

**Unpacking Social Defenses: A Resource-Dependence Lens on Technology
Ventures, Venture Capital, and Corporate Relationships**

Benjamin L. Hallen
Department of Strategy and Entrepreneurship
London Business School
London, United Kingdom
E-mail: bhallen@london.edu

Riitta Katila
Department of Management Science & Engineering
Stanford University
Stanford, CA
E-mail: rkatila@stanford.edu

Jeff D. Rosenberger
Wealthfront
San Francisco, CA
E-mail: jrosenbe@stanford.edu

Academy of Management Journal, in press.

The authors thank seminar audiences at the Wharton Technology Conference, London Business School, University of Texas at Austin, the INSEAD Network Evolution Conference, the West Coast Research Symposium, the Smith Entrepreneurship Conference, and the reviewers and audience participants at the Academy of Management, EGOS, and the Strategic Management Society Annual Meetings. We are particularly grateful to Tim Pollock and anonymous referees, and to Kathy Eisenhardt, Lori Rosenkopf, Melissa Schilling, and Anil Gupta for their helpful feedback and comments. The research support of the National Science Foundation and the Stanford Technology Ventures Program is gratefully acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

Inter-organizational relationships offer many potential benefits, but they also expose firms to dangers, such as misappropriation, that pull partners apart. This tension between collaboration and competition is central to tie formation, especially for young technology-focused firms who have both high need for resources and high appropriability of their own resources. Prior work has examined legal and timing defenses that enable inter-organizational ties; we focus here on social defenses. In a longitudinal study of equity tie formation between young firms and established corporations, spanning 5 technology-based industries and 25 years, we unpack the effects of social defenses and find, intriguingly, that third-party social defenses are particularly significant when more traditional defenses are unavailable. Beyond providing resources and legitimacy, ties with centrally positioned third parties are a critical mechanism whereby young low-power firms can enhance their power in tie formation. Our study also sheds light on how a portfolio of ties helps young technology firms mobilize resources and manage resource vulnerabilities.