

**Unexpected Entrepreneurs:
The identity work of entrepreneurs with disabilities**

ABSTRACT

Drawing on in-depth interviews, this study investigates how entrepreneurs with disabilities (EWDs) position themselves, in their identity work, vis-à-vis dominant, normative representations of the entrepreneur that tend to exclude them. Addressing the current neglect in how EWDs deal with such discursive barriers, we document four identity positions which they deploy, in various combinations, to construct an identity as an entrepreneur. Our findings show that outward positions, by which EWDs compare their own self with (non)-entrepreneurial (able-bodied) others and emphasize similarity and uniqueness, reproduce normative representations of the entrepreneur. Inward positions, by which EWDs engage in inner conversations contrasting their current self with older, aspirational or impossible selves, on the contrary lead to the destabilization of normative representations. This study speaks back to wider debates in entrepreneurship studies, including the plea to consider ‘ordinary’ entrepreneurs, the difference between ‘being’ an entrepreneur and ‘doing’ entrepreneurship, and the value in difference.

Keywords: minority entrepreneurship; disability; identity work; identity positioning, discourse

Introduction

In neoliberal societies, the figure of the entrepreneur has attained mythical status: it is commonly acclaimed in the media, practitioners’ literature and research as the main ingredient to a prosperous economy, the ‘supreme creator of wealth’ (Verduijn and Essers 2013), the ‘hero of our times’ (Tedmanson, Verduijn, Essers and Gartner 2012), and the ‘curer of the problems of late modernity’ (Jones and Spicer 2009). Such images are underpinned by an implicit belief that anyone *can* be entrepreneur – all it requires is passion and hard work – and a normative expectation that all individuals should become entrepreneurial in their own lives, not only to make a living, but also to fully participate in society (e.g. du Gay and Salaman 1992; Fournier and Grey 1999; McCabe 2009; McNay 2009).

Despite widespread representations of entrepreneurship as an ‘open and accessible socio-economic space, in which personal effort alone determines reward and status’ (Ahl and Marlow 2012, 1), research has shown that people with disabilities face multiple barriers to enter this space. On average, they are less likely to have high levels of savings and educational attainment, as well as specific business knowledge, whilst they are more likely to suffer from health issues (e.g. Maritz and Laferriere 2016; Parker Harris, Renko and Caldwell 2014; Kitching 2014). Other barriers have rather been associated with contextual factors such as inaccessible built environments (Ali, Schur and Blanck 2011; Vick and Lightman 2010), inadequate start-up support (Ashely and Graf 2017; Doyel 2002; OECD 2014), and discouraging tax and benefit structures (Hwang and Roulstone 2015; Renko, Parker Harris and Caldwell 2016). Also, few studies have documented ideational barriers including stereotypes by key gatekeepers such as banks, customers and suppliers (Boylan and Burchardt 2003; Jones and Latreille 2011).

This emergent literature has advanced our understanding of the multiple barriers experienced by EWDs. However, it has to date largely neglected the exclusionary effects of dominant discourses of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship and how EWDs engage with such discourses to craft an identity. This is unfortunate, as prior studies on the identity work of entrepreneurs belonging to historically subordinate groups and underrepresented in entrepreneurship – henceforth ‘minority entrepreneurs’ – such as women, older persons and

ethnic minorities, have shown that hegemonic representations of entrepreneurship (Ogbor 2000) and the ‘hero entrepreneur’ (Ahl 2006; Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio 2004; Verduijn, Dey, Tedmanson and Essers 2014) are deeply gendered (Cohen and Musson 2000), ethnicized (Essers and Benschop 2007; Thoelen and Zanoni 2016, 2017), ageist (Ainsworth and Hardy 2008) and ableist (Williams and Patterson 2019). People with disabilities are thus, we argue, likely to experience analogous difficulties. In contemporary western societies, they are often represented as ‘lacking’, ‘less productive’, ‘inflexible’ and ‘not in control’ (Holmqvist, Maravelias and Skalen 2012; Jammaers, Hardonk and Zanoni 2016; Jammaers and Zanoni 2020; Mik-Meyer 2016), and thus at odds with the ideal, able-bodied entrepreneur, or at the very least ‘unexpected’ entrepreneurs.

To gain insight into the engagement of EDWs with normative discourses in their identity work, we draw on theory on identity positioning (Ybema 2020). Different from other approaches positing a strong constraining role of discourses on one’s identity construction, positioning theory considers the extent to which a specific discourse hampers or enables the crafting of a specific identity in a given situation as a matter of empirical investigation (Berglund, Gaddefors and Lindgren 2016). More than other approaches, positioning theory thus emphasizes subjects’ agency in their identity construction, allowing to investigate the following questions: *What identity positions do EDWs take up to craft an identity? And how do these identity positions relate to the dominant discourse of the entrepreneur?* Empirically, we conduct an interpretative analysis of 31 in-depth interviews with individuals who are self-employed and have physical and/or cognitive impairments¹. We inductively identify four identity positions, which we label the ‘archetypical’, ‘unique’, ‘collective’ and ‘fallback’ entrepreneur. Our findings contribute to ongoing debates by highlighting the complexity of crafting ‘an identity as an entrepreneur’, which is to be distinguished from ‘an entrepreneurial identity’ or ‘the entrepreneurial self’. The latter two terms are used to recognize how people in waged employment settings too can enact an entrepreneurial identity (see McCabe, 2009; Russell & McCabe, 2015). Different from the extant literature on identity work, our analysis shows that the crafted identities are not consistently coherent, positive, or even ‘entrepreneurial’. The self-questioning of the entrepreneurial self commonly features in our data, advancing ‘modest’ ‘day-to-day’ representations of entrepreneurship which destabilize dominant ones.

From material to discursive barriers in entrepreneurship for minorities

To date, the literature on EDWs has largely focused on various barriers people with disabilities encounter to become and remain entrepreneurs. A first set of barriers is related to individuals with disabilities themselves. Such research points to how bodily variations causing health problems and impairment effects (e.g. pain and fatigue) bring along additional hurdles in the day-to-day lived experience of entrepreneurs. Ill health can for instance make it particularly hard to ‘do the long hours’ and constantly put effort into the business, which is often required to succeed (Kitching 2014; Parker et al. 2014). Individuals with disabilities further often experience barriers because of their overall lower educational levels and the lack of specific business knowledge (Kitching 2014; Parker et al. 2014), as well as financial constraints resulting from their lack of financial capital, due to overall lower savings from previous work experiences in paid employment (Maritz and Laferriere 2016).

Other studies rather examine barriers originating in the material context in which EDWs are embedded. The built environment, and in particular the lack of accessible business spaces and transportation options sometimes poses an important burden on people with various impairments (e.g. mobility, visual), hampering their contacts with clients and the smooth

delivery of goods and services (Ali et al. 2011; Vick and Lightman 2010). In some countries, research has unveiled how the loss of disability benefits or lack of social protection outside the salaried labor market or more broad tax and benefit structures discourage people with disabilities from entrepreneurship (Hwang and Roulstone 2015; Renko et al. 2016). Lastly, research shows how vocational rehabilitation counsellors rarely assist people in starting a business, resulting in a lack of support and absence of suitable training (Ashely and Graf 2017; Doyel 2002; OECD 2014).

A third set of barriers relates to the ideational context in which EWDs operate, in particular the discrimination they face by important gatekeepers. Indeed, the beliefs held by others about the capabilities of EWDs and their chances of success also play an important limiting role. For instance, various studies found that banks and suppliers discriminate EWDs, limiting their access to capital and production factors necessary for the business, while customers' discrimination can hamper access to the market for the specific product or service (Boylan and Burchardt 2002; Jones and Latreille 2011; Kitching 2014). Overall, this literature points to how these gatekeepers categorize people with disabilities as belonging to a group that is unable to perform according to expectations in the social role as entrepreneur, falling outside entrepreneurial norms and therefore carrying too high risk, and ignore their actual talents and capacities.

These studies are advancing our understanding of how individual characteristics, contextual material factors and gatekeepers' discrimination represent barriers to individuals with disabilities by restricting the resources they can access to become entrepreneurs. However, they largely neglect the key role of discursive barriers, constraining the identities people are allowed to plausibly craft (cf. Jones and Spicer 2009; Tedmanson et al. 2012; Zanoni, Thoelen and Ybema 2017). Yet we know from the research on other minority entrepreneurs that the identity of the entrepreneur is difficult to claim for female, older, non-white people (Ahl 2006; Bruni et al. 2004; Verduijn et al. 2014). Such difficulties originate from an abundance of romanticized discourses related to the 'hero entrepreneur', in which entrepreneurs are consistently depicted in mythical terms, as relentless creatures on a never-ending quest for innovation (Ahl 2006; Bruni et al. 2004; Chasserio et al. 2014; Verduijn and Essers 2013; Tedmanson et al. 2012; Jones and Spicer 2009), wealth creation and change making (Jones and Spicer 2005; Nicholson and Anderson 2005; Rindova, Barry and Ketchen 2009). Taken together, such pervasive discourses continuously shape a collective imaginary of the 'true' entrepreneur as a masculine risk-taker, rather than rule follower (Spicer 2012), who is aggressive and competitive, but at the same time an eloquent networker who knows how to win the hearts and minds of potential stakeholders through charm and heroic storytelling about start-up periods (Marlow and McAdam 2012; Ozkazanc-Pan 2014; Pelly 2016; Randerson 2016). Importantly, he is seen as an individual agent, rather than part of a group (Drakopoulou Dodd and Anderson 2007).

To overcome such discursive barriers, minority entrepreneurs have often been found to combine two strategies. A first strategy is assimilation into the dominant entrepreneurial norm, stressing similarity with white, male entrepreneurs and strategically following gendered and/or ethnicized scripts for their self-representation (e.g. Kerfoot and Miller 2010; Ogbor 2000; Ozkazanc-Pan and Clark Muntean 2016). For instance Marlow and McAdam (2012) show how stereotypical gendered expectations persisted in a high-tech incubator, leading female entrepreneurs to build identities as tough and strong, reproducing masculine norms of entrepreneurial behavior. Essers and Benschop (2007) show how female Turkish entrepreneurs solved identity tensions between gender, ethnicity and entrepreneurship by identifying with Western norms and values in their entrepreneurial endeavors and the way they depicted

themselves. Such instances of reflexive identity work are sometimes accompanied by assimilatory ‘body work’, such as efforts to dress in appropriate and professional manners (Marlow and McAdam 2015), manipulations of one’s hair to look ‘Western’ (Knight 2016), ‘whitewashing’ of one’s online appearance on the internet (Dy et al. 2017), and suppressing emotions to appear rational (García and Welter 2013).

A second strategy consists in differentiating oneself from the dominant entrepreneurial norm, making a business case for one’s difference and uniqueness by virtue of one’s specific profile, background or experience (e.g. Down and Revely 2004; Essers and Benschop 2007; Zanon et al. 2017). García and Welter (2013) show for instance how women entrepreneurs differentiated themselves from men entrepreneurs by highlighting emotionally intelligent decision-making, attentive customer relations, and empathy for creating a family-friendly workplace. Thoelen and Zanon (2017) similarly analyze how, to distinguish their entrepreneurial project from those of ethnic majority creatives, ethnic minority creatives construct themselves through narratives that highlight the key role of their specific hybrid ethnic background, or the subordinated status deriving from it. As a whole, this body of research concludes that minority entrepreneurs commonly attempt to balance, in their identity work, between assimilation and differentiation, building rich and multifaceted, ‘hybrid’ identities.

Studying EWD’s identity work through identity positioning

Belonging to the long tradition of organization studies that considers identity as socially constructed, identity positioning emphasizes that people actively and constantly ‘work’ on their identity by positioning themselves in relation to others in order to make sense of who they are (Brown 2019). Such identity work is functional to the creation of a positive but also coherent, distinct and secure view of the self, internally ensuring high self-esteem (Collinson 2003; Knight and Willmott 1989) and externally legitimating oneself towards important stakeholders (McAdam and Marlow 2015). More recent scholarship has moved away from the view of identities as fixed to emphasize how they are rather inherently temporary and tentative (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Ybema et al. 2009), neither fully coherent nor completely fragmented (Clarke, Brown and Hailey 2009), and socially constituted through situated practices of talking and writing (Watson 2008; Zanon et al. 2017). Identity positioning assumes that individuals retain some discretion in the preferred identity they craft, as an identity is never entirely determined by normative representations or discourses about who one should be, which might be dominant in the specific environment (Berglund et al. 2016). Emphasizing subjects’ agency, positioning theory helps to see how individuals proactively choose, omit, and combine available vocabularies to strategically construct desired meanings of themselves and their actions (Brown and Coupland 2005; Clarke et al. 2009; Kornberger and Brown 2007; Thoelen and Zanon 2016).

In a recent review of the identity literature (Ybema 2020), a distinction is made between identity positioning that takes a more outward perspective, or *self-other positioning*, and positioning that takes a more inward perspective, or *self-directed positioning*. When people engage in self-other positioning, they compare themselves as members of a social group with the members of another social group, deploying similarities and differences with others as the material resource for crafting their own identity (e.g. Garcia and Hardy 2007; Ybema et al. 2009). For example, the statement ‘Despite being a young woman, I am more capable of negotiating a business deal than my more senior, male colleagues are’ would fall under this type of positioning. Often, such positioning draws on collectively shared binary oppositions available to speakers in a specific context. Most of the extant literature on women and ethnic minority entrepreneurs’ identity work reviewed above seems to focus on this relational, self-

other positioning, in which dominant representations of the entrepreneur serve as the material for comparison, leading to one's assimilation or differentiation. When people engage in self-directed positioning, they imaginatively construct different possible selves (e.g. Dempsey and Sanders 2010; Thornborrow and Brown 2009; Ibarra 1999) or 'others-in-us'. For example, the statement 'I used to be a very shy and introverted person, but since I've become self-employed I've learned to stand up for myself and be more assertive' would fall under this type of positioning. Studies in the past have highlighted the inconsistencies between 'past, possible, provisional, desired, feared, aspired to and alternative selves' (Brown 2019, 9). A study about professional musicians for instance (Beech, Gilmore, Hibbert, and Ybema 2016), exemplifies the inner struggles of professionals who purposefully engaged in 'self-questioning' rather than in positive, 'self-affirming' identity work. Challenges to and inconsistencies in workers' preferred self-view (Collinson 2003) are read as integral part of one's work identity, 'not a route towards resolution, but an absorption into the self' (Beech et al. 2016, 519). Such inner conversations are however also informed by social structures in the form of dominant discourses, cultural scripts and normative prescriptions (Ybema 2020). Approaching EWDs' identity work through a positioning lens thus allows us to emphasize their agency and to identify both self-directed and self-other positioning in their identity work without assuming coherence beforehand.

Methodology

To answer this research question, this study draws on 31 in-depth interviews with EWDs. The interviews were conducted in Flanders, the northern region of Belgium, a country with a particularly low employment rate for people with disabilities and large gap between the employment rate of disabled and non-disabled people compared to the EU average (Grammenos 2018). Although self-employment is higher for people with disabilities than for the overall population, the difference is small compared to other EU countries (OECD 2014). In 2016, 25,751 self-employed people in Flanders self-identified as having a long-term illness or disability (Van Rangelberg 2018). Whereas various support measures for employees with disabilities in waged employment have recently been implemented to increase their activity rate (Jammaers, Zanon and Williams 2019), support for entrepreneurs remains limited. This is in line with Belgium's policies which historically place emphasis on social protection of employees and the collectivization of risks, offering little support to entrepreneurs. For instance, although wage subsidies in theory are available both for employees and the self-employed, in practice they remain largely unused by the self-employed due to the heavy administrative requirements. The public employment service lacks critical expertise to guide clients towards self-employment. Finally, although some people with severe disabilities are entitled to a personal budget that they can freely spend, there are long waiting lists for obtaining one. In the last decade, entrepreneurship has been increasingly promoted, as part of a broader set of labor market policies to activate individuals and increase their flexibility and self-management. This evolution includes some attempts to inclusive entrepreneurship concerning mostly women, migrants and youth (OECD 2018).

Within this national and regional context, 31 individuals with a wide variety of impairments were interviewed for an explorative research project on entrepreneurship among people with disabilities (see Table 1). Of the entrepreneurs, 11 started up their business after having acquired an impairment whilst 13 were born with a congenital impairment. Another 7 respondents acquired their impairment later on in life whilst being self-employed. Fifteen respondents were solo self-employed, while the others employed additional staff in their enterprise and/or worked with business partners. Respondents were active in a broad range of

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professions, with 12 respondents offering coaching/help to individuals to improve their life and health, 11 selling products to consumers and another 11 selling services/consulting to other businesses. Out of the 31 respondents, 10 had a business that was somehow related to their disability. Table 1 provides an overview of the respondents' profiles.

Insert Table 1 about here

During the semi-structured interviews, interviewees were first asked to introduce themselves and to talk about their impairments. Next, different aspects of interviewees' current and previous experiences on the labor market were discussed in depth. The interviews included the following topics: the career trajectory and the motivation to become self-employed, the barriers experienced in entrepreneurship, the benefits of being self-employed, relations with co-workers/employees, clients and suppliers, and the support received from the government. The interviews lasted 55 minutes on average, were all audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

It is important to acknowledge that, next to the way the research was framed and the specific questions formulated, the embodiment of the interviewer – an able-bodied, white, young woman with a higher education degree – is also likely to have influenced the interactions with the respondents. For instance, male respondents might have emphasized their own agency more than they would have if the interviewer had also been a male person with a disability, respondents likely downplayed other non-work roles (e.g. family roles) that are as/more central to their identity due to the focus of the research on entrepreneurship, and they might have stressed barriers they have experienced more than in other situations, in the hope that the research might inform better policy support in the future. Working within a social constructionist epistemology, we consider the interview texts and the identities crafted through them as necessarily reflecting the unique dialogue between the respondents and the first author (Alvesson, 2003), informed by their own, unique lived experiences (Coupland, 2001).

The data analysis aimed at identifying and classifying the micro-modalities of identity work through which EWDs crafted an identity as entrepreneur. First, to answer the first research question – What identity positions do EWDs take up to craft an identity? –, the first author identified all fragments (143) containing identity work, answering questions like 'Who am I?' and 'Who do I want to be?' in the interview transcripts. Specific questions in the interview guideline particularly suited to trigger identity work were 'Where do you see yourself and your business in the next 5 years?' and 'Did you always want to be an entrepreneur?'. Yet, as common in semi-structured interviews, many fragments also emerged from answers to other questions. In a second step, a typology of four identity positions was inductively derived. Next, to answer the second research question – How do these identity positions relate to the dominant discourse of the entrepreneur? –, we analyzed more in depth the nature of the positioning, informed by the Ybema's framework (2020) and with attention for how the identity related to the norm of the entrepreneur: either reaffirming or questioning it. An overview of the steps in the data analysis, the full coding tree and the frequencies are provided in Table 2. In a last phase, we checked how positions were combined by the individual EWDs. We tried to identify patterns in the use of positions by respondents in our sample, according to various characteristics (type of impairment, gender, size of company, sector, disability-related business, lifespan), yet no such patterns emerged.

Insert Table 2 about here

In line with the social constructionist epistemological position delineated above, the categorization of identity positions offered here is in itself a construction and not a definitive or correct account capturing reality in its totality (Cunliffe 2003). We accordingly do not advance knowledge claims over absolute truths or ‘objectively lived’ social realities (Alvesson 2010; Danieli and Woodhams 2005). Moreover, it is important to note that this categorization concerns solely the positioning strategies of EWDs through language, and in no way attempts to say something about their humanity, which no representation can capture. In this sense, what we present is our own interpretation of what they have chosen to share in their dialogue with us, and inevitably reflects our own academic voice. At the same time, this project does partake in redressing the ableist neglect of the economic activities of people with disabilities in both research and practice. We follow Shildrick in her conviction that ‘the responsibility for enquiry and analysis of ableism falls on all those who participate in the relevant structures, both those identified with normative standards and those constructed as excessive to them’ (Shildrick 2012, 39).

Findings

The EWDs in this study crafted an identity as entrepreneur through four distinct positions: as an ‘archetypical’ entrepreneur, a ‘unique’ entrepreneur, a ‘fallback’ entrepreneur, and a ‘collective’ entrepreneur. In what follows, we illustrate each identity position through our empirical material, indicating whether it relies on self-other or self-directed positioning and how it is related to dominant, normative discourses of the entrepreneur. We then give an example of how these ‘ideal type’ positions are combined. This last sub-section of the findings provides a glimpse of the complexity of positioning to craft an identity as entrepreneur and the ambiguity of EDWs’ relation to dominant norms on entrepreneurship.

Positioning oneself as an archetypical entrepreneur

A first identity position used to craft an identity as entrepreneur defines an entrepreneurial self relationally by stressing its difference from a non-entrepreneurial other. Such positioning seems closely aligned with the normative ideal of the entrepreneur depicted by popular discourse. Characteristic of these textual fragments is the recurrent emphasis on the entrepreneurial ‘I’, defined by an inherent stubbornness, assertiveness, ability to do business, sell and work hard, ambition, and refusal to work for a boss. Consider the two following interview quotes:

I never thought of being a waged employee. Already in school, I had a strong drive, so I think it has been in me since I was a kid. I started selling CD's and stuff, taking initiative, being an entrepreneur was always in me somehow. [...] I would like my business to grow, especially the B2B section. We recently bought a new venue and so we want to reach a 20-FTE staff. I would also like to bring more structure into the firm and grow our brand awareness. (Mathias, ICT store owner and wheelchair user)

I'm not the person who can work for a boss. I can work hard, and do many hours, but in the way I want to, not according to someone else's demands. [...] Ever since I was a kid I have been selling things, it is in my DNA. I have no trouble approaching people and talking my way around. I often have too many clients at my stand, who are chatting [laughs]. One bakery becomes rich while another one goes bankrupt, and a lot of that has to do with the quality offered and the person running the business [rather than one's disability]. (Ludwig, vendor and wheelchair user)

These quotes implicitly align the speaker with the norm entrepreneur by explicitly referring to others who are non-entrepreneurs (e.g. waged employees or failed business owners). Such positioning often relies on an element of comparative valuation, through contrasting

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entrepreneurship with ‘inferior’ waged work or one’s own business with that of less successful competitors. Many of the excerpts constructing the archetypical entrepreneur position also stress an element of temporal continuity along the speaker’s life course, marked by statements claiming that one has been ‘this way’ since early in life. Excerpts also emphasize one’s growth ambitions, the quality of one’s product, and the recognition one receives from other entrepreneurs or one’s employees.

Narratively, such position is achieved by glossing over one’s impairment and/or disability and any of the barriers one might have experienced due to it. Such minimizing of the role of one’s disability is well illustrated by the following quote:

What matters is your motivation to start a business, and whether you have a disability or not should not matter. Is there an unmet need in the market? And can you help fulfil that need with your business? You need to specialize, and make sure that there is a demand for your product. (Jacques, HR consultant and wheelchair user)

Central here is the ability to offer a product or service that meets the demands of the market, an ability that entrepreneurs need to possess, rather than any specific embodied characteristic of the individual entrepreneur. Other examples of this positioning acknowledged more the role of the disabled body. Yet this role was limited for example to affecting the choice of one’s professional specialization, as illustrated in the following quote:

Some people ask for special treatments, but they understand that I cannot perform some things [referring to his disability]. I specialize mainly in back and neck problems. For example, I cannot do tests with drawings, and then I refer them to others. But some therapists also have this [specialization] for other stuff, some might for instance only treat children. (Wim, physiotherapist with blindness)

This first type of positioning constructs an identity as entrepreneur through narratives that largely align with and reproduce dominant understandings of entrepreneurship, or an ‘archetypical’ entrepreneur. It is centered on an inherently ‘entrepreneurial self’ who is in control and the main author of one’s entrepreneurial story (du Gay and Salaman 1992; Fournier and Grey 1999), as opposed to a non-entrepreneurial other. In these quotes, respondents largely avoid reference to their impairment or dismiss the relevance of its disabling effect. Like in common representations of entrepreneurs, the speaker’s embodiment is taken for granted and silenced (Ahl 2006; Chasserio et al. 2014).

Positioning oneself as a unique entrepreneur

A second identity position used to craft an identity as entrepreneur also defines an entrepreneurial self relationally, yet in this case by stressing the difference from an able-bodied other. Identity work relying on this position was very much centered on one’s embodied difference and disability, which were constructed as a unique asset providing a business advantage through offering unique products, services, public relations or a social mission. The role of one’s disability in enabling the identification of a business opportunity that was still untapped was constructed in various ways. In some instances, one’s disability was presented as enabling one to see a business opportunity, and the own role in this process of discovery was emphasized. Consider the following excerpts:

I had an accident on holiday 23 years ago while diving and I got in a wheelchair. But I have always kept on travelling over the last 20 years and I have always organized each trip myself. At one point I noticed that there was an opportunity in arranging travelling

for disabled people, because I had acquired all that experience and saw that others were less at ease with arranging everything for themselves. And so I saw a clear need for such a travel agency. (Christian, travel agent and wheelchair user)

In wheelchair-basketball, I noticed there was a real need for people who had both the technological skills and knowledge on how to take measurements of people with disabilities in their wheelchair. Most disabled sportspersons went to the Netherlands to buy good wheelchairs for sports and get their gear fixed. Sometimes they had to wait for 6 to 8 weeks to have their chair back. [...] In my previous job, I was trained to become a certified welder and so fixing wheelchairs was quite easy for me to do. (Henry, wheelchair store owner and wheelchair user)

These excerpts construct an entrepreneur fully in control of his or her business and all similarly emphasize how one's disability, together with the specific experiences and skills, uniquely positions him to build a business addressing the specific needs of individuals with disabilities. In this outward positioning of the self, the other used as the term of comparison is the able-bodied entrepreneur who lacks expertise.

In other instances, the business case for one's disability is made by claiming that it allows to offer a product or service that is adapted to individuals having similar impairments or experiences of discrimination, thanks to one's capacity to better understand them:

When I was rehabilitating after my accident, at the center many people told me to do something with my skills and knowledge, to go for designing and building homes that are accessible. They told me that there was a real need for it and shortage of people with sufficient experience. And so I jumped and started specializing myself in it, and indeed the demand is massive. (Kelly, architect with mobility impairment)

I worked in a slaughterhouse as a butcher for 15 years. A physically heavy job, and when I got home I was always so tired, so drained... And so I started taking Herbalife to get healthier and I immediately got results. And so many people came to me asking how I got so much energy and weight loss and they wanted me to coach them. Many deaf people are having health issues and doctors or dieticians are not helping them because of communication problems. (Helen, health coach and dietician with deafness)

I started off with one patient and then the word spread. My clients were telling their physicians that I actually listen better than other psychologists [due to being blind]. [...] Once a professor told me that we, visually impaired people, are better able to hear and feel our patients, and less susceptible to prejudice and stereotypes, a clear advantage in the profession of psychologist. [...] I reap the benefits of all the harassment and discrimination I have experienced earlier in my life now. It gave me a lot of life experience, compassion and understanding of my clients' emotions. (Julie, psychotherapist with visual impairment)

In these excerpts, the 'unique entrepreneur' identity position is built by referring to how other actors in the EDW's environment made her aware of an entrepreneurial potential related to her disability. The speaker's agency is here thus narratively downplayed. Interestingly, female EWDs in our study more often mentioned indebtedness to others as compared to male EWDs, who underlined their own agency in turning their disability into a business opportunity. This indicates that one's positioning is enabled and constrained at once by other normative discourses available to EDWs, in this case gender (Williams and Patterson 2019).

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In few other instances, this positioning rather emphasizes how one's disability represents an advantage to build an image and 'sell' oneself as entrepreneurs, precisely because of the capacity to overcome the barriers commonly associated with disability. In these cases, the client base is broader, comprising able-bodied individuals, to whom EWDs can present themselves as role models:

Having a disability opened many doors for me. [...] Many organizations find it inspiring to see a person with a disability go out and conquer the world with his project. I'm often on a pedestal, for instance I now have to record a video for [Bank name] which supports my project financially with a startup-fund as positive advertising for them, to inspire others. So, yeah I think you will get a lot of "Yesses!" and many people that will want to join your project when you're a disabled entrepreneur. (Pierre, product developer and wheelchair user)

Finally, one excerpt makes a claim to uniqueness by pointing to the social goal of one's business related to one's disability:

The people that come here are all in search of 'something else', something alternative. And they find it here. They like talking about this place to others. My business allows me to spread deaf culture, to inform people about deaf people and how they are not dangerous or aggressive. There are also deaf people that like to come here. But the soup bar is really open to all, the atmosphere is relaxed and familiar, people can be their true selves here. (Sam, deaf restaurant owner)

This second position, the 'unique' entrepreneur, is used by respondents to craft an identity that both resembles and reproduces dominant representations of entrepreneurship. This is achieved by re-appropriating one's disability as a unique asset to achieve one's business goals. Some of these excerpts, often in narratives of female EWDs, acknowledge more others' role in spotting entrepreneurial opportunities offered by one's disability, while other ones remain centered on the self (see also Essers and Benschop 2007; Verduijn and Essers 2013). Such positioning unfolds through the comparison of the self with able-bodied others. In these cases, disability is highlighted and the value of their unique capacities is stressed to understand the needs of clients with (and occasionally without) disabilities, and to create superior products and services through their 'disability capital'. The centrality of disability capital in this type of positioning resembles the use of ethnic capital (Cederberg and Villares-Varela 2019; Vershinina, Barrett and Meyer 2011) and gender capital (Swail and Marlow 2018) in entrepreneurship studies, and more broadly classical business case arguments for diversity (Robinson and Dechant 1997; Woodhams and Danieli 2000).

Positioning oneself as a fallback entrepreneur

In a third position we identified, an identity is constructed as an entrepreneur who happened to start a business not out of choice, but rather largely out of necessity, to overcome barriers experienced in their social environment over which one has no control. Such an understanding of the self emerges through an inner conversation, in which an 'older self' or an 'aspirational self', rather than an external other, serve as term of comparison with the present self. Most commonly, this type of identity work points to entrepreneurship as a solution to the difficulties in obtaining and keeping a job as an employee, due to employers' perceptions of people with disabilities or outright discrimination:

I worked in the regular economy for 17 years in various administrative jobs, but I will never work in the regular sector again. Employers would only hire me because I was

cheap labor, because I came with a 50% wage subsidy. At one point, I got so tired of all the bullying, jealous colleagues, and the commute. [...] All the problems I encountered in my past [as an employee] really made me want to be self-employed. In fact, self-employment had become my only option. Luckily, I took on several evening courses throughout my career that enabled me to become an independent psychotherapist. (Julie, psychotherapist with visual impairment)

[After being fired] I sat in the taxi and I had nothing, no job and an empty calendar. It felt as if they had put me out with the rest of the garbage. Really... What hurt me even most was that three weeks later, a vacancy for my job was put online. Then I realized that, even though they gave as reason some “reorganization” stuff, it was for my disability [that they fired me]. Someone confessed to me that they thought I was not multifunctional enough. I am not bilingual and I sometimes struggled to get to places that were not accessible, like the Brussels headquarters. [...] It was a real process of grief. But I gave myself 14 days to be sad, and then I said, okay Tania, you are not going to let this happen to you ever again, from now on you take matters into your own hands! (Tania, HR consultant in a wheelchair)

These two excerpts construct a self that embarked on a journey of entrepreneurship because it was pushed out of the waged labor market. Entrepreneurship is here not a vocation but a ‘fallback’ position, taken by a resilient self in the attempt to protect oneself and take back control over his or her professional life. Such positioning is achieved through a comparison between the present self and the ‘old self’.

Similarly the following quotes refer to a ‘problematic’ old self as a waged employee, but in addition acknowledge how disability and/or impairment make even the current role challenging at times:

I’ve worked in restaurants before, but I was often degraded to cleaning vegetables or making French fries [...]. I do think entrepreneurship is more challenging for people with a disability. Because I think that people who went to regular schools might have had more relevant experience in previous jobs and might have been treated more normally than me. (Bob, sport dietician with mobility impairment)

When you work for a boss, you always have to take things into account that [as a person with autism] are quite strange, unknown.... You constantly have to adapt and almost guess half of the time what it is people want you to do. Very stressful. [...] I guess an entrepreneur requires a good dose of courage and guts as well. You have to be able to sell yourself. And the insecurity that comes with my autism has certainly made it challenging for me. I know this other [able-bodied] professional organizer who started out her business long after me, but within a year, she had an incredible amount of success. (Johanna, organizer with autism and hearing impairment)

Given the important role of the ‘old’ self, these excerpts show an inward identity positioning, as opposed to an outward one, even if others are mentioned. In the following narrative, a tension between one’s current and aspirational self arises, which is related to the family’s expectation that the individual run the family business:

To me the business is largely a burden, I would most of all like to sell it and move to Italy, work there two or three times a week in a local shop or something and that's it. It no longer interests me at all, my business. I just run it to have an income. I have been fooled by the

insurances so many times [after becoming impaired through work-related injury] and I am sick of it all. I never wanted to take over my parents' business, but I was expected to. (Jos, liquor store owner and wheelchair user)

Like the other excerpts in this type of positioning, this one explicitly rejects the dominant understanding of the entrepreneurial self as fully in control of his or her fate, rather presenting entrepreneurship as fulfilling a need to work, given the constraints the social environment imposes on the individual.

In this third identity position, EWDs take up an identity that stresses how entrepreneurship is something they do – a fallback activity –, rather than something they are – a vocation. Self-employment is presented as a necessity, an occupation one has ended up doing because of structural barriers, the expectations of others, or lack of opportunities in the environment, which excluded other, preferred, occupational possibilities (Dencker, Bacq, Gruber and Haas 2019; Miller and Le Breton-Miller 2017). Popular notions of ‘the self-made subject’ whose success solely depends on choice and effort are refuted by emphasizing the constraints imposed by social structures on the self (Ahl and Marlow 2012; Williams and Patterson 2019). At the same time, this position portrays self-employment as a way to protect oneself and take (back) control over one’s life, constructing the subject as resilient in the face of adversity. This identity work is based on inner conversations between different selves, rather than a relational, outward positioning. When the EDW’s disability is present in these excerpts, it is constructed as a source of discrimination, hampering the individual’s free choice.

Positioning oneself as a collective entrepreneur

In a fourth identity position, an identity as an entrepreneur is constructed by emphasizing the collective nature of entrepreneurial endeavors. The identity work is turned inward, through a conversation between the current self that depends on others to be entrepreneur and an impossible, independent self that is individually in control of the business. Different from dominant constructions, these quotes emphasize the group behind the enterprise:

In the last five years I’ve been doing interior design assignments, together with marketing, developing house styles, brochures, and those types of things, including entire renovation projects. Now we are making the step towards our own architect office. I think, definitely when it comes to business growth, it holds you back when you have a health issue, the future of your business is even more uncertain because of it [impairment effects]. But that’s why I’m doing this with my partner, I can trust him completely, maybe if I was on my own, I would have postponed such a big step. (Lena, architect with Crohn’s disease)

We also had the chance of finding a very competent technology developer. You can come up with a device but it still has to be made. I am an engineer myself and I take part in all discussions still, about development etc. but I would not be able to execute it. [...] I also rely on someone driving me around to business meetings. (Kurt, product developer with visual impairment)

Because of my nerves, I can barely write. So I let my business partner handle the contracts with many pages. And I had a stamp made that I carry around with me to sign documents. On my computer, I just type in the financial figures. People around me have adapted to me not being able to write easily. (Maurice, cleaning company with physical impairment)

In this type of positioning, respondents largely talk in the plural form and emphasize the key role of others possessing complementary skills to theirs for running the business. Disability is

here more or less explicitly associated with lacking skills or with the lack of access to essential resources to be successful, due to a disabling social environment:

We are three today. I do all the strategizing on growth of the business and some marketing stuff... As we work with young graduates, you know, they have good theoretical baggage to do the assignments, but they need my guidance in translating it to practical solutions for the clients. [...] Often the sites of clients are not accessible, which physically requires more effort on my part. [...] I try and do most of the sales, but 50% of a person's communication and persuasive power consists of body language. And I do not have that body language due to my impairment. It makes it more difficult for me to close a deal. (Robert, HR and organizational change consultant with physical impairment)

In this fourth type of positioning, an identity as a collective entrepreneur is performed countering the dominant representation of the entrepreneur as a 'lonely wolf' (Drakopoulou Dodd and Anderson 2007). The individualistic entrepreneurial norm is questioned through reference to collective forms of mastery and control by stressing heterogeneous skills and mutual dependencies between individuals. Different from the previous identity positionings, this 'collective' identity is neither hierarchical nor evaluative, as it does not rely on the comparison with an inferior other or a more desired self. One's body and impairment effects are foregrounded as necessitating collaboration between people, redefining the individual subject as inherently vulnerable and dependent on supportive relations with others having complementary competencies within the enterprise.

Crafting an identity as an entrepreneur by combining multiple positions

The EWDs participating in our study often combined two or more distinctive positions to craft an identity. Most (17 EWDs) combined two or three positions, while 14 EWDs used only one identity position. Paul was one of the rare respondents positioning himself in all four ways to craft an identity. He stated:

The sector that I am in [ICT] requires cognition, not legs, so it's not a hindrance like it would be if my business was in logistics or something [...] It doesn't make a difference that I was lying in a hospital bed, I was still doing conference calls and reporting to India" [*archetypical* identity position]. However, soon thereafter, he says: "it was more difficult to do prospects for new clients, because then you would have to go and do on-site visits [...] so I finished ongoing projects and now have more or less retired, at 62 instead of 65, that's financially hard, I mean, we are now talking in 6 numbers [of missed income]" [*fallback* identity position by referring to old self that could have earned a lot more]. At one point, he also claims the *unique* entrepreneur position by saying: 'if you ever come across a disabled person who wants to create their own business, hold them in high regard, right, those are the ones with the best of motivation, they are the ones who won't quit', and also takes a *collective* entrepreneur identity position when stating: 'since the age of 35 I've been in a leadership role and have had a management assistant working for me, so all writing [difficult due to impairment] is being done by Rita.

Although our sample is too limited to draw conclusions about how often each identity position is used by EWDs, our data does give an indication of how prominently each positioning features in EWDs' narratives. The 'archetypical- entrepreneur' position was the most frequently used in the interview data in absolute terms, followed by a similarly popular 'unique entrepreneur' position, then the 'collective entrepreneur' position and, last, the 'fallback entrepreneur' position. These frequencies reveal the normativity of dominant discourses of the entrepreneur as in control, despite EDW's agency in crafting their own identity as an entrepreneur. Half of the respondents in our sample used the 'archetypical', the 'unique', and,

surprisingly, also the ‘fallback entrepreneur’ position at least once in the interview. Despite the marginality of the ‘fallback’ position in terms of repeating such arguments throughout the course of the interview, the fact that it was mentioned at least once by half our sample points to how this position is part of many EDWs daily reality, even if they are not eager to take it on as it might associate them with negative worth in the eyes of others. As the ‘fallback entrepreneur’ was the position most often used singlehandedly to craft an identity as an entrepreneur, it appears to be a strong micro-modality of resisting the normative discourse about the hero entrepreneur who is in control. Lastly, one third of the respondents took up the ‘collective entrepreneur’ identity position at least once during the interview, and this was always combined with other positions, indicating how this constitutes a weaker modality of micro-resistance by itself.

Discussion

Taking stock of the extant literatures on the barriers EWDs face and minority entrepreneurs’ identity work, this study investigated the positions EWDs take in their identity work, and how such positioning relates to dominant, normative discourses of the entrepreneur as a heroic individual in control of his business. This focus was chosen to address the neglect of scholarship on how EWDs deal with the discursive barriers they face. Our results confirm the necessity for EWDs to engage with existing discourses on the entrepreneur in their identity work, as such discourses provide a shared framework of intelligibility, an ‘ideational barrier’ that cannot easily be ignored when narrating the self. At the same time, adopting the lens of identity positioning has allowed us to emphasize EWDs’ agency in the construction of the self as well as the heterogeneous character of their identity work. Of the four distinctive positions we identified, two – the archetypical and the unique entrepreneur – reaffirm the individualistic, heroic ‘entrepreneurial self’ in control of his or her destiny, and two – the fallback and collective entrepreneur – rather question it. They also differ concerning the value they ascribe to disability, the degree of agency accorded to the self within existing social structures and relations, and, even more fundamentally, the very centrality of entrepreneurship to one’s identity. Especially when combined, they allowed EWDs to construct complex and nuanced selves that destabilize existing social norms of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship.

Our findings are broadly in line with previous studies on minority entrepreneurs’ identity work, which have highlighted the use of two main discursive practices – assimilating oneself to and differentiating oneself from the norm entrepreneur – to craft an identity (e.g. Essers and Benschop 2007; García and Welter 2013). Yet at the same time, they extend this body of literature by showing the possibility that identity also be crafted through inward, self-directed positioning, next to outward, self-other positioning (see Ybema 2020). In the former case, the material used as a basis for comparison to position oneself is not the norm entrepreneur commonly depicted by public discourses on entrepreneurship. It is rather ‘others within us’ – e.g. old selves, aspirational selves, impossible selves. This type of positioning has to date been largely overlooked by the research on minority entrepreneurs’ identity, which tends to focus on self-other positioning. Possibly, this is because dominant norms tend to constrain more the identity work of individuals from marginalized social groups, which historically do not ‘fit’ them. As ‘unexpected’ entrepreneurs, they likely need to put more effort into crafting a plausible identity, which leaves relatively less room for self-directed identity positioning. This was also the case in our study, in which outward positioning was more frequently used. Future studies might want to comparatively examine whether and how minority and majority entrepreneurs in similar settings differently position themselves in their identity work. Intersectional approaches might further enrich our findings by demonstrating the intersecting

role of other discourses and identities. Also, future research might consider extending methods of data collection and design to include reciprocal positioning (e.g. through real-time conversation analysis) and the institutional dynamics of subject positioning (Ybema 2020).

Our respondents differentiated themselves from able-bodied entrepreneurs by bending common interpretations of disability as an entrepreneurial liability, highlighting the strength of one's disability as a business asset and forwarding a unique, and sometimes even superior entrepreneurial identity. This finding echoes prior work revealing how femininity can become a potential legitimating factor for entrepreneurs (Swail and Marlow 2018). Similarly, in our case, the tension between the disabled body and entrepreneurship was bridged through turning disability into an asset, highlighting the value that can be derived out of being different (Baldrige and Kulkarni 2017; Jammaers et al. 2016). This finding also speaks back to a growing number of studies interested in the 'special talents' that certain impairments bring along for the business venturing (e.g. problem-solving skills, tolerance for risk, superior discipline and perseverance, creativity and impulsivity, see Antshel 2018; Johnson, Madole and Freeman 2018; Lerner, Hunt and Verheul 2018; Maritz and Laferriere 2016; Miller and Le Breton-Miller 2017; Wiklund et al. 2017; 2018). Future research should investigate when and how disability can become a ground for gaining legitimacy, rather than a liability. The possibility to turn one's disability into an entrepreneurial 'asset' seemingly depends to a considerable degree on the type of sector the individual is embedded in. Women entrepreneurs are more easily accepted in aesthetic labor (Pritchard, Mackenzie Davey and Cooper 2019) and 'pink ghettos' (Smith 2014) or as 'mumpreneurs' (Duberley and Carrigan 2013) than elsewhere. Tellingly, minority identities are far more often sources of entrepreneurial legitimacy in sectors characterized by a lower status and lower income, entailing an inclusion that at once perpetuates inequality and marginalization within entrepreneurship (Swail and Marlow 2018).

Importantly, our analysis also shows how the identity positioning used by EWDs to craft an identity can interrogate and resist dominant norms of entrepreneurship (e.g. Cohen and Musson 2000). Refuting the 'entrepreneurial self' as individually 'in control' (cf. Ahl 2006; Bruni et al. 2004; Chasserio et al. 2014), self-directed, self-questioning identity work (e.g. Beech et al. 2009) constructs a subject who is either embedded in and dependent on social relations with others and/or constrained by social structures that impede his or her 'free' professional choice. This finding speaks back to the wider debate surrounding the disproportionate attention given by the field of entrepreneurship studies to extreme cases of technology-intensive, 'high growth and highly capitalized firms, with a focus on innovation and creativity' (Aldrich and Ruef 2018, 461), at the expense of more mundane, every-day manifestations of entrepreneurship (Welter, Baker, Audretsch, and Gartner 2017), including for instance regionally embedded, community entrepreneurship (Berglund et al., 2016). These 'ordinary' entrepreneurs are themselves the actual 'norm', in the sense that they constitute the vast majority of entrepreneurs, yet are dismissed by popular celebratory images of the figure of the hero entrepreneur prevalent in the media and public discourse. This call for acknowledging the diversity in entrepreneurship (Welter et al. 2017; Jones and Spicer 2009; Rindova et al. 2009) arguably reaffirms in a reformulated, specular way prior pleas to open up normative representations of the entrepreneur to include subordinated groups held by critical entrepreneurship scholars (Calás et al. 2009; Dempsey and Sanders 2010; Tedmanson et al. 2012; Verduijn and Essers 2013).

At the same time, the 'fallback entrepreneur' identity position pushes us to reflect on the role of entrepreneurial identity in entrepreneurial activity. The non-entrepreneurial characterization of the self by EWDs through this positioning actively refutes the need to invest in one's sense of self as an entrepreneur and even in one's business. It reminds us that, for some

people, or perhaps for all at some points in time, other identities – including non-work related ones – become a more important resource for the crafting of a valued sense of self. Through bringing to the forefront disinterest, lack of skill and social discrimination, the ‘fallback entrepreneur’ points us to the possibility of (entrepreneurial) ‘identity minimalism’ – a form of sparseness and limited focus on (entrepreneurial) identity concerns (e.g. Alvesson and Robertson 2016, 8). These entrepreneurs construct themselves as ‘entrepreneur in doing’ rather than ‘in being’, an extremely explicit form of resistance to the entrepreneurial subjectivity expected from them, which reminds of the resistance against the neoliberal enforcement of an entrepreneurial subjectivity found among employees in organizations (McCabe 2009; Russell and McCabe 2015). The emphasis on one’s lack of passion for one’s business and/or ambitions for growth and expansion warn us for the danger of neglecting those who opt for entrepreneurship merely as a necessity, rather than considering it as a vocation, a preferred and superior lifestyle, dream or identity (Warren and Anderson 2009). It speaks to a number of studies interested in furthering knowledge on the distinction between ‘necessity’ and ‘opportunity’ entrepreneurship (Dencker et al. 2019; Miller and Le Breton-Miller 2017; Rindova et al. 2009). While this body of research has to date used these two notions to explain entrepreneurial motivation, further research could rather investigate how the identity work of individuals constructing themselves as entrepreneurs out of necessity proactively interrogates and undermines dominant norms of entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

The theoretical insights of this study are also of high relevance to policy makers, as they lay bare the heterogeneity of real entrepreneurs behind a homogeneous dominant norm of the entrepreneur, and their struggle to enact this role. They point to the importance of promoting more inclusive understandings of entrepreneurship and taking into account different embodiments. This is necessary to envision adequate support measures that can reach out to diverse entrepreneurs, including EWDs, who stand themselves in entrepreneurship in different ways, leading to a more socially just entrepreneurial climate. As long as scholarship on entrepreneurship takes the entrepreneur for granted, assuming his or her able-bodiedness, policies remain ill-equipped to foster equal access to and equal opportunities in entrepreneurship for all.

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TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1. Overview of respondents

Number	Name	Age when acquiring impairment	Age at start up of the business	Age at time of the interview	Nature of impairment	Type of the business	# FTE
"Congenital Disability Entrepreneurs"							
1	Finn	0	35	45	hearing	Architect	1
2	Johanna	0	50	57	hearing and psychosocial	Organizer	2
3	Tania	0	46	48	mobility	HR consulting	1
4	Robert	0	26	36	mobility	HR and change consulting	3

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5	Julie	0	35	41	visual	Therapist	1
6	Helen	0	34	37	hearing	Health coach	1
7	Bob	0	26	28	mobility	Sports dietician	1
8	Sebastian	0	40	45	mobility	Sound technician	1
9	Dan	0	41	46	mobility	ICT consultant	1
10	Daisy	0	32	44	mobility	Coach	5
11	Karen	0	37	41	mobility	Coach	2
12	Sam	0	46	47	hearing	Restaurant owner	2
13	Wim	0	22	62	visual	Physiotherapist	1
“Startup after disability acquirement”							
14	Christian	18	39	41	mobility	Travel agency	2
15	Diego	26	27	42	mobility	Sports coach	15
16	Henry	37	38	42	mobility	Wheelchair shop and repair	6
17	Kurt	28	50	67	visual	Product developer	8
18	Ludwig	20	26	56	mobility	Vendor at local marketplaces	1
19	Pierre	23	25	27	mobility	Product developer	1
20	Bill	22	52	53	mobility	Consultant	1
21	Paul	40	52	62	mobility	Consultant	1
22	Kelly	29	31	33	mobility	Architect	2
23	Maurice	41	46	56	mobility	Cleaning company	700
24	Jaques	18	44	50	mobility	HR Consulting	1
“Disability Acquired while Entrepreneur”							
25	An	53	38	60	MS	Accountancy firm	12
26	Lena	26	23	28	physical	Architect	1
27	Tina	43	40	58	physical	Insurance office	5
28	Lucas	57	34	60	physical	Joiner	20
29	Mathias	24	21	34	mobility	ICT store	10
30	Joris	33	18	38	mobility	Brewer	3
31	Jos	38	30	46	mobility	Drinks/liquor store	1

Table 2. Overview of the data analysis process

Step 1: Identifying fragments on identity		Step 2: Type of positioning	Step 3: Crafted identity position
Fragments containing identity work (143)	Runs through my veins/ born business man / growth ambitions	Relational (self = an entrepreneurial self, other = a non-entrepreneurial other)	Affirming the entrepreneurial self through the <i>archetypical</i> entrepreneur (49)
	Working 24/7, not wanting to sit still, being a survivor, being focused on growth		
	Respect by colleague-entrepreneurs/employees		
	Denying significance of impairment / minimizing the differences		
	Better network skills	Relational (self = an entrepreneurial self, other = able-bodied entrepreneur)	Affirming the entrepreneurial self through the <i>unique</i> entrepreneur (42)
	Better expertise / better product or service		
	Better sensing		
	Better service		
	Better motivated to succeed / better problem solving	Self-directed (self 1 = current non-entrepreneurial self, self 2 = older or aspirational self)	Questioning the entrepreneurial self through the <i>fallback</i> entrepreneur (34)
	Necessity based / discrimination driven		
	Lacking essential business skills		
	Stressing unfulfilled desires		
	Taken over family business	Self-directed (self 1 = current collective non-entrepreneurial self, self 2 = impossible individual self)	Questioning the entrepreneurial self through the <i>collective</i> entrepreneur (18)
	Help by business partners		
	Support by external networks		

ⁱ In this paper we use the term ‘impairment’ to refer to a person’s bodily variation or biological difference. We use the term ‘people with disabilities’ to denote a group of people that have historically been disadvantaged by a society that is maladapted to all kinds of human variation, thereby disabling people with impairments and excluding them from equal participation in various domains of life.