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Reflexivity: The Role of Embedded Social Position and Entrepreneurial Social Skill in Processes of Field Level Change

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Abstract

We examine the micro-foundations of field-level organizational change by analyzing the role of social skill and social position in individuals. Our core argument is that differences in an individual's social skill and in their social position produce different degrees of reflexivity or awareness of existing social arrangements. We demonstrate how the interaction of social skill and social position produce distinct types or categories of reflexivity, each of which contributes to institutional stability or change.

Keywords: agency, institutions, organizational fields, reflexivity, social position, social skill

Understanding the sources of profound organizational change – i.e. the creation of new organizational forms, new modes of production or social and technological innovation – is a fundamental issue for organizational theory. Researchers have consistently moved to increasingly higher levels of analysis in their efforts to explain how change can occur in highly institutionalized settings. Over the past four decades the analytic focus has shifted away from the organization and moved to studying the organizational environment as a fundamental determinant of the direction, pace and content of change. As a result, considerable attention has been devoted to viewing change through the interpretive lens of the sector (Scott & Meyer, 1983), the population (Hannan & Freeman, 1977), the network (DiMaggio, 1991; Powell, White, Koput, & Owen-Smith, 2005) and, increasingly, the organizational field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Fligstein, 2013).

Used largely within the context of institutional theory, the organizational field is defined, variously, as “key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies and other organizations that produce similar services or products” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) or “organizations that interact frequently and fatefully with each other” (Scott, 1994). A key distinguishing feature of the construct, however, is the phenomenological understanding that the social and cultural environment created by communities of organizations and their ideational expectations of each other is every bit as important in understanding processes of change as the technical environment of material resources (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). In counterpoint to most economic based theories of organizational change, institutional theory argues that organizational change is often the

result of social pressures to conform to field based norms of legitimacy rather than economic pressures.

Institutional theory, thus, has become highly influential in management theory because it has the ability to explain why and how organizations often change in ways that defy traditional economic explanations (Suddaby, 2013). Early articulations of the theory focused attention on how field norms pressured organizations to adopt changes that produced increasing similarity (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). A growing body of empirical evidence, thus, demonstrated that organizations in a common field adopt similar practices, even when those practices compromise efficiency (Tolbert & Zucker, 1983; Haveman, 1993; Wespahl, Gulati & Shortell, 1997).

More recently, however, institutional theory has turned to explaining processes of change by examining how some organizations are able to *resist* isomorphic pressures (Oliver, 1991; Dacin, Goodstein & Scott, 2002) and engage in non-isomorphic or divergent change. Considerable recent attention has been devoted to describing acts of institutional entrepreneurship that demonstrate how organizational fields change in ways that defy long-standing normative pressures for conformity (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Rao, Monin & Durand, 2003; Zilber, 2002; 2007).

The shift from explaining conformity to divergent change has created a logical contradiction for institutional theory (Suddaby, 2010). If the process of institutionalization makes a practice or structure so socially embedded or taken-for-granted that it becomes unquestioned, how can divergent institutional change ever occur? This is the paradox of embedded agency (Seo & Creed, 2002; Leca & Naccache, 2006), which questions the internal coherence of a theory that argues, on one hand, that institutional norms are so

totalizing that actors cannot even conceive of opportunities for change, and on the other, that some actors are uniquely able to think beyond the cognitive constraints of institutions. The paradox of embedded agency, thus asks, *if institutional norms and pressures are so cognitively overwhelming and totalizing, where do new ideas or conceptions of change come from?*

Empirical efforts to resolve the question of embedded agency have focused on explanations that occur at the level of the organizational field. Studies have identified certain organizational actors – institutional entrepreneurs – that are less susceptible to institutional pressures to conform because of their size and power (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006) or their structural position as boundary spanners across multiple fields (Leblibici, Salancik, Copay & King, 2006). Size, power and position within the field, according to these studies, makes some organizations more resistant to the normative, cognitive and regulative pressures of the organizational field.

Field level answers to the problem of embedded agency, however, are not completely satisfying because they violate the inherently phenomenological assumptions of institutional theory (Meyer, 2008). That is, they offer a structural solution to a cognitive problem. The cognitive element of institutional processes, critics observe, has not been well articulated in institutional theory. Rather, it remains implicit or, as Zucker (1983: 5) noted, a “black box” that fails to explain how commonly shared cognitions become taken-for-granted and therefore promote conformity or become disrupted and thereby promote change.

Prevailing explanations of institutional change all imply variations in the cognitive ability of actors to enact or resist normative pressures. A critical but yet unresolved

question for neo-institutional accounts of field level change is to understand how some individuals cognitively perceive the social world as contingent and thus amenable to change while others see it as concrete and immutable. That is, *how are some actors able to rise above the cognitive constraints (the 'iron cage') of institutions while others are not?*

We address this question in our case study of technological disruption in the French communications consulting industry. The introduction of the Internet in 1994 created two categories of advertising executives: incumbents, drawn primarily from the elite of French society and trained in the abstract skills of traditional broadcast advertising; and challengers, middle class individuals trained in the expert skills of digital media. Our empirical analysis shows that the incumbent class managed to retain its position of power over expert challengers. Digital natives, by contrast, who became knowledge experts in their firms, were largely unable to improve their organizational position. We also identify, however, a minority group of challengers who successfully assumed positions of power and status within their respective firms. Finally we identify an even smaller group (n=1) comprised of an incumbent who successfully transitioned to become a digital native.

We attribute these outcomes to varying degrees of *reflexivity* or awareness of the cognitive limits imposed on an individual because of the taken-for-granted assumptions that are generated by one's institutional life-history. Our core argument is that individual reflexivity – or the ability to overcome the reified, rule-like, taken-for-granted quality of social life – arises from the interaction of two key elements of human experience; *social position* and *social skill*. Based on these two dimensions, we empirically observe and theoretically elaborate four distinct categories of reflexivity: incumbent reflexives, challenger reflexives, superficial reflexives and super-reflexives.

Our contribution is as follows. First, we offer a theoretically coherent account of institutional change based on pre-existing notions of social position (Battilana, 2006) and social skill (Fligstein, 1997) – thus combining structural and ideational accounts of institutions. Second we introduce the construct of *reflexivity* and elaborate its role in explaining how some actors are differentially able to overcome the taken-for-grantedness of their socially constructed environment. Third, we provide an empirically grounded typology to different categories of reflexivity. Finally we offer new methodological techniques for analyzing the individual in field-level processes of change.

Theory

The cognitive/phenomenological foundations of institutions

At their core, institutions are macro-phenomenological social structures. Institutions only exist to the extent that large populations of individuals accept that they exist and act in accordance with their agreed existence (Schutz, 1967). In this view, institutions emerge from the interaction between individuals and collective interpretations. Social order (i.e. institutions) emerges from the processes by which individuals interact, assign meaning to those interactions and then share those meanings collectively as “typical” categories of action (Berger & Luckman, 1967). In so doing, specific repertoires of actions become associated with and available to certain types of actors, given their historical relationship with specific institutions and their habitual reproduction of roles appropriate to their social history (Goffman, 1959; 1977).

Neo-institutionalism, thus, is founded on an implicit theory of micro-behavior (Barley, 2008; Powell & Colyvas, 2008) in which socially constructed belief systems

“produce common understandings about what is appropriate and fundamentally meaningful behavior” (Zucker, 1983: 5). A central assumption of the phenomenological approach to institutions, therefore, is that *individuals* are actively subject to and participants in institutional processes.

The notion that we might understand institutions by examining their effect on individuals was first studied empirically by Zucker (1977) who demonstrated that the interpretation of institutional context, such as one’s role or status in an organization, was an important mechanism in ensuring the persistence of normative beliefs. Zucker (1977: 728, emphasis added) observed that “*individual* actors transmit what is socially defined as real and, at the same time, at any point in the process the meaning of an act can be defined as more or less a taken-for-granted part of this social reality”.

This micro-psychological approach to understanding institutions has been revisited in two conceptual models, both of which seek to understand how individuals make judgments about the legitimacy of institutional outcomes. Bitektine (2011) describes a range of decision processes that individuals experience when making assessments about the legitimacy, status and reputation of organizations. Tost (2011), similarly, identifies three component elements (instrumental, relational and moral) of individual legitimacy judgments. Both studies reflect efforts to effectively model the cognitive effects of institutional pressures at the level of the individual.

Barley (1986) demonstrated how institutionalized assumptions of status and power can be momentarily disrupted by the introduction of a new technology but reinstated as highly institutionalized interaction orders reassert themselves. More recently, Hallett (2010) analyzed how group-level interactions between teachers helped to decouple and re-

couple rational myths about education in the context of a public school. Hallett (2010: 52) concludes that the neglect of individuals is a major failure of the unfortunate “macro-gaze” in neo-institutionalism and that a better understanding of institutional processes can be developed by “inhabiting” institutional accounts with people, “their work activities, social interactions and meaning-making processes.”

Apart from these few studies, however, the individual has largely disappeared from institutional accounts of field level change. As noted above, this has occurred largely because of the heavy emphasis placed on elements of social structure in contemporary institutional theory and the relative absence of elements of cognition. Still, as the phenomenological origins of institutional theory demonstrate, social structures cannot endure or change without human agency and human agency requires some degree of awareness of the constraints and opportunities available in one’s institutional environment. If institutions are structured at the level of human cognition, then it only stands to reason that explanations for institutional change must also engage with cognition that occurs at the individual or group level of analysis.

Empirical and Theoretical Solutions to Embedded Agency: Social Skill and Position

Part of the answer to this conundrum involves analytically opening up Zucker’s (1983) “black box” of cognition in an effort to understand the conditions under which actors become more socially aware of the constraints imposed on them by prevailing conditions and see opportunities for change. Two distinct approaches have emerged in the literature in order to explain how actors become aware of opportunities for change in highly institutionalized setting. The first, Fligstein’s (1997) notion of *social skill*, suggests that

different actors have different degrees of awareness of the constraining and enabling characteristics of institutions based on individual differences in knowledge or expertise about the institutional environment in which they exist. The second, Battilana's (2006) construct of *social position*, suggests that different actors acquire different degrees of awareness of the constraining and enabling characteristics of institutions because of differences in the social position that they occupy. We elaborate both of these constructs in the balance of this section and argue that, in combination, both social position and social skill generate a continuum of reflexivity that gives certain individuals the capacity to not only see beyond the taken-for-granted assumptions of their institutional environments but also to identify and act upon opportunities to change.

Social Skill:

Fligstein's (1997) notion of "social skill" draws from core ideas in symbolic interaction (Mead, 1935; Goffman, 1959) that suggest that some individuals are more sensitive to the inter-subjective relationships of people in social structures. As a result, actors with social skill are differentially better equipped to "induce cooperation amongst others". In later work, Fligstein (2013: 43) elaborates the construct with the observation that "certain individuals possess a highly developed cognitive capacity for reading people and environments". Socially skilled actors hold world-views or cultural frames that give them a larger conception of their institutional environment. As a result, Fligstein observes, these actors are able to rise above the taken-for-granted elements of their socially constructed existence and act with high social agency. Incumbents will tend to use their unique insight and agency to maintain existing social arrangements, while challengers will use their social skill to create disruptive change.

A key element of the construct of social skill is the idea that some individuals have “a larger conception of the world” that allows these individuals to define “which actors are legitimate and which outcomes are the most desirable” (Fligstein, 1997: 398). Fligstein goes on to describe social skill as a form of specialized knowledge or expertise that extends beyond mere technical knowledge and which give some actors a deeper understanding of the social or organizational field in which they are embedded. This expertise or knowledge is of two factors:

“(a) the current condition of the organizational field and the place of various groups in that field and (b) the type of strategic action that “makes sense” given the objective conditions” (Fligstein, 1997: 398)

Fligstein is describing one essential parameter of reflexivity – a general awareness of the defining social order within which one is embedded. While Fligstein does not specify the precise nature of this knowledge, he implies that it entails an understanding of the inherent meaning structure of the field through which individuals acquire status, resources and capital. This knowledge or expertise also has a temporal component. Fligstein refers to knowledge about the “current condition” of the field, and in so doing implies that actors with social skill may also have important insights into the trajectory of the field.

While social skill may be based on technical knowledge or expertise, it extends beyond mere technical ability. It requires the capacity to leverage technical expertise for personal or group advantage (Fligstein, 1997). So, for example, in Barley’s (1986) study of the disruptive effects of new technology in radiology departments, he describes the disruption in social order that occurred in the relationship between radiologists and radiology technicians for the brief period of time in which the technicians had superior technical expertise. However, because they lacked social skill – i.e. an understanding of

how to convert that skill into new status, resources or capital – the pre-existing social order was quickly re-established by radiologists. Radiology technicians, one might argue, lacked a degree of reflexivity about the social field within which they were embedded.

Social skill, thus, is a critical but unexplored component of reflexivity and is a necessary but insufficient element of field level change. Being aware of the rules of the game in a field and having the capacity to induce or negotiate cooperation are key skills for understanding and maintaining a social field. In Fligstein's (2013) terms, these components of social skill will allow incumbents to *resist* change. However, challengers who seek to *change* fields require a slightly different configuration of social skills. Challengers not only need the social skills required to negotiate the existing field dominated by incumbents, they also need the social skills required to adapt to imminent changes in the field. That is, they require additional social skills that confer a capacity for adaptation and change to accommodate the technical practices and expertise of the impending new social order. We term this sub-type of social skill *entrepreneurial social skill*.

Social Position:

Fligstein also observes that social skill includes an awareness of one's structural position in a social field. Battilana (2006) argues that an individual's social position is a critical explanatory variable for understanding how some actors are more capable than others of overcoming the constraining elements of their institutional environment. Drawing from Bourdieu's notion of habitus or field, Battilana observes that individuals who occupy elite positions in social fields have differential access to key resources – i.e. social capital, networks, status and political power – that provides them with greater insight with which

to recognize opportunities for change and greater power to effect such changes. Battilana extends Bourdieu's argument, which originally referred to one's position in a social field, to the context of organizations and organizational fields, to suggest that an individual's hierarchical position within an organization also confers distinct insight and power and allows some individuals to rise above the constraining and enabling conditions of their socially constructed environment.

Like Fligstein's notion of social skill, however, Battilana's construct of social position tends to privilege the role of incumbent actors who occupy an elite or privileged position within an organizational field. The notion of social position seems to implicitly favor the attributes of actors who seek to maintain an existing status order or social hierarchy in the field. It fails to offer any traction for those actors who understand their socially embedded position in the field hierarchy, but seek to change it. To convey the understanding that some actors – challengers in the field – are aware of the constraints of their social position, yet have the capacity to change it, we use the term *embedded social position* to differentiate, albeit slightly, prior uses of the term social position.

Both Fligstein's and Battilana's explanations for how some individuals defy normative pressures bear some overlap with the literature on creativity in organizations (Amabile, 1988; Staw, 1990). In general, studies of creative individuals in organizations have demonstrated a stable set of core cognitive traits that include high degrees of self-confidence, significant degrees of autonomy and high measures of social skill (Oldham and Cummings, 1996; Amabile, 1996). This research, thus, overlaps strongly with Fligstein's notion of social skill. Similarly, creative individuals in large organizations tend to occupy either marginal or boundary spanning positions in complex work contexts (Andrews &

Smith, 1996). This work, thus, reinforces Battilana's argument about social position. In fact, more recent theorizing on creativity in organizations suggests that it is the empirically unexplored interaction of individual cognitive traits and structural/social position that offers the best opportunity for future research on organizational creativity (Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003).

While social skill and social position each offer some insight into the problem of embedded agency, neither perspective, by itself, offers any predictive insight into how some actors, either elite and incumbent actors operating at the center of a field or disenfranchised and marginal incumbents working at the periphery (Fligstein, 2013), are particularly able to recognize and overcome the totalizing cognitive effects of field level pressures and rise above them. Empirical research offers powerful examples of both incumbent-elite actors with considerable social skill that effect institutional change (i.e. Suddaby & Greenwood's (2005) account of the role of Big Four accounting firms in creating a new organizational form) as well as weak actors operating from the periphery of the field that are also able to effect institutional change (i.e. marginal actors on the periphery of the radio field in Leblibici et al. 1996 or the activist AIDS social movement documented in Elsbach & Sutton, 1992). If both central, elite and peripheral challengers are able to effect institutional change, there must be something more – an alternative construct – that explains the ability to cognitively overcome social pressures to conform and initiate successful change.

Reflexivity

We propose reflexivity as an aggregate construct that combines social position and social skill as the key variable to explain how social change can occur in a highly institutionalized field. Reflexivity is a critical subject in the social sciences with unique definitions of the construct offered by such diverse writers as Bourdieu (1990), Giddens (1991), Beck (1992), and Archer (2007). While each author offers different accounts of the essential sources of reflexivity and important differences in how reflexivity becomes manifest in contemporary society, they share a common theme in arguing that individuals periodically (mainly during crises or tensions in the field) can acquire moments of self-awareness in which they gain clear insight into the constraints imposed on them by the broader social structures (i.e. institutions) within which they are embedded.

Organizational theorists have also used the concept of reflexivity. Largely the term is used to describe how individual actors gain insight into the constraints imposed on them by organizational controls (Alvesson, 2003; Antonacopoulou & Tsoukas, 2002; Chia, 1996; Weick, 1995). Based on this literature and broader sociological conceptions we define reflexivity as *an individuals' general awareness of the constraints and opportunities created by the norms, values, beliefs and expectations of the social structures that surround them*. We see reflexivity as the outcome of an interaction between one's structural position (in an organization or society) and the general level of social skill, expertise and knowledge that they have (in an organization or society).

Our core theoretical assumption is that social position and social skill interact to determine distinct degrees or categories of reflexivity. While the construct of reflexivity helps capture the combined influence of social skill and social position in the context of institutional change, it begs the question of how these different types of individual

reflexivity play out in the context of actual institutional change. To address this, we apply the notion of reflexivity to a case study of institutional conflict and change in the communications consultancy field. Two questions are addressed. First, we ask, how do individual actors acquire or develop reflexivity? That is, is the reflexivity acquired as a result of social position manifest differently from the reflexivity acquired as a result of social skill and expertise? Second, we ask how each type of reflexivity become differentially manifest in processes of institutional change? That is, given our understanding from the literature that individual actors may acquire reflexivity from either occupying a unique social position or possessing unique social skill, what degrees of variation in reflexivity might we observe in practice?

Methods

Because our interest is in understanding how some individuals within distinct social groups have enhanced reflexivity, we employ a prosopographic method. Prosopography is “the investigation of the common background characteristics of a group of actors in history by means of a collective study of their lives” (Stone, 1971: 46). This includes analysis of the social and economic affiliations of individuals, their titles and professional affiliations, their educational background, the social status of their parents and related biographical and genealogical data. The purpose of a prosopography is to use these data to identify common patterns in the individual biographies of members of a social group that can help explain “ideological or cultural change, to identify social reality, and to describe and analyze with precision the structure of society and the degree and nature of movements within it” (Stone, 1971: 47). Broadly speaking, we rely on prosopography to investigate the relationship

between individual biographies, strategic reflexivity, and the capacity to change in a highly institutionalized field.

We selected the communications consultancy field in France to study strategic reflexivity for three reasons. First, and perhaps foremost, France offers an optimal site to examine issues of class and social im/mobility. Prior researchers, from Marx to Bourdieu, have identified France as a class stratified society with a relatively high degree of stability in the reproduction of class differences over time (Goux & Maurin, 1997). Because we have some indication that strategic reflexivity varies by class, professional expertise and social position, France seems an ideal context to explore the role of reflexive capacity in institutional reproduction and change.

Second, the advertising industry in France offers an exemplary illustration of the reproduction of social inequalities in French society. As we will demonstrate, the incumbent executives in the advertising industry in France have traditionally been drawn from the bourgeoisie, they attended elite educational institutions, joined socially powerful networking organizations and, in general, reflected the power of the dominant social class.

Finally, the advertising industry in France, like its counterparts around the world, suffered an exogenous shock with the introduction of Internet technology. This shock destabilized the institutional fabric of the organizational field and, for a brief moment, exposed and challenged many of the largely invisible and taken-for-granted assumptions about how the industry should function. More importantly, it created opportunities for a new non-elite class of advertising executive – a class based on digital expertise rather than elite social standing – to emerge in the industry.

We collected two types of data, archival documents and interview data. These data were used for two main purposes; first, to circumscribe the field of French communications and advertising and second, to construct the personal biographies of key executives within the field. The personal biographies are critical elements of prosopographic technique which summarizes biographical data of representative individuals of targeted social groups in order to “tell us about the different types of connection between them, and hence about how they operated within and upon the institutions – social, political, legal, economic, intellectual – of their time” (Keats-Rohan, 2000: 2).

Archival data was drawn from three sources. First, we collected and analyzed market research on communications consulting agencies in order to verify the economic impact of the Internet on the industry and on executive careers within the industry. Second, we examined the websites of professional bodies such as the Association des Agences Conseil en Communication (AACC), France Pub, the Institut de Recherche et d’Etudes Publicitaires (IREP), the Union Française du Marketing Direct (UFMD), the International Advertising Association (IAA) and related professional agencies. Third, we analyzed media accounts of changes in the advertising field as reflected in trade publications (*Strategies*, *CB News*, *CB Newsletter*, etc.), the French daily press (i.e. *Le Figaro*, particularly its detailed media section, *Le Monde* and *Libération*) and the French financial press (*La Tribune*, *Les Echos*). The relevant articles were collected using Lexis-Nexis, Factiva and Delphes-Indexpresse, between 1988 and 2008. We selected this time period because it effectively brackets the exogenous shock of the introduction of the Internet in 1994.

In order to gain insights into differences in the reflexive capacity of individual executives we also collected interview data. Our data includes 93 semi-structured interviews with 84 professionals working in the communications industry (some individuals were interviewed twice because of the relevance of their observations). Table 1 details the interview strategy in which interviews were conducted in three stages. In the exploratory stage (March to June, 2005), the aim was to validate our research questions and to construct a time-line of events preceding and following the introduction of digital advertising. This was followed by a first wave of 53 interviews conducted between June 2008 and January 2009. A second wave of 30 interviews was carried out in 2009 to supplement our data and address gaps in information.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Our analytic strategy in interpreting data was threefold. First, we used the archival data to construct an overview of the material changes in the organizational field that occurred as a result of the introduction of the Internet and the growing significance of digital advertising. Second, we used both archival and interview data to construct personal life histories of key executives in top advertising firms. The purpose of this category of data was to create individual “institutional biographies” by reconstructing the historical range of institutions experienced by each executive as part of their personal histories.

Our third analytic focus was to understand the subjective experience of each executive regarding the significant changes to industry practice in response to the ‘shock’ of the introduction of the Internet. We assessed this primarily through the interview data in which executives were asked to reflect, first, upon the changes experienced in the field as

a result of the Internet, and then to reflect on their own personal histories and how their professional career trajectories may have been impacted by digitalization.

In analyzing our data, we were interested in understanding what Archer (2007: 115) describes as the “morphogenesis of the person” through an analysis of their “internal conversation”. Thus we looked for the degree to which each respondent was aware of their social position and how that awareness was used to explain their career trajectory and mobility. We were also attentive to the degree to which institutional factors (status of schools attended, social networks, club affiliations, reputational factors) as opposed to technical factors (knowledge, expertise, technical training and skill) were used to justify their current life-position.

The interview data was supplemented and cross-referenced with publicly available data to construct “institutional biographies” of key executives. The directory of the AACC (the main representative body for practitioners in commercial communication) provided useful information for identifying the majority of top executives and managers working in the field. The sample also included managers of newly emerging digital agencies that did not appear in the AACC directory. These were identified using the popular business press as well as industry and trade journals.

Data was also taken from biographical directories such as *Who's Who*, *Top Management* and *Nominations* to complete the biographies. In addition to civil status (including the parents' occupation and qualifications), these sources provided valuable information about each executive's education including secondary schools attended, post-secondary education, additional qualifications and related information. Entries also

informed us about awards and distinctions, sports and leisure activities and club memberships.

In total, we reconstituted the institutional biographies of 164 top executives drawn from the following field categories; advertising (53 executives in 22 agencies), marketing services (54 executives from 24 agencies) and digital marketing (57 executives from 25 agencies). Details on the individuals are summarized in Table 2A. We also constituted an illustrative example of a typical institutional biography of both a traditional incumbent advertising executive and a digital challenger, presented in Table 2B.

[Insert Tables 2A and 2B around here]

Because of our analytic interest in reflexivity, we organized our institutional biographies into four categories. The first category was comprised of the traditional, incumbent advertising executives, whose biographies shared a common theme of an “elitist” social class. That is, they attended exclusive schools, belonged to elitist social clubs and mainly came from wealthy families. This group, perhaps unsurprisingly, dominated positions of status and power in the largest organizations in this field.

The second category was comprised of the digital challengers, whose biographies depict what has come to be known, variously, as the “knowledge class” (Stehr, 1994; Wuthnow & Shrum, 1983), the “symbolic class” (Reich, 1992) or the “creative class” (Florida, 2002). This group was characterized by a clear absence of elite social status, but a strong presence of expert skill and knowledge in the new digital media. We refer to this group as the “expertise class”. This group was, largely, absent from top executive positions in firms in this field.

A third category of biographies emerged as a result of the analytic process. This group, in reality a subcategory of the second group, consisted of those few digital experts who managed to move into elite executive positions in the organizational field. We refer to this group as “challenging reflexives” because, to foreshadow our results, these individuals were characterized by a form of reflexivity that was quite distinct from that of the incumbent elites.

A fourth, and somewhat more latent category more notable by its absence in our data set, are the individuals within the industry who lack both elite status and expert skill. While these biographies did not form part of our industry biographies, their absence became apparent as part of the analytic process of interpreting the results. We elaborate each of these categories in our discussion of results below.

Results

We present our results in three parts. In the first part, we describe the profound changes that occurred at the level of the organizational field as a result of the exogenous shock of the Internet. In the second part, we demonstrate an emerging class distinction between the incumbent traditional professionals, whose class identity is based on social position, and the challenger digital professionals, whose class identity is based more on an awareness of how their expertise can form the basis of an entrepreneurial social skill. In the third part, we elaborate one additional category of reflexive individuals who possess entrepreneurial social skill (expertise) but not social position and discuss a fourth, latent category notable by its absence of reflexivity based on a lack of both social position and entrepreneurial social skill.

An Exogenous Shock in the field of Communications Consulting in France

Prior research indicates that field level change occurs as a result of profound shifts in material or technical practices (Dacin, Goodstein & Scott, 2002), changes in meaning (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005) and alteration in the power structure or status order of the field (Washington & Zajac, 2005). Theorists observe that while the first two criteria are often studied empirically, the role of power is typically neglected (Lawrence, 2008). Our analysis of the field of communications consultancy in France shows that the introduction of the Internet in 1994 produced dramatic changes in material and technical practices in the field – i.e. a shift from traditional broadcast media (television, radio, print, display and cinema) to digital media (Internet, social media, and direct marketing). We also identify significant changes in how advertising is understood – i.e. a shift from viewing marketing as a subjective art to a more objective and measurable activity. We elaborate these changes in this section.

Material and Technical Practices: Like other advertising markets around the world, the communications consulting industry in France was markedly transformed by the commercialization of the Internet in 1994. The most significant change introduced by this new technology was that it permitted direct access to potential consumers and a more objective measurement of how money spent on advertising translated into increased sales.

The strength of this shift is perhaps best illustrated by tracking the movement of investments by advertisers in France from traditional to digital media. The traditional media category includes mass broadcast media – television, press/print, display, radio and cinema. The digital category, sometimes referred to in the industry as “below the line” services, refers to all forms of electronic or social media intended to directly target

consumers. It includes direct advertising (i.e. mail), short term promotions (i.e. sales vouchers) and the new social media.

Figure 1 indicates that between 1984 and 2007 there was a complete reversal in the relative use of traditional and nontraditional media (comprising direct media and digital media) by corporate consumers of advertising services. Until 1990, four years before the Internet became publicly available, 60% of advertising was accomplished through traditional broadcast media and 40% through nontraditional media. By 1998, four years after the introduction of the Internet, the relative revenue contribution was exactly reversed with less than 40% of advertising provided by traditional media and more than 60% by nontraditional media. The expansion of the Internet in the early 2000s solidified this shift and firmly established digital media as the most promising mode of advertising.

[Insert Figure 1 around here]

When the Internet was first made available to the general public in 1994 most advertisers were dismissive of its commercial potential, and suggested that it was a passing fad limited to young people. Once established, however, Internet usage exploded in France, like the rest of the industrialized world. As a result, investment in Internet advertising also exploded, growing at nearly twenty percent between 2007 and 2008 (see Table 3) while similar investments in traditional media advertising fell dramatically.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

Social Skill: Technical Knowledge and Digital Expertise

These powerful changes in the technical practices and material consequences of digital advertising were accompanied by a distinct pragmatic shift in the basis of technical expertise and social skills required for success in advertising. While traditional advertising

was typically viewed as an art in which advertising campaigns were evaluated on aesthetic and creative values, digital advertising challenged the ideology of “aesthetic creativity” through the identity of “scientific” performance measurement. In particular, corporate consumers of advertising were fascinated with the ability to directly target specific consumer groups with pinpoint precision and to directly measure the value proposition (i.e. profitability) of advertising campaigns by using online tracking that could connect money spent on advertising to actual sales. In contrast to traditional advertising, corporations could, for the first time, measure “scientifically” their return on investment in advertising.

A communications manager at a national firm explains the shift in expertise and entrepreneurial social skill that was driven by the superior measurement capabilities of digital media:

When our targets are more business oriented, you need to prioritize the Internet because it has more obvious power of conversion and it’s easier to fit in an ROI [return on investment] rationale. Using the available tracking tools, we’re able to optimize every single customer presence – which obviously is more difficult on television, in the press or on advertising boards. So when business is the number one priority, the Internet tends to be the privileged strategy. We use offline resources [traditional media] to increase notoriety and to position the brand. So based on our mixed targets we define a mixed set of means. I can’t disclose specific figures for reasons of confidentiality, but to give you a rough idea, it is 60-40; 60% online and 40% offline. (ADV 005)

Interviewees further specified that the Internet did not translate into general growth in the economy of the field but rather cannibalized existing investments in traditional media. According to one director of communications:

When you invest online, you invest less elsewhere. Online investments are made at the expense of everything else. (ADV 011)

Prior to the Internet, advertising was premised on a core skill set of aesthetic creativity – i.e. the ability to rhetorically use images and words to seduce masses through

persuasion, semiotics and sophisticated design. Success in advertising was preferably ‘measured’ by focus groups or peer review culminating in highly public awards for ‘successful’ campaigns. The Internet, however, put the power of assessing successful campaigns in the hands of the corporate clients; the core social skill of aesthetics was seriously challenged by an ideology of measurement. This shift in emphasis is perhaps best illustrated by the following quote from one of the few digital challengers who managed to rise to the top of a traditional advertising organization:

Before the Internet, it was all chimeras and magic. The advertisers told the clients to ‘give us your money and trust us. We will make something beautiful. You may not be able to tell if it works, but you will fall in love’. With us (digital media) it is much more scientific. We say ‘give us our money and we will show you increased sales’. (TPM 022)

The new social logic held implications for recruiting where the traditional value of a general arts mindset was progressively dominated by a focus on “digital natives” or individuals with technical training in computing science and programming.

In sum, the Internet introduced a sharp shock of “objective rationality” into an industry that had previously been characterized by abstract notions of creativity, imagination, aesthetic and a distinct lack of client accountability. The ability to precisely craft a more meaningful message, target it to a specific consumer and then confirm its effectiveness radically transformed the core values of an industry from ‘art’ to ‘science’. The shift in core skills also created a new class of advertising executive, the digital native, whose legitimacy drew from expert knowledge rather than social position. In the following section we elaborate the differences between these two classes.

The Emergence (but not the Rise) of the Digital Class

The growth of digital advertising created two main classes of professionals in the advertising industry – the incumbent traditional advertiser or “creative” and the emergent “digital native”. Historically, such digital natives or professionals inclined toward measurement and direct marketing had long operated in the shadow of traditional creative executives. Before the Internet, specialists with measurement expertise typically worked behind the scenes, without direct client contact and largely subservient to or in supporting roles for creative advertisers. The Internet, however, created substantial opportunities for career growth and status for digitals.

Digital natives appropriated the logic of the Internet effortlessly. As technology specialists they embody the quantitative, computerized spirit of the Internet. Most are younger than their creative counterparts and, as a result, grew up in the midst of the information revolution. They view information technology and the role of measurement as important achievements in terms of societal progress. As a result of creating their own websites, personal programs and related hobbies, many of the programming skills required in the workplace were already well honed. Programming tracking algorithms, generating online animation and constructing databases for work were simply large-scale extensions of what they had, previously, done for recreation and personal fulfillment. The shift in field meaning and identity, from advertising as an aesthetic, creative function to a rational and measurable practice, was entirely consistent with their skill set. Digital natives, thus, relate to an emerging managerial class based on expert power and technical skill.

Traditional executives, by contrast, constitute a distinctly different managerial class. As indicated below, their power derives less from technical expertise and more from their broader social position. They come more frequently from wealthy backgrounds and

they tend to attend better schools and move in wider social circles. They are, in sum, elites who occupy positions of power, not only in society, but also in the dominant organizations in the field. As shown in Table 4, despite the growing economic influence of the Internet, and the technical expertise of the digital challengers, traditional advertising executives still dominate the highest level of advertising agencies even though traditional advertising accounts for only 40% of the field's total revenue.

[Insert Table 4 about here]

Social Position: Elites in Advertising

In the balance of this section we explore and elaborate the differences between these two social classes. Our argument is twofold. First, we argue that because of their quite similar social background (e.g., having been educated in Grandes Ecoles), incumbent traditional advertisers tend to have a stronger sense of group commitment (inherited from their passage through the same schools where they acquired “esprit de corps”). Incumbents will also tend to be sensitive to issues of social position, having learned, in their social background, to look for status threats in their environment. Incumbents will therefore tend to behave as a class and show more reflexivity on their institutional environment than the digital challengers. Second, we maintain that a small cluster of successful digital challengers demonstrate a high degree of reflexivity, but of a qualitatively different type than their traditional counterparts.

Compared to the digital challengers, traditional incumbents are clearly more richly endowed in terms of social, educational, economic and symbolic resources. As shown in Tables 5 and 6, the incumbent traditional advertising professionals are more likely to come from a wealthy background (on the father's side, 84.2% from upper categories compared

to 57.1% in digital marketing). Similarly, advertising professionals are more likely to come from families with a stay-at-home mother, an indicator of economic wealth suggesting that the partner is not required to work to ensure the financial survival of the family (52.6% of traditional advertisers come from families with stay-at-home mothers as opposed to 35.7% for digital executives).

Moreover, traditional advertisers are more likely to have pre-existing exposure to large organizations based on familial ties. The percentage of advertising incumbents with a father employed as a corporate executive is 68.4% compared to only 28.6% for digital challengers.

Overall, Tables 5 and 6 indicate that the digital challengers tend to come from the middle class and have moved to their executive positions as part of a trajectory of personal social mobility – i.e. they have shifted social classes. Roughly 30% of these executives come from families where the father’s occupation falls in the middle tier of work categories. By contrast, the incumbent traditional advertisers are more likely to have maintained their social class. Only 10% of this group comes from families where the father’s occupation may be characterized as “middle class”.

[Insert Tables 5 and 6 here]

The class differences between incumbents and challengers are reinforced by an examination of their respective exposure to educational institutions. As shown in Table 7, traditional advertising professionals tend to be educated in elite schools when compared to digital challengers. A unique feature of the French educational system is the classification of universities into different categories – the *Grandes Ecoles* (literally “Great Schools”), which admit students competitively and are widely viewed as elitist because of their

selective entrance exams (which have less than a 10% pass rate) versus public universities, which permit much greater open access to a broader range of students. Incumbent advertising professionals are more likely to have qualifications from *Grandes Ecoles* specializing in business studies (i.e. INSEAD, HEC Paris, ESSEC, ESCP and EMLyon). Thus 31.4% of traditional advertising executives have degrees from these institutions as opposed to only 6.5% of digital challengers.

[Insert Table 7 here]

Conversely, digital natives are less elitist and include a greater proportion of “self-made” people (i.e. not dependant upon inherited wealth or social position) within their ranks (10.9%) than traditional advertisers (2.9%). Digital marketers tend to attract executives with technical qualifications from engineering or IT schools (10.8% compared to none in advertising), whereas traditional advertisers tend to gravitate to degrees in business (54.3% compared to 39.1% for digitals).

We also observe that traditional advertising executives tend to be more deeply embedded within their occupational category than are digital challengers. As demonstrated in Table 8, traditional advertising professionals tend to “stay put” or remain within their defined occupational category. So, for example, 78.5% of traditional advertising professionals have only ever worked in advertising, as compared to 35.4% of professionals who have only ever worked in digital marketing.

[Insert Table 8 about here]

Advertising incumbents also work in much broader professional networks than their digital counterparts. As shown in Table 9, there is a comparatively greater number of advertising professionals in ‘elite’ general management directories such as *Nomination* and

Top Management or in the more selective directory of *Who's Who* – 35.8% for advertising executives versus 10.5% for digital marketers. Conversely, digital challengers are more strongly represented in the more narrowly defined and technically oriented online directories such as *LinkedIn* where 77.2% of digitals appear as opposed to only 47.2% for advertising executives. Note that, as opposed to the more elitist general management directories listed above where members are invited, online directories are generally open to self-subscription.

[Insert Table 9 around here]

We also found that traditional advertising professionals claim membership in extra-professional networks. Advertising incumbents tend to support political associations such as “*Désir d’Avenir*”, feminist associations such as “*Force Femme*” or “*Terra Femina*”, or elitist clubs or sports associations such as “*Polo de Paris*” and “*Racing Club de France*”. The digital challengers by contrast tend to be confined to more technically oriented extra-curricular professional organizations such as the AACC or the Electronic Business Group.

Finally, we observe that the class distinction between traditionalists and digitals is manifest in more overt symbolic expressions of power than that of their digital counterparts. Distinctions and awards are one such tangible mark of the recognition of peers – a form of recognition, which, by accumulation, produces the effects of symbolic power (i.e. peer respect, celebrity, renown) that can ultimately translate into economic power (i.e. clients).

Several of our informants referred to the case of Jacques Séguéla, a highly renowned Chief Creative Officer working for HAVAS as an illustration of this argument. Séguéla, recipient of many professional awards and trophies, worked on the

communication campaigns under President François Mitterrand and advised Carla Bruni in her communication strategies when her husband Nicolas Sarkozy was the President of the French Republic. In recounting this example, our informants point out that people in places of power tend to have faith in Séguéla because of the legitimating effect of the numerous awards and other symbolic indicia of peer recognition. Our point is that Séguéla's prominent position in circuits of political power reflects skillfulness in maintaining the elite social status of the advertising incumbents.

We measure the relative strength of symbolic aspects of elite status in the field in Table 10. Within the profession, the Cannes Advertising Festival represents a major event for peer recognition of professional talent. The awards given at the festival, known as “Lions Cannes Festival”, have a decisive impact on the career of advertising professionals as well as their employing agencies. As indicated in Table 10, creative executives in advertising tend to receive more of these awards than executives working in other areas. Notably, traditional advertisers have received, on average, 2.2 awards while the average number of awards received by digital marketers is 0.4.

[Insert Table 10 about here]

Collectively, our data shows a marked distinction between two distinct social classes of executives in the advertising field. The incumbent traditional advertisers are clearly elites, and their privileged access to cultural, social, economic and symbolic capital has translated into dominant positions both in the organizations that populate the field as well as the broader society within which those organizations exist. The digital challengers, by contrast, constitute an emerging class whose potential claim to power is based largely on technical expertise. However, their distinctive expert-based capital, generally speaking,

has not yet translated into dominant positions in organizations or in society. Nonetheless, a few members of this class have managed to establish themselves in “command posts” (Reed, 2012) in well-known advertising firms or in creating new firms that occupy important positions in the field.

Our interest is in understanding if social position relates to distinct types of reflexivity that can explain organizational success. To answer this question, we present the results of our analysis of the interview data with traditional incumbents and digital challengers, with a specific analytic focus on their distinctive type of reflexivity. We present these results in the next section.

Reflexivity

We observed four distinct types of reflexivity among our respondents. The first type is superficial reflexivity, which can be defined as a myopic concentration on technical expertise but without any awareness or motivation of the need to use technical expertise to advance one’s social position. Superficial reflexivity was especially present in the transcripts of digital natives who tend to see the field and their involvement therein from a purely technical perspective. Importantly, strategizing over matters of social position was outside the scope of superficial reflexivity. Accordingly, most digital challengers were not interested in engaging in jurisdictional contests with advertisers. This category, thus, is characterized by possessing both low social position and low social skill.

The second type is incumbent reflexivity, comprised largely of traditional advertisers who tended to be deeply reflexive both of their social position and its role in their career trajectory, and often used success in one to explain their current life-position

in the other. Incumbent reflexives' focus is at once on means and ends, and they do not hesitate to strategize in order to maintain their dominance in the field. Their reflexive thinking incorporates a strong sense of self-confidence, being convinced that they are the main party in the field having relevant ideas and able to devise great strategies, on the advertisement and organizational level alike. Individuals who hold strong social position but lack technical expertise characterize this category.

A third category consists of challenger reflexives, which characterized the interview conversations of the few digital challengers who managed to rise to positions of prominence in the field (either in large advertising agencies or in creating their own firm). Successful challengers tended to rely on substantive reasoning when discussing developments in the field and their career path, questioning the field's dominant ways of thinking and doing and being inclined at strategizing over power issues. Our analysis suggests that challenging reflexivity is associated with one's perceived awareness of belonging to a distinct social group, resulting from a specific period of insight that occurred in adulthood. We elaborate each of these categories of reflexivity in the balance of this section.

A fourth category, populated by only one respondent, is characterized by both high expert knowledge/social skill and high social position. This category we label as super reflexivity. We elaborate each category below.

Superficial reflexivity: One of the main patterns emergent from our analysis is the high degree of superficial reflexivity characterizing most digitals and marketing services professionals. None of them had risen to the elite executive position of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in traditional and well-established agencies. As such, superficial reflexivity

implies one's tendencies not to question claims and norms that are taken for granted in a field (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). Further, superficial individuals are generally not concerned about their dominated position within the field, focused, instead, on issues of technical expertise. In short, their reflexivity is deployed on means, not ends.

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of this category is that, despite the growing awareness in the popular press that digital experts constitute an important and influential "creative class" (Florida, 2002) of "symbolic analysts" (Reich, 1992), these individuals expressed a lower degree of self-awareness of participating in a social group, and most did not clearly see the public pronouncements of such a social group as having any empirical reality in their daily lives or offering any specific advantage to their life-project. As one digital challenger explained,

I use the word digital native. Yet the way I use it is misleading. It seems that digital natives constitute a group, but in practice the group doesn't really exist. Apart from parties like "First Tuesday" organized within the digital community before the Internet crisis [in 2000], the existence of the group is not clear in terms of capacity to act and represent interests. Of course, there's a digital group in the AACCC [Association des Agencies Conseil en Communication] but they're totally subservient to advertisers. The AACCC is extensively ruled by old-school advertisers who don't care at all about the new technology. (TPM 024)

Another digital, while being reflexively aware of his group's subordination to advertisers, ultimately acquiesces to the prevailing social order, in that advertisers are the ones able to strategize and innovate creatively, while digitals are not inherently comfortable in doing it:

The vision we have of our job is problem solving. We are solution driven. My client faces a problem like, for instance, how to improve his sales. I suggest him technological solutions. I will think of this problem in terms of communication channels and combinations of digital solutions but I don't think in terms of global strategy. Advertisers are the strategists, they are story tellers. We [digital natives] should invest energies in behaving as strategists, as story tellers. We must learn to do it. We are better than the advertisers in terms of technological skills. But they

are the thinkers and we acknowledge that they are the thinkers. In a sense we feel disadvantaged as compared to them. [...] My friends and I are first of all techies. We share the passion for technology, but we don't really see ourselves as a powerful group to get the highest positions in agencies. Technically we could. But actually, I think we just share an interest in technology. In a sense we should be bolder and we should dare to accomplish what advertisers do. (TPM 037)

Our point is that superficial reflexivity translates into an analytical gaze focused on the technical rather than the social domain. Broader and power issues such as inter-jurisdictional contests, when they are considered, are viewed as being outside the individual's zone of comfort. Most digitals just see themselves as not sufficiently skilled to engage in social strategizing.

When digitals venture to talk about career success, the discussion relates largely to technical expertise, and when being asked to speculate about their future, they point to the revolutionary power of the Internet and not to themselves, as the primary source of agency:

Internet opens avenue for success, so my future success is tied to the Internet. The Internet has a direct influence on all communication techniques. This is the only medium that has a cross-influence. You cannot do advertising without it. You cannot perform event communication without it. You cannot create financial communication without it. You can't conduct PR without using the Internet, etc. (TPM 027)

In sum, superficial reflexivity entails a myopic concentration on issues of technical expertise. From this perspective, mastering the Internet constitutes the main motivation at work. When issues of inter-jurisdictional contests and power are acknowledged, they are not considered as a source of dissatisfaction, as long as one is able to have decent conditions of work to satisfy their technological passion.

Incumbent Reflexivity: A second main pattern that we unveiled relates to incumbent reflexivity, which predominates in the traditional advertising executives that we interviewed. These individuals recognize the key challenges that the Internet constitutes

not only to the field of communication consultancy, but also to their own dominant social position in the field. However, they lack the social skill and expertise necessary to adapt to the emerging new social order. That is, they lack entrepreneurial social skill. Accordingly, one of the main features of their reflexivity is the ability to strategize within the social constraints of the existing field, which implies the capacity to identify socio-economic threats and decide on remedial actions. Incumbent reflexives were also quick to criticize the myopic vision that their digital counterparts tend to have. Incumbent advertisers coined the phrase “below the line” to emphasize the traditionally low status of technical support services within the advertising firm. In explaining the organizational status differences between traditional incumbents and digital challengers, TPM 009 explained:

Culturally, the “below the line” group has always been guided by performance. The digital man is the same. He is driven by the talent and the work, while the advertising man is a talented shirker. He [the advertising man] masters the art of doing well. Genetically, he can handle the beautiful things, while the “below” is the needy subordinate who gets by... The advertising man is very arrogant. Yes he is someone arrogant and when [a digital] gets close to him he must understand that he is the guy from below and he has to shut up.

Incumbents therefore reflexively attribute their superior position within the field to creative and strategizing skills. Another incumbent advertising executive described in a patronizing way the cultural sources of difference between these two groups:

I have great respect for these people [digitals and marketing services] because I know that even though they are not graduated from Polytechnique or HEC, they have practical knowledge, they do not hesitate to get their hands dirty when necessary. They have an operational capacity which compensates for the intellectual side of advertising people. (TPM 031)

In this quote, the jurisdiction of digitals is associated with “dirty” work while that of advertisers relates to the more prestigious and aerial domain of the intellect. Also, the traditional incumbents saw a connection between social awareness, social confidence and

career success. Most traditional advertisers observed that digitals would never rise to positions of power in their organizations because they did not have the ability to strategize and manage social relationships with clients, a skill that digitals and marketing services allegedly lacked because of their inferior social status and history:

If we have a one hour meeting on a stupid and boring topic [direct advertising] it is necessary to the client that we fix the problem in fifteen minutes and then, in the remaining three quarters, we discuss something else, we have good fun. You know what I mean? (TPM 031)

No. (interviewer)

Well it means that if people coming into your office have only professional conversations it has no interest [to the client]. They value relationships and the digitals do not get this. (TPM 031)

In fact, traditional advertising executives saw much of their career and organizational success as drawing from two key sources, their ability to interact as social equals with the corporate executive clients (who are sometimes graduated from the same schools) and their ability to represent the domain of digital advertising and direct marketing as a sub-domain, subjected to the ascendancy of the traditional advertisers' strategic and innovative "big ideas". Both of these sources of power, according to the executives, were accessible to them and inaccessible to their digital and marketing services counterparts.

The ability to relate, as social equals, to corporate clients was described by a traditional advertising executive as follows:

They [digitals] do not know how to communicate to clients. They meet the marketing director, in the best case, but never the boss. I see the boss. Yes, I see all the CEOs. We [in advertising] are the public image of the company. We are an extension of how the client wants to broadcast his company. They [digitals] simply do not have the language or knowledge to talk to corporate clients. (TPM 020)

Another advertiser put the social awkwardness of digitals more bluntly:

They [digitals] have always been given the four final minutes to present their s*** to the client and when one looks at what they do, one holds their nose, of course. They don't know how to talk to these people but I do, because I know them. I attended their schools, I see them socially at functions, I know how they think. (TPM 024)

Omnipotence, an over-generalized sense of competence, seems to characterize many of the reflexive thoughts of the incumbent executives. These advertisers were also quick to attribute their career success and their organizational dominance over digitals to their creativity or their ability to express the complexity of a digital campaign in a terse summary statement, which they describe as the "big idea". So one incumbent, in explaining the lack of career success of digitals in large organizations observed:

The problem they have is that the people of new technology have no creativity... The great creative minds have not yet emerged from the digital class. There are plenty of creative minds in that group, but ... the Ogilvy and Bill Bernach [famous advertisers] of the Web, we don't see them yet. (TPM 007)

Another traditional advertiser, graduate of HEC and member of the social elite in France, maintained that the digitals' lack of creativity ensues from their lack of social awareness:

[The continued success of traditional advertisers] is because advertising men have the ability to formulate a problem and to conceptualize. They know, as good Jesuits, the importance of formulating the question; what is the question? What is the perception of social reality? The only people able to do this are advertising people because their training and history allow them to see a bigger world than the digital. (TPM 019)

The reference to "good Jesuits" is a subtle but significant gesture to the training in elite private schools enjoyed by the social elite, which the respondent clearly sees as a critical element in the success of his social class. In the eyes of the interviewee, the

differentiating reflexive abilities of advertisers relate to the capacity to view and act upon the world from a holistic perspective.

In sum, incumbent reflexivity entails the ability to conceive of problems from a broad perspective and protect one's dominant position. While they have the reflexivity necessary to see the impending dangers of change, they lack the capacity (i.e. the expert knowledge) to adapt to the emerging new social order. Thus, while incumbents possess Fligstein's (1997) social skill, they lack *entrepreneurial* social skill. Their strategic action is restricted by the existing social milieu within which they are embedded and must therefore direct their, now limited, social skills to resisting change.

Incumbent reflexivity also emphasizes comparative assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of the main groups involved in the field. Our interviews with traditional executives indicate a clear awareness of themselves as a social group. Moreover, they are also attentive to, and critical of, the lack of social awareness of much of the digital or marketing services challengers (i.e. the superficially reflexives). A few incumbents are aware of the potential threat posed by digitals were they to become more reflexive. TPM 019 acknowledges that once digitals become more aware of their importance within the industry, they will "have a very bright future" but offers the important caveat that "they need to acquire the vision of the advertising man".

Challenging reflexivity: A much smaller, category of respondents were characterized by a relatively high degree of reflexivity about the institutional constraints and enablers in their life-path, similar to the elite reflexives described above, but who appeared to have acquired this reflexivity somewhat later in life, largely as a result of having achieved success in their careers. That is, they possess high social skill in both the

existing field of traditional advertising and in the emerging field of digital advertising. Although they lack social position, they have high entrepreneurial social skill and are in the process of using that skill to acquire social position, both in their organizations and in their broader social sphere.

Only some of our respondents fell into this category and consisted exclusively of digitals who managed to achieve positions of importance (CEO or vice-president) within large organizations in the field. This group clearly expressed an awareness of the digitals as an emerging social class, but one that has largely failed because of its lack of strategizing endeavors. One respondent, a successful digital native and graduate from a prestigious engineering school in France explained:

So we [digitals] are considered riskier than [traditional advertisers] because we don't say "give us your money and trust us". We provide a marketing service that is so effective and measureable that it will restructure your entire communications strategy. We simply need to become more conscious of our power vis-à-vis the client and tell them that our strength is in our intimate relationship with the customer. They [advertisers] brag about their skills with the client, but the real client is the customer not the buyer of advertising. (TPM 038)

One of the key features of challenging reflexivity is therefore the capacity to go beyond the scope of technicalities to define problems and issues, translating ultimately into some form of engagement towards action. Another participant outlined how traditional advertisers have historically capitalized on their social relationships with the client:

They [traditional advertisers] have an element that is fundamental. They have the relationship to the advertiser [client] that we [digitals] did not traditionally have. My key insight was in starting to talk to the CEOs among my clients. But it took me eight years in the business to be able to do this. And yet, it's just a start for me. In contrast, [traditional advertisers] have breakfast with them three times a week if the advertisers want it. And that changes everything. (TPM 036)

Comparative analysis therefore characterizes challenging reflexivity, its adherents being inclined at evaluating the comparative strengths and weaknesses of the different

factions within the field, and at making sense of current developments and trends therein accordingly. Along these lines, another informant went on to explain that the failure of most digitals to achieve organizational and social success is because they do not understand the social “rules of the game” as well as their traditional counterparts:

They [digitals] are incredibly well armed to take advantage of the changes introduced by the Internet, because the Internet is a complete transformation of the industry. But they don't recognize their power, their importance in the organization or the world. The moment they gain this awareness, from the moment they really learn, from the moment they are ready to challenge their organization, change some teams, how they proceed, how they get remunerated, how they should move in this market, the day they do that, they can become incredibly dangerous for us [traditional advertising professionals]. The day they begin to better understand the rules of the game is the day the advertising professionals begin to die. (TPM 019)

Strategizing is, again, viewed as a distinctive feature of challenging reflexivity. In sum, we found indications of challenging reflexivity within a sub-set of digital challengers who appear to have achieved some degree of insight into the drivers of success in advertising firms dominated by traditional advertisers and have been able to use this to their personal advantage, based on strategic thinking. Their reflexivity is qualitatively different from that of the traditional advertisers in that their “internal conversation” about the institutional enablers and inhibitors of career success seemed to be less intuitive and occurred as a consequence of their exposure to traditional advertisers in an organizational context.

Super Reflexives: A final category consists of a single respondent (female) who possesses both an elite social position and strong social/technical skills. That is, she comes from an elite position in French society but also has extensive technical training and skill in the digital world. Because this category is so thinly populated, we identify its existence

but do not elaborate or generalize from this single observation other than to acknowledge its existence.

Discussion and Conclusion

The intent of this study was to gain a better understanding of the role of individuals in processes of field level organizational change. Our core argument is that reflexivity – a generalized awareness of the constraints and opportunities created by the institutional environment in which the individual is embedded – is an important but unexplored construct in understanding the competing pressures for institutional stability and change. Prior literature has emphasized two key variables in explaining the role of individuals in field level change – the social skill that each individual possesses (Fligstein, 1997; 2013) and their social position in the field (Battilana, 2003).

We argue that both variables are important factors that, in combination, describe the large construct of individual reflexivity. Moreover, our empirical analysis of changes in the field of communications consulting in France demonstrates that, in interaction, the two variables constitute a typology of qualitatively distinct categories of reflexivity. We summarize those differences in Figure 2.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Assuming that social position and social skill each vary in rough degrees of high and low, in interaction they capture four general types of reflexivity. When an individual possesses high social skill and occupies an elite position in a social order (the upper right hand square of Figure 2), these individuals are highly aware of their institutional context. In our study, elite social position refers to an individual who has the benefits of class – high

status parents, economic capital, an elite education, access to powerful social clubs and recognition in their occupation. An individual who has high entrepreneurial social skill, in our context, possesses specialized technical knowledge – i.e. is a digital ‘native’ – but also has expertise and cultural fluency in the digital world that extends beyond mere technical knowledge. That is, they also have an understanding of how the technological revolution they are currently experiencing will disrupt the existing social order. We term these individuals *Super Reflexives* and, as our empirical study demonstrates, they are very rare.

By contrast, an individual who possesses low social skill and low social position (the lower left hand corner of Figure 2) are individuals with relatively low degrees of reflexivity. In our empirical sample, digital natives who came from middle class backgrounds, went to public schools and then technical universities and, in general, lacked access to powerful social institutions in French society, populated this category. That is, they largely lacked social position. Although these individuals had very strong technical skills, they viewed this expertise very narrowly as simply a means of employment and did not see how their skills could be leveraged to gain political, social or organizational advantage. We term these individuals *Superficial Reflexives*.

Many individuals in our study possessed high social position but lacked social skill, largely because they had little understanding of the emerging digital revolution in advertising (the upper left hand square of Figure 2). Incumbent traditional advertisers populate this category. Unsurprisingly, they sought to maintain existing social arrangements. Somewhat more surprising, perhaps, was their general success in maintaining their powerful positions in advertising organizations despite their general lack

of expertise and social skill in the emerging new digital world. We term these individuals *Incumbent Reflexives*.

Finally, we observe a number of individuals who have low social position but who possesses a high degree of social skill (the bottom right hand corner of Figure 2). These individuals demonstrate a relatively high degree of reflexivity, paired with an interest in changing existing institutional arrangements. All of these individuals either rose to positions of power in their employing organizations or left them to start their own ventures. We term these individuals *Challenger Reflexives*.

Our key finding in this study, thus, is that social position and social skill interact to create variation in the degree to which individuals are conscious of the constraints and opportunities that exist in their institutional environment. We identify four types of reflexivity and argue that they are each characterized by important differences in their causal origins, the way in which agency is manifest (or suppressed) within each subject group and in the degree to which each subject perceives the capacity to act on their insights.

While our study offers some insight into the nature and variability of reflexivity, it does not permit us to say if these are the only types of reflexivity or whether we have exhaustively identified their causal origins. Likely we have not. Nor are we able to determine whether one form of reflexivity offers superior access to agency and change in all types of institutional settings. Indeed, a serious boundary condition of this research is that it involves an industry that, at least historically, has privileged the social over the technical. This may advantage the incumbent's overall reflexivity in this industry, despite the disruptive effect of a new technology. One might speculate that superficial reflexives might be similarly advantaged in a field based on technical skills, such as manufacturing.

Our study does, however, make three important contributions. First, we introduce the individual as an important actor in understanding processes of field level change. We observe that reflexivity is, ultimately, an individual phenomenon. Our results demonstrate that there are clear macro-structural influences on reflexivity – i.e. structural or social position. However there are also micro-experiential and personality influences on reflexivity that may temper the determinative influence of social position – general intelligence, personality and the highly individualized social learning that one acquires as a result of the various institutions that he or she passes through in their life course. A potentially important but unexplored variable, thus, is an individual's institutional biography or history as a key determinant of reflexivity.

Second our research offers an epistemologically unifying account of processes of institutional change. The concept of reflexivity unites two competing explanations of institutional change – structure (social position) and meaning (social skill). In so doing it unites two divergent streams of neo-institutional analysis that both agree on the importance of human cognition, but use very different assumptions and method to analyze it (Suddaby, Elsbach, Greenwood, Meyer & Zilber, 2010). The tension between macro social structure and individual cognition, or between the individual and the organizational field, offers an important preliminary scaffolding for a multi-level theory of institutions.

Finally our paper offers important methodological advances for studying the role of the individual in field level change. We introduce prosopography as a method for exploring the structural aspects of social position and the meaning aspects of social biography in a highly institutionalized context. Originally used by historians to study elites, prosopography can be used to capture both elements of the status order of field and the

core identity or meaning structure of the field. We also introduce the method of analyzing individual's internal reflections about their social position and skill as a key technique for understanding how individuals subjectively make sense of the institutional environment in which they are embedded.

Although our study identifies reflexivity as a key variable in understanding why some individuals are able to adapt to field level changes while others are not, the precise boundary conditions of the construct are not yet clear. In our case, for example, we are not able to determine whether reflexivity is a cause or consequence of the variation in career paths. Nor are we able to accurately determine which specific elements of the dynamic interplay between social position and entrepreneurial social skill make some individuals see the social world as fully formed and immutable, while others see it as plastic and full of opportunity for change. Clearly more empirical research is required.

Our findings do, however, provide some generalizability. Our results suggest that reflexivity – or the ability to see opportunity for change where others do not – occurs as a dynamic interplay of one's institutional history (social position) and one's ability to adapt to impending change (entrepreneurial social skill). This basic framework has the potential not only to explain how some individuals become institutional entrepreneurs; it might also offer insight into traditional entrepreneurship as well. That is, key elements of one's past and one's social skill might be used to understand more basic aspects of human creativity and how some individuals (artists, entrepreneurs, intellectuals) see opportunity where others see danger and possible failure.

The core construct of reflexivity offers a hybrid combination of structural embeddedness and inertia, on one hand, and agency and the capacity for action on the other.

These are two fundamental themes that have defined debates around conformity and change throughout the history of management research. By bringing them together in dynamic juxtaposition, we hope to stimulate additional thinking and further research on reflexivity, helping us to better understand the competing human tendencies toward conformity and/or change.

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Table 1: Interviews and distribution of participants

Profile and code	Number of interviews			Total
	Exploration: March to June 2005	First wave: June 2008 to January 2009	Second wave: April to December 2009	
Top managers (TPM)	3	28	17	48
Middle managers (MOP)	3	10	3	16
Experts (EXP)	2	8	5	15
Advertisers (ADV)	2	7	5	14
Total	10	53	30	93

Table 2A: Detail of 164 individuals comprised in institutional biographies

Top managerial position	Advertising		Marketing services		Digital	
		%		%		%
Chairperson/President	27	50.9	26	48.1	26	45.6
Vice-president	8	15.1	2	3.7	1	1.8
CEO	2	3.8	5	9.3	11	19.3
Chief Creative Officer (CCO)	16	30.2	17	31.5	15	26.3
Chief Technology Officer (CTO)	-	-	4	7.4	4	7.0
Number of individuals	53		54		57	
Scale of monthly wages in euros	30,000-50,000		20,000-40,000		10,000-30,000	
Average number of employees by agency	166		168		91	

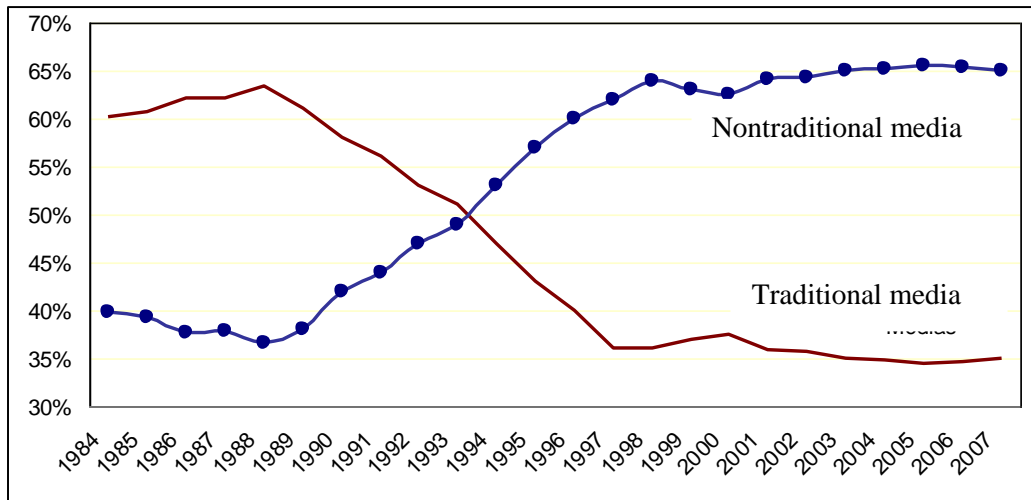
The 164 top managers were selected from a shortlist of agencies (22 in advertising, 24 in marketing services and 25 in digital marketing). We selected key agencies in each discipline using, in particular, the 2009 directory of the AACC. Then we compiled a comprehensive list of top managers in each agency. The classification was done by identifying the most prominent managerial position that a given individual occupied at the time of the study.

Table 2B: Sample institutional biographies of a representative elite incumbent and digital challenger

Incumbent Elite Executive	
Name & Current Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Natalie Rastoin ▪ Female ▪ 53 years old ▪ CEO at Ogilvy & Mather (ad agency) and Chairperson at Ogilvy One (digital arm of Ogilvy UK Network) and member of WPP (UK Communications Group)
Professional Trajectory and Origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Full Career in Advertising/Ideal corporate apparatchik ▪ Career path is exclusively in elite advertising firms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chargée d'études à The Creative Business (1980-82) ○ au planning stratégique de Young & Rubicam France (1982-85) ○ Directeur du développement à Saatchi & Saatchi France (1986-90) ○ Vice-président, chargée du développement Europe (1991-92) ○ Directeur général de l'agence de Paris (1992-97) de BDDP Conseil ○ Directeur général d'Ogilvy & Mather Paris (1997-2005) ○ Directeur général d'Ogilvy France (depuis 2005).
Social Trajectory and Origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Father: Magistrate at the Court of Auditors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Court of Auditors is a quasi-judicial body responsible for audits (both financial and legal) of all public and most private institutions in France. ○ It is similar to the function of the auditor general, in Commonwealth countries and is a Grand Corps of France, indicating that it is populated by graduates of the Ecole Nationale.
Cultural Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mother: Housewife ▪ HEC 1980 ▪ MSc from Paris IV La Sorbonne ▪ A level in Lycée Jean de La Fontaine (Paris 16eme, ie a good lycee in a social selective district) ▪ Lycee Sainte Genevieve (top notch preparatory class to HEC)
Social Capital and Network Affiliations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ registered in all the important professional and social directories (Who's Who, Top Management, Nomination) ▪ member of a political club of reflection supporting the Segolene Royal ▪ socialist and losing candidate to the election for the French presidency against Nicolas Sarkozy in 2007.
Economic Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Salary (monthly): 30,000 – 50,000 Euros

Name & Current Position	<p style="text-align: center;">Digital Challenger Executive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Marco Tinelli ▪ 44 years old ▪ founder and Chairman of Fullsix (created 1997 as an independent agency and now a Top 50 Global marketing firm)
Professional Trajectory and Origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Career path shifts from consulting to advertising and moves from employee to founder/owner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1992-94 : Arthur Andersen, Consultant fusions acquisitions litiges. ○ 1994-97 : Publicis, Création et direction des activités interactives du Groupe (Publicis Technology). ○ Depuis 1997 : Création et direction de Grey Interactive France et Europe au sein du Groupe Grey. ○ En 2001 Grey Interactive devient FullSix à l'occasion de la fusion avec Inferentia-DNM ○ Président de FullSix et administrateur de Inferencia-DNM/FullSix.
Social Trajectory and Origin Cultural Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Father: Chemical Engineer in the Petroleum Industry Mother: Professional translator ▪ 1992, Ecole Central Paris ▪ Masters degree in History
Social Capital and Network Affiliations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ registered only in professional directories (no social lists): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Top Management ○ Nomination ○ Journal du Net ○ LinkedIn
Economic Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Salary (monthly): 10,000-30,000 Euros

Figure 1: Distribution of traditional media investments versus nontraditional media investments



Source: Havas médias

Figure 2: Embedded Social Position and Entrepreneurial Social Skill as determinants of Reflexivity

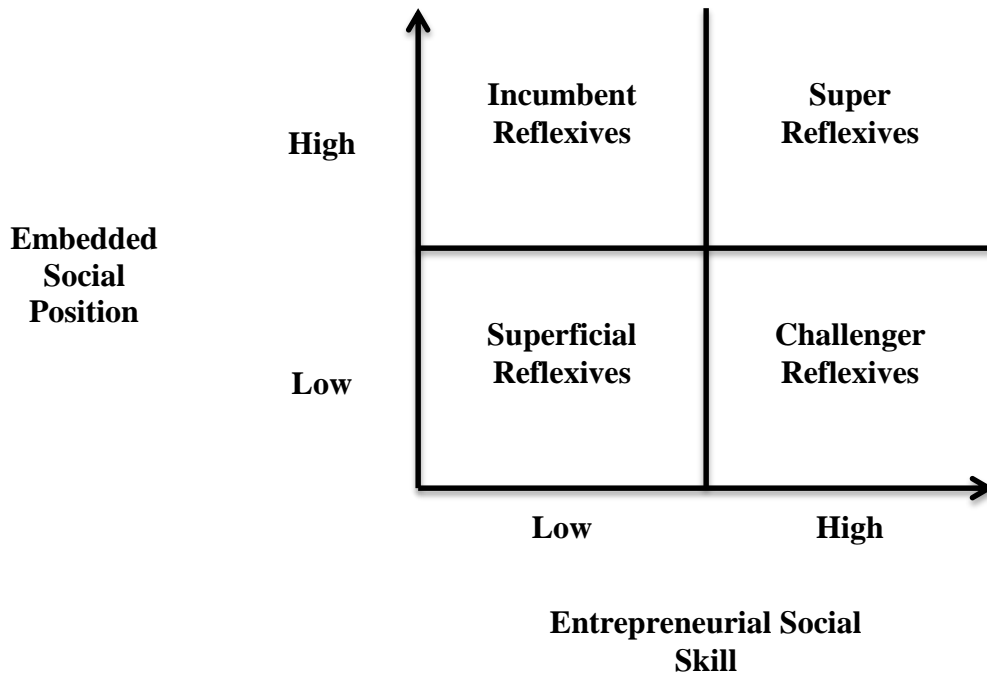


Table 3: The structure of media investments in France (2008 vs. 2007)

Traditional media	Invest. Billion €	%
Television	4.112	-4.5
Press	4.247	-3.4
Display	1.455	1.9
Radio	0.921	-3.2
Cinema	0.117	-15.4
	10.852	
Nontraditional media		
Direct Marketing	9.559	-1.9
Promotion	5.106	-1.5
Public Relations	1.833	-2.0
Exhibitions and Fairs	1.539	2.7
Directory	1.286	3.2
Sponsorship	0.833	-3.0
Philanthropy, patronage	0.354	-3.0
	20.510	
Digital media		
Internet	1.007	19.9

Source: France Pub 2009

Table 4: Disciplinary origins of CEOs of advertising networks and large agencies in France

Network	Group	Individual	Position	Discipline of origin
BBDO Paris	Omnicom	Accary Valérie	CEO	Advertising
DDB Groupe France	Omnicom	Seguret Jean-Pierre	CEO	Finance
Draft FCB	Interpublic	Héry Benoît	CEO	Marketing services
Havas Worldwide	Havas	Jones David	Global CEO	Advertising
Euro RSCG France	Havas	Erra Mercedes	CEO	Advertising
Euro RSCG France	Havas	Fouks Stéphane	Deputy-CEO	Corporate communication
Grey	WPP	Stillacci Andréa	CEO	Advertising
JWT Groupe France	JWT Worldwide	Chambon Emmanuel	CEO	Finance
Leo Burnett	Publicis Groupe	Brunier Jean-Paul	CEO	Advertising
Lowe Strateus	Interpublic	Adenot Philippe	CEO	Corporate communication
McCann Worldgroup	Interpublic	Ferrebeuf Michèle	CEO	Marketing services
Ogilvy France	WPP	Sicouri Daniel	CEO	Advertising
Publicis Worldwide France	Publicis Groupe	Sadoun Arthur	CEO	Advertising
Saatchi & Saatchi	Publicis Groupe	Lichtenstein Christophe	CEO	Advertising
TBWA France	Omnicom	Bordas Nicolas	CEO	Advertising
TBWA Worldwide	Omnicom	Dru Jean-Marie	Chairman	Advertising
Young&Rubicam France	WPP	Bungert Jacques	CEO	Marketing services
Young&Rubicam France	WPP	Torloting Frédéric	CEO	Marketing services

Source: Who's Who, Top Management, Nomination 2009

Table 5: Linking social position to father*

Father's profession	Advertising N=53	%	Mkg serv. N=54	%	Digital N=57	%
Included participants	19	35.8	11	20.4	14	24.6
Upper categories	16	84.2	7	63.6	8	57.1
Entrepreneurs and industrialists	3	15.8	2	18.2	2	14.3
Executives	13	68.4	4	36.4	4	28.6
University professor	-	-	-	-	1	7.1
Physician	-	-	-	-	1	7.1
Industrial farmer	-	-	1	9.0	-	-
Intermediate categories	2	10.5	4	36.4	4	28.6
Teachers in primary and secondary	1	5.2	2	18.2	4	28.6
Small traders	1	5.3	2	18.2	-	-
Employees and workers	1	5.3	-	-	-	-
Bank employee	1	5.3	-	-	-	-
Other activities	-	-	-	-	2	14.3
Writer	-	-	-	-	1	7.2
Military (rank not specified)	-	-	-	-	1	7.1
Excluded participants	34	64.2	43	79.6	43	75.4

*The total number of people investigated is 164. However, we were unable to obtain these data, across all participants, for all of the institutional biographies dimensions under study. For instance, in the above table, we were able to collect information (using publicly available data and in a number of cases data originating from our series of interviews) on the participant's father in 44 cases (which we designate as "included participants"). The remaining 120 individuals are identified as "excluded participants".

Table 6: Linking social position to mother

Mother's profession	Advertising N=53	%	Mkg serv. N=54	%	Digital N=57	%
Included participants	19	35.8	11	20.4	14	24.6
Upper categories	3	15.8	3	27.3	4	28.6
Entrepreneur and industrialist	-	-	-	-	1	7.1
Executives	1	5.3	2	18.2	2	14.3
Physicians	2	10.5	1	9.1	1	7.1
Intermediate categories	3	15.8	3	27.3	4	28.6
Teachers in primary and secondary	3	15.8	2	18.2	4	28.6
Small trader	-	-	1	9.1	-	-
Employees and workers	2	10.5	-	-	-	-
Administrative employees	2	10.5	-	-	-	-
Other activities	11	57.9	5	45.5	6	42.9
Housewives	10	52.6	5	45.5	5	35.7
Advertiser (without specification)	1	5.3	-	-	-	-
Painter	-	-	-	-	1	7.1
Excluded participants	34	64.2	43	79.6	43	75.4

Table 7: Linking social position to educational diplomas

Degree(s) hold	Advertising N=53	%	Mkg serv. N=54	%	Digital N=57	%
Included participants	35	66,0	37	68,5	46	80,7
Graduate schools of business	19	54,3	9	24,3	18	39,1
Parisian and foreign top business schools	11	31,4	1	2,7	3	6,5
London Business School (EMBA)	1	2,9	-	-	-	-
INSEAD (MBA)	1	2,9	-	-	1	2,2
HEC Paris	4	11,3	-	-	2	4,3
ESSEC	1	2,9	-	-	-	-
ESCP Europe	2	5,7	1	2,7	-	-
EM Lyon	2	5,7	-	-	-	-
Provincial business schools	3	8,6	5	13,5	10	21,7
Private business schools	5	14,3	3	8,1	5	10,9
Graduate schools of engineer or computer	-	-	2	5,4	5	10,8
CNAM	-	-	1	2,7	-	-
Ecole Centrale Paris	-	-	1	2,7	-	-
Ecole des techno de l'informat° et de la com°	-	-	-	-	1	2,2
Ecole Supérieure des Travaux Publics	-	-	-	-	1	2,2
Institut National Supérieur des Sciences Appliquées	-	-	-	-	1	2,2
Institut des techniques informatiques et commerciales	-	-	-	-	1	2,2
Supelec	-	-	-	-	1	2,2
University (+3; +5; +8)	24	68,6	17	45,9	18	39,1
Including IEP (+5 in politics)	5	14,3	1	2,7	3	6,5
Including CELSA (+5 in communication)	2	5,7	1	2,7	1	2,2
Including IAE	-	-	4	10,8	-	-
Including MSc. In artificial intelligence	-	-	1	2,7	1	2,2
Including MSc. In computer sciences	-	-	1	2,7	1	2,2
Schools of Arts, Design, Animation	10	28,6	7	18,9	12	26,1
Other	1	2,9	4	10,8	5	10,9
Self-made person	1	2,9	3	8,1	3	6,6
Degree of bachelor program only	-	-	1	2,7	2	4,3
Excluded participants	18	34,0	17	31,5	11	19,3

Table 8: Social closure of disciplines (or extent of mobility across disciplines)

Career	Advertising N=53	%	Mkg Serv. N=54	%	Digital N=57	%
Included participants	42	79.2	42	77.8	48	84.2
Full career in advertising	33	78.5	-	-	-	-
Full career in marketing services	-	-	20	47.6	-	-
Full career in digital (digital natives)	-	-	-	-	17	35.4
From advertising to...	-	-	7	16.7	6	12.5
From marketing services to...	5	11.9	-	-	15	31.3
From corporate communication to...	2	4.8	2	4.8	-	-
From digital to...	-	-	3	7.1	-	-
From other consultancies (organizational, strategic, etc.) to...	1	2.4	2	4.8	2	4.1
From advertiser to...	-	-	6	14.2	3	6.3
From political activity to...	-	-	2	4.8	3	6.3
From other communication disciplines (design, TV production, etc.) to...	1	2.4	-	-	2	4.1
Excluded participants	11	20.8	12	22.2	9	15.8

Table 9: Expert power as indicated through inclusion in professional directories

Professional directories	Advertising N=53	%	Marketing services N=54	%	Digital N=57	%
Who's Who	19	35.8	8	14.8	6	10.5
Top Management	21	39.6	17	31.5	19	33.3
Nomination	35	66.0	31	57.4	27	47.4
Journal du Net	-	-	12	22.2	16	28.1
LinkedIn	25	47.2	34	63.0	44	77.2
LinkedIn exclusively	3	5.7	7	13.0	13	22.8
None	6	11.3	7	13.0	5	8.8

Table 10: Expert power through distinctions and awards

Discipline	Distinctions & awards			N	%*	Per CCO**
	School awards	Medals	Professional awards			
Advertising	Concours général 1	OLH 2 knights	Lions Cannes Festival	38	55.9	1.5
	Concours histoire 1	OMN 1 knight	Grand Prix Stratégies	6	8.8	0.2
			Effie awards	3	4.4	0.1
			AD Club awards	5	7.4	0.2
			Webby awards	-	-	-
			Cyber Cristal	-	-	-
			John Capples awards	-	-	-
			Other awards	4	5.9	0.2
			TOTAL	56	N/A	2.2
Marketing services	-	OMN 1 knight	Lions Cannes Festival	3	4.4	0.2
	-	Défense nationale 1	Grand Prix Stratégies	1	1.5	0.1
			Effie awards	2	2.9	0.1
			AD Club awards	-	-	-
			Webby awards	3	4.4	0.2
			Cyber Cristal	5	7.4	0.3
			John Capples awards	1	1.5	0.1
			Other awards	-	-	-
			TOTAL	15	N/A	0.8
Digital	-	-	Lions Cannes Festival	2	2.9	0.1
			Grand Prix Stratégies	3	4.4	0.1
			Effie awards	-	-	-
			AD Club awards	-	-	-
			Webby awards	-	-	-
			Cyber Cristal	2	2.9	0.1
			John Capples awards	-	-	-
			Other awards	2	2.9	0.1
			TOTAL	9	N/A	0.4

*Calculation based on the total population of Chief Creative Officers (CCOs), among the 164 individuals that we considered.

**Calculation based on the population of CCOs in each discipline.