



Crafting success by 'fitting in' and 'standing out': Ethnic minority entrepreneurs' construction of legitimacy in the creative industries



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5 **Ethnic minority entrepreneurs’ construction of legitimacy**
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Abstract

This study investigates how ethnic minority entrepreneurs in the creative industries deploy their ethnic background to craft professional legitimacy. Drawing on De Clercq and Voronov's (2009) theory of legitimacy, we examine how they discursively deploy their ethnic minority background and combine it with other available discourses to fit in and stand out in their field. Based on data collected through 13 in-depth interviews with established ethnic entrepreneurs in the creative industries, we identify four types of use of the ethnic minority background to craft legitimacy: the 'ethnic' creative entrepreneur, the 'hybrid' creative entrepreneur, the 'heroic creative entrepreneur, and the 'unproblematic' creative entrepreneur. The study contributes to the emerging stream of literature approaching ethnic minority entrepreneurs as agents by highlighting the heterogeneous ways in which ethnic minority backgrounds can be deployed to foster professional success.

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[T]he concept of entrepreneurship is discriminatory, gender-biased, ethnocentrically determined and ideologically controlled [...] serving as a tapestry for unexamined and contradictory assumptions and knowledge about the reality of entrepreneurs (Ogbor, 2000).

In the scientific literature, entrepreneurs are largely portrayed as individuals with strong personalities (Essers and Benschop, 2007; Nicholson and Anderson, 2005; Ogbor, 2000) who spot opportunities, act, and create new value (Jones and Butler, 1992; Schumpeter, 1949), building their own business success. The perception of an ‘heroic’ entrepreneur is however remarkably absent from the ethnic entrepreneurship literature, which largely focuses on structural characteristics constraining and/or enabling entrepreneurial action (Essers and Benschop, 2007).

Ethnic entrepreneurship rather examines the effects of ethnic group characteristics such as culture (e.g. Basu and Altinay, 2002; Light and Bonacich, 1988; Nwankwo, 2005; Ram and Deakins, 1996), ethnic networks (e.g. Chaganti and Greene, 2002; Hoang and Antoncic, 2003; Light, 1972; Masurel, et al., 2002) and family bonds (e.g. Bagwell, 2008; Ram, 1992) on entrepreneurship. Other studies investigate how the environments of host countries affect ethnic minority business, including the formation of (ethnic) markets (e.g. Aldrich, et al., 1985; Waldinger, et al., 1990; Zhou, 2004), specialization in niches (e.g. Baycan-Levent, et al., 2009; Boyd, 1998) and access to resources (e.g. Basu and Werbner, 2001; Ram, et al., 2003). A third group combines these two aspects in the so-called “mixed embeddedness” approach (e.g. Kloosterman and Rath, 2001; 2003; Kloosterman, et al., 1999).

Despite the contributions of this literature to our knowledge of ethnic entrepreneurship, the overwhelming interest in ethnic minority group relations and the “structural disadvantage” (Brettell and Alstatt, 2007) has produced stereotypical, deterministic portrays of ethnic entrepreneurs which obscure their agency. Yet ethnic

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3 minority entrepreneurs are not only ‘caught’ in contexts that constrain and enable
4 their action in specific ways, they are also, similar to majority peers, agents capable to
5 detect new demands, create opportunities, and envision successful business futures.
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7 To gain a better understanding of ethnic minority entrepreneurship, research needs to
8 better account for entrepreneurs’ agency (Brettell and Alstatt, 2007; Kontos, 2003), or
9 individuals’ ability to intervene in the world or to refrain from such intervention, with
10 the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs despite historically
11 specific bounds (Giddens, 1984). Agency specifically accounts for the capability of
12 human to be reflexive about their situation – their ‘discursive consciousness’ – and to
13 act upon it to ‘make a difference’ (Giddens, 1982).
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27 Building on the emerging stream of research investigating ethnic minority
28 entrepreneurship from the entrepreneurs’ own point of view (Brettell and Alstatt,
29 2007; Essers and Benschop, 2007; Pio, 2007), this study attempts to advance extant
30 scholarship by conceptualizing ethnic entrepreneurs as agents. Specifically, we
31 investigate how ethnic minority entrepreneurs discursively deploy their ethnic
32 minority background and combine it with other available discourses to acquire
33 legitimacy in their professional field. Entrepreneurs depend on their legitimacy – or
34 credibility, and acceptance and recognition by the strategic peers and/or stakeholders
35 (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994; De Clercq and Voronov, 2009; Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001;
36 Rindova, et al., 2006) – for gaining and maintaining access to the resources they need
37 (De Clercq and Voronov, 2009; Minahan, 2005). Legitimacy has been theorized as
38 resulting from an entrepreneur’s capacity to balance between on the one hand ‘fitting
39 in’, or demonstrating awareness and conformance to the established dominant norms
40 in the field and ‘standing out’, bringing something original, new and different into de
41 field (De Clercq and Voronov, 2009).
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3 The investigation of how ethnic minority entrepreneurs deploy their ethnic
4 background in crafting professional legitimacy is warranted because of the saliency of
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6 ethnic minority cultures in contemporary European societies. Such cultures are often
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8 discursively constructed in highly negative terms as ‘other’ and by association with
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10 socio-economic disadvantage. In as far as ethnic minority entrepreneurs are embedded
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12 in fields constituted by social actors overwhelmingly made up of majority individuals;
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14 they are likely to have to deal with their minority background in their legitimacy-
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16 seeking entrepreneurial narratives. However, how they deploy such background is not
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18 easily predictable. On the one hand, it has been argued that it is particularly hard to
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20 reconcile a minority background with dominant discourses of entrepreneurship which
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22 reflect personality traits associated with white men, to ‘fit in’ (cf. Essers and
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24 Benschop, 2007; Ogbor, 2000). On the other, in as far as an ethnic minority
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26 background is discursively constructed as ‘otherness’ it might also provide specific
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28 opportunities to claim difference and authenticity, ‘standing out’ and thus rather
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30 fostering one’s legitimacy.
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39 Empirically, we conduct a discourse analysis of the deployment of one’s ethnic
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41 minority background in the narratives of 13 established entrepreneurs in the creative
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43 industries to ‘fit in’ and ‘stand out’, crafting professional legitimacy in their field. We
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45 opted for interviewing established entrepreneurs, rather than starting ones, to be able
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47 to examine discursive strategies that have apparently favored (or at least not
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49 hampered) professional success. We selected the creative industries because these
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51 fields are prototypical of a ‘symbolic economy’ in which the mastery of individuals
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53 over signs is crucial to achieve legitimacy (Lash and Urry, 1994) and, therefore,
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55 success. In these industries, ethnic entrepreneurs are likely to be in a particularly
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57 disadvantaged position in terms of their reduced access to the cultural capital
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3 necessary to fit in, as this capital is often not codified and transmitted through
4 education but rather through socialization into the habitus of the majority upper class
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8 (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986; 1993). Yet given the central role of creativity and authenticity
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10 and the increasingly fragmented nature of the contemporary creative industries (Lash
11 and Urry, 1994), ethnic entrepreneurs might be able to deploy their background as
12
13 symbolic capital to stand out, and even to partially redefine the norms predominant in
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17 their field.
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19 20 21 22 **Perspectives on ethnic minority backgrounds in the ethnic entrepreneurship** 23 24 **literature** 25

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27 The influence of ethnic minority backgrounds on entrepreneurship is a well
28 researched phenomenon. The classical ethnic minority entrepreneurship literature has
29 examined how ethnic minority backgrounds affect the entrepreneurial behavior of
30 ethnic communities. For instance, a major stream of studies has focused on ethnic
31 entrepreneurs operating in (co-) ethnic markets, offering products in ethnic niches
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33 (Aldrich, et al., 1985; Boyd, 1998). In this case, the entrepreneurs' ethnic background
34 is conceptualized as cultural capital providing them a competitive advantage to create
35 and trade products in ethnic product niches (Aldrich, et al., 1985). Other studies have
36 rather argued that the collective immigration history of ethnic community members
37 and the related 'we-feeling' enables them to develop a 'bounded solidarity' and
38
39 'enforceable trust' within the ethnic group (Zhou, 2004). Together with the above-
40 mentioned cultural capital, this form of social capital is seen as contributing to the
41 concentration of ethnic minority entrepreneurs in the ethnic market, as trust and
42 solidarity create network advantages among all stakeholders (Waldinger, et al., 1990;
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44 Zhou, 2004). Conversely, others have pointed to the downside of the competitive
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3 advantages of ethnic minority entrepreneurs in the ethnic niches, which often holds
4 them back from developing a growth strategy towards mainstream markets (Ram, et
5 al., 2003).
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10 By approaching ethnic minority backgrounds as factors enabling and/or
11 constraining the entrepreneurial activities of a whole ethnic community, this literature
12 has tended to portray minority entrepreneurs in an essentialistic and deterministic
13 way. Only recently have some scholars turned to the investigation of how such
14 backgrounds are reflectively deployed by individuals, shaping their entrepreneurial
15 experiences. Thanks to their conceptual and methodological attention for
16 entrepreneurs' own perspective, these studies "give voice" to them, unveiling the
17 individuals behind the facades of only seemingly monolithic ethnic groups. For
18 instance, examining ethnic minority women's experiences of mixed embeddedness in
19 ethnic communities and host societies, Pio (2007) inductively identified stages in their
20 entrepreneurial development. Both Brettel and Alstatt (2007) and Kontos (2003)
21 integrated the biographical method to better balance between structure and agency in
22 their analyses of the experiences of ethnic minority entrepreneurs. Essers and
23 Benschop (2007) rather focused on ethnic minority female entrepreneurs' reflexive
24 construction of enterprising identities. They show how these women construct
25 complex yet distinct identities in dialogue with different constituencies by drawing on
26 ethnic, gender and entrepreneurial discourses.
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50 This study adopts a similar perspective, centered on the agency of ethnic minority
51 entrepreneurs. We specifically focus on individuals' narrative crafting of legitimacy in
52 the professional field in which he or she is embedded (i.e. competitors, suppliers,
53 partners, institutional actors, clients, etc.). This perspective allows us to highlight
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3 entrepreneurs' conscious deployment of narratives specifically in function of their
4 professional success.
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10 **Crafting entrepreneurial legitimacy through 'fitting in' and 'standing out'**

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12 The concept of legitimacy refers to credibility, a social process of acceptance and
13 recognition by the strategic peers and other stakeholders constituting a field (Aldrich
14 and Fiol, 1994; Baumann, 2007; De Clercq and Voronov, 2009; Johnson, et al., 2006;
15 Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001; O'Connor, 2004; Rindova, et al., 2006). In the
16 entrepreneurial literature, legitimacy is considered key to business success as it allows
17 gaining access to resources needed to achieve business success (e.g. De Clercq and
18 Voronov, 2009; Minahan, 2005). Entrepreneurial narratives play a fundamental role in
19 the process of entrepreneurial legitimization because they communicate and frame the
20 entrepreneur's specific personal and business intentions in a way that shows
21 conformance to existing, socially constructed norms, thus becoming believable for
22 others. At the same time, however, they need to demonstrate that their project is
23 sufficiently innovative to break through those norms (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994; De
24 Clercq and Voronov, 2009; Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001).
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43 Accordingly, De Clercq and Voronov (2009) theorize legitimacy as resulting from
44 entrepreneurs' capacity to craft narratives that meet these two contradictory
45 expectations, simultaneously 'fitting in' and 'standing out' in the field. Drawing on
46 the work of Bourdieu (1984; 1986; 1993), they stress the power relation between the
47 legitimacy-seeking entrepreneurs and the incumbents constituting the field.
48 Specifically, they argue that the cultural capital of entrepreneurs, or the capacity to
49 "access and mobilize institutions and cultural products of a society" (De Clercq and
50 Voronov, 2009: 404-405), enhances their ability to fit in. Namely, objectified
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3 (material goods), institutionalized (formal certifications and credentials) and
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5 embodied (norms of behavior) cultural capital demonstrates to other social actors their
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7 understanding of and conformance with the field's dominant practices. It is however
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9 their symbolic capital, or "the ability to manipulate symbolic resources, such as
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11 language, writing, and myth" (De Clercq and Voronov, 2009: 406) and to impose it on
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13 others in the field, which allows them to stand out.
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17 In this study, we examine how ethnic minority entrepreneurs narratively deploy
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19 their ethnic minority background and combine it with other discourses available to
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21 them to craft professional legitimacy. Balancing fitting in and standing out is likely to
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23 be particularly challenging to members of ethnic minority groups, due to these
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25 groups' limited cultural capital, as they are farther from the majority's norms and
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27 institutions; as well as limited symbolic capital, as they often have a social, economic
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29 and cultural subordinate position. Nonetheless, minority entrepreneurs might be able
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31 to leverage their ethnic 'difference' to claim authenticity or innovation, standing out
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33 in unique ways. Although we agree with De Clercq and Voronov (2009) on the key
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35 role of entrepreneurs' ability to manipulate symbolic resources, we argue that
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37 standing out does not necessarily entail the ability to impose new norms on the field.
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39 If this were true, that would mean that only a few entrepreneurs would be able to
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41 stand out and achieve legitimacy at all. Rather, standing out might be achieved by
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43 discursively constructing a narrative claiming some degree of innovation in a
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45 plausible way along existing norms. This might also be achieved by discursively
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47 reconfiguring the background against which one's own work ability to stand out is
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49 assessed, for instance by limiting it to a sub-field within the broader creative field of
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51 activity. This more 'modest' conceptualization of standing out does not contradict an
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3 understanding of fields as socially constructed in power-laden relations between
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5 social actors constituting them advanced by De Clercq and Voronov (2009).
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8 We approach ethnic entrepreneurs here as active meaning-makers who, despite
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10 their historically specific embeddedness, possess transformative capacity or power
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12 (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Giddens, 1984). Ethnic minority entrepreneurs are
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14 namely able to actively position themselves along the available discourses by
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16 selectively combining discursive elements to craft professional narratives (Hytti,
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18 2003) and resist using discourses that might undermine their legitimacy.
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24 **The creative industries**

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27 The term creative industries (Caves, 2000) covers a wide variety of activities
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29 including advertising, architecture, arts and antique sales, crafts, design, fashion, film,
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31 games, music, performing arts, publishing, software, television and radio (DCMS,
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33 2001; Smallbone, et al., 2005). In these industries, entrepreneurs highly depend on
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35 their reputation because they generally work through temporary collaborations
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37 including peers, clients, distributors and employees (Bechky, 2006; Delmestri, et al.,
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39 2005; Jones, 2002). To maintain access to resources via these loose networks, they
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41 therefore need to continuously invest in narratives that legitimize their work and
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43 maintain social acceptance.
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48 A distinctive feature of the creative industries is that creative commodities do not
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50 only carry economic value but also symbolic value (Bourdieu, 1986). This latter is
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52 seen to originate in creativity, independence and authenticity (Jung and Moon, 2007;
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54 Peterson, 1997). However, precisely these quintessential sources of symbolic value
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56 are seen as conflicting with the materialistic overtone of entrepreneurship. Creative
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58 entrepreneurs therefore need to manage the inherent tension between the symbolic
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3 production and its economic aspects (Dimaggio, 1982; Scardaville, 2009), as too
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5 much emphasis on these latter will likely undermine their legitimacy within the
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7 creative field. In particular a too 'commercial' approach will diminish, rather than
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9 enhance, the symbolic value of the creative good because it is considered to limit the
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11 independency of the creative production (Jung and Moon, 2007).
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15 The creative industries offer a particularly suitable context for studying ethnic
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17 minority entrepreneurs' narrative crafting of legitimacy. On the one hand, ethnic
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19 minority entrepreneurs are likely to be in a particularly disadvantaged position to fit
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21 in. They generally have more limited access to the cultural capital shaping the field, as
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23 this capital is largely transmitted through socialization into the habitus of the majority
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25 upper class (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986; 1993). On the other, ethnic entrepreneurs might be
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27 able to deploy their background as a form of symbolic capital to stand out, claiming a
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29 specific form of creativity, aesthetic and authenticity due to their cultural 'otherness'.
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31 This form of capital might be particularly effective in the contemporary creative
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33 industries which tend to be fragmented (Lash and Urry, 1994).
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41 **The narratives**

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43 The empirical part of this article is based on 13 narratives of 'established'
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45 entrepreneurs with an ethnic minority background active in the creative industries in
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47 the same European country. The material was gathered through in-depth interviews
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49 conducted by the first author in 2010. The interviews consisted of a non-structured
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51 and a semi-structured part. Respondents were first asked to explain their work and
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53 who they are, narrating their personal and professional trajectory. In a second stage,
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55 they answered open-ended questions exploring a broad variety of themes including
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57 the product, clients, management and entrepreneurship issues, financial matters,
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3 networks, encountered barriers in their career, as well as about their personal
4 background, including their family and education. To avoid probing, all the questions
5 making explicit reference to the (multiple) cultural background of respondents were
6 posed at the end of the interview. The interviews took place at the respondents' home,
7 in a bar or at their workplace, and lasted between one and three hours each. Each
8 interview was fully recorded and transcribed verbatim.
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17 The first author's familiarity with the creative industries allowed her/him to make
18 contact with an initial group of informants renowned in their fields. These suggested
19 respondents and opened up their personal networks to the researchers for them to find
20 additional respondents, who on their turn suggested further creative entrepreneurs
21 with an ethnic minority background. Next to this snowball sampling (Patton, 2002),
22 we also identified informants through the press. Respondents were selected to take
23 part in the research based on four criteria. First, as our focus lies on entrepreneurs,
24 only self-employed respondents were included. Second, we selected creative
25 entrepreneurs who were themselves born in a country outside North-America and the
26 EU15 (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy,
27 Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom) or
28 with at least one parent who was. We chose this definition because it is commonly
29 used to define disadvantaged ethnic minority groups. Third, we only selected
30 'established' creative entrepreneurs in order to ensure that they had been able to
31 acquire legitimacy. Entrepreneurial success is reflected in rewards and prizes by
32 sector, positive acclaim in the media, substantial financial revenue by selling their
33 products (Delmestri, et al., 2005), and/or collaborations with significant peers in- and
34 outside their sector. Finally, to enhance the comparability of the data, we tried to keep
35 the sample as balanced as possible in terms of the respondents' creative industries.
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Insert Table 1 about here

To stay close to the entrepreneurial subject and its narrative strategies (Gartner, 2010), we conducted the data analysis on the full interview transcripts in their original language. Only the texts selected for inclusion in the study were translated after the analysis, respecting as much as possible their original meaning. In a first phase, we read and reread the transcripts to become completely familiar with their content and the overall sense of respondents' narratives. We then went back to each and identified excerpts in which interviewees referred to their ethnic minority backgrounds in more or less explicit and extensive ways. In a third step, we coded the specific usages of one's minority background in either fitting in or standing out in their specific field. We found that some respondents used their minority backgrounds to stand out (2), some to partially stand out (4), some to fit in (3) and some did not use it at all (4). Following De Clercq and Voronov's (2009) idea that legitimacy is achieved through balance, for each type of account we also identified the other discourses deployed to balance standing out and fitting in. The analysis resulted in the four-fold typology presented in Table 2: the 'ethnic' creative entrepreneur, the 'hybrid' creative entrepreneur, the 'heroic' creative entrepreneur and the 'unproblematic' creative entrepreneur.

Insert Table 2 about here

In the next section we will present the four types of accounts. For each, we analyze in depth extensive excerpts fragments of one illustrative interview. To guide the

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3 analysis, we highlighted in bold the passages through which respondents discursively
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5 fit in and stand out. All names used in the text are pseudonyms.
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10 **Fayza, the ‘ethnic’ creative entrepreneur**

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12 A first type of accounts – which we called the ‘ethnic’ creative entrepreneurs – is
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14 characterized by entrepreneurs’ extensive use of their ethnic minority background in
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16 their creative production to stand out in their creative field. These respondents
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18 counterbalanced standing out through their ethnic background with fitting in through
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20 showing conformity to majority dominated field norms concerning high standard
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22 quality, aesthetics and entrepreneurship. To illustrate this type of accounts, we
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24 selected the narrative of Fayza, a fashion designer with Moroccan roots, running her
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26 own label of fashionable headscarves (hijabs).
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32 I am Fayza Asrar. **I am a designer** at [name of her fashion company]. It all
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34 started because of personal needs. ... A few years ago, I started as a fashion
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36 designer to look – **as I am wearing a headscarf myself** – ... for different
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38 materials and fabrics ... for headscarves, and **I found nothing on the market**
39
40 ... Well, and then I started on my own to create and draw, to design. And one
41
42 thing led to another. I make ... exclusive headwear ... Designing **exclusive**
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44 **headwear** is something that **doesn’t exist yet**. [So there is] **no competition at**
45
46 **all** ... Since we have been to **Paris** [showroom organized by national
47
48 governmental fashion support agency] there has been **a lot of interest** for
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50 accessory headscarves.
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52 You have the **normal, classic, traditional headscarf** consisting of a piece of
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54 fabric ... There was not such a thing like the ease of getting it on, and the
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56 different materials. For me, the most important thing [is] ... the freedom of it.
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58 Because the other one, the **traditional [headscarf] is in fact not comfortable**
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60 **to wear** ... It [was] on my head and always when I got in somewhere, and I
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62 moved a little, it fell off my head on the floor . So I thought ... **there must be a**
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64 **solution, a ... technical invention I should say** ... to put one on, and it is
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66 secured here, behind the ears ... **It’s more beautiful**, you look younger too I
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68 think. Because **the other one is more grandmother-like** ... [But] **I don’t think**
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70 **they’re expensive**, as we are in **high fashion, like Dior and Chanel**, we want
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72 with our headscarves to reach as high as them. ... It’s not because you wear a
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74 headscarf that you have to walk around ... like a frump ... **You have to look**
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76 **good, elegant**, and that is ok, absolutely. ... That is also what I want ... **big**
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78 **names like Dior, Chanel ... Yves Saint Laurent ... [their] style, also classy**,
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80 that is also want **I want to achieve with my designs**. ... I also do tailor-made
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82 jobs ... If you want something special, I’ll make it for you. So **I don’t think**

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3 **that ... I should keep my prices very low ...** No, I want to – because it
4 [making fashionable hijabs] also doesn't exist yet – **keep that high [standard].**

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6 I [sometimes] **mix the Western with the Arabic**, and I think that's
7 very interesting. I thought it was so cozy, all these Western ladies wearing a
8 beanie in winter, together with a scarf, and that was something we couldn't. And
9 so I thought ... I have to do something with that. ... Only a headscarf, that isn't
10 so warm in winter ... So I thought, **I'm going to connect the two ...** and than a
11 little flower on the side and that's **a success of course**. It can be worn by
12 Western as by Muslim women ... Thus, those are things you **as Western**
13 **Muslim woman** make and design and I think in the Arabic world they are,
14 actually **slowed down** to just design in an Arab way, because they did not got
15 that Western [influence], and **I've got both**. I was born here so ... half is
16 Moroccan and the other half is Belgian ... That's the most beautiful, that you've
17 got the two.
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20 [S]ometimes there where people that said: "What are you going to start
21 with?!". ... I must say **people didn't take me seriously before, because I wear**
22 **a headscarf ...** now I notice people are surprised about [my work]. "Did you do
23 that?". ... Then I'm thinking by myself: "**Yes, of course, we have feelings too,**
24 **we have creative fingers too, we can do the same, we are just like you**". ...
25 I'm always proud when someone achieves something in life ... Because as a
26 woman – not only Muslims, also in the Western world – you can't do your
27 thing, you see that everywhere. ... **In our culture, they say a Muslim woman**
28 **is allowed to do everything**. Studying, opening her own business, it's even
29 encouraged to do so ... **Hadija, the wife of the prophet** had a business, as the
30 first woman in history, where she had a lot of men under her, and to that woman
31 I look up enormously.
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37 In her narrative, Fayza constructs her own minority culture as a valuable resource
38 for creating her unique product, standing out in the fashion field. She indicates her
39 own personal experience as a Muslim woman, unable to find fashionable and practical
40 headscarves, as the origin of her enterprise. The strong emphasis on her own cultural
41 specificity and 'difference' allows her to claim a specific type of symbolic capital to
42 stand out within the broader field. As a Muslim woman wearing a headscarf herself,
43 she argues that she is best placed to understand what kind of product Muslim women
44 wearing headscarves want. Interestingly however, relying on this specific form of
45 symbolic capital she risks to being pinned down as a 'Muslim woman', an identity
46 that is, in Western countries such as Belgium often associated with subordination. To
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3 counter this possibility, Fayza stresses that her identity as a Muslim woman is
4 compatible with a creative entrepreneurial one.
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8 In her narrative, Fayza's standing out centered on her ethnic background is
9 counterbalanced by fitting in by complying with the dominant norms in her field of
10 activity, a field which she discursively constructs as international and culturally
11 diverse. For instance, although her minority culture represents her main source of
12 inspiration, she mentions combining it with Western elements, creating products that
13 are attractive for both Muslim and Western women. Stronger, she claims that
14 precisely the integration of those elements provides her a creative advantage vis-à-vis
15 Arab world designers, who are 'slowed down' because they can only design 'Arab'
16 products.
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29 Throughout her narration, Fayza discursively deploys institutionalized, objectified
30 and embodied cultural capital associated with the majority dominated professional
31 field in which she is embedded. She draws on her institutionalized cultural capital
32 when she mentions that as a fashion designer running her own label, she is
33 acknowledged by the national government support agency for fashion. By doing so,
34 she constructs herself as fitting in the institutionalized high fashion industry in
35 Belgium. Along the same lines, she refers to the interest in and the positive feedback
36 on her work from peers and customers.
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48 Her objectified cultural capital emerges in her claim to have upgraded the
49 traditional, 'grandmother-like' and uncomfortable headscarf to a fashionable, elegant
50 new product. By stating that she uses different fabrics and materials, makes beautiful
51 hijabs, applies flowers and wants women to look good and elegant, she presents
52 herself as a creative entrepreneur who understands the quality and aesthetic norms of
53 the fashion industries.
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4 Finally, Fayza enacts her embodied cultural capital to craft legitimacy by fitting in
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6 the fashion field. She behaves as a high fashion entrepreneur by expressing her
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8 ambition to create products comparable to those of internationally renowned up-
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10 market brands such as Chanel, Yves Saint Laurent and Dior, and adopts the
11
12 appropriate pricing strategy. On the same time, echoing classical entrepreneurship
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14 discourses, she stresses elements of market opportunity and innovation. Also her
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16 reference to the price of her products and the high standard she wants to keep on the
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18 other hand, underlines her understanding with the financial standards of the high
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20 fashion field.
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25 Fayza's narrative is exemplary for this type in which one's ethnic background is
26
27 used as a key resource to stand out and craft legitimacy. These accounts are all
28
29 centered around creating competitive advantage at the product level, caused by insider
30
31 information about the ethnic group's experiences and demands. To fit in the broader
32
33 creative field and achieve legitimacy, the respondents in this group do also
34
35 incorporate references of the majority dominated system in their narratives. One
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37 respondent even told us that he offered a role in his film to a renowned Flemish male
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39 actor to attract more press attention.
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46 **Khalid, the 'hybrid' creative entrepreneur**

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48 We called a second type the 'hybrid' creative entrepreneurs as these respondents
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50 mainly focused on creating a unique product by mixing their knowledge of both the
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52 minority and majority cultures. 'Hybrid' creative entrepreneurs stand out by claiming
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54 the ability to capture the best of two worlds in their creative products. They
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56 counterbalance this standing out by fitting in their creative field in through conformity
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58 to the predominant (majority) aesthetic and symbolic norms. They craft legitimacy in
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3 fundamentally different ways from the ‘ethnic’ creative entrepreneurs, as their ethnic
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5 minority background is less central and stands out in a more balanced relation to
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7 Western elements. To illustrate this type we selected the narrative of Khalid, an
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9 interior and furniture designer, with roots in Algeria and Tunisia.
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13 [I am] someone who ... **went through an awful lot** ... My youth brought
14 about a language deficit, because from Paris I was put in a [Dutch-speaking]
15 Belgian [foster] family ... It all turned out bad ... and I was obliged to start on
16 an apprenticeship contract, to be able to stay here all together ... **And then I ...**
17 **ended up in fashion ... [There] I started up the production of Ann**
18 **Demeulemeester** [internationally renowned Belgian fashion designer]. In the
19 meanwhile ... I went travelling with my then girlfriend who had acquaintances
20 living in Morocco. ... And well, yes, **there I found my roots again**. So, only
21 on my 17th I was for the first time **confronted with the Arab world**. Always
22 ... afraid of it, until I was there, so going over was a triumph. And then a world
23 opened up for me, that wasn’t known to me but felt very familiar ... After
24 putting my feet on sand the first time ... it was like other blood started to flow
25 through my veins ... You do have that in you, you recognize it like: “**Well,**
26 **maybe I’m not crazy after all, they also do this or that here**”. So you start to,
27 well, yes, it was an enrichment for me.
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30 ... then I ended up in building stands [for fairs]. And by coincidence
31 after a couple of years I ended up designing a large stand for a **Dutch company**,
32 and they were **so satisfied ... that they asked: “Would you like to make a**
33 **house label for us?”**. And then suddenly I was launched into the world and was
34 in airplanes every day ... for that Dutch company [I] started working there ... **in**
35 **Marrakech ... where all the materials can be obtained, and where all the**
36 **artisans – the best of the country – are.** ... And since then I have there an
37 atelier, with a lot of employees and things are turning out well. ... We are
38 located 30 kilometers outside [the city center], in the middle of nowhere,
39 surrounded by the Atlas, we are completely isolated in our world. ... **I’m going**
40 **one week back and one week forth**. But in Morocco I look at the things from a
41 distance and vice versa. ... **When I draw a form, I’m always thinking: “How**
42 **would they perceive this here? How do they perceive it there? How do I**
43 **perceive it? And if we would turn it around, how could it be functioning?”**. **And**
44 **I also always jump between these two worlds.** ... [T]hat’s me, those two
45 **cultures**, and I’m always seeking, and my misfortune is today my strength. ...
46 We’re always talking about two cultures. But **I don’t agree with that**
47 **anymore, because it’s the new culture.**
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50 I just helped completing the design of the bridge of [the Dutch city]
51 Nijmegen. And you have like the **architects of the Lange Wapper [bridge in**
52 **Belgium] that call you and ask: “Well, what do you think about it?”**. Why
53 do they do that? Well, I don’t have a degree [in designing], so I don’t get to
54 work thinking: “Course 1 was this, course 2 was that”, no **I look at it from a**
55 **totally different angle, and that’s very important for society today.**
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58 [M]y previous associate was a Moroccan, I lived with him for ten years, or, I
59 stayed with his family. I was one of them. And I learned a lot there, from **the**
60 **simple life, to being happy with nothing and to the mystical, the spiritual**

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3 **and to energy.** ... I'm mainly occupied with energy, designing, color, joining
4 materials, and exactly that is the key to my designs. ... **There is always a**
5 **solution in purification.** Constantly purifying, purifying, purifying, and making
6 sure you get back to the essence. That's important for me ... So actually **I**
7 **create a décor,** where you get in and where you feel yourself immediately more
8 rich and more open, and at ease, and that is my intent, yes that's my life. ...

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10 [But] **it's mainly Europeans that judge my work.** My work here, **the**
11 **Arabic world can't understand** that. That's the same if I would say to you:
12 "We'll take your toilet and make there [points at the bottom] an opening". ...
13 I've made lots of chairs, of which they didn't understand us to be sitting on
14 them. ... It's innovative because I use [Moroccan] **techniques of already 500**
15 **years old** ... with a view from here, from there, so it's purified, and revisited ...
16 I think that that's the art – I always say: "**Going backward is going forward**" –
17 ... to see how it was before and to see what we have now.
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22 In his interview, Khalid claims to be standing out because he brings the best
23 aesthetic elements and techniques of both his ethnic minority and majority cultures
24 into his work. Namely, it is the incorporation of selected ancient traditional Moroccan
25 techniques that makes his work special and qualitative. When he mentions growing up
26 in Belgium, yet having found his roots again in Morocco, he is claiming for himself
27 the symbolic capital to stand out in his field in this way. This is further reflected in his
28 construction of himself and his work as 'hybrid', constantly jumping between two
29 worlds both physically and mentally.
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41 To fit in, Khalid discursively deploys institutionalized, objectified and
42 embodied cultural capital defining his international, yet still majority dominated
43 professional field. For example, he draws on his objectified and embodied cultural
44 capital to fit in when claiming his products to be purified and 'essential', along
45 contemporary norms of Western design. To reinforce his conformity he mentions that,
46 although all his work is produced in Morocco, the Arab world cannot understand it as
47 it is made to meet the qualitative and aesthetic standards of the European context.
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Khalid draws on his institutional cultural capital to fit in. He constructs himself as

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3 being a valued link in the chain, being called for advice on some major projects.
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6 Elsewhere in the interview, he mentions that renowned architects envy him for his
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8 freedom and creativity and are therefore eager to work with him.
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11 In this type of accounts, the entrepreneurs thus portray their work as combining
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13 the best elements of their ethnic minority culture and the majority culture to create
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15 'hybrid' products valued by majority stakeholders constituting the field. These
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17 respondents stand out by constructing hybridity as a key source for creativity and fit
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19 in by referring to predominant majority norms in the field.
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22 23 24 **Onat, the 'heroic' creative entrepreneur**

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27 The type of the 'heroic' creative entrepreneurs discursively constructs their
28
29 minority background construct their minority background as a source of subordination
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31 and deficit to fit in. Namely, they craft legitimacy by portraying themselves as
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33 heroically overcoming difficulties, a common element in entrepreneurship narratives.
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35 Regarding their creative work, they rather claim to stand out along dominant quality
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37 and originality norms in their professional field. These narratives differ from the
38
39 previous two types because these individuals only perceive their minority background
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41 as a constraint for their personal and entrepreneurial development. To illustrate this
42
43 account we selected the interview of the Turkish rooted Onat, founder and manager of
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45 Onat Publishing.
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52 I already write for a long time – ten years or so – very intensively, and it's
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54 something I like, and I always have wanted to do. The problem is, especially
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56 before ... there were not so many chances on getting feed-back ... **Like all**
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58 **writers I was at home**, did it in my spare time, got not so much response. ...
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60 Then the internet came of course, and ... then you send it, and like all the others
you notice: "Well, actually you don't get much response". ... **You thus get a**
lot of rejection. Something every writer has to deal with. ... Gradually things
came like [name of a supporting organization for migrants] ... so I did sent
everything to them. ... I learned there that **mine [my work] was good, yes,**

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strange that this wasn't picked up. ... Then I started to think. ... I did put one and two together and in the end I came to the conclusion that **I was considered to be an *allochtoon***! [pejorative term for person with a foreign background]. I have never really considered myself that way ... and I also don't have problems with others considering me to be like that. [But] it has some consequences; **you have to live with that!** I was born here. ... I have Turkish roots; I am not going to deny that. ... although **I have no noteworthy differences with anybody else here.** ... But nevertheless **publishers expect for instance: ... "He writes on immigrant themes like migration, racism and all that stuff"**. And you also notice that in the literature they publish. It's all about ... the Aid [Muslim Celebration of Sacrifice] for instance, or how one came here from Morocco or Turkey, and the integration and all that kind of things. ... I do understand that a publisher says: "We can sell this"... [but] **I don't write on that.** I write on things that I'm interested in. ... My work apparently is **similar to what Bret Easton Ellis** is writing, that's a nice reference ... So the very first books I had were mainly a sort of **coming of age with sex and drugs and rock'n roll** – **you could say that are quite Western themes** – ... and that doesn't fit with them. They then can't sell me or something, you know ... You have to know that literature, especially here, is very **archaic. It's like this little elite world** ... everyone knows everyone en you mainly get a chance when you're constantly in the picture. ... They have their own sources and such, like magazines and – I will not call it literary salons but, it comes down to the same thing –, like evenings and little conferences where everyone gathers and says like: "This is that" and **people with a foreign background don't get in there.** ... Then I thought: "What should I do now?" and in the end I thought: "I'm going to do it all on my own" ... And that's somehow the start of *Onat Publishing*. ... Also you have to know that writers only get 10% of the price [of their books]. So if the publisher sells thousand [books], they get only 1500 euro or so. You can't live from that, right? ... And some writers only sell a couple of hundred. ... **So when you keep all your [copy]rights yourself, you can also make a better living out of it. ... But I'm not quite doing it only for myself. I think, I have seen enough shit myself. I want to help the others.** That's why I also publish others. **Everyone is welcome for me, if you are good. My focus is on immigrants who don't write on migrant themes. So it gets a lot of attention,** it's something new, they don't know it. Have you ever seen someone from an ethnic minority group publishing a thriller? No way! **A Mohammed who is the new Aspe?** [famous Belgian crime-scene writer]. No way! Science fiction? Those writers nevertheless do exist!

Not a lot of Belgian culture did filter through for us. ... They [my parents] read the Turkish newspapers; quite a lot of Turkish culture came in, but hardly any Belgian. **I had to discover that all on my own** ... my father said: "What is that, Belgian culture? That's beer and fries". Then you could start saying: "Dad, pall, all that writers, fucking Margitte, Fernand Khnopff, what are you talking about?", you know. ... **I've never had an impulse there. ... I didn't know anything of the painters, I didn't know anything of the literature that interested me so much, I didn't know how I could get there.** ... So I came here [he moved at 18 from the countryside to a major city] and I learned about the literature, and you have the publishers, they draw from the people they know, so you have to get in at some literary magazines and this and that ... Someone who, on his 18th, is interested in culture, in literature **from Belgian**

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3 **parents, has a huge advantage. On my 18th, I still had to start.** ... For
4 example: when I was 12, 13, I went to the library by myself to get a library card,
5 because I heard from a friend that you could borrow books. I remember very
6 well, I found Moby Dick, a large book with illustrations, and a story: hé Herman
7 Melville! I came home and said: “Look mum, I have borrowed a book from the
8 library!”... and my mother said: “What the fuck ... **did you steal that?!?**”. And I
9 said: “no, I borrowed it”. They didn’t know the concept of lending ... So I
10 explained: “you can borrow something for free, and afterwards you need to give
11 it back to the library”. And then the reply was: “Well, ok, then you just read it
12 fast and then quickly give it back”, you know. ... **I lagged behind a lot.**
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18 In his narrative, Onat associates his work with Western writers and ideas. By doing
19 so, he claims that his work stands out in his creative field for its creativity, quality and
20 originality. Drawing on his symbolic capital as a creative, he stresses that his work is
21 of high quality, yet was never picked by the mainstream Belgian publishing industry,
22 which is dominated by an archaic, elitarian and commercial logic. His emphasis on
23 quality is further supported by the statement that every writer, independent of his or
24 her ethnic background, is welcome to publish at Onat Publishing, as long as his or her
25 work meets high quality standards.
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36 To counterbalance standing out along creative norms in the field, Onat discursively
37 uses his ethnic background to highlight his individual effort to acquire the cultural
38 capital necessary to fit in the field. He extensively recounts how the lack of
39 socialization into the ethnic majority culture (due to his upbringing in an ethnic
40 minority one) caused him to start out his career as a writer with a structural cultural
41 disadvantage. Precisely Onat’s admission of this disadvantage proofs, a contrario, his
42 awareness of the dominant creative norms in the field. Not only, it also enables him to
43 build a heroic narrative of acquiring this cultural capital on his own, solely through his
44 individual efforts. By so doing, he stresses his agentic role, echoing a classical
45 ‘heroic’ entrepreneurial narrative leading to success. By constructing himself as an
46 entrepreneur, Onat enacts his embodied cultural capital to fit in his creative field.
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3 At the same time, Onat discursively claims he fits in his cultural field by explicitly
4 associating his work with internationally renowned majority writers such as Bret
5 Easton Ellis. He further forcefully rejects any association with other Muslim writers
6 by virtue of having a Muslim background and expresses his disapproval for being
7 pinned down as an '*allochthonous*' (Dutch pejorative term for individuals with a
8 foreign background) writer in a certain "ethnic minority genre". In this way, he resists
9 the stigma associated with ethnic minorities and reaffirms his fitting in the majority
10 norms.
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22 Similar to Onat, all 'heroic' cultural entrepreneurs in our study stress the
23 disadvantage they experienced in their lives due to their ethnic minority backgrounds.
24 This subordinate position is then discursively deployed to craft legitimacy by claiming
25 to having acquired the cultural capital necessary to fit in their creative field through a
26 'heroic' entrepreneurial route. They craft legitimacy by counterbalancing this fitting
27 in with standing out in terms of quality excellence and originality along established
28 majority norms.
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41 **Saida, the 'unproblematic' creative entrepreneur**

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43 The last type of accounts was labeled the 'unproblematic' creative entrepreneurs,
44 as the respondents in this group showed a complete orientation towards the majority
45 norms, values and culture. The respondents in this group used 'Western' discursive
46 elements both to stand out and to fit in their creative fields, without any significant
47 reference to their ethnic minority background. They stood out solely by referring to
48 the dominant majority norms of quality, and they fitted in by associating themselves
49 with the cultural capital of the majority dominated creative field. The narrative of
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3 Saida, a silversmith and flatware designer with roots in Palestine, illustrates well this
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6 type.

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8 My work ... is about real evident things, actually daily functional objects. ...
9 **I don't think there are a lot of people designing cutlery** ... And maybe it's
10 just getting the essence out of that ... everyone eats with flatware, every day
11 again. How many times a day do you hold a piece of cutlery, and in the end, not
12 a lot of people are paying attention ... **flatware is something that needs to be**
13 **very functional. You must be able to prick with it, you must be able to pick**
14 **up a fluid and bring it to your mouth ... a knife, you have to be able to cut**
15 **with it.** ... You hold it in your hands, so in one way or the other it must be
16 ergonomic. ... And it is something you put in your mouth, how many objects
17 are there that you also actually put in your mouth ... [My] objects ... are in the
18 end daily objects with a ... I don't know really. Some say it's a twist ...
19 sometimes it's a wink ... **In the end, I'm just ... keeping the link with ...**
20 **silversmithing. But actually I'm a designer ... for little productions, for**
21 **larger productions, but there's always an exchange between craft that is**
22 **brought to an industrial process.**

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26 [I'm] almost always working on command. Yes actually I do. ... What you
27 have to do, you go to a fair, and you have this firm of what ... you say: "Well, I
28 would like to do some day something for them". Just step towards them, and tell
29 them like: "**I'm this person, and I have worked for this and this company**",
30 and then you show them your work, it's as simple as that ... you just have to do
31 it, you just have to try, and ... I was lucky of course that ... **Jean-Louis Dumas**
32 **of Hermès and Puiforcat thought:** "Ok, I believe in her, and I will give her an
33 order, and I'll give another, and it works". ... I also didn't get any commands in
34 Belgium before. But I have to say, what made a great difference was the fact
35 that I became designer of the year [in Belgium]. So that put me in the picture,
36 and opened up the market in Belgium for me.

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39 Yes, there exists like an aura of luxury around [silver objects] ... if you take
40 for example an object of Hermès or Puiforcat, you can say like: "Yes, that name
41 sticks to it, and that's the reason why it's so expensive". Ok, well, of course
42 that's part of the idea, but my products don't make them money, because they're
43 **made in such limited editions that they become things on which they**
44 **actually lose money** ... if only you already take into account how much work is
45 spent on them.

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47 Identity ... is really the theme I think, that 90 percent of the people use in
48 their work ... It's something that really strikes me ... I think that it's probably
49 also important for a lot of people ... but I don't have that, far from it! ...
50 **Sometimes I even feel pressure from others like: "Well, you're not doing**
51 **anything with that! Why is it you're not doing anything with that? What is**
52 **your problem?"**. ... and then I think like: "**I don't want to do something**
53 **with it, I don't have to do something with it, it is not that I'm obliged to do**
54 **something with it!"**. And still people really expect you to ... Look, I've
55 designed that waterpipe [hookah, nargileh or shisha] over there. That waterpipe
56 was **an order from a company just like I've got all my other orders** ... I've
57 never said: "I'm now going to make a waterpipe". ... The only advantage I may
58 have is that maybe I've more affinity with waterpipes than someone here, and
59 that I've smoked shisha, I know the product. But for me this was not like: "Well
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and here I'm going to use my roots, and now I finally can show who I am and how important that is". That's for me just the same as that beer glass. ... So I designed a beer glass for [a garden furniture firm] ... and they have brewed their own beer now ... So you could say: "Beer that's Belgian, well then it has something to do with your background and ...". But so yes, for me it's not about designing a beer glass to show this is Belgian and I'm a Belgian ... that's their [the ordering clients] choice, from their side.

My father is Palestinian, my mother was Belgian, and yes, that influences you ... because in the end you've got the two cultures. And I completely don't see that as an obstruction, but rather as enrichment. ... What I'm doing now, **if that would be caused by me being raised with two cultures, I don't think so.** ... I'm not someone that needs to enlarge things ... and wants to prove like: "That's me" ... It's not because I'm a woman that I'm saying like: "I'm a woman, and I want my viewpoint as a woman and my rights as a woman and so on". I'm not like that, so I'm also not feeling the need to do that on cultural terms. ... Still I get a lot of comments like: "**Well, your work is very feminine, and very oriental**" ... and then I think like ... I don't think anyone can see that in my work ... it is not about, let's say, a chair that you only make once, and that can express everything you would like it to express ... I need to do that one day, when I have time, to **design a couple of products with a completely different name, a masculine Belgian name, just to see how people would react...**

Similar to Onat, Saida also claims to excel in quality and originality referring to the established creative norms in her majority dominated professional field. Drawing on her symbolic capital, she defines her creative field as the one of flatware designers, an international sub-field made up of only a few. This enables her to stand out against the larger mass of designers. She portrays her work as original and unique, mentioning to keep the bond with silversmithing, yet making products with 'a wink' or 'a twist'.

To fit in, Saida deploys in her narration her objectified, institutionalized and embodied cultural capital. Her institutionalized cultural capital is reflected in her reference to how the award of designer of the year, an acknowledgement for her work by peers and clients in her creative field, opened up the Belgian market for her. She also mentions the established large firms for which she has worked in the past, such as Hermès and Puiforcat. These references as well as stating that she is generally working on command indicate that she not only understands the dynamics of her

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3 creative field, but she is also part of a larger network of important majority
4 stakeholders within it.
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8 Saida also draws on her objectified cultural capital in constructing her work as
9 ergonomic and functional. Stressing these elements, she disassociates herself with
10 aesthetics-for-aesthetics, and so fitting in the designing industry where the norm of
11 functionality needs to be balanced with design. Significantly, she argues her ethnic
12 minority background to be irrelevant to her production. She does so by explicitly
13 rejecting being pinned down in categories such as 'feminine' and 'oriental'. Stressing
14 that there are no elements of her background in her work helps to construct herself
15 and her products as fitting in the majority dominated creative field.
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19 Finally, Saida enacts her embodied cultural capital by constructing herself
20 discursively as a designer, making use of craft and tradition, yet brought to an
21 industrial process. In Saida's field of flatware designing, there is namely often no
22 other way to distribute work than to cooperate with larger firms that reproduce the
23 products they ordered. By doing so, she constructs herself as a creative entrepreneur
24 fitting in the silverware designing industry in Belgium.
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28 The entrepreneurs in this group associate their work with the majority dominated
29 norms in their field, disassociating it from their ethnic minority background. When
30 asked during the interview about the lack of reference to their ethnic background in
31 their work, most observed having always worked in this way. One entrepreneur
32 however, stated having switched from a strategy similar to the 'hybrid' creative
33 entrepreneurs to not using his minority background at all. He argued that this was a
34 better strategic choice for his business.
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Discussion and conclusion

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3 The goal of this study was to understand how ethnic minority entrepreneurs in the
4 creative industries deploy, as agents, their minority background to craft professional
5 legitimacy by standing out and fitting in their field. From the analysis of ethnic
6 minority creative entrepreneurs' narratives, we could identify four different types of
7 use of their minority background to this aim.
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15 In the 'ethnic' creative entrepreneur accounts, respondents use their minority
16 background as the core of their creative production to differentiate themselves from
17 others, standing out in their field. To counterbalance this standing out, they associated
18 themselves to fit in with the institutionalized, objectified and embodied cultural
19 capital to show conformity to the norms of the majority dominated creative field. The
20 'hybrid' creative entrepreneur accounts rather combine elements from their ethnic
21 minority and majority cultures to produce creative work that stands out while at once
22 referring to the majority field norms to fit in. In the 'heroic' creative entrepreneur
23 accounts, respondents claim standing out in terms of the quality and originality of
24 their creative work along majority norms prevalent in their field. However, they still
25 discursively deploy their ethnic minority background to claim an initial disadvantage
26 and cultural deficit which they were able, as agents, to overcome. By so doing they
27 align themselves to classical heroic narratives of entrepreneurship, fitting in. Finally,
28 the 'unproblematic' creative entrepreneurs neither draw on their minority
29 backgrounds for standing out nor for fitting in. Rather, they claim standing out for the
30 quality and originality of their work according to the established majority norms of
31 their field and fitting in by referring to their institutionalized, objectified and
32 embodied cultural capital along those same norms.
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57 Comparing our four types of accounts, we note that the degree to which the ethnic
58 minority background is deployed to stand out in one's creative field varies greatly.
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3 This indicates that ethnic minority entrepreneurs maintain latitude in defining their
4 professional selves as well as their creative work. Distinct choices on the usage of
5 ethnic minority background further seem to be related to different ways of fitting in,
6 or to showing compliance to the dominant norms. We observe that the extreme uses of
7 one's background to stand out – those of the 'ethnic' and the 'unproblematic'
8 entrepreneurs – go together with the most comprehensive and least critical
9 manifestations of fitting in, including references to institutionalized, objectified and
10 embodied cultural capital. 'Hybrid' and 'heroic' accounts tend to craft legitimacy by
11 fitting in a field that is (partially) first discursively redefined in ways that are in line
12 with the own creative philosophy.
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27 A theoretical perspective highlighting ethnic minority entrepreneurs' agency (e.g.
28 Brettell and Alstatt, 2007; Kontos, 2003) allowed us to reveal the heterogeneity of
29 ways in which ethnic minority backgrounds can be deployed by individuals, affecting
30 their entrepreneurial experiences and their business success. Such heterogeneity
31 results from individuals' biographies (e.g. Brettell and Alstatt, 2007; Kontos, 2003)
32 which, due to their uniqueness, foster the development of a personal and professional
33 sense of the self in which one's ethnic minority background enters to different degrees
34 and in distinct ways. However, this does not occur automatically or in a deterministic
35 way. As our data well shows, ethnic minority entrepreneurs as agents self-reflect on
36 themselves and the world around them and act accordingly, making a difference in
37 their lives (Giddens, 1982; 1984). To successfully navigate fields shaped by multiple
38 actors and unequal power relations, they construct professional narratives balancing
39 the conflicting needs to fit in and stand out in one's field (cf. De Clercq and Voronov,
40 2009).
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These findings expose the bias in the understanding of ethnic minority entrepreneurs prevalent in the research on this topic. In line with the emerging stream of agency-centered ethnic entrepreneurship literature (e.g. Brettell and Alstatt, 2007; Essers and Benschop, 2007; Kontos, 2003; Pio, 2007), we call into question the tendency of the extant literature to represent these entrepreneurs as deterministically ‘caught’ in multiple structural factors including their ethnic minority background, obscuring their agency. At the same time, our approach centered on the notion of legitimacy goes beyond the indisputable need of ‘giving voice’ to ethnic minority entrepreneurs in research. Namely, it attempts to offer theory to better understand the role and relevance of such voice in processes of wealth creation. This important economic aspect generally remains tangential to the emerging agency-centered literature, which focuses on ethnic minority entrepreneurs’ personal experiences related to their background, not linking them to entrepreneurial dynamics. Conversely, as mentioned above, the classical literature addresses economic aspects completely neglecting the personal experiences behind them. Taking stock of these insights, future research could gain from combining both aspects to gain a better understanding of ethnic minorities’ entrepreneurial behavior and specifically, the sort of behavior leading to their business success. Whereas our analysis admittedly remained limited to the realm of discursive constructions – or narratives of legitimacy – future studies should consider integrating in the analysis more ‘material’ and ‘objective’ indicators of wealth and success and/or aspects such as market dynamics. Such approach is likely to generate more accurate accounts of ethnic minorities’ entrepreneurial experiences both in terms of meaning and economic value.

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Table 1. Overview of the respondents

Respondent (nickname)	Gender	Industry	Generation	Age	Cultural origins (except Belgian)
Robert	M	Music	2nd	40	Congo
Onat	M	Publishing	2nd	33	Turkey
Najiwa	F	Graphic design	2nd	32	Morocco
Khalid	M	(interior) Design	2nd	40	Tunisia/Algeria
Murad	M	Film	2nd	32	Morocco
Saida	F	(silver) Design	2nd	43	Palestine
Altan	M	Film/Theatre	2nd	36	Turkey
Abdel	M	Advertising	2nd	53	Algeria
Fayza	F	Fashion	2nd	41	Morocco
Iulia	F	Architecture	1st	34	Romania
Michael	M	Media	2nd	51	Hungary
Saaim	M	Dance	2nd	35	Morocco
Mahsun	M	Theatre	1st	39	Turkey

Table 2: Typology of ethnic minority entrepreneurs' use of their background

Type	Use of minority background	Stand out: Symbolic capital	Fit in: Cultural capital
'Ethnic' Creative Entrepreneur (2)	To stand out	Claiming one's minority culture as being at the core of one's creative product, against the established creative norms in the majority dominated professional field	Deployment of objectified, institutionalized and embodied cultural capital associated with the majority dominated professional field
'Hybrid' Creative Entrepreneur (4)	Partially to stand out	Acknowledging the most interesting aesthetics, values and traditions of one's minority and majority culture and claiming to bring these mixed into one's work	Deployment of objectified, institutionalized and embodied cultural capital associated with the majority dominated professional field
'Heroic' Creative Entrepreneur (3)	To fit in	Claiming to excel in quality and originality along established creative norms in the majority dominated professional field	Deploying one's subordinate social position due to one's minority background to construct a classical narrative of heroic entrepreneurship
'Unproblematic' Creative Entrepreneur (4)	No use	Claiming to excel in quality and originality along established creative norms in the majority dominated professional field	Deployment of objectified, institutionalized and embodied cultural capital associated with the majority dominated professional field