

Afro-Brazilian women entrepreneurs: characteristics, critical issues and current comments

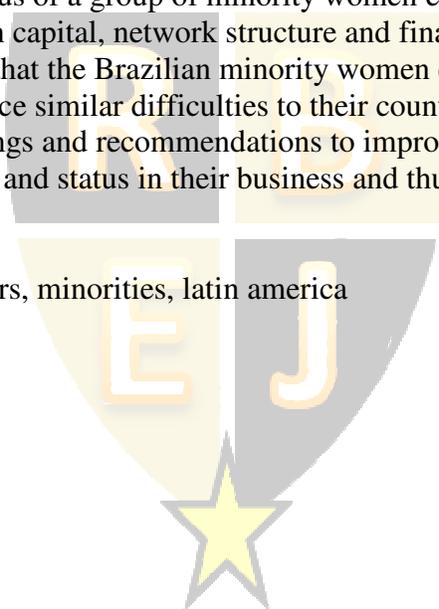
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Abstract

Research done on minority women entrepreneurs in the United States has suggested that they are more likely than their non-minority counterparts to experience difficulty in the start-up and operational stages of their businesses. However, little has been done to highlight the issues for minority women entrepreneurs in an international context. In light of this deficiency, the current study examined the status of a group of minority women entrepreneurs in Brazil. Aspects of their general, human capital, network structure and financial capital characteristics are highlighted. The results show that the Brazilian minority women entrepreneurs share some of the same qualities and experience similar difficulties to their counterparts in the United States. The implications of these findings and recommendations to improve the Brazilian minority women entrepreneurs' position and status in their business and thus in society are discussed at the end of the paper.

Keywords: women entrepreneurs, minorities, latin america



Introduction

Entrepreneurship as a legitimate occupational source of income for women, can be found worldwide. In some regions, it is institutionalized and represents a viable source of employment for women and as an income bearing source for their families. While women working as self-employed individuals dates back to much earlier centuries (Oppedisano, 2000; Boyd, 1996), their formalization as business owners or as a sector requiring their place and contribution to a country's gross national or domestic product has taken prominence primarily in the last three decades, and for some countries only in the last five years. Accounting for and documenting exact worldwide figures on women in the entrepreneurial sector remain illusive, but there is no doubt that women's place as a part of the entrepreneurial field is becoming more prevalent. This phenomenon is seen as a necessary development and a vital component to a country's advancement. Vital, since women represent approximately 50% of most countries' population and thus 50% of the potential workforce. Vital still, since the latter portion of the workforce is often marginalized and existing on the peripheral boundaries of a country's mainstream labor market – facing obstacles and being denied their rightful place as contributing income earners in their society.

Some have suggested that this documentation should mainly travel a path at the microlevel (Shane, Kolvereid and Westhead, 1991), others have emphasized the need to do studies that address the informal versus the formal economic sector – albeit a macro approach (Weiling, Winter, Morris and Murphy, 2001), while others have advocated a theoretical and empirical understanding of home based employment, especially as it impacts and is impacted by the contributions of women as independent income earners for their families (Hennon and Locker, 2000; Hennon, Jones and Roth, 1998).

The World Bank states that approximately half of the world's economic growth in the last decade can be attributed to the contributions of female entrepreneurs (Coughlin and Thomas, 2002). In Southeast Asia, the number of women entrepreneurs is more than 50% of all entrepreneurs (Coughlin and Thomas, 2002). Women entrepreneurs in Hungary, Russia, Romania and Poland have made and continue to make significant contributions to previously stagnating economies (Coughlin and Thomas, 2002). The turnaround of such countries' economies is said to be primarily attributable to the opportunities provided by women owning and operating their own businesses. A Kaufman Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership study of 21 countries revealed that current women entrepreneurs and their ever increasing numbers are key to the long-term economic growth of any country that wishes to operate effectively in the global marketplace.

Today, women in advanced market economies are said to own more than 25 percent of all businesses, with women-owned businesses in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America growing rapidly (De Bowman, 2000; Grasmuck and Espinal, 2000; Moghadam, 2005). Business ownership has also become the profession of choice for many women in the United States (Knotts, Jones and LaPreze, 2004). Several studies report that women entrepreneurs owned approximately 41 percent of all businesses and represented an important and growing sector of the economy (Lee and Denslow, 2005, Center for Women's Business Research, 2007). In 2007, there were 10.4 million women-owned firms that employed nearly 13 million people and generated \$1.9 trillion in sales. Between 1997 and 2006, the 42 percent growth rate of women-owned firms, was nearly twice the 24 percent growth rate recorded for all firms (Center for Women's Business Research, 2007). In concert with the growth of women-owned firms was the

increase of firms owned by women of color. According to the Center for Women's Business Research (2007) there were 2.4 million firms owned by women of color in the U.S. that employed 1.6 million people and generated nearly \$230 billion in sales

Overall, the global literature provides mounting evidence that business ownership by women is on the rise and is a vibrant and growing trend worldwide (Instituto APOYO, 2000; NFWBO, 2000; Weeks and Seiler, 2001; Smith-Hunter, 2006). Dismal economic conditions, high unemployment rates, spikes in divorce rates and the number of unmarried women, as well as the perpetual discrimination against women in the mainstream labor market are propelling women into alternative employment opportunities – such as the field of entrepreneurship (Moore and Buttner, 1997; Riethof, 2004; Benavot, 1989). Women entrepreneurs are not a homogenous group, even when the analysis takes place while keeping geographical context constant, that is – looking at a particular country. That homogeneity is further shattered when the analysis is done across countries. Cultural and social patterns prescribe the characteristics of women entrepreneurs worldwide. Women entrepreneurs worldwide are shown to be mainly concentrated in the services industry, are on average between 40-45 years old, married with approximately 2-3 children, have primarily a college education, have been in business for approximately 10-15 years and have 10–20 employees (Smith-Hunter, 2006).

Obstacles that women entrepreneurs face worldwide include: a lack of financial capital, inadequate human capital potential, lack of adequate network structures, especially one lacking in access to international networks and stifling government policies (Bitler et al, 2001). Creating educational tactics for improving women's human capital potential is fundamental for entrepreneurial growth and an essential component for producing an able crop of women who can enter and survive in the entrepreneurial world. Finally, access to financial capital is seen as a major criterion for this previously mentioned entrance and survival. The connection to an international network structure is a necessary ingredient for women entrepreneurs to grow and prosper as legitimate concerns that must now compete in the global marketplace on an individual level; business ownership provides women with the financial dependence that offers numerous tangential opportunities. On a national level, having approximately fifty percent of any nation's economy earning an income is said to be critical to the prosperity of a country's economy. On a global level, having an increased number of women working will serve to change the face of world economies today, whether the work is taking place in the mainstream labor market or in entrepreneurial ventures.

Industries and the types of businesses that women entrepreneurs operate is another challenge to women entrepreneurs that carries over from the mainstream labor market. The current research literature repeatedly laments the fate of women entrepreneurs and their concentration in less lucrative industries, such as personal services and the retail trades which provided lower returns to their operators. This concentration in personal services and the retail trades is common for all groups of women entrepreneurs; occurring across racial lines, across international boundaries and whether the enterprise is located inside or outside the home (Boyd, 1996; Maysami, 1999, Priestnitz, 1993; Olson, 1997).

Women are said to gravitate towards such industries for a number of reasons. First, the investment capital needed for such enterprises is proportionately smaller than needed for other industries, such as construction, mining and engineering (Smith-Hunter, 2006). As such, women are drawn to industries where the initial capital outlay is probably smaller. Second, studies have also shown that women entrepreneurs are more likely to operate familiar enterprises or businesses that are extensions of their hobbies, often providing services needed by and thus

catering to other women (Ayres-Williams and Brotherton, 1999; Bailyn, 1989; Biggart, 1989; Brodie and Stanworth, 1998). In addition, women in the mainstream labor market are concentrated in the personal services and retail industries. Thus transferring into the same sectors of business ownership from the mainstream labor market sector seems like an obvious transition.

Women have long worked as unpaid employees in their spouses' enterprises (Dhaliwal, 1998). This is particularly true of women in an international context where available employment alternatives are limited. However, the tide has shifted and women-owned businesses are beginning to increase in numbers on a global level (Dhaliwal, 1998). A study sponsored by the United Nations indicates that women entrepreneurs in Africa experience similar problems as those experienced by women entrepreneurs in the United States. Problems such as lack of access to financial capital, inadequate programs offered by government agencies and low education and skill levels, especially skills specifically related to running a business (De Groot, 2001). Another study conducted by Dhaliwal (1998) in England indicates that Asian women entrepreneurs are becoming a prominent feature of the business population and indicates that policy makers are being reminded to appreciate the needs of ethnic minorities in business (Dhaliwal, 1998). Similar studies in Europe, Canada, Australia and Pakistan herald the contributions of women entrepreneurs to their countries' economy.

Globalization has introduced challenges for people, enterprises and governments by altering the relationships between world markets, production, capital and labor. The feminization of poverty (Kottak and Kozaitis, 1999; Herring, Horton and Thomas, 1993) has led to entrepreneurship being seen as a viable income earning alternative for women across the world. Small and micro enterprises are some of the largest providers of employment opportunities worldwide, especially for women (Acs and Audretsch, 1990; Aronson, 1991; Bannock, 1981).

This paper continues to illuminate the role of minority women to the development of women entrepreneurship by focusing on Afro-Brazilian women entrepreneurs, with a look at various human capital, network structure and financial capital characteristics. The paper ends by discussing the importance of studying women entrepreneurs across racial lines.

Literature Review

A close examination of women entrepreneurs in Brazil suggests that most are employed in the services industry, followed by manufacturing (which consists primarily of making products with their own hands) and then transportation/communication (NFWBO, 1999). A marginal majority are said to be married, with an average number of 2.1 children, operating businesses with an average of 10-50 employees (NFWBO, 1999). The Brazilian economy boasts a high level of entrepreneurial activity when compared to other countries worldwide (Allen et al, 2007). The same report also indicated that overall, business owners have an activity level of 19.06 percent for females, as compared to a 28.8 percent rate for males. A more detailed look at the female statistics indicated that this percentage consisted of 9.61 percent early stage entrepreneurial activity (in business less than 42 months) and 9.45 percent established business owners' level of activity (being in business more than 42 months), Allen et al (2007). The male activity levels showed that the males had a 13.74 percent early stage entrepreneurial activity and a 14.77 percent established business owners' level of activity (Allen et al, 2007).

In recent years, self-employment and home based work has expanded opportunities for women's participation in the labor force worldwide, but is characterized by lack of security, lack

of benefits and low income. In the case of Brazil, 42 percent of their entrepreneurs are opportunity entrepreneurs (defined as people who take advantage of a recognized opportunity), while 56 percent of the entrepreneurial population are described as necessity entrepreneurs (defined as people who enter entrepreneurship because other employment options are absent or unsatisfactory), Allen et al (2007). In addition, in Brazil, the female opportunity to necessity ratio is 0.73 compared to the ratios for males, which is 1.43 (Allen et al, 2007). One can conclude from this prior statistic that in Brazil females are more likely to be necessity versus opportunity entrepreneurs when compared to their male counterparts.

One distinct perspective that is often presented in women entrepreneurial studies is the problems they experience, while operating their enterprises. One main problem women entrepreneurs in Brazil encounter are the many competitors they have, especially when operating in industries where other women entrepreneurs are the dominant members. Women entrepreneurs in Brazil are on average 40-45 years old, highly educated with most having a secondary degree or higher, including graduate experience (NFWBO, 1999). In spite of this high human capital potential, women entrepreneurs in Brazil were shown to be less likely than their male entrepreneurs to have the required skills to start a business (Alves de Siqueira, 2008). This sentiment is echoed in another study, which showed that the desire for more business training and education was a major concern for women business owners in that economy (NFWBO, 1999). Other issues or concerns for Brazilian women owners included economic issues, access to financial capital, cash flow to operate their business, the state of the country's economy and the impact it had on their business, as well as obtaining and keeping good employees (NFWBO, 1999, Duffy et al, 2006; Djankov et al, 2007; Geddes and Neto, 1992). A minority of the women entrepreneurs in Brazil are involved in the international marketplace (NFWBO, 1999), a factor that is said to be needed to grow a business successfully.

The employment patterns of women entrepreneurs in Brazil shows that most are also employed in the mainstream labor market and that some are in fact employed full time (17.5 percent) outside of their entrepreneurial ventures. This outside (of their entrepreneurial venture) access to financial resources, network structures, customers and ideas in turn aids them in their entrepreneurial ventures. Compared to their male counterparts, women entrepreneurs were less likely to belong to an adequate network structure. A network structure can be defined as the formal and informal connections of overlapping organizational, family and social memberships that accounts for their level of success, the resources they have available to them to satisfy our needs, obligations and expectations (Hogan, 2001; Easter, 1996; Aldrich, Reese and Dubini, 1989; Coughlin and Thomas, 2002). It has been described as the hidden hand of influence that impacts the development of business markets (Hogan, 2001; Choi and Hong, 2002; Chung and Gibbons, 1997) which included other business owners. This finding is significant, since an appropriate network structure has been shown to be critical for the establishment and continuation of entrepreneurial ventures.

While women entrepreneurs in Brazil continue to experience barriers while pursuing the business of entrepreneurship, various agencies and government organizations in that country have recognized the need to assist the women in transcending some of these barriers. Two dominant research papers that identify the barriers experienced by women entrepreneurs in Brazil highlight similar issues. Economic issues were a top concern, ranging from cash flow problems, to gaining access to bank credit (Alves De Siqueria, 2008; NFWBO, 1999). The earlier study also identified the then economic and political instability as a major concern for women entrepreneurs (NFWBO, 1999). Since then, the economic and political aspects of the

Brazilian economy have stabilized, but women in that sector continue to occupy a disadvantaged position, compared to their male counterparts. This disadvantaged position has its roots in a historically patriarchal society (Alvarez, 1990; Bak, 2000; Skidmore, 2004) that continues to see women, more than men, to be affected by poverty, and less likely than their male counterparts to be employed (Corral, 2002). Currently women in the labor force in Brazil are earning returns that are 40 per cent less than their male counterparts, although they have an overall higher educational level (Corral, 2002). This reduced access to financial capital, hampers women's ability in that country to accumulate the resources to start and operate their businesses.

Other barriers identified by the women entrepreneurs included: finding good employees, obtaining more training, both on business ownership in general and that related to their industry in particular and the lack of membership organizations that catered specifically to women entrepreneurs (NFWBO, 1999; Smith-Hunter and Leone, 2009). The more recent study looked at Brazilian women entrepreneurs in Sao Paulo and confirmed previous results, as well as offered new incites. The study cited too much competition, finding good employees and state and federal regulations (the cumbersome and at times bureaucratic process needed to comply with government regulations when operating a business in Brazil) as the top three problems faced by women business owners in that country (Smith-Hunter and Leone, 2009).

It should be noted that the studies mentioned previously kept the variable of gender constant, focusing exclusively on women rather than pursuing male versus female comparisons. Thus, declaring that Brazilian male entrepreneurs do not express the same problematic issues or identify the same barriers would be erroneous. In fact, both Robben (1984) and Djankov et al (2007), who looked at multiple gender samples of entrepreneurs in Brazil, identify government regulations, access to financial capital and competition, as barriers applicable to both male and female entrepreneurs in Brazil.

Research Methodology and Sample

The results from this study are comprised of information obtained from seven Brazilian women entrepreneurs in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, surveyed during the months of July and August 2007. 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 University of Sao Paulo who work with women entrepreneurs. The surveys were then emailed to the women entrepreneurs who completed the questionnaire and emailed them back. The women entrepreneurs who participated in this questionnaire varied in the type of businesses they operated. Consideration was given to the inclusion of women entrepreneurs operating different types of businesses, different size of businesses, a variety in the number of years their businesses were in operation and included women who operated businesses with a partner versus women who operated businesses as sole proprietors. This varied perspective was intentional; in order to capture how different sectors of the sample of Brazilian women entrepreneurs would view the same questions.

The women entrepreneurs in the current sample indicated that they were at least part owners of a registered company in Brazil. Thus, this study does not include women in the informal sector of the economy. Due to the sources of this sample, the Brazilian women entrepreneurs in this sample may not be indicative of the entire population of women entrepreneurs in Brazil. A total of seven Brazilian women entrepreneurs from an African

(Black) descent completed the questionnaire. It is their results that are included in the rest of this paper.

Results

The data from the study was prepared and stratified based on four key categories:

General Characteristics

A look at the overall general characteristics of the businesses was analyzed. They include: the types of businesses, the obstacles the business owners faced, the factors that motivate the women entrepreneurs, whether or not they started the businesses themselves, the number of employees of the business, the number of years in operation, the location of the business, the age and race of the business owners and whether they have children.

The Afro-Brazilian women's companies specialize in different areas of economic activity, but are found to be located primarily in the services industry. More specifically, two of the Afro-Brazilian women entrepreneurs made and sold arts and crafts, one made and sold earrings, one woman entrepreneur operated a small clothing boutique (making most of the clothes) one woman entrepreneur made bathroom tiles and two of the women entrepreneurs owned a chain of hair salons and spas. The results regarding the dominance of women entrepreneurs in the service industry has been confirmed repeatedly in other studies. NFWBO (2000) found women entrepreneurs distributed in the following industries: business (22%), service (20%) and surprisingly construction (10%), while Instituto APOYO (2000) 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 four principal motivations for the Brazilian women entrepreneurs to start their own businesses were: "needed a job," "to make more money," "always wanted to start my own business" and "a good way to find employment." Another key component of the top reasons for becoming a business owner centered on financial reasons. These are in keeping with other studies in the United States (Smith-Hunter, 2006) which also concluded that financial laden motivators were key components that propelled minority women entrepreneurs into the area of entrepreneurship. These results are similar to those by the Instituto APOYO (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 Brazilian women saw their top three problems as follows: rising costs of business, state and federal regulations and cash flow. The study further revealed that "not enough business knowledge," "too much competition" and "finding good employees" as rounding out the top positions. 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 Brazilian study also played a very important role as creators of new companies, since they either started their businesses themselves (14.29%), or started with a partner (85.71%). 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 remain primarily owned by the women, with most (85.71%) operating partnerships, followed by sole proprietorships. (14.29%). It should be noted that most of the partnerships the women entrepreneurs had, were with other women (83.33%), as opposed to men (16.67%).

One factor that can be used to estimate the size of a business is the number of employees. Most of the women entrepreneurs (71.43%) had less than 10 employees, with the average number of employees for the thirty-three business owners being fifty- nine employees. More specifically, three of the women entrepreneurs had zero employees, one woman entrepreneur had five employees, another had nine employees and two had two hundred employees. This relatively high value for average number of employees is based on a larger than expected business size from two of the women entrepreneurs who owned a beauty salon and spa chain which had a disproportionately large number of employees. As expected, other studies have shown much smaller 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.

The companies owned by the women entrepreneurs were young, with most (57.14%) owning their businesses for less than five years and 42.86% owning their businesses for more than 10 years. Overall, the women entrepreneurs had been in business an average of 7.5 years. 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.

The GEM report labeled entrepreneurs who started a business to exploit a perceived business opportunity as opportunity entrepreneurs and referred to those entrepreneurs who were pushed to start a business because all other options for work are either absent or unsatisfactory as necessity entrepreneurs (Allen et al, 2008). That same report indicated that 58% of the Brazilian women entrepreneurs were opportunity entrepreneurs and 41% were necessity entrepreneurs (Allen et al, 2008). The current study's results are an almost exact replica of those studies, finding that 57.14% of the women entrepreneurs were opportunity entrepreneurs and 42.86% of the women entrepreneurs classified as necessity entrepreneurs.

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 located their businesses outside the home (57.6%). 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 (85.71%), with results indicating that they had two children on average. 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, NFWBO (1999) 2-3 children on average and Instituto APOYO (2000) –3 children on average. Most of the women entrepreneurs were in the 31-40 age group (28.57%) and the 41-50 age group (42.86%), with the average age of the women business owners being 39 years. These results are in contrast 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 to be between 45-54 years old on average. The lower than expected average age is in keeping with other studies. However, the fact that the sample is Afro-Brazilian women, makes the findings unique, since as compared to their Caucasian counterparts, minority women entrepreneurs are usually found to be older (Smith-Hunter, 2006).

Human Capital Characteristics

Human capital has been defined as the propensity of a person or group to perform behavior that is valued from an income earning perspective by an organization or a society. Human Capital also refers to the knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being. This definition of human capital extends beyond those capital assets linked directly to productivity, to encompass factors that reflect the broader values associated with a well-educated population (Becker, 1993).

A significant number of the Brazilian women business owners had university educational experience (57.14%), with a large portion of that percentage pursuing graduate school (28.57%). These results are similar to 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. The study showed that most of the Brazilian women entrepreneurs (57.14%) had not been employed in previous businesses. 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). In addition, to their academic experiences, the Brazilian women entrepreneurs also detailed their other human capital experiences, where school education and accounting experiences showed the largest mean values.

Network Structures Characteristics

Network structures can be defined as the formal and informal connections of overlapping organizational, family and social memberships that accounts for our level of success, the resources we have available to us to satisfy our needs, obligations and expectations (Hogan, 2001; Easter, 1996; Aldrich, Reese and Dubini, 1989; Coughlin and Thomas, 2002). It has been described as the “hidden hand of influence” that impacts the development of business markets (Hogan, 2001; Choi and Hong, 2002; Chung and Gibbons, 1997).

A good percentage of the women in the research study are married (42.86%), followed by another large percentage – being divorced/single (57.14%). This relatively and surprisingly low marriage rate was also confirmed in another study by NFWBO (1999), but differed from that found by others (Smith-Hunter, 2006), 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.

Most of the women entrepreneurs received assistance from family and other sources (71.43%) at the start-up stage of their businesses compared to the assistance they received from friends. Assistance from family and friends in the operation of the business has also been reported in other studies (NFWBO, 2000; Instituto APOYO, 2000).

For the Afro-Brazilian women business owners, most of their family and friends owned businesses (57.14%). A final result was the lack of membership organizations that the women business owners belonged to, with only (28.57%) reporting that they belonged to such organizations. Part of the explanation for this lack of membership can be found in the fact that there are few such organizations that exclusively cater to women in Brazil. The few major organizations that exist are: SEBRAE, Endeavour and Instituto de Brasilio. Other studies have found even lower results for membership in organizations. Specifically, Instituto APOYO (2000) found that only 22% of the women in their study belonged to membership organizations.

Financial Capital Characteristics

While there are different ways to measure financial success for business owners, possible sources of financial capital include, but are not limited to, the following: liquid assets (checking and saving accounts), credit lines, loans, capital leases (mortgages and motor vehicle loans), financial management services (transaction and cash management), owner loans, credit cards and trade credits (Bitler, Robb and Wolken, 2001).

A considerable challenge facing women entrepreneurs worldwide is access to financial capital. The current results serve to reinforce that difficulty. For example, 85.71% of the women entrepreneurs had difficulties obtaining financial capital when they started their businesses. Their access to bank loans was somewhat difficult (57.14%) or very difficult (28.57%) for a majority of the women business owners in the study.

To finance their businesses, the women entrepreneurs thus primarily relied on their savings (100%) for some of the start-up funds. This was followed by money from partners (57.14%) and then gift from family and friends (28.57%). The seventh woman entrepreneur indicated that she did not even try (14.29%). 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).

The average amount of start-up funds used by the women entrepreneurs was US\$5,500 (all dollar amounts mentioned in this paper are in US dollars). These results are less 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-\$25,000), with the average figures for personal income being \$58,000 and an average net profit of \$200,000. These lower grouping of financial figures was also true for the sales/gross revenue figures, with most occurring in the \$0-50,000 range, with an average of \$5, 000,000 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 and spa chain by two of the women

entrepreneurs who were also partners in business. 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.

Conclusion and Discussion

The rise of women entrepreneurs across countries with varying infrastructures, resource and support for their inception and continuance over the last few decades is nothing less than remarkable. Contributing greatly to this rise in the number of women entrepreneurs are the increases for minority women entrepreneurs (Smith-Hunter, 2006). Across the globe, women are starting businesses in record numbers in every field imaginable (Smith-Hunter, 2006). Although the United States remains one of the most reported countries on studies for women entrepreneurs, women-owned businesses are on the rise everywhere (Coughlin and Thomas, 2002; Smith-Hunter, 2006). Profound structural changes in various nations, as well as the recognition by various facets of the society on the advantageous position it offered to women by the entrepreneurial sector has concentrated to buoy the importance of this employment sector for all – especially women who sometimes lack opportunities in the mainstream labor market (Smith-Hunter, 2006) or who were striving to combine their work and family life (Smith-Hunter, 2006).

This profound effect of the role of women entrepreneurship is attributable to the fact that women entrepreneurs are more likely than other sectors to operate small business enterprises (Smith-Hunter, 2006). Relatively recent reports on the increases in women business owners worldwide have been documented with surprising results. In Eastern Germany, women have created a third of the new enterprises since reunification in 1990, providing 1 million new jobs and contributing US \$5 billion to the German Gross National Product (Coughlin and Thomas, 2002). Female entrepreneurs in other transition economies, like Russia, Hungary, Romania and Poland, are making a similar impact. In Latin American countries, according to the World Bank, fully half of all economic growth in the last decade throughout the region is attributable to the creativity and hard work of female entrepreneurs (Coughlin and Thomas, 2002). In the Caribbean, a well documented study has detailed the importance of entrepreneurship to female's income earning potential (Browne, 2001). In Southeast Asia, female-owned businesses have been at the forefront of that region's economic turnaround since 1997 (Coughlin and Thomas, 2002). In Africa, entrepreneurship has been heralded as a long overdue, but critical component of women's advancement in the income earning sector and the reduction to their poverty levels (De Groot, 2001). Numerous other studies continue to advocate the importance of entrepreneurship in general and women entrepreneurship in particular to continuous economic development (Allen et al, 2008; Weiling et al, 2001; De Bowman, 2000; Heriot and Campbell, 2003; Hutn, 2000).

In turn, small business enterprises are said to be a critical component of the important cyclical patterns that aid in the financial development of a country's economy (Smith-Hunter, 2006). In addition to providing income for the women business owners, women-owned businesses play a vital role in creating for employees and increasing the expenditure of affected citizens and thus overall wealth for various economies. As the world embarks on a new century, there remains a strong but almost one-sided call for the continuous support of women

entrepreneurs. This one-sided chant speaks of the opportunities, challenges and factors impacting women entrepreneurs' success.

Currently, business owners in Brazil have an activity level of 19.06 per cent for females. Compared to their male counterparts, they are more likely to be in the services and retail industries. These industries also show a predominance of women participants worldwide. Resolutions that address women entrepreneurial issues in Brazil should do well in focusing on these industries, since they comprise the largest industry in Brazil by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and labor force participation (World Fact Book, 2009). It is clear from the evidence presented and discussed throughout this chapter that certain characteristics of women entrepreneurs in Brazil were similar to those found for other women entrepreneurs in other geographic regions of the world, reconfirming the perspective that women entrepreneurs worldwide are more alike than they are different.

The preceding results and discussion suggests that future studies could continue to look at a number of perspectives for Brazilian women entrepreneurs: exploration of the factors that lead to economic success in entrepreneurial ventures, the role of government institutions and membership organizations in assisting women to start and operate their businesses, expanding the robustness of the current quantitative results by supplementing it with in-depth qualitative data. Notwithstanding the many challenges faced by women entrepreneurs globally, an understanding of the differences in their characteristics and thus challenges is important in order to paint the multi-faceted picture that is the face of global women entrepreneur. An understanding of factors that help or hinder women is also an important first step in the design and implementation of policies to aid the advancement of women in the entrepreneurial world. This study offers several contributions to the understanding of the factors underlying the main dimensions that impact women entrepreneurs in today's global marketplace. The current study does have its limitations; they lie in the small sample size and the convenience nature of the sampling, especially from a geographic perspective. Future studies would do well to expand the sample size and to use a random sampling, encompassing different geographical areas of Brazil.

Regardless of the country or geographical region that is studied, one area that remains lacking in the entrepreneurship research are studies that focus on women entrepreneurs across racial lines. This is also true for Brazil, where of the limited studies that exist on women entrepreneurs, none focus their efforts across racial lines or on the minority population of women entrepreneurs in that country. This paper hopes to rectify this shortcoming by looking at Brazilian women entrepreneurs from a minority (Black/African) perspective, herein called Afro-Brazilian women. There is still work to be done. However, the results contained in this paper shed some light on the position of such minority women entrepreneurs, who are often left unstudied or understudied.

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