Preface

At the time of my launch into this area of study, I was a relatively new PhD student at Syracuse University taking a seminar with the also newly minted Assistant Professor J. Michael Haynie. It was in his course that he taught us how to conduct interesting and innovative research. He explained that one approach was to think about your field and if there are any taken-for-granted assumptions, long-standing beliefs or perspectives that you could challenge. In essence, by countering the status quo, you may discover something interesting and provocative. He also cautioned that these types of research projects fell into the high-risk/potentially high-reward category. My endeavour into the topic of entrepreneurship addiction provided evidence in support of his teachings.

At this time, entrepreneurship was predominantly heralded as a rewarding pursuit, leading to positive outcomes for the individuals pursuing business ownership. While there was some identification of the stress endured by entrepreneurs, for example, it was still assumed that entrepreneurial pursuits were net positive for entrepreneurs, or that on average, entrepreneurship was “good” for the individuals who pursued it. This seemed like one of those long-standing assumptions that we were prompted to question. It is in large part due to that course, and specifically that exact lecture, with the co-occurring exposure to someone close to me facing a behavioural addiction, that I was primed to pursue this topic area. I found myself asking the question, “What if there are circumstances under which entrepreneurship is harmful to the entrepreneur?”

I've always been interested in the phenomenological experience of the entrepreneur: what entrepreneurs think about, how they think, how they feel emotionally, and how their body responds to the highs and lows intrinsic to the experience of venture creation. To learn more about these experiences, I found myself naturally drawn to interviewing entrepreneurs, to hear their stories, with a particular interest in those that pursued entrepreneurship in a repeated way.

As I listened to their fascinating stories, there were two serial entrepreneurs that seemed to explain their experience using similar descriptors and “symptoms” as the other behaviourally addicted person I knew. They even went so far as to assign themselves the label of “entrepreneurship addict.” It was those conversations that launched me into this area of inquiry. I submitted a conference paper with faculty support to the Babson Entrepreneurship Research Conference in Spain in 2007 (Murdoch et al., 2007).

Continuing on his journey to support me, Dr Haynie connected me with Dr Alex McKelvie to further my research in this area. I am very grateful to Dr Haynie and Dr McKelvie for their past and ongoing support and mentorship. They have made the process of research and discovery even more engaging—which has been invaluable, as it was a long journey to convert the original conference paper into the first published manuscript on this topic (Spivack et al., 2014). The experience of publishing works in entrepreneurship addiction has been in line with the expectation for high-risk/potentially high-reward topics and also highlights the fact that research topics, much like business ideas, must be timely.

In the text that follows, we will deeply explore the concept of entrepreneurship addiction within the stream of research that is examining the “dark side” of entrepreneurship. Specifically, *Entrepreneurship Addiction* will be situated within recent works examining psychological “disorders” and neurodiversity among entrepreneurs and offer insights into conflicting findings regarding entrepreneurial well-being. Incorporating

contemporary multifaceted lenses that consider cognitive, emotional, and physiological dimensions of experience, this book highlights the complex, multifaceted dynamic interplay between an entrepreneur and his/her ventures over time. The book describes recent contributions in entrepreneurship addiction and introduces a future research agenda to further this area of inquiry.

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