Identities and the pursuit of legitimacy: A study of black women wine industry entrepreneurs.

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Identities and the pursuit of legitimacy: A study of black women wine industry entrepreneurs

**Purpose:** The aim of this study is to better understand how black women utilize capital to frame their entrepreneurial identities in order to become legitimate and thus challenge institutional norms. To achieve this, the study draws on perspectives on legitimacy, identity, and capital, and focuses on the well-established wine industry in South Africa.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** Using in-depth qualitative data from semi-structured interviews, this study delves into the lived experiences of nine black women entrepreneurs and three stakeholders in the South African wine industry. Such a context is unique because of the aspects of exclusion and segregation of black women. The data were supplemented with associated secondary material and were analysed using the constant comparative technique.

**Findings:** This study reveals dissonance, *that is, a misfit,* between black women’s social identities and their entrepreneurial self-identities in the South African wine industry; the study uncovers that specific capital forms allow framing their identity through heroical self-description, exploiting professionalism, and enacting new roles to alter the perception of what is socially legitimate in the wine industry.

**Originality and value:** This study contributes to understanding by highlighting that black women entrepreneurs in the wine industry rebel against the expectation that they must fit into a predetermined role. The study highlights the relevance of legitimacy, identity, and capital theoretical perspectives to study an underexplored context and unpack how black women challenge the barriers that affect their entrepreneurial identities in their quest to become legitimate. The value of this study revolves around revealing the underexplored connection between entrepreneurial identity and legitimacy through actions taken by black women entrepreneurs when reworking the role(s) tied to their social identities. The findings suggest
the importance of capital, particularly cultural capital, in how black women entrepreneurs become legitimate in the wine industry. Avenues for further research are offered.

**Keywords:** black women entrepreneurs, social identity, entrepreneurial identity, identity work, legitimacy, Bourdieu’s capital, wine industry

1. Introduction

There is a growing interest in capturing richer aspects of women’s entrepreneurship (Marlow and McAdam, 2015), particularly in relation to black women (Anderson and Ojediran, 2022). Globally, black women are among the fastest-growing entrepreneurs’ groups; in South Africa alone, they are the largest micro, small, and medium enterprises segment of the population, driving inclusive economic growth (IFC, 2019). Whilst prior works reveal diverse challenges that black women entrepreneurs may have to overcome when establishing their businesses (Knight, 2016), recent studies suggest that aspects related to legitimacy concerning both their businesses and their entrepreneurial identity, that is, the embodiment of socially held behavioral expectations (Radu-Lefebvre et al., 2021), remain underexplored (Vreshinina et al., 2020).

Legitimacy – “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, beliefs, and definitions” (Suchman, 1995, p. 574) – offers a perspective to understand how women’s access to various resources, credibility, and societal approval are improved (Vreshinina et al., 2020). Black women may aspire to be recognized and accepted as legitimate entrepreneurs and employ diverse strategies to legitimize their businesses (Essers and Benschop, 2007; Díaz-Garcia and Welter, 2013), yet scholars suggest that they may be both covertly and overtly rejected, as well as excluded, just because they are black women (Davidson et al., 2010). Recent studies suggest dissonance, that is, a misfit, between their social identities – what they
do in a particular context (Anderson and Warren, 2011) – and their entrepreneurial identities, painting a generally deterministic, somewhat challenging portrait of disadvantaged social identities restraining enterprise (James et al., 2021). Thus, further attention to the influence of entrepreneurial identity in becoming legitimate is needed (Leitch and Harrison, 2016; Stead, 2017).

This study argues that prior studies have ignored how black women challenge the norms and prejudices that frame their entrepreneurial identities in achieving legitimacy (Tedmanson and Essers, 2016; Chasserio et al., 2014), as their social identities may not fit well with a socially constructed, entrepreneurial, white, middle-class, male archetype that configures normative assumptions and expectations (Hamilton, 2013). Such lacunae may signal a lack of recognition for the social, cultural, and symbolic aspects (Anderson, 2015) linked to their access to, or lack of, resources and legitimacy (Dy et al., 2017). A capital perspective on entrepreneurship, which relates to understanding how entrepreneurs use capital as a resource to position themselves in the world (Bourdieu, 1986), may allow understanding of how black women entrepreneurs frame themselves in a social structure of less equality in relation to other agents (Knight, 2016). Social structure allocates social identities and their social appropriateness. Similarly, capital has social origins, informed by the social structure and perhaps created by it (Dy, 2020).

Considering that the operation of capital varies according to the particularities of the prevailing cultures, history, and social structures, the distribution of capital may reflect a social order, closely associated with social identity. Ergo, this study draws on Bourdieu’s (1986) capital theory because it offers the opportunity to explore the interplay between structure and agency and may also explain the unique capital that individuals utilize to improve their positions; the theory also encourages simultaneous attention to the construction and maintenance of both disadvantage and privilege and captures the situatedness of identity (Tatli
and Özbilgin, 2012). Indeed, examining how black women utilize capital in diverse ways to frame their entrepreneurial identity in their quest to become legitimate within an established industry is warranted (Ojediran and Anderson, 2020). Therefore, this study aims to better understand: **How do black women utilize capital to frame their entrepreneurial identity in order to become legitimate and challenge institutional norms?**

To address the research question, this study employs a qualitative approach (Neergaard and Leitch, 2015), relying on in-depth qualitative interviews conducted with nine black women entrepreneurs and three stakeholders in the South African wine industry, supplemented with a review of secondary materials. South Africa presents a relevant context, given its social history of apartheid and black women’s repression (Vink, 2019). Such a focus addresses prior calls to go beyond the experiences of white and immigrant women in forming entrepreneurial identities, and to look into the heterogeneity and experiences of black women as entrepreneurs (Knight, 2016). The question was theoretically designed to allow the exploration of the interplay between social identities and the agency that accompanies earning the entrepreneurial identity in order to become legitimate. This study relies on the constant comparative method to analyse data and to fine-tune subjective understandings of participants’ meanings (Anderson and Jack, 2015). Analysis of the data revealed how black women convert and use various forms of capital – both possessed by them and available to them – to frame their entrepreneurial identities in order to become legitimate, thereby altering the status quo of the established social structure within the South African wine industry.

This study makes several contributions. First, it contributes to expanding the conversation on black women entrepreneurs’ identities and legitimacy. Second, it supports the applicability of Bourdieu’s (1986) capital theory to contexts wherein black women are marginalized. Further, it highlights the importance of cultural capital (Barrett and Vershinina, 2011) – that is, the acquired competence to understand and leverage the amalgam of beliefs, values, customs,
and institutions in every society— in developing *habitus*. Cultural capital equips black women to operate as entrepreneurs based on their ability to fit in socially, which is crucial for gaining legitimacy and shaping their identity (Vershinina & Barrett, 2017). Black women in this study leverage capital, particularly cultural capital, in their identity work— **challenging social structural norms, reframing their entrepreneurial identities, and underscoring a link to institutional work** – the purposive action of agents for creating, maintaining, and disrupting institutions (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006) through reworking the role(s) tied to their social identities.

The article continues with the description of the theoretical framework, the context, the methodological imperatives and strategies, the empirically grounded findings, and a discussion. Subsequently, implications for practice, limitations, suggested areas of future research, and a conclusion are presented.

**2. Theoretical framework**

*Legitimacy*

Legitimacy assessments are social judgements based on feedback or acceptance from a wider audience (Fisher *et al*., 2017). Entrepreneurship, broadly defined as a contextual, social process, is such that social and cultural dynamics are pivotal to understanding its practice (Anderson, 2015). For entrepreneurs and their enterprises to be considered legitimate, they must surmount whatever difficulties they face in their quest for social approval, desirability, and credibility (Fisher *et al*., 2017; Vershinina *et al*., 2020). Prior studies suggest that entrepreneurs must be different, but not radical; through their engagement with society and what they do, they form an identity that is distinctive, normatively appropriate, and equally familiar (Navis and Glynn, 2011). This suggests a paradoxical issue for black women entrepreneurs, as previous studies suggest a record of their oppression and discrimination (Davidson *et al*., 2010), the need to fit into the established norms and culture in a particular
context, and a demand to stand out as legitimate entrepreneurs (Swail and Marlow, 2018; De Clercq and Voronov, 2009).

Scholars have underscored different legitimizing strategies that women utilize, including (re)doing gender identities, symbolic boundary-keeping, resisting, or mimicking norms (Bruni et al., 2004; Essers and Benschop, 2007; Diaz-García and Welter, 2013), explaining both the manifold ways in which women manage their identities and intersections in seeking legitimacy, and the diverse forms and strategic nature of women’s identity work (Stead, 2017).

Yet, Dy (2020) suggests that black women entrepreneurs’ choices of legitimizing strategies may be influenced by the (dis)advantages inherent in their social structural positions. Such choices relate to category memberships such as gender, race, and social class status attached to their social identities, making their entrepreneurial engagement pervaded with power dilemmas. This suggests that to begin understanding how black women become legitimate we need to examine the interplay and relevance of social and entrepreneurial identities.

**Social and entrepreneurial identities**

A key social and cultural dynamic in entrepreneurship relates to social and entrepreneurial identities. An entrepreneur’s self-identity centres on who the entrepreneur is, while the social identity relates to what the entrepreneur essentially does (Anderson and Warren, 2011). Archer (2000) explains social identities as the roles and relationships that individuals are committed to in society. Such identities could develop from one’s unintended position at birth within society’s distribution of capital, and from voluntary identification with and personification of specific social roles such as ‘entrepreneur’, which eventually become a part of one’s self-identity (Kašperová and Kitching, 2014).

Entrepreneurial identity is considered an ‘umbrella construct’ (Radu-Lefebvre et al., 2021), deeply rooted in social orders (Williams Middleton, 2013) related to the internalization and
personification of socially held behavioral expectations of an ‘entrepreneur’, dealing with logical claims to questions of: ‘who am I?’, ‘who is she?’ or ‘who are we?’. In essence, entrepreneurial identity is embedded, socially constructed by interaction, and performatively constructed (Anderson et al., 2019).

Social identities are focal components within various discourses that individuals refer to in their identity work (Chasserio et al., 2014). For instance, within the enterprise discourse, certain social identities of ‘the entrepreneur’ exist that are constructed based on masculine social norms, which is a particular challenge for women entrepreneurs. Nonetheless, various studies highlight women’s specific experiences and the handling of different social identities in their identity work (Chasserio et al., 2014; Díaz-García and Welter, 2013), stressing the dominance (Essers and Benschop, 2007), rejection (Lewis, 2013), or appropriation (Bruni et al., 2004) of the heroic, white, male entrepreneurial discourse by women (Hamilton, 2013). As entrepreneurial social identity is allocated by others (Anderson et al., 2019), issues may arise, as agents cannot just define and label themselves as entrepreneurs and expect their narratives to be accepted and institutionalized by others (Kašperová and Kitching, 2014).

Critiques about entrepreneurial identity draw attention to the normative entrepreneur as fundamentally masculine with heroical descriptions, making masculinity and heroism features of entrepreneurship that women, black women adopt in self-descriptions and align with in order to be recognized as credible entrepreneurs (Marlow and McAdam, 2015). Thus, constructing or earning a ‘fitting’ identity is focal to legitimacy achievement processes (Fisher et al., 2017). It then appears reasonable to assume that the entrepreneurs are pursuing ‘fitting’ identities in order to become legitimate.

Such critiques are relevant, as entrepreneurship is taking a turn towards entrepreneurial identity being fluid, yet characterized by conflicting processes (Radu-Lefebvre et al., 2021),
noting that women have multiple, socially constructed identities, which are relatively stable but not fixed (Leitch and Harrison, 2016). These studies support the social constructionist perspective in examining interactive dispositions (Williams Middleton, 2013), since it accentuates the need to understand lived experiences in social, cultural, and historical contexts (Berger and Luckmann, 1991). Studies following the social constructionist tradition have highlighted the inherent conflict between entrepreneurial self-identity and social identity (Watson, 2008; Lewis, 2013) – for instance, in research on the dissonance between entrepreneurial and gendered identities (Díaz-García and Welter, 2013; Chasserio et al., 2014).

However, the dissonance that is compelling to us is intricate – the friction between entrepreneurial self-identity and the social identity of being black women – which can be seen as not ‘fittingly’ entrepreneurial. Simply put, it concerns who, what, and how black women self-present as, alongside who, what, and how others identify black women as. Entrepreneurial identity is relevant for this study, as it considers sensemaking and sense-giving notions; that is, instead of just portraying social identities, entrepreneurial identity could be powerful, since it can influence entrepreneurial action. The favorable judgement of others works to legitimize entrepreneurial identity (Anderson et al., 2019). The circumstantial denial or acceptance, the entrepreneurial identities, and the quest for legitimacy in the practice of entrepreneurship, offer a relevant framework for this study.

While a woman entrepreneur’s identity can function as a proxy for a growing enterprise (Swail and Marlow, 2018), women’s entrepreneurship is often associated with low monetary and symbolic value, (mis)construed as a marginal entrepreneurial identity (Meliou and Edwards, 2018). Yet this may overlook the approach of women entrepreneurs, based on their entrepreneurial identity, to changes in cultural, legal, economic, and political norms (Ojediran and Anderson, 2020). To overcome such challenges, scholars emphasize and encourage further attention on what they do to legitimize their actions (Watson, 2008), and focus on the interplay
of social structures and women entrepreneurs’ agency, since these structures are characterized
in social identities as black, and as women, which trivializes their entrepreneurial identity and
constrains legitimacy (Ojediran and Anderson, 2020). We focus on such items next.

Identity work and capital

A focus on what entrepreneurs (agents) do to legitimize their work and non-work
actions, practices, and outcomes revolves around identity work, which comprises agents’
actions in shaping self-identities and (re)authoring social identities that manifest in their
relationship to others, while considering the socio-cultural restrictions of each context (Watson,
2008; Chasserio et al., 2014). Such a depiction highlighting actions, culture, and society
suggests a complementary feature to perspectives of capital forms.

Bourdieu (1986) distinguishes between four forms of capital – economic, cultural,
social, and symbolic. Economic capital exists as monetary income and business assets
convertible to money. It can be converted into cultural, social, and symbolic capital, with
varying values and weights (Karataş-Özkan, 2011). Social capital is the totality of potential
and actual resources, accessible through durable networks of relationships or support based on
group membership – for instance, family, social, and professional networks (Bourdieu, 1986).
Membership allows entrepreneurs to benefit from collectively held and shared capital
(Anderson and Jack, 2002).

Moreover, cultural capital refers to long-lasting dispositions, implicit and explicit culture,
its know-how and habitus, gathered through the socialization process; it is embodied through
taste, mannerisms, and style, objectified through artworks, and institutionalized through
educational qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986). It is closely related to economic capital, since it
takes time and resources to accrue, and is an extension of human capital, denoting the skills,
training, and work experiences of entrepreneurs (Pret et al., 2016). The structure and quality of
an agent’s cultural capital influence their social opportunities in the field (Bourdieu, 1986).

Recognition of any of the above-mentioned types of capital can generate symbolic capital. Bourdieu (1986) defines symbolic capital as ‘distinction,’ from possessing the right types of capital to succeed in a field as per its rules. Symbolic capital is the status, prestige, and positive reputation that entrepreneurs possess in the eyes of others – objectified through recognition and awards, socially legitimized as power, prestige, and status (Vershinina and Rodgers, 2020).

Bourdieu (2005) posits that capital is interrelated with the concept of (institutional) fields (social arenas wherein individuals compete for capital to attain dominant positions) and a socially shaped habitus (dispositions – enduring, acquired schema of perception, thoughts, and actions), which represents the ‘rules of the game’. Habitus revolves around an agent’s dispositions to act in particular ways in certain social contexts – yet the agent is typically not consciously aware of them. For Bourdieu (1986), capital represents diverse resources – tangible and intangible – with varying significance within various fields, acquired (or not) in developing habitus. Thus, capital acts as the exchange means wherein power relations are legitimated and maintained.

Bourdieu’s depiction of fields and habitus aligns with identity work, as it homes in on the capital that black women entrepreneurs have and use in (re)crafting their entrepreneurial self-identities, and which they believe they will need to become legitimate, since through identity work – a way of dealing agentially with shaping their entrepreneurial identity – women entrepreneurs strive to be seen as legitimate by important others in order to gain access to resources and opportunities (Bjursell and Melin, 2011). Bourdieu’s (1986) conception of capital, particularly cultural capital, shares identity research’s interest in skills, know-how, and how one is valued by a specific group established within a milieu.
Women entrepreneurs’ access to and ownership of capital motivate their practice, (re)establish the power structure and relations, and influence the enactment of their entrepreneurial identities for legitimacy (McAdam et al., 2019), since capital is a tool that offers agency in their practice (Bjursell and Melin, 2011). Vershinina et al. (2020) note that in Russia, the possession of foreign qualifications (cultural capital), work experience (human capital), and access to international stakeholder networks (social capital) have enabled women entrepreneurs to navigate institutional constraints that disregard their entrepreneurial identities in their quest for legitimacy in high-technology industries, suggesting that black women entrepreneurs could use capital as tools to exploit the possibility of agency in crafting their entrepreneurial identities in order to become legitimate.

However, black women entrepreneurs’ social identities attached to their lack of capital could influence the levels of support for legitimacy that they offer and receive within their fields and communities. Both social identities and legitimacy have pivotal roles in the social acceptance and embeddedness of women entrepreneurs in networks and fields (Stead, 2017). Regardless of this, entrepreneurial identity, a process of ‘becoming’ (Giddens, 1991), can be potent in women entrepreneurs’ role performances and entrepreneurial behaviors in terms of repute and actions (Anderson et al., 2019).

In synthesizing the capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986) with established work on entrepreneurial identity processes and legitimacy (Leitch and Harrison, 2016; Stead, 2017), the authors theorize about identity work and black women’s entrepreneurship by underscoring capital forms as enabling conditions that black women utilize in different ways to frame their entrepreneurial identity in order to become legitimate. The notions of capital described earlier are important in this study, as Brush et al., (2006) argue that women entrepreneurs circumvent the liabilities attached to their social identities in acquiring capital by bootstrapping. Their education/skills and social networks have been suggested as suitable to provide the basis for
capital accumulation, including physical assets, organization, and economic capital (Carter et al., 2003). Black females have been noted to possess a range of capital that they choose to utilize in creating a sense of self (Carter, 2003). Yet, further empirical evidence as to how they leverage their entrepreneurial identity and capital to become legitimate and challenge institutional norms in contexts where it can be manifested is needed. The research context is presented next.

3. Context: The South African wine industry and black women

Globally, the wine industry provides a relevant context to examine entrepreneurial dynamics, due to its associated concomitant capital, habitus, and practices (Brennan et al., 2021; Spielmann et al., 2021). In South Africa, the socio-economic impact of the wine industry is unequivocal, with an annual contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in excess of US $2.6 Billion (SAWIS, 2021).

South Africa offers a relevant context for our study for several reasons. First, before the annihilation of apartheid in 1994, its wine industry was a no-go area for black women. Although the wine industry, dominated by the established white, landed, settler elites, commemorated its 360th vintage in 2018, its history and institutional structure are intricately tied to South Africa’s apartheid past. Formal institutions such as the National Party played pivotal roles; equally significant were the informal familial networks of the established settler families and how they wielded power over factors of production (Vink, 2019). Prior studies suggest that these elites, with their values encompassing patriarchal white supremacy, which was a part of their socio-cultural background, controlled commercial agriculture, particularly winemaking, using cheap black labor (Ewert and duToit, 2005). Thus, an interplay of identity, capital, independence, authority, and control over who lived and worked on the farms and in the industry characterized such contexts. Hundreds of years of colonial settlements,
suppression of race and gender, and class domination have interwoven these notions into the social construction of white and black identities (Ewert and duToit, 2005).

Second, the implementation of apartheid policies by the National Party in 1948, borne from agreements and pacts between the Dutch and British colonialists and the Afrikaner nationalists, sought to legitimize social and economic inequalities to further the development of Afrikaners’ business interests (Vink, 2019). Apartheid, underpinned by a fundamental white superiority assumption and based on subjective criteria such as appearance, meant that being Afrikaans (white) denoted superiority over blacks. Appearance was largely interpreted as class (Seekings, 2008). In the wine industry, apartheid laws meant land segregation, since blacks could not lease or own land, and these laws became a foundation for the repression of black agriculture and enterprise, and the oppression of the blacks, in a bid to foster a constant supply of very cheap labor to the mines and farms (Vink, 2019), thus making a momentous mark on the labor, production, and enterprise practices within the industry (Ewert and duToit, 2005).

Finally, black women were the most negatively affected by apartheid, given that they struggled with the ‘triple oppression’ of being ‘non-white, female, and often poor’ (Jaga et al., 2018, p.432). They were denied work access and mostly stayed in impoverished backwaters. The few city migrants were legally dependent on their employed husbands for urban residency. The race-based education system legally excluded them from employment, restricted their education to servant training, and pushed them into domestic labor. The designation of the cities as ‘for whites only’ and influx control rules inhibited them from engaging in the low-wage service jobs legally accessible to them. Therefore, they served their white masters as servants (Jaga et al., 2018).

The post-apartheid political system altered the structure of the wine industry, and in 1997, deregulation and privatisation birthed a new era. Thus, the roles and the functioning of the
Koöperatieve Wijnbouwers Vereniging van Suid-Afrika, KWV (a wine production cooperative of South Africa) and other key players that became producers’ cellars, wine estates, and grape farms changed, while the number of private cellars increased (Vink, 2019). Yet, the industry is burdened with norms and expectations that foster certain power structures and boundaries, with the ‘establishment’ most likely to recognize those with similar attributes (Ewert and duToit, 2005). The new political dispensation, with its promises of affirmative action, land reforms, and the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) programs to redress some of the previous wrongs, paved the way for previously disadvantaged people to venture into the industry.

Thus, a context in which black women who *entreprendre* as independent, first-generation, wine entrepreneurs are likely to be rejected because they are black women, offers an interesting milieu to explore how they may become legitimate, creative, and able to leverage capital to succeed.

4. Methods

To answer the research question: *How do black women utilize capital to frame their entrepreneurial identity in order to become legitimate and challenge institutional norms?*, this study’s methodology is qualitative, given its appropriateness for the exploration of social processes in entrepreneurial identity construction (Chasserio *et al.*, 2014). This approach allows locating narratives and practices conceptually and empirically in context (Neergaard and Leitch, 2015). The background data were informed from discussion and reading from history sources, which offered us informed ‘thick’ contextual descriptions (Geertz, 1973).

Considering this approach, the authors recognize the subjectivity in the observations and analyses, but they ensured that the interpretations were examined in the intra-research team discussions by broaching and critiquing one another’s prejudices and views (Neergaard and Leitch, 2015). The authors understood that the questions asked shaped the data; while remaining impartial, though, certain responses were inexorably triggered. This approach is
prevalent in social construction, where researchers analyse interpretations of others’ interpretations (Anderson et al., 2019). Nonetheless, this was tackled by ensuring that the participants’ voices were heard in the explanations.

**Sampling and data collection**

The primary units of analysis were the lived experiences of black women entrepreneurs (micro-level) operating wine businesses and three wine industry stakeholders in Cape Town, South Africa. Accordingly, the data collection from August 2020 to February 2021 comprised in-depth semi-structured interviews, which helped to capture context and actions. Due to COVID-19 pandemic travel restrictions and physical distancing, the authors adapted but ensured that the research quality was maintained (Tremblay et al., 2021). All interviews were digitally conducted, using voice over internet protocol (VoIP) mediated technologies (e.g., Zoom) as qualitative data collection tools. These allowed for real-time interaction, consisting of sound and video, permitting transmission and responses to verbal and non-verbal cues, and mimicking face-to-face interviews. Both the audio and video features helped establish familiarity and trust with the participants (Archibald et al., 2019). A virtual pilot interview was conducted with the respondent Afua to contextualize the study, validate it, and ensure the reliability of the interview data and methods, adding credibility to the study. The interviews ranged from 62 to 173 minutes.

**INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE**

Table 1 shows the profile of the respondents and the volume of the qualitative data collected. The participants were selected through purposeful sampling, because it connects the sampling strategy to the purpose of the research, focuses on what people do, and permits the researcher to choose participants based on their breadth of knowledge and experience of the phenomenon being explored (Patton, 2015). One author knew some black women
entrepreneurs in wine, so they became willing respondents and introduced us to the others. They had been in the industry for at least ten years and had operated their wine businesses for at least two years. The nine respondents matched these criteria, operating their wine businesses with at least two employees. The three stakeholders were independent wine industry experts involved in the international wine business, offering valuable data with respect to the acceptance of black women entrepreneurs in the industry. They had been in the industry for at least seven years. To achieve methodological rigor during the data collection, the study followed Lincoln and Guba’s (1986) recommended ‘trustworthiness criteria’ of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

In line with social construction (Berger and Luckmann, 1991), the aim was not to capture the truth but to understand how they utilize capital to contest the norms framing the enactment of their entrepreneurial identities in order to earn legitimacy, and to elicit the stories of their enterprise start-ups. The interviews began with the open-ended question: ‘Can you tell me about yourself, your background, and about your business?’ Using plain language (Patton, 2015), initial explications were further probed with questions that allowed the respondents to further expand on their stories, in many instances referring to critical events, which offered us an opportunity to have a deeper appreciation of their lived experiences. The authors are mindful that this study adds to the women recognizing and describing themselves as entrepreneurs by discussing their entrepreneurship journeys, thus strengthening their self-identities (Lewis, 2013).

The main data were the interviews, the ‘field’ notes developed during the virtual interviews, plus additional data collected from the websites, media, and social media coverage of the participants (Silverman, 2016). The interview protocol directed and stimulated conversation, allowing them to recount their lived experiences, entrepreneurial practices, and contexts (James et al., 2021). Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, which
generated a large volume of raw data and permitted an iterative reading and systematic analysis of the data. Each researcher reflected on and discussed individual research experiences, feelings, and prejudices, particularly of data gathering using web technologies. While the experiences of one of us, a black woman who lived and studied in Cape Town, could taint the readings of the transcripts, being critical as a team assisted in eliminating this bias.

**Data analysis**

Although the data collection process was informed by the literature and the theoretical framework, the analysis was not inhibited by this understanding. Adopting the inductive approach to data analysis, the collected data were filtered, the inapt ones disposed of, and vital parts connected (Silverman, 2016). The next phase was to seek out patterns and explanations. Utilizing the constant comparative technique (Anderson and Jack, 2015), which entails recursive sensemaking of the data to analyse the relevant data, movement was made iteratively between data and data, data and theory. The data were grouped according to social identity disadvantage (rejection, marginality), respondents’ approaches (heroic/norm mimicry, role enactment), and the capital forms used. Through the process of continual comparison within the same categories and action patterns, different themes emerged. For instance, Figure 1 shows eight different quotes from the respondents, including the themes of non-economic capital forms in heroical entrepreneurial self-descriptions in the recounting of their identity work.

Manually, themes were compared and contrasted, and patterns and commonalities were searched for across the respondents’ experiences in order to develop superordinate categories, through three cycles of theming, noting emergent themes in the familiarizing, reading, and re-reading of the datasets, then comparing themes with theories (Boeije, 2002). Themes and similarity patterns were discovered and conceptually knitted to build explanations. The iterations were largely trial and error, which continued until the team reckoned that the data were theoretically saturated with sufficient data to establish convincing explanations that
answered the research question, and it was improbable for further iteration to offer a better understanding.

Each of the lived experiences of the participants signifies an example of their attempt to frame their entrepreneurial self-identities in order to become legitimate. Pseudonyms have been used to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants’ identities. Through the process, one of the authors took on the role of devil’s advocate, critiquing the evolving patterns and themes (Anderson et al., 2019). The report of the findings is based on the participants’ viewpoints, with direct quotes from the virtual interviews and media sources.

5. Findings and discussion

The key findings that have been analysed regarding relevant emergent themes from the data, grounded in the literature, are presented below. Marginality and the influences of the dissonance between the entrepreneurial self-identities and social identities of the respondents were observed. Moreover, using Bourdieu’s thinking about capital, equally noted was how the participants have seemingly contested the norms and values that frame the enacting of their entrepreneurial self-identities, pursuing legitimacy through their identity work. Figure 1 illustrates the ordering and the structure of the data, from the first-order codes to the aggregate themes used in conceptualization.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Non-economic capital forms in heroical self-description

Data analysis revealed capital as facilitating in heroical self-descriptions, which involved acknowledging the significance of some non-economic capital forms in embracing traditional descriptions of the heroic entrepreneur in self-identities, rooted in entrepreneurial enactment. Having transformed the participants’ investments in education into various skills, including winemaking, institutionalized as certificates (cultural capital), and having developed some
durable relationships along the way (social capital), which they draw on, convert to, and use to increase their economic capital through generating wine sales, the respondents self-present as being ‘called’ to *entreprendre* within this industry, with remarkably similar heroic motivations, which seem to emerge from their experiences of South Africa’s historical past.

Figure 1 shows that the respondents’ calling appears to be accompanied by an overarching driver for action. This has to do with impacting their social environment, making them committed to entrepreneurship, though their business logic is different from that of a social enterprise. Intriguingly, they seem to consider themselves as heroines for leveraging some non-economic forms of capital in engaging in what past generations could not do by owning wine businesses, a previously forbidden pursuit. For instance, Elena explained:

...Mandela’s post-1994 call sealed it; I thought: I am well-educated, if it is not me, who else? I thought I could do what our people had never done before,...I started my winemaking venture...

While the respondents’ enterprises are relatively new in this over 360 years standing, they still comfortably self-identify as entrepreneurs and willingly apply the label. Tanja, an industry expert, remarked:

*This industry is driven by generational, family-owned estates, so when these women began their wine businesses in the early 2000s, parading themselves as entrepreneurs, it was unusual, and generally unwelcomed by the traditional businesses, who didn’t instantly adopt them as entrepreneurs, but these ladies persisted.*

The respondents feel that they have fulfilled the basic conditions, such as venture start-up, risk-taking, and business performance in terms of wine sales, which they consider as some of the marked characteristics of an entrepreneur, though there is no specific array of features that define an entrepreneur (Williams Middleton, 2013). Ilo, for example, remarked:

...I was not into wine at all, but the wine business chose me...my training was beneficial in seeing the opportunity, I met with the KWV people, I took a risk to venture into a business I did not know; I became an entrepreneur that day.

Figure 1 reveals that in recounting their various entrepreneurial actions, the respondents describe themselves through heroic entrepreneurial identifiers of the institutionalized mythical stereotype, established in the performance of their identity work as wine entrepreneurs.
Interestingly, they inertly equate being black women with mental fortitude, but paradoxically, they do not explicitly privilege the words female, woman, or black in the discussions of their entrepreneurial identity and processes. This is because their self-identities as entrepreneurs conflict with their social identities as black women, inducing exclusion. This exclusion renders an awareness of the ‘lucidity of the excluded’ in their field (Bourdieu, 1990, p.26). Thus, they ignore practices that exclude them and do not interpret themselves with regard to the disadvantaged social identity of black women. Rather, they dissociate from the ‘disadvantage’, but embrace the categorical, heroical characterizations of the entrepreneur, self-present themselves as one, and lay claims to the characterizations because they agree with their internal sense of self (self-identity). Liesl’s comments highlighted this:

*Doing this business looking like me is not easy; ...I was alienated. The Afrikaners were the winemakers, the only ones in this business; they thought I was uneducated and would not succeed, but I persisted. To them, I was not an entrepreneur...But I make the decisions. I take risks. I am an entrepreneur; it is simply who I am. As the lead entrepreneur, winemaker of XXX wines, and as a black woman at that, you don’t realize how strong you are...*

Although the participants contrast in their venture creation approaches, previous job experiences, numbers of years spent in the industry, degree certificates, and professional titles (see Table 1), they all consider their education (cultural capital), previous job experiences (human capital), and contacts within and outside of the industry (social capital) as preparatory to their *entrepreneuring* and bolstering to their entrepreneurial self-identities. For instance, Elena noted:

*...as an entrepreneur, it was gruelling when I started 18 years ago, I was considered atypical. The unacceptance that comes with looking like me in this business was intense; they questioned my competence to run a winery...But my education helped a great deal, especially in seeing opportunities and taking calculated risks. Also, my connections within and outside of this industry were handy...*

Similarly, Liesl stated:

*...my winemaking degree, previous work experiences, and my professional contacts equipped me in my situation as the lead entrepreneur, in making decisions...*
The stories among the respondents are alike; they mentioned their struggles, including prejudices and how their capabilities to operate wine businesses are strongly challenged. Not to be taken seriously is a persistent experience for them. However, they note the influence of non-economic capital forms in their identity work. In describing their identity work, they tend to highlight their education and professional training (cultural capital) as enabling to their decision-making, risk-taking, and opportunity recognition, while disengaging from their social identities as black women. They activate and acknowledge the facilitating effects of capital in their embrace of the normative entrepreneurs’ heroic qualities, although it appears that they pay heed to the dominant masculinized enterprise discourse. Largely, they seem to have personified some aspects of the discourse, making it meaningful, appealing, and practically empowering to them.

In her narratives, Liesl emphasized predominant entrepreneurial qualities such as leadership, risk-taking, and toughness. Congruent with other participants, she appeared to exhibit a conforming mindset when reflecting on her encounters in attempting to grow the business. While explaining her entrepreneuring processes, she indicated that several people depend on her for their survival, reflecting her authority, responsibility, and ‘heroic’ significance as the strong provider of wages and salaries to her employees and farm workers. All but one of the respondents emphasized their heroic significance towards their employees, particularly when accentuating the need for their businesses to remain a going concern.

Consciously or otherwise, the participants seem to have internalized the normative entrepreneur’s heroic qualities and claim them as their self-identities. In a bid to challenge the socio-cultural biases and the taken-for-granted beliefs about the inclusivity of black women in the wine business, using their acquired knowledge in wine (cultural capital), they mimic and seem to have learnt and adopted the language and behaviors of winemakers (businessmen).
which are some known behaviors of the male stereotype, and seem to secure the ‘approval’ of
their employees and farm workers. For example, Ilo stated:

...I don’t stop, I can’t, and I think that is what sets me apart as an entrepreneur. They see me as an
angry black woman; I don’t care as long as I make and sell my wines.

Likewise, Liesl described her actions thus:

...I become very aggressive, strong-willed, and take calculated risks. People see me as a tough black
woman, a bitch.

The participants have developed the ‘angry black woman’, ‘iron lady’, ‘bitch’ personas and
repute that highlight these masculine conducts. Particularly, evidence suggests that they do not
perceive the ‘adopting’ of the male stereotype as negative to their self-identities, since their
specific habitus with dispositions of ‘how to be and how to do’ as (wine) entrepreneurs,
acquired through their relationship to the wine industry(field) and the incorporation of its
specific logic, aligns with this, corroborating earlier work on women’s entrepreneurial
identities (Bruni et al., 2004; Essers and Benschop, 2007). They see the adopting of the male
stereotype as a good fit as long as they achieve their aims; hence, they are not dissociating from
the inherent heroism. Self-identifying with and mimicking masculine behaviors seem to be
approaches that assist the respondents in enacting perceived legitimate entrepreneurial
identities. It seems that agentic identity work is pivotal to their legitimacy processes.

Further, the lack of explicit privilege for the words woman, female, and black in their
entrepreneurial identities discussions signals a disadvantage in their subject position. However,
by leveraging their education and acquired skills (cultural capital), previous professional
experiences (human capital), and some valuable relationships (social capital) in enacting the
‘entrepreneurial qualities,’ they seem to have obtained some semblance of self-awarded
‘heroine status’ and tend to embrace a distinguished outlook towards being a minority in this
industry. Recounting her business commencement day experience, Ilo remarked:

...I was the only black and (the only) woman in a meeting of eight people.

Relatedly, Betty reported:
...after ten years as the only black and female winemaker in the company,...now, as an entrepreneur, when I meet with clients in China, Japan, I find that I am the only woman and black talking and dealing in that space at that moment.

The data from the respondents reveal how they have acculturated, thinking with the rules of the game (habitus) in learning and conforming to, but the wine industry (field) power dynamics has set the onus on them to ‘fit in’ rather than challenge the rules of engagement, thus they remain marginalized. However, in exploiting capital (resources needed for developing (or not) habitus) – particularly cultural capital – in their identity work, and the individual adoption of features of the enterprise discourse, the respondents demonstrated their ability of thinking with the required habitus and developing their participation in the field (Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, the participants are granted some active agency to (re)frame and shape the significance of their entrepreneurial identities in order to become legitimate. Although Bourdieu’s (1986) capital theory has been used as a framework in women’s entrepreneurship (McAdam et al., 2019), less has been known of its applicability in contexts where black women entrepreneurs are marginalized. This finding supports the relevance of Bourdieu’s (1986) capital theory in contexts where black women entrepreneurs are marginalized and expands the debates on their entrepreneurial identities and legitimacy processes by foregrounding the essentialness of capital, particularly cultural capital, in their identity work.

The respondents’ identity work appears to be guided by the meaning they give to their entrepreneurial identities, making stakeholders – including employees and clients – seem to approve of and recognize them as legitimate entrepreneurs, although the ‘establishment’, the incumbent members of the wine industry, did not immediately approve, suggesting that entrepreneurial identities are deeply rooted in social orders (Williams Middleton, 2013).

Cultural and human capital in exploiting professionalism

The data analysis revealed that the participants’ self-identities as entrepreneurs are built on several components, such as their professional paths, families, and communities’ areas of
their past and present lives. Thus, their social identities are linked with the many other social roles they play. However, the data suggest that they are caught in an intricate system of discrimination and power relations, given that different social conditions intertwine and emerge as their social identities, which work as either a disadvantage or privilege to them.

While their self-identities and activities as entrepreneurs seem to influence other black women, farm workers’ families, and communities, their entrepreneurs’ identity effects are not immediately recognized by the established elites in the industry. This is because the perception and presentation of the respondents completely differ from what they know of black women in the industry and how they have come to know this. Their movement from being servants to entrepreneurs involves a clash of *habitus* and field. Expressed differently, they have not been considered to be legitimate entrepreneurial identities in the wine industry(field), which highlights the conflict between the respondents’ social identities and entrepreneurial self-identities. For instance, Stella remarked:

*Black women are servants, farmhands, and white women in the industry generally are marketers with red lipsticks, who present bottles of wine. We did not start at that level. We began talking production systems, value chain, governance, finance, and export arrangements – as entrepreneurs.*

Figure 1 shows the respondents’ acknowledgment of skills (cultural capital) and, by extension, professional experiences (human capital) as the *foundation* of who they are and what they do as entrepreneurs. While the respondents differ in their professional expertise (see Table 1), they all possess competence in wine appreciation. Although they suffer from a lack of legitimacy in their wine businesses, given the dissonance between their self-identities as entrepreneurs and social identities as black women, evidence suggests that normative social expectations produced their entrepreneurial identities, and not what they did. The respondents have attempted to overturn this. Influenced by their professional paths, they exploit the strength of their professionalism, acquired knowledge in wine, cultural behavior, bounded professional networks, and other limited capital in their ventures. They claim their entrepreneurial identities,
displaying creative entrepreneurial practices, striving to become legitimate, and concurrently
driving industry-wide transformation. This expands arguments on women entrepreneurs’
identity construction (Díaz-García and Welter, 2013; Lewis, 2013) by highlighting the
importance of capital to the identity processes of black women entrepreneurs. Stella noted:

_We (a group of black women professionals in wine) came together because we really want to do business in the wine industry... The struggle was profound when we started. They assumed we were illiterates, and we were completely undervalued. It is this thing that a black woman can never be independent, you cannot be your own boss... They were reluctant to deal with us. But we kept displaying our expertise as experienced professionals, entrepreneurs who know the wine business, making it known that we are not less than them..._

Stella described how twenty black women professionals in wine teamed up to start their
wine enterprise, without the huge economic capital outlay required for traditional vineyards
but leveraging their professionalism, various experiences, knowledge of the industry’s value
chain (human capital), certifications in wine (cultural capital), and limited networks of durable
relationships. She mentioned their struggles with embedded bias and intense negative reactions
to their entrepreneurial identities and legitimacy. Her unusual business model offers a rich
example of professionalism in the process of earning entrepreneurial identities for legitimacy.

While they have faced discrimination and the influences of the archetypal white male in
the wine business, with an unfamiliar business model they have deployed their professional
expertise (cultural capital) and, by extension, their professional experiences (human capital) in
wine analysis, marketing, finance, development, and social responsibility. They carry out their
identity work through partnering with existing cellars, bottling, and packaging firms to produce
their wines, playing a pivotal role in Fairtrade Certification, which includes the principle of
BEE, attempting to overcome social structural disadvantages tied to their social identities,
creating more visible entrepreneurial identities, and solidifying their position in the industry.
Thus far, cultural capital has received scant attention in black women’s entrepreneurship
literature, regardless of its link to economic capital generation and legitimacy (McAdam et al.,
2019). Consequently, this study contributes to the literature by highlighting the import of
cultural capital(education and skills), which offers an opportunity to learn and think with the required habitus crucial for entrepreneurial legitimacy in various fields.

It is interesting to note how Stella, as the lead, positioned herself to convert and employ her entrepreneurial team members’ expertise, persisting by acting ‘not less than them’ in various partnerships in order to establish their venture. She remarked:

In 2012, I found myself alongside these Afrikaners as a board member in one of these organizations, exhibiting my know-how, talking, and doing (wine) business. They acknowledged the brand and could not undervalue me as an entrepreneur; instead, they regarded me as their partner.

Comparably, Elena’s remarks below reveal how utilizing her expertise in her identity work through launching a vintners’ alliance has put her on the map, established her entrepreneurial identity, and consolidated her position in the industry. Both Stella and Elena’s examples demonstrate that the respondents, by activating their professionalism in their identity work, are no longer defined by their marginalized social identities. Elena said:

…with my expertise in psychology, hydroponics production, coupled with my past experience as a director of the government’s XXX program, in 2005, I launched a vintners’ alliance for black women for developmental opportunities and to push for change. The Afrikaners did not know what to make of me, I look like their workers, but I am an expert in many fields, including wine business management. I launched three wines, one of which was served during President Obama’s inauguration. The prominent ZZZ family wineries of Stellenbosch acknowledged my proficiency, welcomed me, and in 2009 a formal business partnership ensued, symbolic! Slowly, others followed.

Evidence across various cases has highlighted that the respondents adhere to the formal industry rules concerning legalization, but they creatively entreprendre, performing their identity work, attempting to influence the structure. Thus, they accentuate the connection between identity work and institutional work by reworking the role of servants tied to their social identities (Lewis, 2013; Chasserio et al., 2014). The respondents described how they use the various expertise and professional experiences they possess in claiming their entrepreneurial identities in order to become legitimate. Clearly, their professionalism works to their advantage. Angela, an industry stakeholder stated:

...these black women entrepreneurs are coming up strongly in the industry. They are well-read, they know their onions, and cannot be trifled with. They have become recognized and respected by all, and by all, I include the industry’s traditional old-timers and agencies too, though this did not happen in the early 2000s. Once thought to be flukes, but about ten years ago or thereabouts, they emerged,
breaking barriers as the first crop of black women in wine. Now, they are seen as trailblazers, a force
to be reckoned with. Their wine brands are known and are being fostered.

Data analysis revealed that in exploiting professionalism in their wine businesses, which
are authenticated with credentials (institutionalized cultural capital), the respondents are
challenging the norms and taken-for-granted beliefs framing their entrepreneurial identities –
staking a claim, creating new legitimating beliefs, disrupting the status quo, while concurrently
slowly transforming the industry, making themselves change agents. This finding contributes
to recent debates on entrepreneurial identity process as reactive (Leitch and Harrison, 2016;
Radu-Lefebvre et al., 2021). Consequently, the established actors and prominent stakeholders
are approving and gradually recognizing the respondents, or to put it more appropriately, these
black women and their businesses are earning ‘legitimate’ entrepreneurial labels.

Cultural and symbolic capital in the enactment of new roles

Figure 1 shows cultural capital as enabling for the respondents’ social recognition,
emanating from the utilization of capital in their identity work in enacting new roles, including
guest lecturers, mentors, enlightenment campaigners, and community saviours, which revolves
around ignoring negativities but using their entrepreneurial self-identities’ influence to engage
in other pursuits. The respondents are aware of the inherent challenges that are closely
associated with being ‘newcomers’ in this field. However, they assign them to their
marginalized (Anderson and Ojediran, 2022) or ‘disadvantaged’ social identity of being black
women and not having the ‘wine culture’, given their social background, although culture is
learned and not inherited (Chell and Adam, 1995). While the respondents are trained and have
acquired skills in wine, including wine appreciation, which socializes them into similar
worldviews to the established elites, they are not immediately recognized as legitimate,
complicating their identity work.
The participants’ supposed lack of wine culture (embodied cultural capital) seems to restrict their capacity to fit into the field with accepted norms (habitus), restricting their access to the social networks of the ‘establishment’, thus hindering the maintenance of their entrepreneurial identities and status advancement with the ‘establishment’. However, in their identity work, they seem to accentuate what they do and downplay their social identity as black women in a bid to overcome the detriments of their subject position. Anna’s illustration of *who is this black woman to be in wine business anyway?* and how she handled the overt opposition highlights this notion:

*Looking like me as an entrepreneur, you are treated differently in this wine world – unwanted, someone beneath them. I once had a supplier (a farmer), who felt I should not be talking on an equal basis with him, despite having two university degrees, and having experienced my share of hardcore, well-recognized training in wine... It was meant to be a collaboration... but I was not to come up with suggestions, ideas, or inputs. I set about finding another wine farm as a partner to produce certain wines. I met with people who didn’t want me to be there; it was a tumultuous journey of disapproval and exploitation... but I ignored all their voices..."

Similar stories were found amongst the respondents about their struggles with exclusion. The respondents, however, disregard their negative experiences, indignation, and disapprovals of their entrepreneurial identities. Rather, they leverage their certificates (institutionalized cultural capital), professional experiences (human capital), limited networks of relationships (social capital), and little or no economic capital, and they ‘invest’ in their communities, assuming new roles. Taking up new roles appears to be a part of their identity work. Interestingly, they place their identity work on a pedestal, portraying it as a journey with both economic results and an outcome of societal change. Nevertheless, their concept of society denotes their immediate communities, as illustrated by Anna:

*...my dream of creating the best possible wines is intact and drives me; I am still a certified high school teacher, so teaching remains a part of this dream. I started my community project – the school project to get into the space of those who fall by the wayside. Teach them, especially the females, to be entrepreneurs and wine ambassadors. Show them how passion and tenacity have got me here. We all need the change... in my community, I am perceived as a high achiever, a real businesswoman, and they are proud of me..."

Similarly, Betty remarked:
…black women working in vineyards and cellars are mostly uneducated but have practical experiences. However, their value was never translated to them by their Afrikaner bosses. As an entrepreneur and Level 5 winemaker, I started bi-monthly wine training sessions for these women in my community for winemaking, confidence-building, information-sharing, and awareness-creation...now, Wine Training S.A collaborate with me on this project, they recognize my competence, and they see me as a serious businesswoman.

Data analysis revealed that helping others matters to the respondents. They do so by utilizing their cultural capital in enacting new roles that revolve around developing other disadvantaged young black females through training, developing manpower, and perpetuating black women entrepreneurs in the wine industry. Thus, they creatively reject institutional norms that only recognize black women as servants and disregard their entrepreneurial identities. This relates to conversations on women entrepreneurs’ identity work, emphasizes the link between their identity work and institutional work (Lewis, 2013; Chasserio et al., 2014), and extends the debates by accentuating capital forms as enabling conditions in black women entrepreneurs’ identity work. The respondents seem to participate more within their various communities, increasing their local engagements, role performances, and underscoring their reputation. These efforts aid them to (re)author their social identities and stay true to their entrepreneurial self-identities and heroic images of their entrepreneurial selves that they present to various audiences, particularly the ‘establishment’, over time.

Notably, the respondents convert their educational qualifications and training (institutionalized cultural capital) into social recognition (symbolic capital) in their new roles. For example, Anna, as she relates above, describes being thoroughly rejected as an entrepreneur, given her social identity. However, by using some forms of capital, especially institutionalized cultural capital (certifications) in her identity work, enacting a new role of community saviour cum project owner, her cultural capital is recognized, and it generates social recognition, accentuating her reputation as a ‘high achiever and real businesswoman.’ This validates her actions as an entrepreneur, enhances her reputation, and legitimizes her entrepreneurial identity. Similarly, other respondents described exploiting capital – particularly
cultural capital – in their identity work, enabling their social recognition in their newly enacted roles. Zion, a stakeholder, noted:

In running their businesses, through the years, these women play one role or another in their communities. They envision it as a part of their wine businesses, helping others, giving back, increasing confidence levels, and becoming esteemed by all; it’s such a delight to see!

The respondents’ enactment of new roles seems to be strategic, that is, calculated, although these roles vary, given differences in the respondents’ personal goals. Nevertheless, these roles tend to foster their reputation.

Anna’s identity work involves steering disadvantaged, young female students towards formal education, accentuating entrepreneurial practice within the wine industry as a way of gaining financial independence. With her entrepreneurial identity effects, she coaxed a community high school principal into having a summer school for the students, a seemingly odd activity in their milieu. She stated:

...I talked the principal into starting summer school; the community likes it, we are progressing, in fact, we have been featured in the news.

The initiative has been adjudged a welcome development by the populace and the media, thus furthering her acceptance and facilitating her social recognition as the wine entrepreneur from Mango township; although wine is a new alcoholic beverage to the people in the townships, they represent potential markets. She has ingeniously used this to boost her repute, position herself as an entrepreneur, and ensure that her entrepreneurial identity is legitimate.

While performing different roles, it seems as if the respondents knowingly (or not) select new audiences that support these roles and their entrepreneurial activities. They utilize the influence of their institutionalized cultural capital in their identity work to involve these new audiences in their projects, reinforcing their entrepreneurial identities and simultaneously playing these new roles. Consequently, their entrepreneurial identities are legitimized by both the institutions of higher learning that invite them as guest lecturers, and the communities and
local schools that regard them as saviours, and who collaborate with them or rely on their projects. Liesl opined:

*When we started, we were rejected, and not part of the club. We stood up for ourselves, got involved in various things within and outside the industry. I can tell you things are different from when I joined the industry 13 years ago. In 2019, I was awarded entrepreneur of the year by SASB; years ago, that was not the case...* But why do you want a seat at the table when they don’t want you? Why can’t you create your own table? Create your own table. Make a change. This is what I say on Twitter, I also told the students at the University of XXX last week when I guest lectured there...the University sees me as a highflier.

Likewise, Betty remarked:

*After a decade of winemaking, I won the highly prestigious Old Mutual Wine Trophy for my 2016 Sauvignon Blanc; with my wine business, I mentor young people for the SA youth development program, they recognize my competence, and they see me as a serious businesswoman...I’m also busy working with one of the groups– XXX, where I teach people how to appreciate the product...these are community-based groups that get media attention and recognition.*

As detailed above, data analysis revealed that activities around these new roles tend to garner media coverage that foster more symbolic capital-building opportunities for the respondents; the media representations accentuate them as entrepreneurs, heroic figures endorsed to improve society economically. This media attention, alongside the public recognition of their qualifications (cultural capital) in their identity work, manifests as prestige and seems to generate more symbolic capital, credibility, and legitimizes their entrepreneurial identities and actions, particularly with the ‘establishment’. This finding relates to debates on symbolic capital as being facilitating (De Clercq and Voronov, 2009; Vershinina and Rodgers, 2020), which supports the contribution on capital as enabling in framing black women entrepreneurs’ identities in order to become legitimate.

Some of the respondents who have received winemaking recognition in the industry – including the Old Mutual Trophy Wine Awards and government enterprise awards – for instance, the Department of Trade and Industry’s South African Premier Business Awards, with awards such as ‘entrepreneur of the year’ or ‘entrepreneur of the month’, and who have been featured in both mass and internet media, appear to be more emboldened. The evidence
suggests that in exploiting their budding symbolic capital alongside their media presence, the respondents speak up, rejecting businesses and transactions that do not align with good values. They rebuff condescending remarks and constraining opportunities through various social media platforms, guest lecturing engagements, and community-based groups. The accrual of their symbolic capital enables the enactment of other critical new roles as the ‘mouthpiece’ of the downtrodden, invariably tending towards advocacy, influencing others, and gradually disrupting the status quo. The meanings they give to their entrepreneurial identities by utilizing capital in their identity work direct their actions in the enactment of these roles, which boosts their reputation and legitimizes them.

6. Conclusion

This study has focused on perspectives on identity and capital to help understand how black women entrepreneurs challenge the norms framing their entrepreneurial identities in order to become legitimate. The synthesis of Bourdieu’s (1986) capital theory with established work on identity and legitimacy as the explanatory concept, with more focus on cultural capital, as necessitated by black women entrepreneurs’ contexts to become legitimate, has offered a context-sensitive, agent-centric framework for exploring such processes.

Theoretical contributions

First and foremost, this study expands the understanding on black women entrepreneurs’ identities and legitimacy by accentuating capital forms as enabling conditions in framing their entrepreneurial identities through heroical self-descriptions, exploiting professionalism, and enacting new roles, as necessitated by their social, historical, and cultural contexts, in order to become legitimate. Findings suggest that cultural, human, and symbolic capital are deployed by black women entrepreneurs in creating self-identities and aid their entrepreneurial practice to attain legitimacy (Carter, 2003; Vershinina et al., 2020). Second, this study supports the
applicability of Bourdieu’s (1986) capital theory to contexts wherein black women are marginalized. In terms of identity work, Bourdieu’s (1986, 2005) reference to the interrelation between capital, field, and habitus positions has been observed, with the habitus operating to the logic of practice. By deploying cultural capital in their identity work (Watson, 2008), the respondents display a greater sense of how to play the game, enact the habitus of the ‘entrepreneur’, challenge social structural norms of the field, (re)frame their entrepreneurial identities, and earn the social identity (categorization) of the entrepreneur from the ‘establishment.’ Their entrepreneurial status has become empowering, given its ability to influence others, making their actions a legitimate part of their self-identity. Ergo, this study highlights the importance of cultural capital in developing and thinking with the (required) habitus crucial for earning legitimacy and emphasizes the importance of capital, particularly cultural capital, in identity work, extending black women entrepreneurs’ identity process literature (Knight, 2016; Radu-Lefebvre et al., 2021).

In relation to entrepreneurial identity, an earned entrepreneurial identity imparts agency, and it is almost a license to effect changes. The respondents have utilized capital in their identity work, reframing their entrepreneurial identities as such, reconstructing the roles attached to their social identities, disrupting the social structural arrangement, and striving to alter the perception of what is socially legitimate. Thus, this study underscores the link between their identity work and institutional work (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006) through actions taken in reworking the role(s) tied to their social identities. Taken together, the findings emphasize the active process of earning entrepreneurial identities through identity work, the interaction with capital, the disruption of the status quo, and their emergence as institutional entrepreneurs (David et al., 2013).

Lastly, in terms of legitimacy, the findings reveal that for black women entrepreneurs, becoming legitimate is not automatic, but an active process which entails fitting in while
standing out (De Clercq and Voronov, 2009), being enabled by capital in their identity work through heroical self-description, exploiting professionalism, and enacting new roles, as necessitated by their social, historical, and cultural contexts, to acquire an earned identity, which epitomizes who they are and what they do, holds a possibility of agency, and offers a license to effect change.

Implications for practice and society

This study suggests relevant practical and policy implications. For practitioners, it sheds light on the ways that women entrepreneurs should acknowledge the social structures around them (Dy, 2020) as they relate to black women’s social identities and their approach to entrepreneurship, often in adverse contexts. The resolute desire of black women in this study to develop themselves as entrepreneurs and to use some forms of capital towards that quest underscores an innate motivation to discover themselves and their identity as entrepreneurs in a society. Being black and a woman have been markers of both structural and historical disadvantage, which has manifested in reduced access to capital and legitimacy. A fundamental implication relates to how women may find themselves in a relationship with men in industries that associate entrepreneurs with white males. The findings suggest that although not without struggles, women who are able to develop cultural capital and think with the required habitus may not find themselves in a situation of subordination that implies inferiority, or that engenders a level of low esteem as entrepreneurs. Thus, black women entrepreneurs should not dissociate from the prevailing social structure, since they may be missing out on pertinent details about the origins of diverse forms of capital.

For policymakers, this study provides micro-detail on how black women entrepreneurs become legitimate. Thus, policymakers could use the findings of this study when designing initiatives to ensure the inclusivity of black women, given their traditional level of social
marginality in contexts around the world. Future policies and programs need to be more ‘culture sensitive’. There is a need for deeper understanding of entrepreneurs’ self-fulfilment and social needs, as well as their values and perceptions of their environment, which would greatly enhance the effectiveness of policy development and outcomes. Developing initiatives that allow segregated populations to develop their entrepreneurial identity by relying on several forms of capital (e.g., entrepreneurship education programs related to cultural and human capital development) may help move away from focusing mostly on delivering support related to specific types of capital (e.g., financial), which fails to consider the capacity of women to navigate their cultural setting (Anderson and Ojediran, 2022). Bourdieu’s (1986) articulation of capital was intricately connected to the concepts of field and habitus. Therefore, there is a need for scholars and policymakers to focus on working with black women entrepreneurs to understand structural issues peculiar to them in order to develop effectual capital-developing, habitus-improving, and field-positioning strategies that will aid their legitimacy.

Limitations and future research

Very little research has been conducted on black women entrepreneurs. This study has few limitations, and so its findings must be interpreted with caution. First, using Bourdieu’s (1986) capital theory, only black women entrepreneurs and some industry stakeholders were interviewed in the quest to understand how black women entrepreneurs frame their entrepreneurial identities in order to become legitimate and challenge norms. Future research might expand on the number and gender of participants used and expand to other contexts. The related concepts of field and habitus leave scope for further studies to explore both black women’s and black men’s social identities in relation to the (re)authoring of their entrepreneurial identities in this (or other similar) contexts. Such studies could both qualitatively and quantitatively examine the motivation among entrepreneurs in both urban and rural settings in South Africa and compare female and male entrepreneurs. In doing so, such
studies would offer deeper insights into the interplay of social, entrepreneurial identities, and legitimacy, particularly from the complex nexus of both gender and race. Second, the findings suggest that capital, particularly cultural capital, is a facilitator in the (re)authoring of black women entrepreneurs’ identities. **This study suggests the need to explore** the effects of cultural capital on the practices of entrepreneurs who move beyond the stereotypical portrayal within an industry or sector. Qualitative studies could broaden our understanding in contexts where women have been previously discriminated against by other groups, based on their race or gender. While the findings cannot be generalized (Davidson *et al.*, 2010) for these black women, this study suggests that earning legitimacy can embolden and increase their morale. Future studies within the wine industry, or others where disadvantaged women may be underrepresented yet are gradually having a presence, could further explore the implications that an earned entrepreneurial identity brings.

Thirdly, it would be beneficial for future research to undertake ethnographic methods to examine how the earned identity has (or not) (re)positioned them as legitimate entrepreneurs in the field (e.g., see Down and Warren, 2008), and how the (re)positioning has offered particular understandings of what being an entrepreneur means. Future studies could adopt diverse qualitative and quantitative methods that are seldom used in women’s entrepreneurship, such as autoethnography or oral history (Stead *et al.*, 2021), to focus on understanding how black women frame their entrepreneurial identities in order to become legitimate over time. Such studies would aid in illuminating entrepreneurial experiences and focus on the use of diverse methods of support. Scholars could expand on the different yet interrelated institutional logics (e.g., cultural, market, family) that may influence the development of black women entrepreneurs in different contexts (Ojediran and Anderson, 2020). In doing so, scholars could further the understanding of identity processes and legitimacy in entrepreneurship, in tandem with understanding contextual changes in society. Taken together, future studies can, building
on our findings, help elucidate not only the challenges that black women entrepreneurs face, but also how they overcome them in their pursuit of legitimacy.

Notes

1. ‘black’ (with a lowercase ‘b’) is a broad term used for the racially classified population groups: Coloureds, Indians, and Africans in Apartheid South Africa (Manzo, 1998, p.107).

References


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<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Educational Qualification</th>
<th>Background &amp; Experience</th>
<th>Years of wine industry experience</th>
<th>No of years as entrepreneur</th>
<th>Time spent in interviews/Pages of transcripts (11 pt. font, single-spaced)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Afua</td>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>Degree, Cert (in Wine)</td>
<td>Au pair; wine certification, exports, and logistics officer</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>173 minutes, 30 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilo</td>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>Prof. Cert</td>
<td>Bookkeeping and wine marketing grapes’ harvester, tasting room assistant, winemaker</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>69 minutes, 14 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>153 minutes, 24 pages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liesl</td>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>sugarcane farmer, winemaker</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>73 minutes, 16 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>Degree (2), Cert (in Wine)</td>
<td>English teacher</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>63 minutes, 7 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stella</td>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>Degree, Cert (in Wine)</td>
<td>Marketing and communications manager</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>70 minutes, 13 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mene</td>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>MBA, Grad degree</td>
<td>International business, Projects manager</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>62 minutes, 8 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elena</td>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>Diploma (2), Degree (2), MSc, Cert (in wine, hydroponics production)</td>
<td>Nurse, midwife, senior lecturer, administrator, clinical psychologist, director of a govt establishment</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>75 minutes, 14 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilda</td>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Fashion designer, cashier, truck driver, credit controller, project manager, and HR manager</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>67 minutes, 15 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zion</td>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>Degree (Int’l Trade Relations)</td>
<td>Aviation, int’l consumer marketing, GM</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>63 minutes, 13 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanja</td>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>MBA, Degree</td>
<td>Marketing, international business, CEO</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>62 minutes, 9 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>MSc, Degree</td>
<td>Marketing research, FMCG, education, cosmetics, spirits and wine, CEO</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td>66 minutes, 15 pages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I think the business chose me to make a difference, doing what we had not done before stimulates me…So, I started my wine business…

But with expertise in psychology, hydroponics production and experiences as a director, I launched a Vintners’ Alliance and...

I literally turned to a peacock to show off my know... Mandela’s post 1994 call sealed it, I thought: I am well...

My wine degree, my previous experiences and professional networks equipped me as the lead entrepreneur, in making decisions...

Teaching is a part of it. I started a community teaching project for the disadvantaged females... I am perceived as a high ac...

Figure 1 : Data coding structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st order coding</th>
<th>2nd order theme</th>
<th>Aggregate theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- I think the business chose me to make a difference, doing what we had not done before stimulates me…So, I started my wine business…</td>
<td>Overarching driver for action (heroic motivation)</td>
<td>Overarching driver for action (heroic motivation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I am called to make wines, I create wines… my winemaking and business management degrees, just pushes me to help others in wine business …</td>
<td>Non-economic capital forms in stereotypical (heroic) entrepreneurial attributes</td>
<td>Non-economic capital forms in stereotypical (heroic) entrepreneurial attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The business chose me…. I took a risk to start. I realise it was fate, making me give hope to others in my community.</td>
<td>Professional training and competence</td>
<td>Professional training and competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- We are called to do business in wine; our shared dream of creating economic opportunities for other black women drive us. We started the business.</td>
<td>Technical skills and exposure</td>
<td>Technical skills and exposure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Wine was abused and despised in my community, but it kept piquing my interest. It literally called me… I started the business… I just want to achieve, so, I persisted.</td>
<td>Proficiency and endorsement</td>
<td>Proficiency and endorsement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Being in the industry is my calling. I studied oenology; I am a creator of wines. I have a natural passion for it… my personal belief that I can bring change to my community in my own little way fuels my passion…</td>
<td>Cultural and human capital in exploiting professionalism</td>
<td>Cultural and human capital in exploiting professionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ... Mandela’s post 1994 call sealed it, I thought: I am well-educated, if it’s not me, who else? I thought I would do what our people had never done before, it is right to say winemaking chose me!… I started my winemaking venture.</td>
<td>Know-how and prestige</td>
<td>Know-how and prestige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I come from a beer drinking community, but I saw this business opportunity and I embraced it, it pulled me in, doing what has not been done. I am the first to start a wine business in community,…</td>
<td>Expertise and recognition</td>
<td>Expertise and recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I took a risk to venture into a business I did not know, my education and training was beneficial. I became an entrepreneur that day.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- But my education helped a great deal, especially in seeing opportunities and taking calculated risks, also, my connections were handy…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- We are all well-educated professionals, it made us see the opportunity, we started a business. We are entrepreneurs…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I used my education and experiences. They assisted me in finding and seeing the opportunity. Instead of waiting for nothing, I risked it, I started my business…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My wine degree, my previous experiences and professional networks equipped me as the lead entrepreneur, in making decisions,…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- With a degree in Oenology, I created my wine business…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Our proficiency, experiences and an unusual business model turned us to recognised entrepreneurs, business, and brand …</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- But with expertise in psychology, hydroponics production and experiences as a director, I launched a Vintners’ Alliance and that aggrandized the business, one of the prominent family wineries admitted my proficiency, others followed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I started in wine working with the viticulturists. I developed competences that set my businesses apart, got my wine unto the high-end stores’ shelves and landed me some much-deserved recognition from the big guns in the industry.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My professional training and expertise as a winemaker and businesswoman from the University of XYZ were all I had. Over the last 11 years, they have distinguished me and ushered in the industry-wide acceptance levels which I enjoy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I literally turned to a peacock to show off my know-how. You will be surprised at what this got me with the grape growers. Now, they see me as a knowledgeable businesswoman, as one of them and some even discuss their other contracts with me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A show of my technical expertise and industry exposure has made me and my business legit, got me business offers and repeat businesses even from the Afrikaners.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teaching is a part of it. I started a community teaching project for the disadvantaged females… I am perceived as a high achiever …</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I lead one of the community-based wine appreciation groups, they all respect me as a real entrepreneur.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I mentor young people in the youth development program, they recognise my competence, and they see me as a serious businesswoman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- You have been to my community, I mentor the next generation in doing small businesses, I am well-respected in the industry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Why can’t you create your table? I said it last week when I guest lectured at XXX University… The Uni recognises me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I am very active on Twitter, I promote (wine)entrepreneurship on it, and I often guest lecture at XYZ University. The Uni recognises me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My business brought me more respect, I use my social media platforms to fight against social injustices in the industry and beyond.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>