

## Advancing Minority Entrepreneurship: Obtaining Resources and Legitimacy

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### **Project aim and description:**

Minority entrepreneurs are members of a distinct cultural, ethnic, or racial groups who have a different status in society, such as immigrants or females (Fairlie & Robb, 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Research has established that minority entrepreneurs face more obstacles than nonminority entrepreneurs in securing the necessary resources to establish and grow their businesses due to lower legitimacy perceptions that society holds about them due to their minority characteristics (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Freeland & Keister, 2016; Shelton, 2010).

Yet, minority entrepreneurs are the fastest growing entrepreneurial population in the world and as such are key actors in socio-economic development (Dana & Morris, 2021). Given the importance of entrepreneurship as a livelihood for minorities and as a vehicle of social integration, it is surprising that research into how minorities and major stakeholders such as investors or policy makers perceive these barriers and what strategies they develop to effectively eliminate them remains underdeveloped. For example, previous literature examining women and immigrant entrepreneurs found that they face injustice in the form of harsher evaluations of their business abilities and as a consequence secure less resources and perform less well than their nonminority counterparts (Brush, de Bruin, & Welter, 2014; Shepherd & Patzelt, 2015; Simmons, Wiklund, Levie, Bradley, & Sunny, 2019) -however, minority entrepreneurship literature remains underdeveloped with regards to the specific challenges that different types of minority entrepreneurs face (e.g.: gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, age, race and ethnicity, etc.) and what they do to overcome negative legitimacy perceptions.

Moreover, current research takes a nonminority centric view, in which minority entrepreneurs are treated as if they are a homogenous group. However, it is likely that minority entrepreneurs are heterogenous and are not treated equally. The differences in how different minority entrepreneur groups are treated have yet to be examined.

The PhD research project, starting February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, aims to address the above gaps in knowledge and study the different ways in which diverse minority entrepreneur groups overcome barriers in obtaining fundamental resources (such as funding, market access, human resources, and legitimacy) necessary to ensure success in their entrepreneurial endeavours.

**Theoretical perspectives and contributions:**

We are open to a diverse range of theoretical perspectives in which applicants can approach the topic. We particularly welcome proposals that seek to enrich the minority entrepreneurship literature with insights from biases, intersectionality, legitimacy, inequality or social identity theories amongst others.

The potential contribution of this research project extends beyond academia. From the academic perspective, this research is expected to contribute to the minority entrepreneurship and broader management literature by opening research debates and expanding knowledge in an under-researched area. From a practice perspective, the findings of this research could be helpful to private and public organisations seeking to support entrepreneurial initiatives (educational institutions, incubators, financial institutions, governmental agencies, etc) given the relevance of the research topic to such institutions and to society in general.

**Proposed methodology:**

The proposed methodology is mainly qualitative (e.g.: interviews, repertory grids) but may also include quantitative methods (e.g.: experiments). We are open to other methodologies proposed by applicants that help our domain of enquiry.

**Expectations:**

The candidate is expected to develop more specific research questions within this area and gradually develop three working papers over the period of three years that are potentially publishable in internationally recognised academic journals.

**Applicant Specification:**

The candidate must express a keen interest in minority entrepreneurship, inequalities, legitimacy, or related areas. Prior knowledge and experience in both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies is an advantage.

**About the Supervisors:**

**Björn Claes** is Senior Lecturer in the Department of People and Organizations and Teaching Director of the Masters Programmes at OUBS. His research interests span the areas of Operations and Supply Chain Management, and Organizational Theory and Entrepreneurship, including legitimacy, business controversy and minority entrepreneurship. He has worked as academic and researcher in the UK, Spain, France, Sweden, and Colombia.

**Carolin Decker-Lange** is Senior Lecturer in the Department for Public Leadership and Social Enterprise and Deputy Director (Business) of SCiLAB, FBL's Scholarship Centre for Innovation in online Legal and Business Education. Before joining The Open University, she held academic positions at UWE Bristol Business School (UK), the University of Bremen (Germany), WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management (Campus Vallendar), Freie Universität Berlin, the University of Paderborn and the University of Leipzig. Her research interests comprise entrepreneurship and management of SMEs, entrepreneurship education, organisational development and change, and inter-organisational collaboration.

**Sonia Siraz** is Lecturer in the Department of Management and Marketing at Essex Business School. Before joining the University of Essex, she was a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Pittsburgh, USA. Her research interests are at the nexus of entrepreneurship and organization theory and focus mainly on (1) minority entrepreneurship and equality/inclusion including exploring the mindset of various legitimating audiences and the performance of minority ventures, and on (2) legitimacy perceptions in the grey areas between legitimacy-illegitimacy and complex institutional environments, legitimacy formation processes and legitimization strategies of controversial businesses.

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