

## AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN A CARIBBEAN COUNTRY: CAYMAN ISLANDS

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### ABSTRACT

**T**he study of women entrepreneurs worldwide has taken on a sense of importance and urgency (Diochon, 2015; Gallagher and Selman, 2015; Gallagher and Lawrence, 2012). This importance and urgency is partially fueled by the recognition that women's income earning potential has become important for a country's Gross Domestic Product and the removal of such social ills as poverty, infant mortality among other factors (Dana, 2015; Morley, 2014; Todd, 2012; Ramadani, Gerguri-Rashiti and Fayolle, 2015).

In Caribbean countries where an informal economy often exists for employment, entrepreneurship and in particular, women entrepreneurship thrives a legitimate source of income for women. In Trinidad and Tobago, the government has created a "nation of entrepreneurs" in order to relieve some of the inequality that defines the society (Karides, 2005). In another study, a cross-cultural, interdisciplinary and comparative study of how female entrepreneurship is patterned is looked at according to a society's particular configuration of gendered institutions and ideologies (Browne, 2001). The islands of Puerto Rico, Martinique and Barbados, colonized centuries ago by Spain, France and Britain respectively, exhibit strong differences in the incidence of female self-employment and in local patterns of gender roles (Browne, 2001).

This current paper seeks to contribute to the body of research on women entrepreneurs in the international marketplace by looking at women entrepreneurs on the small Caribbean island known as the Cayman Islands. The study was conducted in the Summer of 2009 at a government sponsored conference in the Cayman Islands.

**KEYWORDS:** women entrepreneurs, Gross Domestic Product, Self-Employment, Capital, Technology

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## INTRODUCTION

The study of women entrepreneurs worldwide has taken on a sense of importance and urgency (Diochon, 2015; Gallagher and Selman, 2015; Gallagher and Lawrence, 2012). This importance and urgency is partially fueled by the recognition that women's income earning potential has become important for a country's Gross Domestic Product and the removal of such social ills as poverty, infant mortality among other factors (Dana, 2015; Morley, 2014; Todd, 2012; Ramadani, Gerguri-Rashiti and Fayolle, 2015).

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

Very few studies have looked precisely at women entrepreneurs in the Cayman Islands. Instead, what we have are a plethora of studies that have danced around this definitive island and focused on a number of closely geographically related Islands' and countries. Browne (2001) did a multisite investigation of female entrepreneurship in the Caribbean, looking at such countries as Puerto Rico, Martinique and Barbados. The author contends that female entrepreneurship in the Caribbean offers a particularly useful focus for the analysis of gender and economic outcomes, since women's work force participation in this region is one of the highest in the developing world (Browne, 2001).

The author goes further to state that these societies demonstrate certain patterned and significant

differences in the degree of female self-employment, the proportion of female headed households and the extent of occupational segregation (Browne, 2001). Completing thirty interviews on each island for a total of ninety interviews, Browne (2001) concluded that the women entrepreneurs:

- Participation in entrepreneurial activities varies based on the gender stratification in that country and as such we in Puerto Rico are seen as outliers. This is less so far Barbados and Martinique where gender roles are more relaxed and where women can pursue varying ambitions.
- Women in welfare oriented such as Martinique and Puerto Rico are less risk oriented, more conservative and are more accustomed to relying on the state.
- Women entrepreneurs from societies in the same geographic regions who practice the same political systems and economic practices are more likely to share similar experiences.

Another multi-country study on women entrepreneurs in the Caribbean/Latin American area was completed by Weeks and Seiler (2001) and published in the same year. These latter authors also looked at Mexican, Argentinean and Brazilian women entrepreneurs coupled with an analysis across gender lines. The study exposed the reader to the most successful programs fostering women's enterprise development focused on one over-arching characteristic. Collaboration initiatives involving women's business organizations, as well as governmental agencies (Weeks and Seiler, 2001). Access to capital, technology (or lack thereof) and technical assistance were all found to be more problematic outside of major metropolitan areas (Weeks and Seiler, 2001). Finally, the study also reported predictable results – showing women entrepreneurs who were younger than their male counterparts, had operated their businesses for a shorter time period than their male counterparts and were less likely to access bank credit for use in their businesses (Weeks and Seiler, 2001).

An unexpected focus was taken by Wydick (1999) in his assessment of women entrepreneurship in Guatemala. The author assessed the impact of micro-enterprise lending to firms on the effect of child schooling (Wydick, 1999). The caveat being that this increased access to financial capital would provide an opportunity to hire labor to assist in the business and reduce the need to keep children from school (Wydick, 1999). With

the assumption being that children formerly offered their labor in enterprises operated by their mothers (Wydick, 1999).

A research on women entrepreneurs and micro enterprise entities was done closer to the Cayman Islands' proximity – completed on women entrepreneurs in the Dominican Republic (Grasmuck and Espinal, 2000). The article examined the impact of gender on the relative economic success of micro entrepreneurs, their contributions to family income, and the impact of gender ideology and income on household decision making (Grasmuck and Espinal, 2000). Drawing on data from a representative survey of 201 male and female micro-entrepreneurs in the Dominica Republic, the study assessed among other things, the importance of the informal sector to the overall economic welfare of households in that country (Grasmuck and Espinal, 2000). The authors found that both income and gender ideology matter in household decision making (Grasmuck and Espinal, 2000). They specifically concluded that high relative income contributions of both partnered men and women entrepreneurs are associated with higher degrees of influence in nontraditional spheres than expected by patriarchal norms and with even higher relative levels of influence in their traditional areas of influence (Grasmuck and Espinal, 2000). Moreover, income apparently mattered at different gender thresholds (Grasmuck and Espinal, 2000). In other words, when income does matter, the impact of income kicks in at much lower levels for women than for men (Grasmuck and Espinal, 2000).

A rare but comprehensive study on Jamaican women entrepreneurs was completed in a dissertation form (Bolles, 2007). The research project looked at the differential importance of class, color and access to opportunities among them (Bolles, 2007). By looking at small business owners, the market women in the study are seen as critical to the economy of the geographic area in which the study was conducted, Negril, as well as the broader Jamaican economy (Bolles, 2007). The Jamaican women entrepreneurs were found in retail stores, did food catering businesses, owned guesthouses, did professional services, such as hair styling, hair braiding, dressmaking and made craftwork (Bolles, 2007).

Through primarily a qualitative study, the Jamaican study focused on three such women entrepreneurs. One of the business owner's mother was also a woman entrepreneur (Bolles, 2007). This woman entrepreneur sold agricultural goods, harvested

on her own land (Bolles, 2007). A second woman entrepreneur sold baked goods made by her and other family members (Bolles, 2007). A third woman entrepreneur operated a cottage guesthouse, where she rented small apartments to visiting tourists (Bolles, 2007). The author concluded that similar to other industrial sectors women's labor is critical to but often devalued in this Jamaican society (Bolles, 2007).

A final study to look at women entrepreneurs in the Caribbean and also completed as a dissertation looked at female micro-entrepreneurs in the Jamaican urban semi-informal economy (Brown-Claude, 2003). The women entrepreneurs are often called higglers (women entrepreneurs who operate smaller, considered more informal areas) and represent only one of the many aspects of women entrepreneurship in the Jamaican economy (Brown-Claude, 2003). The author looked at forty-five Jamaican higglers had found some expected results, most were primarily married or with a male partner, had at least one child, with an on average of two children (Brown-Claude, 2003). However, because of the nature of the population, they were less educated than their samples of women entrepreneurs that have been reviewed. These higglers are synonymous with the market women who have been investigated in other countries, such as Ghana. The author also found that the women faced varied discriminatory practices in applying for financial capital to assist them with their businesses and from the wider society who stigmatized them because of their original low socioeconomic status in the society and by registered business owners who operated businesses housed in building structures as opposed to stalls that the market women occupies and by the state who did not see them as fitting into the formal sector of the economy – an inaccurate perception, since the author concluded that they contributed significantly overall to the Jamaican economy (Brown-Claude, 2003). To date, no known study has looked at women entrepreneurs in the Cayman Islands. It is in this direction that the current research paper turns its attention. In so doing, it hopes to add to the much needed body of knowledge on women entrepreneurs located in countries that are often overlooked.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE**

The results from this study consisted of women entrepreneurs surveyed in The Cayman Islands, during the period August 2009 to August 2010. The questionnaire was prepared on the basis of a questionnaire used in a similar study in the United States

in 2005 (see Smith-Hunter, 2006). The women entrepreneurs were contacted through a variety of sources, including entrepreneurship membership organizations and professors at the universities in their respective geographic areas, who work with women entrepreneurs. The surveys were then emailed to the women entrepreneurs who completed the questionnaires and emailed them back. The women entrepreneurs also had the option of completing the said survey online. The women entrepreneurs in the current sample indicated that they were at least part owners of a registered company in The Cayman Islands. Thus, this study does not include women in the informal sector of the economy.

In total, thirty-four women entrepreneurs participated in this study and while not a large sample, it still provides a rich source of data for a research area that is often lacking in coverage. Among other things, the study looked at the general characteristics of the women entrepreneurs, as well as general characteristics of their businesses. More specifically, the general characteristics of the women entrepreneurs include three key variables that have been said to be critical to the success of an entrepreneurial venture. They are: human capital, network structures and financial capital.

The general characteristics assessed for the women entrepreneurs included demographic factors such as their age, education, marital status, number of children and whether they operate the businesses as sole proprietors or with a partner. The general characteristics of the businesses included what industries they operated in, what assistance if any they received with their businesses, what problems they faced with the businesses and their level of financial success. Other questions looked at the amount of start up capital, what motivated them to start a business and what factors have led to their success.

## **RESULTS**

The results from the study of the Cayman Islands' women entrepreneurs is presented in four main categories below, namely: general characteristics, human capital characteristics, network structure characteristics and financial capital characteristics

### **GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS**

The Cayman Islands' women's companies specialize in different areas of economic activity, but are found to be located primarily in the services industry. These businesses included: consulting, travel agency, residential home for seniors, fitness facility and event

planning (see also table 1). The other areas of activity included: manufacturing and writing and publishing. The manufacturing sector consisted mainly of: furniture, gourmet food and decorative stationary. The results regarding the dominance of women entrepreneurs in the service industry has been confirmed repeatedly in other studies. Brown-Claude (2003), Fleming et al (2015), Gurman et al, (2015) and NFWBO (2000) found women entrepreneurs distributed in the following industries: business (22%), service (20%) and surprisingly construction (10%), while Instituto APOYO (2000), Matthew (2010), Pardo-del-Val (2010) and found women entrepreneurs distributed in the following industries: retail (44%) and services (9%). NFWBO (1999) found women entrepreneurs distributed in the following industries: services (46%), goods producing (19%) and communications (14%).

The top three principal motivations for the Cayman Islands' women entrepreneurs to start their own businesses were: "to be my own boss, always wanted to start my own business and dead end in my job," see also table 2. Other motivators that rounded out the top five reasons were: "to make more money and deliver an important service." These results are similar to those by the Instituto APOYO report (2000) and the report by NFWBO (2000), which also saw the personal fulfillment of owning their own business as a key motivator for the Argentinean and Latin American women entrepreneurs analyzed in those studies.

In identifying the main obstacles or problems they face as business owners, the Cayman Islands' women saw their top three problems as follows: cash flow, too many factors out of my control and rising costs of business. The study further revealed that the "finding good employees and keeping customers happy" rounded out the top five obstacles faced, see also table 3. These results are somewhat similar to others, which also cited cash flow and government regulations as serious obstacles (Weeks and Seiler, 2001; NFWBO, 2000; NFWBO, 1999; Instituto APOYO, 2000). Specifically, Seiler and Weeks (2001) and Instituto APOYO (2000) saw access to cash and government policies as the top two problems for women entrepreneurs, while NFWBO (1999) and NFWBO (2000) saw government regulations and finding good employees as the top two obstacles.

The women in the current Cayman Islands' study also played a very important role as creators of new companies, since most (63.3%) started their businesses themselves. This is followed by starting

with a partner (16.7%), see also table 8.8. of the Cayman Islands’ women entrepreneurs, 80% owned 100% of their businesses (see Table 4). This is followed by 10% owning 75% of the business and another 10% owning 50% of their businesses, see also table 5. In addition, 66.7% of the Cayman Islands’ women entrepreneurs were the sole owners of their businesses, see table 6. NFWBO (2000) and Instituto APOYO (2000) also found that women entrepreneurs were often the original creators of their businesses, with 66% and 76% respectively of the women in those studies starting the businesses themselves. Currently, most of the businesses in the current study have become corporations, with (53.3%) operating as such, followed by partnerships (30.0%), see also table 8. It should be noted that most of the partnerships the women entrepreneurs had, were with other women (64.7%), as opposed to men (35.3%). However, the average number of partners for the Cayman Islands’ women entrepreneurs were two males and also two each for females, see also Table 7.

One factor that can be used to estimate the size of a business is the number of employees. Most of the women entrepreneurs had less than 10 employees, with the average number of employees for the thirty business owners being 7.43 employees, see also Table 23. The results further showed that the average number of male employees for the Cayman Islands’ women entrepreneurs was 3.80 employees, with an average of 3.17 female employees. As expected, other studies have shown much larger average number of employees for women entrepreneurial ventures, namely eleven employees by NFWBO (1999) and five employees by Instituto APOYO (2000). One study to have closely aligned results to that of the current study was completed by NFWBO (1999), incidentally another Brazilian women entrepreneurs’ study that also found the average range of employees as existing between 10-50 employees.

**TABLE 1 – Types of Businesses**

<b>TYPE OF BUSINESS</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>TYPE OF BUSINESS</b>	<b>%</b>
Consulting	33.3	Gourmet Production	3.3
Travel Agency	6.7	Event Planning	16.7
Residential Home for Seniors	3.3	Writing/Publishing	3.3
Fitness Facility	3.3	Spa	3.3
Training	6.1	Beauty Salon	3.3
Design and Make Furniture	3.3	Furniture Retail	3.3
Decorative Stationary	3.3	Floor Company – Ceramic Tile and Carpet	3.3
Restaurant	6.7		

**TABLE 2 – Reasons for Becoming a Business Owner**

<b>REASONS FOR BECOMING A BUSINESS OWNER</b>	<b>MEANS</b>
Be my own boss	0.90
Always wanted to start my own business	1.07
Family Responsibilities	0.33
To make more money	0.60
Good way to find employment	0.13
Opportunity presented itself	0.20
Needed a job	0.17
Dissatisfied with my work situation	0.27
Thought I could do a better job than others	0.57
Dead end in my job	0.83
To deliver an important service	0.67



**TABLE 3 – Problems Faced By Business Owners**

<b>PROBLEMS FACED BY BUSINESS OWNERS</b>	<b>MEANS</b>
State and federal regulations	0.23
Too much competition	0.20
Finding good employees	0.73
Rising costs of business	0.80
Not enough time for business and personal life	0.57
Cash flow problems	1.10
Too many factors out of their control	0.80
Not enough business knowledge	0.40
Too much paperwork	0.53
Keeping Customers Happy	0.67
Others Take You Seriously	0.20

**TABLE 4 – Origins of Businesses**

<b>ORIGINS OF BUSINESSES</b>	<b>%</b>
Start the business themselves	63.3
Start the business with a partner	16.7
Purchase the business from someone else	13.3
Inherit the business	6.7
TOTAL	100.0

**TABLE 5 – Percentage of Business Owned**

<b>PERCENTAGE OF BUSINESS OWNED</b>	<b>%</b>
100	80
75	10
50	10
TOTAL	75

**TABLE 6 – Business Solely Owned By You**

<b>BUSINESS SOLELY OWNED BY YOU</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	66.7
No	33.3
TOTAL	32 (100)

**TABLE 7 – Partners in Business**

<b>PARTNERS</b>	
How Many Businesses Had Partners	Yes – 36.7 No – 63.3
Those With Male Partners	35.3%, Average Male Partners – 2
Those With Female Partners	64.7%, Average Female Partners – 2

**TABLE 8 – Types of Businesses**

<b>TYPE OF BUSINESS</b>	<b>%</b>
Sole Proprietorship	16.7
Partnership	30.0
Corporation	53.3
TOTAL	100.0

**TABLE 9 – Years in Business**

<b>YEARS IN BUSINESS</b>	<b>%</b>
1- 5 years	10.0
6-10 years	36.7
11- 15 years	20.0
>15 years	33.3
TOTAL	100.0

Average number of years in business = 13.10 years

**TABLE 10 – Age of Business Owners**

AGE OF BUSINESS OWNERS	%
20-30 years	0.0
31-40 years	10.0
41-50 years	26.7
>50 years	63.3
TOTAL	100.0

Average age of business owners = 53.87 years

**TABLE 11 – Race of Business Owners**

RACE OF BUSINESS OWNERS	%
Latina	3.3
White, not Latina	16.7
Black	60.0
Asian	3.3
Other	16.7
TOTAL	100.0

The companies owned by the women entrepreneurs were a mixed bag, with (36.7%) owning their businesses for six to ten years and 33.3% owning their businesses for more than fifteen years (see also table 9). Weeks and Seiler (2000) and Instituto APOYO also found that the women entrepreneurs in their study had been in business for less than ten years, while NFWBO (2000) had slightly different results with the sample of women entrepreneurs showing an average tenure of twelve years in business.

Other miscellaneous general characteristics on the women entrepreneurs in this study included: the location of the business, having children, age of the business owners and race of the business owners.

Most of the women by a small margin located their businesses outside the home (53.3%), see table 26. These numbers echo results by NFWBO (2000) and Instituto APOYO (2000) which also found most of the women entrepreneurs in their studies also located outside the home (71% and 76% respectively). Most of the women entrepreneurs in the current study had children, with results indicating that they had two children on average, see Table 16. This result has also been confirmed in other research studies which also found the women entrepreneurs to primarily have children, averaging two children on average; NFWBO (2000) 2.4 children on average, Brown-Claude (2003); NFWBO (1999) 2-3 children on average and Instituto APOYO (2000) –3 children on average.

Most of the women entrepreneurs were in the more than fifty age group (63.3%) and the 41-50 age group (26.7%), with the average age of the women business owners being 53.9 years, see table 10. These results are similar to others that found the women entrepreneurs on average to be in their 40s, specifically

48 years old (NFWBO, 2000) and Weeks and Seiler (2000) who found them to be a little less than 50 years old on average, but differed from NFWBO (1999) who found the women be between 45-54 years old on average. As expected, most of the women entrepreneurs were Blacks (60.0%). However, the sample included other races such as Whites (16.7%), Other (16.7%), Latina (3.3%) and Asian (3.3%), see also table 11. The Cayman Islands is a highly multi-racial country and the results from this study on women entrepreneurs just confirmed this fact.

### **Human Capital Characteristics**

A significant number of the Cayman Islands' women business owners had university educational experience (80.0%), with a large portion of that percentage pursuing graduate school (50.0%), see also table 12. These results are slightly higher than others that have also shown women entrepreneurs to be a highly educated group; NFWBO (2000) found that 68% of the women entrepreneurs had a college education, while Instituto APOYO (2000) found 66% of the women entrepreneurs in their study as having a college education. This departed sharply from another study done on women entrepreneurs in the Cayman Islands, which found the women entrepreneurs in that study to be from the lower educational levels (Brown-Claude, 2003).

The study showed that most of the Cayman Islands' women entrepreneurs (66.7%) had not been employed in previous businesses, see also table 13. This is similar to other studies which showed that most women entrepreneurs had not had previous employment experiences before their current venture (Smith-Hunter, 2006; Hokari, 2013; Kumar, 2015; Odey (2015). In addition, to their academic experiences, the Cayman

Islands’ women entrepreneurs also detailed their other human capital experiences, see table 14, personal experience, seminars and programs related to the business, supervisory and management experiences showed the largest mean values.

**Network Structure Characteristics**

A good percentage of the women in the research study are married (56.7%), followed by the second largest percentage – being single/never married (26.7%), see also table 15. This relatively and surprisingly low marriage rate was also confirmed in another study by NFWBO (1999), but differed from that found by others, with NFWBO (2000) finding 74% of the women entrepreneurs in their study to be married and Instituto APOYO (2000) finding a 61% marriage rate for the women entrepreneurs in their study, while Brown-Claude(2003) also found high marriage rates for the women entrepreneurs in that study.

Most of the women entrepreneurs received assistance from family (86.7%) at the start-up stage of their businesses compared to the assistance they

received from friends (23.3%) and other sources (13.3%), see also table 17. This majority help from family continued as their businesses grew (53.3%), but it was less than at the start-up stage of their business. Assistance from family and friends in the operation of the business has also been reported in other studies (NFWBO, 2000; Instituto APOYO, 2000; Weeks and Seiler, 2001; Ombati, 2015; Osman et al, 2010).

For the Cayman Islands’ women business owners, most of their family and friends owned businesses (70.0% and 90.0% respectively), see also table 18. In addition, that table showed that 36.7% of the Cayman Islands’ business owners had family working in the business and 26.7% having friends having friends working in the business. The Cayman Islands’ women business owners belonged to membership organizations at low rates, with 73.3% reporting that they did not belong to such organizations, see also table 19. Finally, only 20% of the Cayman Islands’ women entrepreneurs saw going into business as an only alternative, see Table 24.

**TABLE 12 – Educational Level**

<b>EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF BUSINESS OWNERS</b>	<b>%</b>
Graduate Level	50.0
College	30.0
High/Vocational Level	20.0
Elementary School	0.0
TOTAL	100.0

**TABLE 13 – Previous Self-Employment**

<b>PREVIOUS SELF-EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE</b>	<b>%</b>
YES	33.3
NO	66.7
TOTAL	100.0

**TABLE 14 – Other Experiences**

<b>OTHER EXPERIENCES</b>	<b>MEANS</b>
Job in the same field as the business	0.83
School education directly related to the business	0.87
Seminars, programs relevant to the business	1.20
Hobby, personal experiences in the same field as the business	1.20
Supervisory/management experiences	1.20
Accounting experience	0.83
Sales/Marketing experiences	1.10

**TABLE 15 – Marital Status**

<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>	<b>%</b>
Married	56.7
Separated/Divorced	10.0
Single/Never Married	26.7
Widowed	6.7
TOTAL	100.0



**TABLE 16 – Information on Children**

What Percentage Had Children	63.3%
Average Number of Children	2.0 children

**TABLE 17 – Assistance From Other Sources**

ASSISTANCE AT START UP STAGE OF BUSINESS	%	ASSISTANCE CURRENTLY	%
Family	86.7	Family	53.3
Friends	23.3	Friends	33.3
Other	13.3	Other	13.3
TOTAL	100.0	TOTAL	100.0

**TABLE 18 – Friends and Family Members Business Owners**

Family members who are business owners	70.0%
Friends who are business owners	90.0%
Family who work in the business	36.7
Friends who work in the business	26.7

**TABLE 19 – Membership Organizations**

MEMBERSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS	%
Yes	26.7
No	73.3
TOTAL	100.0

**TABLE 20 – Financial Capital Difficulties**

START-UP STAGE OF BUSINESS	%	CURRENTLY	%
Yes	53.3	Yes	51.3
No	46.7	No	48.7
TOTAL	100.0	TOTAL	100.0

**TABLE 21 – Bank Loan Access**

DIFFICULTY OF BANK LOAN ACCESS	%
Not Difficult at all	60.0
Somewhat difficult	10.0
Very difficult	30.0
TOTAL	100.0

**TABLE 22 – SOURCE OF START-UP FUNDS**

SOURCE OF START-UP FUNDS	%
Personal savings	53.3
Gift from family/friends	13.3
Loan from previous owner	0.0
Credit card/personal loan	6.7
Bank Loan	10.0
Money from partners	3.3
Loan From Family and Friends	3.3
Other	10.0

Average Start-Up Capital = \$8,592

**TABLE 23 – Number of Employees**

Average Number of Employees	7.43 employees
Average Number of Employees – Men	3.80 employees
Average Number of Employees – Women	3.17 employees

**TABLE 24 – Going into Business Only Alternative**

Going Into Business as Only Alternative	%
YES	20.0
NO	80.0

## FINANCIAL CAPITAL CHARACTERISTICS

A considerable challenge facing women entrepreneurs worldwide is access to financial capital. The current results serve to reinforce that difficulty. For example, fifty-three percent of the women entrepreneurs had difficulties obtaining financial capital when they started their businesses, see table 20. This difficulty declined to fifty-one percent as they continued to operate their businesses. Their access to bank loans was somewhat difficult (10.0%) or very difficult (30.0%) for a minority of the women business owners in the study, see table 21. To finance their businesses, the women entrepreneurs thus primarily relied on their savings (84.8%) for some of the start-up funds. This was followed by money from partners (27.3%) and then bank loans (18.2%), see table 22. This difficulty in obtaining start-up funds for a business was also documented by others, who also purported that the women in turn had to rely on their own personal funds for the start-up of their businesses (Weeks and Seiler, 2001; Instituto APOYO, 2000; NFWBO, 2000; Brown-Claude, 2003; Roomi et al, 2010; Shastri et al, 2010; Sui et al, 2011; Swanson, 2010; Wegener, 2014; Wood et al, 2011).

The average amount of start-up funds used by the women entrepreneurs was \$8,592. These results are less than/equal to/slightly more than that found by

others in starting their businesses. Specifically, NFWBO (2000) found that just over sixty-five percent of the women entrepreneurs in that study had used \$50,000 or less as start-up funds.

Net profit and personal income for the businesses were mainly at the lower end (\$0-\$50,000) with the average figures for personal income being \$32,267 and an average net profit of \$28,687, see table 25. These lower grouping of financial figures were not also true for the sales/gross revenue figures, with most occurring in the more than \$100,00 range, with an average of \$159,655 in sales/total revenue figures. The seemingly large averages for net profit and sales/gross revenue figures are as a result of the wide range in figures and more specifically related to the few “outlier businesses” mentioned previously, albeit the beauty salon, hotel chain and shipping manufacturing businesses. NFWBO’s (2000) gross revenue figures also showed a wide range in their sample from small to large businesses, with 25% grossing under \$100,000, 24% grossing between \$100,000 and \$499,000 and 27% earning more than \$500,000. Instituto APOYO (2000) found lower gross revenue figures, namely: 33% under \$25,000, 16% between \$25,000 and \$50,000, 9% between \$50,001 and \$100,000

**TABLE 25 – Net Profit and Personal Income from Businesses**

\$ Amounts	NET PROFIT %	PERSONAL INCOME %	SALES/TOTAL REVENUE %
0 – 25,0000	53.3	20.0	10.0
25,001 – 50,000	20.0	30.0	3.3
50,001 – 75,000	6.7	26.7	0.0
75,001 – 100,000	3.3	6.7	10.0
>100,000	16.7	16.7	76.7
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0
Average Figures	\$28,687	\$32,267	\$159, 655

**Table 26 – Physical Location of Women Businesses**

Location of Business	%
Home	14 (46.7%)
Office Space	16 (53.3%)
TOTAL	30 (100.00%)

## **QUALITATIVE DISCUSSION ON CAYMAN ISLANDS' WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS**

The Cayman Islands has long been a country that had a very high regard for females in the population. The women entrepreneurs in that country speak openly of “always” having the confidence to do what they were doing, that is, pursuing business ownership. While the women entrepreneurs often operated the traditional types of businesses that were found in the services industry, some of the women entrepreneurs had a mixture of experiences. Some of the Cayman Islands’ women entrepreneurs were older, with no children, having never been married and had devoted their lives to their business ownership. Others were young, married and with children. Others still had operated their businesses as partnerships with their husbands for some time and now sole owners of related businesses or had moved on to form later partnerships with other women.

For the most part, the women entrepreneurs were highly educated and were not primarily “traders” or “higglers” (which operated smaller businesses), but were instead operating larger businesses. Some of the business came from creative and somewhat revolutionary ideas. For example, one woman entrepreneur started a business that acted as a “middle layer” between the utility companies and customers. This idea, while common in other countries, had never been done before in Cayman Islands. While this started small at first, as trust built among customers, word spread of the company’s efficiency, accuracy and timeliness in paying these utility bills and the woman owned business became popular. Another business owner spoke of forming a partnership with her sister, sister’s husband and her husband to offer a business that was an event planning business that also offered a recreational location that offered in door golfing – a unique idea for a country that is located in a tropical area of the world and with summer weather year end.

The Cayman Islands’ women entrepreneurs spoke constantly of the struggles they experienced in starting and operating their businesses. Struggles that included a lack of readily available access to financial capital. A struggle that included government regulations that seemed to consist of endless “red tape” that made it difficult to start a business, get the needed permission to operate a business and to keep the business in constant operation. The Cayman Islands’ women entrepreneurs lamented that to overcome such “red tape”, they would often have to rely on bribery (which

is accepted, albeit informally in the Cayman Islands) to get certain regulations approved or relationships with individuals in influential positions to get things done. These happenings they expressed as frustrating and as counterproductive to their pursuance of their entrepreneurial goals.

The Cayman Islands’ women entrepreneurs did belong to membership organizations but felt that they needed more substantive knowledge and experience to assist them with their businesses. They felt that the services they currently were exposed to, needed to be expanded and include other knowledge. Knowledge that was focused, concentrated and specific to their businesses, instead of being more generic and not potentially relevant. As such, they felt that their businesses were stymied or limited by their lack of exposure to such knowledge and while they spoke of many ideas to expand the business, including internationally, most of the women entrepreneurs had not done so and thus their business remained mainly small and local. They saw the promise of hope as new government agencies were created to assist women entrepreneurs in the country.

## **CONCLUSION OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN THE CAYMAN ISLANDS**

Located primarily in the services industry, the businesses operated by the Cayman Islands’ women entrepreneurs were generally of a nature that provide subcontracting services to other larger corporations or those that assist women in their everyday lives. The drive to be independent led the Cayman Islands’ women entrepreneurs to start their own businesses, most of whom started and developed the businesses, that is, they decided to pursue business ownership without an explicit business partner, but instead pursued the businesses on their own. The women entrepreneurs’ undertaking of their own businesses was based primarily on a drive to be their own boss or the fact that they had always had a dream to pursue business ownership.

Overall the research literature offers an integrative perspective on why women choose to pursue business ownership. This integrative perspective usually encompasses gender, family, work and economic reasons. Thus, women entrepreneurs tend to pursue business ownership for reasons ranging from starting a career to the issue of escaping gender and socioeconomic issues in society and/or the mainstream labor market. One common theme that has been put forward centers on women’s inability to escape the rigidity and inflexibility that a mainstream labor market

position places women in. Such rigidity limits her ability to fulfill other roles in her life – such a wife and mother. The lack of adequate mentors, role models, career advancement opportunities and the stagnation that sometimes come after being in a particular job and/or career has also been seen as playing a large role in women opting out from the mainstream labor market to pursue business ownership.

The main problems that faced the Cayman Islands' women entrepreneurs as they tried to operate their businesses were of a financial nature, with cash flow problems and the rising costs of business being prominent. These problems led to a sense of helplessness at times, with the women entrepreneurs further feeling that there were so many business related factors that were beyond their control and thus not being easily quelled by them. These financially related difficulties were experienced by the women entrepreneurs both at the start up stage and as they continued to operate their businesses and led to frustrations on their part as they were denied bank loans to further their business ventures. Financial capital is a crucial resource to a business' establishment, operation and expansion. While women entrepreneurs have been shown to be modest in the desire for vast debt to infuse in their businesses (Smith-Hunter, 2006), they do acknowledge that some debt is needed when operating a business. It is in the fact that this debt has not been as forthcoming as it should be that undermines the women entrepreneur's confidence and leaves their business operating in a less than optimal position.

In terms of their network structures, the Cayman Islands' women entrepreneurs had very low memberships in organizations but instead relied heavily on family and friends for their network capital. The low memberships in organizations might be related to a number of factors. First, that the women entrepreneurs don't see these organizations as particularly relevant to the operation of their businesses or as helpful from a practical viewpoint. Second, the fact that these memberships oftentimes carry a membership fee and that the women entrepreneurs might see such monies as better spent elsewhere in their businesses. Finally, the fact that there are not a lot of such membership organizations that exist in the Cayman Islands and whilst male entrepreneurs rely on other informal sectors and social events to build their network structures, work/family conflict issues preclude the Cayman Islands' women entrepreneurs from heavily pursuing those types of network structures to build their network capital. This

heavily involvement in work/family conflict issues and the gendered stereotypes for women in the Cayman Islands' is changing.

Demographically, the Cayman Islands' women entrepreneurs were a bit older, had lower marriage rates and a high percentage did not have children. This overall stance is a departure from other women entrepreneurs but is in keeping with the profile of a more career – as opposed to family-oriented woman (Bahmani, 2012). This career-oriented notion is further supported by the high levels of education the women entrepreneurs had, indicating a focus on advancing career wise. Further conclusions regarding the Cayman Islands' women entrepreneurs as related to their human capital potential showed that while they had a lot of experience in management and marketing, a lot of their other experience in regards to the business came informally, from seminars and as a hobby. The combined effects of their education and their experiences painted a picture of the Cayman Islands' women entrepreneurs as embracing entrepreneurship as the fulfillment of a dream and not as a last resort after other avenues had been closed to them or other opportunities had been blocked from them.

Resilience seems to mark the hallmark and essence of the Cayman Islands' women entrepreneurs. Overall the findings suggest a group of women who have bravely stepped outside of the mainstream labor market to pursue their economic opportunities and to strive to attain financial stability in the entrepreneurship world. This is no easy feat. Especially, since the said women entrepreneurs could have obtained and pursued more lofty opportunities based on their educational attainments. Overall, the findings suggest a clear, definitive impact of women entrepreneurship to the nation's economy. While the results are mixed (some positive, some negative) on what the women entrepreneurs have to do to contribute to that country's economy, there is nothing contradictory about the impact business ownership must have on their family's income and the benefits that can be garnered for the overall family's disposable income the accumulation of wealth.

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