Reflexive Perseverance
How Entrepreneurs Adapt to Cumulative Adversity

Tuesday, November 8, 2016 from 12:15-1:45 PM in David Strong Building, room C125

ABSTRACT
Many countries face recurrent disruptions and shocks, varying in severity, intensity and duration. This cumulative adversity triggers rapidly declining performance in many entrepreneurial ventures, by disrupting, displacing or damaging those businesses. First, we introduce the concept of progressive failure to decouple and disassociate the stressors from the failure, and reveal the host of actions that entrepreneurs can take to reverse rampant failure. In exploring how thirty-two entrepreneurs experience progressive failure in Lebanon, we show how entrepreneurs stop, stall or stabilize failing ventures. Second, we use a grounded theory approach to develop the concept of reflexive perseverance, a three-stage process by which some entrepreneurs not merely outlast stressors, but emerge as more capable as a result of how they chose to respond, one event at a time. We find that contemplating exit can help entrepreneurs reverse escalating failure by shifting attention to new and different types of resources and distinct uses of these resources in new entrepreneurial entries, in other places and at other times. Contemplating exit facilitates reflexivity by offering new insights into what the resources are and how they can be used. This unusual exit-reentry pattern offers a more nuanced understanding of the continuance of the relationship between an entrepreneur and one’s venture, which amends the simpler prior understanding of exit as a breakdown in this relationship. Also, the ‘coupling’ of exit and reentry complements the predominant theories of recovery after failure, by showing how entrepreneurs reflexively persevere in order to reverse failure.

To RSVP please contact Sheryl at GSBfacultysupport@uvic.ca or (250) 472-5647