic team. With it there seems to be a stronger force to the team, certainly when competing against other teams who do not have this connection. Without it, a team composed of two highly skilled and awarded individuals may function and perform well, but, the implication here is that without the invisible strands of companionship that something may be lacking in the creative product, and this can impact the durability of the partnership long term. The notion of companionship that emerged from my data was imbued with comfort and security, and was not the companionship of extreme activities. Indeed, in all the findings about the working relationship as a marriage, the image that endures most strongly is one of a secure base, and almost domestic habits.

#### **7.1.3. Equilibrium at work**

In the context of power within the dyadic team, the concept of “inequality” does not seem to be a major issue if there is mutual agreement around it. If inequality emerges from a balance of power, a characteristic of the successful creative partnership is that they do not view it so much as negative, but rather, as a necessary, temporary shift in the equilibrium of the relationship. This is not to suggest that there is a programmed rhythm to the ebb

and flow of equality, but that when it does occur it does not cause undue concern within partnerships of this calibre.

#### **7.1.4. Making it personal**

My data show that a characteristic of successful dyadic teams is that they recognise the value of, and are involved with, secure personal relationships outside of their professional partnership. While there are some in the advertising industry who sacrifice their personal lives to their profession, the successful teams with immediate family seem to have a clear delineation and sense of priority that places family at the forefront. The strong family connection, and by implication support, provides the individuals with a secure foundation for their creative endeavours. The majority of the team members have been in stable relationships outside the professional partnership for at least five years and this seems to offer a reliable foundation for the creative partner.

#### **7.1.5. In the end**

A characteristic of successful dyadic teams is the ability to manage their professional relationships and any of its challenges. This management incorporates the balance suggested earlier in this section, as well as the commitment to ensure the future success of the partnership. One of the significant differences between a traditional marriage and the dyadic team “marriage” is that when there are stresses or functional issues within the former, these may be ignored or denied by the couple, at times by mutual agreement. In the dyadic team “marriage”, the core reason for their relationship is the creativity that they generate, and therefore any threat to this needs to be managed, or it can have a negative impact upon the partnership. When traditional marriages become dysfunctional, the partners may stay together for children, finances, or appearances. If a creative partnership is dysfunctional due to stress or distraction, both of which can subsume the ability to create, the partners’ creative capabilities will be compromised, as will the advertising product that they originally teamed together to construct.

In summing up my findings under this super concept “Relationship as a marriage”, the data clearly illustrated that ego and emotion can erode the potential success of a dyadic team. Therefore “anything you can do we can do better” is viable only when the “we” is composed of two committed to the one-ness of their team, rather than two rigidly defined individuals.

If there are fractures within the partnership which may at times be related to their personal life, the team need to have agreed processes in place to address and manage them. These processes identified through the data suggest that some of the “glue” of the participant’s partnerships is a combination of respect for each other’s skills, clarity as to their roles and responsibilities, shared understandings, companionship through a genuine enjoyment of and valuing each other’s company, and commitment to their agreed goals and objectives. The partnership lives and breathes alongside the team and for as long as they are in accord, it will thrive.

## 7.2. Formations of the creative self

### 7.2.1. To be “creative”

My data suggest that a characteristic of successful creative teams is demonstrated through their commitment to develop their creative self, to “become a creative” and to maintaining the creative self through membership of the creative team. It did not occur by chance, but by choice and through a self-knowledge around the creative self and a wider knowledge around the creative team.

Through this research the term “creative” has been used by team members as they discuss theirs and others’ places in the industry. There is an important contrast between “*being creative*” and “*being a creative*”. From a grammatical perspective it could be viewed as the difference between the use of a verb and a noun, but for the participants, it is a foundational career milestone. Olivia and Helen referred to their lives divided prior to and after becoming “a creative” (personal communication, December, 2010). They could not “be a creative” until their skill was recognised by other advertising professionals, who would generally though not exclusively, be creatives. The ability to create an idea for an advertising campaign that is both unconventional and useful can distinguish a person as “creative”. For the work to be recognised and to be successful in achieving the agency’s commercial objectives can result in its creator being called “a creative”. Once the status of being a “creative” is attained, it can also be viewed as a badge or emblem that those “creatives” within the industry wear with pride. The “creative” mantle is not one that can be self assigned, but rather, it is one of identification and recognition, and as such, something to aspire to, to earn, and to treasure.



### **7.2.2. Boundaries and beyond**

Such was the joy and fulfilment that creating appears to offer, a characteristic of the dyadic team is that for each of them their creativity flows through their working lives beyond the advertising agency's mandate, into their personal lives. As the data show, the majority of the participants' creativity extended beyond their roles within the dyadic team. They were involved independently and individually in writing screenplays and music, making paintings and graphics, in their own time.

### **7.2.3. No clashing of symbols**

The data revealed that a characteristic of the successful dyadic team is that they seem to be able to manage and integrate the rewards of the role in advertising and do not allow the rewards to be their primary motivation. They are not 'blinded by the light' but rather have a clear, shared vision of who they are and where they are going. For these teams, success is not defined by self-indulgent acquisitions or superficial facades. Instead, these teams seem to be able to see through the smoke and mirrors and to relegate them to their less influential places as symbols of status rather than essentials to their lives. As my participants seemed to be less influenced by both image and rewards, the implication is that image and rewards are not a primary factor when attracting a successful team to an advertising agency.

### **7.2.4. Planning for success**

A further characteristic of the teams exhibiting success is that their approach to work and to their partnership seems to be strategic and planned, which is not necessarily how the account management side of the advertising agency might expect a "creative" team to behave. This finding, however, does resonate with Csizkszentmihalyi's suggestion that the creative's playful approach is counterpointed by "a quality of doggedness, endurance, perseverance" (1996, p. 61) which could serve to explain how some creative teams convey the impression of having ricocheted from agency to agency without apparent direction. This behaviour masks clear, long term plans and these successful teams appear to share this paradoxical quality.

#### **7.2.5. Shifting roles. Solid understanding.**

My analysis of the data shows that successful creative teams can be identified by the following, paradoxical yet complementary characteristics: that in each creative project, there is one team member who takes on the mantle of the innovator or idea generator (Bilton, 2007) while the other takes on the role of the adaptor of the idea. This behaviour is not concrete, but rather is fluid.

There follows a collaboration and a layering of thinking, of reactive thoughts and ideas that they play and work with until the concept reaches a form that both of the team members are in agreement with. There is a willingness to share the load without taking over the other person's role. That is not to say there is never an issue of ego management, but rather that they are capable of placing it appropriately in order to focus on the work. They can be chameleons in that the art director may influence the copy, and the writer may make suggestions about colour and type, but each is comfortable in their own role and knows that they are ultimately responsible for their skill set and this mutual dependency sees them supporting each other in this process. They may exchange metaphorical hats during the creative process but they will always know which one fits them best, and that they are most comfortable wearing.

This clear understanding of their identity and roles ensures that the team members can focus on the work rather than be distracted by role allocation and responsibility. To achieve this there is a continual balancing of ego, which needs to remain resilient while maintaining commitment to the team. From this I conclude that a characteristic of the successful dyadic team is the flexibility within their roles without compromising their craft, and to the benefit of the creative project that they are involved with at the time.

In summing up this “super concept”, my findings show that their creativity infuses their lives and serves to blur boundaries between personal and professional time, in other words, creative outputs are generated for their own pleasure rather than for professional justification.

There seems to be a resilience within the successful team in that while they appreciate the tangible rewards, it is the less tangible, or those defined by their mutual standards, that endure and therefore are valued by them as they progress in their careers through the advertising industry.

### **7.3. Rites and rituals**

“Rituals” and “rites of passage” as concepts have a connection with “The relationship as a marriage” and therefore are discussed under both “super concepts”. Through this research it became apparent that rites and rituals form an accepted part of the successful creative team’s professional lives. They are woven into the fabric of their professional lives. They celebrate and appreciate them and also seem to be able to recognise them for what they are, and in some cases allow the rituals to enhance their own image.

Through the data on this subject, it seems that having a set of rituals such as situation and timing for the team to meet to work, and how they approach their creative assignments provides a resilient framework for the partnership. Through drawing together their observations and learning over repeated experiences the teams transition through the rites of passage that symbolise their career paths.

#### **7.3.1. All in good time**

The teams engaged in successful partnerships share the ability to maintain a shared momentum and direction as they travel through the advertising industry. If the advertising industry can be viewed as a building with many floors and rooms, it is the moving through these rooms, and up the different floors that can be seen to symbolise the ritualistic experiences of the dyadic team (Van Gennep, 1960, p.26). Ideally, the partners enter through the same door, into the room at the same time and while they experience the room individually, they take that experience and integrate it with their work, leaving together to experience the next room with similar momentum.

The data suggest that in situations where one team member transitions at a different rate without an agreement to maintain its equilibrium there is the potential for conflict within the dyadic team.

#### **7.3.2. The reliability of ritual. A respect for rites**

The data show that a characteristic of successful creative teams is their determination to traverse the rite of passage to “be a creative”, and once they have achieved this, they demonstrate a commitment to maintain and develop it individually and collectively.

While discussed under “Formations of the creative self”, the experience of becoming a “creative” is also a rite of passage. Once a “creative” they can transition from junior to

intermediate and senior “creative” roles however it is the term “creative” that carries the prestige and the value for them.

The participants seemed to accept the rite of passage of a harsh initiation into the advertising industry as a necessary experience. It may be seen as a filtering process through which only those who can adapt will survive and thrive as successful creatives. The implication here is that there is no need to enforce rituals or rites onto these teams as they are capable of adapting their own.

Therefore in closing this section I conclude that rather than glamorous surroundings, the successful dyadic team are just as comfortable sharing their regular morning coffee around a kitchen table. Rituals are an essential and unique ingredient of their partnership in that they are developed and practiced over time in the advertising industry. Allowing these rituals to occur is of far more importance to the successful dyadic team than Italian leather sofas in the creative department. It's not so much the “objects”, rather it seems to be the rhythm of rituals around them. This is not to suggest that they are rigid, but that they have rituals that reaffirm and frame the way that they work together as a successful creative dyadic team.

#### **7.4. What is the answer?**

The research question on which this investigation “Anything you can do we can do better”, was based is, “What are the characteristics of successful creative teams in New Zealand advertising agencies?”

Of the conclusions that I have drawn from my data, overall perhaps the defining characteristics of successful dyadic teams is their devotion to their partnership and wrapping around this, their joy in the rituals that are an essential and unique ingredient of their partnership. They appear to provide a comfort and a reliability for each member of the dyadic team, and this security enables and empowers them to perform in their creative work. It is the ordinary things in their extraordinary lives that seem to be important to the successful dyadic team.

At first, this answer to my research question perplexed me because I had thought that I might find that creatives' behaviour matched the wild originality of their ideas. I was guided to a certain extent by Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) definition of characteristics of the creative as being sets of paradoxical behaviours. At times my participants' behaviour

could be seen as paradoxical, but more than this, was its ordinariness, and its grounded nature. On reflection however, I decided that it was not altogether surprising that creatives should seek certainty in their working relationships for this offers a solid platform from which to spring into creativity.

#### **7.4.1. The “coke or cup of tea” conundrum**

My data showed that the perception of the advertising industry and the living reality of it for the participants, is, as Macdonald and Wilson (2005) found with professional jazz musicians, markedly different. In other words, the world that they have sought to enter, viewed from the outside, is not necessarily how it functions practically or views itself. In completing this section, I am going to demonstrate this difference in perception by way of the following personal anecdote.

Several years ago the Communication and Advertising Agencies Association of New Zealand (caanz) set about to launch their new website to industry creatives. They briefed their communications agency to develop a direct mail “package” to be sent to this discerning and critical group. The pack addressed to my company was couriered to my office. There was no indication as to its contents, or the sender, and as I was expecting a document that was essential to the client meeting I was involved with at that time, I opened it. Inside was a tin case the size of a school pencil case, containing a syringe, spoon and elastic: essentially a drug kit. Luckily my client had a sense of humour though at the time I didn’t find anything comical with the contents or the message. Upon investigation it seemed that when the designers had been briefed to develop a package to target advertising “creatives” they had assumed that a drug kit would be in keeping with the target’s lifestyle. Their assumption was that creatives working in the advertising industry lead lives fuelled by drugs and alcohol. This is not to suggest that drugs, alcohol, and other social excesses are not utilised by some in the industry, but the perception conveyed through this pack is not an accurate reflection.

This research suggests that a characteristic of the successful creative team is that it is more likely to find them partaking of a cup of tea, rather than inhaling cocaine. It is the ordinariness of life, of agreed and valued rituals, that contribute to the hallmarks of these successful creatives.

My findings are significant for the advertising industry because they show successful creatives in a more responsible, and even pragmatic mode of operation than is the prevailing image. It also shows that the current emphasis on an expensively stimulating

physical environment is much less important than the strength of the working relationship. My findings also show that elaborate management plans for altering work design to maximise creativity is meaningless in the face of reality of the dyadic relationship which self designs its own work style and produces its own creative energy. The research is significant for the advertising industry as it demonstrates that control even though well intentioned can inhibit creativity of the dyadic team. Overall, for the advertising industry, managers need to learn to trust the creatives to produce high level work and that the successful dyadic team relationship cannot be prescribed or predicted.

## **7.5. From this point forward**

In considering future research, I have arrived at these topics:

### **7.5.1. What happens when good teams go bad?**

What are the factors in the breakdown of a creative team? To investigate this question would require further research to explore what occurs when successful teams falter: what the factors are, whether the strongest influences are from their personal or professional lives, and from which relationships.

Of the dyadic teams interviewed it seems that the team most at risk is the one where the partner is leaving due to personal/family reasons – however this is external and in both cases the partners' response is their determination to find a way to work together again in the future. Other potential impacts could be change of lifestyle, for example, alcohol or drugs, and change in personal circumstance, financial or personal loss.

### **7.5.2. What are the rites of passage for a creative team into and out of an agency?**

Exploring this question would involve an investigation into the rites and processes of the creative team as they move from the 'outside' the advertising agency to within; what are the steps, their meanings, their patterns? How are they reversed within a group or within the team? What are the processes at play as the team retreat or extricate themselves from that environment?

### **7.5.3. Are there new team models in the context of the dyadic team in advertising?**

To investigate this question I would research how the hybrid team functions; in this model both partners bring craft skills in both art direction and copywriting. In the digital agency there is a team model where by a "creative" is teamed with a strategic planner and a digital expert and /or developer. How do these different skills interact and operate?

### **7.5.4. If it doesn't sell does it work?**

To investigate this topic I would apply Bilton's (2007, p. 7) "Fitness for purpose theory of creativity" to the industry practice of scam advertisements which are produced with the

sole objective of winning advertising awards for creativity. These advertisements may only appear once in the media, in order to meet award criteria, and are often created for non profit or charity organisations who may or may not be involved in the brief. Their objective is not to build sales or market share, but rather, to build prestige for the creators of the work by way of industry recognition and award.



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## Appendix a

### Criteria for dyadic teams for research

**Employment:** That they have been employed as a creative team in the NZ industry for two or more years.

**Industry:** That at least one team represents the direct marketing industry, with the balance drawn from the advertising industry as a fair reflection of the industry as a whole

**Achievement:** That each team has won at least one industry award (Axis, Next, Orca, Caples, Clio, Cannes, are examples) in the past two years

**Gender:** That there will be at least one male team and one female team, and at least one male/female team within the teams interviewed to accurately reflect the gender balance in the industry

**Relationship:** One of the teams interviewed may have both a personal and professional relationship.

## Appendix b

### Email to participants

Dear Prospective participant,

Your awarded work over the years with your creative partner has distinguished you as a winning creative team in the New Zealand (and Australasian) ad industry. I've always been fascinated about the alchemy of creative teams, and now I'm writing my thesis on it.

My research project is called 'Anything you can do we can do better' and it seeks to explore whether successful creative teams share any characteristics with each other. Part of the research is based on interviews, and I'm planning on meeting with some of New Zealand's top performing creative teams over the coming months. This will include you, I hope.

I've obtained your contact details through Admedia, and your agency receptionist and this email is to check your interest and time (initially just a few moments to read the Participant Information Sheet) in helping me with this research through agreeing to let me interview you.

You're under no obligation to participate, and if you do, your involvement is completely anonymous.

The time commitment for you would be approximately one hour for the interview, with your creative partner Jeremy Taine, at a time and place that suits you. You'll be able to check the results of the interview and I can email a PDF copy of your interview and/or a summary of my findings once they're complete.

If I don't hear from you in the next week, I'll follow you up.

Thankyou for coming this far,

Yours sincerely,

CJane Berney

## Appendix c

### Semi structured interviews

#### Background questions:

- a) Which age bracket/s would be appropriate for me to place you in (each): 20 – 25yrs, 26 – 30yrs, 31 – 35yrs, 36- 40yrs, 41 – 50yrs, 50yrsplus (and of these years, how many have you each spent in the ad industry?)
- b) Were you born in NZ? And if you weren't, where did you last call home? And how long have you lived in NZ?
- c) What were your qualifications prior to coming into the industry, and are there qualifications (no, not awards yet) that you have gained since being in the industry?
- d) How did the two of you meet?

#### Interview questions:

- 1) How would you describe your professional/creative partnership to someone outside the industry? (i.e. explaining to your mother what it is that you do for a job)
- 3) Working together, how do you approach, deal with, create a campaign ?
  - Who does what? – Who finishes first?
  - How did you come to this way of working?
  - In your experience, is this how other creative partnerships work?
- 4) Are you conscious of what motivates you?
  - Has that shifted/changed over the years?
- 5) What do you consider to be the (three) most important factors in creating the ideal environment for creativity within a team? (For example, Pricken (2002) records respect, compassion, humour with one leading creative team)
- 6) The partnership: what are some of the highs and lows of your experiences as a team?

- how long have you worked together as a team?
- how long have you been at this agency?
- this is where you can talk about awards!

7) Could you share with me some of your key career/turning points that have influenced your life as a creative?

8) Last question: Outside of the industry, what are your interests/passions/hobbies/ past-times?

## **Appendix d: CD of recorded interviews with participants**

To complete interviews with five dyadic teams involved a total of six interviews: four with dyadic teams, and two interviews with individual members of the fifth team. Ten participants were interviewed for this research, with each interview taking approximately one hour.