

Successful Afro-Caribbean Women Entrepreneurs:

Business Challenges, Strategies and Motivations

A Research Report

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Report Details

- Final Report
- Submission Date: 1 October 2018



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Title: **Successful Afro-Caribbean Women Entrepreneurs:
Business Challenges, Strategies and Motivations**

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Date Submitted: **1 October 2018**

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SUCCESSFUL AFRO-CARIBBEAN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS: BUSINESS CHALLENGES, STRATEGIES AND MOTIVATIONS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Purpose

While Compete Caribbean (2016) found that the region's female entrepreneurs had significantly smaller firms, were less likely to both seek credit from financial institutions and take advantage of technical assistance, and were more likely to perceive access to finance as a business obstacle than their male counterparts, there was a small number (approximately 3,000 from the collective workforce of about 1.2 million women) who had successful businesses with five or more employees (InfoDev, 2015). The purpose of this study was to discover these rare women's motivations for starting a business, the challenges they faced, and how they overcame them to become successful.

1.2. Methodology

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 35 Afro-Caribbean women who owned 'successful' businesses (defined as those that have existed for at least five years and which have at least five full-time employees), with 10, 11 and 14 interviewees being from Trinidad, Barbados and Jamaica, respectively.

1.3. Findings

The three main challenges to their businesses that the women believed were related to gender were: 1) Not being taken seriously as businesspersons; 2) Childcare and having children; and 3) A lack of social acceptance for deviating from the cultural norms for their sex. The main strategies for overcoming the challenge of not being taken seriously were: 1) Forming mixed-sex partnerships; and 2) Using male proxies. The main methods used to overcome the challenge of childcare and having children were: 1) Controlling the structure of their families; and 2) Getting assistance with childcare. The main means of achieving social acceptability were: 1)

Getting married; and 2) Financial success. In terms of motivation, 85% of the women cited pull or opportunity-driven motivations, 15% cited push or necessity-driven motivations, while none of the women cited a desire for work-life as a motivation for going into business.

1.4. Recommendations

To increase the number of women entrepreneurs in the Caribbean who own small, medium or large businesses:

1. Improve the affordability of childcare by incorporating childcare-related breaks and incentives into the islands' tax codes;
2. Start a women's only Development Bank, with a directorship and staff that is mostly female, and to assist solely women;
3. Institute incentives and penalties aimed at increasing the number of women at the board level in commercial banks and other lending institutions;
4. Develop a mentorship programme for women entrepreneurs at the pivotal, initial-success stage in business, when they start to be subject to competition; and
5. Improve social acceptance in the short term by promoting female entrepreneurship through public awareness campaigns, and in the long term by including entrepreneurship in the school curriculum.

1.5. Research Limitations

This study's focus on Afro-Caribbean women is a limitation because we cannot compare the experiences of the considered women with those of other ethnicities (Indian, Chinese, White, etc.) in the region.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Conceptual Framework

Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship are long-established driving forces of economic growth and development (Schumpeter, 1934). Societies in which entrepreneurs flourish benefit from their activities by having more consumption opportunities, jobs, and tax revenues (Baumol, 1990).

Female entrepreneurial activity represents an increasingly-important part of economies around the world. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitors 2017 Women's Report estimated there were 163 million women starting or running new businesses in 74 economies around the world, and an additional 111 million running established businesses (GEM, 2017). In the United States, women entrepreneurs are majority owners of about 10 million businesses, or 36% of all enterprises (Brush *et al.*, 2014). However, women's share of entrepreneurship in Latin America and the Caribbean lags behind more advanced nations in Europe, North America and Asia (Terjesen and Amorós, 2010), with women entrepreneurs accounting for only 8% of the total workforce in the English-Speaking Caribbean¹ (InfoDev, 2015).

Not only are there proportionally fewer women entrepreneurs in the Caribbean, Compete Caribbean (a private sector development program that jointly funded by the Inter-American Development Bank, the U.K's Department for International Development (DFID), The Government of Canada and the Caribbean Development Bank; 2016) found that, when compared to their male counterparts, the region's women entrepreneurs had significantly smaller firms, were less likely to both seek credit from financial institutions and take advantage of technical assistance, and

¹ The English-Speaking or Commonwealth Caribbean consists of two coastal and ten island nations that were colonies of Great Britain. They are: Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

were more likely to perceive access to finance as a business obstacle. Of an estimated 1.2 million women in the Caribbean workforce, 228,000 (13%) are self-employed, with 204,000 having no employees, and only 3,000 (1.3%) having five employees or more (InfoDev, 2015; Figure 1).

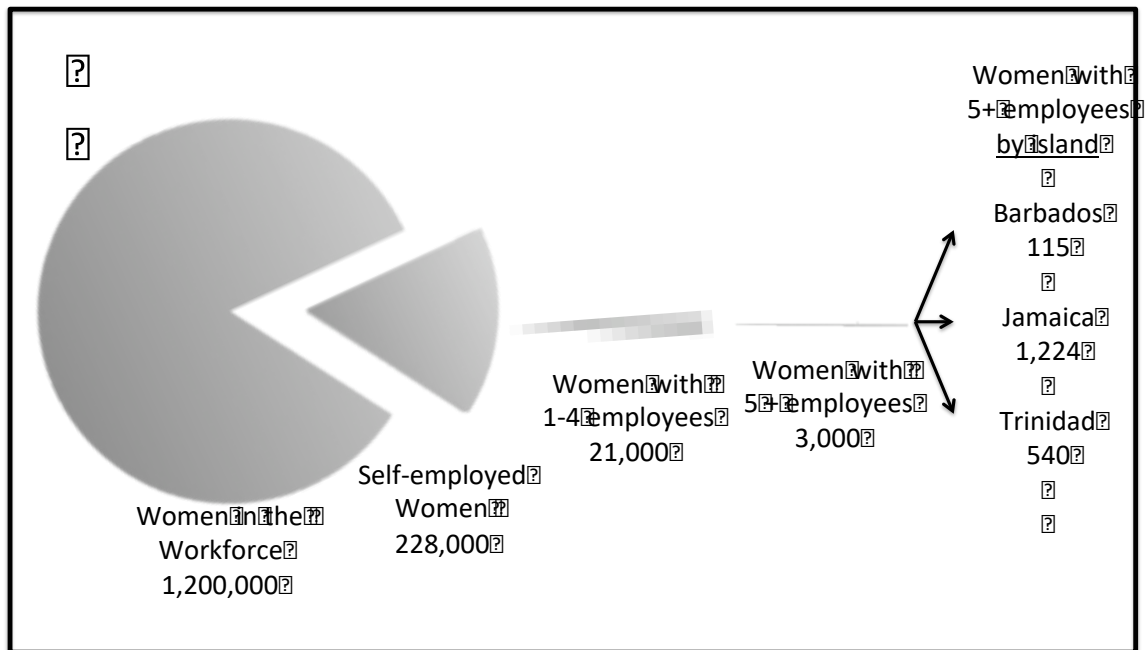


Figure 1. Size of the Caribbean's¹ Female Workforce (Data from InfoDev, 2015).

2.2. English-Speaking Caribbean

When trying to understand why Caribbean women are underrepresented in entrepreneurship, it is important to consider the socio-cultural context of the region. The English-speaking (or Commonwealth) Caribbean (ESC) consists of two coastal mainland countries and ten islands that were British colonies, but which are now independent nations. This study focused on the three largest islands—Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados—because they contain 67% of the ESC's people and account for 70% of its GDP (World Bank, 2018). The majority of the people are descendants of African slaves or Indian indentured servants (who were brought to the Caribbean after slavery was abolished). Blacks comprise 92% of Barbados and Jamaica's

populations, and are tied (35%) with Indian-heritage persons as Trinidad's largest ethnic group (CIA, 2017).

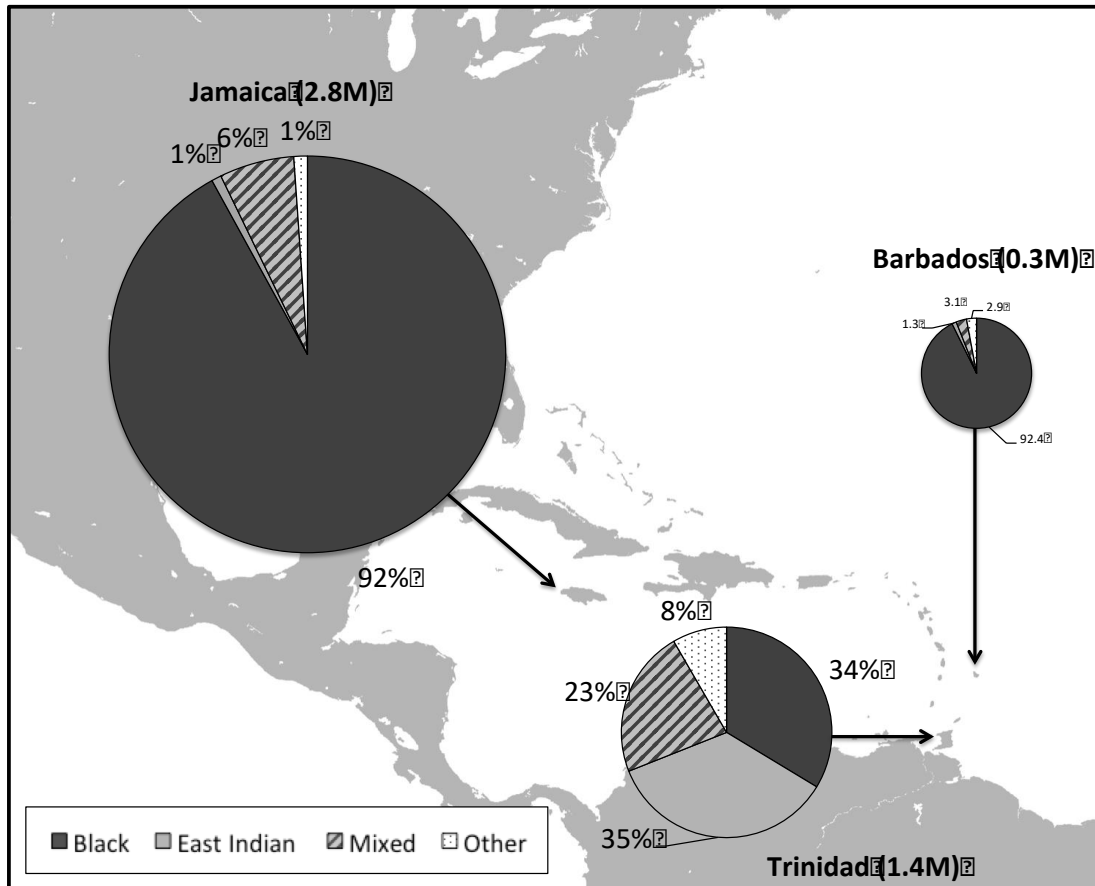


Figure 2. Population Size and Ethnicity of Study Sites (Data from CIA, 2017).

2.2.1. Respectability

An historical legacy of slavery and colonial rule that persists in the now-independent islands of the Anglo-Caribbean, ‘respectability’ is part of a value system in which the culture, language, and institutions of the former colonisers are seen as superior to any values originating in the colonised societies (Wilson, 1969; 1973); and, as such, are aspired to. The two most-important institutions that embody the values of respectability inherited by the post-colonial Caribbean from its colonial past are the school and the church. ‘Respectable’ persons pursue educations (preferably to university level) to attain jobs in a profession, the civil service, or in large businesses within the private sector. ‘Respectability’ requires public sincerity in worship at a Christian church, and ‘properly-married’ spouses living monogamously in a nuclear-family household, complete with domestic servants. It

has been theorized that because of slavery and colonialism, and the value system of respectability that it created, entrepreneurship is not viewed as a desirable occupation:

Black entrepreneurship in the Caribbean is retarded because of social psychological factors, which are the result of colonialism and slavery” (Boxhill, 2003:38)

Education is valued as a means to achieve status and as a means to acquire a good job. Education is also valued for its own sake. The region’s peoples are job seekers rather than job creators...It is quite possible that the content of the region’s education curricula has induced a trained incapacity in people to adopt values essential to the generation of wealth.” (Danns and Mentore, 1995: 45)

2.2.2. Intersectionality

Mollett and Faria (2013) argue that gender is connected, or intersectional, to other social categorizations (including race and class) and cannot be considered in isolation. In post-colonial Caribbean societies, the power-of-race is socially embedded and, in developing policies to assist women entrepreneurs, one must acknowledge that people of Indian and (especially) African heritage face greater obstacles than those of European descent. Indeed, there is some evidence that race influences the ability to gain financing for Trinidadian entrepreneurs in a study by Storey (2004) who examined loan applications and denial rates from banks to micro- and small-enterprises in Trinidad, found that denial rates were higher for those of African descent. Being of African descent added 25% to the reported denial rates when all other measures of credit-worthiness were held constant.

2.3. Success and Motivation

In addition to understanding how the local context might influence entrepreneurship, it is also important to understand, more broadly, what is meant by ‘success’, and the role of motivation in determining success. Entrepreneurial

success is defined as “the favourable or prosperous conclusion of any attempt, aim, activity or business” (Cabrera and Mauricio, 2017:41). It can be defined in objective terms (through business results indicators; e.g., survival and job creation; Dalborg, 2012) or subjective terms (according to the entrepreneurs aims or motivation; Weber, 2014).

Entrepreneurial motivation can be broadly divided into ‘push’ or necessity-driven motivation and ‘pull’ or opportunity-driven motivations. Push/necessity-driven motivations are those that force an entrepreneur to go into business because they have no other choice; while pull/opportunity-driven motivations are those that attract or entice an entrepreneur into business. Additionally, there is a trend among female entrepreneurs for starting businesses as a way to seek a work-life balance, (essentially the idea that women are attracted to self-employment out of a desire to have control over their own work schedule and avoid the ridged timetable of a corporate job that does not allow them the flexibility they want to look after their children). Trinidad’s sole study of female-entrepreneur motivation (Ramkissoon-Babwah, 2015) matched findings in developed countries (e.g., Langan-Fox, 2005), which showed that independence and flexibility, that allowed women to look after their families while still earning sufficient money, was a primary motivating factor.

2.4. Aims

While the InfoDev (2015) study found there were very few Caribbean women entrepreneurs with businesses that had five or more employees, they do exist. The purpose of this study was to uncover these rare women’s motivations for starting a business, the challenges they faced and how they overcame them to become successful, so that this information could be used to propose policy interventions to increase the number of successful female entrepreneurs. As a consequence of the intersectional nature of race and gender in the Caribbean and evidence of racial discrimination in business financing (Storey, 2004), it was decided to focus the study on Afro-Caribbean women. Blacks are not only the majority but are also at the

bottom of the islands' social hierarchies. Insights that assist black female entrepreneurs will help the most disadvantaged women.

The research questions are:

RQ1. What challenges did successful Afro-Caribbean Women entrepreneurs face when starting their business, and how did they overcome those challenges?

RQ2. What motivated successful Afro-Caribbean women to start their businesses?

3. METHODS

3.1. Data Collection

This study used semi-structured interviews to understand women's experiences as business owners. The semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face with 31 Afro-Caribbean women who owned 'successful' businesses between 19 April and 05 May 2018, with four additional interviews conducted virtually (via the internet, using Skype telecommunications software) between 09 May and 26 June. In all, 35 interviews were conducted, with ten, 11 and 14 interviewees being from Trinidad, Barbados and Jamaica. The interview instrument is attached in Appendix I.

The interviews started with the 'grand tour' question, "Tell me about how you came to start your own business," and continued with questions on the women's motivations for and reservations about owning a business, the challenges and opportunities they experienced, the strategies they used to overcome obstacles, information on their families, their education, and descriptions of the day-to-day activities involved in running their business.

The final section of the interview instrument contained quantitative questions on the businesses' ages and employee compositions that corresponded to data collected by the Productivity, Technology, Skills and Innovation in the Caribbean Survey (PROTEqIN), conducted by the Inter-American Development Bank in collaboration with Compete Caribbean in 2014. The purpose of the quantitative data was to compare the structure of successful women-owned businesses in the Caribbean to that of other businesses in the Caribbean.

We identified study participants using purposeful sampling methods (where information-rich cases are deliberately selected for in-depth study; Patton, 1990): Specifically, criteria sampling and snowball sampling. Each study participant was an Afro-Caribbean woman business owner who had started her own business and who had not acquired her business through family relations (neither inherited nor

marital). The criteria for business 'success' were:

1. The age of the business. The business must have been operating for more than five years. This criterion was based on the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor model, in which a business is considered to be an "Established Business" if it is at least 3.5 years old and unsuccessful businesses do not persist (GEM, 2018). We set the age at five years because we believed a successful business needed to be more established.
2. The number of employees. The business must have a minimum of five full-time employees. This criterion was based on the definition of MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) used by the World Bank in their Enterprise Surveys conducted throughout the Caribbean in 2010 (and subsequently by the Compete Caribbean survey in 2014), and in which micro-enterprises have between one and four employees. InfoDev (2015) estimated that only 3,000 women-led businesses in the Caribbean had five or more employees (i.e., were larger than Micro-enterprises).

Having established the sampling criteria, internet searches were conducted and knowledgeable business people and business organizations² in each island were contacted and asked to recommend prospective participants who met the criteria. Nominees snowballed from there and converged on a number of possible participants recommended by different sources.

3.2. Data Analysis

All interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Interviews were analysed using thematic qualitative text analysis, facilitated by the CAQDAS (Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis) software, NVivo (QSR International, 2017). After initial

² The following organizations were contacted: Association of Female Entrepreneurs of Trinidad and Tobago, Powerful Ladies of Trinidad and Tobago, The Jamaica Manufacturers and Exporters Association, The American Chamber of Commerce of Jamaica, The Branson Center of Entrepreneurship, Barbados Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Compete Caribbean)

work with the texts to develop the topical categories, we chose to focus the analysis on three main topical categories: 1) Business Challenges; 2) Strategies for Overcoming Challenges; and 3) Business Motivations. The first coding process used only these main categories; and a second coding process used sub-categories developed/elaborated within the main categories. All coding was performed by the same person to preclude the need for testing of the coding's interrater reliability.

From the PROTEqIN data set, which contains information on firms from 13 Caribbean countries, we extracted the data on business size, business sector and employee composition for Barbados (123 firms), Jamaica (241 firms), and Trinidad (370 firms), and compared those figures to ones we collected for these parameters.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Demographic Profile

The women ranged in age from their early 30s to their 80s (Figure 3a), and they most-often started their businesses in their late 20s or early 30s (Figure 3b). Seventy-five percent of the women had tertiary-level education (Figure 3c). Approximately 40% of the women had some specific business training: This included six with Masters of Business Administration degrees and nine with some non-degree training, such as that offered by the Branson Center for Business Innovation in Jamaica or the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme in Barbados. This business training was usually undertaken after the start of their business in an effort to improve their ability to manage their enterprise.

With respect to the women's family structure, the most striking result was how many of the women had married (with 77% being either currently married, widowed or divorced), and how few of them had children (46%). This is the opposite of the profile of average women in these islands, the majority of whom remain unmarried and have children—with 34%, 24% and 54% of women having married in Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago, respectively (Figure 3d; BSS, 2013; STATIN Jamaica, 2018; CSOTT, 2012). It is also worth noting that the woman with the largest number of employees (1,800) did not start her business until she was 50 and her children were already adults. More than half the women in the study (53%) had no children (Figure 3e), giving a fertility rate of 1.09 for the study's women—significantly lower than the national fertility rates of 1.96 in Jamaica, 1.71 in Trinidad, and 1.68 in Barbados (CIA Factbook, 2017). For women who had children, the mean age gap between consecutive children when both offspring were born before the start of their business was 2.85 ± 0.9 years; and when both children were born after the start of the business the gap was 2.25 ± 0.5 years. However, if one child was born before the start of the business and one after, the average age gap between the children was 8.16 ± 4.0 years (Figure 3f).

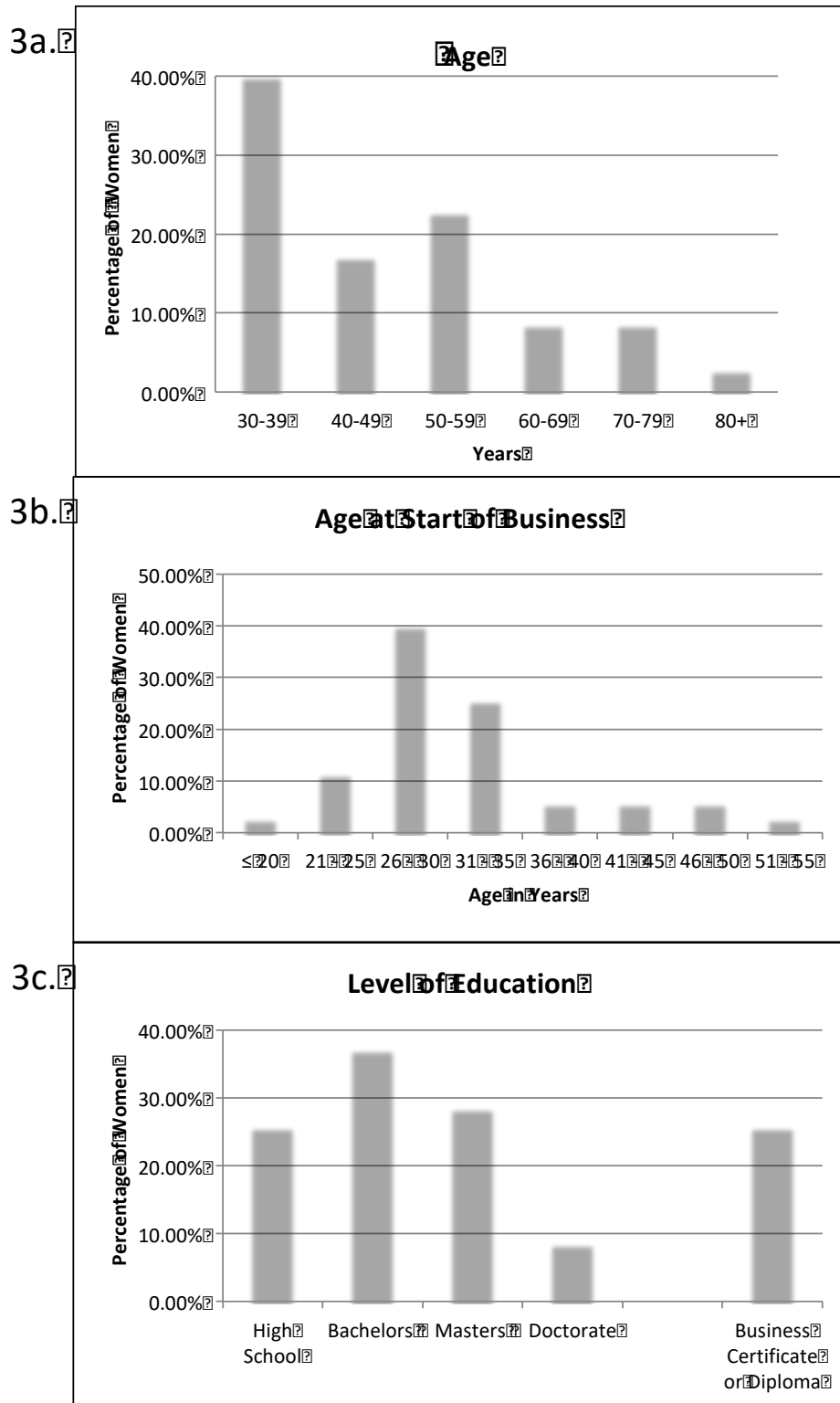
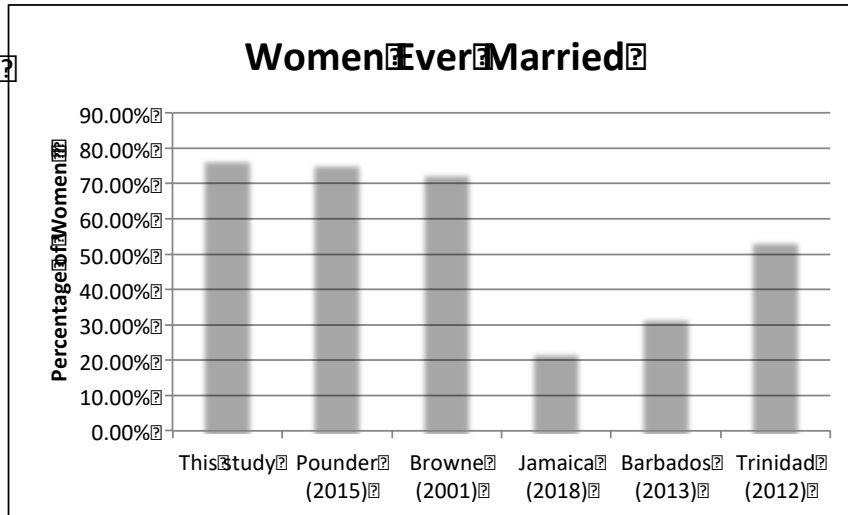
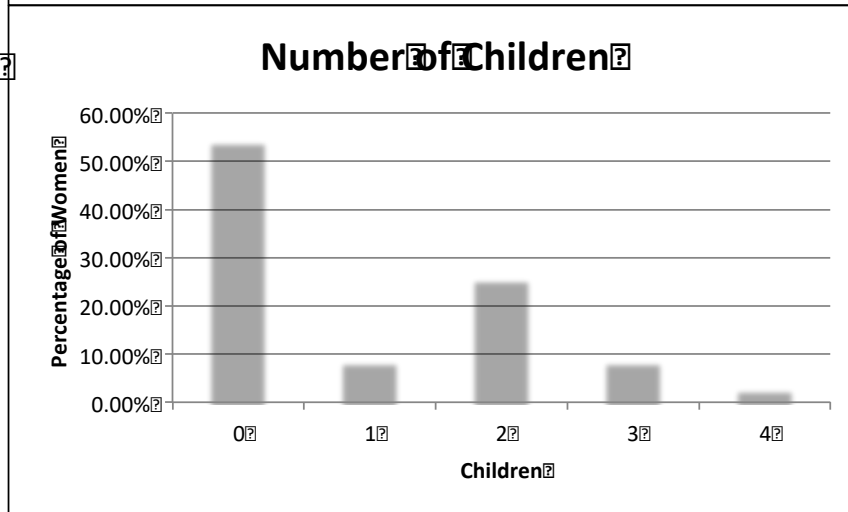


Figure 3. Demographic Profile of Study Participants: a. Age; b. Age at Start of Business; and c. Level of Education.

3d.



3e.



3f.

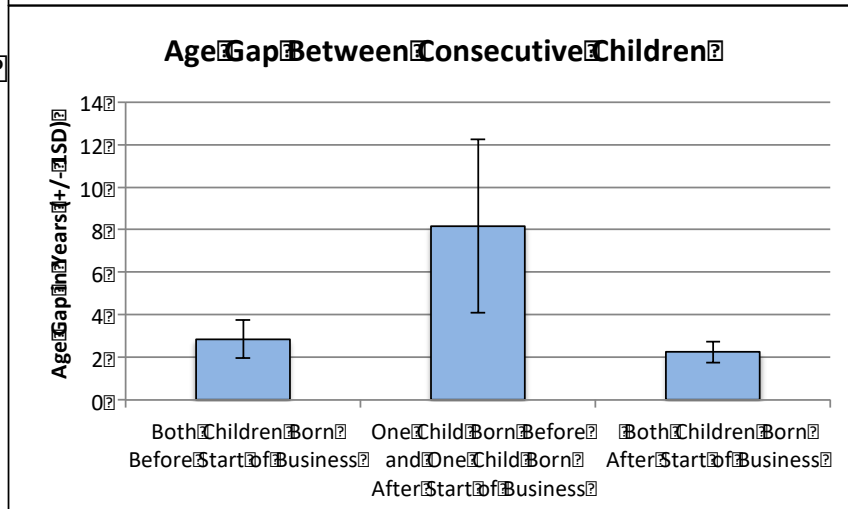


Figure 3. Demographic Profile of Study Participants (Continued): d. Marital Status; e. Number of Children; and f. Age Gap Between Consecutive Children.

4.2. Business Profile

The businesses the women started had been in existence for a minimum of five years to a maximum of more than 40 years. However, most businesses were less than 10 years old (Figure 4a).

Using the same definition for MSMEs (Micro-, Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises) as used in the PROTEqIN surveys (Micro, 1-4 employees; Small, 5-19 employees; Medium, 20-99 employees; and Large, 100 or more employees) we found the proportion of small and medium size businesses was very similar to that found by the PROTEqIN surveys for all businesses (male- and female-owned) on the islands. There was, however, a smaller proportion of large businesses in our study than in the PROTEqIN surveys. With respect to the type of businesses, the women in our survey ran comparatively fewer manufacturing businesses (18%) when compared to the overall proportion of manufacturing businesses (32.2%) on the islands (Figure 4b). When broken down by business sector, the PROTEqIN study contained not just a greater proportion of manufacturing businesses but more types of manufacturing businesses, while this study contained more types of service businesses (Figure 4d). When examining the age of the owners and the business sectors (Figure 4c) in sectors with more than one firm, there was a broad range of ages within each sector suggesting that these sectors have been accessible to women for quite some time.

The percentages of female employees were markedly different in the study's firms when compared to those of the PROTEqIN survey. All the firms in our study employed women, while only 27.9% of firms in Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad in the PROTEqIN survey employed women (Figure 4e). In the study's firms that did employ women, females averaged three-quarters of the work force, but only 11.7% of the workforce in the PROTEqIN study (Figure 4f). The largest difference in female employment was seen in respect to female managers and skilled workers: In our study, 82.8% of the firms employed female managers or skilled workers while,

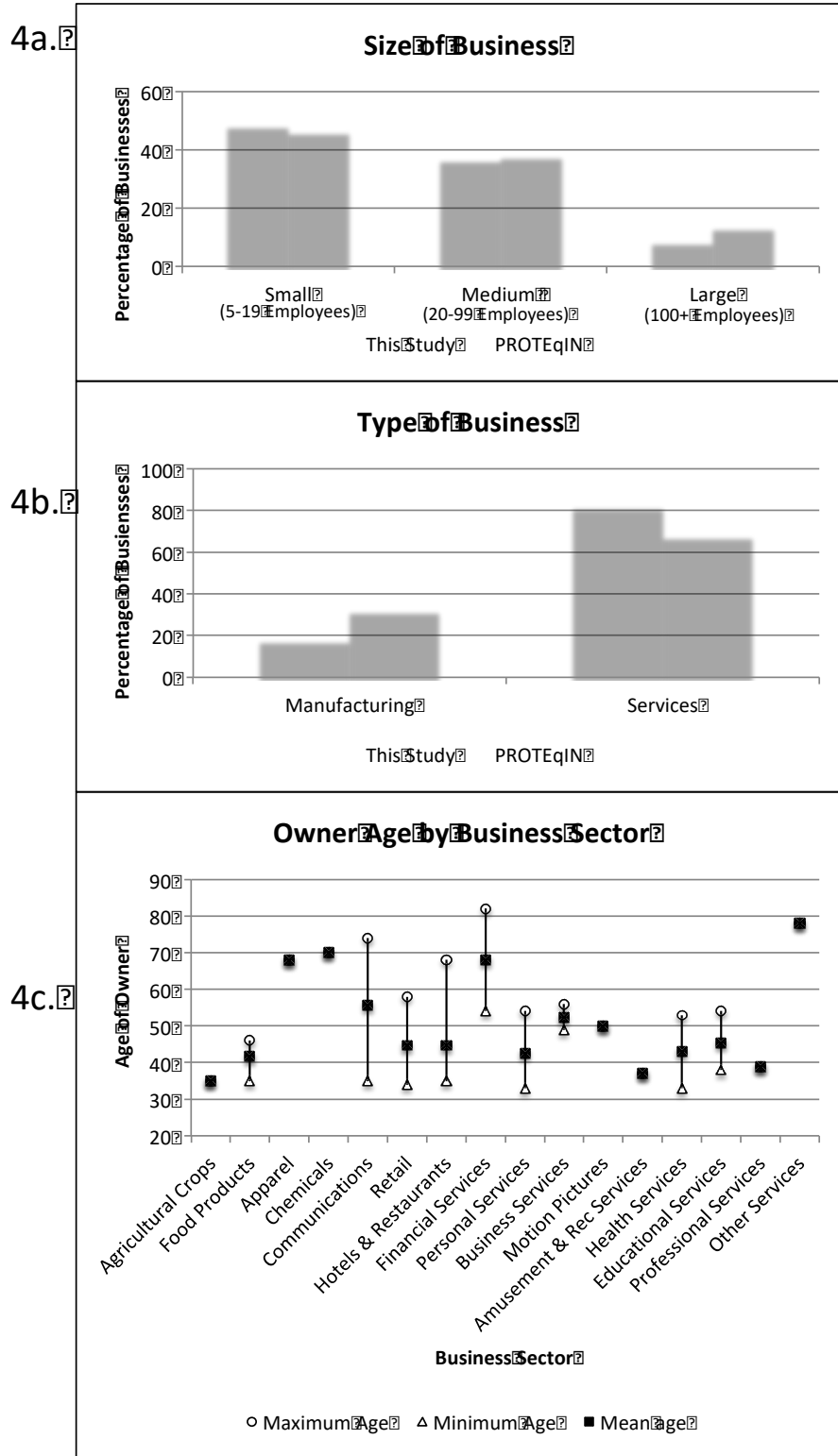


Figure 4. Business Profile: a. Size of Business; b. Type of Business; and c. Age of Owner by Business Sector .

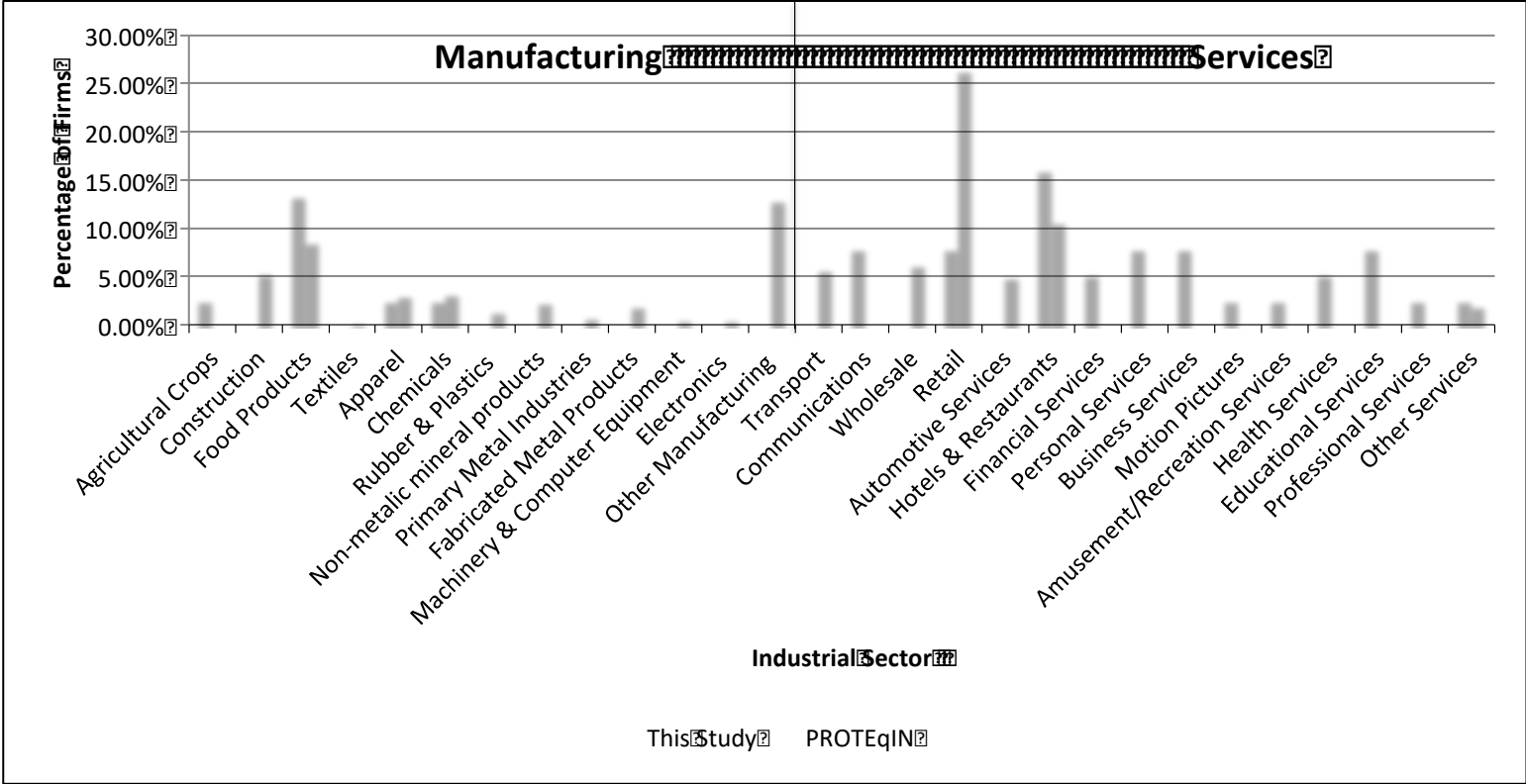
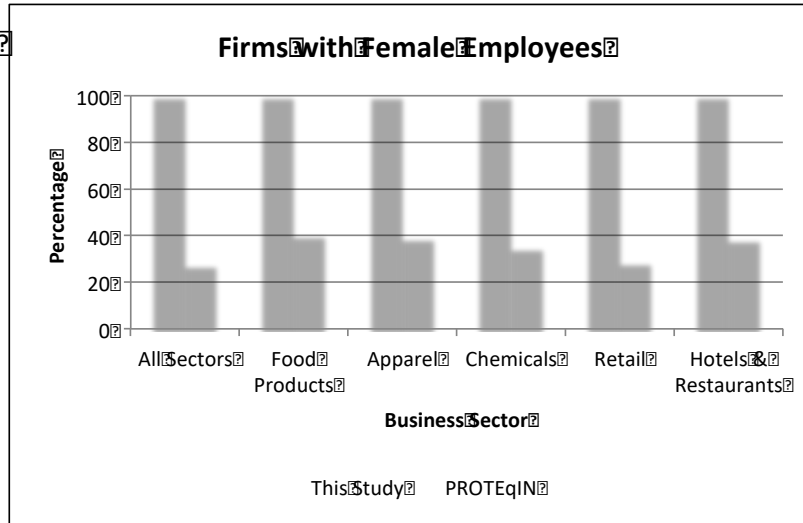
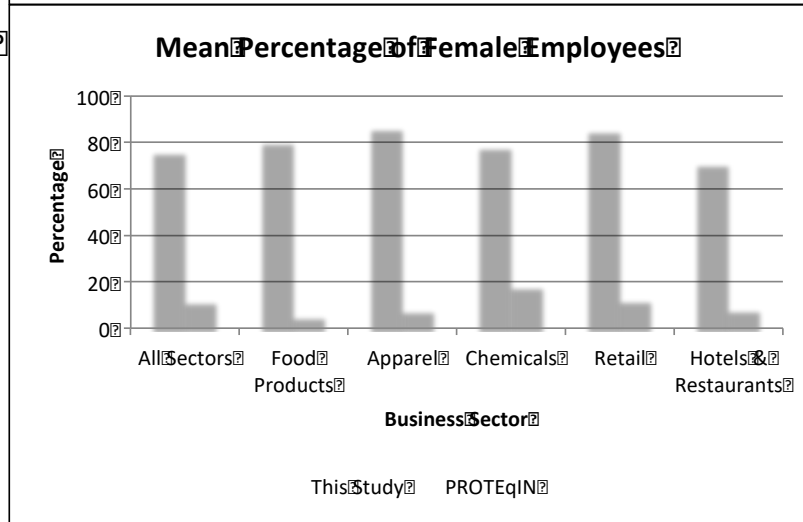


Figure 4. Business Profile: d. Proportion of Firms by Business Sector

4e.



4f.



4g.

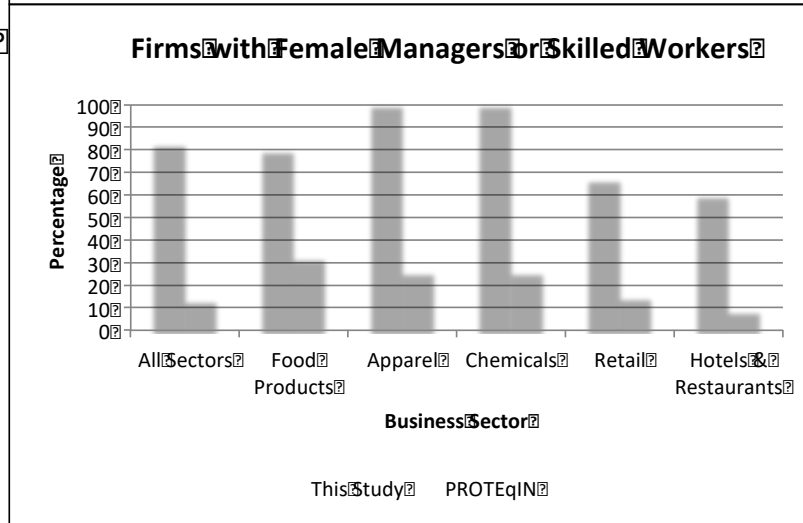


Figure 4. Business Profile: e. Firms with Female Employees; f. Mean percentage of Female employees; g. Firms with Female Managers or Skilled Workers

in the PROTEqIN study, only 13.7% of firms had female managers or skilled workers (Figure 4g). When broken down by sector (for the sectors represented in both studies) these trends in female employment were the same.

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of the women's businesses involved traditionally-female pursuits, such as food preparation, cleaning, caring, fashion, beauty and teaching, with food related businesses being the most common, accounting for 31% of all businesses. The remaining third of the women's businesses were in less-traditionally-female sectors, including media and entertainment, financial services, and information technology (Figure 4d).

4.3. Business Challenges

The three main challenges to their businesses that the women believed were related to gender were: 1) Not being taken seriously as businesspersons; 2) Childcare and having children ; and 3) A lack of social acceptance for deviating from the cultural norms for their sex.

4.3.1. Not Being Taken Seriously

Not being taken seriously as businesspersons was cited by all the women in the study as a major challenge in starting and operating their businesses. The most-frequently-cited consequences resulting from their "not being taken seriously" were difficulty in getting financing and competition after an initial business success.

Getting financing is a challenge for all businesses, but the women believe the difficulty they had getting financing was exacerbated by their gender. This is supported by examples of their experiences; notably, not receiving financing after having met all the financing institutions' stated collateral, business plan and accounting record requirements.

I went to my financial advisor [...] and I said I've got the opportunity to buy [name of male partner] out of the business and I need to borrow \$200,000. And, we went

into the bank, which is a bank that I had banked with all my life. The first bank manager had loaned me \$50,000 with no problem. But I went in now, setting up this business on my own, to borrow \$200,000; and I had the collateral of my mom's house. And the bank manager said to me [...] he is really sorry, but the bank has no confidence in me as a businessperson running the business. They were happy to loan me the money before because I had a male partner. But the bank has no confidence, so, they'll get back to me. (B04)

One woman even discovered that her business plan was being used by the bank that turned her down for a loan as a model for its loan officers.

I went to a Commercial Bank and they turned me down. They didn't give reasons; they just said it's not something that they could do right now. I went to an entrepreneurship session maybe about a year later and a girl said, "Are you [name of entrepreneur]? I've seen your business plan it's so good. Yeah, I just started working at [name of bank], and I'm going to be working in the loans department and they showed me your business plan to say, "This is what a business plan should look like and this is the kind of thing that we would approve.'"(J09)

When they were offered financing, there were instances when it was at higher interest rates or with additional conditions.

They called us back and said, "Right, the bank is prepared to loan you the money but you would have to pay prime lending rate plus two percent. And we need to see financials at the end of every month, and every day that they are late it's \$100 penalty." So I am going to have to pay now every month to have financials done and then for every day that they're late there's this \$100 and I'm paying prime plus 2% for the money. [...] It was insulting. (B04)

If the bank was interested in the business proposition they were still met with disbelief and skepticism that business was in fact theirs, they must be fronting for a man.

My own experience is that the banks would think, "So who has invested, are you representing your husband? Is this your father's business? Do you have an overseas partner?" It's like no, it couldn't be you alone, there has to be more, you are not enough. What they're saying seems to be "This looks good, we want to be a part of this but it clearly couldn't be you". (J11)

What I find is, as a woman, when you go to these lending institutions, it's not so easy: They ask you all types of crazy questions. Like, with me, they asked if it is really my business. They asked about my husband, and I said, "It's my business. Why are you asking about the male figure next to me? I am able. I am capable to pay back the loan." (B09)

Even when they had been running a large and successful company for decades, they were still disregarded. In the following example, the company wanted to borrow money to expand its facilities to meet its growing export demand; and because of the company's size and reputation they did not go to the banks, the banks came to them to make presentations on what financing they could offer.

So everybody is coming to make a presentation. And I must tell you that while they sat around the board table here, I sat in that corner over there on that chair and I watched them genuflect to the men. Nobody paid me any mind. Sometimes, when I asked a question, nobody don't answer me [...] My chairman said to them after everything, "You all didn't know where the power lies" [...] Because if they had read the documents and saw that I was the dominant person, you don't ignore me. That's why I tell you it hasn't changed. Those men came in here talking to these other men: "Who are you?" (J07)

With the difficulty of getting loans from conventional financial institutions, the most-frequently cited sources of financing for the startup of their businesses were: Savings; loans from family and friends; personal loans secured by the salary from their job; and credit cards. Indeed, the ability to obtain personal loans but not obtain

business loans of equivalent value reinforces the women's prevailing beliefs that they are not taken seriously as businesspersons. In the example below, the woman wanted to borrow the equivalent of US\$5,000 and was told that because of her creditworthiness they would lend it to her if she wanted to use it to go on holiday but not for a business.

They actually told us that if we wanted to apply for a vacation loan, they would give us. But not a business loan. So, if we had wanted to take a trip, they would have funded it. But not for a business. (T07)

The other negative consequence of "not being taken seriously" was that, once the women's businesses had become established, their success attracted attention and were then exposed to competition in the form of copycat businesses or take-over bids. They were also subjected to extortion and theft. The women believed that, to some degree, these actions were gender-related: As women, they were perceived as soft targets who would be unwilling or unable to fight back. Three such examples are described below:

The owner of the building said, "Your business is nothing without this location. So we have a proposition to put to you. We have two other properties that we are considering developing and we would like you to come on board and work with us to develop those businesses so that we would have a chain. Your investment would be [name of business], [...] the other alternative is that we are going to put your rent up by an additional \$10,000 a month so you either come with us or your rent goes up by \$10,000 a month. [...] One way or another we will get what we want." (B04)

I had an issue with intellectual property: The software for my business. The computer programmer partnered with another company and went into business in direct competition with me using the software that I had paid for developing. (J14)

From about the second to about the seventh year I was faced with burglaries on a regular basis. [...] They were stealing everything, and so I had to continue each time. And that was one of my biggest battles; my first battles. (T06)

4.3.2. *Childcare and Having Children*

The family structures of having no children, a large age gap between children at the start of their business, or a delay in the starting of a business until children are older indicate a trade-off between entrepreneurship and children for these women who build businesses larger than a micro-enterprise. Indeed, those who had children during their businesses' early years spoke of how difficult it was:

It's absolutely, absolutely ridiculously almost impossible. There are days when family has to win, and there are days when the business has to win. I would sadly say that many times the business wins over my family. (J02)³

They often regretted that they could not spend more time with their children:

And there were times when I felt guilty; like, "Oh my God, I need to be spending more time with my child." [...] So, I would say there were times when I felt really guilty. [...] But you're pushing forward to build a life and do things that you really want. (T05)

Those with a large age gap between their children felt the younger child had benefitted from that gap:

I'm at a place in my life now where I felt I forsaked [sic] my son, in terms of my business. She [interviewee's daughter] is getting more of me now. (B02)

Some women with no children, though, expressed regret at not having had children:

³ For the profile of each quoted entrepreneur see Appendix 2

I've made some very great sacrifices because I have no family and I have no children. And part of that was I was so focused in making this business succeed that I had no time for that, and that's been one of my regrets. (J07)

The women most-often started their businesses in their late 20's or early 30's (Figure 2b.), once they had acquired the necessary human capital (skills and experience) and the time to identify a business opportunity/gap in the market. This age conflicts with when most women in these islands have children: The median age at first-child birth in Jamaica and Trinidad is 21.2 and 22.2 years old, respectively (United Nations, 2013; no data is available for Barbados.), while the mean ages of mothers at childbirth in Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad are 27.8, 27.3 and 27.7 years, respectively (CIA Factbook, 2017; Figure 2b).

4.3.3. *Lack of Social Acceptance*

The women recounted opposition from their families and incredulity from their friends at their going into business—particularly toward the idea of giving up a “good job” to go into business.

There were people who think that I am crazy. In fact, there are still family members who still think that I am crazy, even at this stage. It was always a situation: “Why would you leave your good job (I have heard that so many times) to go and struggle.” Because it was a struggle. (J13)

My dad kind of wanted us to be doctors and lawyers. His other daughter is a lawyer, and that was the standard [...] Being an entrepreneur in 2009 meant you were a bum; it meant you were unemployed, or you were still living with your parents. [...] There was not a lot of value to that word when we started. And worse yet, a female entrepreneur. They would be like, “Well, you could get a job doing anything, you know. An assistant, or whatever.” (T07)

I'm from a family that is very professionally-oriented, meaning my father's a lawyer and my brother is a lawyer, my sister is a lawyer, my other sister is a doctor. So I was considered the black sheep in wanting to do business. But I had no interest in what they were doing. [...] So I didn't have any family support. So, even when I was coming into this business, you might wonder why didn't I bring in family members. They didn't believe in what I'm doing. (J06)

Those in the less-traditionally-female sectors cited more instances of disapproval and of their credibility being questioned.

I know that there are people who didn't think that a woman could do it and [...] I know that people felt well it should have been a man. (T02)

And even in ICT... It was mostly men creating websites, and designing websites, and doing these things. So, I think that was a huge challenge, the credibility side of it, and people trusting that I was capable of doing it. (J10)

Social acceptability also influenced what the women thought was possible for themselves in terms of the type of business they could start. As a young woman with limited exposure to what women might do in business, one of the study participants (who now owns a large manufacturing firm exporting product throughout the Caribbean and to the United States) initially thought of hairdressing salons, but being an entrepreneur of this kind, even if the vision was a chain of salons catering to tourists, was not deemed a socially acceptable occupation by her father and he refused to finance it.

What I wanted to do, where I fell out with my father, I wanted to go to Canada to do hairdressing and come back to Jamaica and open shops: Hairdressing shops at all the hotels. That was what I had in my little head. But my father said, "Anybody that became a hairdresser was a failure." And he said he would not spend any more money on me. (J07)

4.4. Overcoming Challenges to Business

The main strategies for overcoming the challenge of not being taken seriously were: 1) Forming mixed-sex partnerships; and 2) Using male proxies. The main methods used to overcome the challenge of childcare and having children were: 1) Controlling the structure of their families; and 2) Getting assistance with childcare. The main means of achieving social acceptability were: 1) Getting married; and 2) Financial success.

4.4.1. Strategies to Combat Not Being Taken Seriously

A quarter of the women had formed mixed-sex business partnerships. In addition to the conventional partnership benefit of combining different skill sets, these mixed-sex business partnerships were believed to enhance the legitimacy of the woman's business: Giving greater access to resources (particularly financial resources); better service from suppliers; and increased credibility with prospective clients and customers.

When you look up on that wall you see three men beside me [...] And the reason those men are there: I'm the founder, I'm the visionary; but I recognized very early, and from my experience, that the banks would not give me any equity because they do not believe that women are capable. (J07)

So, me and my business partner, he is a man. It works for us in some ways because we would go to meetings, and people would assume that I was the assistant—his assistant. (T07)

My husband and I were toe-to-toe in it to build this business. (J03)

Women without formal male business partners frequently used male proxies for their interactions with lending institutions, suppliers or customers, wherever they felt it would provide them with an advantage. The male proxy may have been their husband who is not involved in the business, other male relatives, or friends.

I may have a meeting and I have to say to my husband, "Can you come with me? You don't have to do anything. You just have to sit in the room with me." And that makes a big difference. (B10)

One of the things I've been doing is understanding when I needed to bring in my husband to go in to pitch. (B01)

You are running a business. So whoever is going to be the person that would get the most traction, then you're going to send them out. And so I do it with my son now. (J03)

This strategy is a deliberate choice one made after their experiences of not being taken seriously, particularly by lending institutions.

Unfortunately there are a lot of women who have said you know I'm going to play the game, I know women who own their businesses and they will go to a business meeting and say they are the vice president. They will say they have to check in with the president to find out if they can make a particular decision, they will not take credit to be founder and C.E.O because they know that it will work against them. Or they will have a man as a figurehead, I did that and I confess, I had so many other things against me, I just said, "do I fight it or join it"? (J11)

The validity of this strategy is confirmed by the more positive reception, or better service, their businesses receive when they are represented by men compared to when the women represent the businesses themselves.

But I can tell you why I know for sure: Further on in the business, I formalized things, and I had a board of directors and I had a Chairman. [...] So I would now be going to a meeting with the bank and [*name of Chairman*] would be going to the meeting with me in his capacity as Chairman. Remember, this is my business that I started how many years before and the reception was different. (J11)

If I have to deal with something, if I send [*name of husband*] to deal with it, it's a piece of cake. If I go and deal with it myself, it's a little bit more challenging. (B04)

4.4.2. *Overcoming the Challenges of Childcare and Having Children*

The women controlled the structure of their families by: Having no (or no more) children after starting a business; having a large age gap between children born before or after the start of the business; or delaying the start of their business until children were older (and required less childcare commitment), particularly during the time-demanding startup stages of their businesses, making it possible for them to focus on the development of their business.

For women with children, arranging childcare was an important strategy for affording them the time needed to devote to their businesses. Only one woman in the study organized her business around the care of her children, so she could look after them herself:

Everything revolves around them. I plan my meetings around picking up [*name of child*] from school. Work starts at about nine for me, because I have to make sure that [*name of child*] is okay, and that everything is in order. (T09)

Who provided the childcare depended on the women's comfort levels with other people seeing to their children and their ability to pay for childcare. Some felt happier when family members, primarily their own parents, were looking after their children.

Without my mother, I couldn't even do it. Because I am not trusting anybody with my children! I can close my eyes with my mother and them [sic] children. [...] I'm always sure they're well taken care of. I don't have to worry about that. And that's a big plus. (T08)

So, like, my dad picks my children up from school every day. [...] He's always been there to help me and, as the business has grown, he said, "I need to be a full-time grandpa now." So he does all the pickups and activities and stuff. (J02)

However, most women conceded that they did not have the time to look after their own children and paid for the additional help they needed once they could afford it.

As soon as I could afford a nanny I got one. (J14)

Over the past couple years, I had somebody who would be there during the day [...] Within the past nine months, I've had to find somebody to live there; not just be there like a regular nine to five, but live there. [...] So now I don't have to worry about when I'm not finished working at four o'clock or five o'clock: She is there for them. She puts them to bed. [...] I really could not function if I did not have all of that extra help, because the truth of the matter is that I work much more than a regular forty-hour week. (J02)

I said to my husband, "I'm not going to be one of these women who do the triple-double whatever the number of days. I'm not doing it. I'm not washing. I am not cooking. I am not cleaning. I'm going to be a businesswoman." So, we always had a full-time helper because we had a son, and we ate out a lot because I would come to work, as I still do, seven o'clock in the morning. I'm in the office most times seven o'clock at night. (J03)

4.4.3. *Overcoming the Lack of Social Acceptance*

One indicator of social status and respectability in which the study's participants ranked higher than the average population was marriage (Figure 1d). As previously stated, in 7 of 9 cases husbands were the male partner in their mixed-sex business partnerships. Husbands were also frequently the male proxy used in interactions with financial institutions, suppliers or customers.

The principal path to social acceptability was, however, financial success. Only when the women were financially successful did their unsupportive families or doubting/skeptical friends finally accept or believe in what the women were doing.

[*My father*] before he died, he told my brother [*pointing at her*], “That’s my best child yet, and my most successful child.” (J07)

I was able to buy a car, I was able to move out, I was able to afford to do certain things, and they [my parents] understood that, “Maybe she is okay.” But they only saw success through those platforms; as in being able to afford to do certain things [...] And now they are 100% supportive. (T05)

A strong commonality among the women was their prior exposure to entrepreneurship in their immediate family, with 94% of them having had their parents, grandparents or other close relatives in business. The size of these relative-owned businesses varied from very small and informal to large and well-established.

My mom [...] she would do nuts and channa [*chick peas*]. She would fry them in butter then sell them to supermarkets. (T03)

So, my dad ran a supermarket, and my grandfather owned a very successful supermarket here. (B07)

Some of the women recognized this exposure to business as a possible source of their own entrepreneurial intentions.

My father’s family background is very entrepreneurial; my mother’s, they are not. So I come from two diverse backgrounds, but I was raised hearing my mother saying, “You are the spitting image of your father in everything you do.” [...] And because of that, I always wanted to be like him: Very successful. Maybe that is where it came from. (T06)

My grandmother was a shopkeeper: She had her own business. My mom was a hairdresser [...] I came up with the whole family, where everybody worked for themselves. [...] I always knew that I was going to work for myself. (B04)

Importantly, this exposure to business, gave the women themselves a more positive social valuation of entrepreneurship than is customary among the populace in these islands.

Entrepreneurship is the only way I know to move from one level in terms of socioeconomic status to another level in the shortest possible time. [...] It's like going in an elevator on the ground floor and you want to get to the penthouse. I'm not saying that you can't get to the penthouse otherwise. But to me entrepreneurship is, like, just pressing a button that can take you to the penthouse. (J11)

4.5. Motivation for Business

For 85% of the women in this study, the primary motivations for starting their business were pull or opportunity-based motivations, such as identification of a gap in the market/business opportunity, and a desire for financial improvement. In describing their motivations they said:

I always wanted to be wealthy. (J14)

For me, success is building a multi-million-dollar company. (B05)

Only 15% of the women had push motivations for going into business; i.e., they went into business out of necessity. These push motivations included the loss of a job, unavailability of an expected job after professional training, and the death of a spouse.

None of the women cited a desire for work-life balance as a motivation for going into business.

Role of Husbands

Husbands fall into two distinct groups, those who are copreneurs and those who are not copreneurs. Copreneurs are cofounding business partners who are spouses. Nine of the 35 women in the study were copreneurs (26%) and 7 of these were married to their copreneur business partner. Copreneurs are fully invested in the business and contribute to the financing. In addition, the business often benefits from having business partners who bring different but complementary skill sets to the business.

So this business really is a husband and wife team, my husband is good at raising the finance and I am good at explaining the model, what the experience is like, so, that's what really helps raise the money and convince people let's give this a chance. (T01)

It was just me and my husband. He's the creative, I'm the business side. (J06)

Me and my husband. I did the cooking, and he did the management part of it. And sending out the emails, getting clients, going to meetings. (B06)

The husbands who were not copreneurs range from very supportive, to tolerant, to obstructive, to free-riding, to their participation in the business causing the break-up of the marriage.

Both my husbands were very supportive. Still are. And I can still call on them at any time. (T06)

And, luckily my husband is very understanding, as you would say, because the hours here can be long. (B04)

My husband was always a very strong man. He was always very strong to cope with his wife being in the forefront and I think that was a challenge for him in the beginning but he eventually realize that I was doing a successful job and the children were grown up now so he got used to it. (T02)

With my husband, my biggest problem is that, he works for the government. So working for the government you're guaranteed your pay, you have a lot of benefits. Me, I have to work very hard and so he wouldn't understand that I have work. I have an obligation. And it's hard to explain to somebody who doesn't have an entrepreneurial mind that yes I'd rather be at home but I can't because for them it's just like oh you choose the business over me. (J02)

My husband is an accountant, and I found that speaking to him about my risk-taking and so on used to make him pretty nervous; because he is not a risk-taker. So, he blocked all the things that I wanted to do. So, I then went on and kept studying and I did my Masters in Business Administration. (B10)

The husband I picked up was a musician and he was quite happy having a very strong wife who brought home the bacon. And so he did nothing, so that's the downside to that. He passed away now. (J12)

My husband came into the business five years after I had launched it. But working with my husband--and my business contributed so much to what caused the breakup of my marriage--that's also been one of the challenges. (T04)

In terms of assisting with childcare, only 2 women mentioned their husband helping, in both cases it was dropping or collecting children from school.

So, usually I am not the one who gets the children off to school. They are bigger now, so it's my husband who does the dropping off to school. (T03)

I will bring them here and then they would have to leave and go to class. So, [Name of husband] has a lot to do with that. My husband, normally he would come pick them up... It's just a combined effort; because you cannot do this on your own. (T08)

More common was the idea that it was still their responsibility to take care of the children and their husband did not have time to do it because he worked.

I love my children. So, I love spending time with them [...] because my husband's job is very demanding, we were not in a position where I can be so busy that I did not have time for them. I do have a very supportive family, having said that, my mom and dad are still alive. So, Granny and Grandad play a big role. (B10)

None of the women mentioned their husbands paying for childcare but it is possible that they do.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Motivation

Our finding that most of the study's women cited pull or opportunity-based motivation as their primary reason for going into business and that none cited the need to balance personal life and work responsibilities contrasts with previous investigations which found that a need for work-life balance is a major motivating factor for women starting their own businesses and is worth examining (e.g., Connelly, 1992; Demartino *et al.*, 2006; Kirkwood and Tootell, 2008; Mattis, 2004, Ramkissoon-Babwah, 2015, Arraiz, 2015). While there is a trend in the literature promoting work-life balance as a motivating factor for women, there have been studies like ours that show no differences between the motivations of female business-owners to conventional male-entrepreneur motivations (primarily increased wealth, social standing and professional fulfillment; e.g., Fischer *et al.*, 1993). That some studies find work-life balance important while others do not may be explained via a recent study of women-led businesses in Spain by Rey-Martí *et al.* (2015), who found (using crisp set qualitative comparative analysis, csQCA) that the motive of work-life balance is related to non-survival of the business and has a negative relationship with business success. In short, women whose motive is to pursue a better work-life balance are less likely to succeed. Our sample population was restricted to women-led businesses that had been in operation for at least five years and had at least five employees; similarly, the women in the study by Fischer *et al.* (1993) had been in business for an average of 10.3 years and had managed employees for 11.1 years (although the number of employees is not stated). If a motivation of work-life balance is related to non-survival of businesses, then studies that sample only large, long-standing businesses are unlikely to include entrepreneurs with work-life balance motivation. Hughes' (2006) study of over 3,800 Canadian-women entrepreneurs found that differences in motivation were linked to the type of businesses women build, with those having classic pull motivations more likely to have employees, work full-time and have a much-longer

business tenure (with one third in operation for 10 years or more) when compared to those with work-family, or push, motivations.

5.2. Not Being Taken Seriously

The main consequence of not being taken seriously was not getting financing. Brush *et al.* (2006) found that most women-owned businesses are financed by personal savings, family and friends, credit cards and some bank finance; and this is essentially the same as our findings. Harrison and Mason (2000) describe a 'pipeline model' of funding, whereby business owners approach the four main sources of funding in the following order: 1) Personal savings, family and friends; 2) debt financing from banks; 3) government grants; and finally 4) venture capital. To prevent being stuck at the beginning of this financing pipeline, we found Caribbean women use two main strategies: Forming mixed-sex business partnerships; and using male proxies. Mixed-sex partnerships have been theorized by Godwin *et al.* (2006) to be a potentially-beneficial strategy for women, particularly in male-dominated cultures or industries, that would provide them with greater legitimacy, access to a larger number of resources, and a more-diverse social network. Outside of studies on 'copreneurs' (co-founding spouses; Fitzgerald and Muskie, 2002; Kirkwood, 2009), this study is the first to report that women routinely form mixed-sex business partnerships in order to increase the legitimacy of their businesses and help them access financing. With respect to the use of male proxies, we found one study in Italy (Cesaroni and Paoloni, 2016: 4-5) that described the use of male proxies by women entrepreneurs, but which did not identify this behavior as using proxies:

For other women, the involvement of a male family member (birth or marriage) is absolutely necessary to get a bank loan: "I got two mortgages but I didn't have any problems with the banks. They were always very helpful and my husband helped me by signing" (Rachele, owner of a small clothing manufacture); "Fortunately, I had my brother's support for the guarantees. He signed a surety in my favour, so I

had no problems with the bank” (Enrica, owner of a bookshop); “I took my last mortgage last year, but without my father I wouldn’t have gotten anything ...” (Giorgia, owner of a beauty centre).

Cesaroni and Paoloni (2016: 5), concluded only that “the main conclusion of our analysis is that female entrepreneurial experiences cannot be truly understood if attention is not paid to their family situation.”

We believe that the use of male proxies is a prevalent but overlooked strategy of Caribbean women entrepreneurs in their quest to obtain financing for their businesses. Using this very-effective strategy does not, however, help reduce discrimination but, ironically, reinforces the status quo.

There is no gender-specific strategy to combat competition, or threats of extortion and theft after initial success. While the women believe this competition may have been partly gender-inspired, based on the notion that women were easy targets and would not fight back, the strategies to combat it are the same as for any business facing competition, and which needs to reduce its vulnerability to, or overcome, the specific threat. If the women are threatened with extortionate rent increases, they need to buy their own property; if they are suffering losses due to theft, they need to make their premises more secure; and if they are overly reliant on a few customers who are now being enticed by copycat businesses, they need to diversify their customer base and/or improve the quality and efficiency of their business.

5.3. **Childcare**

Starting a business and taking care of a family are both time-intensive activities that are therefore very difficult to combine. Our finding that more than half of our successful women entrepreneurs have no children is a feature of female entrepreneurship that was noted in early studies trying to classify and develop a typology of female entrepreneurs. In the best known of these classifications (Goffee

and Scase, 1983; Cromie and Hayes, 1988), the category 'Innovators' was described as strongly-success-oriented women, usually without children, who view entrepreneurial activity as an opportunity for greater professional fulfillment. Having a large age gap between consecutive children coinciding with the early stages of their business is a feature that has not been previously described, and that serves a similar function of providing the women with time to devote to their businesses. The literature also provides examples of why going into business after 50 is a good fit for women (McKay, 2001), who state that they have the benefit of less child-rearing obligations/flexibility of family not being central to their business plans. All of these family configurations (no children, gap between children, and late-in-life business start) serve the same purpose of separating the early stages of the business from childcare because it is so difficult to do both simultaneously.

For the women with children who needed to organize childcare, the solutions lay on a spectrum from, most infrequently, taking care of their children themselves (and organizing their business around their childcare responsibilities), to often having family members take care of their children, to most-commonly paying for professional childcare—with the ultimate choice seeming to depend on how willing the women were to flout the socially-acceptable role of taking care of their children themselves. Browne (2001: 337), comparing female entrepreneurship in English-, Spanish- and French-speaking Caribbean islands, found that the Barbadian women entrepreneurs with young children “frequently make use of daycare centers or home-based nannies as well as extended networks of kin” to look after their children, and there was a willingness among them to “simply hire the help they need at home.” This willingness to relinquish the socially-acceptable role of taking care of their children themselves and pay for assistance makes it possible for them to focus on their entrepreneurial ventures. Of course, this can be expensive, with the cost possibly limiting the number of women that can pursue this strategy.

5.4. Social Acceptability

Entrepreneurship is not traditionally seen as a 'respectable' profession by Afro-Caribbean people; particularly not for women, where it is associated with small-scale buying and reselling, or 'higglering', and seen as the last resort of the uneducated and unemployable. In becoming entrepreneurs, all of the women had overcome a social stigma that devalues entrepreneurship and confers prestige on those who are educated in a profession and have a good job (a relic of colonialism, in which getting a job in the professions or in the civil service were the principal avenues for social mobility; Danns and Mentore, 1995). Exposure to business through direct contact with other family members involved in business activities is associated with the intention to become an entrepreneur in both men and women (Bonev *et al.* 2016; Zapkau *et al.* 2015) and on the perception of going into business as both desirable and feasible (Kreuger, 1993). All but two of the 35 women in our study had immediate family members who were in business, supporting the idea that this pre-exposure to business may have helped them to overcome the societal stigma associated with an entrepreneurial career.

Seventy-seven percent of women in the study were married or had been married. This finding matches that of Pounder (2015:12), who surveyed entrepreneurs across nine English-speaking Caribbean countries, found that 76% of Caribbean women entrepreneurs were either married or had been married, and remarked that "the high percentage of married entrepreneurs is noteworthy." Similarly, Browne (2001:336) found that her sample of entrepreneurial women in Barbados were "overwhelmingly married (73%)." While both Browne (2001) and Pounder (2015) found the proportion of married women entrepreneurs worthy of note, they were more vague about how women entrepreneurs benefitted from being married: Browne (2001: 336) stating only that "having a husband or male partner provides critical financial, moral or work-related support for many women's businesses," and Pounder (2015: 16) reporting "The high percentage of married entrepreneurs suggest that there is a need for full support from a spouse in order for the venture to be successful or sustainable." We suggest that being married provides two benefits

to female entrepreneurs. Firstly, it increases their social acceptability. Compensating is a common psychological coping strategy (Adler, 1992) where, when a person feels deficient in one area of life, they make up for it (compensate for it) with behavior(s) in other areas. If entrepreneurship is traditionally perceived as not a 'respectable' occupation in Afro-Caribbean culture, then it is possible that the women may compensate for that by getting married, as marriage is a highly-valued social institution and a bastion of 'respectability'. Secondly, and more practically, their husbands may act as proxies or partners in their business, giving them legitimacy and allowing them to be taken more seriously.

5.5. Limitations of the Study

This study's focus on Afro-Caribbean women, an understudied and traditionally-underprivileged population, is one of its strengths. It is, however, also a limitation because, while seven of the 35 interviewed women indicated that they believed their race hampered them in developing their businesses, we cannot compare the experiences of this study's women with those of other ethnicities (Indian, Chinese, White, etc.) in the region. It is also clear that, while all the women were 'black', they were not all the same colour, and there is disparity (perceived and/or real) in the way lighter- and darker-skinned people are treated (known as 'colourism') that needs further study.

Use of Technology and Overcoming Discrimination

All of the entrepreneurs use technology in their firm. WhatsApp groups to communicate with staff in small firms and dedicated e-mail systems in larger ones. Small firms use social media (FaceBook, Instagram and Twitter) to advertise and market their business to customers, in addition to these social media outlets larger firms also have dedicated websites. Many firms use the internet to find and contact potential suppliers, especially it there is a cost saving relative to a local supplier.

There are new and innovative businesses that would not exist without technology, for example the company that uses drones to survey, map and monitor physical infrastructure (such as bridges and seawalls) that would not exist without the drone and GIS technology. There are also very traditional businesses, such as selling fruits and vegetables that has been transformed by the use of technology. The fresh produce business saw an opportunity in having an online store and delivery service, so that instead of people going to market the market comes to them. The business has been very successful with busy, upmarket customers who what fresh or organic produce but do not have the time to shop for it.

With respect to discrimination, there is an example of a firm that used technology to overcome what they believe was racial discrimination. A nanny/baby-sitting/eldercare services building was told that in order to work with a large tour company they would need liability insurance because their employees would be going into the villas where there was the possibility of theft and they might also be administering medication which if done incorrectly could cause harm. They went to all 20 local Insurance companies and brokers but could not get insurance.

I went to all the big-name insurance companies: [names of companies]... You name it, I went there. I even went to brokers.

She would call first before going to the company and would get a positive response and be asked to come in, as soon as they met her, they changed their mind and would not consider insuring her business.

I was going around to these insurance companies, I would call and I would tell them all about my service: "We are nanny company, we provide childcare service, senior-care service, and housekeeping services. And we don't want to structure or businesses as an agency. We want to have persons who are employed by the company." And they would say, "Oh, you know, come in directly and see us. And we would go in and say we spoke to the supervisor over the phone, and they would ask, "Who sent you? No, no, no, no. We can't help you. Not with this type of business."

She believes the rejection was due to her appearance as a black woman with a dreadlock hairstyle.

I think that I was turned down, not only because I was a woman, but because I have locks.

Having exhausted all local possibilities, she turned to the internet and quickly found insurance with Lloyds of London.

And we outsource our liability insurance from Lloyd's of London, and the premium was \$8,000.

She believes that being anonymous on the internet, with no one that she was corresponding with able to see her appearance, helped her to get the insurance she could not get on the island.

Emboldened by this success she has outsourced other business functions, including her payroll that is done by an accountant in Australia.

And I have staff overseas [in Australia] doing my payroll. If I have to pay an accountant here in [name of island], it would be tons and tons of money. They do the payroll on Sunday, because Sunday is actually their Monday. And I'm not paying a big set of money for that.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Women entrepreneurs are a heterogeneous group. The vast majority of women-owned businesses in the Caribbean are micro-enterprises (InfoDev, 2015). Consequently, the unique characteristics and strategies of successful Caribbean businesswomen (i.e., those with small, medium or large enterprises, who are estimated to represent only 1.3% of all Caribbean female entrepreneurs), such as not having work-life balance as their principal business motivator, are often obscured in the literature by the characteristics of the micro-enterprise owners who overwhelmingly outnumber them.

In describing the characteristics of these successful women, we can say that they were exposed to business in their families, are motivated primarily by market opportunities not by work-life balance. often have no children, and when they have children are willing to outsource childcare to family or paid helpers. Additionally, as a strategy to increase the legitimacy of their businesses, they make use of male proxies or partners. If the aim is to increase the number of women entrepreneurs in the Caribbean who own small, medium or large businesses, and who have the potential to provide significant employment for others, we recommend the following:

1. Improve the affordability of childcare provision to female entrepreneurs so they do not have to choose between children and their entrepreneurial ambitions. None of the three islands (Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago) have childcare provisions and/or incentives in their tax codes. Olivetti and Petrongolo (2017) found that in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (all of which are high-income and regarded as developed countries), governments spent an average of 0.8% of GDP (in cash or kind) on early-childhood care, rising to a maximum of 2% of GDP in Denmark; and that spending on early childhood care was positively correlated with female employment. Considering childcare a business expense

clearly assists (and enhances the productivity of) businesswomen who have children. The most common childcare-related tax provisions in OECD Countries were tax deductions, tax credits and refundable tax credits (Immervoll and Barber, 2006). An additional positive benefit of such a tax policy may be that, as provision of funds for childcare increases the demand for paid childcare, it could also provide new market opportunities for entrepreneurs to develop childcare-provision enterprises.

2. Accept that changing the male-centric culture of commercial-banking sector will not happen voluntarily, and that radical action is required. To this end:
 - a. Start a women's only Development Bank, staffed and directed predominantly (if not only) by women, and to assist solely women. This suggestion is made in response to the difficulty women have in getting finance at traditional bank where those who make the decisions on their credit-worthiness are men who do not take them seriously. In addition to the usual credit-worthiness selection criteria, select candidates most likely to have a successful entrepreneurial career using the characteristics revealed here as important to conventional business success; e.g., estimates of their prior exposure to business in their immediate families, and assessments of their degree of pull (opportunity) motivation versus work-life-balance motivation. Scores on business-acumen or psychometric tests (such as F-DUP^N; used by Bonev *et al.*, 2016) could also be used.
 - b. Institute incentives and penalties aimed at including women at the board level in commercial banks (gender parity at lower levels means little if the upper echelons, which set the policies and tone of the organizations, as well as what is prioritised by them, are male-dominated). Including women on boards has been shown to increase transparency of decision-

making (e.g., Nielsen and Huse, 2010) and reduce asymmetry in information distribution (e.g., Abad et al, 2017).

3. Develop a mentorship programme for women entrepreneurs at the pivotal, initial-success stage in business, when they start to be subject to competition. At this stage, the women's businesses are both capable of further growth and at increased risk of failing; and the women themselves need help and advice on how to tackle the very specific and often quite diverse challenges they face. In establishing a mentorship programme, advantage should be taken of communication technology (which all the women said they used) to allow virtual counselling by mentors located in other countries, as the pool of potential mentors locally is small—as many of the women were the first to develop their type of business, to that level of success, on their islands.
4. To improve social acceptance in the short term, promote female entrepreneurship through public awareness campaigns (in print, broadcast and social media, as well as in schools) that boast the accomplishments of successful women entrepreneurs, like the ones in this study. This can possibly be undertaken in a similar manner to Sweden's Government Ambassador Program (GEM, 2010). Women in traditionally non-female sectors should receive particular exposure, to serve as role models and expose those fields' possibilities to females. The importance of such role-models to women was shown by Lockwood (2006), who found that 27% of women who chose a female role model said they were inspired by the gender-related obstacles their choice overcame. Lockwood (2006) concluded that outstanding women can function as inspirational examples of success, illustrating the kinds of achievements that are possible for women around them, and demonstrating that it is possible to overcome traditional gender barriers—indicating to women who are considering entrepreneurship that high levels of success are, indeed, attainable.

5. To improve social acceptance in the long term, use the finding that training programs can help to develop entrepreneurship skills, and follow the example of the European Union's E360 Entrepreneurship in Education programme (Lackéus, 2015), and start to include entrepreneurship in schools, making it part of the school curriculum.

Reducing barriers to female entrepreneurship and making it easier for women to go into business will not only increase/serve as an engine for the economic development of the islands, it will improve the lot of women in the workforce more generally, as female entrepreneurs employ more women—and, importantly, more women in skilled and management positions—than other firms.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

Reducing the Gender Gap in Firm Productivity in the Caribbean: Insights from Exemplary Afro-Caribbean Female Entrepreneurs

PREAMBLE

- Thank subject for consenting to interview.
- Brief summary of project
- Information about what will be done with the interview (transcribed; who will have access to it; quotes will be used for the report and possibly future publications)
- Reassurance of anonymity.
- Request for permission to record interview.

PART 1: HISTORY OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Question 1. Tell me about how you came to start your own business.

Prompt: initial idea

Question 2. What do you consider to be the distinguishing feature of your business (that made it successful)?

Prompt: Unique selling point, innovation, difference from other businesses in same sector

Probe: Is this your first business? *If not then go to Question 3.*

Question 3. Can you tell me about your very first business and how you came to start it?

Question 4. Can you tell me about any other businesses that you have had?

PART 2: MOTIVATIONS AND GENDER PERSECTIVE

Question 5. Tell me about why you decided to start your own business.

Probe: How old were you when you started this business/your first business?

Question 6. When you first started your business what was your vision of success for that business?

Probe 1: What was your vision of success for yourself?

Probe 2: Do you consider yourself to be an entrepreneur?

Question 7. Did you have any reservations about owning your own business?

Question 8. Tell me about your work history before you started your own business.

Prompts: “glass ceiling”, flexibility, pay.

Question 9. Tell me about your family.

Prompts: Married? How long? Children? Children’s ages?

Question 10. Tell me about how you have managed to combine having a family with your business.

Question 11. Tell me about any specific business training or education that you have had.

Probe 1: If “yes”, then ask: How did this help your business?

If “No”, then ask: What is your educational background?

Probe 2: Have you ever participated in any programme of technical assistance?

Probe 3: If “Yes”, then ask: How did ...*name of programme*... help you with your business?

PART 3: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Question 12. What has been the hardest part about owning your own business?

Question 13. Have you had any other challenges in your business?

Prompt 1: Access to financing (including public programmes that finance entrepreneurs)

Probe 1: How did you finance the start-up of your business?

Probe 2. How have you financed the expansion/growth of your business?

Question 14. Have you had any challenges that have to do with you being a woman?

Prompt: Crime (robbery/theft/vandalism/assaults or threats)

Probe: How did you overcome these?

Question 15. How has being a woman specifically helped you in this business?

Question 16. Can you tell me about the interaction you have with other women business leaders?

Prompt: friends, only professional, help/assistance

Question 17. Have you had any challenges that have to do with race?

Probe: How did you overcome these?

Question 18. How has your race/ethnicity specifically helped you in this business?

Question 19. How is running a business different from starting a business in terms of the problems you face?

Probe 1: How have you dealt with these operational problems?

Question 20. Can you tell me what role modern technology has played in your business?

Prompt: the internet, cell phones, computerization, robotics

PART 4: UNDERSTANDING THE BUSINESS

Question 21. Can you describe for me a typical day running your business?

Question 22. Can you describe for me what you did yesterday?

PART 5: WISDOM/ADVICE

Question 23. What is the most important thing for people to know before trying to start a business?

Question 24. Do you have any final thoughts about entrepreneurship?

PART 6: BUSINESS PROFILE

a) Business sector:

(To be determined by interviewer prior to interview using PROTEqIN classification)

b) What year did you start this business/What is the age of your Business?

(Equivalent to PROTEqIN Response b6a)

c) How many full-time employees do you have?

(Equivalent to PROTEqIN Response I2a)

d) How many employees did you have when you started the business?

(Equivalent to PROTEqIN Response I1)

e) How many female employees do you have?

(Equivalent to PROTEqIN Responses i3b1+i3b2a+i3b2b+i3b3)

f) How many women do you have in management positions?

(Equivalent to PROTEqIN Response i3b1)

g) "What were the total sales /Gross revenue of your business last year?"

(Equivalent to PROTEqIN Response k1a (for 2011), 2k1b (for 2012))

APPENDIX 2

Business Profiles

Id No.	Standard Industrial Code (SIC) 2 Digit Code Description	SIC 2 Digit Code	Business Size
T01	Motion Pictures	78	Medium
T02	Communications	48	Medium
T03	Food and Kindred Products	20	Small
T04	Apparel and Accessory Stores	56	Medium
T05	Business Services	73	Small
T06	Apparel, Finished Products from Fabrics & Similar Material	23	Small
T07	Food Stores	54	Small
T08	Personal Services	72	Small
T09	Apparel and Accessory Stores	56	Medium
T10	Eating and Drinking Places	58	Small
B01	Business Services	73	Small
B02	Amusement and Recreation Services	79	Small
B03	Health Services	80	Small
B04	Eating and Drinking Places	58	Medium
B05	Personal Services	72	Medium
B06	Eating and Drinking Places	58	Small
B07	Educational Services	82	Small
B08	Food and Kindred Products	20	Small
B09	Eating and Drinking Places	58	Small
B10	Health Services	80	Small
B11	Educational Services	82	Small
J01	Agricultural Production - Crops/Eating and Drinking Places	1	Small
	Eating and Drinking Places	58	
	Hotels, Rooming Houses, Camps and Other Lodging Places	70	
J02	Food and Kindred Products	20	Medium
J03	Communications	48	Medium
J04	Personal Services	72	Small
J05	Services, Not Elsewhere Classified	89	Large
J06	Food and Kindred Products	20	Small
J07	Chemicals and Allied Products	28	Large
J08	Security & Commodity Brokers, Dealers, Exchanges & Services	62	Medium
J09	Food and Kindred Products	20	Small
J10	Communications	48	Small
J11	Business Services	73	Small
J12	Educational Services	82	Small
J13	Engineering, Accounting, Research, and Management Services	87	Medium
J14	Security & Commodity Brokers, Dealers, Exchanges & Services	62	Large

Appendix 3

Concordance Between SIC 2 Digit Codes and PROTEqIN Codes

PROTEqIN Code Descriptions	PROTEqIN Code	SIC 2 Digit Code	SIC Code Descriptions
		1	Agricultural Production & Crops
Construction	45	15	Construction & General Contractors & Operative Builders
		16	Heavy Construction, Except Building Construction, Contractor
		17	Construction & Special Trade Contractors
		20	Food & Kindred Products
Food	15	20	Food & Kindred Products
Textiles	17	22	Textile Mill Products
Garments	18	23	Apparel, Finished Products from Fabrics & Similar Materials
Chemicals	24	28	Chemicals & Allied Products
Plastics & Rubber	25	30	Rubber & Miscellaneous Plastic Products
Non-metallic Mineral Products	26	32	Stone, Clay, Glass & Concrete Products
Basic Metals	27	33	Primary Metal Industries
Fabricated Metal Products	28	34	Fabricated Metal Products
Machinery & Equipment	29	35	Industrial and Commercial Machinery & Computer Equipment
Electronics	31	36	Electronic and Other Electrical Equipment & Components
Other Manufacturing	2	39	Miscellaneous Manufacturing Industries
Transport	60	40	Railroad Transportation
		41	Local and Suburban Transit & Inter-Urban Highway Transportation
		42	Motor Freight Transportation
		43	Postal Service
		44	Water Transportation
		45	Transportation by Air
		47	Transportation Services
		48	Communications
Wholesale	51	50	Wholesale Trade - Durable Goods
		51	Wholesale Trade - Non-Durable Goods
Retail	52	52	Building Materials, Hardware, Garden Supplies & Mobile Homes
		53	General Merchandise Stores
		54	Food Stores
		56	Apparel and Accessory Stores
		57	Home Furniture, Furnishings & Equipment Stores
		59	Miscellaneous Retail
Services of Motor Vehicles	50	55	Automotive Dealers and Gasoline Service Stations
		75	Automotive Repair Services and Parking
Hotels & Restaurants	55	58	Eating and Drinking Places
		70	Hotels, Rooming Houses, Camps and Other Lodging Places
		62	Financial Services
		72	Personal Services
		73	Business Services
		78	Motion Pictures
		79	Amusement/Recreation Services
		80	Health Services
		82	Educational Services
		87	Professional Services
		89	Other Services