STOCKHOLM SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS
Department of Management and Organization
Master Thesis, Spring 2017

Compassion in Entrepreneurship

How do entrepreneurs make sense of self-compassion in times of failure?

Stockholm, May 2017

ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship is an integral part of our society in creating jobs and new innovations, but the journey is often characterized by high uncertainty and many failures. Researchers have proposed that self-compassion can be an effective emotional coping mechanism to deal with various failures in life. Can self-compassion play a similar role for entrepreneurial failures? This study aims to shed light on this topic, and in particular explores how entrepreneurs themselves make sense of self-compassion in dealing with entrepreneurial failures. Through a multiple case study method, 13 in-depth interviews with current and former entrepreneurs were conducted. This study answers the research questions through three main propositions: i) Entrepreneurs can make sense of self-compassion mainly for survival, not for achieving success. ii) Entrepreneurs' limited sensemaking and criticism of self-compassion points out to a potential conflict between self-compassion and entrepreneurial identity. iii) While being critical about self-compassion, entrepreneurs can compensate for their lack of self-compassion through the compassion they receive from others.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurship, failure, compassion, self-compassion, emotional coping, sensemaking, identity

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AUTHORS
Deniz Demirer Demir, 40844
Erik Öborn, 22140

SUPERVISOR
Emma Stenström

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who supported us while conducting this study.

First and foremost, we would like to express our deep gratitude towards our supervisor, Associate Professor Emma Stenström, who has provided invaluable guidance, support and encouragement throughout this study.

We would also like to express our gratefulness to the entrepreneurs who participated in our interviews. Without their willingness and openness to share their personal experiences with us, it would not have been possible to conduct this study.

Last, but not least, we would like to thank Christina Andersson for her expert guidance in the field of compassion, and connecting us with some of the valuable participants in this study.

Deniz Demirer Demir & Erik Öborn
Stockholm School of Economics
May 2017

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If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion. - The Dalai Lama

Running a startup is like chewing glass and staring into the abyss. After a while, you stop staring, but glass chewing never ends. - Elon Musk

1. Introduction

Compassion is a phenomenon playing a central role in many societies and religions throughout history. It is known to date back to the emergence of Hinduism and Buddhism, which has compassion as a central part of their belief system. The term "compassion" refers to the awareness of someone's suffering, being moved by it emotionally, and acting with a motivation to help (Strauss et al., 2016).

The need for compassion in today's western world can be characterized by "modernity". Modernity promotes constant progress, development and growth (Furusten, 2013), and such trends lead our society towards a strong "performance addiction", where we are pressuring ourselves hard to succeed, constantly comparing ourselves with others, and feeling insufficient (Andersson, 2016; Kraut and Lundmark, 1998). Such a pressure might easily lead us to believe that we are failing in life. Our performance orientation is an addictive spiral of always doing more, working a bit harder, performing a bit better, and without "progressing" we feel restless (Andersson, 2016). Performing and succeeding leads to satisfaction, or dopamine[1] kicks for creating a positive feeling of fulfillment. In order to sustain satisfaction, new achievements are required (Bressan and Crippa, 2005). In today's performance oriented society, where not performing as expected is disparaged; how can we ensure our psychological well-being?

The answer may lie in compassion. Compassion is, in fact, a natural instinct that we humans are born with. We have a system based on sympathy and willingness to help others in suffering, even though it is in conflict with our other instincts, such as avoiding pain and suffering. When we develop our system of security and self-compassion, we are able to give compassion and take on others' suffering. Once our brain is in a safe mode, instead of stressed, we get the strength to care for ourselves and others.

[1] Dopamine is a hormone related to the brain's reward system

Helping others creates the belief that it will also be received when needed. Therefore, compassion is an approach to life, a value that includes paying attention to suffering and trying to alleviate it.

Self-compassion is a part of compassion, which entails noticing and relieving pain of oneself. "*With self-compassion, we give ourselves the same kindness and care we would give to a good friend."* (Neff, 2017) Researchers have shown that self-compassion can be an important factor to effectively deal with various failures in life. In general, increased compassion has shown to have a positive effect on lowering stress levels, reducing anxiety, reducing depression and increasing feelings of inner warmth, belonging and safeness (Gilbert, 2009). It has also shown to create a higher degree of meaningfulness in everyday life (Strauss et al., 2016; Pommier, 2010). Self-compassion levels affect our perception of failure, and helps to deal better with it (Neff, 2004; Shepherd and Cardon, 2009). It can be concluded that self-compassion, as well as compassion overall, are traits with many benefits especially in environments with high risk of stress and failure.

From a business perspective, the high risk environment of entrepreneurship makes it an interesting area to explore the failure-recovery processes, including emotional coping mechanisms such as self-compassion. First of all, entrepreneurship is often associated with innovation, high risk of failure and a disrupted journey, where only a few succeed (Rerup, 2005; Sarasvathy and Menon, 2004). This shows the importance of the recurrent need for recovery and rebound from the failures for entrepreneurs. Secondly, the impact of failures on entrepreneurs are usually amplified due to their psychological ownership and bonding with their business ventures. In fact, researchers suggest that individuals feel psychological ownership of projects to the extent that they fulfill their needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Kahn, 1990; Pierce et al., 2001), and most of the entrepreneurial projects satisfy these conditions. The more ownership entrepreneurs feel for their projects (or business ventures in this context), the greater levels of negative emotional reactions should be expected for when the project fails (Shepherd and Cardon, 2009). Both the abundance of failures in the entrepreneurial arena and their heightened ownership of their projects points to a potential need of self-compassion in coping with entrepreneurial challenges. Therefore, a crucial function of this thesis is to review the emotional

landscape of entrepreneurs, and explore how entrepreneurs make sense of self-compassion.

1.1. Problematization

Entrepreneurship is an important part of the society and within the radar of politicians and economists. New businesses increase the competitiveness of a country through reduced unemployment and increased innovation and export, which leads to a higher GDP growth. According to Lindelöf and Löfsten (2005), there are significant indications that the importance of small businesses will increase both in terms of economic growth and the ability to be intermediaries for diffusion of innovations. Wetter (2009) supports this and argues that new companies create the largest part of new jobs. It is, therefore, very important to create the entrepreneur-friendly climate and establish necessary platforms that promote the emergence and growth of new businesses.

Due to the importance of entrepreneurship, vast resources are committed for this cause. Governments invest resources in programs in order to be at the top when it comes to innovation and new ventures started. In Sweden alone, Vinnova[2] develops Sweden's innovation capacity through grants of in total over 2 billion SEK per year to facilitate a good entrepreneurial climate. Another example is Almi, who granted governmental innovation loans to new ventures totaling up to 3,2 billion SEK in 2015 (Almi Annual Report, 2015). Furthermore, private institutions and individual investors are also taking great risks by placing large commitments in terms of time and capital to emerging startups.

The value of entrepreneurship to the economy and job creation has been studied extensively, and various stakeholders argue that new venture failure is good, because the society learns from it (Carree and Thurik, 2010; Lee et al., 2011; Knott and Posen, 2005). However, the extent to which the potential learnings can be materialized depends on social and psychological factors. For example, according to Ucbasaran et al. (2013), if an entrepreneur finds the psychological costs of failure too high and choose to exit the entrepreneurial career path, there might be limited opportunities to

[2] Vinnova manages programmes for strengthening Sweden's innovativeness. The programmes and cover several areas of society and industries e.g. funding for research projects.

carry on the entrepreneurial learnings to the next venture. In such a situation, both the entrepreneur and society may lose out. This shows the importance of understanding psychological costs and their effects on realizing one's full potential, entrepreneurial learning and persistence.

In this context, self-compassion, among others, has been proposed as a key element in learning from the failures and having the motivation to try again (Shepherd and Cardon, 2009). Previous research has theorized such a relationship in coping with project failures, and due to the similarities between high-risk project settings and entrepreneurship, researchers have pointed to possible implications for entrepreneurial organizations as well. For example, some entrepreneurs have a tendency to deal with failures and keep on with their entrepreneurship, while some others do not recover as efficiently and change direction. Would such a difference in entrepreneurial persistence and effective recovery from failures be explained through self-compassion? Today, the problem remains that there is still little understanding of the relationship between self-compassion and recovering from entrepreneurial failures due to lack of empirical research.

Understanding the role of self-compassion in entrepreneurial decision making, and more specifically coping with failures and challenges, is important to create environments that improve entrepreneurs' performance as well as their well-being during tougher times. Such an understanding could lead to insights that are useful in designing the entrepreneurship education of the future, and complement the existing curriculum which puts more focus on business plans, business models and startup financing methods to *avoid* failure in the first place. Individuals and teams who are trained to *cope* with failures better and stay motivated can achieve higher performance, and ultimately create new innovations and increase a country's competitiveness (Bettis and Prahalad, 1995; Löfsten, Lindelöf and Aaboen, 2006).

1.2. Purpose

This study aims to combine the fields of psychology and business, and empirically explore the role of self-compassion in the entrepreneurial setting, and particularly with a focus on coping with entrepreneurial failures. Through the entrepreneurs' own narratives of their journeys, we aim to understand if they experience self-compassion

in their professional lives, and if so, find out its implications on entrepreneurs' coping mechanisms, and on their learning and motivation to continue. We are particularly interested in observing how the entrepreneurs - themselves - make sense of the compassion concept.

1.2.1. Research Questions

This study aims to provide insights into entrepreneurs' sensemaking about the role of self-compassion in dealing with failures. In our exploration of this topic, our objective is to provide answers for the following research questions:

Does self-compassion have a role in coping with entrepreneurial failures?

- *If so, how do the entrepreneurs make sense of the relationship between self-compassion and dealing with their entrepreneurial failures?*

1.3. Thesis Outline

Figure 1 provides an outline of the thesis, which consists of eight chapters including appendix.

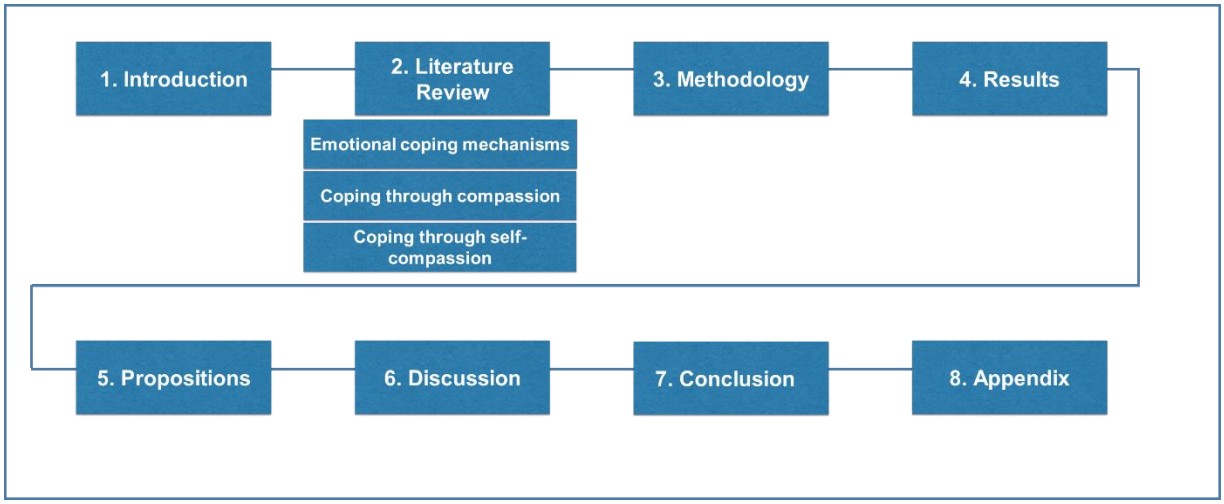


Figure 1. Thesis Outline

This (*first*) chapter has provided an overview of the main concepts in the study, described their importance and explained the basic relationships between them. It followed with the purpose of this thesis and research questions. The *second* chapter provides an overview of the literature, including a literature discussion, summary and

presentation of the research gap. Definitions and terminology is developed throughout this chapter in order to capture the context of multifaceted concepts. The *third* chapter describes the methodology used for the study. The abductive research approach is described with argumentation for the selected method, the processes for data collection and selection of participants is described, the analysis method is presented, and data quality and limitations of the method are discussed. The *fourth* chapter presents the participants (entrepreneurs who were interviewed) in detail, and describes the collected data (findings). The findings are analytically structured based on the emerging themes from the interviews. In this chapter, empirics and analysis are iterated and thus presented together. In the *fifth* chapter, the research questions are answered, and the findings are discussed as several propositions. Furthermore, the bridge between the findings and existing theories in the literature are established. In the *sixth* chapter, the findings and literature are discussed from a higher level. The *seventh* chapter is concluding the study and summarizes the propositions, contributions and further discusses limitations and future research. Finally, the *eighth* chapter presents the appendix consisting of the survey results and questions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Our review of the current literature on “entrepreneurship” and “compassion” revealed that there are few prior studies focusing on both of these concepts together. For this reason, we have extended our review to the adjacent areas for a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms associated with coping with failures. First, we have not restricted our search solely on entrepreneurial failures, but also looked at failures in other business settings, i.e. project failure or loss. Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial organizations pursue high-variance opportunities, similar to organizational projects, and they are likely to experience many project failures (McGrath, 1999). Therefore, we aimed to cover such project-based perspectives which might be applicable to entrepreneurial failures due to the similarity of their settings.

Secondly, due to limited prior research on compassion in the organizational setting, we have gone beyond business studies and reviewed compassion in its original context from the work of scholars in psychology field. Through combining the angles

of both disciplines, we aimed to present a broader picture of compassion and its underlying elements. In the end, such extensions of research have enabled us to be more knowledgeable in this matter and led us to take a critical perspective towards some theories.

The illustration below (Figure 2) presents an overview of this section. Firstly, entrepreneurial failures and challenges are reviewed and the working definition of *failure* for this thesis is established. Secondly, different coping mechanisms are reviewed, among which emotional coping mechanisms, compassion, self-compassion and fear of compassion are addressed in more detail. Finally, the summary and research gap is presented following a discussion.

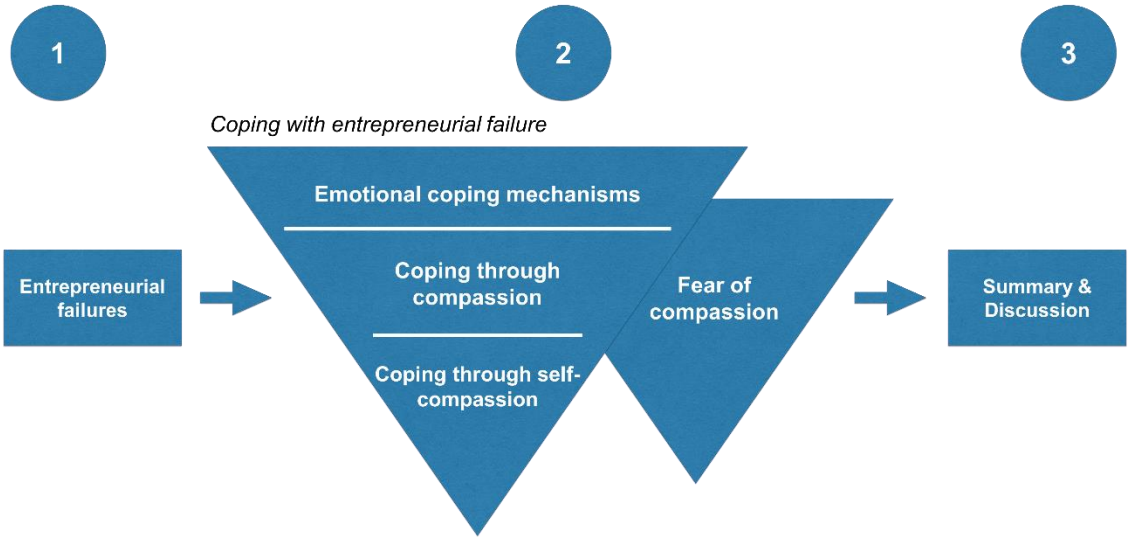


Figure 2. Literature Review Outline

2.2. Entrepreneurial failures

Through an entrepreneurial journey, one is expected to experience frequent turbulence. The scholars within entrepreneurship agree that the entrepreneurial journey is often described as bumpy and with a high degree of uncertainty (Ucbasaran et al., 2013; Rerup, 2005; Sarasvathy and Menon, 2004). Schollhammer (1991) points out that most new ventures fail largely because of the unexpected events that they face.

While researchers agree on the risks and turbulence that lies on the road of an entrepreneur, there is no consensus among the researchers regarding exactly what

constitutes an entrepreneurial failure. Some earlier researchers defined failure in strict terms, such as bankruptcy; whereas other studies defined it in broader terms, such as loss of projects or ownership (Ucbasaran et al., 2013). A potential critique entails that too strict definitions cannot capture the diversity of entrepreneurial failures, whereas broader definitions may not be applied to different circumstances consistently. For example, “loss of ownership” can be through the sales of the business, and the sale event might be considered as a success or a failure depending on the individual’s expectations regarding the price.

Entrepreneurs’ individual differences regarding the perception of failure is an important factor to be handled in a study closely related to emotions. It has been suggested that entrepreneurs have a high bonding and psychological ownership of their business (Shepherd and Cardon, 2009). This is in line with the previous research suggesting that individuals feel psychological ownership to their projects to the extent that they fulfill their needs for *autonomy*, *relatedness*, and *competence* (Kahn, 1990 and Pierce et al., 2001), which is applicable to entrepreneurship since most entrepreneurial engagements satisfy all these conditions. Since this strong ownership can amplify the psychological impact of failures, it can be predicted that challenges such as loss of a client or time invested in a wrong business model can become major sources of reduced psychological well-being.

Perception based interpretations of failure makes it a more dynamic and flexible concept, which can be applied to different individuals, times, and social contexts. Therefore, in this thesis, we have chosen this perspective for defining failure.

Because failure is a constant thing. Now we were talking about big failures, but failure is every day. - A participant in this study (Lars)

Emotional reactions to failures

Previous research in different settings of project failure have pointed out to the diversity of emotional reactions among individuals and how such emotions are shaped. For example, Shepherd, Patzelt and Wolfe (2011) suggest time- and context-dependency of emotional reactions towards failure, e.g. time elapsed since the failure can “heal the wounds” and reduce the emotional reaction surrounding the failure

experience, and the negative emotions over the failure were lower if the organization "normalizes" the failure. Furthermore, the study also suggests that the emotional reactions for project failure depends on the strength of the individual's coping mechanisms: the choice of focus on loss or restoration orientations, or oscillation between these two. Regarding this matter, a key take away is the interdependence of emotional reactions and coping mechanisms - as long as there are differences in individuals' emotional reactions to business failure, it could be expected to see differences in the way they cope with the failures.

2.3. Coping with entrepreneurial failures

The term "coping" refers to mastering, tolerating, or reducing various demands and conflicts through available resources (Folkman and Lazarus, 1980). Based on the resources utilized, coping can be either problem-focused or emotion-focused. Problem-focused coping involves a person's active efforts in managing the situation that causes distress, whereas emotion-focused coping involves the regulation and processing of stressful emotions (Folkman and Lazarus, 1980; Byrne and Shephard, 2015). It was previously suggested that entrepreneurs do not show much difference in their problem-focused coping mechanisms, but those who had higher levels of emotion-focused coping reflected higher levels of progress in making sense of the business failure. (Byrne and Shephard, 2015).

Emotional coping mechanisms

Among emotion-focused failure coping mechanisms, the dimensions that are prominently investigated by the researchers are the *learning processes* after a failure event, and *motivation to try again*. According to Cope and Watts (2000), the term "learning" can have different meanings, but many of the scholars have offered a general definition of learning such as Huber (1991): "An entity learns if, through its processing of information, the range of its potential behaviors is changed". An important part of the definition is that learning leads to the potential to behave differently, even if it may represent a cognitive change that is difficult to observe from the outside or quantify (Marsick 1990). Such a potential in changing one's behavior imply applying the learning, hence trying again and moving forward.

In entrepreneurship

The previous research in entrepreneurship have investigated the role of emotions in learning from failure and the motivation to try again from different angles. For example, regarding learning from failure, Shepherd (2003) described how *grief* - the negative emotional reaction to the loss of a business - can obstruct an entrepreneur's ability to learn from the experience and, thus, proposed a mode of coping with grief to maximize learning (namely, oscillating between loss and restoration orientations). When it comes to motivation to try again, Hayward et al (2010) conceptualizes and takes up psychological costs as a perspective in their research and argues that it is the *confidence* that entrepreneurs possess matters. Highly confident entrepreneurs are more likely to get back up after a failure because of a higher level of social, emotional, cognitive and financial resilience. Other researchers have pointed out *passion or grit* to explain the persistent motivation to pursue entrepreneurship despite challenges and failures (Rerup, 2005).

In organizations

The research within organizations argue that organizations as well as individuals learn from their past experience (Rerup, 2005; Greve, 2003). For example, McFadyen and Cannella (2004) recognizes the importance of *knowledge transfer*. Lankau and Scandura (2002) concluded that learning from *mentorships* is an efficient way of personal learning. Personal learning impacts organizations and projects significantly due to the impact on job satisfaction, role ambiguity and employee turnover, which decreases personal learning. Furthermore, it is suggested that learning from failure is a process that can be learnt by *repetition* and developed as a skill over time (Gilbert, 2009; Schuyler and Davidson, 2015). Their results indicated that time is very important for learning from project failure. Time to personally *reflect* on what went wrong is also addressed and consistent with the organizational learning literature (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Cannon and Edmondson, 2001, 2005). The belief that people can learn most from their failure experiences is supported by Bettis and Prahalad (1995), who claimed that they are more interesting to investigate than pure success stories (Sitkin, 1992; Chuang and Baum, 2003).

Shepherd, Patzelt and Wolfe (2011) highlights the need for empirical research on how organizational members created knowledge from failures and committed new knowledge to their organization. In the article they have theorized on how to cope with project failure, and how to move forward afterwards. Based on their literature review of the area, the two sources of learning are:

i) Individual's performance (project related learning), focused on the causes of failure, for example how to recognize signal of failure better (e.g. “I can see earlier the signs that a project is in trouble”).

ii) Individual's personal attribute (person-related, or personal learning), source of learning mentions both learning about self and others, for example acts towards self (e.g. “I am a more forgiving person”) after the failures and toward others (e.g. “I am more tolerant of others shortcomings”).

Another possibility for understanding personal growth from business failure is presented by Fredrickson (2003). She argued that *negative emotions* narrow people´s mindset and *positive emotions* broaden them. In other words, optimism and positive emotions can overweigh the effect of negative emotions such as stress. Positive emotions can provide meaning to ordinary events and give meaning and compassion through gratitude, love and appreciation and trigger an upwards spiral of compassion and positive emotions to oneself and the group. This research highlighted the need for developing methods to experience positive emotions more often.[3] While the positive emotions can undo the impact of negative emotions in narrowing attention and learning from failure, it can also help build resources to deal with adversity and support the motivation to try again.[4]

[3] Positive emotions, such as pride, gratitude and elevation, can also exist on a group level and broadens others’ mindset and helps others in the group to share these feelings and develop compassion towards others.

[4] Concerning the field of entrepreneurship, researchers have *not* always studied failure and learning processes/mediators, but instead studied the relationship between success (not failing in the first place) and emotions. For example, Scheier, Carver and Bridges (2001) and Hmieleski and Baron (2009) pointed out a correlation between optimism and entrepreneurial success (revenue and growth).

2.4. Coping through compassion

The word “compassion” has its roots in the Greek word *pathein* which means “to suffer or be part of suffering” (Dictionary, 2017) and the Latin word *compati* which is about sharing the suffering (Latdict, 2017). In combination, compassion is linked to motives, emotions, abilities and competencies to be supportive, understanding, kind, and helpful to others (Neff and Dahm, 2015; Davidson and Harrington, 2002; Neff, 2017)

Compassion has played a central role in many societies and religions throughout history. Not surprisingly, this phenomenon has been mentioned in various religious writings, especially in Hinduism and Buddhism. Drawing from this heritage, compassion has gained more interest in the Western world over the past years. The increasing interchange between Buddhism and psychology could be an explanation why compassion has recently gained interest among academics, and that started within the psychological field of research (Neff 2003). Today, the phenomenon has become a growing area of research within health disciplines, such as psychology and medicine; and has spilled over to business studies.

Spanning multiple disciplines through time, several definitions of compassion have emerged in various fields, including organizational studies. Still, there is not one single definition among the scholars of what compassion is, and there is not a consensus on how to best capture and measure compassion (Strauss et al., 2016). However, in the organizational context, compassion most frequently refers to the three-step approach consisting of (1) *noticing* - having an attention and awareness towards others’ suffering; (2) *feeling* - caring and being touched by another human’s situation, mistake and flaws; and (3) *responding* - taking an open-minded and non-judgmental attitude towards that person, and acting in ways aiming to alleviate their suffering, (Kanov et al., 2004). In this process, the common humanity between people is recognized.

While compassion can be experienced individually, it can also become a collective capacity in groups and work organizations. Kanov et al. (2004) describes organizational compassion where “members of a system collectively notice, feel, and respond to pain experienced by members of that system”. Furthermore, Dutton et al. (2005) explains how individual compassion gets socially organized and how this process becomes a collective competence in its ability to alleviate suffering. Dutton et

al. (2011) refers to compassion as a collective capability that can shape organizational culture.

It is important to understand the practical implications of working with compassion and to what extent the level of compassion can be influenced in an organizational setting. Gilbert (2009) and others (Neff, 2003a; Andersson, 2016) believe that compassion can be trained and developed by compassionate mind training, and feelings of inner warmth, safeness and soothing can be developed. Through this process, increasing the level of compassion leads to a greater feeling of security, meaningfulness and reduced levels of stress and anxiety (Andersson, 2016; Gilbert et al., 2012). Affection and care create a safe place and positive feelings about the self and others (Bowlby, 1969; Mikulincer and Shaver, 2007). Perceived social support is associated with positive well-being of individuals, and therefore organizations can be places where compassion is given and received (Kanov et al., 2004).

2.5. Coping through self-compassion

The term “self-compassion” is derived from the overarching definition of compassion, and means the compassion given to oneself. It is showing oneself love and caring attitude and to feel the pain without being judgmental, but rather acting to soothe it (Neff and Dahm, 2015). Self-compassion involves the way one “speaks with oneself”, and considered as an attitude towards life that increases our health and wellbeing (Neff 2017; Gilbert 2009). The definition of self-compassion implies that we need self-compassion most at the time of hardships and failures, i.e. when facing a challenge in living up to one’s own expectations.

The term self-compassion consists of three components: self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness (Neff, 2017).

Self-kindness (versus self-judgment): Self-kindness is to have a relationship with oneself that faces and understands when we suffer, fail or feel as if we are not enough; and not respond to these feelings with judgment and self-criticism. Instead, it is to recognize that we are not perfect and failing is inevitable. To be self-kind is to be gentle and sympathetic and actively do something that calms and softens the feelings that

hurt. If reality of imperfection is denied, pushed away and worked against feelings of stress, self-criticism and frustration increases.

Common humanity (versus isolation): Common humanity is the realization that all humans suffer, and that it is a part of the human experience. For example, instead of thinking “Why me?” it is thinking “Just as everyone else, it now happened to me”. This can be a technique for reducing the feeling of loneliness, isolation and shame (Andersson, 2016). Reducing isolation and seeing suffering as a part of the human experience increases feelings of empathy and closeness through identification with others.

Mindfulness (versus over-identification): Mindfulness can be defined as a state of mind where one observes thoughts and feelings without judging, suppressing or denying them, but rather with acceptance. Within mindfulness, the painful feelings should be held in mind and confronted, but still without over-identifying oneself with the feelings which then can become destructive. This helps to set negative thoughts and feelings in a larger perspective. The opposite of being mindful, on the other hand, is to become aware of negative emotions yet pushing away the pain. In doing so, there is a risk to over-identify oneself with the feelings and increase the risk of becoming isolated and egocentric.

The closest theoretical study about this research topic was conducted by Shepherd and Cardon (2009), who proposed self-compassion as a strength when dealing with project failures. Their proposed conceptual framework (Figure 3) indicates that self-compassion could explain the differences between individuals in terms of why some people can rebound from failures, more specifically learn from them, and have the motivation to try again. The below figure represents how project failure can create a deficit in psychological well-being and lead to emotional reaction, as well as how self-compassion can be used to overcome those negative feelings for coping with the failure. This theoretical framework was suggested for future researchers to test with empirical data.

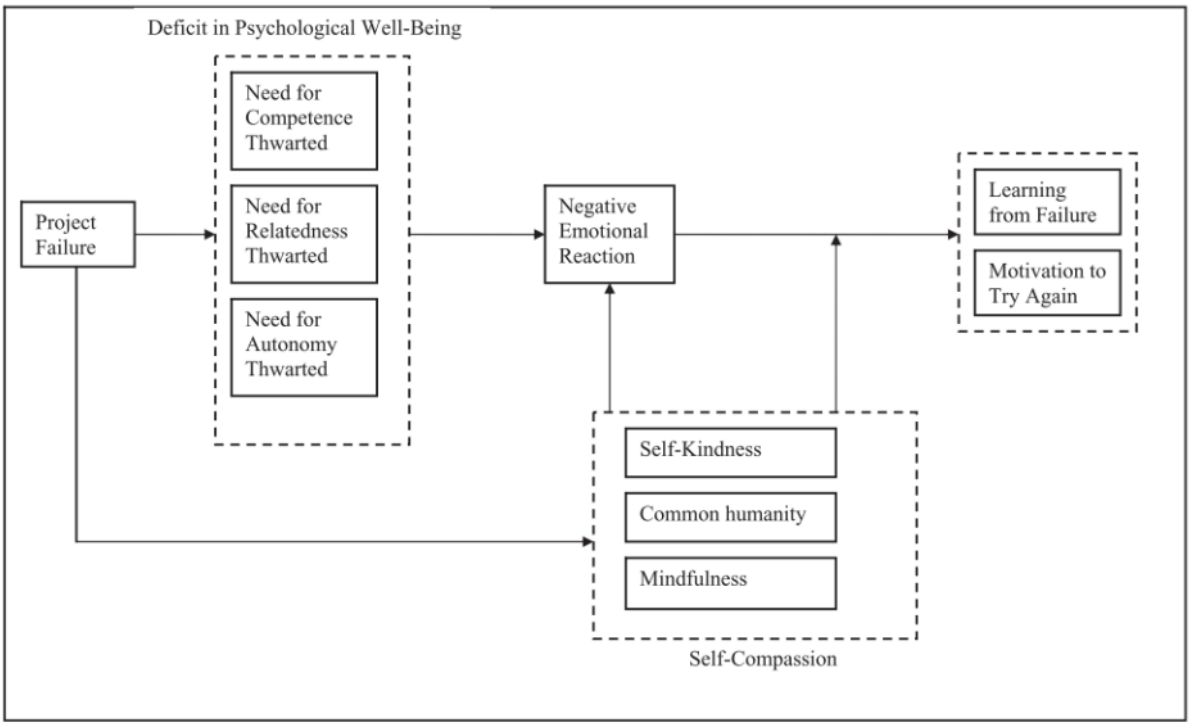


Figure 3. A model of an organizational member's emotional process from project failure (Shepherd and Cardon, 2009)

The closest empirical study about this topic has been carried out by Neff, Hsieh and Dejitterat (2005) in the setting of a midterm examination in an American university. The research quantitatively examined the relationship between self-compassion, perceived failure from the grade and students' coping strategies.[5] The study found that students with higher level of self-compassion had higher mastery goals, higher perceived competence and less fear of failure. Furthermore, the study also showed a positive correlation between high levels of self-compassion and intrinsic motivation, and a negative correlation with anxiety.

Other researches have also studied parts of self-compassion. For example, Rerup (2005) conceptualizes on learning from past experiences and how the entrepreneurial journey is affected by the degree of *mindfulness*, one of the components of self-compassion. He argues that, with a higher degree of mindfulness, entrepreneurs can learn more from their past experiences (experience-based learning). The mechanism behind this is the enabling nature of mindfulness in codifying knowledge and making

[5] Considering this study, while observing the similarities in our research aims, the difference in the magnitudes of the failure should also be noted, since a midterm failure is usually considered substantially smaller than a venture failure.

individuals aware of what they know, including tacit knowledge. From this perspective, mindfulness can be seen as a capability that makes it possible for the entrepreneurs to access the experience-based knowledge which they have built in a more effective way. Therefore, this would imply that mindfulness can be used as a part of the learning process including failures and particularly good for experienced-based learning which entrepreneurship is often associated with (Rerup, 2005).

Previous critique towards self-compassion

Given the proposed benefits of mindfulness, it is not surprising that a number of organizations have shown increased attention to mindfulness and use trainings to reducing stress, improving employee well-being, improving emotional intelligence, or improving performance (Reb and Choi, 2014). However, it has been criticized to be made a tool for employees to push and work harder - which is "divorcing" mindfulness from its original context, i.e. the Buddhist perspectives (Purser and Milillo, 2015). It has been argued that such a deviation from the original context "reduces" mindfulness to a self-help technique, and gives way to further enforcement of power from employers towards employees, and promotes a workaholic culture[6].

Reb and Choi (2014) propose that more research within the area of organizational mindfulness must be performed to enrich the literature. Benefits has been shown and are well documented, but there are more to be determined, such as the relationships between mindfulness and performance. Organizations still want to see evidence that their trainings pay off for the business, so it is suggested that more detailed research is necessary to determine what type of organizations are difficult to develop mindfulness in, and which situations it might be less efficient as a tool (Reb and Cho, 2014).

From an entrepreneurial perspective, Rerup (2005) argues that the current state of mindfulness studies only acknowledges the positive aspects of mindfulness and excludes the negative. Negative aspects are vaguely discussed in terms of opportunity

[6] Regarding misuses of mindfulness, Purser and Milillo's study (2015) refers to the examples of Google's "Search Inside Yourself" programme which is leading to a 80 hour/week working culture and U.S. Marines' "Mindfulness-Based Mind Fitness Training which prepares marines to "combat battle stress".

cost, such as effort, energy and time spent on building mindfulness, that the entrepreneur could possibly have spent on other needs. Rerup (2005) concludes that more research needs to be conducted to establish potential drawbacks with mindfulness.

2.5.1. Relationship between compassion and self-compassion

Even though self-compassion can be presented separately from compassion, they are considered as part of the overall compassion construct, which has different ways to "flow" among individuals. In other words, the term "flow of compassion" describes the different ways compassion can flow, and compassion is classified as flowing in three ways by Gilbert (2014a)

(i) Self-compassion (compassion to self), which embraces cultivating and developing compassion within oneself, and directing compassion towards the self

(ii) Compassion for others (compassion flowing out), which involves directing compassion outward towards other people

(iii) Compassion from others (compassion flowing in), which includes experiencing and accepting compassion from other people

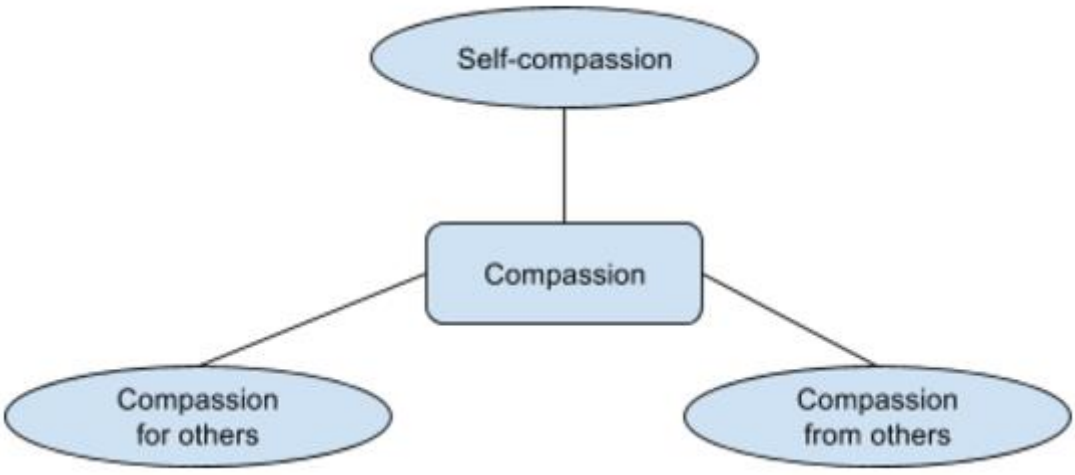


Figure 4. Flowing directions of compassion

Some researchers have argued for correlations between the three ways that compassion can flow. For example, Neff, Hsieh and Dejitterat (2005) argues that, in order to feel compassion towards others, one must first be able to feel compassion towards the self, which is similar to the Buddhist understanding of compassion. In fact, according to the Buddhist origin and religious perspective, compassion is given to our own as well as to others suffering, and does not differ between compassion and self-compassion.[7] In another study, Cosley et al. (2010) proposed that individuals with a greater concern for others (e.g. giving compassion) will be better prepared to benefit from social support (e.g. receiving compassion) than individuals low in compassion, hence compassion can become a social capability through an upward or downward spiral of reciprocity. However, a continuous and external flow (giving) of compassion, in the absence of self-compassion, can lead to burnout. Feeling overwhelmed by competing needs and demands of external actors may contribute to compassion fatigue (Gilbert and Choden, 2013).

Strauss et al. (2016) conducted a literature review and found conflicting arguments regarding whether compassion and self-compassion are part of an overall construct, and how these different elements correlate with, or cause, each other. On one hand, Buddhist thinking argues that self-compassion comes together with showing 'true' compassion towards others. However, studies by Neff, Hsieh and Dejitterat (2005), Neff and Pommier (2013) and Pommier (2010) suggested that associations between self-compassion and compassion may be weak, or even non-existent in their empirical tests. Strauss et al (2016) argue that it is unclear whether such conflicting results reflect a genuine independence between these concepts or the possibility of definitional problems, weaknesses of correlational study designs or limitations with current measures (e.g. Williams et al., 2014).

On the other hand, some studies suggest that experiencing compassion may lead to self-compassion. For example, Schafer (1964, 1968) argues that an individual's ability to experience and pay adequate attention to own emotions is developed through the empathetic responses of the environment that one experienced as a child. Stolorow, Brandchaft, and Atwood (1987) agrees and argues that there is a link between internal

[7] Nevertheless, the differentiated definitions have been widely accepted in the research community, and the concepts will be used separately in the context of this research as well.

emotions and the empathy received from early age. Both studies are suggesting that compassionate family relationships during childhood increases the likelihood to become self-compassionate individuals later on in life, something also supported by Gilbert et al (2014b). Even though these studies refer to the childhood settings, they point out to the importance of one's environment in the ability to develop self-compassion as a human being.

2.6. Fear of compassion

Psychologists believe that compassion can be trained and considered as a skill to learn. Through compassion focused therapies, psychologists usually work with developing a compassionate mind among their patients. According to Gilbert (2009), much of this work addresses people's fears and resistance towards compassion and self-compassion, which is found to be well correlated with psychopathology symptoms (Gilbert, 2011). Compassion focused therapies have also been proved to reduce fears of compassion over time (Liotti and Gilbert, 2011). For example, Jazaieri et al. (2013) developed a 9-week compassion cultivation training based on Buddhist concepts, combining in-class training and compassion focused meditations, and showed reduction in fear of compassion.

To put the research in a more quantitative perspective, researchers have developed "fear of compassion" scales (Gilbert et al., 2014b). These scales are threefold, which correspond to the three types of flow of compassion:

i) Fear of compassion for self, consisting of 15 items, e.g. "Getting on in life is about being tough rather than compassionate"

ii) Fear of compassion from others, consisting of 13 items, e.g. "Wanting others to be kind to oneself is a weakness"

iii) Fear of compassion for others, consisting of 10 items, e.g. ""I fear that being too compassionate makes people an easy target".

Gilbert et al. (2012) found evidence that fear of compassion is linked to fear of happiness in general, issues with emotional processing and issues with mindfulness. They argue that issues with emotional processing, e.g. the fear of connecting with

one's emotions, lead people to actively resist engaging in compassionate experiences, and hinders their ability to develop compassion. In a study by Gilbert et al. (2014b), fear of compassion is reviewed: Firstly, blocking compassion increases vulnerability and likelihood of mental disorders in general including burnout, stress and anxiety. One common reason for fear of compassion is unprocessed griefs, and the pain that is deeply kept inside us. If stimulating, e.g. grieving, some get overwhelmed and it results in attempts of blocking out the emotions and compassion. Secondly, research indicates that the level of empathy plays an important part in the ability to develop compassion for self and others. Empathy is especially compromised during stressful situations (Liotti and Gilbert, 2011).

Furthermore, Andersson (2016) brings up fear of compassion from an everyday perspective and touches upon reasons that lead to a heightened fear of self-compassion. For example, showing kindness to oneself and opening up to pain creates a fear of losing what has been achieved. Developing self-compassion often implies to get in touch with painful feelings and experiences, which can be a painful and overwhelming process. Feelings of self-contempt, and that we do not deserve to feel good, might also appear when we develop self-compassion. Many lack courage to face pain that has been pushed back for a long time, and feel that it is too late to do anything. After having overcome the initial obstacles of painful feelings, fear of emotions is replaced by compassion. Positive emotions and higher degree of meaning takes over, even if we face painful events in the future as well (Andersson, 2016). Another fear of compassion is regarding the belief that drive, ambition and hard work takes one further. From that perspective, would it be possible to reach as far if we show kindness to ourselves? Other than the painful feelings, there can be many other reasons people fear self-compassion and face obstacles developing self-compassion. These could be, for example shame, self-criticism, the fear of becoming a coward that people can take advantage of, feeling defenseless, passive/lazy, losing control, losing one’s inner drive and not perform (Andersson, 2016; Gilbert et al., 2014b).

2.7. Literature discussion

The literature review shows that the organizational research has still very few studies regarding entrepreneurship and compassion. However, we believe that the reasons for this is not solely a low awareness of compassion in organizational research, but

rather labeling of concepts. New concepts within compassion are being developed continuously. Some examples of these new expressions are “self-compassion”, “flow of compassion”, “fear of compassion” and “compassion focused therapy”. For example, when Kanov et al (2004) researches about compassion as part of organizational culture and capabilities, many of these new concepts were not developed far, and thus were not available for reference. Furthermore, there are other studies that focus on emotions and learning from failure experience, such as Shepherd, Patzelt and Wolfe (2011). Several sections in this article clearly relates to areas of compassion (e.g. how to cope with feelings of pain after project failure); however, the word compassion or any relationships are not brought up in the article. There might be other studies conducted in Positive Organizational Science (POS) through the lens of other emotional states, such as optimism, fear of failure, which would have commonalities with the concept of compassion without being labeled as such. Even though the domain of compassion is in its nascent stage in organizational studies, we believe that it might be larger than it is getting credit for. At this time, recognizing such extensions in those studies requires deep familiarity with the concepts. Nevertheless, in the future, a detailed review could show the actual breadth and depth of compassion in organizational research.

The literature review presented in this study combines several disciplines, mainly focusing on compassion and self-compassion in both psychology and business studies. The psychology aspects aim to provide a more solid foundation, background and clarity towards the key concepts of this study in general as well as to address where the gaps exist in the organizational literature. Due to the lack of literature directly connecting these concepts in entrepreneurial setting, our review aims to establish the links between them, i.e. challenges, failures, and coping mechanisms, and may include our own interpretation to some extent.

2.8. Summary and research gap

As mentioned before, there are few studies exploring self-compassion in the organizational setting, and even fewer in entrepreneurship. However, the studies that does explore the link between compassion and organizations, for example Rerup, (2005), Shephard et al. (2009), Ucbasaran et al. (2013) are often theorizing about the relationship, yet empirical support found in such research is little. Several scholars

have suggested that the theorized roles of self-compassion in entrepreneurial organizations should be further investigated (Rerup, 2005; Neff and Dahm, 2015). Ucbasaran et al. (2013) also points out the need for empirical analysis to validate and support the existing knowledge.

Furthermore, Neff and Dahm (2015) is highlighting the need for a more rigid knowledge of when, how and for whom the positive aspects of mindfulness and self-compassion can be applicable. Newer concepts within compassion studies, such as fear of compassion, is still under-researched from the perspective of organizations, and even more so within entrepreneurship. Therefore, while positive aspects of compassion and self-compassion are theorized to some extent, critical perspectives are still at an even more novice state.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Approach

The research questions are by their nature multifaceted and complex. To reach conclusions about the role of self-compassion on entrepreneurship, a deeper understanding of the subject - on both a theoretical and practical level - is necessary. Due to this nature, and the nascent level of the research on the selected topic, an explorative study (a preliminary investigation) is preferred to expand current research and uncover the problem in empirical entrepreneurial processes.

Since the aim of the study is to investigate a priorly under-explored research topic in the business context, this study is conducted with an abductive method (Ryan et al., 2002). The abductive method is a combination between deductive and inductive methods (Dubois and Gadde 2002). Dubois and Gadde (2002) alongside with Lee (1991) argue that the abductive method is preferred when the objective is to discover new insights. The abductive method allows going back and forth between the empirical findings and theory. It allows the authors to analyze the case in order to rethink and improve the theoretical framework along the way. Therefore, we have used this method to contribute to theory-building on the topics at hand.

Based on our aim to follow an exploratory and abductive approach, according to Holme and Solvang (1997) and Bluhm et al. (2011), a qualitative, interview based

approach is preferred. The method provides the possibility to understand hardships of entrepreneurship and how they reason and deal with failure. By conducting semi-structured interviews, the participants are allowed for a broader spectrum for their responses in order to catch the wealth of details in the narratives (Bryman and Bell 2013). Their narratives reflect and give meaning to events (Orr, 1995), and thus plays a significant part in the process of sensemaking (Brown, Stacey and Nandhakumar, 2008). This provides a possibility to understand the process of emotional reactions to failure, the will to try again and if or how self-compassion plays a role in this complex process.

While the main method of the survey is qualitative, we have complemented it with a quantitative survey using the Self-Compassion-Scale (SCS) developed by Neff (2003b) to measure the participants' level of self-compassion. With this, first of all, we aimed to gain a better understanding of entrepreneurs' self-compassion levels and be able to see if narratives of entrepreneurs are consistent with their reported self-compassion scales. The SCS scale is becoming a standard for many scholars using it to measure self-compassion[8]. Neff (2016) discusses the SCS scale through a study which concludes that it is valid and theoretically correct. It has also been widely referred by other researchers, for example by Pommier (2010), Strauss et al. (2016), Gilbert (2009) and Gilbert et al. (2014b).

3.2. Data Collection

3.2.1. Study population

In this study, we use a multiple case study approach to reach insights through empirical data. We chose this approach since existing theories are not useful for exploring the specific research questions. For this purpose, we have worked with 13 entrepreneurs, among which there were 11 males and 2 females, through in-depth interviews (each lasting 60 to 90 minutes). Our study population consisted of current and former entrepreneurs[9]. In this context, entrepreneur is defined as i) a person that

[8] Nevertheless, the topic is a relatively new research area and there has also been criticism towards the SCS scale (Muris et al., 2016).

[9] Former entrepreneurs are not self-employed any longer. See section 4.1 for a detailed description.

played an active role in the company, equivalent to having the venture as main occupation (full-time work) and ii) having founded or co-founded the company and kept having ownership stake through the period and iii) who are not freelancers with individual self-employment goals but rather having venture growth ambitions.

Several aspects were considered when selecting the study population. First, we aimed to focus on experienced entrepreneurs, who has had at least three years of experience as an entrepreneur and experience from more than one entrepreneurial venture. This improves the possibility that the entrepreneur has experienced more ups and downs and allows us to uncover potential trends in their coping mechanisms. Second, we have aimed to diversify the population and include both commercial and social entrepreneurs. Third, to make sure of a broader understanding, we have targeted different age groups and genders.

Throughout the process, over 30 entrepreneurs were invited to take part in the study, of which the first 13 who accepted the invitations were included in the study. Since these participants were able to supply varied and detailed accounts of their experiences, and we were able to capture satisfactory level of richness in the material, we have limited the participants to the initial 13 entrepreneurs. This meant that, due to the time required for the coding and detailed analysis of the existing data, we had to reject several other entrepreneurs who also showed willingness to participate. 9 participants were selected through convenience, and the snowball approach was adopted for the remaining 4, as each respondent was asked to recommend other participants who might be able to articulate their views about the topic. We have observed that connecting to new participants through their referrals were helpful to establish the trust and openness in the interviews about such a sensitive and personal topic.

3.2.2. Primary Data

Our primary source of data has been semi-structured interviews with study participants. The interviews mainly took place in Stockholm, Sweden. The preferred option was to conduct face to face interviews when possible. We met with the participants mostly in their offices for their convenience and to have privacy due to the sensitivity of the topic. Nevertheless, since some entrepreneurs had limited office

space, we met at another place where they would also be comfortable, such as the school or a cafeteria. In rare occasions, we also held interviews over Skype due to their presence abroad.

For all interviews, a set of questions were asked, covering entrepreneurs' history, their expectations from entrepreneurship, their main challenges and failures, and their coping mechanisms in such situations. For comparability of the answers received, we have planned the overall structure beforehand and followed a consistent sequence of interview topics, while specific questions could be adapted to interviewee's own experiences. First, we discussed how the participant started their entrepreneurial journey and what their expectations and ambitions are. Second, we asked them to describe what their main challenges and failures were in this journey. Third, we asked questions about how they have coped with them, and if there were any differences between how they handled similar problems before and today. Fourth, a discussion took place regarding how they would describe what "self-compassion" is, whether they think they are self-compassionate indeed, and how this might be affecting their choices and persistence in entrepreneurship. In accordance with the propositions of Shepherd, Patzelt and Wolfe (2011), that time reduces the negative emotions on project failure and heals wounds, we have looked for the differences in their early and late career failures, and asked about how they made sense of it back then and now.

During this process, we started with open questions, which allowed them to speak freely about the topic. However, we have shown the flexibility and interest to follow up on their answers and add depth to the interview when they touched upon the topics of this thesis. In connection to the abductive method, this helped to identify new areas of interest along the way of the process. For example, if we noticed a few participants describing a topic independently of each other, this was something we discussed and explored in further interviews.

All interviews were recorded and notes were taken to capture what was not actually said in the room. After the interviews, an internal discussion took place amongst ourselves regarding what was actually meant and said. This was an important part of the data collection process, since some of the participants were not familiar with the self-compassion concept. This led to a wide range of interpretations by the entrepreneurs themselves, and we discussed their approach to the topic in their own

context. In other words, while discussing their experiences, it was not expected from the participants to label their experiences with terms “compassion” or “self-compassion” to be considered as inputs. A standard definition of compassion was nevertheless given to all interviewees, whereas their different interpretations has been taken into consideration while analyzing and discussing the interviews.

Since the topic of failures was sometimes emotionally difficult for the participants, we adjusted our interview approach to make it easier for them. Firstly, we did not aim to be very “efficient” in the process, and increased the interview durations with an open ended meeting schedule. Secondly, we introduced ourselves in detail, and allowed them to get to know us personally to feel comfortable. In rare cases, we also shared more of our own experiences and showed vulnerability, with the purpose to encourage them to share their own feelings. Lastly, we informed the participants in advance what the session was going to be about to give them the time reflect about the topics in case they wanted to.

As previously mentioned, besides the qualitative interview questions, a survey to assess the participants’ level of self-compassion is applied. The collected information has been used secondarily to the qualitative questions. This was the self-compassion survey developed by Neff (2003b), which consists of 26 questions with a five graded scale. Participants filled the survey before the interview, which also allowed them to see what self-compassion is about, besides supplying their answers to us.

3.2.3. Secondary Data

We have used public data to understand the career of the entrepreneurs, the status of their companies, and their personal reflections. Examples of secondary data used has been company websites, press releases, LinkedIn profiles, financial information, blog posts, news articles through Retriever and Google searches. This enabled us to get a better general understanding of their history, background and media coverage.

3.3. Analysis Method

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative data analysis should be conducted in six steps. These steps build upon each other as a process in the following order: i) code the data ii) note down reflections through the data collection

process iii) split up the data to find similarities and differences iv) identify patterns v) identify generalizations vi) compare the generalizations toward theory. These six steps have been followed to a large extent in our process of analyzing our collected data. Below is a further description of the process.

In order to systematically analyze the responses, several coding categories was created. These categories included, for example, the main concepts of the self-compassion construct (such as isolation, over-identification, self-judgment, fear of self-compassion) and other empirical findings from the interviews (such as new identity development, mindfulness training). The transcription and analysis of interviews was conducted as an ongoing process as part of the abductive overall approach.

Once all data was collected, we went through all interviews once more with greater accuracy. The categorizations were then reviewed collectively and compared towards each other to take the analysis one level further. In order to further explore relations between interviews, an overall matrix was created with several coding parameters related to participants (such as ambition levels (High/Moderate/Low), self-compassion training (Y/N), burnout experience (Y/N)). Furthermore, the scores from the SCS survey was also analyzed and broken down into the subsections (Self-Kindness, Self-Judgment, Common Humanity, Isolation, Mindfulness and Over-Identification) and were included.

During the beginning of this process, we contacted a psychologist and researcher in compassion, and interviewed her to receive guidance and feedback regarding how to interpret different narratives. She has provided valuable input from a trained psychologist's perspective, and shared her recommendations about the first few interviews, and allowed us to have greater confidence in analyzing future interviews.

3.4. Data Quality and Limitations

3.4.1. Generalizability

As we mentioned before, a multiple case study is the preferred method when exploring a new area. While the case study method has advantages to effectively collect field-based data to build new theory, it also has potential disadvantages. Such

disadvantages can occur, for example due to a selection bias in selecting the cases, and therefore limit the generalizability of the results.

In the entrepreneurship field, any research in which participants are selected among the current entrepreneurs would create a success bias. In our study, we aimed to reduce the bias through including both current and former entrepreneurs, e.g. those who have left the entrepreneurship path and pursuing other careers. We have also taken steps to ensure representation of different types of ventures (social / commercial), age groups, entrepreneurial stages (from ex-entrepreneurs, to new, and some with extensive experience), and genders. We believe these precautions have limited the risks of generalizability issues, if not solved completely.

On the other hand, we acknowledge that the answers of the research question is dependent on the social context and is likely to be affected by cultural interpretations of failure. Since our research was designed to include cases from the Stockholm, Sweden area, a bias on the cultural differences in interpreting entrepreneurship, failure and compassion can be expected. Yet, the strength of this qualitative study lies in the depth and presentation of rich data. In accordance with Bryman and Bell (2013), we agree that details in data is the strength of studies of this kind.

3.4.2. Reliability

According to Bryman and Bell (2011) reliability is particularly important for quantitative research. Reliability is commonly measured by i) stability over time and ii) internal reliability (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Stability over time is perceived as high if a study in a different setting shows similar results with the same methodology. However, in an exploratory study, it is often an issue due to the fact that human behavior is individual and changes over time and social context (Merriam, 1994). Cassell and Symon (2004) agree and point out that there is always limitations to replicability in a quantitative study, especially case studies. The setting is contextual and depends partly on the author's interpretation, and the way questions are posed.

To increase the reliability of this study, we have presented the methodology transparently, including data about the participants (see section 4.1), to the extent that we can protect their privacy. Furthermore, the research background, the collection of

data and the analytical tools applied are clearly described with their results. Meanwhile, both authors have actively participated in the analysis of interviews and questioned the likelihood of subjective interpretations before any input was chosen to include in the study. Lastly, since the area of research combines psychology and business, advisors with both these backgrounds were consulted to make sense of complex relations between them.

3.4.3. Validity

As mentioned before, the social context is in constant change which makes the trustworthiness difficult to determine (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In order to still reach the highest validity possible, the interview questions have been re-formulated during the research and adopted to the participants' relevant experiences. Furthermore, to improve the quality of the interview answers, the main discussion topics were shared with the participants in advance. This made it possible for them to reflect about the topics and have easier access to their memories. Additionally, selecting participants from different age groups and experience levels provided a more holistic view of the relationship between self-compassion and entrepreneurs' decision making, and to be able to compare across the social context depending on these variables. Lastly, most interviews have been conducted face-to-face at a physical location which reduces the risk of misinterpretations through the body language.

4. Results

4.1. Study Participants

Below table summarizes the demographics and a short background on entrepreneurial history of participants. Fictitious names are used throughout the thesis to protect the participants' identities.

Table 1. Profile of participant entrepreneurs

Name	***Gender***	***Age***	***Entrepreneurship Experience***	***Business Type***
Erik	**M**	***30-35***	**10-15**	**Commercial**
- He has experience from several ventures, most failed, except the current one which he has been working with over 5 years. The company is now midsized and in rapid growth.				

- He has high expectations for himself and the business. In total the organization has collected 30+ MSEK capital from investors. - He has experienced burnout.				
Lars	**M**	**40-45**	**15+**	**Commercial**
- Serial entrepreneur, who cannot see himself in a regular job. He wants to work on ideas that can disrupt business models. - Since he has financial security from successfully selling a previous company, his expectations from entrepreneurship is no longer making a living.				
William	**M**	**30-35**	**5-10**	**Commercial**
- He has experience from three ventures, had both successful and unsuccessful businesses. - He has high expectations from himself, especially because he finds himself as an experienced entrepreneur.				
Anders	**M**	**30-35**	**5-10**	**Social**
- Previous entrepreneur who currently works with investing. - He has been trained in mindfulness and self-compassion, and familiar with the concepts.				
Johan	**M**	**30-35**	**10-15**	**Social**
- He has been working with the same venture for a long time. - His expectations for himself are really high and he wants to change the world.				
Maria	**F**	**25-30**	**5-10**	**Social**
-She has been working extremely hard and experienced a burnout. - She has attended mindfulness training and practicing yoga.				
Anna	**F**	**25-30**	**<5**	**Commercial**
- Her business did not take off, switched to a regular job.				
Per	**M**	**25-30**	**<5**	**Commercial**
- He has worked with two ventures, first one successfully sold. - He has high expectations for his venture and has received 10+ MSEK in several rounds of start-up capital.				
Lucas	**M**	**45-50**	**15+**	**Commercial**
- Previous entrepreneur who pursued many ventures, some being very successful. He has financial stability and his expectations are still high. - He is currently investing in other startups.				
Oscar	**M**	**35-40**	**15+**	**Commercial**
- He is working on his third venture. The first one never took off. - He had external investors, his expectations were really high.				
Jan	**M**	**35-40**	**5-10**	**Commercial**
- He has experience from multiple ventures, one of which failed. - He has financial stability.				

Hans	**M**	**25-30**	**<5**	**Commercial**
- He has experience from multiple ventures, none of them took off.				
Lennart	**M**	**35-40**	**10-15**	**Commercial**
- He has experience from multiple ventures, and he also invests in startups.				

4.2. Findings

In this section, the findings are presented based on the emerging themes. Furthermore, examples are provided in the form of quotes from the interviews. When there were multiple examples (quotes), we have chosen to include those which were most precise and clear in capturing the spirit of other similar interviews. Furthermore, we have aimed to include the examples from the extreme cases, since the extremes are particularly useful for building new theories (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003a). Therefore, those who were clearer in articulating their perspectives and who had extreme experiences might have more frequent appearance among the quotes.

4.2.1. Perceived impact and sensemaking of entrepreneurial failures

Over-identification with venture

Among study participants, personal identification with the business have been frequently articulated. Participants have expressed how they took the business challenges as personal ones, and felt as if they personally failed when the business could not overcome the challenge. Such an association with business on a personal level have periodically resulted in continuous fluctuation of emotions with direct connection to their business' performance. With the sphere between private life and business life highly overlapping, one participant explains:

(Erik) *Back then, if I was failing with a client, I would personally feel that the failure of delivering to a client is my fault. It is my fault that it isn't delivered. I put a lot of emotion into delivering to the client and failing to deliver was... I would stretch myself to the point that I will break to deliver to that client.*

(Erik) *As an entrepreneur, your emotions go up and down with the company. If the company goes well, entrepreneur happy; company goes bad, entrepreneur sad...*

In this example, as Erik experienced hardships in his ventures, he has become too exposed to negative emotions. Each challenging circumstance, accompanied with the feelings of personal inadequacy and the perceived need to work for delivering more, built up in time and have led him to darker periods with symptoms of burnout and depression - “hitting the wall”.

The extent that an entrepreneur builds their private life around the business, and closely integrates it with their own identity, points towards the societal expectations from entrepreneurs. The participants had described their need to become perceived as *committed and successful* business people, which has been steering their lives towards seeking of constant achievements.

Identity building around a heroic image of entrepreneurs

The origins of perceived external demands - for an entrepreneur - are described mainly as business school experiences (school enforcing demands), entrepreneurial peer pressure (comparison of self with others), and the role of social entrepreneurs (society expecting self-sacrifice from them). To a large degree, many entrepreneurs build their identities around these external demands. While the feelings of pressure from societal demands go to extremes, participants express their concern with how their accomplishments would be perceived by the social group they feel belonging in. It is considered as a conflict with the entrepreneurial identity and leads to feelings of shame.

(Erik) *I think the basis of it was that initially I was building my identity on that I was a successful person. Because that has been the image that I have been nurturing all the way through school and through participating in competitions... and wanting a confirmation on being a successful of any kind... different sorts of successful. But then I couldn't deliver on that in real life. Because I was spreading myself too thin, it became kind of an identity crisis.*

(William) *I think to some extent you attach the failure to your self-image and you think failing the business would make you look stupid, would make you look inferior.*

It's some kind of shame. [...] I was looking at my LinkedIn profile and I thought "Ok, how can I tell it? How can I hide it or present in a nice way?"

***(Anna)** I think the venture is in between success and failure. If it has been successful, we would have made money on it. But we didn't. Yet it still continues, so it is not a total failure. Therefore I can tell about it to anyone, anytime.* (She is describing how her venture is part of her identity.)

***(Maria)** My biggest failure was not realizing where I would end up during this entrepreneurial journey. It is so interesting because a lot of people talk about this [social] entrepreneurial lifestyle and journey as something really heroic. And people look up to it or look up to you. You are viewed as some kind of hero and it is really not that cool, you work your ass off and you are alone doing it.*

A strong sense of over-identification with the business, for example, a strong attachment to the entrepreneurial identity that has been grown through societal expectations, have led some entrepreneurs to persist in the venture and/or business model for a long time. It has been exemplified that such a persistent attitude can lead to sub-optimal business decisions. For example, one participant describes his relationship with a model his venture was building up, describing it as he "*married the model"* and the only option he saw was to live and work with that. In this case, the prolonged attachment to this model cost the entire venture, and suggestions towards the model became criticism towards both to the organization and as a person himself, leading to an amplified sense of failure and downward spiral of negative emotions.

***(Anders)** I was in fact putting myself in the center of the organization which also means to put my identity in the organization, which means that the criticism towards the organization became criticism towards my identity.*

Disengagement from failure

While some participants were open to discuss their failures and feelings - as in the above examples -, not all participants have demonstrated such openness. In some cases, participants took a rather more cautionary approach in discussing their business failures. A common narrative included a reluctance to define specific "failure" events, but instead labeling them as "learning opportunities" or impact of external

forces. While a failure can very well become a learning opportunity and can occur due to uncontrollable forces, our observation relies on the narrative formed by the participant. This took place as a self-initiated shift of perspective during the description of the failure events, e.g. starting with defining failure only to claim it is actually not one, or not accepting failure only to “admit” the failure shortly afterwards.

(Per) *We definitely made the wrong strategic decisions during the last 2 years. But during that time we learned so much, so it is hard to see it as a complete failure.*

(Lennart) *Beyond that I think my main failures is... But it's not really failures, it's been learning experiences...*

(Oscar) *[A strong competitor] came to the market. That was like a failure for us. But it wasn’t something we could influence. It’s not your failure but other factors [...] I guess these are more like other factors. But I guess it can also be a failure as we were investing in platforms and IT structures which we had high hopes for.*

4.2.2. Coping with challenges through action

We have observed that *action-orientation* and *persistence* is ubiquitous among the entrepreneurs. This goes together with pushing away the negative emotions that are stemming from the daily hardships, and enabling them to focus their energy on the upcoming projects. An analogy for the way these entrepreneurs see their work would be with the sports - the best way to forget their defeat is going in the pitch again and simply playing the next game.

(William) *things which help me are two - planning and action. Basically, when you stop you think about the situation and key success factors, how to solve it. […] As soon as you drift into action, everything usually disappears, you are in an action mode, and you don't think about stress or fears or anything like that.*

(William) *And once business was closed, I immediately jumped into the next one so I didn't have that much of time to be frustrated or negative. I had another venture and another opportunity and I simply moved forward.*

4.2.3. Coping with challenges through self-compassion

Development of self-kindness

Participants have expressed that they are using self-compassion to distance themselves from challenges, failures and even the business itself. The issue that many entrepreneurs describe is initially identifying themselves with their venture, which makes it personal when they fail, and through experience they have found the need to develop this skill. Participants mention being kinder to oneself, and trying to separate the failure from themselves as individuals. For example, in order to cope with failure, one participant developed a new identity with more self-compassion in time and re-invented himself. The central part of his self-compassionate identity was identifying himself less with the businesses, in other words, separating the work and the self. This enables him to reorganize his life in a more balanced way.

(Erik) *I was more or less burned out, I had a really difficult year when I started and I fainted on stage while I was having a speech. Then after that, I realized that I had to change quite some aspects of my lifestyle in order to keep going forward because I was doing so many different things and things just messed up at the same time.*

Another participant has experienced a strong shift from burnout into becoming more care-taking to herself, which was also something encouraged by her boyfriend. Today Maria works 4 days per week and rearranged the company structure so that she does not work with any day-to-day business. She has also set up rules to further enable her self-kindness. For example now she does not take phone calls after office hours or have a voice mail. For her, self-compassion primarily means being able to take time away from work in her daily life.

(Maria) *I woke up, started working at 8 in the morning and passed midnight every day for almost three years before... you know... it did not work anymore.*

Making sense of self-compassion as the affordability of taking time off work has been a common theme, even though the nature of the off-time might be different. For example, after his venture's failure, Jan took almost one year off and reflected on his experiences. He can make sense of the benefits of taking personal time in contrast to those who do not feel they can afford it. Having gone through a burnout, or a major

failure event, gives a positive meaning to the off-times, which would otherwise be considered “lost time” for an action-oriented entrepreneurial mindset.

*(**Jan)** I took quite a lot of time to myself [after leaving a failed venture], not worked but thought about what I should do next. That was when I actually could learn from all these things I went through with the company - they weren’t a complete waste. That I could come up with something valuable, that took me months, almost a year. [...] So with really big failures, I think it takes time, but I think you should take time as well, I think it's important that you reflect, I think it's important that you think through. I think it's important that you don't just brush it off and move on because the importance is to learn from the failure and I think you learned from the failure by processing it and that takes time.*

Development of common humanity

Participants have described feelings of isolation, and the feeling that they are constantly competing with other entrepreneurs, and feeling insecure. One hinder to developing self-compassion, and to common humanity, was reported as *social media*. Through seeing the achievements of other entrepreneurs’, their insecurities regarding their flaws are triggered. Therefore, recognizing common humanity between entrepreneurs can be characterized by a struggle, i.e. something that the entrepreneurs has to remind themselves periodically. One of the participants explains his perspective through the lens of Imposter Syndrome. He does not always see the commonality of flaws among humans, but rather feels that he is the one who is flawed, which also leads to feelings of not deserving his achievements. He explains his awareness about common humanity, however, that sort of positive mindset is not a *natural response* to himself during the times he goes through a failure.

***(Jan)** I have a very strong imposter syndrome in my life, I always question: Why did people invest money in my startup? How did I convince them? When will they realize that I know nothing about what I'm doing? When will [employees] realize that I am a shitty manager and I don't really know how to lead people? […] [To cope with these thoughts] I think the most important thing that I do is to remind myself that every human being - at some point of time in their career - also stumble and fall. And the best ones get up and learn from that and see it's a valuable experience. I am*

really good at doing that over time, but still when [something bad] happens I'm going really hard on myself [again].

Another participant recognizes and reminds himself the common humanity among people through talking to other people. In fact, reflecting on common humanity has been a part of Erik's development of a new self-compassionate identity. Nevertheless, he can still feel isolated in facing his problems. His perspective demonstrate that being more mindful, accepting towards his shortcomings, and acknowledgement of the common humanity does not necessarily mean less isolation at the end of the day.

(Erik) *You have to forgive yourself for the mistakes you make. Because you make mistakes all the time. I made mistakes that cost the company millions you know... But so has [Co-founder 1], and [Co-founder 2] and [Co-founder 3]. So knowing that and accepting that is a part of it.*

(Erik) *I also have a tendency sometimes when I am wrestling with problems, either professional or personal, I tend to become introvert. I don't talk to other people about it, and try to work it out myself. But that often means working myself into a corner where it feels lonely and then there is no solution. It's almost always better to speak with people.*

Development of mindfulness

Putting problems "in perspective" is something that many participants mentioned, and it is the most common (emotional) coping strategy. It is usually used as a defense mechanism for showing resilience through toughest times. They purposefully zoom out to see their life from a macro perspective, and can avoid fixating on a single problem. For example:

(William) *When you start thinking in broader terms, then the whole perception changes. The problems you think that are important now becomes less important. But you think about your past and there are some cases where the life was harder.*

Having a larger perspective can also mean the recognition of other factors that can build up and lead to a failure. This kind of disengagement from the failure makes them less personal, and the entrepreneur can keep balanced emotions in those situations.

(Erik) *I accept the flaws that I come with, or that comes within the failure. I'm not the perfect person, there are circumstances as well, and that it is not my fault. […] My new image was more forgiving to flaws, and also to care less about if things went well or if they didn't. Because when I stopped caring about everything, that's also when I felt more relief that it doesn't matter really as long as I try. But previously, I had to succeed, or win, or be first.*

On the other hand, a participant who has formally been involved in a corporate mindfulness course, described mindfulness as a toolbox that he can use to survive in the toughest times. Anders believes that his mindfulness increases his persistence in keeping on with his venture and prolongs the time he spends with it, indicating that it cannot only work as a coping strategy, but also indirectly with entrepreneurial persistence. He explains what this new toolbox has done for him, and how he couldn't survive without it now:

(Anders) *I almost build a little pride that how good that I didn't let [the problems] progress to the point where I let it explode in disaster… but could actually come back before then. [Without mindfulness] I think that I would have ended up in a crises management behavior eventually, and given the nature of the challenges, I would assume that I would have employed an escape behavior.*

4.2.4. Coping with challenges through the flow of compassion

During the interviews, the compassion flow between the entrepreneur and their professional and personal spheres was an emerging theme.

4.2.4.1. Receiving (experiencing) compassion

Most of the participants have directly expressed **receiving others' emotional support in the form of compassion** in dealing with failure events and challenges. Such support is received not only from their personal circle (partners and friends), but also from their professional circle (investors, co-founders, clients and employees).

From investors

Investor relationships have been brought up on the topic of compassion surrounding the entrepreneurs, and was described as the most demanding relationship. For

example, Erik's investors showed awareness regarding his challenges as an entrepreneur. Their demonstration of empathy and compassion was described with hope for the future by Erik. Being on the receiving end of compassion (in the form of alleviating his financial pains in this example) allowed him to continue working towards the company's mission with persistence and better mental health. Furthermore, the investor's empathy also encouraged *Erik* to be kinder towards himself and not drain his energy through an excessive workload and pushing too hard. Even though it could be argued that the investor's motive is rooted in his own interests of making the company work (aiming to receive a return on investment rather than a pure emotional response), in this context, Erik interprets it as an act of "permission granted" for self-kindness.

(Erik) *Our investor used to say "the most important thing for getting this company to work and be sustainable is that you guys work - cause if you guys won't work the company won't work". And I think it is super profound, because he also encouraged us to take out a decent salary early on, so that we could survive and live. Because he also saw that the entrepreneurs are the driving force of the company and if they don't function for a reason, not just physical reasons but for also psychological reasons, it won't work...*

On the other hand, Lucas sets a difference scene about entrepreneur - investor relationship. During the time he was an entrepreneur, he felt the discomfort of the investors through the tougher times and it amplified his negative feelings towards the failure.

(Lucas) *You are quite alone, if you haven't been a CEO or entrepreneurial CEO, it is very hard to understand the feeling and position you are in. Behind you, you do not have a wall, you have someone [referring to investors] with a baseball bat and you have staff that you have responsibility for. You have shareholders and investors that you have responsibility to, you have a board that tend to being quite nervous in situations like this. You have no one to turn to, you are extremely alone in these situations. […] It was a very tough time. I had a hard time to sleep, I felt that I painted myself into a corner.*

Meanwhile, Jan reflects on this matter from an investor perspective, as he has been

in both shoes. He portrays a shift in the entrepreneur - investor relationship, and believes that the investing trends that account for non-hard data, emotions and passions allow and promote compassionate relationship for the new generations.

(Jan) *Regarding compassion and emotions, the transparency of human emotion is essential for entrepreneurship and for founder-investor relationship. [...] If you talk about emotions, you dare to be vulnerable; you become much more compassionate. [...] I think there is a generational shift that is happening in the world of venture and investing, that has gone from being very hard data and financial modeling structured around hard investments. It's going much more into the direction my passion for the entrepreneur, my emotions and beliefs into something. I think the new generation of venture capitalists share my beliefs in these topics, but for a lot of the former generations, this is very strange and they do not share this at all.*

From clients

As Erik was developing his self-compassionate identity, he also started perceiving his client relationships more compassionate. Earlier he was suffering from working day and night to fulfill client demands, and setting his own needs aside in this process. As part of his recovery from the burnout, he has started perceiving client deadlines more flexible than before. When he showed vulnerability in his client relationships, he started to observe more empathetic responses.

(Erik) *I also seen the recent flexibility in deadlines… that you can actually tell a client "Sorry we can't deliver for the deadline but it will be there a week later. Is it ok?", that there is a measure of empathy in the relationship between the client and me.*

On the other hand, Maria pointed out that the entrepreneurs should not expect empathy and care from clients. According to her experience, she had to rely on herself for establishing personal barriers from the business, because no one else would.

(Maria) *If I don´t set barriers for myself no one else will, if I don't have notifications on my phone do I answer the phone if someone calls at 9? Do I answer if someone calls before 8? It is about not letting other people's stress and annoyance getting into your mood because no one will set those barrier for you.*

From co-founders and other entrepreneurs

Some participants expressed how they find the comfort in the acceptance and compassion from peer entrepreneurs and friends, and that it has become a source of psychological safety for them. Having the ability to turn to e.g. co-founders while coping with the failures allows the entrepreneurs to experience the common humanity between them and allow the flow of compassion.

(William) *I went to Silicon Valley for 3 months. And my perception completely changed because in Silicon Valley, or US, they wear badges of dignity of failures. The more failures the better because you learn from them, the only way to execute and to achieve is actually to fail, fail and learn. I realized that when I met so many people under this perception, and I started to be proud of my failures. So I changed my LinkedIn profile, all the descriptions, and I started talking about the things as they really are [having sugar-coated the story previously]. Because there is no need to be ashamed about the failure.*

(Anders) *I appreciated having the space with others where I can help them and they can help me and you have a degree of humility to the fact the you might not always hear what you want to hear… but you know it is said with good intentions and that is good and healthy to have those relationships.*

From family / friends

Many participants have brought up friends, partners and family. Among those, for example, Jan finds support from his wife who guides him through the process of his "Imposter Syndrome".

(Jan) *This is where my wife actually serves as a great help for me because she pulled me out and made me see what I actually have learned and think about where I actually was successful. I am using her to help me realize this. I know this is the way I [myself] should cope with it but this is hard.*

(Oscar) *I think discussion about [the tough times] with my fiancé helps me reflect on things.*

(William) *We used to have drinks, talk about these things with friends. And when you are friends, when you are in a social circle and speak up, you don't keep everything inside. I had my brother as well and we would speak up openly about anything so it wasn't locked inside.*

According to one participant, receiving compassion becomes necessary especially when the problem gets bigger for oneself to handle, and the entrepreneur is closer to hit the wall. One of the participants expressed in the following way.

(Hans) *I guess it is a lack of self-compassion when you reach a point that has come far in some situations... that you need others to come and help you [with compassion]. It is like going to the emergency - that's a lack of treatment during time.*

4.2.4.2. Giving compassion

Compassion can also be given to others, even though it was not a common theme in the interviews. In few cases, compassion giving (outflow) was in parallel to receiving. In other words, entrepreneurs have acknowledged the need for compassion in their lives, and they **demanded compassion from others while building the compassion capability in their organizations**. This allowed them to create an environment where compassion is embraced in all directions of flow, including but not limited to their own experiencing the compassion from employees. Such a holistic approach helped them to develop self-compassion (i.e. self-kindness through work-life balance), and encourage the others in the organization to experience it as well.

(Maria) *Over those 2.5 first years we created a culture that if there is a problem Maria will solve it. I solved the problems on my own and that is not sustainable to put that pressure on that individual. [...] So we started with free vacation...you can take your time of whenever you need it. You can choose when you work and wherever you work. [...] What we do that is even more important is that we talk about compassion, we talk about self-compassion. We talk about how we feel, how we are. On different days we will be on different levels of productivity and that is fine, instead of fitting it in [the initial plans for the day] be flexible, listen to yourself and what you need, and how you can be the best version of yourself.*

Another example was Oscar who recognizes that his business partner is not self-compassionate and can go in a negative spiral of thoughts during harder times. Oscar notices this, feels empathy with the understanding that he has kids to look after and support financially and that such a responsibility impacts his ups and downs and be more sensitive to risk. He then tries to convey a compassionate response through emotional support to him.

(Oscar) *For example, my business partner is much more emotional. So I am always giving him positive thoughts: "Don't dig a hole and put your head in it. It's going to be ok."*

4.2.5. Fear of compassion

In the setting of entrepreneurs, fear of compassion does apply in various forms. The common belief amongst the participants is that they would become less successful and less efficient if they increased their self-compassion levels. The notion between entrepreneurs seems to be that in order to succeed, one not only needs to be right in timing the market and having a good business idea; but also work *really* hard. One participant is describing his view on the topic as a criticism to self-compassion:

(Lars) *"I hate the expression "I did my best". There is no I did my best. You never did your best, you can always do better. And that's an expression, when I hear it I get mad. Because there is no fucking way you did your best. There is always better. You could always be better prepared, you could always have worked a little bit harder, you could always have thought a little bit further down. So I think to answer your question, too much curling with yourself will increase the failure."*

Lars explains that the reason why he prefers not to focus on his emotions during tough times (but rather push them away) is about their incompatibility with achieving success. He believes that giving oneself to much room for kindness might mean conformity to lower standards, hence move one away from the possibility of success. Driven by the stressful situations, he expects to work more efficiently in building his ventures.

(Lars) *I honestly think that you are less efficient if you are not really stressed. So I think when I knew I had no back up, I was more focused, more efficient. When you*

know that you have a backup, you're not as good. So you're much sharper when you know that you cannot fail.

Lars is not alone. After having gone through a journey with increased personal distance to the business as a coping strategy, Erik still feels today that personal well-being and performance in personal life and work life is highly intertwined. Developing self-compassion through challenging experiences, he still considers the risk of becoming a worse and less efficient entrepreneur if he would develop his level of self-compassion even further.

***(Erik)** I am becoming a worse entrepreneur… Not really, but because I am becoming more comfortable, I'm not producing as much right now as I could have done if I pushed myself. I am ending on a little lower productivity level, on the other hand, what it produce is better quality than it would be if I would go on volume.*

These participants are demonstrating the thin line between self-compassion as a coping strategy and performance. For example, if we look at the example of Erik, we have observed his "development of self-compassion" through the burnout after a company failure during which developing the compassion towards himself was the only way to survive. However, when confronted to reflect on the impact of self-compassion, his immediate reaction is about becoming a "worse entrepreneur", which he fears to become, because it is overall perceived as negative towards the entrepreneurship concept. It is only after he scans his thoughts and feelings thoroughly that he can "defend his position" as "a self-compassionate entrepreneur". This shows an example of being on the fine line between burnout and still achieving success.

Meanwhile, William has his own reservations regarding being too kind to himself. According to his perception of self-compassion, it would lead to lowered ambitions and quality of work. Furthermore, he addresses another mechanism that magnifies the "fear": the social circle of an entrepreneur. His logic points towards the demands and expectations from the entrepreneur from their immediate social environment, and how their demands can shape the entrepreneurs' own demands from themselves.

***(William)** The negative sides of being too positive [referring to kindness in this context] about yourself include the fact that you lower your benchmarks. Because*

you know… whatever you do is good! So the performance standards deteriorate, you don't demand, you don't push yourself.

(William) *But also it involves your self-esteem to some extent, your dignity, the way you think the others value you and that's pretty important. And you think you could disappoint others, you think you would have a lower social status, reputation.*

In comparison with Erik, William does not show signs of hitting the wall or burning out. This could be why his focus is developing an emotional coping mechanism that allow him to *work more*, rather than take another direction of thought that questions the validity of environmental demands in the first place.

(William) My goal of reading books and so on is to be able to develop a state of mind which lets you work fully focused and fully committed 60 hours a week. (William is using a software to measure the committed hours in front of the computer.)

It has been a common observation that many participants dedicate a large part of their lives to their ventures and careers. This has not been surprising considering its relation to over-identification with the business, their own identity portrayed as the company, and the companies as themselves. On the other hand, there is also others, especially those who are driven by a higher purpose that might see vice versa: companies as a reflection of the self. An example participant is Johan, who talks about how he is sacrificing relationships, family and friends for his social venture. He gives up a lot of what is usually perceived as important relationships, justified with a higher purpose:

(Johan) *In my world, it is totally fine to work really hard and to down-prioritize your family and friends, health and everything if there is a great purpose to it [...] I am always trying to find a higher purpose and if I do not have that then I cannot work as a human being, I really need that higher purpose, that is an important aspect. […] I really believe in tough love, it goes both for me and the people around me.*

Anders, who has been an entrepreneur himself but currently works as an investor, sums up his experiences and observations from working with many entrepreneurs.

(Anders) *What would burn out 80-90% of people feels like a regular day for an entrepreneur. The shit they will take before they say "no" is huge, and they believe in*

their own ability. It drives a lot of unhealthy behavior, but it also makes them cope with the shit storm that they make for themselves in challenges that they take on.

Fears can also be about compassion (not self-compassion). Depending on the entrepreneur, and their venture, compassion can conflict with “some of the goals”, referring to profit-orientation. The logic is that it is easier to make money if you don’t consider well-being of others.

***(Anders)** [Compassion] could screw with some of the goals that I have had in mind, it could invalidate some goals, since some goals are easier to achieve in a situation where you don't employ these kind of methods. For example say that I would like to make loads of money, it is something easier to do if you are an asshole right? But if you are in touch with your emotions and the emotions of others it is quite difficult.*

***(Anders)** My assumption is that 80% of the time 80% of the people are driven by fear. It is not a more fun story than that, in Sweden at least. Those kind of drivers (fears) get exposed if you use these kinds of (mindfulness) tools and that can be kind of painful and scare a lot of people. It demands a lot of acceptance, curiosity and will to want to mess with your status quo. It you are going to screw with your own drivers and passions, that's dangerous and powerful stuff.*

It is not only about the individual fear of compassion but on an organizational level. Several entrepreneurs are describing how it can affect organizational goals negatively with different degrees of criticism towards organizational compassion. It is generally perceived as slowing down the efficiency in the organization.

***(Erik)** The drawback is it might be conflicting with the effectiveness goals of an organization. [...] Some companies are awfully productive, but at the expense of compassion.*

***(Per)** Developers are more compassionate to each other. They can be too compassionate. [...] They are not so business driven, whereas as a CEO, I am not as compassionate towards others in that sense. I can see flaws, but they are flaws that actually you are hired to be good at! And there's not going to be any waiting around.*

5. Propositions

Proposition 1: Entrepreneurs make sense of self-compassion mainly for survival, not achieving success

While previous research in psychology presents predominantly positive aspects of self-compassion, early entrepreneurs did not attribute the same meaning to the concept. According to them, self-compassion was risky as it would be conflicting with their high goals and ambitions. However, the perception of entrepreneurs were found to be converging towards a positive perspective as they became more experienced.

Proposition 1.1: Seeking "action" and new success opportunities is the most common coping strategy

While participants have been more embracing (even if not fully) towards mindfulness and common humanity aspects of self-compassion, many have expressed critical views towards self-kindness. They considered it in conflict with their will to achieve success, which was much more important than opening up towards feelings of pain, noticing it, and feeling the need to relieve it. Relieving the pain would mean not pushing themselves as hard, consequently working less, which according to many would lower probability to success. (Example: Lars hating the expression "I did my best")

Entrepreneurs' perspective shows inconsistency with the previous research. First, Neff, Hsieh and Dejitterat (2005) have suggested that self-compassion increases the level of ambition and decreases the level of perceived failure. However, participants have expressed self-compassion as a hinder towards their ambitions, performance standards and ultimately business success. (Example: William believing self-kindness would deteriorate performance standards)

Secondly, several scholars are promoting reflection and time to think as important ingredients to learning from failure (Cannon and Edmondson, 2001, 2005; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991). On the other hand, participants commonly expressed action-taking and problem-focused coping in replacement of emotion-focused coping strategies. Many of the participants have discussed the importance of moving on quickly after a project failure, such as starting a new venture, pivoting the existing business, looking

for new clients. Furthermore, several participants expressed comments highlighting non-action related coping mechanism as unproductive.

In the entrepreneurship context, where business is risky and the market is seen as moving very fast, it is perhaps not surprising that entrepreneurs act quickly. The goal of entrepreneurs often becomes surviving only above a level of mental collapse or burnout. This could be a possible explanation why they are more action-oriented rather than getting in touch with their emotions. However, such an approach overlooks reflection to some extent and might reduce the learning opportunities. Furthermore, it is the very need of constantly taking actions that has negative impacts on the personal well-being, which makes entrepreneurs burnout and start seeking self-compassion.

Proposition 1.2: Self-compassion is developed over time during the entrepreneurial journey

Over time, as entrepreneurs experience more failures, the challenges and failures may become normalized. Through tougher times, they increase their acceptance towards their flaws and focus on learning from their experiences. This has been demonstrated in participants' comparative narratives of earlier and later experiences through their entrepreneurial journey. During their first failures, they take it highly personal that it almost leads them into a depression. (Example: Erik put a lot of emotion in losing a client). However, over time, self-compassion is developed as a coping mechanism. (Example: Maria working only four days a week). Within this process, entrepreneurs also become more mindful and separate their own identity from business, which allows them to take self-kinder actions.

Our findings show that there are some accelerating factors to self-compassion development. The main accelerator is based on an internal trigger, i.e. experiencing a burnout. Action-oriented coping takes precedence in the mind of an entrepreneur, seemingly only until they go through a burnout or come closer to a collapse. Experiencing a serious burnout leads to a reorganization of life and adoption of a more self-compassionate identity. In this process, the entrepreneurs may take time away from business for the aftermath of the major failure and reflect on their experiences before bouncing back to business. (Example: Erik's development of new identity, Jan's taking time away from business)

This process can also be triggered by an external force, or by the environment, which intervenes in how the entrepreneur takes care of himself/herself. From the interviews, the following were identified as external self-compassion development accelerators:

- Attending mindfulness trainings and reading personal development books help the entrepreneurs to find a more balanced view towards their business' ups and downs. This is also associated with reorganization of priorities in life and reduced over-identification with business (Example: Lennart and Anders have separated their identities from business through better awareness of mindfulness techniques)
- Intervention events from the entrepreneurs' social circle, such as partners and/or family can initiate or accelerate this process. (Example: Maria was encouraged by her boyfriend to change her whole company and lifestyle)
- Being in an environment where entrepreneurial failures are normalized and accepted as a natural consequence (Example: When William visited Silicon Valley, he experienced higher normalization and acceptance for entrepreneurial failures)

Proposition 2: Entrepreneurs' limited sensemaking and criticism of self-compassion points out to a potential conflict of identities

As mentioned in the previous proposition, entrepreneurs who have gone through major failures or experienced burnout can make more sense of self-compassion. However, most participants have experienced lower levels of self-compassion during the initial years of their entrepreneurial journeys. During this phase, they have not found self-compassion compatible with their goals and ambitions, but rather perceived it in conflict with them. Therefore they have not embraced it as a mental resource for success until they *had to* for survival.

As we explored the underlying reasons for why self-compassion was repulsed by the participants for such a long time, we have found a highly consistent *entrepreneurial identity* description as the rationale in entrepreneurs' own narratives. According to them, this entrepreneurial identity portrays a "hero", mainly built on being a successful doer, a strong force of change that "keeps going no matter what", and perhaps working towards changing the world. Such an image is nurtured by the society in large and

being projected to the entrepreneurs through various channels. For example, these channels can be including but not limited to business schools (Example: Erik nurturing a successful identity throughout business school), or entrepreneurial peer pressure and success stories (Example: William and Jan were affected by social media which shows a biased picture of entrepreneurs). Furthermore, social entrepreneurs have reported an additional demand, from their clients and society as a whole, regarding their self-sacrifice and commitment to the cause, often without getting a decent pay for long periods (Example: Maria and Johan were expected to self-sacrifice). Another participant self-summarized the entrepreneurship with a *reinforcement* of this image:

> ***(Anders)*** *What would burn out 80-90% of people feels like a regular day for an entrepreneur.*

Entrepreneurs' over-identification with their ventures adds on to these, which closes the loop and makes them *personally* associate with these societal demands. Based on the narratives of participants, not living up to this entrepreneurial image is hardly an option. The heroic depiction of entrepreneurs pushes them to set high goals, seek constant achievements, whereas offering them the feeling of personal inadequacy and "shame" unless they are successful in reaching them (Example: William trying to hide failures on LinkedIn). It can be almost described as a self-fulfilling prophecy; the more they strive to become the heroes, the more legitimate the demands become.

In review of this mechanism, we see similarities with earlier psychology and organizational studies. First, entrepreneurs' risky environment and the high demands are consistently threatening to their heroic identity, and reduces their well-being and feelings of safety. Previous research suggests that affection and care are important for creation of a safe place and positive feelings about the self (Bowlby, 1969; Mikulincer and Shaver, 2007). However, in the context of entrepreneurship, the environment that does not show adequate affection and care to the entrepreneur can be as big as their whole personal and professional circle. Secondly, earlier studies in psychology suggests a relationship between receiving empathy and developing self-compassion, i.e. the social environment might foster or hinder the development of self-compassion within individuals. For instance, a child's early upbringing may impact whether or not that child will grow up to be a self-compassionate adult (Schafer 1964, 1968; Stolorow, Brandchaft, and Atwood, 1987). In the context of entrepreneurship,

there seems to be a similar relationship between the level of empathy and compassion shown towards the entrepreneur by their social circle, which determines the level of self-compassion they "allow" for themselves.

All in all, the heroic image is hindering the entrepreneurs' ability to develop self-compassion and to get in touch with their emotions. The entrepreneurs that are allowing self-compassion into their life and business are also the ones criticizing the society and their past personalities for allowing themselves to be part of this social pressure. (Example: Maria, Erik)

Proposition 3: While being critical about self-compassion, entrepreneurs can compensate for the lack of self-compassion through the compassion they receive from others

In this proposition, our aim is to discuss the immediate environment of entrepreneurs by focusing on entrepreneurs' relationships. Entrepreneurs have to cater to many different stakeholders, such as customers, co-founders, employees, investors. As long as they take all these relationships personal, it gets harder for them to cope with their demands and reactions to failure. With personal and professional spheres intertwined, lack of self-compassion can lead to burnout and collapse.

In those hard moments, entrepreneurs can find safe harbors among the people surrounding them. Experiencing compassion from the other people creates a safety net and enables them to follow their passions and ventures more persistently in spite of the challenges or demotivating factors. While only part of the entrepreneurs made sense of self-compassion as an integral part of their daily emotional coping mechanisms, almost all participants have directly expressed compassionate emotional support in their lives from others. In some cases, this is found to be a complementary mechanism balancing the lack of self-compassion.

The role of experiencing compassion in achieving a more positive attitude and well-being is consistent with previous research in psychology. Gilbert (2014a) describes how compassion can be transferred from others as in "flowing in". Researchers have associated such flow of compassion with achieving a higher well-being (Bowlby, 1969, 1973; Mikulincer and Shaver, 2007). Furthermore, it was also acknowledged in

previous literature that such a mechanism can be found in the organizational settings, for example when compassion is found among colleagues (Kanov, 2004).

Our findings point out the breadth of relationships an entrepreneur has with their personal and professional circles, which collectively impact their perspective about their ventures. In the entrepreneurial context, our findings show that one can receive compassion from their co-founders, families, partners, clients, employees and investors. While previous empirical business research has focused on organizational settings where compassion capability is analyzed from an organizational culture lens, it is noteworthy to acknowledge that entrepreneurs can be impacted positively or negatively from perhaps more complex relationships with their personal and professional spheres intertwined.

Secondly, the investor - entrepreneur relationship stands out among the findings as the most “stressing” relationship in case of lacking compassion. There is a disproportionate power balance between investors and entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurs go for massive lengths to “make investors happy”, which contributes highly to extreme workload and burnouts. This points out to the need for healthier relationships between investor - entrepreneurs in terms of entrepreneurs’ mental well-being. We believe that it would be interesting to go deeper and examine investor - entrepreneur relationships from a compassion perspective in a future study. In the meantime, one of the study participants (Jan) has given a green light in improvement of investor-entrepreneur relationships as he sees a change in the newer generation and he encourages the entrepreneurs to be more transparent and vulnerable.

6. Discussion

If the negative perceptions of self-compassion among early entrepreneurs (discussed above in the Propositions section) are compared with the predominantly positive literature about self-compassion, a potential tension between the literature and practice can be recognized.

According to the literature in psychology domain, scholars have taken a predominantly positive stance towards self-compassion and its effects on well-being, for example in Gilbert (2014) and Neff´s (2014) studies. In these studies, self-compassion has been

considered as a mental resource that helps with dealing with failures and challenges that one goes through in life. Building on their work, several organizational studies such as Shepard et al. (2009), Ucbasaran et al. (2013) adopted a similar positive stance, often theorizing about compassion to create positive perspectives, and with a note for future studies that it needs to also be empirically tested in different settings.

The current literature addresses those who do not embrace self-compassion as having a fear of self-compassion (Gilbert, 2014b), and compassion focused therapies are proposed in this situation to alleviate such fears. From this perspective, we can find many entrepreneurs participating in this study as fearful. The possibility of performing worse is feared by the entrepreneurs, especially due to the surrounding narratives of entrepreneurship regarding the importance of inner drive, performance oriented goals, and the stigmatization of not dedicating oneself to the venture, which might be perceived as laziness. For people in extremely demanding environments, which entrepreneurs often are a part of and are used to perform in, it could be perceived as very threatening to start becoming kinder to themselves.

However, while the concept of fear (as something that can/should be resolved through focused therapies) might be enough discuss a variety of cases, our study raises the question regarding its applicability to the entrepreneurial setting. First, several participants of this study have raised their criticism towards the concept because they believed that it is not possible to be kind to oneself and be a successful entrepreneur at the same time (Proposition 1). Second, in the analysis of their perspectives, it is important to recognize the environment that leads them to believe that they should push through pain, work hard and never give up (Proposition 2). Can entrepreneurs silence the external demands and perhaps develop self-compassion at the very beginning of their entrepreneurial journeys? Should they do that at the expense of their ambitious goals? On this matter, we propose to keep a healthy skepticism towards the concept, and argue that there is a need for establishing a critical domain of analysis of compassion in entrepreneurship.

All in all, it must be acknowledged that the level of perceived failure and the benefits of compassion might be very dependent on the context, goals, expectations and demands of the individuals. If not, a pure positive stance which dismisses the criticisms solely as “fear of compassion” may lead to biases. Expecting to find same positive

effects through self-compassion among all individuals in different settings would not be realistic. Therefore, we believe that taking a holistic perspective, recognizing the overall institutional design surrounding entrepreneurs (both internal and external relationships, e.g. investors, clients) and developing compassion capability within the entrepreneurs' broader circle is crucial to achieve a positive compassion effect in entrepreneurial setting.

7. Conclusion

In our investigation of the relationship between self-compassion and entrepreneurship, we have aimed to answer the following research questions:

Does self-compassion have a role in coping with entrepreneurial failures?

- *If so, how do the entrepreneurs make sense of the relationship between self-compassion and dealing with their entrepreneurial failures?*

Based on the findings of this study, first of all, self-compassion does have a role in coping with entrepreneurial challenges. However, it is not considered a significant part in daily challenges, but rather perceived to be in conflict with the entrepreneurship and venture goals. To be more specific, entrepreneurs may feel driven by their ambitions and prefer problem-focused coping strategies, and showing compassion to self is associated with reduced standards and lowered ambitions. On the other hand, entrepreneurs can make sense of self compassion to cope with a burnout from extenuation of their ventures, a state which was observed in many ambitious and hard-working entrepreneurs. Self-compassion can then be driven internally, during which more self-kindness, mindfulness and less personal identification with the venture is developed as a "survival strategy". It is developed to the extent that they will have enough internal strength to move forward. Secondly, our findings indicate that a strong entrepreneurial identity is a hindering force in the development of self-compassion. A heroic image of entrepreneurs is nurtured by the society and entrepreneurs themselves, which in turn do not permit them to be self-compassionate. Lastly, in their very demanding environment, entrepreneurs attribute high importance to the compassion received from people in their surroundings, for example, partners, co-founders, friends and even investors. All participants could make sense of the benefits

of receiving compassion. The degree of reliance on receiving compassion from others varies between the individuals, but is easily acknowledged. Furthermore, inflow of compassion helps some entrepreneurs to develop their self-compassion, especially when it is seen as an act of permission for being kinder to self. This mechanism may compensate for the cases in which the entrepreneur lacks self-compassion.

7.1. Contributions

With above conclusions, this thesis makes both theoretical and practical contributions to entrepreneurship. From a theoretical perspective, first, this study fills the empirical research gap previously defined in Section 2. The role of self-compassion in coping with project failures in organizations was previously theorized by researchers (for example, see: Shepherd, Cardon, 2009), yet was neither applied in the entrepreneurship setting nor empirically tested before. This study has become an initial response with empirical evidence that sheds light on the relationship between self-compassion and entrepreneurship.

Secondly, this thesis in particular shows the role of self-compassion and compassion from the entrepreneurs' perspective, and explains how they make sense of it. This is important to determine when they feel the need for self-compassion most (survival and rebounding from burnout), what sources they can potentially receive the compassion they need (such as investors, clients, friends/family), and which institutional frameworks are blocking them to access these mental resources (societal expectations and heroic image of entrepreneurs). Our findings are pointing out to the importance of the entrepreneurs' environment and the quality of their personal and professional relationships in making use and sense of compassion. Furthermore, through the entrepreneurial narratives, this study raises the awareness on why increasing compassion in the entrepreneurs' relationships might be practically important for their personal development and well-being.

Thirdly, we argue for a potential critique towards the concept of compassion from an organizational and mainly entrepreneurial perspective. As in most cases in life, the role of compassion in coping with failures and challenges is more than a black and white concept, and we argue for a more nuanced perspective in our study. We aim to distinguish between what is a *fear* of the concept from a general attitude towards life

and what can be a valid critique given the examples of the entrepreneurial setting in this study. By doing that, we address previous researchers questions on potential costs of mindfulness and self-compassion (for example, see: Rerup, 2005) and put forward entrepreneurs' own struggles between self-compassion and environmental demands as an example setting where such approaches might conflict. We believe that such a critical perspective would be useful to highlight new perspectives in other business and management studies, in particular while exploring other high-demand organizations as well.

From a practical standpoint, we believe entrepreneurs and other stakeholders who work with entrepreneurial ventures can benefit from this study in several ways. First of all, by being aware of the concepts of self-compassion and compassion, and learning about how others are making sense of these concepts, entrepreneurs can recognize the common humanity between them and increase their emotional resilience to failures. The awareness itself can enable them to listen to the internal warnings if they are approaching burnout, and develop their self-compassion skills before "hitting the wall". Those entrepreneurs can further play a role in building compassionate organizations as they are potentially the business leaders of the future.

Secondly, a similar awareness can also be built among entrepreneurs' personal and professional circles. In particular, investors can recognize the destructive impact that their demands cause on entrepreneurs' well-being, and hopefully see a win-win in building more compassionate relationships.

Lastly, this study can create awareness among entrepreneurial education programs. The organizations that work with entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs, such as business schools, accelerators and incubators, could include emotional coping mechanisms like self-compassion in their curriculums, which can help build resilience to failures and influence various future leaders in the entrepreneurial scene to become an advocate for compassionate relationships.

7.2. Limitations and future research

In this study, the use of explorative and qualitative approach has enabled us to reach a deeper understanding of entrepreneurs' sensemaking of compassion. However,

such an approach also brings limitations to generalizability of the results. First, this study was limited to respondents who are Swedish, or have lived in Sweden for a long time. Different countries might have different perceptions of failure and values or norms in making sense of the topic; therefore, it is unknown if the findings could apply to other countries. Regarding this, conducting a similar study with participants from other countries can reveal further insights into cultural differences as well.

Secondly, our approach depends on the post-failure narratives of the entrepreneurs, but not necessarily immediate after the failure. Time affects the emotional reaction to a failure (Shepherd, Patzelt and Wolfe, 2011), which then could have affected the respondents' narratives regarding their failures. In other words, entrepreneurs might have gone through "sensemaking" of the failure events more than a few times, and there might be differences between the reality and their narratives / interpretations of such historical events. Having several interviews with the same respondents, or in other words shadowing entrepreneurs for a longer period during which the failure events can be closely observed, could capture the emotions and coping mechanisms in almost real-time and reveal more detailed insights into the development and use of self-compassion and compassion through time.

The findings of this study also open up for new avenues of research. For example, we have discussed the most important relationships which can be a source of compassion from the perspective of entrepreneurs themselves. Building on these findings, future researchers can take a more holistic approach, detailing a specific case study while engaging with other stakeholders, e.g. investors, co-workers, or families. Such an approach will have the potential to reveal additional insights through different accounts of the same failure event.

Secondly, our study identifies the existence of a critical perspective of self-compassion in the entrepreneurial environment. There is still very limited research which addresses the critical perspectives regarding self-compassion, and previous research does not exist in the entrepreneurial setting. Therefore, establishing the difference between fear of compassion and its critique would be another area for future research.

Lastly, we encourage future researchers to review the literature on coping with failure for entrepreneurial organizations, in order to find out how much of compassion and

self-compassion is actually existing in the current literature but not labeled directly so. Based on our literature review, we believe that there is a greater extent of work on this topic than scholars currently reckon.

8. Appendix

8.1. Comments on self-compassion survey results

The self-compassion survey was filled by all participants in the study. From an overall perspective, all results indicated either medium (Score: 2.5 - 3.5) or high (Score: 3.5 - 5.0) self-compassion levels, with none of the participants rated as low (Score: 0 - 2.5). The results were also similar in the more granular level, in other words, no participants were rated as low in any sub-dimensions that make up the overall self-compassion score.

Our comparison between the sub-dimensions showed that self-kindness scores - on average - are slightly lower than Common Humanity and Mindfulness. Furthermore, the number of participants scoring high on each sub-dimension is the following: Self-kindness (5 participants), Common Humanity (7 participants), Mindfulness (8 participants). Below chart shows a summary overview of the collected responses.[10]

Table 2. Summary of SCS results

	Average	**Std. Dev.**	**Minimum**	**Maximum**
Self-kindness	3.23	0.63	2.60	4.60
Common Humanity	3.61	0.72	2.75	4.88
Mindfulness	3.60	0.61	2.63	4.50
Overall Score	**3.48**	**0.52**	**2.66**	**4.53**

For each participant, self-compassion survey results were reviewed for their relations with the narratives, with the aim to see whether the narratives of those who scored

[10]One participant who has filled the survey by rating the highest score, 5 out of 5, was considered with a red flag and excluded from the summary table. We have also approached the participants' qualitative answers cautiously.

high in the survey differed from those who scored low. However, even though we have observed self-kindness being to most criticized dimension in general, no strong correlation has been observed at the individual level. This might be due to multiple reasons. First, since they have taken the survey once, we have captured a snapshot of their lives, and the responses might be dependent on their momentary experiences which might be different than the general. Secondly, since the participants filled the survey before we had the chance to establish trust, some participants may not have been willing to share their reality. Thirdly, it could indicate limitations on the definition of self-compassion or the survey design. Therefore, we believe that a future study involving more participants and more quantitatively focused method can establish further conclusions.

8.2. Self-compassion survey questions

Age:

Gender: Male / Female:

Total years as self- employed?

Please read each statement and indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following scale.

Almost Never	Occasionally	About Half Of The Time	Fairly Often	Almost Always
1	2	3	4	5

1. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.

2. When I'm feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.

3. When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.

4. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world.

5. I try to be loving towards myself when I'm feeling emotional pain.

6. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.

7. When I'm down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am.

8. When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself.

9. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.

10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.

11. I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.

12. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.

13. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.

14. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation.

15. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.

16. When I see aspects of myself that I don't like, I get down on myself.

17. When I fail at something important to me I try to keep things in perspective.

18. When I'm really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it.

19. I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering.

20. When something upsets me I get carried away with my feelings.

21. I can be a bit cold-hearted towards myself when I'm experiencing suffering.

22. When I'm feeling down I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.

23. I'm tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.

24. When something painful happens I tend to blow the incident out of proportion.

25. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.

26. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like

Calculation method:

Self-Kindness Items: 5, 12, 19, 23, 26

Self-Judgment Items: 1, 8, 11, 16, 21

Common Humanity Items: 3, 7, 10, 15

Isolation Items: 4, 13, 18, 25

Mindfulness Items: 9, 14, 17, 22

Over-identified Items: 2, 6, 20, 24

Subscale scores are computed by calculating the mean of subscale item responses. To compute a total self-compassion score, reverse score the negative subscale items before calculating subscale means - self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification (i.e., 1 = 5, 2 = 4, 3 = 3. 4 = 2, 5 = 1) - then compute a grand mean of all six subscale means.

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