**Juggling the odds of being young: Unpacking the impact of age discourses on new venture development**

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates how social materializations of the macrostructure “age” are impacting on how young nascent entrepreneurs start a business. It contends that the social construction of a strategic fit between personal and field structure drives individuals to pursue a start-up, underpinned by Bourdieu’s practice theory. Based on a case study and three semi-structured interviews with student and graduate start-ups, the research explores how age discourses affect the social positioning processes performed through temporary configurations of habitus. This research contributes to entrepreneurship as practice literature, focussing on entrepreneurial processes in context and suggesting the application of a new process model.

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**Introduction**

This paper aims to unpack how social materializations of the macrostructure “age” shape how young nascent entrepreneurs adapt their field-dependent entrepreneurial behavior by means of a temporary habitus. This habitus is the result of having contrived a strategic fit between personal structure and field-specific context, and it is this constructed fit that propels individuals to physically start a business; the latter is the formal registration of a business activity and the start of trading. The focus is on how age-related discourses shape context conceptualizations and the personal structure of nascent entrepreneurs when developing a new venture. This article uses a research approach that suggests ways of acquiring practical knowledge (Armstrong, 2003; Baker & Welter, 2017; Kenworthy & McMullan, 2013; Ladik & Stewart, 2008) that are relevant for entrepreneurs and those supporting them, thereby offering replicable knowledge.

The findings of more than 25 years of research (see for example Reynolds, 2016; Reynolds & Curtin, 2011) on nascent entrepreneurship have to-date rarely been applied by entrepreneurs or those supporting them. The majority of published research uses panel-study data underpinned by a positivist approach (Pittaway, 2005; Karataş-Özkan et al., 2014, more references), including the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (Global Entrepreneurship Research Association, 2017). These articles present findings in a language that often provides little knowledge of practical value to entrepreneurs for improving their ongoing activities (Baker & Welter, 2017; Evanschitzky, Baumgarth, Hubbard, & Armstrong, 2007; Karataş-Özkan et al., 2014; Kenworthy & McMullan, 2013). These kinds of findings do not yet answer the recent call for open access(ibility) (RCUK, 2014), according to which, in addition to physical access to publicly funded research, they should offer accessible “socially useful knowledge” (Cunliffe & Scaratti, 2017; Kenworthy & McMullen, 2013).

Social science disciplines have turned to practice theory based on significant social theory publications, for example by Giddens (1986, 1993), Bourdieu (1977, 1986, 1990), and Schatzki (2006; Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina, & Savigny, 2001). Applications to organizational inquiry led to the emergence of a focus on studying practices (for example Geiger, Kjellberg, & Spencer, 2012; Nicolini, 2009; Özbilgin, & Tatli, 2005), and in business to “strategy as practice” (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Johnson et al., 2007). This “practice turn” in the social sciences has only comparatively recently inspired entrepreneurship researchers, leading to the formation of the “Entrepreneurship as practice” field (see, for example, Coleman, 2016; Gaddefors & Anderson, 2017; Keating et al., 2014; Johannisson, 2011; McKeever, Anderson, & Jack, 2014; Steyaert, 2011; Watson, 2013; Welter, 2011; Welter & Gartner, 2016; Zahra, Wright, & Abdelgawad; 2014). Focus in this emerging field is on processes and practices of “entrepreneuring”, the ongoing processes that entrepreneurs engage with including resourcing (for example McKeever, Anderson, & Jack, 2014; Moroz & Hindle, 2012; Mueller, Volery, & von Siemens, 2012). The shift in focus is from a functional viewpoint investigating the “what” questions to researching “how” entrepreneurial outcomes are achieved, with a keen interest in the practices leading to them. For nascent entrepreneurship research, further unpacking the nature of business start-up processes in context would be essential in order to reveal insights relevant to business practitioners and those supporting them (Geiger & McLoughlin, 2014; Cunliffe & Scaratti, 2017; Kenworthy & McMullen, 2013).

The paper’s aim is to explore how one element of social macrostructures – age discourses – is reflected in the behavior of young people starting a service business, homing in on how age affects the various agents in the organizational context of starting a business and gaining clients. The focus is on mapping the material dynamics of age-related practices and habitus and how they shape the structuring power of social capital in the start-up field, using Bourdieu’s (1986, 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) concepts of capitals, habitus, and field. Secondly, the research illustrates how this reconceptualization of contacts (and their “quality”), often referred to simply as networks, questions the nature of social capital. In doing so, this study adds to the emerging field of entrepreneurship and context (Keating et al., 2014; Watson, 2013; McKeever, Anderson, & Jack, 2015) and social capital research (Gedajovic et al., 2013; Lee & Jones, 2015; Kreiser, Patel, & Fiet, 2013) and offers insight into the temporary and context-dependent nature of starting a business (De Clercq & Voronov, 2009; Dimov, 2010; Geiger et al., 2013; Johannisson, 2011).

The research is motivated by the fact that many engaging in business start-up activities still do not pursue a start-up and that one-third of those who do fail within the first 12 months. Indicative for many Western countries, the UK had the largest number of active businesses (over 3.26 million) between December 2014 and June 2015, owing to having recorded the highest number of new business registrations compared to business closures (Barclays and Business Growth Fund, 2016). An understanding of how better to manage these pre-start-up activities is needed in order to provide insights for those engaging in them, with the goal of increasing the number that succeed in starting a business. Increasing this number of actual start-ups boosts the likelihood of more successful small businesses; in turn, this likely means more jobs, which are linked to increased tax income for governments, contributing overall to a growing and more sustainable economy. For these reasons, the practical implications aim to contribute to improving the rate of those engaging in and continuing successfully with start-up activities and trading beyond year one.

This article contributes to the growing body of research on entrepreneurship processes and contexts (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2001; Johannisson 2011; Keating, Geiger, & McLoughlin 2014; McKeever, Anderson, & Jack 2014; Tatli et al., 2014; Watson, 2013), heeding the call to consider the realities of venture formation as an exploration of the unknown (McKeever, Anderson, & Jack 2014). In response to the request for further theory-driven debate (Welter et al., 2017; McKeever, Anderson, & Jack, 2014), this article suggests the application of a new process model and how the social materialization of one macrostructure element – age discourses – informs start-up behavior. It explains via narratives of young people how *being young* affects how nascent entrepreneurs construct a strategic fit between personal and field structure. This explicit deconstruction of age narratives adds an innovative approach to nascent entrepreneurship research, which, like the majority of organizational studies research, is mostly age-insensitive (Thomas et al., 2014). In the little existing literature on older entrepreneurs, age has been approached predominantly by creating homogenous groups of around the same calendar age (for example, Kibler & Blackburn, 2015), using age-related labels as if there is a generational approach – with the exception of Gartner and Nielsen (2017) and Down, S. and Reveley, J. (2004) – but this has not covered recent graduates.

The paper makes both empirical and theoretical contributions: It contains insights from a case study and three semi-structured interviews on the often-overlooked aspect of the age of the founder by telling the story of a young nascent entrepreneur and how he created a strategic fit between his personal structure and that of the field in order to be successful in his industry sector, having to manage limitations related to his embodied age through age-informed strategic behavior (in his 20s and a student), supported by findings from semi-structured interviews with three nascent entrepreneurs to illustrate the spectrum of social materializations of age. Thus the paper adds to the small body of empirical research analyzing the impact of age discourses on organizational inquiry and related practices, and extends the findings of organizational studies on youth and age (for example, Thomas et al., 2014) to the area of nascent entrepreneurship.

Two important theoretical contributions broaden existing theory: A process model is offered (see Figure 1) that theoretically underpins how the social materialization of one element of macrostructures – age discourses – shapes the mental and behavioral processes of nascent entrepreneurs, concentrating on the transformation of capitals and adding to previous findings (Karataş-Özkan, 2011; Vershinina, Barrett, & Meyer 2011). This model identifies salient iterative processes and their materializations and explains what propels individuals to develop a business with the construction of a strategic fit between personal and field structure through transformation of capitals. Existing studies give only limited detail on how these transformations occur. Discussions of capitals in entrepreneurship research have predominantly focussed on social capital as an accumulation of networks, often not linking it to the core function of habitus, namely to activate and realize (social) capitals as a structuring force for acquiring and maintaining social positions in fields (Gedajlovic et al., 2013) with limited deconstruction of the nature and impact of context.

*<”Insert Figure 1 Here”>*

In addition, the application of the process model provides theoretical underpinning that makes explicit the underlying mental and behavioral context and how macrostructures such as age materialize in habitus shaping start-up behavior. For the first time this new process model also captures strategic negotiation processes at the half- or subconscious level to explain pre- and start-up behavior (Bird & Schjoedt, 2017; Bourdieu 1986, 1990; Schjoedt, 2017).

The paper proceeds with a critical review of the relevant academic literature, followed by a brief explanation of the process model. The discussion of the research approach precedes the findings section telling the story of the case study, Bill, and the other nascent entrepreneurs’ reconciling embodied age with constructions of context based on semi-structured interviews. The discussion section illustrates how the suggested process model adds value by explaining how nascent entrepreneurs negotiate strategic fit. The paper concludes by outlining a research agenda and implications for entrepreneurs and policymakers.

**Literature review**

The debate on what kind of knowledge entrepreneurship research should ideally supply is ongoing (Keating, Geiger, & McLoughlin, 2014; Kenworthy & McMullen; 2013, Welter, 2011). Some scholars discuss quality criteria of practical knowledge that can better serve entrepreneurs and those supporting them (Welter et al., 2017) or practitioners more generally (Cunliffe & Scaratti, 2017). MORE

**Theory developments leading to applications of practice theory in entrepreneurship research**

Entrepreneurship research in general, and nascent entrepreneurship research in particular, has been dominated in the past by a functionalist economic rationalist approach to explaining entrepreneurial behavior and processes (see Baker & Nelson, 2005; Karataş-Özkan et al., 2014; Lee & Jones, 2015; Pittaway, 2005; Stinchfield, Nelson, & Wood 2013; Tatli et al., 2014; Wood & McKinley, 2010; Reynolds, 2016). Classic economic rationality assumes that all possible solutions are gathered and evaluated when making a decision, before one option is implemented, underpinned by economic reasoning (Pittaway, 2005; Stinchfield, Nelson, & Wood, 2013). According to this approach, when starting a new venture individuals follow a rational process of setting goals, developing mindsets, identifying and developing opportunities, and gathering appropriate resources (see for example Aldrich & Baker, 1997; Aldrich & Martinez, 2001; Baker & Nelson, 2005; Baron, 1998; Wood & McKinley, 2010). Influenced by disciplines such as psychology, sociology and management research (and authors such as Bourdieu, 1977, 1986, 1990; Geiger, 2009; Giddens, 1990, 1993; Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2005, 2006), other paradigms gained entry into (nascent) entrepreneurship research.

A number of alternative theoretical approaches developed: The bricolage approach (Geiger et al., 2016; Mueller, Volery, & von Siemens, 2012; Stinchfield, Nelson, & Wood, 2013) is an example of a subjectivist-agency research, could identify practice is emerging and developed while going along, whereas resource optimization is rarely even attempted. This finding contradicts the rational economic “hero”. The research shows the reality of “what entrepreneurs do”: their practices (Keating, Geiger, & McLoughlin 2014; Lindgren & Packendorff, 2009; Sarasvathy, 2003, 2004; Shane, 2003; Stinchfield, Nelson, & Wood, 2013; Mueller, Volery, & von Siemens, 2012; Welter et al., 2017). Process theory applications (Frank & Lueger, 1997; Hjorth, Holt, & Steyaert, 2015; Steyaert, 2007) conceptualized new venture creation as a development model with clear stages that start-ups had to go through (Greiner, 1998), which was rightly criticized for being too general and abstract and unable to explain what nascent entrepreneurs really did and do (Downing, 2005; Fletcher, 2006; Frank & Lueger, 1997; Steyaert, 2007); the same applies to evolutionary process theories (Aldrich, 1999; Aldrich & Martinez, 2001; Moroz & Hindle, 2012; Steyaert, 2007). Both of these latter approaches need to include the subject of the processes in the analysis (Steyaert, 2007) to be able to explain entrepreneurial outcomes and processes sufficiently, in line with current multilevel approaches (Davidsson & Wiklund, 2001; Karataş-Özkan, 2011; Steyaert, 2007), which are falling short of explaining the manner in which these outcomes are achieved, not why. Relational perspectives (Emirbayer, 1997; Tatli et al., 2014), based on the sociological theory of relationalism, go further and focus on human beings as fundamental elements in relationship networks and assume that the individual does not exist without being within social relationships (Emirbayer, 1997; Tatli et al., 2014). The research focusses on social relations and could shed light on how nascent entrepreneurial processes are managed. Process-relational perspectives then bridge the dualism of structure versus agency, or objective-structural versus subjective-agency, and focus on interdependencies between structure and agency (Karataş-Özkan & Chell 2010; Karataş-Özkan, 2011; Kyriakidou & Özbilgin, 2006; Tatli et al., 2014). Based on this paradigm, nascent entrepreneurship research could map and unpack how individuals draw on context during their negotiation of the processes leading to business start-up.

Recent theoretical approaches have acknowledged the significance of integrating the analysis of social relations and context into entrepreneurship research, with early works based on Granovetter (1985, 1992) (e.g. Greve & Salaff, 2003; Sarasvathy, 2001; Karataş-Özkan & Chell, 2010; Karataş-Özkan, 2011; Moroz & Hindle, 2012; Stinchfield et al., 2013; Kreiser et al., 2013) moving beyond the functional paradigm assuming rational decisions and heroic rationale strategizing when starting a new venture (see Reynolds and Curtin (2011) and Reynolds (2016) for a review of nascent entrepreneurship research, based predominantly on panel studies research). An assumption of some causality has often led to a sequential, rational approach of setting goals, developing mindsets, and identifying or developing and exploiting opportunities for which resources were gathered (see for example Baker & Nelson, 2005; Baron, 1998; Greiner, 1988; Wood & McKinley, 2010).

Applications of practice theory have led to the emergence of two research streams: Strategy as Practice (for example Eero, Sonenshein, & Boje, 2016; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009) and Entrepreneurship as Practice (including Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Johannisson, 2011; Keating, Geiger, & McLoughlin 2014; McKeever, Anderson, & Jack 2014; Watson, 2013), which often do not cross-reference each other’s work (with the exception of Keating, Geiger, & McLoughlin, 2014). Both streams draw on the same social theorists, including Schatzki (Schatzki et al., 2001; Schatzki, 2006), Bourdieu (1977, 1986, 1990), and Giddens (1984, 1990) when defining the purpose of their research activities. Both approaches share social situatedness and a keen interest in deconstructing complex social realities in organizations and when organizing business processes. Of the three areas of interest regarding strategy-in-practice research (practitioners executing strategy, practices as tools to realize strategy, and praxis as the flow of activities constituting strategy – Jarzabkowski, P. & Spee, A. P., 2009; Johnson et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006), the concern with praxis is most relevant to this research, followed by practices, as this research’s interest lies in unpacking iterative patterns of action that constitute strategizing.

Aiming to overcome the above-mentioned limits of structure and the agency-focussed research of the past are recent applications focussing on entrepreneurship and context that seek to deconstruct how entrepreneurs negotiate entrepreneurial processes in specific contexts (social, economic, temporal, spatial, ideological) (e.g. Corbett, 2007; Zahra & Wright, 2011; Gedajlovic et al., 2013) and at several levels (from the individual or micro- to the meso- and macro-level) (Payne, 2011; Karataş-Özkan, 2011; Karataş-Özkan & Chell, 2010; Kreiser et al., 2013).

**Findings of age and organizational studies applied to entrepreneurship research**

Age is part of everybody’s identity and an integral part of social and business discourses. These discourses inform the material practices of individuals and fields differently (Bourdieu 1977, 1986, 1990; Özbilgin & Tatli, 2005). Industry sectors vary in their age-related discourse, from “young” industries, where youthfulness and low calendar age are highly valued, for example in some subsectors of the creative industries (social media and website design, product design; see Thomas et al., 2014), to other industries where maturity and soberness underpinned by experience are deemed essential (for example banking; see Ainsworth & Cutcher, 2008). But what does this actually mean? Looking though the critical lens of organizational studies (Thomas et al., 2014), it is helpful to deconstruct how the social macrostructure of age materializes in the habitus of young people as workers (for the purposes of this article, nascent entrepreneurs). Thomas et al. (2014) state that the discourses of youth have been much less studied than those of ageing and maturity, the latter often being carried out within organizations for older workers and the ageing workforce. “Being young” is constructed on the basis of biological/chronological calendar age measured in numbers of years lived and is often not explicitly addressed in studies, with youth or being young(er) often seen as the norm (Fineman, 2011). Both the embodied identity of age (with shared meanings for individuals) and the ways in which organizational identities and organizations are created based on assumptions of age (Thomas et al., 2014) are subsumed in this article and Figure 1 under social materializations of age in fields and personal structures.

A review of the literature on organizational studies (Parry & Urwin, 2011; Thomas et al., 2014) reveals a number of biological age-stereotyped assumptions, in particular when generational groups are created as social entities with an assumption of homogeneity of traits and behaviors, such as Generation X or Y or Baby Boomers, all of which are transferrable to perceptions and stereotypes of young people as entrepreneurial business partners or suppliers to existing organizations. Existing studies have not, however, managed so far to demonstrate shared attributes of supposedly homogenous generations (Parry & Urwin, 2011; Thomas et al., 2014). Nevertheless, many studies by think tanks, government bodies, and banks create images of assumed homogenous groups, most recently the Millennipreneur (BNP Paribas, 2015). Rather, Thomas (2009) and Shilling (2005) could point out that body and age seem hardly to exist in organizational studies. This is all the more surprising as assumptions about age are always present and form part of mental and physical behavior and social practices. However, this existing generational discourse is widespread and has resulted in limiting the choices of seemingly acceptable behaviors for young individuals.

Young people have to deal with false stereotypes in the media and wider society which can affect their social positioning and employment; these simplify their image and generalize their behavior often negatively, and this is seen as applicable to *all* young people, leading to statistical discrimination for being young. In contrast to common myth, 74% of 16–24-year-olds have done voluntary work (a 9% increase on 2012). Yet media convey an image of “lazy, binge-drinking, crime-related victimhood due to accidents or violence” when it comes to young people, as confirmed by an Irish study (Devlin, 2006), whereas secondary-school teachers describe their students as “caring, enthusiastic, and hard-working.”

Critical sociology has contributed to the idea that age is never just a number (Biggs, 1997; Calastani, 2008; Gullette, 2004) but that the aged body is inscribed with discursively constructed meanings and importance ascribed to age, with material effects on behavior. These meanings are reproduced via power relations in fields, where the norm can often be the middle-aged individual (often assumed to be between early 30s and late 40s in some fields), or the young person or the more experienced one, as the associated age-related assumptions in industry subsectors above showed. Age discourses offer subjectivities that include assumed attitudes, identities, and behaviors.

Drawing on age-related identities to legitimize claims for more freedom at work is more difficult for young people in organizational contexts. Research has shown them to be constructed as deviant from the norm, whereas older workers in the same organization were able to use the social construction as less productive to their advantage in gaining more freedom (Zanoni, 2011). The latter finding is important for this paper in explaining the conceptualization of younger people’s social positioning as possibly less valuable. Most studies in entrepreneurship research have been rather age-insensitive. While there is a small body of research on older entrepreneurs and what they do, assuming a homogenous group based simply on calendar age (Down & Reveley, 2004; Fineman, 2014; Kautonen & Tornikoski, 2010, 2011; Kibler & Blackburn, 2015; Small, 2012) and associated generational behavior, the embodied nature of age and age-related discourses have hardly been studied. A rare example of the application of some of these insights to young nascent entrepreneurs is a finding wherein the social construction of identity is carried out in contrast to existing age-defined “older managers” (Down & Reveley, 2004), seemingly falling into the general trap of assuming the homogeneity of social groups, as discussed above. Studies on the social construction of entrepreneurial identities (for example Downing, 2005) portray the need to develop multiple identities, with some focussing on student entrepreneurial identity (Donnellon et al., 2014; Ollila & Middleton, 2013; Nielsen & Gartner, 2017). One finding of particular relevance to this research points out the challenge for students of developing the sometimes conflicting identities of student and entrepreneur while studying (Nielsen & Gartner, 2017). Given that many entrepreneurship studies outside of panel studies involve students out of convenience, it has to be noted that the impact of individual age on context and associated meanings and discourses has rarely been given explicit consideration in those studies.

**Conclusions**

This paper has analyzed *how* nascent entrepreneurs succeed in managing the entrepreneurial processes that lead to setting up a business, conceptualized as business registration and the start of trading. It contends that the social construction of a strategic fit between personal and field structure drives individuals to pursue starting a new venture. Based on a new conceptualization of practice within the emerging field of “Entrepreneurship as practice” (Geiger, 2009; Johannisson, 2011, etc.), this research was able to (1) demonstrate through empirical research findings how a recent process model focussing on achieving strategic fit through social positioning via transformation of capitals helps to unpack what nascent entrepreneurs do during the pre-start-up phase; (2) the personal background of the start-up cases in the service industry differed in ethnicity, gender, and subsectors, and illustrated the effect of personal structure (3) on the abilities to transform capitals; (4) illustrate similarities and differences between the start-up processes for different subsectors as revealed through transformation of capitals. The findings highlighted the temporal nature of social positionings and capitals (5).

The contribution is conceptual in unpacking the nature of the entrepreneurial processes leading to business start-up as unpredictable and temporary in nature, building on the insight that capitals cannot be owned and shelved but need to be brought alive to be real and entrepreneurial (Keating et al., 2013). This need for capitals to be brought to life in order to become entrepreneurial is illustrated in Figure 1 by visibly separating the entrepreneurial aspects of each capital with a line. This paper focusses on the entrepreneurial aspects of business start-ups, but acknowledges that the processes addressed by Figure 1 apply to all entrepreneurial processes from start-up to growth to enforced exit. However, the outcomes of a selection of processes can be predefined on the basis of an understanding of what is needed to get up and running, while the actual journey to get there cannot be. Through processes of trial and error and gaining feedback and learning from others (formal or informal mentors), nascent entrepreneurs were able to transform capitals successfully until they reached the strategic fit for starting up, conceptualized as a mixture of feeling ready combined with having put in place a number of formal requirements (such as website, social media, and other marketing-related resources), as well as having collated the financial and human resources to get up and running. This research can demonstrate agreement with many emerging insights from the Entrepreneurship in practice field (Johannisson, 2011; Geiger et al., 2012; Watson, 2013), in particular with the view that a new venture is an “evolving practice mesh” (Geiger et al., 2014, p. 1229). The accounts of entrepreneurial processes presented mirror to a large extent the socially constructed nature of resource contexts (Fisher, 2012; Geiger, 2009) and the fact that they become relevant only when a nascent entrepreneur engages with them (Geiger et al., 2014). Thus this paper’s findings add to the slowly growing body of empirical evidence that aims to overcome the simplistic nature of causal models of rational decisions and actions fuelled by supposed goals of optimizing resources, offering instead an illumination of what “thinking on your feet” means for nascent entrepreneurs.

This paper also makes an empirical contribution to the emerging research field of entrepreneurship in practice by discussing in detail how nascent entrepreneurs juggled “being young” and reconciled their personal structure with the entrepreneurial field by taking on a temporary habitus that allowed them to create a temporary strategic fit that led to their gaining business – even though they were young.

Empirically, it could be shown how calendar age and its perception by and in the field can have a structuring effect on social positioning in a massive way until other capitals such as cultural and symbolic are developed. Similarly, gender can have an effect on the time it takes to develop and construct strategic fit, dependent on the gendered construction of the industry sector and the dominant gender of the workforce in it.

The findings serve to illustrate a theoretical framework, taking advantage of the rich insights offered by young nascent entrepreneurs. There is opportunity for future researchers to examine the extent to which behaviors and interpretations offered by the selected entrepreneurs discussed here are typical of or apply to other young entrepreneurs outside of the university context but in the same industry sectors, for example. Future research would benefit from carrying out a more longitudinal study and interviewing all nascent entrepreneurs twice or three times. References

The analysis of individual nascent entrepreneurs and selected more general conclusions on the transformation of capitals might add further value to research that aims to supply practitioners, entrepreneurs, and advisers with practical knowledge (Kenworthy & McMullan, 2013).

This article used the metaphor of “juggling the odds of being young” to achieve a strategic fit as a way of illuminating what those successful start-ups portrayed in this paper (and indeed all nascent entrepreneurs) do who move from engaging in start-up activities to actual business registration and the start of trading. Figuratively speaking, this metaphor illustrates how nascent entrepreneurs have to undertake many activities simultaneously, some of which are dependent on others for the sequence in which they are carried out, crystallized in the image of objects being juggled (balls or plates) while the body is also moving, either to a destination or just around a limited space. This paper postulates that the end goal of the juggling of activities and the physical movement is the actual start-up. The metaphor of “juggling the odds” serves to illustrate the messy, ongoing adjustment process that young ambitious nascent entrepreneurs embark on in order to be successful as a start-up in a chosen field. “The odds” indicate that not all situations and contexts are the same at all times, and that behaviors have to be adjusted accordingly – partial field understanding is valid only for a limited time. Successful business people know that they have to show different behaviors and mindsets (including language use) to different stakeholders at different times. They learn to read the cues from situations as they go, learning by doing (and only sometimes from conscious reflection) and learning from others. “Being young” is more than an identity; rather, it is several subjectivities, some offered or rather imposed through discourses by public reports (such as BNP Paribas Wealth Management, 2015). These offered discourses and associated subjectivities force ambitious young professional nascent entrepreneurs to juggle their habitus to be successful. Not every professional, supplier or bank clerk, will see them in the light of the media image, but if one does, they have to be able to flip their temporary performance of the “serious business professional.” Achieving this flexible performance of a repertoire of different behaviors and subjectivities involves a learning process, and needs consciously (at least at the start) to draw on various entrepreneurial capitals.

For entrepreneurs and business support providers, the findings offer guidance and reassurance that the unpredictability of entrepreneurial processes can be overcome to some extent through flexible, strategic, entrepreneurial transformations of capital, that is assisting start-ups in capital assessment, acquisition, transformation, and development. Moreover, support for young people within and outside of academia could include developing coping strategies and a repertoire of temporary habitus for strategic fits with different field-specific stakeholders and subfields. When business support providers can see strategic process management through nascent entrepreneurs’ eyes, they can adjust their practices and shorten the time needed to get to market. Global economic pressures materialize in national economic changes that have an impact on enterprise discourses and real (self-)employment chances, so learning to start and run a business successfully needs to become a citizenship skill.

The author hopes that the process model and stories will inspire other researchers to test and challenge them against different sectors, individuals, and socio-political contexts in different types of economy. There is still so much unmapped territory regarding how entrepreneurial processes are juggled by individuals (and teams) of all ages in multilayered contexts. This complexity needs to be explored and fresh insights provided, so that we can add value to start-ups and those supporting them, for which I trust this article has added another pathway.

**References:**