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Author(s): Ikonen, Hanna-Mari; Nikunen, Minna

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Abstract

Enhancing the entrepreneurial spirit of young people is a means by which their employability and future potential as well as economic growth, the core goal of national policies, are incubated. Consequently, individuals performing *entrepreneurial mindset* are seen to possess the most future potential. We sketch the contours of this mindset and develop the idea of 'tuning' the entrepreneurial mindset with other discursive elements, or 'ingredients', available in society in order to make the overarching idea of entrepreneurialism more manageable, bearable, and even enjoyable at the individual level. The ingredients with which the mindset is tuned are *non-depressiveness*, *happiness,* and *gratefulness*. This tuning of the mindset is itself necessary and difficult mental work, even though it is invisible. Our analysis is based on 40 interviews with 18–30-year-old women and men from Tampere, Finland.

Keywords: employability, entrepreneurialism, gender, individualization, neoliberalism, young adults

Introduction

This article explores Finnish youth's affective orientation toward the entrepreneurial self and, thus, aims to contribute to emerging scholarship on the entrepreneurial self with a context-specific empirical research. Through careful analysis of interview data, we identify three ways through which young people tune themselves into the entrepreneurial mindset: non-depressiveness, happiness and gratefulness. We take our starting point from neoliberalism and argue that neoliberal governing is steering at a distance in order to get

individuals to tune their behaviors and minds. Here we are in line with McNay (2009, 56), who states that individual autonomy lies at the heart of disciplinary control through responsible self-management. Neoliberal governance appears as a productive force that encourages individuals to conduct responsible self-management rather than as disciplinary control to one's individual authority.

Interrelatedly, we are inspired by the notion of the affective mood in current neoliberal, post-crisis capitalism, which has been described in the media as a 'new pessimism' (Coleman 2016). It does not refer so much to the effects of the actual politics of cutting public spending as it does to the pessimistic and worried atmosphere that neoliberal austerity politics is using as a tool of steering at a distance and inspiring changes in individuals' mindsets. Even though the 2008 financial crisis did not hit Finland as hard as it did some other European countries, such as Iceland, Greece, or the UK, a crisis consciousness and austerity mood have traveled here nonetheless. In addition, Finland has problems of its own: the optimism that Information and Communications Technology (ICT) inspired and that was attached to the rise of the 'creative class' was cancelled after Nokia's (a Finnish multinational ICT company) downfall. Furthermore, neoliberal ideology—in which the role of the state is to participate in global competition by helping enterprises gain more of a competitive advantage in the global economy and by helping active citizens be entrepreneurial and do their part to increase national competitiveness—was already in favor of the power elites, politicians, and high-governing officials. Therefore, they used the negative mood as a tool to advance the implementation of these policies and bring about the end of the welfare society—to continue the neoliberal project that was launched during the recession of the 1990s, which was extremely deep in Finland (e.g., Kantola and Kananen 2013).

Arguably, today's young adults have to become employable in labor markets that offer less for them than these markets had offered the previous generation. Millennials may be 'the first generation to have things worse than their parents' (Howie and Campbell 2016, 912). Social conditions, such as voicelessness and uncertain futures, may bear down on young people in ways previous generations have not experienced (Howie and Campbell 2016, 918; Kelly 2013). However, the governing bodies and the media offer ways of coping with insecurity and other characteristics of austere times. For Coleman (2016), there is 'hopeful pessimism'. Pessimism is hopeful in the sense that it presents a chance to be

prosperous—at least for some (Coleman 2016, relying on Berlant 2010). Also in Finland, as well as elsewhere in the EU, the authorities on education, youth, and labor policy advise young people how to be successful (Nikunen 2017). Additionally, young people themselves find ways to get ahead of others in the competition over scarce resources, including work and employment, by using methods gleaned from the media, social media, popular self-help literature, their peers, and their parents.

In the current paper, we contribute to the critical discussions on employability and entrepreneurialism by asking how Finnish young adults evaluate the ideas of entrepreneurialism as it relates to their lives in the time of neoliberal capitalism after the global economic crisis. We share the assumption that entrepreneurialism, as a means for employability and as a tool of neoliberal governmentality, is a discourse that has a major role in youth policies. Enhancing the entrepreneurial spirit in young people is a means by which economic growth—the core goal of national policies—is incubated. Consequently, individuals with an *entrepreneurial mindset* are seen to possess the brightest future potential (Ikonen 2013).

Roughly drawing from the studies of Scharff (2016) and de Sá Mello da Costa and Silva Saraiva (2012), who have analyzed young people living with an entrepreneurial discourse and related discourses in neoliberal capitalism, we suggest that this entrepreneurial mindset is associated with several other discourses in society that both support and potentially resist the governing discourse. In examining this discursive environment, we lean on scholars who have questioned the autonomy of the neoliberal self (e.g., Davies 2014; Gane 2012; Hjorth 2005; McNay 2009; Weiskopf 2007). We develop the idea of ‘tuning’ an entrepreneurial mindset with other discursive ‘ingredients’ available in society, such as learning to avoid depressive tendencies and being happy and grateful, to make the overarching idea of entrepreneurialism more manageable, bearable, and even enjoyable at the individual level. In other words, it is our contention that young adults are adjusting their way of thinking to better respond to the requirements the present labor markets have set for them. With interview quotes, we valorize those ingredients with which the young adults whom we have studied frame entrepreneurialism.

Our analysis is based on 40 interviews with women and men ranging in age from 18 to 30 from Tampere, Finland. Although the interviewees were recruited with the polarization

hypothesis in mind (there might be an increasing divide into successful and marginalized young subjects), in our analysis, it became clear that in times of insecurity, managing one's life mentally and materially can become a challenge for anyone.

Background: Employability through what kind of entrepreneurial mindset?

In recent decades, the concept of employability has crept into policy documents and the web-page presentations of universities and other educational institutions. In short, in these documents, employability means that to attract employers, formal skills and diplomas are no longer enough; rather, one has to show personal, social, and behavioral credentials (Tomlinson 2008). Having an entrepreneurial mindset is one piece of this marketable package. For young people of the 2010s, the requirement of becoming employable and entrepreneurial is a deep and individualized project (Harris and Wyn 2010, 5). In some research, employability is defined as 'a capacity to gain initial employment, maintain employment, and obtain new employment if required' (Hillage and Pollard 1998, 1). This type of definition is used especially in the activation of unemployed people and by career psychologists and other individual-centered actors. However, Brown, Hesket, and Williams (2003, 110) see this definition as ideological because it 'ignores the fact that employability is primarily defined by the labor market rather than the capacities of individuals'. Serrano Pascual and Martin Martin (2017) also note that employability policies promote the depoliticization of unemployment issues and convert social problems into individual deficits.

In their individualized attempts at enhancing employability, young people need to stand out from the crowd (Holdsworth 2017), making young people—in addition to having to complete a certain level of education—increasingly invest in gaining experiences, such as work experience, internships, volunteering, and international mobility (also Nikunen 2017). However, because everyone is expected to acquire experience, it becomes all the harder to distinguish from others. When it comes to social differences, those who lack experience, are not able to respond to this requirement of gaining more experiences (Holdsworth 2017, 298). Therefore, building up employability is not equally easy for everyone. Additionally, as employability also signals suitability and potentiality ('fit' or, alternatively, 'lack'), attributes related to class, gender, ethnicity, and place of residence also matter (Harvey 2001; Morley 2001). Thus, employability and one's acquired and inherited attributes equip people with different resources to prepare for them for an unknown future. It seems that even vast

experiences and impressive CVs are not enough. Instead, building up employability also requires changing one's attitudes and behavior—that is, one's mindset.

Policy documents created by Finnish ministries and the EU increasingly stress the importance of entrepreneurialism for increasing the employability of youth (Nikunen 2017). Here, employability is represented as both a resource (for economic growth) and a solution to problems (unemployment, social marginalization); it is also represented as both a mindset and a real means of making a living (Ikonen 2013). For instance, in Finland, the educational sector is involved in building up the entrepreneurial spirit, which is called 'a sense of enterprise and initiative', and this education starts in the pre-school stage and runs through Higher Education (European Commission 2012, 46; Ministry of Culture and Education 2012). It is believed that entrepreneurship education prepares people to be responsible and enterprising individuals, meaning that they develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to achieve the goals they set for themselves (European Commission 2018), and it seems to be self-evident that these people are goal-oriented, aspiring individuals.

Nowadays, developing entrepreneurial skills is a 'panacea that seemingly cures anything' (Weiskopf 2007, 130). However, be it an entrepreneurial attitude as an employee or independent entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship refers to what Hjorth (2005) has described as the managerial forms of the concept, which seldom foster an atmosphere conducive to transformative creativity. In the current discursive atmosphere, the entrepreneur has been recycled as a symbol of the proper employee, and there is a narrow understanding of entrepreneurship: one from which its innovativeness and creativity is removed and that mainly serves managerial purposes to produce latently governed, obedient entrepreneurs: manopreneurs (ibid., 390). These 'manopreneurs' are supposed to be constantly active and self-responsible but in a predefined way.

Although the reading of entrepreneurship in a Schumpeterian sense as creative disruption against existing conventions (Davies 2014, 52) may be possible, save for promoting start-up activities, it seems that being entrepreneurial means being active, autonomous, and self-responsible to support governmental aims of rapid capital accumulation. However, some scholars (e.g., Davies 2014; Hjorth 2005) see that entrepreneurialism has the potential to challenge the political-economic practices, moving toward the view that all, not

just some talented, heroic individuals, have ideas and value to contribute; yet they admit that currently, the term ‘entrepreneur’ may be too compromised and too beloved by corporate elites to be politically transformative. In our data that we will bring in soon, even start-up entrepreneurship is in danger of becoming institutionalized and managed to the degree that it may lose its disruptive potential, hence becoming harnessed for the purposes of governmentality. There are examples where the research participants see being a partner in a nascent start-up company as a step toward securing an individual’s next career step. It may be that self-responsibility as tyranny (Bröckling 2016, 201) overtakes the disruptive potential of entrepreneurship.

Besides providing soothing security through providing yet another form of self-governing, entrepreneurship can also be empowering in its promise of hope and guidance through austere times. The discourse of an enterprise is meant to turn the sense of powerlessness regarding an uncertain future into an active posture. In this vein, even the therapeutic discourses have become close to an enterprising ethos because mental labor is needed to find the self-motivation to actively push forward (Bröcking 2016, 29).

To summarize our theoretical readings with which we interpret our results, throughout the education system, employability and entrepreneurial skills that support the aim of employability are highlighted. Young people with the experiences and capacities due to their international mobility and required entrepreneurial skills, such as having an active, self-responsible, risk-taking, and problem-solving mindset, are seen as having the brightest potential to become successful in future labor markets. However, the employability of all young people appears to be an important goal in curricula and national and European-wide policy documents. Employability is built by teaching skills that are seen as crucial in future work, but those crucial skills differ according to the target group. Start-up entrepreneurship is a much-discussed topic in certain circles while a simpler idea of taking responsibility and initiative is required at all levels of education and one’s working life. Mostly, in today’s labor market, it is a rather obedient entrepreneurial personality that is called for over the renewing spirit of entrepreneurship. After presenting the materials on which we base our empirical analysis, we start valorizing how our Finnish interviewees relate when it comes to modifying their mindsets to these hot topics of employability and entrepreneurialism.

Materials and analysis

As the materials for our analysis of young adult mindsets, we use the interviews gathered in 2015 and 2016 for our research project *Division into two? Young adults, work, and future*. For this project, we interviewed 40 young adults (aged 18–30) from different backgrounds. We sought participants from a variety of social and institutional networks using e-mail lists and personal contacts from different organizations. The sample includes men (12) and women (28) who either were active in the labor market or entrepreneurship or were unemployed; who were either students in universities or elsewhere or did not have any education after compulsory school; who either had various international experiences or who had not been internationally mobile; who had either an ethnic background or whose parents were both born in Finland; who had either a working-class or middle-class background; and who were either on the way of upward mobility or who were losing their social positions. Thus, the group was rather diverse; however, we do not aim to conduct a detailed class analysis here.

The interview themes included the following: the interviewees' life histories; their situation in terms of work, education, and intimate relationships at the time of the interview; future plans, hopes, and fears; their conceptions of the good life, success, and failure; and the expectations they see as being imposed on young people in working life. Six interviewers from our project conducted the interviews, and two interviewers, at maximum, were present for a single interview. The semi-structured interviews lasted from 20 minutes to 1.5 hours. They were digitally recorded and later transcribed verbatim by a commercial transcription firm. The language of the interviews was Finnish, even if it was not the mother tongue for the participant. The excerpts used in the current article were translated into English by the authors with the aim to maintain the tone and rhythm of the original speech.

Our interviewees live in the Tampere metropolitan area. Tampere is the third largest city in Finland, totaling about 250,000 inhabitants, and is the biggest inland town in the Nordic countries. National polls report that the area is very popular among Finnish inhabitants as a place to live. According to Statistics Finland (2015), Tampere is a migration gainer at the national level. However, the unemployment rate in the area was high in 2016, which was when the interviews were conducted, at 14.8% compared with the country's 12.5% average (Työllisyyskatsaus 2016). According to the Senior Statistician Aura Pasila at

Statistics Finland, the unemployment rate of young people aged 18–29 was 19.8% in 2015. However, many young adults are in education and not counted as a part of the labor force. (A. Pasila, personal communication, October 10, 2017.) This relatively high unemployment rate is partly because of the city's popularity among young adults who move to the area to search for work and partly because of the vast student population who, after graduation, search for employment in the area.

We based our reading of the interview data on the above-presented theoretical and conceptual background concerning the entrepreneurial mindset and employability. Consequently, we explored terms that we thought to be related to the desired mindset, such as attitude, activity, career, CV, growth, networks, success, and start-ups, along with terms that might be negative for an individual's well-being, such as instability, pressures, stress, freelancing, and project-based life. In addition, we were interested in what other mindsets or mood-related themes and terms emerged that possibly could be opposed to entrepreneurialism, such as ordinariness, regular working hours, and well-being. However, entrepreneurial and 'opposite' mindsets soon proved to be aspects of the same phenomenon and have their origins in neoliberal politics; entrepreneurialism just seemed to be adapted in different ways in different aspects of life. Foucault (1981, see also McNay 2009) also states that it is the active relation between discourse and society that ensures that the entire production of a discourse is controlled. This led us to ask what the mechanisms are that lead young adults to tune their minds in different directions in a society that, for some time, has encouraged its citizens to be enterprising.

The research participants were not systematically asked about entrepreneurialism either as an attitude or as a concrete way of earning a living. Yet with some participants, it was a relevant issue to discuss at length if they, for instance, were met at a start-up event or were self-employed. However, reading an entrepreneurial mindset from the data has been an interpretative process and based on our theory-driven conception of a governable version of an entrepreneurial mindset as a requirement for employability. In addition, the interviewees themselves brought forth themes that were inspired by, yet not directly linked to, the questions the researchers posed. One such important discursive formation that crosses with entrepreneurialism was happiness, which the interviewees wanted to discuss when asked about success. Being happy in life was valued over material achievement, a topic we will elaborate on later.

Results

Living with the fact that your mindset, not your skills, is evaluated: non-depressiveness

Our analysis reveals that the young adults who participated in the current study—particularly those coming from the middle class—know how they should demonstrate employability and an entrepreneurial mindset. They fluently use important keywords, such as activity, networks, optimism, and positivity, while mentioning the actual skills they have acquired, such as accounting, advertising, pitching, and concrete craft skills. What we find to be of special interest is entrepreneurialism and employability on the level of their inner mindset: how they are constructed in the mind to make the governing discourse of enterprise livable.

However, the current talk about austerity and a grim future may hamper the ability of young people to perform the right mindset. The grim future means that no amount of effort guarantees security; still, a lack of harsh self-discipline can ensure failure (Bröckling 2016, 36). Even though our interviewees generally see they are not at risk while someone else might be, some interviewees think that it is possible that they will fall into a group that does not find employment because the future working life treats individuals haphazardly. For example, a 19-year-old female university student ponders ‘whether there will be demand for the type of expertise I will have in the future’, and another 26-year-old female university student says the following:

> Many friends of mine have graduated lately and they have cursed this situation, that the employment situation is not particularly good, and then it seems to happen very easily in our industry that people are fired because they are perhaps not seen as important as, let’s say, engineers or entrepreneurs or the like, so this has been quite frightening.

Ideologically, the most prominent future employees are not only enterprising, which can be proven by their CV in their vast number of activities, but also show a joyful, sociable attitude (Kuokkanen, Varje, and Väänänen 2013). Regardless of gender or different educational backgrounds, many of our interviewees consider these expectations to be difficult, if not impossible, to reach. It is seen as important that:

> You look successful also from the outside, or it comes through somehow that life is treating you well and you are moving ahead. (21-year-old female university student)

> When you are 25 you should have 15 years of work experience. [--] Nowadays you should have an education even to apply for a job. [--] If you can do your job, and you are professional in it, it should be enough I think, but no, you should have skills in everything and you should be active in social media and you should this and that. And then you should have a certain set of values and an opinion on everything. (25-year-old male, vocational diploma, unemployed)

Although it is hard to see from these short extracts, unlike the quoted female, who plainly points out the expectations, the quoted male is angry and rebellious against the irrational requirements. He is not embarrassed to say that he lives on social security benefits and lacks entrepreneurial aspirations.

In addition to trying to acquire potentially useful skills and push forward determinedly, there are virtues that are less easily attained. It is a unique personality that the neoliberal governmentality searches after, but trying to develop the right kind of personality is amorphous work. However, if one gets feedback indicating that one has the right personality, it can be a relief amidst all the formal qualifications: 'the thing to get the job might be, precisely, to have a sort of own personality' (23-year-old female, vocational diploma, in subsidized employment[1]).

Then again, if young people are continuously made to understand that they are not good enough as they are, it is hard to maintain a conception of oneself as a valuable human being, and not appearing as self-confident further hampers employability. As the labor market comes to feel like a battlefield where the successful are those people who 'swallow up all other people on their way' (25-year-old male, unemployed), people with a certain ability may succeed, as anticipated below by a woman with vocational education:

> I see that [those who will succeed are] hardworking and enterprising people, who are ready [to try again], so that they don't get depressed or totally phlegmatic, if they don't instantly succeed with finding a job. (23-year-old female, vocational diploma, in subsidized employment)

[1] Subsidized employment means that the state or municipality pays a part of the wage to help a person who has trouble finding employment and thus 'getting a grip' at the labor market.

The need to be entrepreneurial becomes interpreted today in the form of resilience. One must not give up easily, but an individual must be diligent enough to try again time after time, despite hardships and dead ends. It is stressful, but knowing how to handle that stress correctly has become a trainable skill too.

Thus, the entrepreneurial mindset becomes tuned with the ingredient of *non-depressiveness*: an ability to bounce back when faced with difficulty by demonstrating initiative and an entrepreneurial mindset. Young people need to avoid developing clinical depression, a condition that is, according to certain indicators, increasing among Finnish youth (Suvisaari et al. 2009; Torikka et al. 2014). We argue that it is not whatever resilience young people must develop, but rather, a special emphasis must be given to (avoiding) depression[2]. Ehrenberg (2010), according to Bröckling (2016, 201), states that mental diseases, such as depression and burnout, have replaced neurosis as the typical and accepted digression from the norm; entrepreneurial selves just get worn out pure and simple. Resistance to work manifests itself in diffuse forms of apathy and chronic health problems (Davies 2015, 106), and the general competitive ethos with the associated division into losers and winners may cause depression (ibid., 142). Thus, performing non-depressiveness is important, but in the current neoliberal entrepreneurial spirit, working with the inner mindset by assuring oneself that one is doing the right thing and motivating oneself for further action is needed as much as performance. The current therapy culture**,** which has happiness as its goal, seems to offer answers to these needs, a topic that we will discuss in the next part of the analysis.

The ambivalence of achieving and satisfying: learning happiness

Because young adults know that a positive, non-depressive mindset is needed for future employability, effort is needed in finding and maintaining this attitude. Therefore, it is an asset for an individual to learn how to be happy. Promoting happiness, which goes under the discourse of well-being, is also a way to govern young people toward an enterprising way of being (Duffy 2017, 88). In the same vein as Davies (2015, 114), we read from our data that '[h]appiness becomes a form of capital on which they [happier people] can fall

[2] Depression can be a medical condition but the view this article takes is that in the context of neoliberal governance, depression is not only an illness but also a continuous, abstract threat which, however, can be worked away by mental labor.

back amidst the turbulence of an uncertain economy. It is … a source of advantage in the battle to succeed'. This is how one of our interviewees talks about happiness:

> How you define it [happiness] yourself is important. [--] I think that happiness is that you are content with who you are. Because, in some sense, I think that nowadays there is the trend—what I'm doing myself, too—that you are always after something, like 'money is the thing that brings you the happiness' or that you are elevated to a new position in work, like, promoted. [--] So, in my mind, this [being content] is happiness, and it is achieved when you sort of learn to content yourself with that 'I have this and I am like this, and it is quite all right, and it is actually splendid and it is enough'. (26-year-old female university student)

This may look like resistance toward governing the discourse of enterprise. However, it is important to keep in mind that even resistance, in a Foucauldian sense, does not necessarily deny the core of the hegemonic discourse. McNay (2009, 66) formulates that 'even the most oppositional of identity movements may be neutralized as by being transformed into a form of responsible self-management and commodified as lifestyles choice'. In the account above, happiness is something a person is; it is an individualistic lifestyle choice, not an effect of something that has happened to the individual. Davies (2015) argues that in the therapeutic culture, we are supposed to think that happiness has no other origin but our mind. The practice of defining happiness as immaterial resists the imagined monetary discipline that is supposed to lead one into valuing the material. Material values and work as an instrument to gain material assets for happiness seemed to be more acceptable for the working-class interviewees with a vocational education than for middle-class university students.

In the same vein, the many ways our interviewees criticize entrepreneurialism are directed at the wrong ways with which to apply entrepreneurialism: ways that do not support the development of the authentic self and entrepreneurial mindset. Thus, these ways to resist the discourse are actually enforcing it (see Davies 2014; Gane 2012; Hjorth 2005; McNay 2009; Weiskopf 2007). According to our reading, the above quoted 26-year-old female university student criticizes a form of entrepreneurial spirit that represents the past, industrial capitalism. In the new capitalism, entrepreneurial mindset is not measured only by success or money. In this view, even setbacks are seen as important because they foster the spirit and develop the self.

In addition, based on the interview of this university student, we know that she has been a typical over-achiever who now struggles with making a successful transition to the labor market and, after experiencing mental problems related to burnout and self-dignity, is desperately trying to learn to acquiesce who she is. Learning to be kind and compassionate to oneself is a discourse that is emerging from the overarching expectations young women in particular set for themselves. The discourse of being compassionate toward oneself arises from a huge ambivalence: first girls, the new privileged subjects of neoliberalism (Baker 2010; McRobbie 2007), are steered toward pursuing top grades at school, being educated without taking 'useless' breaks, finding a purposeful combination of studies, and acquiring work experience and contacts for their future working life. If they become too tired and cannot achieve all the time, they are advised to be compassionate toward themselves, find their inner peace, and be happy in their lives, which is in line with therapeutic discourses (Ahmed 2010; Binkley 2014; Ecclestone and Hayes 2009).

Below is another example of a young female university student who tells how she has done everything she was supposed to do. She understands her potential but defines happiness as her ultimate, but not necessarily easy, goal, as follows:

> *Of course* (emphasis ours), I have always been sort of a target-oriented person, so that I want to fare well and be successful, and be in a high position or so. But maybe foremost [the dreams] link to happiness, that there are good guys around and you have a feeling that you are loved and you love others. So, foremost you dream about just being happy. (21-year-old female university student)

Yet another young (22-year-old) female university student ponders how she still has to learn happiness: '*Of course* (emphasis ours) I could be even more happy with myself.' Thus, although developing and demonstrating an entrepreneurial mindset is a necessity, it is done by adding the ingredient of *happiness* to the desired mindset. It is by being happy, not only by aiming toward achievements, that brings a feeling of well-being. This reflects the discourse of happiness, whose growing popularity in these times of entrepreneurial spirit and austerity mood is not a surprise (Ahmed 2010; Binkley 2014; Duffy 2017). Drawing from Binkley (2014), Sugarman writes how happiness 'is an effect of success, yet also a resource for further success, occasioned by life interpreted as an endless array of emerging opportunities and resources, including one's own emotional states, to be

engaged, deployed, and even risked toward the overarching goal of making oneself as competitive and effective as possible' (2015, 109). According to Davies (2015, 201), this discourse encourages us to conceive of other people and close human relations such as friends in an instrumental way: as a resource for the individual to be happy and thus successful. The 'self' is seen in a narrow way as an individual project instead of a relational self – a collective project emphasizing empathy and care.

Seeking the mental state of happiness is hard work. For a self-governing individual who rationalizes happiness as a means of remaining employable and staying a productive member of society (see Duffy 2017), aiming high is a form of risk-taking. It requires taking the risk of investing all assets into a successful career or enterprise and possibly failing. Therefore, there should be other, perhaps temporary, 'baskets', such as happiness without a career, happiness with a more modest career, and happiness with other things in life. Having a plan B is wise, even for an individual with capitals and credentials: 'I usually make quite many plans and then we'll see which one turns out to be successful, and thus you fall on your feet at the end, always' (28-year-old female university graduate, employed).

Mental lessons learned: be grateful

To be a useful citizen and valuable individual, the investments made have to pay off. For some individuals, even burnout becomes defined as 'a necessary growth as a human being'—as something that will turn out as a resource later in life. In the context of neoliberal self-responsibilization, it is necessary to construct the story of a self-governing, surviving, and happy self (Orgad 2009, 151). Some interviewees use the discourse of survival, which Kristiina Brunila (2014, 18) argues to be the position from which young people can be heard. Reflecting neoliberal therapy discourses, by learning how to survive, they also learn how to cope in the labor market (Brunila and Siivonen 2016; Salmenniemi 2017). In the culture of self-responsibilization, it is not surprising that therapies promise not to resolve the crisis but rather to ameliorate the symptoms by means of psychic maintenance work (Bröckling 2016, 201). Our interviewees indeed express gratefulness for their difficulties. Hardships, efforts, and a necessity to visit their own limits have made them stronger. If, as for Davies (2015, 114), happiness is an advantage in the battle to succeed, so is gratefulness. This is shown in the following quotes:

> I wouldn't be the person I am now if there would not have been that [burn-out] / 'Can you later be thankful for that experience?' / Yes, it made me stronger. (26-year-old female university student)

> In my opinion, there is even a positive side [in parents being demanding], that it urges you to keep the bar high for yourself, so that you may reach high, so that you get to live out your potential as much as possible. (26-year-old female university graduate, an entrepreneur)

This gratefulness can be interpreted as an expression of the individuals' appreciation of their parents, the school system, and policies that have put a lot of pressure and expectations on them, who appear to be middle-class future stars. Being pressured has forced them to reach their full potential, and they are grateful for having learned an entrepreneurial mindset from their close friends and family and society. This closely resembles what Christina Scharff (2016, 114–115) states regarding knockbacks and surviving difficulties—which belong to the past—as learning experiences, as in the case of the classically trained musicians she has studied.

There are even other ways in which gratefulness can be discussed. Even those who have the opposite experiences of pressure mention things for which they are grateful: friends from childhood, pleasant leisure time activities, parents who express their unconditional love, and a beloved on one's side, as follows:

> I have always said that my parents have aimed to influence me only a little, ever. In a certain sense, I am even grateful that I have had an opportunity to do things the way I have always wanted. That there has not been so much pressure. (28-year-old male technical university graduate, employed, working-class parents)

> They [the parents] have always just watched my undertakings from the sidelines. They haven't put any pressures or guided me to any direction. [--] Some others surely need steering. But I'm lucky in that sense, content, like successful. (21-year-old female university student, working-class parents)

In the examples above, gratefulness toward one's parents is expressed because their parents have acted in a way that is against the common middle-class wisdom stating that parents should be involved and help, even train their children, in making difficult decisions. These young adults are grateful that they have had the possibility to become who they are.

Their working-class parents have been supporting them aptly. Good parents, those who are culturally competent or recognize the limits of their competence, know when to get involved and when to step back. Parental non-involvement is considered wise in these cases because everything has gone well. We interpret that in a competitive society, parents who let young people be themselves and take risks but who still stay by their side and supporting them are valuable. The gratefulness expressed in the above quotes refers to this support and emphasizes the young subjects' own authority and self-directedness.

We take this notion as a demonstration of adding an aspect of *gratefulness* to their entrepreneurial mindset; those who express gratefulness for their 'no pain, no gain' experiences rely on the idea that getting angry at one's hardships or society's inequalities would not help. Therefore, it is best to turn everything into an educational experience because one, after all, only competes with oneself (Scharff 2016). Those who are grateful for their parents for not interfering state this from the position of young adults who are on the right course: they are already in a dream job or pursuing an education that allows them to reach their full potential. In both reasons for gratefulness, contentment with the current situation can be clearly seen, and these declarations of gratefulness, with a little exaggeration, sound like practicing a success story beforehand for a speech they will give for some future nomination.

Discussion and Conclusion

In the current study, our aim was to elaborate on the enterprising discourse as it presents itself in the lives of Finnish young adults. Our starting point was, in alignment with the idea of governmentality, that entrepreneurialism is already a well-known and widespread discourse, one that guides people to manage themselves in an entrepreneurial way. In various policy documents, government reports and strategies and school curricula, the strategy of spreading what we call an entrepreneurial spirit is clearly recognizable. It comes in forms of showing future potential or at least becoming and staying employable. At the level of individuals, assuming this spirit and incorporating it into one's own thoughts and actions is defined here as an entrepreneurial mindset; it is expressed in the vocabulary used and the views about viable and unavoidable actions. The mindset appears as rather conformist though; more than a creative disruption of a Schumpeterian entrepreneur, what is described is a controllable, managerial entrepreneur (Hjorth 2005;

Weiskopf 2007). Thus, young people seem to have learned how to be employable rather than how to produce radical creativity.

As our special contribution, we have suggested ‘tunings’, or the slight changes in this managerial-entrepreneurial mindset as it appears in our interviewees’ talk; here, our assumption was that the perpetual discourse is not stable but rather is supplemented with new elements that emerge after changes, such as the global financial crisis and the mood it has created. Importantly, through these tunings, very different young adults are capable of showing a ‘fit’ and not a ‘lack’ of entrepreneurialism. Those ingredients with which the mindset is tuned are *non-depressiveness*, *happiness,* and *gratefulness*. Not becoming depressed when meeting hardships guarantees that an individual is able to work toward employability, an entrepreneurial mindset, and his or her dreams. Several interviewees, despite their family background or current situation, have not been able to entirely bounce back after hardships in life. This has forced them to change their plans. However, talking about conquering hardships and finding other aims can also be seen as showing an entrepreneurial mindset. Happiness as the foremost aim suits this mindset encouraged by the neoliberal governmentality. Material or career-related success cannot be taken for granted, but one can always work on one’s personal mindset toward feeling happy.

Indeed, happiness is brought forth when the topic of success is discussed, and most often, it does not mean anything more complex than ordinary life, yet the ordinariness and balance between different life spheres sometimes seem to be a distant dream. Happiness is framed with gratefulness: one works to find the reasons to be grateful for what one has achieved, learned, and experienced. Being grateful is a mental asset with which one is able to see one’s endless efforts as meaningful and important. Indeed, it is an asset to be grateful for all kinds of experiences because despite the work on oneself, there always is the threat of losing one’s status and recognition if the evaluations received from the constant feedback are bad (Weiskopf 2007, 146).

Working with one’s own mind is not visible or seen as productive work as such. Nevertheless, it is added on top of all the other labor a young adult must do. In its extreme, the future may look like that if a person opts out of trying to assume the entrepreneurial mindset, the person may be exposed to falling into the category of ‘socially marginalized’, because, as Howie and Campbell (2016, 913) put it, the act of trying is a way out of the

threat of marginalization, and not trying is an unforgivable crime. According to our findings, self-responsibility extends to the future self and the quest to be autonomous *then*. A fear of ending up with a wrong kind of mindset, the one without hopefulness in pessimism (see Coleman 2016), fuels this quest. Steering youth at a distance uses this fear as a motivator to change. Molding one's mindset toward an entrepreneurial self is an affective escape from being a self without hope, a self wounded by austere times. Our contribution has been to show the affective side of becoming an entrepreneurial self: how self-responsibility extends to the affective control of the future.

In neoliberal society, the difficulties that some individuals have in tuning their mindset toward entrepreneurialism, or their reluctance to do so, often result in others blaming those individuals, instead of helping them or questioning the dominant line of thought. The affective modalities we have elaborated on are also reflected in therapeutic cultures, which work to alter individual subjectivities toward happiness, well-being, and self-improvement. It is hard to say whether working on one's mind is an empowering way to resist predominant competitiveness or whether these discourses mostly act to ensure that people stay productive and employable. Although uncertain times and a pessimistic mood can cause anxiety, and with depression being an ever-threatening risk, we all have to tune our minds and work for our mental well-being.

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