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Exploring how values shape the entrepreneurial propensity of youths: a study of the young, black South African entrepreneur

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, ***Robert Bruce Venter***, hereby declare that this research is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

SIGNED AT JOHANNESBURG ON THIS THE ***20th DAY OF FEBRUARY 2014***.

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Abstract

South Africa's Total Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) scores are consistently well-below the average of other efficiency-driven economies, as well as for other sub-Saharan countries (Turton and Herrington, 2013). Despite this, a 2013 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report suggests that youth in sub-Saharan Africa demonstrate marked entrepreneurial propensity and potential (Kew, Herrington, Letovsky and Gale, 2013). As such, this thesis seeks to contribute an understanding of how black, youth entrepreneurs located in Johannesburg's informal economy, seek to achieve legitimacy, and thus 'become', through the attainment of an accepted entrepreneurial identity. To this end, the role of hybridity, as a form of entrepreneurial capital, is explored as a potential mechanism.

A hypothesised conceptual framework is accordingly evolved which explores the relationships between entrepreneurial identity aspiration, resource attainment, legitimacy, and how these are mediated by hybridity. Survey data gathered from young, black entrepreneurs (n=503) across Johannesburg's seven administrative districts, using a structured questionnaire, and tested using multiple regression analysis, reveals the following: a direct relationship between entrepreneurial identity aspiration, entrepreneurial resources as well as the attainment of legitimacy is found, suggesting that black youth do indeed aspire to entrepreneurial legitimacy, and thus, seek to 'become' accordingly. Moreover, hybrid values are seen to mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial

identity aspiration and resource attainment such that they accounted for the relationship. This suggests the potential for hybridity as a form of entrepreneurial capital such that values might have been seen to act as a form a catalyst for the attainment of other resources.

The study contributes a conceptual framework which provides a theoretical understanding of young, black entrepreneurs in South Africa. More specifically, it suggests a values-mediated relationship between entrepreneurial identity aspiration and the attainment of resources such that youth seek legitimacy accordingly. As such, this study is the first to provide insights into the potential impact that hybrid values might have on shaping an entrepreneurial identity. Additionally, it contributes evidence to suggest that opportunity-driven behaviour motivates young, black entrepreneurs in Johannesburg's informal economy, beyond necessity motives which are used to stereotypically frame this space.

It is recommended that further research be undertaken to test this framework in other contexts in order to gain a finer understanding of hybridity as a potential entrepreneurial resource. This might additionally involve research into the cues that potentially result in a switching between different values.

Key words: youth, entrepreneurship, informal economy, entrepreneurial identity aspiration, legitimacy, hybridity, hybrid values.

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Dedication

To my darling Bronwyn, who never stopped believing in me, particularly when I did, and for always keeping a light shining, so I could find my way back. I love you;

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Contents

	Page
Declaration	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iv
Dedication	v
Contents	vi
List of figures	xiii
List of tables	xvi
Chapter One – Setting the scene: why a study on young, black entrepreneurs in Johannesburg's informal economy matters	**1**
1.1 Introduction	2
1.2 Conceptualising the 'new young lions'	4
1.2.1 Studying youth	4
1.2.2 The importance of black youth in South Africa	9
1.2.3 New young lions 'becoming': exploring the entrepreneurial propensity of youth	13
1.2.4 Informality and youth: providing context	28
1.2.5 Charting the research direction: the effect of hybrid values in attaining legitimacy	39
1.2.6 The research questions	43
1.3 Mapping the study: a brief chapter synopsis	44
1.4 Conclusion	46
Chapter Two – Towards a values-based understanding of young, black entrepreneurs	**48**
2.1 Introduction	49
2.2 Understanding entrepreneurial values	50
2.2.1 Defining values	50
2.2.2 Measuring values: a critical analysis	51
2.2.2.1 Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's value orientations	51

Contents (cont.)

	Page
2.2.2.2 Rokeach's end-state vs instrumental values	52
2.2.2.3 Hofstede's dimensions of national culture	53
2.2.2.4 Schwartz's PVQ	55
2.2.2.5 The GLOBE dimensions	55
2.2.3 Values and entrepreneurship: trends and observations	57
2.2.4 Biculturalism and hybridity	65
2.2.4.1 Biculturalism	66
2.2.4.2 Hybridity	74
2.2.4.3 Youth and hybridity	79
2.2.5 Hybridity and entrepreneurship: envisaging hybridity as a form of entrepreneurial capital	83
2.3 Evolving a framework: youth, hybridism and entrepreneurial capital in the informal economy	92
2.3.1 Aspirations, resources and legitimacy: a youth entrepreneurial identity in the making	95
2.3.2 The moderating effects of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and motives	100
2.3.3 The mediating role of hybrid values	106
2.4 Conclusion	109
Chapter Three – Beyond essentialism: methods involved in the quantification of young, black entrepreneurs	**110**
3.1 Introduction	111
3.2 Setting out the research rationale	111
3.3 Research design	114
3.3.1 Describing the population and sample	114
3.3.2 Data collection	118
3.3.2.1 The questionnaire	118

Contents (cont.)

	Page
3.3.2.2 The pilot study	124
3.3.2.3 Assessing the reliability and validity of the questionnaire	127
3.3.2.3.1 Reliability	128
3.3.2.3.2 Measurement validity	130
3.3.2.4 Describing the large study	131
3.3.3 Limitations of this research	134
3.4 Hypotheses	140
3.5 Statistical tests adopted	142
3.5.1 Level of significance	142
3.5.2 Statistical tests and procedures	143
3.5.2.1 Descriptive statistics	143
3.5.2.2 Tests for validity and reliability	143
3.5.2.3 Hypothesis testing	145
3.5.2.4 Statistical packages	148
3.6 Ethical considerations	148
3.7 Conclusion	149
Chapter Four – Evidence for a youth entrepreneurial identity: results and discussion	**150**
4.1 Introduction	151
4.2 Describing the sample	151
4.2.1 Age	151
4.2.2 Gender	153
4.2.3 Education	154
4.2.4 Language and ethnicity	157
4.2.5 Sources of finance	158
4.2.6 Products or services	162
4.2.7 Describing respondents' businesses	167
4.3 An overview of the scales	176

Contents (cont.)

			Page
4.3.1	Scale items relating to entrepreneurial identity aspiration		176
4.3.2	Scale items relating to entrepreneurial capital		178
4.3.3	Scale items relating to entrepreneurial performance		181
4.3.4	Scale items relating to formalisation		183
4.3.5	Scale items relating to entrepreneurial values		185
4.3.6	Scale items relating to entrepreneurial self-efficacy		190
4.3.7	Scale items relating to motives		191
4.4	Testing the reliability and validity of the scales		194
4.4.1	Testing reliability and construct validity		194
4.4.2	Factor analyses – further validation of the scales		197
	4.4.2.1	Factor analysis of the entrepreneurial identity aspiration scale	198
	4.4.2.2	Factor analysis of the entrepreneurial capitals scale	201
	4.4.2.3	Factor analysis of the entrepreneurial performance scale	206
	4.4.2.4	Factor analysis of the formalisation scale	210
	4.4.2.5	Factor analysis of the entrepreneurial values scale	214
	4.4.2.6	Factor analysis of the entrepreneurial self-efficacy scale	221
	4.4.2.7	Factor analysis of the motives scale	225
4.5	Testing the conceptual framework		229
4.5.1	Exploring the relationship between entrepreneurial identity aspirations and entrepreneurial capitals (Hypothesis 1)		233
4.5.2	Exploring the relationship between entrepreneurial capitals and legitimacy		236
	4.5.2.1	Hypothesis 2a – the relationship between entrepreneurial capitals and formalisation	237
	4.5.2.2	Hypothesis 2b – the relationship between entrepreneurial capitals and entrepreneurial performance	242
	4.5.2.3	Reflecting on Hypothesis 2	247

Contents (cont.)

		Page
4.5.3	The moderating influence of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and motives	248
4.5.3.1	The moderating influence of ESE	248
4.5.3.1.1	The moderating influence of ESE on the relationship between entrepreneurial identity aspiration and entrepreneurial capitals	250
4.5.3.1.2	The moderating influence of ESE on the relationship between entrepreneurial capitals and formalisation	255
4.5.3.1.3	The moderating influence of ESE on the relationship between entrepreneurial capitals and entrepreneurial performance	261
4.5.3.2	The moderating influence of motives	267
4.5.3.2.1	The moderating influence of motives on the relationship between entrepreneurial identity aspiration and entrepreneurial capitals	268
4.5.3.2.2	The moderating influence of motives on the relationship between entrepreneurial capitals and formalisation	274
4.5.3.2.3	The moderating influence of motives on the relationship between entrepreneurial capitals and entrepreneurial performance	280
4.5.3.3	Reflecting on the moderating effects of ESE and motives	286
4.5.4	The mediating influence of hybrid values	287
4.5.4.1	The mediating influence of hybrid values on the relationship between entrepreneurial identity aspiration and entrepreneurial capitals	289
4.5.4.2	The mediating influence of hybrid values on the relationship between entrepreneurial capitals and formalisation	298

Contents (cont.)

		Page
4.5.4.3	The mediating influence of hybrid values on the relationship between entrepreneurial capitals and entrepreneurial performance	307
4.5.4.4	Reflecting on the mediating role of values	314
4.6	Conclusion	315
Chapter 5 –	**Black youth seeking and attaining an entrepreneurial identity: conclusions implications and recommendations**	**317**
5.1	Black youth seeking and attaining an entrepreneurial identity: conclusions implications and recommendations	318
5.2	An overview of the literature review: a theoretical rationale	318
5.3	Synopsis of the results	321
5.4	New young lions: reflecting on the implications of research into young black entrepreneurs in Johannesburg's informal economy	323
5.4.1	Conceptualising the entrepreneurial potential of Johannesburg's informal economy	323
5.4.2	Reflections on the conceptual framework: aspirations, resource attainment and performance	326
5.4.2.1	Aspirations and resources attainment: seeking legitimacy	327
5.4.2.2	Resource attainment, entrepreneurial performance, and formalisation: attaining legitimacy	333
5.4.3	Extending the conceptual framework	338
5.4.3.1	Education	339
5.4.3.2	Beyond mediation – reconceptualising the role of values	340
5.5	Limitations	344
5.6	Recommendations for future research	345
5.7	Conclusion	348

Contents (cont.)

	Page
Reference list	351
Appendix 1 - Cover letter and questionnaire	383
Appendix 2 - Control Sheet for the pilot study	390
Appendix 3 - Consent to participate	392
Appendix 4 - Ethics clearance certificate	394

List of Figures

		Page
1.1	Types of entrepreneurs	22
1.2	Explaining the impact of hybridity	42
2.1	Intercultural Development Continuum	70
2.2	A conceptual framework of youth entrepreneurial behaviour	93
3.1	Final sample distribution	117
4.1	Age profile of the respondents	152
4.2	Reported levels of education	154
4.3	Distribution of age and ethnicity	157
4.4	Sources of finance	158
4.5	Distribution of products and services	164
4.6	Scree plot for the entrepreneurial identity aspiration scale	200
4.7	Scree plot for the entrepreneurial capitals scale	204
4.8	Scree plot for the entrepreneurial performance scale	208
4.9	Scree plot for the formalisation scale	212
4.10	Scree plot for the entrepreneurial values scale	219
4.11	Scree plot for the entrepreneurial self-efficacy scale	223
4.12	Scree plot for the entrepreneurial motives scale	227
4.13	A conceptual framework of youth entrepreneurial behaviour revisited	229
4.14	Scatterplot for Hypothesis 1	233
4.15	Histogram for Hypothesis 1	233
4.16	P-P plot for Hypothesis 1	234
4.17	Scatterplot for Hypothesis 2a	240
4.18	Histogram for Hypothesis 2a	240
4.19	P-P plot for Hypothesis 2a	241
4.20	Scatterplot for Hypothesis 2b	244
4.21	Histogram for Hypothesis 2b	245
4.22	P-P plot for Hypothesis 2b	245
4.23	Scatterplot for Hypothesis 3a	253

List of Figures (cont.)

		Page
4.24	Histogram for Hypothesis 3a	253
4.25	P-P plot for Hypothesis 3a	254
4.26	Scatterplot for Hypothesis 3b	258
4.27	Histogram for Hypothesis 3b	259
4.28	P-P plot for Hypothesis 3b	259
4.29	Scatterplot for Hypothesis 3c	264
4.30	Histogram for Hypothesis 3c	265
4.31	P-P plot for Hypothesis 3c	265
4.32	Scatterplot for Hypothesis 4a	270
4.33	Histogram for Hypothesis 4a	272
4.34	P-P plot for Hypothesis 4a	272
4.35	Scatterplot for Hypothesis 4b	277
4.36	Histogram for Hypothesis 4b	278
4.37	P-P plot for Hypothesis 4b	278
4.38	Scatterplot for Hypothesis 4c	283
4.39	Histogram for Hypothesis 4c	284
4.40	P-P plot for Hypothesis 4c	284
4.41	Scatterplot for Hypothesis 5a (step one)	291
4.42	Histogram for Hypothesis 5a (step one)	292
4.43	P-P plot for Hypothesis 5a (step one)	292
4.44	Scatterplot for Hypothesis 5a (steps two and three)	295
4.45	Histogram for Hypothesis 5a (steps two and three)	296
4.46	P-P plot for Hypothesis 5a (steps two and three)	296
4.47	Final mediation model (Hypothesis 5a)	297
4.48	Scatterplot for Hypothesis 5b (step one)	300
4.49	Histogram for Hypothesis 5b (step one)	301
4.50	P-P plot for Hypothesis 5b (step one)	301
4.51	Scatterplot for Hypothesis 5b (steps two and three)	304

List of Figures (cont.)

		Page
4.52	Histogram for Hypothesis 5b (steps two and three)	304
4.53	P-P plot for Hypothesis 5b (steps two and three)	305
4.54	Final mediation model (Hypothesis 5b)	306
4.55	Scatterplot for Hypothesis 5c (steps two and three)	311
4.56	Histogram for Hypothesis 5c (steps two and three)	312
4.57	P-P plot for Hypothesis 5c (steps two and three)	312
4.58	Final mediation model (Hypothesis 5c)	313
5.1	Exploring the identity of the informal entrepreneur	324
5.2	Relating entrepreneurial identity aspiration to resource attainment	328
5.3	Relating entrepreneurial capitals to entrepreneurial legitimacy	334
5.4	Relating values to entrepreneurial identity aspiration, capitals, performance and formalisation	341
5.5	A spectrum of hybrid values	343

List of Tables

		Page
1.1	Different research themes and associated schools	14
1.2	Average informality weighted by total GDP in 2005	35
2.1	Kluckhohn-Strodtbeck's framework of cultural values	51
2.2	Rokeach's terminal and instrumental values	52
2.3	Hofstede's six dimensions	54
2.4	The GLOBE Project's 9 dimensions	56
2.5	Models of cultural acquisition	68
3.1	Expanded description of the questionnaire	119
3.2	A comparison of Cronbach's alpha scores	129
3.3	Proportional distribution of questionnaires	133
3.4	Hypotheses	140
4.1	Cross-tabulation of age and gender	153
4.2	Cross-tabulation of the level of education and gender	155
4.3	Cross-tabulation of age and the level of education	156
4.4	Cross-tabulation of gender and source of finance	160
4.5	Cross-tabulation of age and source of finance	161
4.6	Cross-tabulation of sources of finance and the level of education	162
4.7	Product and service offerings	163
4.8	Cross-tabulation of gender and product/service offering	165
4.9	Cross-tabulation of age and product/service offering	165
4.10	Cross-tabulation of the level of education and product/service offering	166
4.11	Cross-tabulation of age and the amount of time in business	167
4.12	Cross-tabulation between gender and the amount of time in business	168
4.13	Cross-tabulation between the level of education and the amount of time in business	168
4.14	Cross-tabulation between product and service offering and the amount of time in business	170
4.15	Distribution and dispersion of reported turnover	172

List of Tables (cont.)

		Page
4.16	Cross-tabulation between age and turnover	173
4.17	Cross-tabulation between gender and monthly turnover	173
4.18	Cross-tabulation between the level of education and monthly turnover	174
4.19	Cross-tabulation between product/service offering and monthly turnover	175
4.20	Cross-tabulation between monthly turnover and the amount of time in business	176
4.21	Scale item frequencies for the entrepreneurial identity construct	177
4.22	Descriptive statistics for entrepreneurial identity scale items	178
4.23	Scale item frequencies for the entrepreneurial capitals construct	179
4.24	Descriptive statistics for entrepreneurial capital scale items	180
4.25	Scale item frequencies for the entrepreneurial performance construct	182
4.26	Descriptive statistics for entrepreneurial performance scale items	183
4.27	Scale item frequencies for the formalisation construct	184
4.28	Descriptive statistics for formalisation scale items	184
4.29	Scale item frequencies for the values construct	187
4.30	Descriptive statistics for values scale items	188
4.31	Scale item frequencies for the ESE construct	190
4.32	Descriptive statistics for ESE scale items	191
4.33	Scale item frequencies for the motive construct	192
4.34	Descriptive statistics for motive scale items	193
4.35	Cronbach’s alphas and inter-item correlation scores	194
4.36	Correlation matrix for the entrepreneurial identity aspiration scale	198
4.37	Anti-image matrix for the entrepreneurial identity aspiration scale	199
4.38	Total variance explained for the entrepreneurial identity aspiration scale	199
4.39	Comparison of eigenvalues from PCA and parallel analysis for the entrepreneurial identity aspiration scale	200

List of Tables (cont.)

		Page
4.40	Summary of EFA results for the entrepreneurial identity aspiration scale items	201
4.41	Correlation matrix for the entrepreneurial capitals scale	202
4.42	Anti-image matrix for the entrepreneurial capitals scale	203
4.43	Total variance explained for the entrepreneurial capitals scale	203
4.44	Comparison of eigenvalues from PCA and parallel analysis for the entrepreneurial capitals scale	204
4.45	Summary of EFA results for the entrepreneurial capitals scale items	205
4.46	Correlation matrix for the entrepreneurial performance scale	207
4.47	Anti-image matrix for the entrepreneurial performance scale	207
4.48	Total variance explained for the entrepreneurial performance scale	208
4.49	Comparison of eigenvalues from PCA and parallel analysis for the entrepreneurial performance scale	209
4.50	Summary of EFA results for the entrepreneurial performance scale items	209
4.51	Correlation matrix for the formalisation scale	211
4.52	Anti-image matrix for the formalisation scale	211
4.53	Total variance explained for the formalisation scale	212
4.54	Comparison of eigenvalues from PCA and parallel analysis for the formalisation scale	213
4.55	Summary of EFA results for the formalisation scale items	213
4.56	Correlation matrix for the values scale	216
4.57	Anti-image matrix for the entrepreneurial values scale	217
4.58	Total variance explained for the entrepreneurial values scale	218
4.59	Comparison of eigenvalues from PCA and parallel analysis for the entrepreneurial values scale	219
4.60	Summary of EFA results for the entrepreneurial values scale items	220
4.61	Correlation matrix for the entrepreneurial self-efficacy scale	222

List of Tables (cont.)

		Page
4.62	Anti-image matrix for the entrepreneurial self-efficacy scale	222
4.63	Total variance explained for the entrepreneurial self-efficacy scale	223
4.64	Comparison of eigenvalues from PCA and parallel analysis	224
4.65	Summary of EFA results for the entrepreneurial self-efficacy scale items	224
4.66	Correlation matrix for the entrepreneurial motives scale	226
4.67	Anti-image matrix for the entrepreneurial motives scale	226
4.68	Total variance explained for the entrepreneurial motives scale	227
4.69	Comparison of eigenvalues from PCA and parallel analysis for the entrepreneurial motives scale	228
4.70	Summary of EFA results for the entrepreneurial motives scale items	228
4.71	Descriptive statistics and correlations for Hypothesis 1	231
4.72	Coefficients for regression model (Hypothesis 1)	232
4.73	Multiple regression table for Hypothesis 1	235
4.74	Descriptive statistics and correlations for Hypothesis 2a	238
4.75	Coefficients for regression model (Hypothesis 2a)	239
4.76	Multiple regression table for Hypothesis 2a	242
4.77	Descriptive statistics and correlations for Hypothesis 2b	243
4.78	Coefficients for regression model (Hypothesis 2b)	244
4.79	Multiple regression table for Hypothesis 2b	246
4.80	Descriptive statistics and correlations for Hypothesis 3a	251
4.81	Coefficients for regression model (Hypothesis 3a)	252
4.82	Multiple regression table for Hypothesis 3a	255
4.83	Descriptive statistics and correlations for Hypothesis 3b	256
4.84	Coefficients for regression model (Hypothesis 3b)	257
4.85	Multiple regression table for Hypothesis 3b	260
4.86	Descriptive statistics and correlations for Hypothesis 3c	262
4.87	Coefficients for regression model (Hypothesis 3c)	263

List of Tables (cont.)

		Page
4.88	Multiple regression table for Hypothesis 3c	266
4.89	Descriptive statistics and correlations for Hypothesis 4a	269
4.90	Coefficients for regression model (Hypothesis 4a)	271
4.91	Multiple regression table for Hypothesis 4a	274
4.92	Descriptive statistics and correlations for Hypothesis 4b	275
4.93	Coefficients for regression model (Hypothesis 4b)	276
4.94	Multiple regression table for Hypothesis 4b	279
4.95	Descriptive statistics and correlations for Hypothesis 4c	281
4.96	Coefficients for regression model (Hypothesis 4c)	282
4.97	Multiple regression table for Hypothesis 4c	285
4.98	Descriptive statistics and correlations for Hypothesis 5a (step 1)	290
4.99	Coefficients for regression model (Hypothesis 5a) (step 1)	290
4.100	Descriptive statistics and correlations for Hypothesis 5a (steps 2 and 3)	293
4.101	Coefficients for regression model (Hypothesis 5a) (steps 2 and 3)	294
4.102	Multiple regression table for Hypothesis 5a	298
4.103	Descriptive statistics and correlations for Hypothesis 5b (step 1)	299
4.104	Coefficients for regression model (Hypothesis 5b) (step 1)	300
4.105	Descriptive statistics and correlations for Hypothesis 5b (steps 2 and 3)	302
4.106	Coefficients for regression model (Hypothesis 5b) (steps 2 and 3)	302
4.107	Multiple regression table for Hypothesis 5b	307
4.108	Descriptive statistics and correlations for Hypothesis 5c (steps 2 and 3)	309
4.109	Coefficients for regression model (Hypothesis 5c) (steps 2 and 3)	310
4.110	Multiple regression table for Hypothesis 5c	314
5.1	Summary of results	322