Mobilizing the Consumer
Assembling the Subject of Consumption

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M ANY DIAGNOSES of our 'postmodern condition' hinge upon debates about consumption: has consumption replaced production as the key to the intelligibility of our present; did the previous emphasis on production in social thought overlook the dependence of an economy of commodity exchange upon the simultaneous constitution of consuming pleasures; have consumption sub-cultures replaced class, region, religion, generation and gender as sources of interests and identifications? Alongside these debates has been an argument about subjectivity. It has been suggested that the perspective of consumption reveals features of our experience that were under-valued in most classical social theory – the active arts through which individuals shape their everyday lives with the materials provided for them by dominant economic, social and cultural forces; the role of subjectivities, pleasures and desires in the history of our present which is so often painted in the monotonous and sombre tones of state, domination, ideology and hegemony (see, for example, Featherstone, 1991; Shields, 1992a; Bocock, 1993).

Yet there is a deep ambivalence underpinning many diagnoses, at least as they come to bear upon 'the subject of consumption', the individual who is imagined and acted upon by the imperative to consume. On the one hand it is claimed that human beings, in engaging in acts of consumption and the relations surrounding consumption, achieve pleasures, exert powers, find meanings, construct diverse subjectivities, enact sociality in a creative and innovative manner (e.g. Shields, 1992b). On the other hand, it appears, that – to the extent that all these are construed as individual achievements, organized in a field whose dynamic is the quest for profit, structured in terms of wealth, culture and gender, shaped by a power relationship in which producers and their agents impose their meanings and values upon others – the pleasures, powers and meanings produced are, in crucial respects, false. The

collective socialities are enacted at the price of turning a blind eye to the regimes of exploitation, illusion and exclusion that foster consumption; the subjectivities constructed are enfeebled or damaged. This latter theme reactivates the earlier melancholy 'aristocratic' disdain with which critics of 'mass society' regarded the rise of new consumer goods, advertising and the like, which, as Featherstone puts it, viewed these as giving rise to 'an atomized, manipulated mass who participate in an *ersatz* mass-produced commodity culture targeted at the lowest common denominator' (Featherstone, 1991: 14). In these respects the regime of consuming subjectivities is to be the target of a critique, its contradictions exposed, the hidden costs – individual, political and cultural – of its surface pleasures revealed (e.g. Qualter, 1991; Langman, 1992).

In this article, we do not wish to arbitrate between these two lines of argument, which we have undoubtedly caricatured; many recent studies of consumption practices have served to deepen and enrich our understanding of the construction of what Frank Mort has termed 'the commercial domain' (Mort, 1996). Our aim is to make a contribution to the empirical bases of such debates, by examining in some detail a number of ways in which different images of the subject of consumption have operated *internal* to one element of the new 'economy of consumption': the shaping and advertising of products. Making up the subject of consumption, we suggest, has been a complex technical process. To understand this process, it is necessary to look beyond general shifts in cultural understanding or the imperatives of profit, and examine the ways in which the understandings of human individuality, personality and psychology elaborated by the psychological sciences have played a key role in the construction of consumption technologies. For psychological expertise in advertising provides a site where we can explore the extent to which this has been less a matter of dominating or manipulating consumers than of 'mobilizing' them by forming connections between human passions, hopes and anxieties, and very specific features of goods enmeshed in particular consumption practices.

There have, of course, been innumerable studies of the rise of advertising and the vicissitudes of the industry, its relations with market research, with producers of goods, and of the techniques that advertising has deployed. While many of these are genial and essentially progressivist accounts, often written by insiders (e.g. Elliot, 1962; Pearson and Turner, 1965; Nevett, 1982; Henry, 1986), the tone of studies written by sociologists and cultural analysts has been one of deep unease about the nature of this profession (notably Ewen, 1976; see also Schudson, 1984; Qualter, 1991). This unease has extended to the symbiotic relations between business, advertisers and psychologists that have obtained at various moments in the history of the industry, encapsulated in Ewen's view that:

> advertising was to develop as a tool of social order.... 'Its constructive effort [was] ... to superimpose new conceptions of individual attainment and community desire'; to solidify the productive process while at the same time

> parrying anti-corporate feeling. Beyond standing at the helm of the industrial machines, businessmen understood the social nature of their hegemony. . . . They aspired to become captains of consciousness. (Ewen, 1976: 14; he is quoting from an article by Herbert W. Hess published in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* in 1922)

Even when they are dubious about the efficacy of advertising, or of the extent to which it does, in fact, make much use of psychological techniques beyond relatively simple conceptions of attitudes and methods of attitude change, the general image portrayed by such writers is of a profession which treats consumers as largely irrational or foolish, to be manipulated through methods not far removed from those of political propaganda, with consequences for public culture and democracy that are largely deleterious (Qualter, 1991).

Our own perspective differs. We abstain from a mode of analysis which links the unholy alliance of psychology, advertising and capitalism with a manipulation of desires in the name of private profit, social anaesthesia and commodity fetishism. We are concerned with what one might term the 'productive' features of these new techniques, the ways in which psychological knowledges have connected themselves up in complex ways with the technologies of advertising and marketing to make possible new kinds of relations that human beings can have with themselves and others through the medium of goods. In addition, while many of the existing studies have treated the USA and 'Madison Avenue' as their primary empirical focus, and tended to concentrate on the early periods of the utilization of psychology in advertising, our focus is on England, and upon the two decades following the end of the Second World War. In particular, we offer a detailed case study of one particular site at which changing psychological conceptions of the human being intersected with changing concerns of producers wishing to market their products and their advertising agents. This site is the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR), a sister institution to the Tavistock Clinic, which was founded in the years immediately following the end of the Second World War and undertook a range of innovative investigations into such varied issues as workplace democracy, the psychoanalytic education of general practititioners, group relations training and marital therapy (Miller and Rose, 1988, 1994, 1995, forthcoming). While many of these initiatives have been discussed in the secondary literature, little attention has been paid to the work for advertisers that was undertaken by the TIHR. Perhaps this is because so much of this work remains unpublished. Yet, from the 1950s onwards, the TIHR was approached directly by many major companies about the development and marketing of their products. The TIHR worked extensively with the advertising agencies responsible for the development of many campaigns – including those for companies such as Cadburys, Shell-Mex and BP, Guinness and Birds Eye Foods. In the present article, drawing upon archival material from the TIHR, we trace out the ways in which changing problematizations of the consumer were linked to

changing technologies of investigation and to changing conceptions of the modes of interrelation between products, advertisements and individuals in choices of goods to purchase and in the acts of consumption themselves. We argue that a distinctive mode of 'mobilizing the consumer' can be traced to this particular moment in the assembling of the subject of consumption.

Our focus is upon a period where, like today, the relations between advertising and the subjectivity of the consumer were matters of intellectual concern and critique: the period from 1950 to 1970. Events across these 20 years are interesting for a number of reasons. In the first place, across these two decades a plethora of new objects for mass consumption within the home appeared, new advertising media including the television became widely available, and novel ways of representing and acting upon the consumer based on psychological and psychoanalytical knowledge were devised. We will suggest that, in the course of these events, a new way of governing the acts of consumption was invented, one that sought to link the individual to the act of consumption and to the object of consumption by means of a new form of 'psy' expertise. Advertising agencies and individual companies keen to promote their wares turned increasingly to this domain of human relations that was seen to lurk unexplored in the multitude of choices individuals made between one product and another, choices that in themselves might appear trivial, but which could have a fundamental influence on the economic viability of a particular firm or even industry.

This period is of particular interest also because of the interplay between the construction of consumption technologies and their critique, an interplay that may hold lessons for our own period. Thus, in 1957, Vance Packard denounced the 'hidden persuaders', those who attempted, 'often with impressive success, to channel our unthinking habits, our purchasing decisions, and our thought processes by the use of insights gleaned from psychiatry and the social sciences' (our references are to the second edition: Packard, 1960: 11). The word 'hidden' referred to the fact that such efforts typically took place 'beneath our level of awareness'. Existing marketing techniques were considered misguided because actual purchasing behaviour was only remotely connected with what people told interviewers: people did not know what they wanted; people did not tell the truth about their wants and dislikes even when they knew them; and one could not assume that individuals would behave in a rational way when selecting one commodity rather than another. These 'irrational' aspects of purchasing behaviour posed particular problems for companies trying to sell increasing quantities of goods in a more and more standardized market where differences between goods were trivial or non-existent. The answer, as the director of research at the *Chicago Tribune* acknowledged, was to turn to psychological and psychoanalytic devices as a way of seeking to understand and act upon consumer choices. For these experts, it appeared, knew more about the individual consumer than he or she knew about him or herself. Professional persuaders seized upon 'mass psychoanalysis to guide campaigns of persuasion' that had become the basis of a multi-million-dollar industry. By reaching into the

consumer's psyche, acts of consumption could be probed to try and figure out:

> why we are afraid of banks; why we love those big fat cars; why we really buy homes; why men smoke cigars; why the kind of car we draw reveals the brand of gasoline we will buy; why housewives typically fall into a hypnoidal trance when they get into a supermarket; why men are drawn into auto showrooms by convertibles but end up buying sedans; why junior loves cereal that pops, snaps, and crackles. (Packard, 1960: 12)

The 'professional persuaders' saw the individual as 'bundles of day-dreams, misty hidden yearnings, guilt complexes, irrational emotional blockages . . . image-lovers given to impulsive and compulsive acts' (Packard, 1960: 14). Once such motivational characteristics were identified and understood, access could be gained to the unconscious or subconscious mind, thereby leading to an understanding of those factors that determined choices of which even the individual consumer was unaware. There was one aim only: to enable advertisers and producers to manipulate the choices and decisions of consumers for their own advantage.

There were, of course, more cautious assessments of the use and power of 'techniques of persuasion', especially in the light of the experience of the Second World War with propaganda, psychological warfare, moral campaigns and 'brainwashing', which had not only been bound up with much psychological innovation, but also with concerns about the differences between public opinion and the nature of consent in totalitarian and democratic regimes (e.g. Brown, 1963). Nonetheless, Packard's populist critique was echoed at a more prestigious intellectual level in a reworking of the earlier theses of Adorno and Horkheimer by Herbert Marcuse. Marcuse, writing in 1964, announced the arrival of a 'one-dimensional society', a society characterized by a 'comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom' (our references are to the 1968 edition: Marcuse, 1968). According to Marcuse, a one-dimensional society was typified by 'false needs', needs to 'behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements', needs that were the result of indoctrination and manipulation (Marcuse, 1968: 22). In a one-dimensional society, individuals 'recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi, split-level home, kitchen equipment' (Marcuse, 1968: 24). The prevailing technological rationality was one in which the 'irresistible output of the entertainment and information industry . . . bind the consumers more or less pleasantly to the producers . . . ' (Marcuse, 1968: 26). Insofar as the resulting way of life extended, according to Marcuse, to all spheres of private and public existence, there was little cause for optimism. For Marcuse the one-dimensional society was a totalitarian society, a society in which it became almost impossible to distinguish between the mass media as instruments of information and entertainment, and the mass media as agents of manipulation and indoctrination. The resulting *mimesis*, the identification of the

individual with the prevailing system of mass production and distribution, meant that the chances of radical change were limited. Hence, for Marcuse, the possibilities of inaugurating a qualitatively new mode of existence characterized by Reason and Freedom were remote.

Culture critics such as Packard, Marcuse and others had a particular conception of the consumer (see also Wright Mills, 1956; Whyte, 1956). Even where they themselves reasoned psychologically about the effects of mass society, they nonetheless conceived of the consumer as a passive being, acted upon by the vast advertising and cultural apparatus that invented desires, created false needs and manipulated individuals into identifying with objects that would otherwise have been alien to them. Paradoxically, however, it was not this image of the consumer that was deployed by those responsible for constructing the new technologies of advertising. Many psychologists and advertisers were aware of the criticisms of propaganda, manipulation and brainwashing and consciously sought to distance themselves from them, stressing the distinctiveness of their own techniques of commercial persuasion and the role of the free market and consumer choice. Critique here, as in many other areas, formed an internal element in the development of knowledge and practice. But more significantly, advertisers and psychologists held a different and more complex view of the 'subject of consumption'.

Making up the consumer in the post-war decades was thus no simple matter. The 'consumer' emerged as a highly problematic entity, by no means a passive tool of the manipulations of the advertisers, but someone to be known in detail, whose passions and desires were to be charted, for whom consumption was an activity bound into a whole form of life that must be anatomized and acted upon. At issue here was not so much the invention and imposition of 'false needs', but a delicate process of identification of the 'real needs' of consumers, of affiliating these needs with particular products, and in turn of linking these with the habits of their utilization. Making up the consumer entailed simultaneously making up the commodity and assembling the little rituals of everyday life which would give that commodity meaning and value. This is not a brute attempt to impose desires upon a plastic and undifferentiated mass, but an unprecedented and meticulous cartography – part imagined, part derived from novel forms of experimentation – of the everyday life of consumption and its little pleasures and anxieties.

A number of studies of advertisements have sought to interrogate the images of the person they rely upon, by 'decoding' them utilizing semiotic and psychoanalytic techniques (Williamson, 1978; cf. Leiss et al., 1986: Ch. 9) or by relating them to the changing attitudes towards the body, image and identity in potential consumers which they seek to engage and instrumentalize in order to sell goods (Mort, 1988). But we can address conceptions of the human being held by advertisers and marketeers more directly. Indeed, over these two decades, it is possible, in one local site, to identify at least three distinct ways of understanding the consumer: psychoanalytical,

social psychological and, for want of a better term, 'rational'. In what follows, we explore each of these three distinct conceptions of the consumer in turn as they were articulated in the work of members of the Tavistock Insititute of Human Relations, in relation to the sale of such diverse products as ice cream, chocolate, soft toilet tissue, beer and stout, petrol and oil, mustard, biscuits, frozen fish shapes, baby foods, vitamin enriched drinks, diamond engagement rings, yeast extract drinks, holidays and shaving.

Such detail may appear trivial or unimportant: are we not observing merely the local results of far-reaching changes in the social determinants and global social logics that shape consumption practices? At the least, we suggest, there is something to be gained in intelligibility by studying these transformations at a more local level. More boldly, we would argue that the changes articulated in terms of such global logics of consumption might better be understood as the resultants of the linkages and relays formed among all those practices that serve to mobilize the consumer. It is the consumer, understood as a being able to appreciate and act according to minute differences between virtually identical products, that lies at the heart of the much vaunted 'global competitiveness' of contemporary capitalism. It is in terms of 'brand' images, product design, consumer loyalty and product life-cycles that contemporary competitiveness is seen to reside. Without the possibility of mobilizing the consumer according to psychological conceptions of the act of consumption, without 'lifestyle' being understood as something linking up a particular complex of subjective tastes and allegiances with a particular product, battles over the best way of linking the desires of individuals to the productive machine would take very different forms.

The Pleasure of Consumption

A mundane problem – how to increase ice cream sales in winter – can be taken as the starting point for the elaboration of a psychoanalytic notion of the consumer. This seems, at first sight, exactly the sort of endeavour attacked by the likes of Packard and Marcuse: the consumer industry, in an alliance with social scientists, was attempting to intrude on the sacrosanct domain of the private home and the psyche of the individual. Even in the privacy of the home, consumers were not to be free from the injunctions to consume according to certain patterns, to modify long-standing traditions to suit the revenue needs of corporations producing ever more standardized products, and to change the very nature of the individual to achieve such ends – in this case, to even out seasonal fluctuations in ice cream sales.

Isabel Menzies and Eric Trist sought to adapt the tools of psycho-analytic investigation that had already been developed at the Tavi for the study of the consumer – most notably the utilization of ther newly discovered dynamics of 'the group' (Miller and Rose, 1994; see, for example, Menzies, 1960: 95–121). As far as ice cream was concerned, they began with the initial assumption that the 'ordinary private home was . . . the most likely market in which to realise a substantial increase in winter sales in the short-term' (TIHR, 1950: 1). The corollary of this was that the central objective

was that of 'securing for ice cream an accepted and permanent place in the meal system of the family' (TIHR, 1950: 1).

However, this initial assumption was quickly challenged once actual investigations were put into place. These used group discussions as technique of enquiry, a method broadly derived from the group work that had been pioneered at the Tavi by Wilfred Bion and which was to be used not just for therapeutic purposes but in such diverse settings as the investigations of poor industrial relations in a factory, group relations training courses, the education of general practitioners and marital therapists. The investigation of the psychodynamics of consumption was a further example of the versatility of the group for forcing into the open phenomena that would otherwise be almost invisible – in this case the unconscious meanings of goods. A group of potential consumers of ice cream – selected in a rather ad hoc manner – were brought together and asked to discuss not this or that brand or product but ice cream in general; one investigator would sit with the group and prompt it along; another would take notes. Somewhat to the surprise of the investigators, the problem was not getting the group to start talking about the product, but getting them to stop – especially when the same technique was deployed later in the investigation of such things as motoring. And what was going on here, as the investigators perceived it, was a kind of free association, which began from practical questions, of course, but which later took off into the underlying unconscious and preconscious dynamics of consumption.

As far as the consumption of ice cream in the home was concerned, there were technological problems to begin with: only 3 percent of homes had refrigerators, and virtually none had home freezers. This meant that there was a kind of teasing quality to ice cream advertisements encouraging the consumption of ice cream at home, since there was no practical way of getting it. 'Why are they tempting and teasing us?' complained one consumer interviewed in the study (Menzies and Trist, published in a revised version in Menzies Lyth, 1989a: 77). The idea of ice cream in the home became unreal, because the majority of consumers *saw no reality in it for themselves*.

There were also problems concerning the consumption of ice cream in the 'family meal system', a 'particularly central and emotionally charged feature in the culture of the home' (TIHR, 1950: 2). For the housewife, having ice cream with meals in the home 'was sometimes experienced as rather an assault on the role of the housewife as provider of food: she had to do nothing to prepare it; gave nothing of herself' (Menzies Lyth, 1989a: 76). Ice cream was a competitor to the custard the housewife made herself. The 'housewife's need to please her family by giving them what they wanted ... was thus in conflict with her wish to sustain her feeding role' (Menzies Lyth, 1989a: 76). Moreover, ice cream was a visible cost – 1*s*. 6*d*. or even 2 shillings, whereas custard *apparently* cost nothing, it was made from 'free' ingredients already available at home.

A way of understanding these tensions and conflicts was needed if manufacturers were to avoid the anger and hostility that consumers were

held to feel, and the possibility that this might lead them to dismiss the idea of ice cream in the home. The psychoanalytic notion of 'pleasure foods' met this need. The concept of pleasure foods, a fusion of Kurt Lewin's field theory and psychoanalysis, 'brought together the environmental influences, the "field" and the internal situation through which the consumer responded to field forces' (Menzies Lyth, 1989a: 72). Oral gratification, through the consumption of pleasure foods, was viewed as a way of alleviating current anxieties and depression, for such emotions were held to be derivatives of the infantile anxiety and depression connected with the loss of the breast. Compensation for the loss of the breast was sought in the consumption of substitute objects – the so-called pleasure foods. The need for pleasure foods appeared particularly acute in those situations that 'awaken again the residues of the earlier situations which to a greater or lesser extent exist in everyone' (Menzies Lyth, 1989a: 72).

This was not to say that pleasure foods had no food value, but that their food value was viewed as secondary in relation to the pleasure they gave in eating. In a paper delivered to the Annual Conference of the Society for Psychosomatic Research in 1969, almost 20 years after the ice cream studies, Isabel Menzies drew more explicitly upon the work of Melanie Klein, to argue that the concept of the inner world, in particular the notion of the 'internal society', was what linked the psychological and the social (published as Menzies Lyth, 1989b). The internal society was 'composed of images, concepts, memories and fantasies about people, in a great complexity of roles, functions and relationships' (1989b: 60). To become a significant influence on the individual, an external stimulus had to be taken in and experienced inside. This notion of the internal world and the internal society was 'a particularly significant influence in determining behaviour about food and eating' for 'in the earliest experiences that form the matrix of the internal society, feeding, the relationship with the mother and emotional experiences are inextricably linked' (Menzies Lyth, 1989b: 61). The result of this early experience was that eating becomes and remains a significant social and emotional activity: 'people never eat alone or uninfluenced by others, since they always eat in the context of the internal society' (Menzies Lyth, 1989b: 62).

Ice cream illustrated this point vividly, for it was, Menzies argued, 'the pleasure food *par excellence*' (Menzies Lyth, 1989a: 73). The significance of ice cream stemmed 'from its symbolic closeness to the breast and the mother–child relationship' (Menzies Lyth, 1989a: 69). The very term 'ice cream' established a 'link with the breast, but better than that, a breast that gives cream', a theme sustained 'in the little round blobs in which ice cream is served in dishes and in the cones or cornets in which it is sold from shops, kiosks or barrows'. This made one lick or suck the ice cream, while 'the more "sophisticated" children or childish adults bite off the narrow end of the cone and treat it as a nipple through which they suck down the ice cream' (Menzies Lyth, 1989a: 69–70). Ice cream has 'great power to act as a substitute for the breast, to wipe out anxieties and depression' (Menzies Lyth,

1989a: 73). The physical sensation of eating ice cream, when 'optimally experienced', is so complete that it is capable of blotting out all other concerns. As for the child at the breast, there are no bad things left, and 'reality consists only of the good substance and the pleasure it gives' (Menzies Lyth, 1989a: 73).

There are potential pitfalls in this experience of eating. The ice cream can be too cold, in which case pleasure becomes neuralgic pain, good turns to bad. Also, because of the 'consumer's infantile concrete attitude to ice cream' (Menzies Lyth, 1989a: 75), because it is either in sight and in mind, or out of sight and out of mind, then if ice cream is not immediately available to satisfy the impulsive desire it is likely that this will touch off 'violent infantile hostility against the ice cream manufacturers' (Menzies Lyth, 1989a: 75). The availability and condition of the ice cream supplied was thus crucial. Ice cream manufacturers were dealing with a dynamic that was much more complex than they had appreciated. They were, in effect, seeking to intervene in the mother–child relationship. For when the child is in a completely dependent position, food is love and security. In the mind of the child 'love is loving acts and good things, particularly the good breast' (Menzies Lyth, 1989a: 70). Deprivation of the breast can lead to 'aggressive omnipotent phantasies which are followed by guilt, depression and anxiety. The breast and the good food it gives have complete and immediate power to assuage these feelings' (Menzies Lyth, 1989a: 71). Ice cream eating was thus inextricably linked to deep-seated characteristics of human relations.

Even outside the home, the psychological significance of ice cream could not be ignored. Ice cream was already consumed in reasonably large quantities in the cinema, in hospitals and in midday restaurants and industrial canteens. In the cinema, the 'solitary gluttony' of eating ice cream could be hidden, but the 'need for perfection, the anger at being teased and tantalized' if it was not immediately available were ever-present potential problems (Menzies Lyth, 1989a: 82). Because of the danger of arousing infantile reactions such as hostility and anger towards manufacturers, ice cream supplies in places such as cinemas should never run out, Menzies strongly recommended to the manufacturers. In institutions such as hospitals, where stress and anxiety are high for both staff and clients, ice cream could be particularly valuable, acting as a 'motherly' food, a 'sign that the hospital cared'. In midday restaurants and industrial canteens, pleasure foods act as compensation for having to eat away from home. This suggested that 'ice-cream consumption might be high in such places and could easily be stimulated' (Menzies Lyth, 1989a: 85).

The concept of pleasure foods thus provided a novel interpretive grid for understanding the consumption of ice cream in a wide variety of settings. Clear recommendations followed from it. Manufacturers eager to build up winter trade in ice cream sales could be told that to increase sales in the home meant introducing more 'exotic' flavours, rather than restricting choice to vanilla (Menzies Lyth 1989a: 83). Also, there was 'considerable potential' for increasing sales to canteens and midday restaurants by means of a 'direct

approach to the consumer and by sales efforts directed at gatekeepers' (Menzies Lyth, 1989a: 86). A combined approach was called for in view of the possibility of arousing strong negative feelings on the part of the consumer if awakened desire is not met.

Problems faced by manufacturers of other 'pleasure foods' could be readily fitted into this interpretive grid. A particular chocolate product – Toblerone – provided the starting point for further elaboration of this distinctive psychoanalytic conception of the consumer. Toblerone, a chocolate product unique in its design, had disappeared during and immediately after the Second World War, had then been in short supply and, when fully reintroduced, met with only limited success. An approach to the Tavistock by the manufacturers provided the opportunity for a discussion of the concept of pleasure foods and a demonstration of the applicability of this concept to the particular product in question.

For the analysts at the TIHR, despite its distinctive appearance Toblerone was part of a much wider problem – the consumption of chocolate, and all that this meant to individuals. The intensity of the feelings about eating chocolate and other pleasure foods 'stems from conscious and unconscious memories in the individual of former experiences of feeding, ultimately and basically the early feeding-centred relationship with the mother' (TIHR, 1959a: 5). Pleasurable eating derives both from the 'actual ingestion of the food and the mouth activities involved and from the related psychological experiences', as well as from 'the alleviation of anxieties which are most acute in infancy but persist in adults and are, indeed, endemic in being human' (TIHR, 1959a: 6–7). Feeding may include actual hunger, but more significantly concerns anxieties such as separation, rejection, shyness, insecurity, aggression, unacceptability, jealousy, rivalry or envy.

For chocolate manufacturers, the significance of this was double-edged. Eating chocolate could, as one woman said, provide 'company'; another described how the eating of pleasure foods enabled her to cope with an irritating elderly relative (TIHR, 1959a: 7). Yet eating such foods could also give rise to anxiety, guilt and other problems. Adults experienced more mature forms of the emotions experienced by the infant greedy for the breast and possessive about the mother: 'Disappointment with sweets and chocolate was frequent and bitter. . . . Idealization of sweets as a source of satisfaction was common' (TIHR, 1959a: 8). Other problems included greed and attempts to control it. People were 'afraid of being too enticed and excited by the chocolate. . . . Fears of being possessed or compelled by sweets, especially chocolate and other rich sweets, were very common' (TIHR, 1959a: 9). Spots, bad teeth, and becoming fat were also stated as evidence of the effects of overindulgence in pleasure foods such as chocolate.

As the child grows older, feeding becomes 'somewhat detached from the close mother–child relationship', and social experiences become 'of relatively greater importance' (TIHR, 1959a: 11). But since 'later development is always influenced by earlier development' one finds traces of early feeding patterns 'right through to adulthood' (TIHR, 1959a: 11). The pleasure foods

thus play a significant role here, both as 'sublimated social activities and more directly sexual activities' (TIHR, 1959a: 11). Sweets and chocolate can 'often play a big part in the build-up through a social to a directly sexual relationship' (TIHR, 1959a: 11).

Manufacturers could not understand the failure of sales to take off significantly in the 1950s without appreciating the role of chocolate-eating in the social, psychological and sexual make-up of the individual. Insofar as food 'expresses social and sexual wishes, conveys social and sexual satisfactions, and deals with social and sexual anxieties', chocolate manufacturers would have to address such issues if they wished to increase the sales of their products (TIHR, 1959a: 12). For eating chocolate could be more a matter of a 'socially acceptable way of getting disguised sexual gratification' than a question of filling an empty stomach. Anxiety about spots and about becoming fat could imply 'anxiety about illicit pregnancies, the result of secret extramarital affairs', fantasies that apply to both sexes even though they are more prevalent in women, since 'the unconscious has little understanding of the real biological difference between the sexes' (TIHR, 1959a: 14). Likewise, dental decay is 'experienced as a direct assault on one's sexual attractiveness as a punishment for one's indulgence' (TIHR, 1959a: 14). Marketing would thus need to embrace much more than the superficial characteristics of the product: it would ultimately depend upon the capacity of the manufacturers and advertisers to form an alliance between the properties offered by the product and the unconscious, yet nonetheless highly active, needs, desires and anxieties of the purchaser who would be the consumer.

The Psychological Meaning of Consumption

The choices that individuals make between products pose problems for manufacturers and advertising agencies keen to differentiate their products from others. As the 'consumer society' took shape in the post-war years, corporations began to ask novel questions about why a competitor's products sold when theirs did not. There was a growing demand for a body of knowledge to underpin the increasingly professionalized know-how of advertising and marketing. In part, this was of course simply an indication of the concern to maintain or improve profitability and market share. But it also helped provide the conditions for a shift in perception as to what drove individuals to purchase this product rather than that. The 'consumer' came to be viewed as differentiated by age, by gender, by class and by psychological type. For the TIHR, beset with financial problems at the expiry of its grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, such concerns provided a crucial point of attachment of their psychological expertise to the requirements of the novel consumption market. And in the process they elaborated conceptions of the consumer that were not so directly infused with psychoanalytic images.

One of the earliest opportunities that members of the Tavistock had to demonstrate the complexity of consumer wishes and needs was provided by a request to investigate the development and marketing of the 'Pin-Up' home

perm. The report that was produced sought to establish the distinctive contribution that a social psychology of the consumer had to offer (TIHR, 1951). For, rather than addressing a specific product and asking why it was used, and why other products were chosen in preference to it, the object of attention was much broader. The report was 'designed to study women's attitudes and behaviour towards their hair', with the aim of gaining 'an understanding of deeper feelings related to hair' (TIHR, 1951: 1). The concern was to 'build up a body of information on the social and psychological aspects of hair and hair-doing', with the expectation that this would lead indirectly to results of value to the client firm (TIHR, 1951: 1).

A social psychology of women's hair would provide manufacturers with a knowledge base for decisions concerning product development and advertising themes. This noted the strong pressures women are under to maintain a good appearance. These came partly from cultural expectations, and partly from 'forces internal to themselves' (TIHR, 1951: 3). By achieving and maintaining a good appearance, 'a woman indicates both to herself and others that she has attained some degree of success in accepting the adult feminine role' (TIHR, 1951: 3). This means that she has 'come to terms with the problem of her sexuality in a way that is within normal limits for our society, and has attained some belief in herself as a good sexual object and good mother, actual or to be' (TIHR, 1951: 3).

This image of the well-adjusted woman was not thought to be specific to particular social groups, but to be generally held. Despite differences between classes, 'a general stereotype of good appearance as an indication of acceptance of the adult feminine role appears to exist' (TIHR, 1951: 3). Even if questions of affordability of perms and other forms of hair care entered the picture for women from lower income groups, the point was that there was held to be a feminine role model that applied to women from all sectors of the population. The stereotype centred on 'waviness', itself associated with images of softness and naturalness, smoothness and sheen. Waviness connoted the 'feeling of a sensuous life', but in a socially acceptable form, a 'civilised rather than primitive naturalness' (TIHR, 1951: 4). Wavy hair, it was argued, 'has always been highly valued', as indicated by 'the spontaneous development of simple home-made tools to achieve it' (TIHR, 1951: 4). So rather than home perms inventing a new need, they 'played into one of the fundamental needs of women', and 'expanded the opportunities for expressing a fundamental wish' (TIHR, 1951: 4). The invention of the home perm 'has provided the female community with a new tool to achieve the aim of wavy hair' (TIHR, 1951: 8).

The researchers studied a variety of women involved in giving and receiving home perms, generally using long non-directive interviews. They studied 'gatekeepers', those who possessed a high degree of skill in hairdressing, without having any professional training. They studied 'solos', skilled persons who required no assistance in doing their own hair. They studied 'two-person relationships', hairdressing relationships based either on mutual dependence, or non-reciprocal. And they studied shop permers

and non-permers, in order to understand the reasons for having shop perms, and the reasons why some women were resistant to perming of any kind. These interviews did not focus on what made people buy particular products, but rather upon the importance of hair to women. The researchers interpreted the responses of those they talked to in terms of the anxieties and fears associated with the potential loss or impairment of hair, arguing that 'there are within the feminine personality certain deep anxieties about physical damage and loss' linked to 'unconscious aggressive and destructive trends within the personality, which seem also to be associated with hair-doing activities' (TIHR, 1951: 12). The existence of the so-called 'destructive tendencies' and their associated anxieties were held to provide the 'psychological basis of the ordeal aspects of hairdressing' (TIHR, 1951: 12). Hair-doing, it was remarked, 'seems to satisfy obsessional tendencies in women', and such obsessional behaviour 'is recognised to be an indication of the existence of anxiety and at the same time is a mechanism which may serve to control it' (TIHR, 1951: 13).

This image of women as beset by obsessional tendencies could provide the basis for practical recommendations to producers. Women, they argued, felt a need to see good results quickly. Since perming of any kind was experienced as a serious ordeal, and since women tended to postpone re-perming as long as possible, technical improvements in the home perm product were needed. A reduction in the time for the whole perming operation would be a major benefit, particularly if this allowed the home perm operation to be 'undertaken and comfortably completed within one of the recognised divisions of the day, the afternoon or evening' (TIHR, 1951: 18). An improvement in the smell of the waving lotion would help relieve anxieties associated with perming, both for those doing the perm or having it done to them, as well as for 'other members of the household, especially male members' (TIHR, 1951: 19). And any written material accompanying the home perm should be regarded as 'objective and authoritative', as coming from a 'technical expert' in the field, one whose advice could be regarded as intrinsic to the services provided by the firm marketing the product. By means of such technical improvements, manufacturers might be able to combat the anxieties and 'ordeal aspects' of home perming, aspects accentuated 'by the fact that it is endured alone, and at the same time is necessarily made public to members of the household and is disturbing to them' (TIHR, 1951: 13).

The marketing of the 'Pin-Up' home perm could make use of these contradictory feelings of women towards the use of perms within the home. For the 'obsessional tendencies in women', the 'need for neatness, regularity and order', when combined with a widespread feeling that home perms were arduous and an ordeal, generated something of a hiatus (TIHR, 1915: 13). Marketing experts could exploit this hiatus, offering women, via home perms, the possibility of neat, wavy, well-groomed hair, thereby controlling 'destructive and agressive trends in women' (TIHR, 1951: 13). As the report went on to argue, 'The creation of something pretty or beautiful is the means

whereby reparation is made for destructive activities and wishes, and anxieties accompanying these wishes are thus allayed' (TIHR, 1951: 13).

Technical improvements in the home perm were one way of addressing the issues. But there was a more far-reaching solution, one that built on the psychological meaning of consumption and sought to foster the development of a 'home perm culture'. Initially, home perms were regarded as substitutes for shop perms. They were used by those who could not afford shop perms, and they were often considered to be of lesser quality because they did not last as long. But home perms, when understood psychologically, had positive attributes too. For the home perm 'produces soft, natural looking waves immediately, as contrasted with the hard, unnatural looking waves of the shop perm in its early stages' (TIHR, 1951: 17). And even attributes that might appear to be unequivocally negative, such as the fact that home perms do not last as long, could be turned to advantage. What was needed was 'to develop a new pattern of usage of home perms', to develop a more frequent and regular usage of the home perm (TIHR, 1951: 17).

The objective – of interest in both psychological and marketing terms – was thus to 'facilitate the establishment of this new home perm culture' (TIHR, 1951: 17). The 'obsessional behaviour related to hair and hairdoing', together with the 'universal feminine attitude which regards hair that is wavy, tidy and well cared-for as the ideal', could thus be combined with the cheapness of the home perm to 'create a situation in which a home perm culture involving the use of, say, three home perms a year will have a sound chance to develop' (TIHR, 1951: 17).

Advertising could play an important role here, even if the researchers recognized that the objective of developing a home perm culture could not be achieved exclusively by such means (TIHR, 1951: 17). Specific recommendations concerning advertising themes were seen to follow from a psychological understanding of what hair means to women. These recommendations cut across conventional beliefs that consumers should be differentiated by class and advertising should be directed to sectors of the market defined in these terms. On the contrary, they pertained to the 'majority of women of all classes' since 'obsessional tendencies' and the positive value attached to wavy hair were seen to be psychological attributes that characterized *all* women. Thus the values that should be conveyed in advertising the home perm were those of 'taste, neatness and a certain feminine capability, as well as maturity, rather than sophistication related only to external matters' (TIHR, 1951: 21). This meant that there were disadvantages in using film stars in advertisements for home perms. Instead of film stars, one might use 'ordinary people' – secretaries, factory workers and housewives – who represented those groups of women who were most likely to be using home perms. Indeed 'ordinary people' were the key here: the psychologists' recommendation that, by using ordinary people, advertisers would be able to indicate that these kinds of appearance were attainable by the majority of women, linked conveniently with the manufacturer's desire to target its product to a mass market.

This way of representing the psychological meaning of consumption was generalizable. It could be applied to other hair products, such as shampoo (TIHR, 1960a). Group discussions with working-class and middle-class housewives sought to 'identify general factors in relation to shampoo' (TIHR, 1960a: 1). In particular, as hair 'symbolises a good and attractive appearance', it 'is likely to be invested with anxieties and fears' (TIHR, 1960a: 2). Those involved in producing and marketing shampoos were advised to recognize that it was not only the perceived qualities of shampoos – smell, colour, viscosity, pleasantness in use, economy – that were at issue. For the 'image that a consumer has of any particular shampoo' is determined 'not only by the properties which she perceives as a result of using it but also by the advertisements with which it is associated' (TIHR, 1960a: 5). This might well be true of all products, but it had a particular relevance to the advertising of shampoos, because 'women's expectations and frustrations are so high in relation to shampoo' (TIHR, 1960a: 5).

One might believe that there is a world of difference between the washing and perming of hair and the cleansing of the body after defecation. Such a distinction would be misleading, at least in terms of the ways in which acts of consumption were analysed by Tavistock researchers. In the mid-1950s, a new question was brought to the researchers of the TIHR, one that centred on the development and marketing of a new type of toilet tissue, 'soft' as opposed to 'hard' tissue (TIHR, 1956a, 1956b). This was addressed by means of a number of regional studies carried out in 1956 – covering Yorkshire, Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester and the south of England – that sought to understand long-term market trends, the 'total toilet tissue field', rather than soft tissues only. These studies demonstrated considerable regional variation, with Yorkshire standing out from the other areas studied. In Yorkshire, progress and a rise in standards of living were 'accompanied by a curious kind of traditionalism' in which 'changes are made in a spirit of regret for the past and little feeling of anticipation or interest or even real conviction about the possibility of a more pleasurable future' (TIHR, 1956a: 1). In Yorkshire, 'Life should be a struggle, much strength of mind must be exercised to control one's desire for pleasure, and there is little capacity to admit . . . the possibility of pleasure connected with bodily functions' (TIHR, 1956a: 1).

This had considerable implications for the marketing of a *soft* toilet tissue. For the 'qualities' associated with products were not simply chosen according to the functions they performed. First and foremost, they had psychological and sociological significance. While hard was usually equated with bad, the equating of soft with good, in the case of toilet paper, was not so simple. 'Soft' papers 'were also viewed with great distrust and anxiety because they were not "reliable". They crumbled, they tore too easily, were pulpable, too absorbent, and so on' (TIHR, 1956a: 1). Soft toilet tissue, at least in the Yorkshire area, thus had a contradictory position in relation to the psychological value placed on cleanliness: 'One feels almost that there is so much anxiety about cleanliness, associated with such vigorous cleaning

that nothing soft could possibly stand up to the way it would be used' (TIHR, 1956a: 1). Underlying the protestations against softness, there was seen to lurk 'a great longing to have something more gentle, if only it were not felt to be almost immoral to have that kind of pleasure' (TIHR, 1956a: 1). But this longing for 'softness' was outweighed by the 'Yorkshire conventions' that dictated that 'it is really not acceptable ... to be discriminating about toilet papers' (TIHR, 1956a: 4).

Elsewhere the prospects of a developing market for soft toilet tissue looked hopeful. A 'steady upward movement in class orientation, and an aspiration to have the same as people in higher socio-economic groups' implied that more demands were being 'put on products for "extra" pleasures, including aesthetic pleasure or "social" satisfaction such as prestige' (TIHR, 1956b: 2). In these circumstances, it is the 'extraneous, or non-fundamental aspects, of products' that were becoming increasingly valued, leading to a 'more permissive and tolerant attitude to pleasurable experiences in general, and especially to pleasure arising from care of the body or from natural bodily functions' (TIHR, 1956b: 2).

A number of recommendations arose from this extensive study of the qualities associated with toilet tissue. There was a description of the 'desired standard tissue'. This, it was argued, should convey an overall impression of a 'dignified, solid middle class comfort, but without, as it were, any direct approach to sensuality or even to luxury, and with great emphasis on reliability, good service and integrity' (TIHR, 1956b: 6). This standard tissue should be associated with the quality of 'softness', but this should be a 'maximum softness compatible with protection from contamination, either by permeation through the paper or by breaking when the paper is used with a rubbing or scraping movement' (TIHR, 1956b: 6). But there were dangers in over-emphasizing the quality of 'softness' for standard toilet tissue. For softness, as an absolute quality, 'seemed to provoke anxiety in standard tissue users', whereas 'smoothness and fineness are felt as compatible with safety' (TIHR, 1956b: 6).

The recommendations for soft toilet tissue again focused on the qualities associated with it, and the potential anxieties it could provoke. It should be associated with qualities such as 'luxury and comfort', 'gentle, kind care' and a 'certain dignity or reserve' (TIHR, 1956b: 6). It should 'grant the right to pleasure and satisfaction in the care of the body', and should suggest that it 'can reduce the tedium or inconvenience of essential personal, family or household tasks' (TIHR, 1956b: 7). But while soft toilet tissue might be regarded as a luxury, it must 'give the impression of appreciating the seriousness of its tasks' and must 'never seem a frivolity' (TIHR, 1956b: 7). With regard to the attributes of the paper itself, the 'overriding consideration is softness', qualities such as impermeability and tensile strength only being of importance in so far as they are 'compatible with maximum softness' (TIHR, 1956b: 7). The report concluded with a recommendation to the manufacturers that they should seek 'as quickly as possible' to establish a soft toilet tissue in the market (TIHR, 1956b: 8).

Thus, over the 1950s and 1960s, consumers came to be viewed as diverse and complex actors, whose choices were nonetheless psychologically intelligible. As commercial television became one of the principal means of advertising, manufacturers and advertising agencies increasingly turned to psychological advice as to how to overcome problems with marketing, to market new products or to market old products more effectively. Of course, psychology itself was heterogeneous and conflictual, and the approach taken at the Tavi was only one line within this field. Nonetheless, the key point is that, through this relation of psy expertise, advertising, marketing and production, the very notion of consumer choice was transformed. Consumer choice was no longer to be regarded as a function of the product, and of what it offered in and of itself. Nor was choice to be understood as something that might be influenced by the promise of status, glamour, happiness and so forth. Indeed, in certain circumstances, this could even be counter-productive, suggesting something that was beyond the reach of ordinary individuals. Rather, the choice of particular products was to be intrinsically linked to the subjective meaning of consumption for the ordinary individual in their everyday life, however that psychological meaning was to be understood. The marketing of a home perm became a question of understanding the psychological and social aspects of hair, a matter of grasping the nature of the 'feminine psyche', and of analysing the 'obsessional tendencies in women' as they might be manifested in everyday behaviour. The simple act of purchase of shampoo had similarly to be understood in terms of deep-seated 'anxieties and fears'. The introduction of soft toilet tissue was also fraught with difficulties of a psychological order. There were anxieties and fears associated with an apparently simple decision as to whether to purchase greater comfort. But apparently, at least for some individuals, there were also problems if comfort and pleasure were too closely associated with the performance of bodily functions. So the marketing of this new product had to be treated with considerable caution. Even pet ownership, insofar as it brought another living being within the family, was a decision of psychological and social significance *par excellence* (TIHR, 1965a; Bridger, 1970). Albeit in different guises, a knowledge of the extraordinarily rich and complex psychological meaning of consumption as it obtained in the individual living of an ordinary life was to become a central feature in these new technologies for allying consumer choice with commercial objectives.

The Rational Consumer

What if consumers were rational? What if individuals were not beset by anxieties, emotions, obsessive tendencies and a need for compensation for the loss of the breast? What if people chose to purchase products because of preferences for the objective qualities of a product that could not be explained away as *post hoc* rationalizations? This was the possibility explored by a group of researchers at the TIHR led by Fred Emery, who sought actively to mitigate the influence of psychodynamic models of the consumer in favour of those which regarded consumers as essentially rational actors making calculated choices.

The Rational Alcohol Drinker

The question of Guinness drinking – what kinds of people drink Guinness, and what kinds of people do not drink Guinness now, but might do so in the future – provided an ideal opportunity for Emery to elaborate this notion of the 'rational consumer' (TIHR, 1960b). The problem was one of finding out what people think they are 'preferring and drinking' when they either accept or reject Guinness, of determining the 'product image' of Guinness. But this was not a question of identifying those idealized images contained in advertising that had been so fiercely attacked by the culture critics. The 'product image' referred rather to those 'real and discriminable qualities' that individuals sought when choosing an alcoholic drink. For when choosing between bitter, Mackeson and Guinness, drinkers were making comparisons that were 'rational and restrained' (TIHR, 1960b: 1, 4). The choices made by drinkers followed 'from an awareness of the objective taste qualities of their drinks' (TIHR, 1960b: 9). Preference for a particular drink 'appears to be closely related to its taste qualities and the ideally preferred taste of the drinker' (TIHR, 1960b: 10).

On the basis of this image of the rational consumer, analyses such as the 'Semantic Differential Test' on taste qualities were conducted, diagrams were drawn of the 'Logical Structure of Guinness and Bitter Images', 'controlled taste experiments' were carried out on carefully selected samples of individuals, and graphs of changing preferences over the drinkers' lifetimes were constructed. The end point was the production in tabular form of the 'distinctive product images' of Guinness, Mackeson and bitter. This made it possible to conclude that the Guinness drinker 'differs in getting more steady satisfaction from the particular combination of properties and effects that characterise Guinness' (TIHR, 1960b: 17). Rejecting explicitly the view that Guinness and non-Guinness drinkers have 'succumbed to nationally common delusions about their drinks', Emery argued instead that there is 'strong evidence for the hypothesis that it is the preference for these properties and effects that has to be explained not preference for Guinness as advertised or as fancifully or idiosyncratically perceived' (TIHR, 1960b: 17). And from the 'logical structure of the product images' one might make predictions, such as the proposition that 'it seems likely that regular Bitter drinkers may develop into Guinness drinkers but unlikely that regular Mackeson drinkers would do so' (TIHR, 1960b: 17).

But if individuals were rational, they were not all rational in exactly the same way. Consultants at the TIHR, like a number of contemporary economists, disputed the adequacy of the classical economic image of the universal rationality of the consumer in the market for understanding consumer choices (see Katona, 1951 for an economic argument that comes close to Emery's notion of 'rational choice'). Just as one could identify 'product images', so too could one identify 'personality images'. Clearly, what was necessary was to map the one on to the other. Using a variation of the Semantic Differential technique, a picture of the Guinness drinker emerged as a

'solid citizen', 'friendly, responsible, hardworking, unaggressive, relaxed, sociable' (TIHR, 1960b: 18). This self-definition of the Guinness drinker presented a relatively sharply defined personality type. This was in contrast to the picture of the bitter drinker that emerged, a picture typified in a negative fashion, as lacking the qualities other drinkers attributed to themselves. Along with the relatively undefined product image of bitter, this suggested that 'Bitter serves a wide range of functions for a wide range of people' (TIHR, 1960b: 19). The sharply defined personality image of the Guinness drinker suggested, however, 'that a much closer fit exists between the product and the person it serves' (TIHR, 1960b: 19). Indeed there was a 'striking parallel' between the 'logical structures' of the personality images and the product images (TIHR, 1960b: 20).

But the notion of 'personality' was insufficient if one was to gain a 'first approximation to a theoretical understanding of the complex processes involved in alcohol drinking' (TIHR, 1960b: 39). Drawing on an earlier paper (TIHR, 1959b), Emery outlined three different aspects of an individual's 'life-space': the 'objective behavioural environment that presents him with a range of stimuli, cues, goals, etc.'; his 'subjective orientation to this life of his'; and 'his pattern of drinking preferences and habits' (TIHR, 1960b: 23). Particular combinations of these different aspects of an individual's 'life-space' gave rise to a tripartite typology of drinking habits: *reparative, social* and *indulgent* drinking. It was these patterns of life conditions, philosophy of life, and drinking habits that would, or so it was hoped, make possible an explanation of why certain individuals chose certain alcoholic drinks.

Emery argued against the view that alcohol had '*the primary social function of anxiety reduction*' (TIHR, 1959b: 3; he is arguing against Horton's [1949] analysis of data on culture and personality accumulated in the Yale Cross-Cultural Files). He also objected to the 'over-concern with the chronic alcoholic and a search for *the* alcoholic personality' (TIHR, 1959b: 6). The target of his criticism here was psychoanalysis and 'depth psychology' which, he argued, had reoriented the search for 'the alcoholic personality' into 'a search for the personality disturbance for which alcoholism was an appropriate symptom' (TIHR, 1959b: 6). Emery favoured a different explanation of alcohol consumption, one that drew on the work of Simmel, Director of the Schloss Tegel sanatorium of Berlin between 1927 and 1934. Simmel had distinguished between 'genuine addiction to alcohol which makes the individual asocial' and the consumption of alcohol that 'serves as a means of balancing an impaired mental equilibrium' (Simmel, 1948, cited in TIHR, 1959b: 9). Emery drew upon this distinction, arguing that there are 'substantial differences between the types of mental equilibrium that different drinkers are trying to re-establish' (TIHR, 1959b: 9). Alcohol consumption, that is to say, has 'positive, social, and personal functions . . . as well as disruptive functions' (TIHR, 1959b: 11).

It was from Simmel that Emery derived, and adapted, the classification of types of drinker that he used in his study of Guinness drinkers. In addition

to 'genuine' addicts, Simmel had identified three types of drinkers: social, reactive and neurotic. Emery preferred a different terminology which retained a certain psychoanalytic flavour. The 'social drinker' was one with 'a general background of discontent for a life that exacts considerable abnegation of instinctual pleasures' (TIHR, 1959b: 13). This, together with the 'illusory, transient nature of conviviality created by drink', of which the individual is well aware, are the major factors propelling the social drinker to alcohol (TIHR, 1959b: 13). The 'reparative drinker' is one who is 'balancing the continuous giving-out of himself in work and family with regular intake of alcohol', sustaining the former by alcoholic reparations to himself (TIHR, 1959b: 13). With a view of life as characterized by lack of change, and by demanding social relations dutifully maintained, the main concern of the reparative drinker is 'just to keep up with the daily grind at work and at home' (TIHR, 1959b: 13). Meanwhile the 'indulgent drinker' values drink as a means of 'escape into the infantile world of the pleasure principle', a 'renunciation of the world of reality ... impelled by unconscious conflicts and made possible by an inconsistent super-ego that can be "bribed" into indulgence' (TIHR, 1959b: 14). For indulgent drinkers, the 'beginning of the drinking career is likely to coincide with some event that aroused the latent oedipal conflict' (TIHR, 1959b: 14).

For Guinness, it was the 'reparative drinker' who was to be the principal focus of attention. For 'it is clear that the reparative drinker's self-image corresponds closely to that of the Guinness drinker' (TIHR, 1960b: 27). Moreover, 'the product image of Guinness is very much like that which a reparative drinker would seek' (TIHR, 1960b: 27). The fit was almost perfect: 'No other drink used by this sample corresponds as closely' (TIHR, 1960b: 27). The reparative drinker is 'happy enough with his past and his present and confident that he can cope with problems as they arise' (TIHR, 1960b: 24). Believing that there is little prospect of a major improvement in his circumstances, the reparative drinker will tend to see himself as someone who is 'well and truly settled down in his way of life, unimpressive in his achievements but worthy of repute as a hardworking, conscientious and stable member of the community' (TIHR, 1960b: 24).

The reparative drinker who seeks refuge in a club or a pub is seeking refuge from external conditions, not from himself as an indulgent drinker is. The 'reparative drinker will tend to stick to a place where he is well-known and respected for what he is' (TIHR, 1960b: 24). This sameness of his conditions will tend to lead the reparative drinker to develop a pattern of regular drinking, as far as possible a daily drink. By the end of the week, the reparative drinker's 'life conditions' will create a feeling of 'emptiness', a feeling of being 'run-down', an emptiness derived from giving of himself to and for others, while getting and expecting from them 'little in the way of affectionate rewards or ego-gratification' (TIHR, 1960b: 25). The reparative drinker will thus be drinking 'so as to be better able to return to and exercise real mastery over his work environment' (TIHR, 1960b: 25). The reparative drinker, that is to say, is so by virtue of 'life conditions', 'philosophy of life',

as well as 'drinking habits'. And Guinness drinkers are pre-eminently reparative in all these three respects.

This conception of the 'reparative' alcohol drinker had considerable implications for the advertising of Guinness. According to Emery, consumers were not duped by advertising into choosing things they would not otherwise have purchased. But this did not mean that advertising could not be successful if the images it used 'fitted' both the 'product image' and the 'life-spaces' of the reparative drinker. Thus, of three Guinness symbols – the zookeeper, the man with the girder, and the 'moon face' on the glass of stout – it is the 'girder man' who was considered to be the most appropriate symbol for the advertising of Guinness. While acknowledging that it is very difficult to control the meanings of pictorial symbols, Emery argued that the 'girder man' as an advertising symbol for Guinness symbolized that Guinness 'gives you that "something extra" needed for the extra effort' (TIHR, 1960c: 5). Such a symbol might be 'appropriate for the young Bitter drinking man in his prime', while for the heavy Guinness drinker, 'the connotation should be a restoration of strength to go on doing the ordinary things of life' (TIHR, 1960c: 5).

More generally, the notion that alcohol consumption was based on rational choices led to a particular role for the 'Flavour Profile' technique (see Cairncross and Sjostrom, 1950). The context was that Guinness (Ireland) was considering introducing a supplementary or alternative drink to Guinness stouts for the Irish markets (TIHR, 1963a). If, as Emery argued, the taste and aroma of alcoholic drinks is one of the key factors in determining whether individuals choose a particular drink, then it was considered crucial that an alternative drink offer a 'different flavour experience'. But detailed flavour descriptions did not come naturally to all individuals. One had, first of all, to choose individuals with care: they had to have 'above average interest in odour and flavour', had to be 'intelligent and of high personal integrity', yet 'cannot be domineering' (TIHR, 1963a: 2). But individuals on their own were not enough: a small group setting for 'flavour panels' was considered essential to developing flavour profiles. Individuals, Emery argued, 'have a limited channel capacity for the conscious handling of sensory input' (TIHR, 1963a: 2). Moreover, not only do individuals 'restrict what gets to consciousness, but they strive to maintain these restrictions' (TIHR, 1963a: 2). The small group setting was a way of seeking to overcome these resistances, by 'extending and amplifying the pressures on the individual to tackle the task and by giving the sort of support needed to cope with the added stress and frustration' (TIHR, 1963a: 2–3). Citing approvingly the conception of the group developed by Wilfred Bion, Emery commented that 'if the level of support is not adequate to the rise in individual stress, other less fruitful forms of small group behaviour will be manifested' (TIHR, 1963a: 3; for a discussion of the work of Bion, see Miller and Rose, 1994).

To cope with these conditions, an experimental situation was designed in which 'the group worked in almost complete isolation for 3-day stretches

(thus minimising forces toward other less stressful activity or opportunities for same)' (TIHR, 1963a: 3). Individual tasting was done as a member of a pair, with one person taking over the 'ego-functions of writing down and organising the verbal reports'. Tasting was done blind for the most part, and the drinks were handled three at a time. A poet provided the group 'access to the sort of memories of experience with which we were dealing', while an expert with experience of the brewers' and the consumers' concerns with flavour helped build up a useful vocabulary for describing tastes.

Once the individual flavour profiles had been constructed, a group meeting was held on each set of three drinks. In these meetings, a first attempt was made to create a composite flavour profile. This 'helped the group to achieve agreement about words, and to develop more insight into the complexities of noting and reporting flavour experiences' (TIHR, 1963a: 9). Checks on reliability were made by repeated tastings of certain key drinks, including draught and bottled Guinness, as well as other drinks named mysteriously 'GM 28' and 'GM X'. Members of the panel were asked to record not only the flavours and sensations, but also 'the order of their appearance, location in the mouth, whether dominant or an undertone, if an undertone, whether clear or faint and the amplitude of both the dominant flavours at different times and of the total experience' (TIHR, 1963a: 9–10). This additional information helped create consistent individual records, and helped also in constructing the 'composite profiles' by indicating 'whether individual differences were about undertones and hence probably differences in level of conscious discrimination or whether for instance, some had started to pick-up the flavour characteristics at a later stage in the process than others' (TIHR, 1963a: 10).

In this way, composite flavour profiles were constructed for a wide range of stouts, brown ales, lagers, light and pale ales, as well as bitters. The conclusion was dramatic: 'each had a profile as unique as a human fingerprint' (TIHR, 1963a: 12). While the basic 'structural elements' might be common, the 'combinations of patterns' were different. All that remained for the manufacturer was to produce a drink that resided at the appropriate point on a continuum of 'basic taste patterns', as long as it was borne in mind that this might be modified by other factors such as the 'overall amplitude of flavour, body and chemical sensations', as well as by the 'after taste' (TIHR, 1963a: 14).

Brands: The Psychological Cost of Choosing Between Equivalents

The question of consumer choice is relatively simple if individuals make rational choices based on preferences for readily discernible objective qualities of products. Things are much more complicated if individuals are faced with products that are equivalent, or if they are faced with a choice of products whose differences they are unable to identify and assess. In these circumstances, there is a 'psychological cost' to those who seek to make a rational choice between alternatives. 'Brand loyalty' was the term that was coined to understand how individual consumers reduced such psychological

cost to themselves (on the general question of brands in advertising, see Leiss et al., 1986: 107–11).

The case of petrol and oil purchase provided a particularly instructive example of such processes, for although it is individuals that purchase petrol, they do not 'consume' it in the sense that they consume Guinness, beer, lager, chocolate or ice cream. And the issue is further confounded since, as Tavistock researchers were quick to point out, the purchase of petrol for car drivers is closely tied to self-images (TIHR, 1959c). It was these issues that were to be addressed when, in January 1959, the Tavistock Institute was commissioned by S.H. Benson Limited, on behalf of Shell Mex and BP Ltd, to undertake a 'long-term programme in which survey techniques would be employed as well as more intensive psychological and sociological approaches' (TIHR, 1959c: 1). Work on the main part of the project began in April 1959, with a short enquiry into reactions to an abstract cinema film on BP. It proceeded to a series of individual and family interviews, group discussions and questionnaire work, discussions with consumers, as well as visits to garages and petrol stations.

The complexity of the issue began with the question of car ownership and driving, for the driver has a particular relationship to the car. When learning to drive, individuals go through 'phases of feeling inadequate in relation to the skills and knowledge required', progressing to a 'sense of triumph and achievement, a warmer feeling for the car and some growth of self-respect' with the acquisition of driving skill (TIHR, 1959c: 2). Although this sense of achievement may diminish with experience, the car tends none the less to be 'incorporated in the driver's image of himself. It becomes an extension of his psychological image' (TIHR, 1959c: 2). However, few people 'ever feel themselves completely masters of their vehicle' (TIHR, 1959c: 2). Mechanical faults, traffic, weather, road surface conditions, the vagaries of other drivers and so on all remind the driver of the limitations of their skill and control.

This need for control over the vehicle has important implications for the purchase of petrol and oil. For, in order to purchase petrol, the driver has to interrupt the 'relationship between him and the car', provoking unfavourable reactions (TIHR, 1959c: 3). This is not simply a matter of inconvenience, but arises because in stopping to purchase petrol 'he is reminded that the car's functioning is subject to circumstances outside his own control, that it is not an extension of himself and that he is diminished when it goes out of operation. He feels worried, silly and powerless or potentially powerless' (TIHR, 1959c: 3). This is why, the Tavistock researchers argued, drivers 'feel tense between the moment when they decide to stop for petrol and oil', and the moment when they actually stop, resenting the need to stop, attempting to delay the stop, and finding reasons for not stopping at the first convenient place, promising themselves and their passengers a better stop, being critical of stations and attendants when they do stop, and so forth (TIHR, 1959c: 3).

The notion of 'brand preference' was held to play an important role here. For brand preference affects where the driver actually stops, drivers

preferring to keep to a preferred range of brands or to avoid others (TIHR, 1959c: 3). And brand preference plays a further important role in handling the anxiety and conflict in deciding which petrol to purchase and when. Although drivers 'realize the importance of petrol they know little about it. Their beliefs are uneven and very often contradictory. Ignorance lies along-side an anxiety about the powers and potentiality of petrol' (TIHR, 1959c: 10).

This 'conflict between the need to know about petrol brands and the difficulty of knowing' is, the Tavistock researchers argued, 'fundamental to the understanding of consumer behaviour in this market' (TIHR, 1959c: 10). An acknowledgement that such a conflict exists 'helps one to understand why it is so frequently said that all the leading known brands of petrol are much the same' (TIHR, 1959c: 10). For the theory that all petrol is much the same is accompanied by a 'fear that there really is a difference, that if only one knew enough about it one could choose the one petrol that would make all the difference' (TIHR, 1959c: 10). The belief that all petrol is much the same is thus 'valuable to the individual as a way of dealing with the possibility that he is really missing something. Like many other of his beliefs it serves the function for him of warding off anxiety or doubt' (TIHR, 1959c: 10). Brand preference, that is to say, could be understood as a way of handling psychological conflict. The Tavistock researchers were unequiv-ocal: 'We regard the conflict between the need to know and the difficulty of knowing as a central factor . . . in the maintenance of brand preferences. *It is a rare consumer who makes his choice on realistic grounds*' (TIHR, 1959c: 10, emphasis added).

This put advertising in a curious position with regard to brand prefer-ence. For if it is the case that 'one very important reason why a particular consumer sticks to a particular brand is to cope with the possibility that he might be missing something elsewhere' (TIHR, 1959c: 10), then the con-sumer does not have to 'decide between the blandishments or technical argu-ments of advertisers' (TIHR, 1959c: 10). The consumer can 'tell himself that if something is good his own brand will incorporate it' (TIHR, 1959c: 10). It is 'probably partially true of brand preference in many fields' that 'con-sumers stick to brands because it is psychologically uneconomical to explore, experiment and learn about minor differences' (TIHR, 1959c: 10). And this is particularly important in the case of petrol because of the 'tech-nicalities, objective dangers and subjective anxieties associated with cars and motoring' (TIHR, 1959c: 10).

While advertisers are 'thought to lie, to over-claim grossly, to insult the intelligence of the public, and to attempt to blind consumers with science' (TIHR, 1959c: 12), advertising nevertheless 'plays an important part in affecting choice of brand' (TIHR, 1959c: 13). It is doubtful whether par-ticular advertisements or campaigns cause large-scale swings in brand choice, but 'it is advertising and marketing practices that have narrowed the range from which he chooses' (TIHR, 1959c: 13). This is so because 'petrol advertising powerfully reinforces a choice once it has been made', drivers

tending to notice advertisements for the petrol they buy, and being 'reassured by seeing its name and claims' (TIHR, 1959c: 13).

In a later report, it was argued that 'different perceptions and rankings of brands derive from *global brand impressions*' (TIHR, 1961a: 1, emphasis added). Rather than consumer behaviour being determined by 'specific brand qualities' or 'reality-based beliefs about specific attributes', consumers loyal to a particular brand 'tend to defend their choice in a "wholistic" manner as a way of dealing with uncertainties endemic in a field where the user cannot adjudicate technical claims' (TIHR, 1961a: 1). This gave rise to the recommendation that there should be two levels or streams of advertising: one referring primarily to the company; and another containing technical claims and references to the functions of each type of petrol and its suitability for different types of car.

But soon even this notion of brand preference proved insufficient. In 1965, a report was prepared for Dynamar on the 'social and psychological factors involved in the choice of petrol and automotive lubricants' (TIHR, 1965b: 1). In this report, the notions of 'brand preference' and 'brand choice' were declared inadequate as a way of designating the emotional significance attached to brands, and the notion of 'brand cathexis' was put forward as more appropriate (TIHR, 1965b: 9). Feelings about brands of petrol were seen to be divided into two categories: positive and negative cathexis. The degree of intensity of 'positive feelings' was held to be indicated by the 'extent to which the habitual journey itself may be distorted ... to get a particular brand of petrol' (TIHR, 1965b: 10). One motorist had tried a particular brand, on the recommendation of a friend, to cure trouble with sticky valves in a second-hand car purchased in the early part of his career. The trouble having disappeared, this motorist continued to use the same brand for the following 32 years in a variety of vehicles. Other motorists, having kept detailed records when young concerning petrol consumption, developed a 'kind of persistent addiction to one brand of petrol', even though the 'kind of experimentation carried out might be extremely perfunctory' (TIHR, 1965b: 10).

'Negative brand cathexis' was a kind of 'mirror image' to the positive side. There were those who had a 'specific aversion to one particular brand' that could be traced back to a 'particular bad experience with the petrol concerned', while the disapproval of a further group 'seems more directed against the company than its product' (TIHR, 1965b: 14). On the whole, the report commented, 'more motorists were prepared to admit to and act upon negative brand cathexis than positive' (TIHR, 1965b: 14). Genuine indifference to the brand of petrol – the complete absence of 'brand cathexis' – was not found: 'we have not met any in whom no feelings about brands could be detected at all' (TIHR, 1965b: 14). While consumers were rational, then, the rationality expressed itself in very complex ways in the forms of life and habits of conduct within which their acts of consumption were assembled and reassembled.

An Avalanche of Consumers

The decade of the 1960s was the heyday for the rational consumer at the Tavistock. Almost anything, it appeared, could be an object of

'consumption'. If consumers were rational, but were nonetheless more complex entities than much conventional economic theory suggested, the concerns of corporations to maintain or improve market share, to introduce new products, or to counteract the long-term decline of a particular product, could be aligned with the Tavistock's capacities to understand the psychological and sociological aspects of human conduct. From 1960 on, there was an avalanche of requests to study a multitude of products and consumer reactions. There were concerns about the overall size of the future market for mustard, and the long-run decline in eating English mustards, expressed by Colman's. Semantic differential scales were constructed to identify the possible taste qualities of mustard, and to study 'mustard in relation to food and not in isolation' (TIHR, 1961b: 5). The 'McQuitty Elementary Linkage Analysis' helped identify a 'group of qualities such that every quality in the group is more likely to be found in conjunction with other qualities in the group than with qualities not in the group' (McQuitty, 1957; referred to in TIHR, 1961b: 22). From this, 'three clear groupings of meat qualities' were identified, making it possible to determine 'what meats tend to go with which group of qualities by calculating the mean ranking each meat has for each group of qualities' (TIHR, 1961b: 23). The final step was to relate the mustard and the meat qualities. From this pilot study it was concluded that 'the usage of mustard may be changed by changing the frequency with which a meat is served, by changing the probability of mustard being served with a meat, or by increasing the number with the family who take mustard' (TIHR, 1961b: 12). It was further concluded that 'the English type mustard is not equally appropriate to all meats, and that in no meat does it fully cater for all of the required mustard qualities' (TIHR, 1961b: 14). The implication was that 'there may be a substantial market for mustards other than the English type' (TIHR, 1961b: 14).

A similar method was used to evaluate a new small non-chocolate biscuit to be introduced to the market by Cadbury's Ltd. Preliminary investigations showed that biscuits were eaten for three purposes: as an adjunct to drinking; as a food; and for tension management. Because of the small size of the proposed biscuit, it was seen by the researchers as most likely to be used to assist in 'tension management', the central question thus being whether the 'bite-size' biscuit was 'appropriate to situations in which tension management is likely to be the main function of biscuit eating' (TIHR, 1963d: 3). A test group of 80 housewives was asked to judge the taste qualities of three biscuits on nine dimensions, using a seven-point scale. The nine dimensions were: rough–smooth; crisp–soft; strong–mild; sweet–not sweet; single–several flavoured; rich–plain; substantial–light; appetizing–unappetizing; and interesting–dull. The judgements made were used to rank order the biscuits and these rankings on each dimension were correlated. A McQuitty Linkage Analysis was performed on the resulting matrix of correlations. From these tests, the crucial characteristic that emerged was 'appetizing', this dimension distinguishing clearly between the biscuits, and correlating highly with liking for the biscuit.

The terrain of consumer research amenable to the methods of Tavistock researchers proved to be vast. There was an investigation into the 'attitudes of housewives to frozen fish-shapes' (TIHR, 1959d). The 'social and psychological factors concerned in the introduction of a liquid scourer' were studied in terms of the 'more general social and psychological factors involved in household cleaning' as well as in terms of 'the more specific factors that might be involved in the use of scourers' (TIHR, 1960d). The 'making of gravy', the qualities people sought in gravy, was studied in order to assist in the formation of an advertising campaign to be mounted by Bisto in the autumn of 1962 (TIHR, 1962a). The 'body surface' as a whole, as distinct from particular parts of the body such as the face and the hands, was taken as the object of study. The point here was that manufacturers at the time were argued to have 'become experts in the care of certain body parts', a focus that 'may militate against an optimal alignment with consumer needs' (TIHR, 1962b: 5). The implication was that 'a new way of categorising the consumer' was needed, 'one more in keeping with the way he perceives himself' (TIHR, 1962b: 6; for a useful discussion of the history of the concept of body image, see Grosz, 1994). Unstructured or depth interviews were used to encourage 37 mothers to talk and express themselves freely on the subject of baby foods (TIHR, 1962c). These focused on the mental experience that people have of baby foods, the ways in which they come into contact with them, and what happens when they are finally consumed. It appeared that some foods 'may be bought less for the nutrients or flavour experiences than for reasons of leisure, prestige, curiosity, novelty, economy, tradition, or other thoughts and feeling that their purchase, contact and consumption can stimulate and satisfy' (TIHR, 1962c: 3). Flavour profiles for vitamin C drinks were constructed on the basis of a study of 38 mothers, in an attempt to identify the 'ideal drink' for 5–15 year olds (TIHR, 1963b).

A group of 22 women under the age of 25 who were 'going steady with a serious boy-friend' were asked to discuss and comment on advertising copy, illustrations and complete advertisements for diamond engagement rings (TIHR, 1963c). They were also asked to discuss the process of getting engaged, deciding on rings, and the 'concept of a diamond' (TIHR, 1963c: 1). The concern was to investigate the factors important for diamond engagement ring advertising as a whole, with particular reference to 'evaluating the British and American approaches' (TIHR, 1963c: 1). In addition to being asked to comment on advertising images, advertising copy and entire advertisements, respondents were also asked to look at two illustrations, imagine what was happening, what led up to the situation, and what was the outcome, and then to write down their thoughts. Responses spoke of a 'dream come true', a 'dream for their future happiness', the 'joy and happiness the day they became engaged', that 'through her ring she could never forget him' (TIHR, 1963c: Appendix III: g). Other responses spoke of the 'diamond ring that would keep them together for always', and of how the 'ring makes them even more sure of their love for each other' (TIHR, 1963c: i).

On a more mundane topic, 39 women were organized into four dis-
cussion groups to investigate views about the constituents and tastes of
Bovril and Marmite, their uses (as drink, as spread, as flavouring agent) and
their flavours (TIHR, 1963e). As a way of understanding the 'often uncon-
scious feelings involved in taking a holiday', 82 respondents were involved
in group discussions or interviewed individually (TIHR, 1965c). On behalf
of S.H. Benson Ltd and the Gillette Co., some 50 respondents were divided
into six groups to address the sociological and psychological aspects of
shaving (TIHR, 1961c). And a more general study of 'hair care' addressed
the 'characteristics and properties of hair-care practices and products . . . as
perceived by the consumers, not by the producers or advertisers' (TIHR,
1964: 6, emphasis in original).

Towards a Social Psychology of the Rational Consumer?

Despite the diversity of products they studied, these researchers at the TIHR
worked on the assumption that most consumer behaviour was rational,
although this was not the perfect rationality invoked by most conventional
economists. A social psychology of responses to advertising images showed
that 'persuasion is an interpersonal process', and that 'it is necessary to bring
back into our concept of psychological man, certain characteristics that have
been stripped off in the search for fundamental laws of organism–object
relation' (TIHR, 1962d: 6). In particular, it was important to address the
'dynamic vectorial qualities of human motives' (TIHR, 1962d: 6). This
meant that if a particular object was to take on the character of a 'goal-
object', to be perceived as something wanted, then 'it must be perceived as
having properties required by and appropriate to the need' (TIHR,
1962d: 6). This placed the general issue of persuasion firmly back on the
terrain of the rational individual choosing those items or qualities they
valued. Advertising and other forms of persuasion could not be reduced to
'blind processes of conditioning or vicarious trial and error' (TIHR,
1962d: 6) except in extreme cases.

By drinking Guinness instead of bitter, by having mustard with certain
meats, by purchasing Bisto rather than Oxo for making gravy, by liking small
'bite-sized' biscuits in certain settings, by selecting Bovril rather than
Marmite or vice versa, and by dreaming of a diamond engagement ring, indi-
viduals were engaged in a consistent activity. They were making rational
choices for objects or qualities they sought and valued. They were not
seeking to alleviate infantile anxieties associated with loss of the breast, or
experiencing unconscious memories of early feeding experiences. Nor was
it necessary, in order to understand 'the consumer', to delve into the 'femi-
nine psyche', or to posit 'obsessional tendencies' on the part of women.
Instead, matters were relatively straightforward. It was a question of under-
standing 'what the consumer thinks and will do' (TIHR, 1962e: 2). When
seeking to determine the appropriate price for a new brand of a popular bev-
erage, it was a question of mapping price and quality on to each other so as
to understand what 'variation in price around the established standard will

be noticed by the consumer or what variation in quality from the standard will be seen as worth a given price change' (TIHR, 1962e: 2). Consumer behaviour with respect to prices might thus be understood by means of experimental studies of human judgement, rather than by recourse to psychoanalytical models.

The dream of providing a general theory of such processes was to prove largely elusive. But the power of such approaches, and their attraction to advertisers and producers, appears to lie precisely in their modesty and pragmatism, perhaps even their liberalism. For explicitly or implicitly they rejected the illiberal potentials that underpinned those psychological theories of the total manipulability of human motivations that have most concerned cultural analysts. They simultaneously rendered consumer choice in a free market intelligible in terms of a complex and hybrid array of individualized psychological factors, and suggested that these could be understood and engaged with in a calculated manner. In the process, these psychological investigations elaborated a cartography of consumption that was unprecedented in its meticulous scope: from this time forward, the subjective everyday life of the consumer, the minutiae of the dreams, hopes, fears, doubts and affections that traversed our mundane existence, was to become a legitimate and respectable object for knowledge.

Conclusion

What can be learned from this detailed study of the varied consulting work undertaken for advertising agencies and manufacturers by a single, though influential, organization? It has not been our claim that the TIHR was typical of other organizations giving such advice, or that its shifting concerns can in some way be seen as representative. Nonetheless, it is clear that over this period its clients included some of the major producers of consumption goods in the UK and it advised on advertising and marketing campaigns that had a high public profile. To that extent, rather than typical or representative, we suggest that the work done at the TIHR was exemplary of the intellectual and practical labour entailed in assembling the modern consumer. We have suggested that, at the very least, the psychologists working with advertisers were neither fools nor knaves; they did not treat consumers as passive automatons to be manipulated and equipped with false needs, nor did they treat the act of consumption as matter of the sovereign will of the producer to which the consumer must succumb. It was by no means easy to 'make up' the consumer – neither a simple matter of the realization of a wish for profit or the invention of a psychological or 'imagological' fiction. Consumers themselves were construed as highly problematic entities, not so different, it appeared, from those who researched them or wanted to sell them goods. In order for a relation to be formed between the individual and the product, a complex and hybrid assemblage had to be inaugurated, in which forces and flows imagined to issue from within the psyche of persons of particular ages, genders or social sectors were linked up to possibilities and promises that might be discerned within particular commodities, as they

were organized within a little set of everyday routines and habits of life. The desires of the individual, whether psychoanalytically derived or rationally modelled, were to be matched with the output of the productive machine. Only when such assemblages of persons, commodities and habits had been produced, and when this assemblage had become infused with psychological functions (whether these be infantile pleasures or adult self-reparations) would it be possible to overcome problems of resistance to purchasing particular types of goods.

In the process, what was entailed was an unprecedented and meticulous charting of the minutiae of the consuming passions by new techniques of group discussions, interviewing and testing. This charting does not merely uncover pre-existing desires or anxieties: it forces them into existence by new experimental situations such as the psychodynamically interpreted group discussion that enable them to be observed, it renders them thinkable by new techniques of calculation, classification and inscription such as 'flavour profiling' and hence makes them amenable to action and instrumentalization in the service of sales of goods. However, even from this limited study, one is struck by the diversity of potential images of the consumer that can be made available to those who wish to sell goods, and by the recognition that those who consume were to be considered, in a variety of different ways, as active agents in their own consumption patterns. The work of the TIHR is thus characteristic of a wider set of processes that were involved in shaping the 'commercial domain' in the mid-20th century and the beliefs and forms of conduct that made it up (Mort, 1996). This was not a matter of the unscrupulous manipulation of passive consumers: technologies of consumption depended upon fabricating delicate affiliations between the active choices of potential consumers and the qualities, pleasures and satisfactions represented in the product, organized in part through the practices of advertising and marketing, and always undertaken in the light of particular beliefs about the nature of human subjectivity.

No doubt it is ironic that the forms of knowledge and institutional projects gathered around the Tavistock Clinic and the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, which had formerly understood themselves as emancipatory, or at the very least as bringing psychodynamic expertise to bear in order to mitigate the miseries of human relations, should dedicate themselves with such energy and seriousness to the problems of the market for soft toilet tissue or housewives' attitudes to frozen fish shapes. However, from the 1960s onwards, as new political techniques for the government of conduct sought to utilize the apparent powers of advertising, the expertise of the Tavi was deployed in campaigns with more virtuous resonances: for example using the psychodynamic group techniques developed to sell ice cream in studies for the Road Research Laboratory and the Ministry of Transport on methods to limit drink driving especially at Christmas, and to reduce the death toll among young male motorcyclists. Nonetheless, we would not dispute that many attempts to know and utilize the psychological needs, wants, envies and anxieties of potential consumers were cruder and

more cynical than those we have described. And we would agree that advertising and marketing thrive, not merely by promising pleasures that mere goods could never deliver, but also on the inevitable dissatisfactions which they thereby engender: consumers spiralling through an interminable series in which they discard an item which they once thought indispensable, in order to acquire something that satisfies a desire which they did not previously know they had. Nonetheless, what is entailed here is more than the invention of 'false needs': rather, these human technologies should be understood as one element in the complex construction of our contemporary 'passional economy', the connections of human being and its corporeality into a regime of needs, desires, pleasures and terrors.

It would be pointless simply to denounce such a passional economy, to conclude that advertising should be understood, essentially, as 'a cultural apparatus aimed at diffusing and neutralising potential unrest' (Ewen, 1976: 12). Rather, perhaps, we might see these psychological projects for making the passions of the soul knowable and calculable as elements within a more general 'political economy of subjectification', in which consumption technologies, along with other quite different narrative forms such as television soap operas, establish not only what one might term a 'public habitat of images' for identification, but also a plurality of pedagogies of everyday life, which set out, in often meticulous if banal detail, the habits of conduct which might enable one to live a life that is personally pleasurable and socially acceptable. These offer new ethics and techniques of living that do not set self-gratification and civility in opposition, as in the ethical codes of the puritan sects that Weber considered so important in the early phases of capitalism, but affiliate them in an apparently virtuous liaison of happiness and profit. In engaging with these formulae, albeit in creative and innovative ways, individuals play their own part in the games of civilization that shape a style of life through participation in the world of goods (Rose, 1994).

Current work on consumption recognizes that an analytics of 'consumer culture' has to be conducted not merely at an 'ideational' but also at a technical level: for example, in the invention and mode of action of new physical topographies of consumption spaces – department stores, shopping malls – which provide new ways of inciting and regulating emotional economies, relations of identification and forms of sociality. Through this case study, we have tried to suggest that similar attention should be paid to the role of psychological knowledges and the spaces of the person which they have invented and territorialized. For these are not merely tools of manipulation or legitimation, or techniques incidental to global logics of consumption, but are central to the human technologies that we argue should be the focus for analyses of the government of the consuming passions.

Note

This article arises out of a larger study that the authors are conducting on the social and intellectual history of the Tavistock Clinic and the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, to be published by Routledge as *In Search of Human Relations* in 1998.

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