THE DAY OF SMALL BEGINNINGS: 
ENTREPRENEURIAL BRICOLAGE AS A 
SOURCE OF DYNAMIC CAPABILITIES IN 
YOUNG FIRMS (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

Andrew Fultz  
*Rutgers University, fultzae@gmail.com*

Keith M. Hmieleski  
*Texas Christian University, USA*

Ted Baker  
*Rutgers University, USA*

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The entrepreneurship literature has not sufficiently explored the origins of dynamic capabilities in young firms (Zahra, Sapienza, & Davidsson, 2006), mirroring the ongoing need within strategy (Felin & Foss, 2009). Despite calls for inclusion, the dynamic capabilities literature has attended very little to micro-foundations in general (Felin, Foss, Heimeriks, & Madsen, 2012) or to entrepreneurship in particular (Zahra et al., 2006). Thus, we ask the question: What behaviors of entrepreneurs shape the development of dynamic capabilities in young firms? We argue for the generative role of entrepreneurial bricolage behaviors in the formation of dynamic capabilities. Dynamic capabilities and bricolage have in common the central characteristic of recombination; however, the former invokes notions of latent or manifest performance capacities, whereas the latter describes a pattern of behavior that often occurs prior to the development of any substantive capabilities. We argue that bricolage can lead to dynamic capabilities through fostering willingness and ability to envision alternative solutions, growth of recombination skills, and increased flexibility. Additionally, we highlight the destructive potential of high levels of bricolage on dynamic capabilities and conditions which may exacerbate these effects.

Method

We are in the process of performing two studies: (1) A cross-sectional survey of a random sample of founders of young ventures, along with (2) a longitudinal survey of a separate sample of founding entrepreneurs and members of their teams.

Results and Implications

We expect this study to contribute to our knowledge of the sources and patterning of dynamic capabilities in new and young ventures. The findings are also anticipated to expand our understanding of the longer-term consequences of entrepreneurial bricolage, which past research has ignored. In addition, this paper has implications for understanding the early foundations of dynamic capabilities in older firms, which are rooted in earlier behaviors. Overall, the results of our study are intended to add to the growing literature on strategic entrepreneurship by attempting to identify underlying mechanisms through which dynamic capabilities are developed—and, in turn, the impact these capabilities have on entrepreneurs’ attempts to establish competitive advantage for their new ventures.

CONTACT: Andrew Fultz; fultzae@gmail.com; 276-979-6663; 1279 Park Drive, East Stroudsburg, PA 18302.