

Neurodiversity and Entrepreneurship

EMERALD STUDIES IN WORKPLACE NEURODIVERSITY

Series Editors: Cristina M. Giannantonio, PhD and Amy E. Hurley-Hanson, PhD

This important series is designed to make a significant contribution to the development of research on neurodiversity in the workplace. Despite increasing recognition of neurodiversity as a competitive advantage (Austin & Pisano, 2017), little is known about the work experiences and career outcomes of neurodiverse individuals. Neurodiversity is reported to include Autism Spectrum Disorder, Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Dyscalculia, Tourette Syndrome, and other neurological differences. This series will include books, monographs, edited volumes, and practitioner handbooks examining the key individual, organizational, and societal issues surrounding neurodiversity at work, the challenges involved in finding and maintaining employment for neurodiverse individuals, and the need to understand which best practices will lead to positive work, career, and life outcomes for neurodiverse individuals.

The series, *Emerald Studies in Workplace Neurodiversity*, will synthesize critical thinking around the strategic issues associated with hiring and integrating neurodiverse individuals into the workplace. Titles in the series will provide current research in this area. This series will capture contemporary research and practice from a diverse range of international scholars, practitioners, and educators. The series will help to build connections between research and neurodiversity in the workplace.

The series will also explore the role of organizations, educational institutions, advocacy groups, and the public sector in preparing neurodiverse individuals for employment. It will also explore best practices being utilized in the employment process and how these may be adapted to address future challenges. This is a series that is relevant for both academics and practitioners, as it aims to further the research agenda on the topic and influence the ability of organizations to successfully hire neurodiverse individuals. While little is known about the work experiences and career outcomes of these individuals, the individual, organizational, and societal issues associated with neurodiversity in the workplace underscore the importance of this topic.

More information about this series at: <https://books.emeraldinsight.com/page/series-detail/Emerald-Studies-in-Workplace-Neurodiversity/>

Available Titles in This Series

Generation A: Research on Autism in the Workplace, edited by Cristina M. Giannantonio and Amy E. Hurley-Hanson

Generation A: Perspectives on Special Populations and International Research on Autism in the Workplace, edited by Amy E. Hurley-Hanson and Cristina M. Giannantonio

Neurodiversity and Entrepreneurship

EDITED BY

KAREN S. MARKEL

University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, USA

MATTHEW E. HANSON

University of California, Irvine, USA

CRISTINA M. GIANNANTONIO

Chapman University, USA

AND

AMY E. HURLEY-HANSON

Chapman University, USA



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Emerald Publishing, Floor 5, Northspring, 21-23 Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 4DL

First edition 2025

Editorial matter and selection © 2025 Karen S. Markel, Matthew E. Hanson, Cristina M. Giannantonio and Amy E. Hurley-Hanson.

Individual chapters © 2025 The authors.

Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited.

Reprints and permissions service

Contact: www.copyright.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83753-799-0 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-83753-798-3 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-83753-800-3 (Epub)



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

“All humans are entrepreneurs, not because they should start companies, but because the will to create is encoded in human DNA, and creation is the essence of entrepreneurship.”

– Reid Hoffman

To my husband, Don, who has been my biggest supporter in all aspects of my life. Extraordinary Ventures was the inspiration around this project's development. A special thank you to Dr Elizabeth Barclay, who has been instrumental in my academic and professional success.

– Karen S. Markel, PhD

To my loving wife, Grace, for her affectionate belief and tender encouragement. I dedicate my contribution to dismantling stereotypes and unleashing the innate creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship of us all, for us all.

– Matthew E. Hanson, PhD

To my parents, Susie and Joseph Giannantonio, thank you for always believing in me, even when I said I wanted to be an archeologist, a fashion designer, an oceanographer, a high school math teacher, and a management professor. Your love and support made the last one a reality.

– Cristina M. Giannantonio, PhD

To Amelia, Lorenzo, and Sophie, who have captured my heart. Thank you for filling my life with joy, laughter, and love. I am grateful for every moment we share together. The world is yours to explore. May your dreams know no bounds.

– Amy E. Hurley-Hanson, PhD

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

About the Editors	<i>ix</i>
About the Contributors	<i>xi</i>
Preface	<i>xv</i>
Acknowledgments	<i>xix</i>
Introduction	<i>xxi</i>

Section I: Neurodiversity and Entrepreneurship

Chapter 1 Autism in Context: The Case for Entrepreneurship and Conditions for Success	3
<i>Eric Patton</i>	
Chapter 2 The Path to Success: Engaging and Preparing Autistic Youth for Entrepreneurship	21
<i>Rachel Torres, Marianna Schroeder and Amy Jane Griffiths</i>	
Chapter 3 Entrepreneurship and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: A Literature Review and Ideas for Future Research	55
<i>Carolin Auschra and Johanna Mai</i>	

Section II: Support for Neurodiverse Entrepreneurs

Chapter 4 The Institutional Support to Neurodiverse Entrepreneurs: Insights From Business Incubators	87
<i>Caroline Demeyère</i>	

Chapter 5 Establishing a Strategic Positioning of Neurodiverse Entrepreneurs 109

Mark E. Moore and Lana L. Huberty

Chapter 6 Neurodiversity-Affirming Entrepreneurship: Improving Work Experiences for Young Adults on the Spectrum 123

Amy K. Izuno-Garcia and Antonio F. Pagán

Section III: International Perspectives on Neurodiversity and Entrepreneurs

Chapter 7 Autistic Social Entrepreneurship and Systems Thinking: A Neurodiversity-Affirming Approach 135

Sharon Zivkovic

Chapter 8 Neurodivergent Entrepreneurship: The Indian Perspective 151

Manisha Vaswani

Chapter 9 It's Just Not for Me: The Reluctant Neurodivergent Entrepreneur 167

Michael Brown and Anica Zeyen

Index 179

About the Editors

Karen S. Markel, PhD, is a Professor of Management at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. She is a senior certified by both professional organizations in Human Resource Management. Dr Markel's research centers on workforce development partnerships between educational institutions and private industry. She also conducts research on the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce. Her work has been published in *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Human Relations*, and *Employee Rights and Responsibilities* among other peer reviews and professional publications. Dr Markel has an active consulting business supporting organizational and employee development.

Matthew E. Hanson, PhD, began his career in innovation and entrepreneurship as an engineer in the US Air Force on the GPS navigation system, eventually developing national space policy, then retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel. On Northrop Grumman's stealth bomber program, he served as an engineer and eventually as a national spokesperson for the program. He and colleagues then launched the medtech start-up Integrated Medical Systems, Inc. Later joining Beckman Coulter as a program manager, Hanson led teams developing an automated diagnostic system and a cloud-based analytics platform. He began teaching entrepreneurship at Chapman University, eventually becoming full-time clinical faculty and entrepreneur center director before taking on his current role as Director of New Ventures at the University of California, Irvine. Dr Hanson holds a patent as a coinventor of a history logging system for biological samples and has a doctorate in aerospace engineering from USC and an MBA from Chapman University.

Cristina M. Giannantonio, PhD, is a Professor of Management in the Argyros College of Business and Economics at Chapman University. She is a Research Associate in the Thompson Policy Institute on Disability and Autism at Chapman University. She is the coauthor of *Autism in the Workplace Creating Positive Outcomes for Generation A*, published in 2020 as part of the Palgrave Explorations in Workplace Stigma series. Since 2019 she has been an Emerald Publishing Series Editor for Emerald Studies in Workplace Neurodiversity. She is also the coeditor of *Generation A: International and Special Populations: Autism in the Workplace* and *Generation A: Research on Autism in the Workplace*, both of which are part of the Emerald Studies in Workplace Neurodiversity Series.

Dr Giannantonio's research interests include autism in the workplace, extreme leadership, entrepreneurship, and image norms. Her research has been published in academic journals, including the *Journal of Management*, *Personnel Psychology*, and *Personnel Review*. She was the coeditor of the *Journal of Business and Management* from 2004 to 2016. Dr Giannantonio and Dr Hurley-Hanson's book *Extreme Leadership: Leaders, Teams, and Situations Outside the Norm* was published by Edward Elgar Publishing in 2014. The book is part of the New Horizons in Leadership Studies series.

She served as the President of the Chapman University Faculty Senate from 2015 to 2016. She received her BS, MBA, and PhD in Human Resource Management from the Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland, College Park, MD.

Amy E. Hurley-Hanson, PhD, is a Professor of Management in the George L. Argyros College of Business and Economics at Chapman University. She is a Research Associate in the Thompson Policy Institute on Disability and Autism at Chapman University. She is the coauthor of *Autism in the Workplace Creating Positive Outcomes for Generation A*, published in 2020 as part of the Palgrave Explorations in Workplace Stigma series. Since 2019 she has been an Emerald Publishing Series Editor on Emerald Studies in Workplace Neurodiversity. She is also the coeditor of *Generation A: International and Special Populations Autism in the Workplace* and *Generation A: Research on Autism in the Workplace*, both of which are part of the Emerald Studies in Workplace Neurodiversity Series.

She is the coeditor of the book *Extreme Leadership: Leaders, Teams, and Situations Outside the Norm*. She was the coeditor of the *Journal of Business and Management* from 2004 to 2016. Dr Hurley-Hanson was chosen as an Ascendant Scholar in 2000 by the Western Academy of Management.

Her research areas are autism in the workplace, organizational decision-making, image norms, high-tech entrepreneurial careers, and the application of behavioral decision theory to strategic aspects of executive succession. Her work on these topics has appeared in numerous journals, including the *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Women in Management Review*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *Group and Organization Management*, *Journal of Leadership and Organization Development*, *Organizational Dynamics*, and the *Journal of Psychology*. She received her PhD in Management from the Stern School of Business at New York University, her MBA from New York Institute of Technology, and her BS from the University of Florida. She was selected as a Research Fellow at the Center for Leadership and Career Studies at the Goizueta Business School of Emory University.

About the Contributors

Carolin Auschra is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Freie Universitaet Berlin, Germany. Her research focuses on the organization of healthcare and neurodiversity in the work context.

Michael Brown is a professionally trained Chef and a qualified Lecturer with 30 years of teaching experience. He met his Japanese wife while living in the Far East for 5 years working as a TEFL tutor. After a challenging upbringing, he left school with few qualifications. He was diagnosed with ADHD as an adult in 2015. He has also suffered with mental health issues for most of his life. Having always worked, he took voluntary redundancy due to work-related ill health. He started a social enterprise as a means of work after 3 years struggling to find employment. He graduated from the School for Social Entrepreneurs and currently leads Empower to Cook CIC (E2C) transforming lives through cookery workshops. He works with schools, families, people living in social housing, unemployed people, mental health clients, carers, community groups, and corporates. E2C is working hard to use food waste/surplus in all its classes to tackle the environmental impact of the food supply chain.

Caroline Demeyère is a Postdoctoral Fellow at Copenhagen Business School, Denmark and Associate Researcher at the Social and solidarity economy Chair of the University of Reims, France. Her research intersects equality, diversity, and inclusion, cross-sector collaboration, and social entrepreneurship.

Amy Jane Griffiths, PhD, NCSP, is a Clinical Psychologist (PSY 24536) and a Nationally Certified School Psychologist. Dr Griffiths came to Chapman University after working as the director of several clinical and non-public school programs serving youth with disabilities. At Chapman University, Dr Griffiths coordinates the Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC) program and is an Associate Professor in the Attallah College of Educational Studies. She is a research affiliate at the Thompson Policy Institute on Disability. Her translational research focuses on how we can *help prepare children from underserved populations for connected, engaged, and meaningful adult lives*. To answer this question, she looks at two distinct yet overlapping areas: (1) school-system intervention used to enhance student outcomes over the long term and (2) career development and transition supports and services for neurodivergent teens and young adults.

Lana L. Huberty is the Dean of the College of Kinesiology and Full Professor at Concordia University, St Paul. Dr Lana Huberty brings her programs a wealth of industry practice in both private and public sport and recreation settings. Dr Huberty's expertise in health and wellness includes 35 years of group and individualized fitness training, for which she holds numerous professional certifications, including NETA, LMI, PHI, and YogaFit. Research interests and publications focus on sport marketing and sponsorship, gender diversity within sport management, and sport leadership. Lana earned her PhD in Kinesiology, with a Sport Management emphasis from the University of Minnesota. Her MS in Kinesiology, Sport and Recreation Management is from St Cloud State University, and her BS in Recreation, Parks and Leisure Services with a Planning and Management Emphasis is from Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Amy K. Izuno-Garcia, PhD, NCSP is an Assistant Professor in the Louis A. Faillace, MD Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at UTHealth Houston, specializing in the assessment of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) across the lifespan. She earned her PhD in school psychology at the University of Houston. During her time in graduate school, Garcia trained in autism assessment in Houston area school districts, UTHealth CLASS Clinic, and Texas Children's Hospital Autism Center. She completed her doctoral psychology internship at Marcus Autism Center in the Clinical Assessment and Diagnostics track and her postdoctoral fellowship in clinical psychology under the supervision of Katherine Loveland through the Louis A. Faillace, MD Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Lifespan Autism (C.L.A.S.S.) Clinic and Center for Human Development Research.

Dr Garcia uses a neurodiversity lens and person-centered approach when assessing individuals of all ages for features of autism. She believes in working collaboratively with clients and their families throughout all parts of the evaluation process. Dr Garcia also has an active role in supervising practicum students, interns, and postdoctoral fellows and hopes to instill the same passion for helping individuals with autism and their families.

Johanna Mai is a senior expert for occupational health and safety with the German Social Accident Insurance and has a background in labor market and socioeconomics. Her research focus is on psychological well-being, management of hybrid workplaces, and the safe and healthy employment of migrant workers.

Mark E. Moore is a Faculty Member in the Department of Kinesiology at East Carolina University (ECU), Greenville, North Carolina, USA, and at the College of Health Sciences at American Public University. His work has been published in journals such as *Vocational Behavior*, *Gender in Management*, *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, *Journal of Marketing Channels*, *Sport Management Education Journal*, and *British Journal of Management*. His research interests relate to organizational behavior, finance, and marketing with an emphasis on disability and diversity in work and educational organizations. Mark also has authored textbooks on sport marketing and disability in work organizations. In addition, he has authored several book

chapters on a wide range of disability and sport management issues. He is a frequent speaker on these subjects at Academy of Management conferences.

He teaches courses in sport finance, sport marketing and sales, sport management, statistics, and research methods. Mark also teaches a course on disability in work organizations in ECU's Honors College. He is a wheelchair user and has a noticeable speech impairment. His speech is supplemented through visual aids. Prior to his ECU appointment, Mark was on the faculty at St Cloud State University. Mark's educational background includes postdoctoral training in sport organizations from Temple University. In addition to advanced coursework at Temple University, he holds a PhD in sport management and an MBA in marketing/finance from the University of Pittsburgh. Mark's undergraduate work is in economics from Kent State University.

Mark's professional experiences include stints with the Pittsburgh Pirates, the University of Pittsburgh Intercollegiate Athletic Department and Temple University Athletics in the areas of marketing planning, marketing research, and strategic planning. He also served as an Administrator at Harcum College (Bryn Mawr, PA) with leadership, budgetary, and grants writing responsibilities.

Antonio F. Pagán, PhD, is a Clinical Psychology Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Texas Health Science Center Houston. Dr Pagán conducts research on neurodevelopmental differences across the lifespan with a focus on how these individuals can be supported during key life stage transitions. His current research is supported by a fellowship from Autism Speaks to develop and pilot test a treatment program for autistic young adults and their Spanish-speaking parents.

Eric Patton, PhD, is a Professor of Management at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia Pennsylvania. Dr Patton's research focuses on absence from work, gender issues in management, and workplace disabilities. His research has been published in several journals including the *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology*, *Human Relations*, *Personnel Review*, *Equality Diversity & Inclusion*, the *Journal of Management History*, and the *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*.

Marianna Schroeder is a graduate student in Chapman University's EdS in School Psychology and Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC) programs. As a graduate research assistant at Chapman, she contributes to Dr Amy Jane Griffiths' research on helping prepare children from underserved populations for connected, engaged, and meaningful adult lives. Having previously served students in educational settings ranging from preschool to adult transition programs as a substitute teacher and in residential and clinical settings as a registered behavior technician, Marianna currently collaborates with colleagues, students, and families as a school psychology practicum student and clinical counselor trainee. Her research interests include identifying and addressing students' mental health needs and fostering success for diverse student populations throughout and after their K-12 education.

Rachel Torres is a Nationally Certified School Psychologist and Associate Professional Clinical Counselor practicing in Los Angeles, CA. She is also a third-year Doctoral Student and Graduate Student Instructor at Chapman University. Before enrolling at Chapman, Rachel earned a Master of Science in Adolescent English

Education and taught for five years in New York City. She currently serves as a Graduate Research Assistant at the Thompson Policy Institute on Disability, where she contributes to research on transition planning and interventions related to postsecondary preparation for students with disabilities. Her research interests include equitable mental health service provision in the schools and preparing diverse populations for opportunities in adulthood.

Manisha Vaswani received her PhD in Entrepreneurship and Management from the University of Texas at Arlington. She is presently an Assistant Professor at the University of Wisconsin at River Falls. Her research interests are focused on studying entrepreneurial mindsets, entrepreneurial identity and motivations, leader behaviors, international business outcomes, small business strategies especially in clusters, strategic entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship and the role of culture, and the role of storytelling in entrepreneurial ventures and family business. She also has varied interests in human resource management, organizational behavior, business strategy, and diversity. Dr Vaswani is also the founder of a nonprofit organization, The Vaswani Foundation, that provides free educational resources to impoverished children and clean drinking water to villages in India.

Anica Zeyen is a Professor in Entrepreneurship and Inclusion at the School of Business and Management at Royal Holloway University of London, UK. Anica is also the Vice Dean for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for her School. Her research focuses on disability-inclusive organizing which covers topics such as disabled entrepreneurs, working while disabled, and inclusive leisure activities. She holds a PhD from Leuphana University Lueneburg, Germany, 2014. Anica has published numerous articles and held various grants on the topic of entrepreneurship and/or disability. Outside of academic work, Anica volunteers for the Guide Dogs for The Blind Charity UK as speaker, campaigner, and volunteer. Anica is blind and uses a long white cane or guide dog as her mobility aids.

Sharon Zivkovic is the Founder and CEO of the social enterprise Community Capacity Builders. As an autistic social entrepreneur and systems thinker, Sharon has used her innate bottom-up and associative thinking skills, and systemising capabilities, to develop and commercialize a number of social innovations. In 2016, Sharon received a Fresh Scientist Award for her innovative work in addressing wicked problems using complexity science, and in 2021, Sharon's work in Applied Complexity (Social Entrepreneurship and Wicked Problems) was recognized on the Map of the Complexity Sciences. Community Capacity Builders has recently established a Centre for Autistic Social Entrepreneurship, which aims to build the capacity of disability service providers, social enterprise support organizations, and business advisors to support autistic social entrepreneurs in a neurodiversity-affirming manner. Sharon's other roles include Adjunct Research Fellow at Torrens University Australia and member of Emerald Publishing's Impact Advisory Board.

Preface

Matthew E. Hanson, PhD

Entrepreneurship has long been integral to the United States economy, intertwined with its history, and symbolic of the American dream. Entrepreneurial ventures are important contributors to the American economy and labor market. Small businesses alone create two-thirds of net new jobs (US Small Business Administration, 2019), drive US innovation and competitiveness, employ almost half (46%) of America's private sector workforce, and represent 43.5% of gross domestic product (US Chamber of Commerce, 2024).

Entrepreneurs comprise some of the world's richest individuals and represent the mythic heroes of success stories. Among the US adult population, 75% believe entrepreneurs receive high social status (Dunk, 2019), contributing to a culture that celebrates famous entrepreneurs, such as Steve Jobs, Walt Disney, and Bill Gates, each of whom started large-scale global corporate enterprises with products and services that touch virtually every aspect of the way we work, play, and live. Entrepreneurs also include the countless number of less well-known small business owners who choose to become their own bosses, as well as the new breed of entrepreneurs making their mark through e-commerce, social media, and artificial intelligence (AI) platforms.

Academics have devoted considerable research to understanding entrepreneurs' characteristics, alternative models of entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial intentions among men, women, minorities, and various generational cohorts. Interest in exploring entrepreneurship as a career path among Generation Z (Gen Z) is surging. Research has found that 93% of Gen Z have explored starting their own business (Kratz, 2024; Zen Business, 2024), suggesting that "Gen Z is poised to become the most entrepreneurial generation the world has seen" (Microsoft, 2022).

Far less research has focused on entrepreneurship as a career vehicle for neurodiverse individuals despite an increase in the number of entrepreneurs in society, growth in the number of start-up businesses established, and increasing recognition of the advantages of neurodiversity for entrepreneurial activity. Ninety-two percent of Gen Z recognize the value of neurodiversity in entrepreneurship, and more than half of Gen Z identify themselves as "definitely" (22%) or "somewhat" (31%) neurodiverse (Kratz, 2024). This is significant because, in the current decade, 707,000 to 1,116,000 young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) will reach adulthood (Shattuck et al., 2020) and will be entering the workplace in unprecedented numbers. Hurley-Hanson et al. (2020) refer to

these young adults as Generation A. Entrepreneurship may be vital to successful employment for neurodiverse individuals.

Much has been published in the media regarding successful neurodiverse entrepreneurs (Bergemann, 2014; Grandin, 2011; Howard, 2017). The disclosure of neurodiversity diagnoses by well-known entrepreneurs has brought attention to the relationship between neurodiversity and entrepreneurship (e.g., Elon Musk's disclosure of Asperger's Syndrome on Saturday Night Live in 2021). Such coverage is important because it lifts up successful role models such as Bill Gates (Asperger's Syndrome) and Richard Branson (dyslexia), who may inspire and motivate neurodiverse individuals to explore entrepreneurship as a career pathway (Doyle, 2019).

The chapters in this book raise interesting questions about the relationship between neurodiversity and entrepreneurship. There are various reasons why neurodiverse individuals start their own companies (Salter, 2024). They may be uncomfortable working in a corporate environment and believe an entrepreneurial setting would better match their skill sets and needs. Anecdotal evidence reveals much variation in the types of entrepreneurial ventures started by neurodiverse individuals, ranging from selling products online to brick-and-mortar establishments including bakeries, coffee shops, and car washes. Additionally, some family members have established microenterprises to help their neurodiverse adult children have a place to work and have a chance at financial independence.

In addition, entrepreneurship as a path for neurodiverse individuals has been recognized by universities and public agencies (Kirby, 2021). Many universities have specific entrepreneurship centers to help neurodiverse individuals become entrepreneurs and offer majors and minors in entrepreneurship. There are local, state, and federal government programs to support entrepreneurial ventures by neurodiverse individuals. These programs also exist in countries worldwide to support entrepreneurial ventures as a path to economic prosperity.

We look forward to this book advancing the context and conversation beyond considerations of diversity, equity, and inclusion (Hogan et al., 2022) and to the greater global good of stronger economies and a higher quality of life. Within this context, chapters were selected to be included in this edited volume. Each chapter examines various factors that may play a role in generating a neurodiverse workforce to the benefit of neurodiverse individuals, organizations, and society. These chapters capture contemporary research and practice from a diverse range of international scholars, practitioners, and educators to build connections between research and practice focused on neurodiversity issues in the workplace.

By convening a critical mass of thought leaders in the area, we hope to advance future theory, research, and practice, as well as advance society's understanding of the creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship that would otherwise be left untapped had we not gleaned the varied information, insights, and opportunities presented by the authors. This book explores entrepreneurship and neurodiversity and is an important addition to Emerald's Series on Neurodiversity in the Workplace. We desire this book to contribute to the emerging literature on entrepreneurship and neurodiversity in the workplace and facilitate employment opportunities for neurodiverse individuals.

References

- Bergemann, R. A. (2014). *Asperger's guide to entrepreneurship: Setting up your own business for professionals with autism spectrum disorder*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. <https://www.amazon.com/Aspergers-Guide-Entrepreneurship-Professionals-Employment/dp/1849055092>
- Doyle, N. (2019, October 22). Richard Branson opens door to bigger thinking on neurodiversity. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/drnancydoyle/2019/10/22/richard-branson-opens-the-door-to-bigger-thinking-on-neurodiversity-/?sh=7e8435df639d>
- Dunk, A. (2019). Entrepreneurship: An American Obsession? Babson College. <https://entrepreneurship.babson.edu/about-entrepreneurship-of-all-kinds/>
- Grandin, T. (2011). *The way I see it: A personal look at autism and Asperger's*. Future Horizons. <https://www.fhautism.com/shop/the-way-i-see-it-a-personal-look-at-autism/>
- Hogan, S. K., Mahto, M. & Sniderman, B. (2022). *Neurodiversity in the workplace*. Deloitte Insights. <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/talent/neurodiversity-in-the-workplace.html>
- Howard, T. L. (2017). *Strategies for entrepreneurs with disabilities to sustain a successful small business* (dissertation). Walden University. https://wonder-request-attachments-production.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/2020/f4cb7a8e-a1b3-494f-8e39-b4619a266c6e/c99TIKFuC_Strategies%20for%20Entrepreneurs%20with%20Disabilities%20to%20Sustain%20a%20Successful%20Small%20Business.pdf
- Hurley-Hanson, A. E., Giannantonio, C. M., & Griffiths, A. J. (2020). *Autism in the workplace: Creating positive employment and career outcomes for generation A*. Palgrave MacMillan Cham. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-29049-8>
- Kirby, A. (2021). Entrepreneurship, and neurodiversity – The SME partnership for 2021. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/entrepreneurship-neurodiversity-sme-partnership-2021-kirby>
- Kratz, J. (2024). What Gen Z entrepreneurs want. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/juliekratz/2024/03/03/what-gen-z-entrepreneurs-want/?sh=53f856a62fec>
- Microsoft. (2022). How Gen Z is flipping the career paradigm on its head and navigating the entrepreneurial world independently. *Windows Blog*. <https://blogs.windows.com/windowsexperience/2022/06/06/gen-trepreneur-z-is-making-its-mark-on-the-future-of-small-business/#:~:text=With%2062%25%20of%20Gen%20Zers,generation%20the%20world%20has%20seen>
- Salter, P. (2024, March 14). Neurodiverse founders are flourishing despite discrimination. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/philipsalter/2024/03/14/neurodiverse-founders-are-flourishing-despite-discrimination/?sh=172cfe526667>
- Shattuck, P. T., Garfield, T., Roux, A. M., Rast, J. E., Anderson, K., Hassrick, E. M., & Kuo, A. (2020). Services for adults with autism spectrum disorder: A systems perspective. *Current Psychiatry Reports*, 22, 13. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11920-020-1136-7>
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce. (2024). <https://www.uschamber.com/small-business>
- U.S. Small Business Administration. (2019). Small businesses generate 44% of U.S. economic activity. <https://advocacy.sba.gov/2019/01/30/small-businesses-generate-44-percent-of-u-s-economic-activity/>
- Zen Business. (2024). <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20230614082058/en/New-ZenBusiness-Research-Finds-Class-of-2023-Sees-Neurodiversity-as-an-Asset-in-Leadership-is-Primed-to-be-the-Most-Entrepreneurial>

This page intentionally left blank

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank our families, friends, and colleagues as we worked to assemble the chapters comprising this edited volume. We thank our families for their unwavering love, understanding, and encouragement. We are keenly aware that the time we spend writing is time we do not spend with them. We appreciate the patience shown by our friends for understanding when we were slow to respond to texts, emails, and phone calls. We thank our respective institutions, Chapman University, the University of Colorado, and the University of California, Irvine, for the time and resources provided so we could work on this book.

We are particularly grateful to our authors for exploring the relationship between neurodiversity and entrepreneurship. Their work contributes to the emerging literature on neurodiversity in the workplace and reminds us these constructs are complex, fascinating, and deserving of future research. We appreciate their commitment to improving the work experiences and lives of neurodiverse individuals. Thank you for your patience with us and for putting our deadlines ahead of your other work commitments. We are excited to have worked with researchers from several countries who are exploring this important issue, providing a global context, and enriching this research around the world.

This book would not have been possible without the encouragement and support of Emerald Publishing, especially Daniel Ridge, Commissioning Editor; Madison Klopfer, Book Commissioning Team; Lauren Kammerdiener, Content Development Editor; and Pavithra Muthu, Book Project Editor. We also wish to thank Kiruthika Andappan and the rest of Emerald's publishing team for their help in making this book a reality. Finally, none of us could have produced this book alone. We are fortunate to be colleagues who became friends.

Karen S. Markel, PhD
Professor of Management
University of Colorado, Colorado Springs

Matthew E. Hanson, PhD
Director of New Ventures
University of California, Irvine

Cristina M. Giannantonio, PhD
Professor of Management
Argyros College of Business and Economics
Chapman University

Amy E. Hurley-Hanson, PhD
Professor of Management
Argyros College of Business and Economics
Chapman University

This page intentionally left blank

Introduction

Karen S. Markel

The chapters included in this book are organized and presented along three themes. The volume begins with chapters that introduce the relationship between neurodiversity and entrepreneurship. The second theme includes contributions that provide insight into the unique support and strategy for Neurodiverse Entrepreneurs. Finally, the book concludes with contributions that report international perspectives on neurodiversity and entrepreneurs. The nine chapters in this book include empirical and theoretical contributions from various disciplines and contexts. The research also focuses on different neurodivergent conditions that include Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), as well as comorbid conditions of the above. Many neurodivergent individuals have relatively lower educational attainment and employment achievement levels despite their knowledge, skills, abilities, and accomplishments, often on par with non-neurodivergent individuals. Entrepreneurship can provide a working environment that can be more inclusive of neurodivergent individuals, whether in self-employment or other entrepreneurial organizations. This is commonly referred to as the pull toward entrepreneurship. Also, different models of entrepreneurship can be associated with neurodivergent individuals discussed in this volume; for example, social entrepreneurship, solo entrepreneurship, and other interventions related to the growth of entrepreneurial organizations (e.g., academic and incubator programs targeted toward entrepreneurial skill development). Many chapters also discuss the push toward entrepreneurship when traditional employment excludes neurodivergent individuals. While this volume does not support either the push- or pull-around the engagement of neurodiverse entrepreneurship, the chapters illustrate those factors in different ways.

Neurodiversity and Entrepreneurship

The first set of chapters explores the existing research and conditions for neurodiverse entrepreneurs. They also explore the opportunity that entrepreneurship presents to neurodivergent individuals rather than the barriers to employment often described in the existing literature. Using primarily guided literature reviews, the chapters in this section present comprehensive suggestions for areas of future research. The chapters included in Section 1 provide rich literature reviews of the existing research, constructs, and a path forward for future

scholarship in examining the relationship between entrepreneurship and neurodiversity.

Chapter 1, “Autism in Context: The Case for Entrepreneurship and Conditions for Success” by Eric Patton, frames the who, what, where, when, and why of the relationship between entrepreneurship and Autism. Patton bases his analysis on the common characteristics of those with autism to identify the context and conditions under which these individuals will thrive as entrepreneurs. Patton frames his research with the underlying assumption that entrepreneurship provides a positive employment pathway for those on the autism spectrum (and also includes those with ADHD and Dyslexia). He uses a contextual approach to their examination to determine the who, what, where, when, and why of the specific work story that makes entrepreneurship a viable and attractive pathway for individuals with autism.

Rachel Torres, Marianna Schroeder, and Amy Jane Griffiths, Chapter 2, “The Path to Success: Engaging and Preparing Autistic Youth for Entrepreneurship,” conducts a systematic review to identify school-based interventions available for autistic youth to support the transition from high school to higher education, entrepreneurship, and employment. Neurodivergent youth need intentionally designed interventions in K-12 to support their development into entrepreneurs. Their review discusses a unique type of entrepreneurial organization, micro-enterprises (10 or fewer employees). Torres, Schroeder, and Griffiths also examine the essential skills needed by successful entrepreneurs to guide the development of these targeted interventions.

Chapter 3, “Entrepreneurship and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: A Literature Review and Ideas for Future Research,” by Carolin Auschra and Johanna Mai, presents a systematic literature review of 26 articles. Using this review, they seek to provide a common measure for attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and entrepreneurship and detail opportunities for future research. Auschra and Mai examine the existing research methodologies employed to conduct the reviewed literature and critically examine the limitations of such data collection strategies to guide their recommendations.

Support for Neurodiverse Entrepreneurs

The chapters included in this section provide rich descriptions of targeted interventions designed to support neurodivergent entrepreneur success. The authors examine commonly used entrepreneurship tools (e.g., business incubators, strategic planning, and workplace practice design) and delve into how they can support neurodiverse entrepreneur success. Together, these chapters highlight how the existing structures often designed to support entrepreneurial success often fall short in the successful support of neurodiverse entrepreneurs.

Caroline Demeyère’s Chapter 4, “The Institutional Support to Neurodiverse Entrepreneurs: Insights from Business Incubators,” explores how business incubators can support neurodiversity individuals during their entrepreneurial journals by analyzing semi-directive interviews with neurodiverse entrepreneurs. This

chapter provides a rich description of the experiences of neurodiverse entrepreneurs in the business incubator setting. It reveals that these efforts must be designed for and sensitive to the unique needs of these participants to ensure that they foster an inclusive environment.

Chapter 5, “Establishing a Strategic Positioning of Neurodiverse Entrepreneurs,” by Mark E. Moore and Lana L. Huberty, develops a persuasive argument for why these entrepreneurs need to employ the tenets of the strategic positioning process to develop successful ventures. They break down the various tenets of strategic positioning and suggest how neurodiverse entrepreneurs can uniquely benefit from incorporating these activities into their development process. Moore and Huberty suggest that utilizing strategic business planning can help a new venture receive legitimacy in the marketplace, which can be an additional challenge for neurodiverse entrepreneurs.

Amy K. Izuno-Garcia and Antonio F. Pagán’s Chapter 6, “Neurodiversity-affirming Entrepreneurship: Improving Work Experiences for Young Adults on the Spectrum,” provides a backdrop for employer practices that may limit the inclusion of autistic individuals to suggest that entrepreneurship may be a viable option for meaningful employment when organizations are not designed to be supportive. They detail the relevant literature to describe the benefits of entrepreneurship for young adults on the spectrum and the conditions in which interventions need to be designed. For example, the authors suggest that clinicians and scholars should incorporate the role and aspirations of these parents, young adult individual characteristics, and needed support (e.g., coaching and targeted job training) to develop a neurodiversity-affirming environment. The authors then continue their discussion with recommendations for educational and organizational accommodations and conditions conducive to the overall success of youth on the spectrum and how school and work can be designed to ensure high achievement.

International Perspectives on Neurodiversity and Entrepreneurs

The final chapters in this book provide rich descriptions of three countries outside of North America. Because the business conditions, government regulations, and institutional supports vary widely across countries, the authors detail many considerations that must be accounted for in examining this research in different countries. From applying systems thinking in Australia, a review of the development of policies and practices in India, and a self-reported autobiography of an English entrepreneur, these chapters represent the importance of international context in the public policy supports that can impact neurodiverse employment, inclusion, and entrepreneurship.

Sharon Zivkovic’s Chapter 7, “Autistic Social Entrepreneurship and Systems Thinking: A Neurodiversity-Affirming Approach,” employs social enterprise systems thinking in Australia. The author argues that all enterprises owned by those with autism spectrum disorder or that align with the broader neurodiversity movement are defined as social enterprises. She suggests that neurodiversity-affirming practices that support these individuals should be moved from a deficit view to one of

viewing neurodiversity as a web of differences and abilities respective of everyone. Zivkovic draws on the experiences of Indigenous businesses in Australia to support her proposition that all autistic owner businesses are social enterprises.

Chapter 8, “Neurodivergent Entrepreneurship: The Indian Perspective” by Manisha Vaswani, is a review article about the evolution of government initiatives and support for neurodiversity individuals in India and, more specifically, those initiatives around entrepreneurship. India has developed public policy in relation to aligning with international movements (e.g., United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) as well as specific legislation to support equal treatment in employment (e.g., Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016)). Vaswani goes on to detail various organizations and targeted support aimed at fostering entrepreneurship and innovation across the country. This chapter illustrates the more recent government, media, incubators, social movements, and education efforts to support the development of new neurodiverse enterprises.

Lastly, Michael Brown and Anica Zeyen’s Chapter 9, “It’s Just Not for Me: The Reluctant Neurodivergent Entrepreneur,” provides a case study of various government programs in England to support entrepreneurs. Through an autobiographical auto-ethnographical account of Michael Brown, a neurodiverse entrepreneur, the chapter describes his experience with entrepreneurship, government program engagement, and reticence in continuing that type of employment. While previous research often suggests that entrepreneurship (or self-employment) could be a more inclusive type of employment for neurodiverse individuals, this may not always be an individual’s preference (regardless of neurodivergent status). Through Michael’s story, we learn the journey of an entrepreneur with ADHD. Although he often behaves in entrepreneurial ways, he does not define himself as a natural entrepreneur nor enjoy the uncertainty of this form of employment. His ADHD contributed to feelings of isolation as an entrepreneur. The authors suggest that unique interventions must be incorporated into government programs and incubators designed to support start-ups.

Summary

Together, the chapters included in this book provide a rich description of the opportunities and challenges to neurodiverse entrepreneurial success. While entrepreneurship can be viewed as a more flexible, inclusive type of employment for neurodivergent individuals (a positive approach), this type of employment does not always accompany the necessary tools and support for success nor a desired employment pathway. Rather, this volume suggests that future research around the relationships between neurodiversity and entrepreneurship must be sensitive to various dimensions of context (e.g., neurodivergent characteristics, public policy, and social support) and the individual’s employment goals.