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Finding your passion: The influence of
entrepreneurial passion on the career path of
entrepreneurship graduates

by

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Abstract

Entrepreneurial passion (EP) has been hailed as a facilitator of venture performance, entrepreneurial skills, and psychological wellbeing. Yet, the concept is underexplored in entrepreneurship research, specifically among entrepreneurship graduates. This thesis aims to understand the influence of EP on the career path of entrepreneurship graduates by studying eight recent graduates from two Scandinavian, action-based entrepreneurship programs. Due to an inductive approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each graduate, complemented by the analysis of personal documents. The cross-case analysis identified common themes and dimensions. The empirical findings found relevance in applying the dualistic model of passion to EP, thereby acknowledging that EP is not by default positive. Furthermore, the nature and influence of EP were found to be influenced by the life stage (adolescence) and corresponding career stage (exploration) of graduates, characterized by explorative coping behaviour. Lastly, support was found for a more inclusive scope in entrepreneurship research that acknowledges EP can be fulfilled in a variety of career paths outside the scope of self-employment. As a result, this thesis suggests that future research on EP should; (1) Incorporate the dualistic model; (2) Acknowledge the influence of one's life-, and corresponding career stage on their EP and career path; (3) Expand the scope of those fulfilling their EP to occupations outside self-employment.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Passion; Passion; The Dualistic Model of Passion; Entrepreneurship Graduates; Career Development; Social Cognitive Career Theory; Career Path.

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1 Introduction

The following section will first provide an overview of previous research on entrepreneurial passion (EP), followed by the research purpose and the outline of the thesis.

1.1 EP as a driving force of career decision-making

Researchers have for many years tried to understand the driving forces affecting entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial career paths on different levels of analysis (Cuervo, 2005; Kuckertz, Berger & Mpeqa, 2015; Murnieks, Mosakowski & Cardon, 2014). Passion is an emotional driving force that has only recently gained attention within entrepreneurship research and is up to now underexplored in this context (Cardon et al, 2009b; Cuervo, 2005; Murnieks, Mosakowski & Cardon, 2014; Thorgren & Wincent, 2015). Vallerand (2015, p. 28) define passion as an affect for “an activity, an object, another person, or even an abstract concept, idea, cause, or goal”. In this thesis, EP is defined as *consciously accessible, intense feelings experienced by engagement in an entrepreneurial occupation associated with roles that are meaningful and salient to the self-identity of the entrepreneur* (adapted from Cardon et al, 2009b). This thesis therefore acknowledges that EP can stem from a passion for entrepreneurial activities or objects related to an entrepreneurial occupation (Cardon, Glauser & Murnieks, 2017).

Assessing individuals’ decisions taken in their entrepreneurial career path is one way of looking at how EP affects the career path of entrepreneurs (Gorgievski & Bakker, 2010; Lajom et al, 2018). According to social cognitive career theory (SCCT), people choose a career path based on what they are interested in and where they expect a positive intrinsic outcome (Lanero, Vázquez & Aza, 2016; Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994). Since passion entails an intrinsic, genuine interest for an entrepreneurial activity or object, EP can be expected to be a driving force in career decision-making (Lanero, Vázquez & Aza, 2016; Vallerand et al, 2007).

1.2 The dualistic model of passion

Vallerand et al. (2003; 2007) identify two types of passion: Harmonious and obsessive passion. Depending on the type of passion experienced, the affective and behavioural outcomes for the individual will differ greatly (Thorgren & Wincent, 2015; Vallerand et al, 2003; 2007). Harmonious passion is defined as a positive motivational drive towards engaging in the activity that one feels passionate about, or engaging with an object one is passionate about, where the passion does not conflict with other aspects of one's life (Vallerand et al, 2007). In the context of work and career paths, an individual with a harmonious passion is engaged in work while being able to disconnect outside working hours and without negative effects on his or her relationships (Gorgievski & Bakker, 2010).

Obsessive passion is defined as a rigid and uncontrollable force, that leads individuals to engage in the activity one is passionate about, or engaging with an object one is passionate about, although it causes negative emotions to arise. In contrast to harmonious passion, the performance and outcome of pursuing the activity or object of passion are internalized (Scott, Moore & Miceli, 1997). For example, an obsessive, self-employed entrepreneur who gets rejected in a funding application, internalizes this as a personal rejection. In the context of work and career paths, obsessive passion is often defined as workaholism, where one works excessively, struggles to disengage and/or experiences negative side effects on one's personal relationships (Bakker et al, 2010, cited in Gorgievski & Bakker, 2010).

1.3 Research Purpose

EP has been identified as having a significant impact on venture performance, personal well-being and has been quoted by renowned entrepreneurs as a prerequisite for their success (Cardon et al, 2013; Moses, Olokundun & Akinbode, 2016). Since passion is a salient concept in entrepreneurship, it is important to understand if, how and why passion influences entrepreneurial behaviour (Cardon et al, 2009b; Cardon et al, 2013; Murnieks, Mosakowski & Cardon, 2014). However, passion is still underexplored in entrepreneurship research and calls for theoretical expansion on the effects of passion in entrepreneurship (Cardon et al, 2013; Moses, Olokundun & Akinbode, 2016).

This thesis examines the effects of EP on the career path of entrepreneurship graduates by looking at entrepreneurship graduates of Lund University (LU) in Sweden, and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Norway. Due to institutional similarities, research tends to regard the Scandinavian countries as one common context (Lehtisaari et al, 2018). Therefore, one can assume that the graduates of these two programs encounter a similar favourable institutional context for entrepreneurship, and such external factors should therefore have limited impact on entrepreneurial behaviour. Furthermore, both programmes are action oriented. This is relevant for the validity of the study, as entrepreneurial behaviour and career paths are also shaped by external constraints and institutional factors (Bosma et al, 2018; Feldman & Bolino, 2000; Lanero, Vázquez & Aza, 2016). Summarizing, this thesis aims to answer the following research question:

How does entrepreneurial passion affect the career path of entrepreneurship graduates?

1.3.1 Academic contributions and societal relevance

This thesis aims to contribute to existing research and entrepreneurship education in three ways. First, studying entrepreneurship graduates will expand scientific understanding of EP outside the current focus of habitual entrepreneurs while simultaneously offering entrepreneurship education a better understanding of how students translate their passion into entrepreneurial behaviour (Lanero, Vázquez & Aza, 2016). Second, by applying the dualistic model of passion, this thesis hopes to expand theory on EP, since existing research on the domains of EP has predominantly addressed harmonious passion rather than obsessive (Cardon et al, 2013; Murnieks, Mosakowski & Cardon, 2014). Third, literature on entrepreneurial career paths tends to be narrow by solely looking at the self-employed, excluding other entrepreneurial career paths such as intrapreneurs, supporting entrepreneurs and even non-entrepreneurs that might also fulfill their EP in their respective occupation (Douglas, 2020; Lanero, Vázquez & Aza, 2016; Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994). Therefore, this thesis includes these entrepreneurial career paths, arguing to expand the general definition of the ‘traditional’ entrepreneur solely as self-employed in existing research (Bird, 1989; Krueger, 2009; Krueger, Reilly & Carsrud, 2000; Nabi, Holden & Walmsley, 2010).

1.4 Outline of the Thesis

Chapter 2 will review the existing body of literature on EP and career paths. Subsequently, Chapter 3 will elaborate on the methodology, research design and sampling criteria for the cases. Chapter 4 will describe empirical findings. Thereafter, Chapter 5 offers an in-depth analysis and discussion, linking it to existing literature. Chapter 6 offers a conclusion of the main results, research implications and suggestions for future research.

2 Literature Review

Chapter 2 will provide an overview of the existing literature and schools of thought on the topics of EP and entrepreneurial career paths. Chapter 2.1 will discuss and define the concept of EP, as well as its societal and academic relevance. Chapter 2.2 introduces the bridge between EP and entrepreneurial career paths. The chapter ends with an introduction to SCCT and concludes how EP can help us to address the research gap.

2.1 Passion across time and research domains

Passion has been a topic for centuries in philosophy and more recently in (positive) psychology. It has subsequently been redefined across time and academic fields. Historically, passion was connoted negatively (Vallerand, 2015). Exemplified in religion and mythology, passion caused enduring suffering, where one's goal or object of passion was either unobtainable or resulted in a tragic outcome because of negative emotions such as passiveness, lust or envy (Vallerand, 2015). The author explains that later, passion was redefined to include not only negative emotions but also positive emotions such as faith, hope, pride and love. As a result of this increased emphasis on positive passion, the most contemporary perspective of passion is a strong inclination toward the object of one's passion, which "(...) *can be an activity, an object, another person, or even an abstract concept, idea, cause, or goal*" (Vallerand, 2015, p. 28).

The abstract notion of passion demands definitional clarity. Particularly, the concepts of emotion and motivation are often (incorrectly) used interchangeably with passion (Vallerand et al, 2003). Concerning *emotion*, German philosopher Kant created a significant and lasting change in the passion discourse (Vallerand, 2015). Whereas passion was historically regarded as equal to strong emotions, he argued that passion differs in the sense that emotions are passive, temporary and dependent on outside stimuli, whereas passion is active, more permanent and intrinsic. *Extrinsic motivation* differs from passion in the sense that an externally motivated activity is done so for rewards, external to the activity itself, compared to passion where an activity is performed for the love of the activity itself or a love for the object one achieves by

performing the activity (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Vallerand (2015) mentions that *intrinsic motivation* conceptually overlaps with passion as both indicate a love for a specific activity or object, but argues that passion provides the element of personal value by internalizing the passion. Intrinsic motivation does not require internalization – rather, intrinsic motivation is focused on short-term motives and can consist of activities or objects without high personal value (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vallerand, 2015).

This thesis defines EP as *consciously accessible, intense feelings experienced by engagement in an entrepreneurial occupation associated with roles that are meaningful and salient to the self-identity of the entrepreneur* (adapted from Cardon, Glaser & Murnieks, 2017). Following this rationale, together with the definition of passion as recently proposed by Vallerand (2013), this thesis regards EP as the sum of one's passion(s) for one or more entrepreneurial activities and objects related to an entrepreneurial career occupation. Individuals with an EP aim to translate this to behaviour, in the form of an entrepreneurial career path, since such entrepreneurial occupations create meaning, purpose and self-fulfilment (Baum & Locke, 2004).

2.1.1 EP as a driving force of success and failure

The academic and societal relevance of EP is reflected by a growing emphasis on passion in academic literature. On a psychological level, through partaking in a career occupation that possesses a characteristic one is passionate about, an individual is enriched with meaning and purpose, stimulating self-growth which positively cascades into other psychological aspects of life (Vallerand, 2015). The psychological importance of passion is further emphasized by the potential negative effects on one's well-being, as obsessive passion can lead to negative emotions such as rigidity and obsessiveness (Vallerand, 2015).

From an entrepreneurial perspective, passion has relevance in at least four directions. First, it is argued that EP improves new venture performance through increased creativity, opportunity recognition and exploitation, fundraising and team motivation (Baron, 2008; Cardon, 2008; Cardon, Sudek & Mitteness, 2009a; Cardon et al, 2009b; Sundararajan, 2000). Second, research suggests that obsessive levels of passion can decrease venture performance through perfectionism, rigidity and inflexibility (Gorgievski & Bakker, 2010). Third, EP is argued to be responsible for entrepreneurial behaviour crucial to success, such as risk-taking, (over)confidence, persistence and focus (Schumpeter, 1951, cited in Cardon et al, 2009b).

Fourth, EP research has significant practical relevance for entrepreneurship education as it can shed light on how to facilitate and/or improve EP and its translation to behaviour (Moses, Olokundun & Akinbode, 2016).

2.1.2 The dualistic model of passion

Despite the importance of EP research for venture performance, psychological wellbeing and entrepreneurship education, passion remains underexplored in entrepreneurship research (Cardon, Glauser & Murnieks, 2017; Moses, Olokundun & Akinbode, 2016; Murnieks, Mosakowski & Cardon, 2014).

A duality in schools of thought has developed across the nexus of reason versus passion. Early influential philosophers such as Descartes held an absolutist view in the sense that reason presided over passion. Therefore, the power of passion depends predominantly on an individuals' control and will (Cottingham, 1988). Later philosophers from the seventeenth century criticized this 'naïve' view of absolute dominion over passion (Hampshire, 1956). Instead, these philosophers saw passion closer to its etymological origin, the Latin word 'passio', which means 'suffering'. Passion is characterized by the loss of control and reason, where an individual becomes a slave to their passion (Cottingham, 1988). This 'obsessive' form has since then become one of the two leading schools of thought on passion within philosophy and psychology.

Obsessive passion has also been defined as workaholism in the entrepreneurial context (Gorgievski & Bakker, 2010). Their conceptual similarities lie predominantly in that workaholics are motivated by a strong drive, work compulsively hard and struggle to disengage from work (Scott, Moore & Miceli, 1997). In this way, a workaholic is controlled by the activity or object he or she is obsessively passionate about. As studies on workaholics suggest, obsessive passion increases exhaustion and decreases relationship quality, work recovery and happiness, as the obsessive passion causes one to continue at all costs (Bakker et al, 2010, cited in Gorgievski & Bakker, 2010). Among entrepreneurs, the inability to detach from work is found to be significantly correlated with decreased overall well-being (Taris et al, 2008).

The second type of passion theorizes that an individual has, to an extent, control over passion through reason. This 'harmonious' position is influenced by early rationalist philosophers (Avineri, 1973). Whereas obsessive passion implies an internalization of the activity and its

associated values and regulation into one's identity, harmonious passion implies autonomous internalization of the sole activity or object without contingencies (Vallerand, 2010). An individual with harmonious passion freely chooses to perform an activity he or she is passionate about (Vallerand, 2010). When a person has control over their passion, it can be harnessed to translate it to action and fulfilment (Cottingham, 1988).

In an entrepreneurial context, harmonious passion has been defined as work engagement where one works vigorously but not compulsively, with dedication and a level of absorption (Gorgievski & Bakker, 2010). Harmonious passion has a unique affective component whereas obsessive passion tends to create negative emotions (Gorgievski & Bakker, 2010). Among entrepreneurs, work engagement is related to increased innovativeness and improved work-, task- and contextual performance, while it is negatively correlated to psychological health issues such as burnouts (Demerouti et al, 2001; Gorgievski & Bakker, 2010).

2.2 Passion for entrepreneurial activities

Cardon et al (2013) proposed three entrepreneurial domains that each define a distinct set of entrepreneurial activities one can feel passionate about. First, there is a passion for inventing, which entails activities such as identifying market opportunities and developing products/services and prototypes (Cardon et al, 2013). Second, a passion for founding reflects a high interest in "assembling the necessary financial, human, and social resources needed to create a new venture" (Cardon et al, 2013, p.4). Third, a passion for developing entails a high interest in, among others, increasing sales, hiring strategies and securing funding channels to ensure growth and expansion of the founded venture (Cardon et al, 2013). This thesis argues that an entrepreneur can be harmonious or obsessive in one or more domains. Initial empirical research by Cardon et al. (2013) has shown no strong support between measures of the dualistic model of passion and the three entrepreneurial domains. However, other articles in the field of entrepreneurship have emphasized the importance and existence of harmonious and obsessive passion among entrepreneurs and its effects (Demerouti et al, 2001; Gorgievski & Bakker, 2010). Therefore, rather than discarding one concept in favour of the other despite empirical support for both concepts, this thesis proposes a combined approach.

2.3 Passion for objects found in entrepreneurship

As Cardon, Glauser and Murnieks (2017) mention, “*extant research still focuses on passion for activities, which we suggest is a limitation to our collective knowledge concerning entrepreneurial passion*” (p. 25). There is an increasing body of research to suggest that (aspiring) entrepreneurs have a diversity of passions for their (future) job occupation that exceeds activity-based passion (Cardon, Glauser & Murnieks, 2017). Rather, in line with the definition of passion as proposed by Vallerand et al (2013), more abstract, career-related objects unique to- or commonly found in entrepreneurship are found as driving forces for an entrepreneurial career path. Cardon, Glauser and Murnieks (2017) found support through explorative, in-depth interviews with entrepreneurs to see if passion exceeded the activities in the earlier mentioned three entrepreneurial domains (inventing, founding and developing). In their analysis and synthesis, they found seven *objects* of passion, of which three are closely related to the existing, activity-oriented entrepreneurial domains. An overview of these objects of passion and earlier mentioned activities of passion is shown below in Table 1.

Table 1: Synthesizing recent findings that support multiple sources of EP (Cardon et al, 2013; Cardon, Glauser & Murnieks, 2017). As structured in the table, the objects inventing, venture and growth are corresponding to the activities of inventing, founding and developing, respectively.

Objects of passion	Description	Activities of passion	Description
Inventing	Passionate for opportunity recognition and creating value	Inventing	Identifying market opportunities and developing products/services
Venture	Passion for establishing and growing one’s own venture	Founding	Securing the financial, human and social resources needed
Growth	Expansion of employees or (physical) stores	Developing	Increasing sales, hiring strategies and secure funding channels
People	Relationship- and partnership-building with stakeholders		
Products/services	Intrinsic interest in product or service that one sells		
Competition	Winning as a motivation to prove oneself (to others and oneself)		
Social mission	Answering a societal problem, often of a marginalized group		

2.4 The diversity of entrepreneurial career paths

2.4.1 Passion for self-employment or a passion for entrepreneurship?

This thesis argues that passion for the entrepreneurial activities and objects as mentioned in Table 1 are not unique to the classical definition of the entrepreneur as a self-employed. Rather, passion for entrepreneurial activities and objects can be expected to be found in a variety of career paths, e.g. innovative organizations and the entrepreneurial support system (incubators, accelerators, entrepreneurship research). As a result, this thesis proposes that one with an EP does not have to become self-employed to answer their passion, but rather, can choose from a diversity of career paths that include entrepreneurial activities and/or objects. This theoretical argument is in line with preliminary data this thesis had access to on the career path of entrepreneurship graduates from LU and NTNU, who reflect a rich diversity in career paths, including self-employment, intrapreneurship and supporting entrepreneurship.

Yet, existing research on entrepreneurial career development is primarily occupied with the extent to which graduates enter the career path of starting a venture as the evident career path to pursue after an entrepreneurship programme (Bird, 1989; Krueger, 2009; Krueger, Reilly & Carsrud, 2000; Nabi, Holden & Walmsley, 2010). A primary example is Bird's (1989) entrepreneurship choice model, which distinguishes four possible career paths for entrepreneurship graduates – however, each career path ends with an occupation as self-employed (Ronstadt, 1982; Ronstadt, 1984). His model, as well as others, are aware of the diversity of possible entrepreneurs (e.g. hybrid-, portfolio- and lifestyle entrepreneurs) – still, no inclusive theory or model exists that acknowledges additional entrepreneurial career paths. This highlights the practical importance and theoretical relevance to explain why graduates choose for a diversity of entrepreneurial career paths rather than the 'evident' career path of self-employment. This thesis argues that the model of self-career management (SCM), which is rooted in SCCT, can help to explain the diversity in career paths among entrepreneurship graduates (Pérez-López, González-López & Rodríguez-Ariza, 2019).

2.4.2 The foundation of diversity in social-cognitive career theory

SCCT has recently gained momentum in the field of entrepreneurship research. It was specifically developed to explain career interests and career-related decisions of those in their

career entry phase (graduates) (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994). SCCT is now widely recognized as a valid framework for assessing graduates across different academic fields and in various national environments (Lanero, Vázquez & Aza, 2016). The SCCT identifies three personal mechanisms that have an important impact on career development; *self-efficacy*, *outcome expectations*, and *goal representation*. These three personal mechanisms have a significant impact on how career interests develop over time, and eventually result in career-related decision-making (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994). How these personal mechanisms impact career development, will in this thesis be explained through the SCM model in the next chapter.

The SCCT argues that having an intrinsic *interest* in an object or an activity is the cornerstone that facilitates the three personal mechanisms, and eventually leads to career decision-making (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994). Relating back to Vallerand et al (2003), arguing that passion entails engaging in an activity that is liked, and where the individual expects a positive outcome, this thesis proposes that EP reflects the *interest* component in the SCCT framework, as a source of self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goal representation (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994). However, since EP is regarded as a strong motivational force that drives behaviour (Moses, Olokundun & Akinbode, 2016), this thesis proposes that EP can be identified as both a source of self-efficacy and outcome expectations, but also as a component that is influenced by perceived self-efficacy and outcome expectations.

Previous research on EP revealed that it is a dynamic concept that is influenced by, while influencing, other personal mechanisms relevant for entrepreneurial actions (Murnieks, Mosakowski & Cardon, 2014). In their study, it was confirmed that entrepreneurial identity centrality interactively affects, and is affected by, EP. Identity centrality indicates the level of importance one assigns to a specific identity (e.g., being an entrepreneur or being a mom), and the more important an entrepreneurial identity is to an individual, the higher their EP will be (Murnieks, Mosakowski & Cardon, 2014). Murnieks, Mosakowski and Cardon's (2014) findings also suggest that EP is positively related to entrepreneurial self-efficacy, where the three concepts (EP, entrepreneurial identity centrality, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy) simultaneously are linked to entrepreneurial actions. Thus, this thesis considers it as relevant to include a dimension on entrepreneurial identity centrality when analysing the career paths of entrepreneurship graduates.

2.4.3 The model of self-career management

The SCM builds on the SCCT in the sense that one's career development is determined by intention, in turn driven and influenced by passion. In an entrepreneurial context, the SCM model differs from the SCCT by including additional variables to the entrepreneurial career path, that reflect the understanding that "*the transition to entrepreneurship is contemplated, not as a final destination, but as being embedded in the career path*" (Pérez-López, González-López & Rodríguez-Ariza, 2019, p. 256). In other words, one's EP is not defined by one's decision to pursue the direct and linear career path of becoming an entrepreneur, but rather, one's entrepreneurial career path reflects intermediate behaviours that reflect self-regulation and career development towards "*career aspirations, values and motivations, involvement in planning and in the creation of opportunities*" (Pérez-López, González-López & Rodríguez-Ariza, 2019, p. 256). A recent empirical study has found strong correlations for the SCM model in the context of entrepreneurial career development (Pérez-López, González-López & Rodríguez-Ariza, 2019).

The three personal mechanisms (self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goal representation) that are driven by EP, are defined in SCM based on the view that career paths are self-managed and developmental in nature, consisting of intermediate career decisions and behaviour between one's intention and outcome (Lent & Brown, 2013a). In this light, entrepreneurial self-efficacy is therefore defined as an individual's confidence in their decisions and ability to undertake and manage their entrepreneurial career (Lent & Brown, 2013a). Following this rationale, outcome expectations are defined as the imagined belief of what will happen when one decides to undertake an entrepreneurial career (Pérez-López, González-López & Rodríguez-Ariza, 2019). Since entrepreneurship graduates are assumed to have a certain level of EP, one can expect them to consequently have positive outcome expectations of pursuing an entrepreneurial career path. Goal representation reflects one's determination to pursue an entrepreneurial career path to affect their ultimate career outcome and is therefore argued to be the result of self-efficacy and outcome expectations, and synonymous with one's entrepreneurial intention (Pérez-López, González-López & Rodríguez-Ariza, 2019).

The main contribution of SCM to SCCT in the entrepreneurship context lies in its explanatory potential of the diversity of entrepreneurial career paths. The SCM model introduces *coping behaviour* as a developmental career behaviour serving as an intermediate step between one's self-efficacy, outcome expectations and intention on the one hand, and the resulting pursuit of an entrepreneurial career on the other hand (Lent & Brown, 2013a). Coping behaviour is

defined as “*initial actions taken to achieve the entrepreneurial goal*” (Pérez-López, González-López & Rodríguez-Ariza, 2019, p. 256). Such behaviour is exemplified by activities that stimulate and train resilient coping skills for the disruptive and uncertain entrepreneurial environment. Examples of such coping skills are tenacity, creativity, active problem-solving, among others (Polk, 1997). Entrepreneurial activities in coping behaviour are aimed to increase entrepreneurial maturity, which influences the decision whether or not to become an entrepreneur (Pérez-López, González-López & Rodríguez-Ariza, 2019). Although SCM acknowledges that contextual factors influence each variable in the model, it was noted in an empirical study that contextual factors had limited impact on one’s likelihood of pursuing an entrepreneurial career (Pérez-López, González-López & Rodríguez-Ariza, 2019).

2.5 Concluding remarks

Summarizing, EP creates an intrinsic need to perform entrepreneurial activities, and depending on the nature of one’s passion, can either be beneficial or damaging (both personally and professionally). EP is diverse and can range from activity-based passion or object-based passion, and can therefore be found in a wide range of career paths aside from becoming self-employed. The SCCT, and in particular SCM, provides potential to explain this observed diversity in career paths among entrepreneurship graduates. Coping behaviour is a career strategy to pursue activities that increase entrepreneurial experience and knowledge, which facilitate one’s career maturity and decision-making.

This thesis aims to add academic and societal value in three ways. First, by including both obsessive EP and harmonious EP, this thesis expands theory on EP, as existing research has predominantly addressed harmonious passion (Cardon et al, 2013; Murnieks, Mosakowski & Cardon, 2014). Second, in contrast to the existing research focus on older and/or habitual entrepreneurs, studying entrepreneurship *graduates* will expand the scientific understanding of EP while offering entrepreneurial education programs a better understanding of how EP can be mediated (Lanero, Vázquez & Aza, 2016). Third, literature on entrepreneurial career paths tends to be narrow by solely looking at the self-employed, excluding other entrepreneurial career paths such as intrapreneurs, supporting entrepreneurs and even non-entrepreneurs that might also fulfil an EP (Douglas, 2020; Lanero, Vázquez & Aza, 2016; Lent, Brown & Hackett,

1994). Therefore, this thesis includes these additional entrepreneurial career paths, arguing for expansion of the current scope of the 'traditional' entrepreneur solely as self-employed.

3 Methodology

The following chapter aims to describe and account for the qualitative approach that was taken in this thesis. First, the underlying epistemological and ontological assumptions behind this thesis will be explained and argued for. The following section will provide a brief discussion on the selected research design. Thereafter, a section on data collection, sampling, and analysis will follow. Then, a brief overview of methodological limitations is given and concludes with ethical considerations applied to this thesis.

3.1 Epistemology and ontology

When conducting a study, assumptions are made that consequently determine what methodology to apply. This thesis tries to understand the “how” and the “why” behind individual’s career paths, proposing that the studied phenomena can be understood by analysing behaviour and personal experiences of the interviewees. Thus, the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions that permeate this thesis are based on interpretative methodology (Scotland, 2012). Furthermore, as this thesis aims to yield new insights and explain the research phenomenon from the interviewee’s perspective, a qualitative approach was chosen (Scotland, 2012). Besides, this thesis aims to gain an in-depth understanding of how passion affects the career path of individual entrepreneurship graduates. Thus, a qualitative research strategy was considered suitable for the in-depth approach of this study (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). In conclusion, this thesis applies a constructionism ontology, assuming that the phenomena studied consist of socially constructed entities (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). EP is therefore viewed as an emergent concept that is constantly changing and understood by studying it through people’s subjective knowledge about the phenomenon.

3.2 Research Design

Since limited theoretical foundation exists in the area of this study, the aim is to contribute to- and expand existing theory on EP of entrepreneurship graduates, and as such, it was designed

qualitatively and inductively (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). However, as Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019) argue, an inductive process normally includes certain deductive elements as well. This study applied an iterative strategy where the authors iterated between data and theory reflection throughout the data collection and analysis. This implies that the main aim of this thesis is to *understand* the decisions and driving forces of entrepreneurship graduates in their career path, after which findings were reflected using existing theory as laid out in the previous chapter (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). By reviewing existing literature on EP and career paths in the previous chapter, this thesis aims to contribute to- and expand existing literature.

In this thesis, a case study design was chosen since the authors' aim is to contribute to- and expand existing theory (Eisenhardt, 1989). Besides, a case study design is appropriate since it is not dependent on established theories and therefore provides research with increased flexibility (Eisenhardt, 1989). The unit of analysis in this thesis is career path-related decisions of entrepreneurship graduates, where each graduate reflects one case. By applying a case study approach, this thesis was able to incorporate direct observations and systematic interviewing with each case (Yin, 2010). As a result, career path-related decisions could be examined and discussed in detail with each respondent.

Rather than examining a single case, this thesis opts for a multiple-case study design, which enabled identification of unique and commonly shared concepts across the selected cases (Yin, 2010). The authors analysed graduates from different graduation years who inherently have had different external factors at play, and therefore the aim was to find patterns across these external factors rather than focussing on one graduation year. Here an idiographic approach was taken where, rather than aiming for interference about a population, the aim is to make analytical generalization by comparing each unique case and identify if the empirical result support the same emerging theory (Yin, 2010). Complementing this idiographic approach, cases were selected based on the belief that each case would produce unique insights and address the theoretical research gap identified (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Stake, 1995).

3.3 Case selection

Since this thesis aims to generate theory through a multiple-case study research design, theoretical sampling was used (Eisenhardt, 1989). To account for theoretical sampling of cases, a *maximum variation* approach was applied. With a maximum variation approach, this thesis

aims to address the wide range of career occupations among entrepreneurship graduates, thereby increasing the relevance, generalizability and external validity of the generated theory, given the limited number of cases one can practically analyse (Eisenhardt, 1989). Selected cases consisted of graduates from the Master-level entrepreneurship programmes from LU and NTNU. These programmes were selected due to their action-oriented approach, where the students are encouraged to actively work on a venture during the programme.

To aid maximum variation sampling, the authors distinguished four categories of possible career paths based on earlier classifications. These categories have been chosen as they represent a realistic representation of career paths chosen by entrepreneurship graduates of the educational institutions of this thesis. The four categories are listed below:

- Self-employed: This thesis defines a self-employed person as *someone who runs their own venture, either as sole business owner or as co-business owner*.
- Intrapreneur: Intrapreneurship is defined in thesis as by Antonic and Hisrich (2003, p. 9): “*Entrepreneurship within an existing organization, referring to emergent behavioural intentions and behaviours of an organization that are related to departures from the customary*”.
- Supporting entrepreneur: To some extent, a supporting entrepreneur corresponds with what research defines as an academic entrepreneur, namely someone who has a supporting role in establishing and starting up a venture, primarily in commercializing university spin-offs (Rahim, Mohamed & Amrin, 2015; Samsom & Gurdon, 1993). However, in this thesis, the definition of an academic entrepreneur is considered as narrow in the sense that it excludes additional occupations within academia, such as pursuing a PhD in entrepreneurship or being involved in entrepreneurship education. Additionally, this thesis acknowledges that there are other supporting positions in entrepreneurship, that are not necessarily related to academia. Such occupations can be found in incubators and accelerators, among others. Therefore, this thesis defines a supporting entrepreneur as someone whose primary occupation either relates to developing and supporting entrepreneurship education or research, or whose primary occupation is to support and help new venture teams and/or individuals in their entrepreneurial endeavour in a consulting-based position.

- Non-entrepreneur: A non-entrepreneur is here defined as a someone whose primary occupation does not fulfil any of the previously mentioned categories. Namely, a person that is not self-employed, an intrapreneur, or a supporting entrepreneur.

Research on EP has generally focussed on the first category of self-employment, often regarded as the ‘traditional entrepreneur’, and to some extent the second category of intrapreneurs. By including the latter two categories, this thesis hopes to stimulate the academic discussion on the diversity of career paths to fulfil one’s EP. A total of eight cases were selected based on their own definition of their current occupation in the previously mentioned data on entrepreneurship graduates from LU and NTNU this thesis had access to. For each of the four career paths, two cases were chosen whose current occupation reflect the respective career path. Having more than one case within each category allows “*findings to be replicated within categories*” (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 537). Based on purpose sampling through a maximum variation approach, the following case selection criteria were applied:

- The case is a graduate from the Master’s entrepreneurship programme at NTNU or LU. Both programmes are action-based and reflective, stimulating the action capabilities needed as an entrepreneur to seize opportunities and allocate resources (Johannisson, Landström & Rosenberg, 1998). The shared educational approach and similar institutional context of Sweden and Norway reduce extraneous variation in the sampling (Eisenhardt, 1989).
- The case has graduated within the last 5 years. Thus, each case made career-related decisions since graduation recently, which is important since a retrospective interview approach is applied.

An overview of the cases is shown in Table 2 on the next page. As mentioned before, in order to improve interview quality, respondents were anonymized by using a different name. However, career path, gender, education and location are based on reality.

Table 2: Overview of cases with randomized names and pictures.

Legend: ■ = self-employed occupation; ■ = intrapreneurship occupation; ■ = supporting occupation; ■ = non-entrepreneurial occupation or other

Case	Name	Data	Education	Current Occupation	Current location	Category	Career overview since starting entrepreneurship education				
							Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
1	Ralph Park	Sex: Male Age: 27	Education: LU Year of graduation: 2019	CEO & Founder	Sweden	Entrepreneur	CEO & Founder	Present			
2	Allison John	Sex: Female Age: 31	Education: NTNU Year of graduation: 2015	CEO &	Norway	Entrepreneur	Head of Technoogy & Innovation		Travel	CEO & Co Founder	Present
3	Margery Nicolson	Sex: Female Age: 32	Education: LU Year of graduation: 2016	Event Manager	Sweden	Intrapreneur	Open Innovation Navigator		Project Assistant	Event Manager	Present
4	Scott Fosse	Sex: Male Age: 30	Education: NTNU Year of graduation: 2015	Business Developer	Norway	Intrapreneur	PhD	Business Developer			Present

5	Forrest Matthews	Sex: Male Age: 28	Education: LU Year of graduation: 2019	Venture Scout	Denmark	Supporting entrepreneur	Venture Scout	<i>Present</i>		
6	Gwyneth Merritt	Sex: Female Age: 29	Education: NTNU Year of graduation: 2015	CEO Start-up community	Norway	Supporting entrepreneur	Project Manager	CEO, Co-Founder	CEO Start-up community	<i>Present</i>
7	Colene Moore	Sex: Female Age: 27	Education: LU Year of graduation: 2016	Merchandiser	Sweden	Other	Founder	Assistant Buyer	Merchandiser	<i>Present</i>
8	Vianne Wortham	Sex: Female Age: 28	Education: NTNU Year of graduation: 2015	Network Coordinator	Finland	Other	Entrepreneurship Development Officer	Business Manager	Network Coordinator	<i>Present</i>

3.4 Data collection

Data was collected by using multiple sources of data to get a wider understanding of the studied phenomenon. Empirical data was collected by conducting individual semi-structured interviews with each respondent. In addition to interviews, personal documents in the shape of motivational letters for jobs, entrepreneurship education or funding were used to support or question empirical findings. The collection process of data is further explained in this section.

3.4.1 Triangulation

In this study, multiple sources of data were used, allowing a broader understanding of the underlying drivers behind each respondent's career path (Yin, 2010). The aim of applying triangulation to this thesis was to further enhance quality and reliability of the generated findings (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019; Yin, 2010). More specifically, having multiple sources of evidence enhance construct validity, since it provides multiple measures regarding the studied phenomenon (Yin, 2010).

Applying semi-structured interviews allowed this thesis to collect rich answers and allowed for an in-depth analysis to be conducted (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). The interview guide for this thesis consisted of important concepts to cover during the interviews. However, each interview was introduced with open-ended, general questions to make the interviewee comfortable and to allow the interviewers to get a sense of the unbiased social world and rationale of interviewee. In line with Goia, Corley & Hamilton (2013), the interview guide was constructed in a way that allowed the respondents to tell their story, and explain how career path decisions were made, using "their own voice" (p. 17). Therefore, the interview guide avoided any use of specific terminology related to passion, with the intention to enable discovery of new theoretical concepts. To further aid unbiased answers and important aspects of the respondents view, the interview guide was not shared with interviewees beforehand. The interview guide can be found in Appendix A.

Interviews were performed in an oral history form, meaning that each interviewee was asked to reflect upon specific decisions made regarding their career since graduation. This type of retrospective interviewing allows to understand the complexity of intricate decisions, such as

those related to one's career path, and for reconstruction of decisions and events, in addition to avoiding sample attrition and panel conditioning (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019).

To address the critique of memory lapses and distortions in oral history interviews, each respondent was asked to provide a motivational letter written with the intention for obtaining a job position, obtaining funding for the start-up, or with the intention to get accepted to entrepreneurship education. In this thesis, motivational letters were used for two reasons. Firstly, this thesis argues that motivational letters could help to explain the drivers and motivational forces in each respondent's career path, as these letters were written during career-related decisions. Second, because this thesis argues that the motivational letters might reveal new emergent themes that were difficult to obtain during the interview.

Potential interviewees were reached through LinkedIn or email. Each interview took approximately 1 hour and consisted of the two authors of this thesis and the interviewee in an online video setting, to create a safe, natural environment for the interviewee, which is relevant for interview quality (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). All interviews were carried out in English, in order to further aid adequacy in the respondents answers and avoid any misinterpretations that might come with translating the interviews.

3.5 Data analysis

Once interviews were transcribed, this thesis applied techniques from thematic analysis, as this approach offers room for flexibility and for the researchers to iterate between theory and collected data (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). The thematic analysis enabled the authors to understand career-related decisions of entrepreneurship graduates and to better make sense of the interconnectedness with passion and their career (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019).

Data that derived from each interview was first divided into different themes, highlighting words and sentences that give meaning to the studied phenomena. Eventually, as additional data was collected and compared to theory, the authors started to look for differences and similarities in the respondents' answers. Themes emerged through analysis of the collected data in relation to the stated research question and the literature review. This approach also enabled the authors to better identify connections and correlations, while keeping the emerging codes within the original context (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019).

Following this first step in the data analysis process, this thesis incorporated strategies from the ‘1st and 2nd order analysis’ as a second step in the data analysis (Goia, Corley & Hamilton, 2013). Since the analysis was carried out simultaneously while primary data was collected, themes and categories emerged over the course of data collection. Once themes and concepts had been identified and coded, iteration with theory was performed, in order to determine whether the emerging themes could help to explain the relation between EP and career paths. Based on this iteration between theory and collected data, collective aggregate dimensions were developed that represented emerging themes that the authors believed could help to explain how passion might affect career paths. Finally, as this thesis aims to contribute and expand existing theory on EP, the authors iterated between the emergent dimensions and relevant theory, to detect whether the findings had already been confirmed in theory, or if new concepts had been discovered.

The two dominant aggregate dimensions that emerged from the iterative process, were entrepreneurial work engagement (harmonious EP) and entrepreneurial workaholism (obsessive EP). In particular, based on the literature review provided in Chapter 2 and in particular Chapter 2.1.2, cases were categorized in either aggregate dimension based on the criteria in Table 3, and the extent to which the cases fulfilled these criteria in their (ex-) entrepreneurial occupation. If two or more criteria were in accordance with one of the two aggregate dimensions, that case was categorized in that respective dimension. Proof quotes were used to support whether a case fulfilled a criterium. Examples of proof quotes are found below in Table 4.

Table 3: Criteria for the categorization of cases using the dualistic model of EP.

Criteria	Entrepreneurial work engagement	Entrepreneurial workaholism
Ability to disengage	High	Low
Effect on personal relationships	Low	High
Level of internalization of performance and/or outcome of object of passion	Low	High

Table 4: Examples of proof quotes for the categorization of cases using the dualistic model of EP.

Criteria	Entrepreneurial work engagement	Entrepreneurial workaholism
Ability to disengage	<i>"I do something on a weekend, work for an hour or something. I think it's fine. And if I have something important planned, then I don't do (work)."</i>	<i>"The first thing I'd do when I get off an airplane is to check my mail. I wasn't good at relaxing and taking time off"</i>
Effect on personal relationships	<i>"It's fun to talk about (work) when you're catching up with people and stuff, but you should limit it, rather than talk about it all the time"</i>	<i>"I know people can get frustrated if (they) don't give me time to get stuff done, then I'm going to appear quite distracted and not in the moment with you"</i>
Level of internalization of performance and/or outcome of object of passion	<i>"If I work on those kinds of tasks, I'm super happy. I'm in the flow"</i>	<i>"In the beginning, it's good to let the company hitchhike on your personality"</i>

The obtained motivational letters of the respondents were analysed and compared to each interview after the authors had made their initial thematic analysis, to either support the emergent themes or disconfirm the authors interpretation of the interview. However, as Atkinson and Coffey (2011) stress, it is important for authors to view the supporting documents in the original context they were created for (in this case, for example a specific job), and not as created for this specific thesis. In line with this argument, this thesis viewed the obtained motivational letters as supporting documents.

3.6 Limitations

Awareness about methodological limitations has important implications for data analysis and the following discussion and conclusion. In the paragraphs below, the limitations are described in terms of research design, data collection and data analysis.

3.6.1 Research design

Despite the relevance within this thesis context, a qualitative research design is often argued to be subjective, problematic to generalize while lacking transparency, and is therefore difficult to replicate (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). This thesis addressed the limitations of subjectivity by applying theoretical sampling and the cases were selected on the premise that the authors had no prior relationship with each graduate before conducting the interview. During the data

analysis, the authors applied a thematic analysis combined with the 1st and 2nd order analysis, while iterating between theory and empirical findings. To improve transparency and replicability, the methodology of this study aims to explain each relevant aspect of the process with detail and clarity. Nevertheless, the unique context of interviews remains a challenge for replicability (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019).

This thesis acknowledges that theory expansion in this type of research design is bound to the distinct and unique context of the used cases. As a result, the aim of this thesis is not to develop a universally generalized theory, but rather an analytical generalization, where replication will be called for if two or more cases support the same emergent theory. As Eisenhardt (1989) argues, such context-dependent theories might be necessary to further develop widely applicable theories.

3.6.2 Data collection

Qualitative interviews are generally regarded as less flexible and insightful in behaviour and prone to over-rationalization by interviewees (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). However, the authors sought to deal with these limitations by applying a thorough methodology that allowed respondents with increased flexibility by having a semi-structured interview guide. Triangulation helped this thesis to increase credibility in the findings, and by having two observers it was easier to deal with limitations such as over-rationalization.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Interviewing individuals can reveal personal and sensitive information, and it is important for the interviewer to reflect upon moral and ethical considerations (Bell & Bryman, 2007). To ensure integrity, this study applied relevant ethical considerations suggested by Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019). Consent was gained from each interviewee prior to the interview through a written consent form (see Appendix B). Each participant was informed that the interview material would be kept anonymous and strictly confidential. The participant was also asked about their consent to record the interview, with the sole purpose to enable the interviewers to transcribe the interview afterwards.

4 Findings

In this chapter, the findings from the triangulated data analysis will be presented objectively. The findings are structured per aggregate dimension, using the 1st and 2nd order analysis described in the previous chapter. The aggregate dimensions are based on the concepts from the literature review covered in Chapter 2. For each second-order theme identified through the interviews and personal documents, first-order concepts are listed using proof quotes. The text further strengthens the findings by using power quotes. An overview of the aggregate dimensions and their link to existing literature can be found in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Chapter structure and the link with concepts derived from the literature review in Chapter 2.

Data analysis		Literature concepts	
<i>Aggregate dimension</i>	<i>Covered in chapter</i>	<i>Literature concept</i>	<i>Covered in chapter</i>
Entrepreneurial work engagement	4.1	Harmonious EP	2.1.2
Entrepreneurial workaholism	4.2	Obsessive EP	
Passion for entrepreneurial activities	4.3	Activity-based EP	2.2
Passion for entrepreneurial objects	4.4	Object-based EP	2.3

4.1 Entrepreneurial work engagement

Five (Allison, Margery, Gwyneth, Forrest and Vianne) of the eight cases showcased a harmonious EP or work engagement during their entrepreneurial occupation. They reflected a high affinity for their entrepreneurial occupation while still being able to disengage from work, without negative effects on their personal relationships and/or without internalizing their performance or work outcomes. Four second-order themes were identified as recurring objects of passion among at least two or more cases, as visualized in Table 6.

Table 6: Data structure of entrepreneurial work engagement.

1 st Order concepts	2 nd Order themes	Aggregate dimensions
Creating things from scratch Using one's artistic/communicative side I am social, creative and positive	Creativity	Entrepreneurial work engagement
Driven by wanting to deliver High expectations of oneself	Competition	
Entrepreneurship gives a lot of freedom Ownership of my own things I want to speak my mind, give input and ideas	Freedom	
Wanting to do more, see more, learn more Career goal to continue developing yourself Learning early-stage venture processes	Personal development	

Creativity is a recurring object of passion among cases with an entrepreneurial work engagement such as Margery and Vianne (the latter when referring to her previous entrepreneurial occupation). As Margery explained her prime reason for her entrepreneurial work engagement: *“I love to create things from scratch. I love to create new things. So, I was given two projects (...). There was nothing in place. (...). It was a prime opportunity for me to go nuts (...). And I was super happy”*. Similarly, Vianne reflects that creativity is a prerequisite for her work engagement: *“I need this sense of creativity and spontaneous behaviour, not really knowing who's going to walk through the door next. I think that's what keeps me sane”*.

Supporting recent findings from Cardon, Glauser and Murnieks (2017), the data analysis showed that **competition** was a recurring object of passion among cases, to prove themselves to others or oneself. For example, Margery emphasizes this as she explains her tendency to be a high-performer was based on a competitive context: *“One was to prove them [I am] worth the money that they are spending on me. And one was to prove myself that this is the right way to go for”*. Similarly, when Gwyneth graduated, she was determined to do anything necessary to get her start-up up and running. She explained that one of her strongest motivations was to

prove to people that she could do it: *“What motivated us the most, was being able to do it. Because a lot of people told us this is never going to work”*.

Furthermore, several cases expressed their pursuit of an entrepreneurial occupation was due to the **freedom** they experience. Several cases, among which Allison and Margery, expressed that the freedom to speak their mind, pursue projects or ideas they believe in, or follow their interests, was what motivated them in their entrepreneurial career. Colene expressed limited motivation, nor a particular liking for entrepreneurship, but reflecting on her time as self-employed CEO, she mentions that next to creativity, freedom was one of her main objects of passion: *“There is a lot of freedom. I had a lot of opportunities to travel and to get paid for that, so the second thing that was a main driver was that I was free (...)”*. As such, the importance of freedom is suggested to be related to creativity, as one (freedom) enables the other (creativity). For example, as emphasized by Margery about her occupation as supporting entrepreneur: *“She [Margery’s boss] really trusted me. She pretty much gave me free range when it came to handling that project. And I got so excited about like, putting together little structures (...)”*.

Allisons’ motivation for changing career occupations and becoming the CEO of a start-up was a combination of the potential societal impact of the venture and **personal development**. The lack of personal learnings and challenges was also the main reason why Allison decided to quit her previous job: *“I would like to develop in the position as CEO of an early stage technology company. Learning kind of how to set up a company from the beginning and follow up investors, bringing onboard new investors, working towards potential clients and matching that with the product development process and strategy”*. Similarly, Margery mentioned multiple times a need to develop and expand her skill-set and multidisciplinary knowledge as a driving force for her career-related decisions since her goal is to *“develop myself in new ways”*. A similar passion for personal development and learning among cases with an EP was found in Forrest.

All cases with a harmonious EP showcased a low to moderate entrepreneurial identity centrality with their entrepreneurial occupation. They did not consider their occupation (e.g., being a venture scout or being an event manager) as highly important and central to their self-definition. Margery mentioned that she, upon graduation, *“(...) could actually identify myself a lot with what comes with being an entrepreneur”*, but that she eventually was more concerned about being able to apply her knowledge, and personally develop, in whatever position she would take. Both Gwyneth and Allison showcased a similar connection to their current occupation,

although Gwyneth identified herself strongly with her previous occupation as self-employed. Gwyneth assigns less importance to her current occupation in the support system, saying that “there’s a few points that would make me more happy with the (current) job”. In the same vein, Forrest did not define himself with his occupation as venture scout, which potentially can be explained by his end goal of becoming self-employed; “I’d love to run some kind of start-up studio and have ownership stake in it”.

4.2 Entrepreneurial workaholism

Three (Ralph, Scott and Gwyneth) of the eight cases showcased an obsessive EP (entrepreneurial workaholism) for their (ex-)entrepreneurial occupation. They struggled to disengage from work, noting negative effects on their personal relationships and/or internalizing their performance or work outcomes. Three second-order themes have been identified as objects of passion, as seen in Table 7.

Table 7: Data structure of entrepreneurial workaholism.

1 st Order concepts	2 nd Order themes	Aggregate dimensions
No alternative but to work on the venture. All I wanted, was to work on the start-up. Goal is to create an awesome tech-business.	Venture	Entrepreneurial workaholism
No one but me has the knowledge and experience necessary. Struggle to separate the company from me personally. The idea of the company is in my head.	Control	
Time spent on work is never wasted time. My personality is 200%. Enjoys working extensively.	Persistence	

As Gwyneth was working as CEO, her life revolved around her **venture** and she was obsessively passionate about the venture. However, at this time, she did not state any specific activity that she liked more or less, but that her driving force was to work on the venture and how she constantly thought about her venture: *“Everything I really wanted to do (at that time), was to work on my start-up”*. Ralph’s current situation aligns well with how Gwyneth described her time as self-employed. He mentioned that it was never an alternative for him to quit his venture, and how every decision he is taking (personally and professionally) relates to the success and survival of his venture.

Since the venture is based on a value proposition invented by him, Ralph considers himself as necessary to properly manage his venture growth: *“I am seeing things that make me able to see the customers in the broad understanding. I have a business perspective, entrepreneurial mindset, the passion. It is a lot of combinations that is needed to push this kind of innovation”*. In this sense, Ralph experiences a need for **control** in his occupation as self-employed. Furthermore, he reflects upon how he is trying to separate the venture from himself, in order *“to get a social life”*, supporting how his obsessive passion for control of the venture also impact his personal life. Scott also demonstrated an obsessive passion for control in his occupation as intrapreneur, where he felt strongly about controlling his own time, what activities he performs, and making sure to control any risks that his team could be faced with.

Ralph persists in his current occupation although he mentioned how he has been close to bankruptcy for the past year, with personal savings being critical. Thus, demonstrating an obsessive passion for **persistence** in his current occupation as self-employed. Similarly, Gwyneth mentioned several times that she persisted with the venture, even though she was hesitant about the technology and questioned whether it was a realistic business idea. What is interesting here, is not only the resemblance between the two founders and their obsessive passion, but the fact that as Gwyneth quit her position as self-employed, she developed a new *harmonious passion for supporting-related activities* (see Chapter 4.3). Ralph did not explicitly state that he considered to quit his venture, but he did mention how he *“(…) cannot do this for five years and not getting anywhere”*.

Gwyneth and Ralph did not have a specific passion for an entrepreneurial activity in their role as self-employed. Instead their obsessiveness was related to the object of their venture. Ralph emphasizes a general low passion for entrepreneurial activities, including pitching, writing funding applications and doing sales. Scott, on the contrary, is obsessively passionate about

founding-related activities, and he genuinely enjoys performing activities that relate to his passion. He furthermore displayed a greater confidence in his abilities to perform founding-related activities. These findings suggest that self-employed graduates show a passion for their occupation regardless of specific activities, whereas those with an occupation other than self-employed might show more specific activity-related EP.

All cases with an obsessive EP for their entrepreneurial occupation, showcased a high entrepreneurial identity centrality with their current occupation. More specifically, they consider(ed) their occupation as highly important and central to their self-definition (e.g., being self-employed or being a business developer). As previously mentioned, Ralph strongly identifies himself with the venture and argued that “(...) *in the beginning, it is good to let the company hitchhike on your personality*”. Scott considered his occupation as highly important to him personally, mentioning how he considers working on business development as more of a hobby and that he “(...) *put working with business development on the same pedestal as being with friends*”. Similarly did Gwyneth showcase a strong connection to her previous position as self-employed: “(...) *back then, I was an entrepreneur*”, emphasizing on how important her role as self-employed was to her personally.

4.3 Passion for entrepreneurial activities

The cases showed different levels of passion for entrepreneurial activities. Furthermore, analysing the cases, a fourth domain of entrepreneurial activities was identified: supporting-related activities. Two related objects of passion were found across the four entrepreneurial domains (see Table 8).

Table 8: Data structure of a passion for entrepreneurial activities.

1 st Order concepts	2 nd Order themes	Aggregate dimensions
<p>Too rebellious for bureaucracy</p> <p>Uncertainty and weird situations needed</p> <p>Fast-paced, difficult projects needed</p>	<p>Change and uncertainty</p>	<p>Passion for inventing, founding and developing</p>

I want to become extremely good at this I want to develop skills in this and learn it Great way to continue learning	Coping behaviour	Passion for supporting
Entrepreneurial interest in Venture Capital Creating value for ventures through VC Supporting ventures with financial resources	Finance	
Carry on entrepreneurial journey of learning Preparation for own start-up Having a macro-view of processes and trends	Coping behaviour	

4.3.1 Passion for inventing, founding and developing

Despite that Vianne currently has a non-entrepreneurial occupation, she reflects that her favourite activities are closely related to entrepreneurship. Creativity is the main object of passion driving this interest. For example, she mentions “*identifying needs and coming up with solutions*” as one of her favourite activities in past job occupations and describes her dream job as “*(...) that slightly crazy lady next to the CEO, with the over the top ideas on anything from marketing to community building to product development. That would be the dream*”. This is also supported by Margery who has an entrepreneurial work engagement and a passion for specific entrepreneurial activities both fuelled by, among others, a passion for creativity. Thus, this thesis identified an overlap regarding creativity among the cases, as an object of EP that may drive a passion for entrepreneurial activities.

Scott and Forrest emphasize how the fast-paced nature of their entrepreneurial activities, characterized by **change and uncertainty**, is what keeps them motivated. As Scott explains, “*I feel that if I am not developing, if I am not experiencing enough, extremely uncertain and weird situations, I am not going to be there [in a job] for much longer*”. Similarly, Forrest considers the fast pace and change of projects as one of the major appeals of his occupation as there is “*(...) immediate gratification*”.

The ultimate career goal of each respondent differed greatly, but analysing the data, several cases emphasized their motivation for pursuing the day-to-day entrepreneurial activities of their

occupation is often related to **coping behaviour** rather than passion. For Forrest, the goal is to start his own venture. In the meantime, his outcome expectation of his current occupation as venture scout is to learn and assemble the necessary resources. For Scott, the goal is to become the best business developer possible. His career decisions have been based on achieving that goal, to continue to learn and being exposed to situations that require him to explore new and better ways of working.

4.3.2 Passion for supporting

Reflecting on Forrest and Gwyneth, the results support a need to expand the existing three entrepreneurial domains. EP is evident among supporting entrepreneurs who fulfill entrepreneurial activities, which this thesis defines as the domain of **supporting**. For Forrest and Gwyneth, their main driver in their occupation is to help and support other start-ups, building relationships and having a macro-oriented view. Gwyneth mentions a specific interest for helping start-ups, by using her experience and knowledge. Her favourite activity at work is helping start-ups with applications for funding and pitching skills. She feels excited about seeing other start-ups taking the next step, and that is where she feels she can contribute and apply her skills: *“I think everything that relates to being able to help the start-ups, using my experience of five years with a technical start-up”*.

One more specific object of passion that both Gwyneth, Forrest and Scott (when he mentions his future career goal of supporting business owners) reflect upon when talking about supporting, is securing the **financial resources** necessary for new ventures. Forrest for example emphasizes how *“Venture capital was something that got me interested in entrepreneurship in the first place”*. He further argues that he would like to end up in venture capital later in his career. Gwyneth reflects that helping with acquiring financial resources is her favourite supporting-related activity: *“What I am most fan of is helping with funding. Applications for funding and then going through them, giving them tips and tricks (...) is a lot of fun”*. Scott considers his future career ideally in a personal investment fund to maximize his impact.

Similar to how entrepreneurial activities related to inventing, founding and developing were performed as coping behaviour, supportive activities are also a form of **coping behaviour**. Forrest reflects that his current occupation is also a way of potentially preparing himself for self-employment, and reflects his goal was to *“(...) get into an accelerator or venture capital,*

have a macro view of all these different start-ups and how it works, and build up your network, have your learnings and then do your own venture after that”.

4.4 Passion for entrepreneurial objects

Next to identifying new objects of passion among those with an EP, the data analysis supported two objects of passion earlier identified in literature, namely a passion for people and a passion for a social mission (see Table 9). Especially the latter was abundant among cases, with four cases identifying this as one of their main driving forces for choosing an entrepreneurial career. An elaboration on the objects of passion in the aggregate dimension are uncovered in the second-order themes.

Table 9: Data structure of a passion for entrepreneurial objects.

1st Order concepts	2nd Order themes	Aggregate dimensions
I love building international partnerships Leveraging your personal network Working with and getting to know investors	Partnership building	Passion for people
Matchmaking is my favorite thing Understanding and accomodating people Steering people in the right direction	Teamwork and collaboration	
Fascination for what makes people tick Customer- and user experience Figuring out the needs of customers	Customer behaviour	
A drive to do something meaningful Wanting to work with a large, social impact I want to see that what I do is a good thing	Impact-driven	Passion for a social mission

4.4.1 Passion for people

Most cases demonstrated a passion for people. The exact nature of the passion ranged from understanding **customer behaviour**, to **partnership-building** to **teamwork and leadership**, but all reflected that frequent, human interaction was a prerequisite for the enjoyment of their respective entrepreneurial occupation. As Forrest mentions: *“We are an accelerator, (...) leveraging the network of other employees, attending events, local meetups, and global international events. (...) Going out in the evenings and socializing, that is another amazing way to do it [business] on these events. Because that is almost when the real business happens. (...). The other aspect I loved was forming international partnerships, because it is all about relationships”*. Colene further supports this rationale. In her occupation as CEO and self-employed, she experienced a lack of social interaction in her job and therefore did not fulfil her passion for people. Partly due to this, she decided to switch careers, noting that it became lonely: *“After a couple months [after graduating], I was thinking ‘okay, I really want to meet more people’”*.

4.4.2 Passion for a social mission

Allison’s current start-up, which works on improving clean water accessibility, aligns with her primary **impact-driven** motivation: *“I want to have jobs where I can see that I am contributing to a better world. (...) Something that is possible to measure in a way. I know that what I am doing actually makes a difference.”*. Similarly, Forrest explained that he is driven by his mission to have a positive impact on a societal level. He mentions that as he was working within the oil and gas industry before undertaking the entrepreneurship program, he felt he was lacking a connection to his work. Although he considered the job as interesting and valuable, it did not fulfil his core mission of doing something about *“(…) environmental problems and helping the planet”*. For example, Forrest mentioned that: *“(…) I could never work for just money, and [I] need to have some kind of purpose or mission”*.

4.5 The nature of EP among non-entrepreneurs

Two cases (Colene and Vianne) with a current non-entrepreneurial occupation were interviewed to represent the significant portion of entrepreneurship graduates that opt for this career path. They both showed a harmonious passion for their current job and low levels of EP for both activities and objects. A possible explanation lies in a low entrepreneurial self-efficacy and a low goal representation in both. In other words, they showed little determination to pursue an entrepreneurial career path and a low confidence in their ability to manage this career path. Colene reflects that most entrepreneurial jobs require an intense amount of time, energy and knowledge whereas the pay-off is generally low, both in terms of impact and financially: “(...) *financially it definitely does not pay off. You put in so many hours. And when you are an entrepreneur, you have to be good at so many things at the same time. You need to know the taxes, you need to know this and that, you need to know a lot of stuff and you cannot afford to get any help*”. Vianne further emphasizes that she believes managing her career is mostly influenced by external forces: “*I feel like so many things have happened very organically, and it has been a combination of being at the right place at the right time*”.

Interestingly, Vianne showcases a lack of EP similar to Colene, even though some of her favourite job activities are closely related to entrepreneurship. For example, she mentions “*identifying needs and coming up with solutions*” as one of her favourite activities in past job occupations. However, Vianne emphasizes these activities can be found in a variety of job occupations and she does not regret quitting her entrepreneurial study project: “*I did all the things I had to do, but I never found that thing that I was willing to like, ‘I’ll bleed for this’. You know, I never found that concept, which is fine. I still learned a lot*”.

In Table 10, an overview of the identified objects of passion in their current work engagement is presented.

Table 10: Data structure of non-entrepreneurs.

1 st Order concepts	2 nd Order themes	Aggregate dimensions
Value of international aspect Facilitating multidisciplinary platforms Macro-view of industries, developments	World-oriented	Non-entrepreneurial work engagement

Opportunity-oriented, 'learn what I can' Get more experience at this stage Balance between learning and stability	Personal development	
Career goal to run a team Affinity for motivating people/collagues Having a feedback partner/collague	People	
A stable job is a needle in a haystack Comfortable and convenient Suitable at current and next life stage(s)	Stability	

Interestingly, all objects of passion identified are closely related to those objects of passion among cases with an entrepreneurial work engagement (Chapter 4.1). This indicates that these objects might be recurring across a general population and are not exclusive to aspiring entrepreneurs. For example, cases from each career path showed a passion for **personal development** and a passion for **people**, whether it was through teamwork, leadership, partnerships or customer behaviour. Similarly, Forrest highlighted his motivation for being a supporting entrepreneur is the **world-oriented** macro-view he develops, something Vianne confirmed as well, both in her intrapreneurial job and her current non-entrepreneurial job.

However, **stability** is a driving force only mentioned by both Colene and Vianne and therefore might be unique to non-entrepreneurs or those with a low EP. Furthermore, it contrasts with the importance of *change and uncertainty* that drives entrepreneurs in performing activities related to inventing, founding and developing (Chapter 4.3). The stability Colene and Vianne mention is related to financial stability and prosperity as well as practical factors such as location and life stage. For example, Vianne decided to move back to her home country (Norway) after working as a supporting entrepreneur in Switzerland for two reasons. First, she wanted “(...) *to come back closer to my roots*”. Second, she favoured a job opportunity in Norway over her current job due to the offered stability, salary and relevant network she would gain.

5 Discussion and analysis

The following chapter will discuss and analyse the empirical findings and relate it to previous research, as well as the research question. The analysis is organized in accordance to the research contributions of this thesis, as stated in Chapter 1.3.1 and Chapter 2.5.

5.1 Applying the dualistic model of passion to EP

This thesis found support for the proposed relevance of applying the dualistic model of passion to EP. Two cases showed an obsessive passion for the object of the venture (Ralph and Gwyneth), and one case an obsessive passion about activities related to founding (Scott). These three instances are different from harmonious EP in the sense that they experienced negative- instead of positive experiences in regard to their entrepreneurial occupation, through either a struggle to disengage, internalizing their performance and/or experiencing externalities in their personal relationships. That Cardon et al (2013) did not find a correlation between the dualistic model and the domains of EP for activities might be explained by their definition of EP. Their definition solely included the stimulation of positive feelings, arguing that EP implies a conscious decision about how important a passion is for one's entrepreneurial identity and therefore an obsessive passion is not applicable (Cardon et al, 2013; Murnieks, Mosakowski & Cardon, 2014).

The findings of this thesis highlight the importance of including negative emotions and feelings as potential consequences of passion, as paradoxical as it sounds, as well as the need for qualitative, in-depth studies that give a more realistic view of EP. This thesis therefore argues that a theoretical synthesis of both Cardon's theory on EP, and Vallerand's dualistic model of passion, is relevant. Such synthesis would then suggest for a re-consideration of the previous definition of EP, previously defined as “(...) *consciously accessible, intense positive feelings experienced by engagement in entrepreneurial activities associated with roles that are meaningful and salient to the self-identity of the entrepreneur*” (Cardon et al, 2009, p. 517). Considering the relevance of the dualistic model of passion in entrepreneurship, this thesis

would suggest for a re-definition of EP as intense feelings experienced by engagement with entrepreneurial objects or activities that are meaningful and salient to the self-identity of the entrepreneur, acknowledging that EP can appear unconsciously.

5.1.1 Expanding the rationale and scope of EP in the light of the dualistic model

To further stimulate a theoretical expansion of EP, this thesis proposes two further changes. In addition the first iteration proposed above, the second iteration is concerned with the current rationale of EP. The six cases in this thesis with an entrepreneurial occupation expressed that a passion for an object is the driving force in their career decision-making rather than passion for specific entrepreneurial activities. This was further supported by the finding that most cases saw their partaking in entrepreneurial activities of inventing, developing, growing and/or supporting as coping behaviour. Thus, these findings suggest that the decision to study entrepreneurship, and/or to pursue an entrepreneurial career path, is often not driven by a specific passion for entrepreneurial activities, but rather, by a believe that an entrepreneurial career path facilitates the fulfilment of objects one feels passionate about.

The third iteration concerns an expansion of the currently known activities and objects entrepreneurs have been found to be passionate about. This thesis generated results suggesting that the nature of activity- and object-based EP asks for theoretical expansion. As Cardon, Glauser and Murnieks (2017) have recently suggested, EP is complex and diverse. In line with this scholarly debate, this thesis supports the argument that entrepreneurs have multiple sources of passion, where passion for entrepreneurial objects can coexist with a passion for entrepreneurial activities. Additionally, the empirical results suggest an expansion with a fourth domain of entrepreneurial activities, here defined as a *passion for supporting*. This includes activities related to supporting the entrepreneurial ecosystem such as partnership-building and guiding and advising new ventures through phases of founding-, developing- and growing-related activities. This type of passion was mostly found among supporting entrepreneurs. Furthermore, in addition to the object of competition initially found by Cardon, Glauser and Murnieks (2017), this thesis identifies objects of harmonious EP as *creativity*, *personal development* and *freedom*. For cases with an obsessive EP, the more negatively connoted objects of *control* and *persistence* were identified as well as support for the object of the *venture* as found by Cardon, Glauser and Murnieks (2017).

5.2 Understanding the effect of EP on the career path of entrepreneurship graduates

Applying the SCM model to entrepreneurship graduates partly helped to explain the relationship between EP and entrepreneurial career development of entrepreneurship graduates. However, this thesis found limited support for the personal mechanisms suggested in theory, specifically outcome expectations and goal representation (Lent & Brown, 2013a). Therefore, this thesis argues a better explanation might be found in Super's career development theory. His theory acknowledges individuals go through life- and corresponding career stages, particularly the adolescent stage of (entrepreneurship) graduates (Luzzo, 2000, Niles et al, 1997; cited in Duffy & Sedlacek, 2010). His theory helps explain the two prominent career stage-related findings among the graduates analysed in this thesis: the high level of coping behaviour and the low level of entrepreneurial self-efficacy observed among cases.

5.2.1 Decision-making in the adolescent stage of career development

First, Super emphasizes (more than the SCM model) the significance of the adolescence stage of graduates for their career. In their adolescence, graduates go through a two-part '*exploration stage*' where they develop a career identity, interests and undertake career-related exploration and planning (Rogers & Creed, 2011; Super, 1990). This "preparatory process characterises the adolescent and young adult years" (Savickas, 2001, p. 52). In the first part of the exploration stage, entrepreneurship graduates exhibit *coping behaviour* to increase their entrepreneurial maturity by emerging themselves in explorative environments that stimulate the development of coping skills, such as tenacity, creativity, active problem-solving, among others (Pérez-López, González-López & Rodríguez-Ariza, 2019; Polk, 1997). The second part constitutes the *crystallization of occupational preferences* (given that one has collected sufficient occupational knowledge from his or her coping behaviour) and *specifying a choice* ("well-developed decisional competence", knowing "what to consider in making educational and vocational choices") (Savickas, 2001, p. 53). Once one can fulfil both parts of the exploration stage, the individual has a high career maturity (Savickas, 2001).

Coping behaviour is a recurring explanation among cases of this thesis for their partaking in entrepreneurial activities, rather than passion for the activities. Specifically, coping behaviour is often mentioned as a form of preparation for a future entrepreneurial career goal; ("*(...) have*

your learnings and then do your own venture after that” (Forrest)) or as a way to fulfil their passion for self-development, among other objects of passion identified earlier; (“*One of the major reasons for me to take a lot of these jobs (...) was how much access it could give me to build a network*” (Margery)). That coping behaviour is a characterization of the exploration stage among adolescents might explain why it has such a prominent place in our sample of graduates compared to similar studies among a diverse entrepreneurial sample, such as the studies of Cardon et al (2013) and Cardon, Glauser and Murnieks (2017).

Relating back to the dualistic model of passion, empirical findings of this thesis suggest a correlation between coping behaviour and an obsessive EP, where coping behaviour was expressed by an obsessive passion for an entrepreneurial object that facilitated the lack of passion for their day-to-day entrepreneurial activities. For example, Gwyneth expressed an obsessive EP in the early phase of her career path, but eventually shifted into a harmonious EP. Potentially, the definition of coping behaviour as “*initial actions taken to achieve the entrepreneurial goal*” by Pérez-López, González-López and Rodríguez-Ariza (2019, p. 156) can help explain why this thesis is yielding results that suggest a link between an obsessive EP and coping behaviour. Early in their career, graduates feel the need to work obsessively on activities they might lack passion for, as this prepares them for their entrepreneurial career goal.

Relating back to Super’s theory, several cases show low entrepreneurial self-efficacy that can be explained by career immaturity, as they all reflect a lack of *crystallizing an occupational preference* and/or *specifying a choice*. For example, when asked about her career goal or motivation behind past career decisions, Gwyneth explains: “*I don't really know. I think it is very difficult. I have thought of that so many times, what would I want to do?*”; “*I am kind of a ‘take it as you go’ person. See where things lead me*”. A similar mindset was found in Gwyneth and Vianne: “*It has been a combination of being at the right place at the right time*”; “*I still don't know what I am going to do when I grow up*”. Their low entrepreneurial self-efficacy, or perceived ability to manage their entrepreneurial career, overlaps with their lack of a crystallization of preference(s) and occupational choice. In this sense, Super’s theory can help explain the low self-efficacy of graduates. Furthermore, the high diversity of fields and occupations of Margery and Vianne, compared to for example Scott or Ralph, could support this rationale as Margery and Vianne are still in an exploratory stage whereas Scott and Ralph early-on reached career maturity.

5.2.2 Role salience, EP and entrepreneurial self-efficacy

Second, Super introduces the concept of *role salience*, “which implies that work, or any other life role, can vary in its centrality or importance for any given individual and at different stages of life. This insight reminds us that work is not the most valued role for everyone” (Lent & Brown, 2013b, p. 6). With the introduction of role salience, Super conceptualizes the individual variability and corresponding importance of *identity centrality* as a driving force for one’s career, or in other words, the importance of work for one’s expression of their self-image (Lent & Brown, 2013b). Applying Super’s theory to the dualistic model of passion, the explanation lies in the relation between individual variation in one’s identity centrality towards entrepreneurship and corresponding variation in one’s EP.

To elaborate, following the dualistic model, the higher one’s EP, the higher the internationalization of the entrepreneurial occupation for one’s self-image. For example, Ralph, who has an obsessive EP, explains that “*How I am feeling is definitely connected to how [his venture] is performing*”. Therefore, he has a high identity centrality for being an entrepreneur and his current occupation as being self-employed is crucial to his self-image. *Role salience* acknowledges that identity centrality is dynamic and varies among individuals and life stages, which was also reflected in Gwyneth, who identified herself strongly with her entrepreneurial role as self-employed, where she also demonstrated an obsessive EP; “*Back then, I was an entrepreneur*”. In her current occupation, where she demonstrates a harmonious EP, she does not assign much importance to her occupation, but focusses instead on her personal life; “*I am becoming a parent in the summer*”. Not only do previously mentioned findings support that identity centrality is dynamic across an individual’s career path, it also suggests that EP should be viewed as dynamic and subject to change across one’s career path.

Summarizing, empirical findings of this thesis suggest that EP is a dynamic concept that interactively affects, and is affected by, the above-mentioned mechanisms (entrepreneurial self-efficacy and role salience). Supporting Murnieks, Mosakowski and Cardon (2014), empirical findings suggest that EP, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and identity centrality affect entrepreneurship graduates’ career decisions towards pursuing an entrepreneurial career path. However, some cases have been professionally active for a longer period than others, having faced personal and professional challenges along their career path that have subsequently affected their EP, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and role salience regarding their identity centrality.

5.3 Understanding diversity in the career path of entrepreneurship graduates

Empirical findings of this thesis indicate that an EP for activities and objects, as identified by Cardon et al (2013) and Cardon, Glauser and Murnieks (2017), can be found in additional career occupations outside the scope of being self-employed. An EP for activities, such as the domains of EP identified by Cardon et al (2013), was occurring across all cases with an entrepreneurial occupation (“[...] you can see the value being created, which is more rewarding [...]” (Forrest); “I love to create things from scratch. I love to create new things” (Margery); “I think the opportunity recognition part is the most fun” (Scott)). Thus, empirical findings suggest that the domains of EP are not unique to the classical definition of an entrepreneurial occupation (Douglas, 2020; Lanero, Vázquez & Aza, 2016; Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994), but can be found in occupations within a variety of (entrepreneurial) career paths.

5.3.1 Challenging the ultimate entrepreneurial career

Existing research on entrepreneurial career paths has predominantly focused on the extent to which entrepreneurship graduates enter a career path as self-employed, assuming this to be the ideal career occupation to pursue after an entrepreneurship education (Bird, 1989; Krueger, 2009; Krueger, Reilly & Carsrud, 2000; Nabi, Holden & Walmsley, 2010). However, the empirical findings of this thesis suggest for theoretical expansion on possible entrepreneurial career paths. Although most cases entered the entrepreneurship programme with the aim to become self-employed, several cases noted how they, during the course of the programme, or shortly after graduating, realized that self-employment was not the ideal occupation for them and that their EP was possible to apply in various entrepreneurial occupations: (“[...] my ambition was to keep that entrepreneurial feeling going (...) and apply whatever I have learned in whatever position or whatever job I was going to take” (Margery); “I can be more of an entrepreneurial rebel in a corporate setting, because they have the financial muscles to actually let me do what I want” (Scott); “What I am most fan of is helping with funding” (Gwyneth)), suggesting that entrepreneurial career paths are more diverse and should include additional occupations where entrepreneurship graduates can apply their EP and entrepreneurial skills.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Aim of the thesis and main research findings

The present thesis aimed to examine how entrepreneurial passion (EP) affects entrepreneurship graduates in their career path. The contribution is threefold: First, by arguing that EP can have an obsessive nature through workaholism, this thesis applies the dualistic model of passion and increases academic understanding of the potential applicability to existing research. Second, this thesis focusses specifically on graduates to increase understanding of the effect of their life- and career stage. Third, supported by preliminary data on entrepreneurship graduates, this thesis includes career paths outside the scope of self-employment, as is commonly found in practice among entrepreneurship graduates, and as such, these career paths can be expected to fulfil one's EP as well.

Summarizing the main findings, three conclusions have emerged. Regarding the first contribution, this thesis identified that entrepreneurship graduates show differing levels of EP, including obsessive passion. A fourth activity-related entrepreneurial domain was identified (*supporting*), in addition to three domains earlier identified by Cardon et al (2013). Furthermore, five new entrepreneurial objects of passion were identified, namely that of creativity; freedom; personal development (found among cases with a harmonious EP); control; persistence (found among cases with an obsessive EP). Concluding, a duality of passion was found across cases and emphasizes the need for a synthesis with existing theory on EP, to better understand how to facilitate EP for improved venture performance, entrepreneurial skills and psychological wellbeing among entrepreneurship graduates.

Regarding the second contribution, two trends emerged during cross-case analysis: both a high level of coping behaviour and a low level of entrepreneurial self-efficacy. More than the SCCT, Super's introduction of life stages in career development theory helps understand the two trends identified. The high level of coping behaviour the cases exhibited, can be explained by the exploration stage, where such behaviour is used to increase one's career maturity, which crystallizes career preferences and facilitates one's career-related decision-making (Lent &

Brown, 2013b). The low entrepreneurial self-efficacy of several cases can be explained by their lack of a crystallization of preference(s). The high diversity of fields and occupations of the cases with a low entrepreneurial self-efficacy, compared to contrasting cases, could support this rationale as the former cases are still in their exploratory stage while the latter cases reached career maturity.

Regarding the third contribution, this thesis found that entrepreneurship graduates, whether they are self-employed, intrapreneurs, supporting entrepreneurs or non-entrepreneurs, all share a passion for one or more entrepreneurial activities or objects related to an entrepreneurial occupation. As such, this thesis found support for the rationale that EP is not limited to the traditional scope of entrepreneurship, and EP is not limited to self-employed individuals. Our cases emphasized how specific entrepreneurial activities or objects of passion can be found and fulfilled outside self-employment. Synthesizing these contributions, an answer can be formulated to the posed research question:

How does entrepreneurial passion affect the career path of entrepreneurship graduates?

This thesis argues that EP affects the career path of entrepreneurship graduates to such an extent that their career path should not be viewed as-, or expected to be, a linear path leading towards an ultimate goal of being self-employed. Instead, the entrepreneurial career path should be viewed as an iterating approach, where the individual aims to apply their entrepreneurial skills and abilities in occupations that allows them to engage with their EP, whether it is to e.g. have freedom at work or constantly develop new skills. Furthermore, obsessive EP may cause entrepreneurship graduates to work excessively with negative short-term consequences (stress, pressure on one's relationships) and long-term consequences for their career path, such as the avoidance of self-employment.

6.2 Implications for the scientific community

The findings mentioned in the previous chapter have implications for future entrepreneurship research in the sense that some findings support existing theory while some challenge existing theory and ask for theoretical revision. Support was found for Cardon et al's (2013) identified three entrepreneurial domains of activities related to inventing, developing and growing; as well

as Cardon, Glauser and Murnieks' (2017) identified objects of passion of competition and the venture. Furthermore, the significance of objects of passion for the career paths of the cases in this thesis support the recent academic discussion within EP research to expand the scope of passion, including more than a passion for entrepreneurial activities.

The support found in this thesis for the application of the dualistic model of passion in the context of EP challenges existing research that found no support for the dualistic model within entrepreneurship, as well as existing research that solely focussed on harmonious passion. Additionally, the high coping behaviour and low entrepreneurial self-efficacy found among cases was insufficiently explained by the SCCT, but found support in Super's theory of career development (Lent & Brown, 2013b). The latter acknowledges the importance of life- and career stages, specifically the exploration stage during adolescence. Lastly, the findings of this thesis challenge existing theory that excludes career paths outside the scope of self-employment, often by default defined as 'the' entrepreneurial occupation. This thesis found that in practice, entrepreneurship graduates enter a variety of career paths, including the occupation of self-employed, intrapreneur, supporting entrepreneur and non-entrepreneur, while cases of each path showed a passion for entrepreneurial activities and/or objects related to entrepreneurship. Thus, this thesis suggests future research on EP to focus on; (1) Incorporation of the dualistic model; (2) Acknowledging the explanatory power of Super's career theory to strengthen the foundation of SCCT; (3) Expanding the scope of those fulfilling their EP to occupations outside self-employment.

6.3 Implications for practice

Two implications can be distilled for those who experience an EP, or who active within entrepreneurship education either as staff or student. First, EP is a highly individual and complex phenomenon that, rather than a passion for entrepreneurship on itself, is a passion for specific activities found in entrepreneurship, and/or more abstract concepts associated with an entrepreneurial occupation. As such, students can be expected to get fulfilment from different aspects of entrepreneurship and in different stages of their education and career. Given the possibility of obsessive EP, this thesis advices those active within education to be aware of the signs (control, persistence) and risks (fear of failure) of obsessive passion. Second, for graduates in entrepreneurship programs, this thesis might help them to understand their passion(s) and

how they can proceed in their entrepreneurial career to nurture and practice what they feel passionate about. For those who may not feel the urge to become self-employed, this thesis might help to explain why they chose an entrepreneurial education in the first place, and how they can benefit from their education to manage and apply their passion in their career.

6.4 Recommendations for future research

The conclusion of this thesis generates three recommendations for future research. First, the proposed definitional reconsideration of EP may serve as the groundwork for future empirical investigation on the driving forces behind entrepreneurship graduates in their career decision-making. Future research may test, and potentially expand, this view on EP to further enhance generalizability and relevance of the findings. A suggestion for future research would be to apply a longitudinal study, investigating how passion in the entrepreneurial realm might change and affect individuals while pursuing a degree in entrepreneurship and eventually as they are active in their career path.

Second, future research could expand the methodological focus of this thesis by analysing cases with a broader and more extensive career path. This would benefit research on EP in two ways. First, it supports the rationale that passion among entrepreneurs is a heterogeneous phenomenon, where a diverse sample in future empirical research is likely to expand the current view of potential sources for EP. As such, additional entrepreneurial domains and objects might be identified. Second, by increasing and diversifying the sample size, personal and professional circumstances could be better addressed along one's career path and how this subsequently affects the dualistic model of EP.

Third, the suggested relevance of Super's career development theory to address the nature of EP and its influence on one's career development could be included in future entrepreneurship research when addressing one's career path and development. The experienced explanatory power of this theory, in synthesis with the SCCT, promises potential for future research. Particularly among adolescents, it can be expected that Super's theory is relevant as the exploration phase of most adolescents is characterized by unique behaviour.

Summarizing, future research is needed to confirm the suggested support in this thesis for the dualistic model, the inclusion of both passion for entrepreneurial activities and objects, the inclusion of a variety of career occupations as well as the explanatory potential of Super's career development theory in combination with the SCCT. This would result in an increased understanding of the complex, heterogenous and individualistic nature of EP. From an educational and societal point of view, this is crucial as passion can facilitate positive emotions, psychological well-being and fulfilment, while improving physical health, relationships, and performance. This would get us closer to answering the question many of us have asked ourselves at some point in our lives: *How can people's lives be most worth living?* (Vallerand, 2008).

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Appendix A: Interview guide

Introduction

- Could you walk us through the major decisions that you have made in your career path, since graduating?
- When during your career development did these decisions take place and why then?
 - Per decision:
 - What would describe as the main driving force behind this decision?
 - What did you choose and why?
 - Looking back, how do you feel about the decision you made?
- Can you tell us briefly about your current occupation?
 - How long have you worked there?
 - Any favourite tasks? If so, why?

Entrepreneurial passion

- Do you have any specific area related to entrepreneurship that you find more interesting?
 - What do you like about this?
 - Do you engage in this area/subject in your current position?
 - If so, how do you feel when you are hindered from engaging in these activities?
 - Have you engaged in this area/subject in previous positions?
 - Is this something that you would like to work with?

Career development

- What is your current career goal?
 - How do you plan to get there?
 - Why is this your goal?
 - How much time do you spend thinking about this career goal?
- What was your main career interest or goal when you graduated?
 - How come this was the career you wanted to pursue?
 - If changed, why has this goal or interest changed?

- How do you feel about this change in goal, or, how do feel about (not) having this occupation currently?
- How do you experience your current job occupation?
 - How do you consider yourself concerning the quality of your work?
 - Do you enjoy going to work/doing work?
 - How do you feel when you go home from work?
 - How would you feel if you were forced to give up your job?
- How did you experience previous job occupations?
 - Did you enjoy going to work/doing work?
- How much hours per week do you approximately spend working?
 - How do you feel about this?
 - Is this an issue for you?
- How much hours per week do you approximately spend thinking about work?
 - How do you feel about this?
 - Is this an issue for you?

Appendix B: Consent form



LUND UNIVERSITY
School of Economics and Management

The influence of entrepreneurial passion on the career decision-making of entrepreneurship graduates

Matthijs Mouthaan & Malin Karlsson
Interview Consent Form.

I have been given information about “The influence of entrepreneurial passion on the career decision-making of entrepreneurship graduates” and discussed the research project with Matthijs Mouthaan and/or Malin Karlsson who is/are conducting this research as a part of a Master’s in Entrepreneurship & Innovation supervised by Diamanto Politis and Anna Brattström.

I understand that, if I consent to participate in this project I will be asked to give the researcher a duration of approximately 1,5 hours of my time to participate in the process. I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, I am free to refuse to participate and I am free to withdraw from the research at any time.

By signing below I am indicating my consent to participate in the research (*anonymously*) as it has been described to me. I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used for thesis and journal publications, and I consent for it to be used in that manner.

Name:

Email:

Telephone:

Signed: