



Gendered positionalities and entrepreneurial engagement: A Jamaica-Trinidad and Tobago comparison

Dr. Talia Esnard, UWI, St. Augustine

Rationale for Study

- Persistent gender asymmetries in women's share of entrepreneurial ventures and its possible developmental impacts (Brush et al. 2006; Allen et al. 2008; Terjesen and Amoros 2010; Banon-Rubio and Esteban-Lloret 2016)
- researchers and policy makers alike continuously explore the nature, profile, dynamics of and constraints on female entrepreneurship.
- the lack of considerations for the contextual nature of female entrepreneurship
- global understandings female entrepreneurship remains restricted to:
 - empirical studies mainly in the United Kingdom and the United States
 - Fewer regional studies
 - Sex based comparisons based on variations in participation rates and growth rates (Minniti and Naude 2010; Jennings and Brush 2013; Carter, Foss and Ahl 2015).

Challenging on moving beyond

- In moving **beyond sex-based** comparisons, researchers have pointed to the need for:
 - contextual scholarship that **centers** the weight of child-care on the diverse ways in which women position their economic activities (Barriteau 2002; Bailey and Ricketts 2003; Reddock and Bobb-Smith 2008.)
 - Exploration that **trouble** the effects of such gendered processes on the unique idiosyncrasies and\or challenges and coping strategies of female entrepreneurs in the region exists (Barriteau 2002).
 - more comparative qualitative research that capture the striking “heterogeneity amongst female entrepreneurs” (Jennings and Brush 2013, 695)

Main objectives

- The main objectives of this paper are therefore to comparatively:
 - examine the labour market and social status of women in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago;
 - assess the effects of gender constructions on the thinking and practices of female entrepreneurs therein, and;
 - assess the implications of these for how we understand issues of sustainability and growth

Existing Labour market prospects: A Comparison

Country	Employed	Unemployed	Levels of Education	Self-employed	LFPR*	HDI*	GDI*	GII*
Jamaica	56.1%-F 70.9%-M	18.5%-F 9.3%-M	74.0-F 70.2-M	34.5%-F 66.5%-M	56.1%-F 70.9%-M	0.719 in 2014 Rank-99 th	0.715-F 0.719-M	0.430 Rank-93 rd \188
T & T*	41%-F 59%-M (2014)	4.7%-F 3.0%-M	59.7%-F 60.9% -M	27.3%-F 73.7%-M	53.0-F 75.5-M(2013)	0.772 (64 th rank)		0.371 Ranking-73/188.

Positionalizing female entrepreneurs

- The benefit of “**positionality theory**” is that it helps underscores the:
 - structured, contextual and discursive (SCD) nature of these experiences
 - need to reflect on the plurality and complexity of SCD issues on the positionalities and experiences of women across different spheres
 - extent to which individuals attempt to construct, reinforce or resist culturally accepted perspectives
 - Ways in which this collective process serves to reproduce or transform inherent social realities.

Methodology

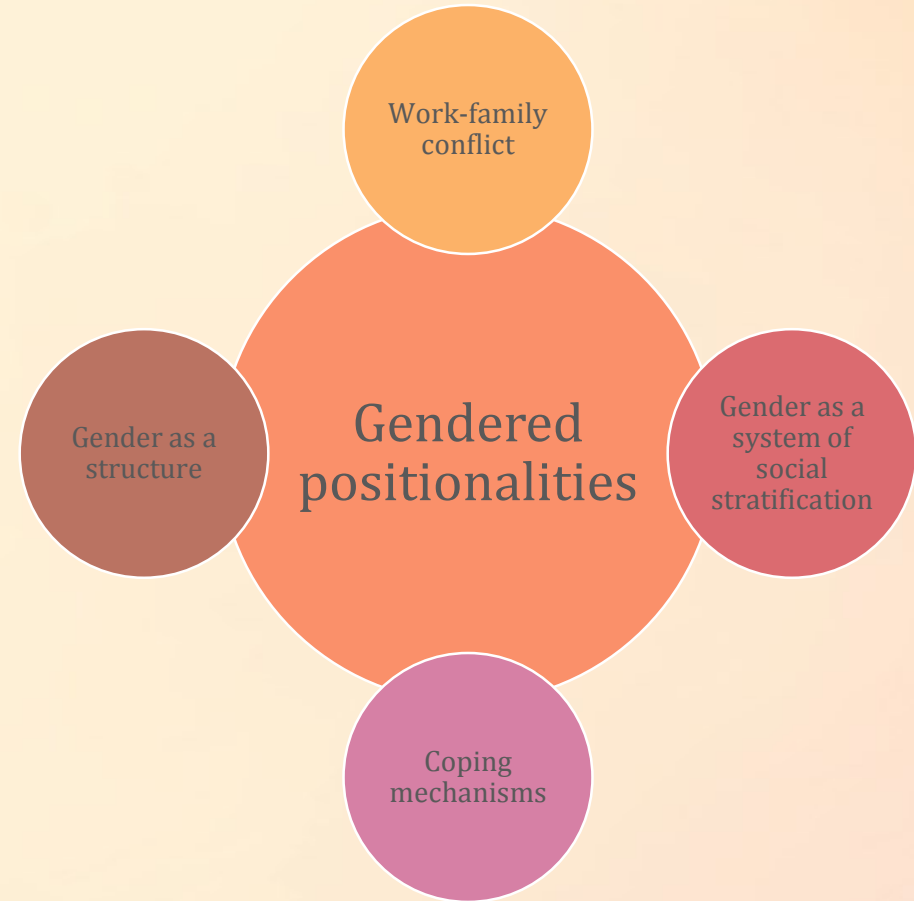
- Research design: an intrinsic case study approach
 - This is used to understand the ways in which contexts shape a given phenomenon (Stake 1995; Yin 2009).
 - Also provide rich data on the “why” and “how” of a given phenomenon
- Methods: in-depth interviews to explore:
 - Their thinking and practices
 - complex and unique conditions or realities
 - Ways of responding and/or coping
- Sampling: purposive and snowballing (early stage entrepreneurs)
- Sample size: 8 early stage female entrepreneurs (4 in each country*across industries)
- Data analysis: thematic

Description of sample

Interviewees	Ethnic background	Highest Level of Education	Marital status	Children	Industry
JA	African	Secondary	Single	One boy	Food & Beverage
JB	African	Secondary	Single	Two girls	Service
JC	African	Secondary	Single	Two girls	Service
JD	African	Undergraduate	Married	One boy	Fashion & Beauty
TA	African	Secondary	Married	Two boys	Textile
TB	African	Secondary	Single	One boy	Service
TC	Indian	Undergraduate	Married	One girl	Food & Beverage
TD	Mixed	Post graduate	Single	No children	Health\Wellness

FINDINGS

- Positionalities were based on how gender operates as a structure and system of stratification
- Work-Family Conflict remained central to their experiences
 - Ideological
 - Experiential
- Coping strategies were diverse but mainly rooted in social and spiritual practices



Gendered positionalities of female entrepreneurs

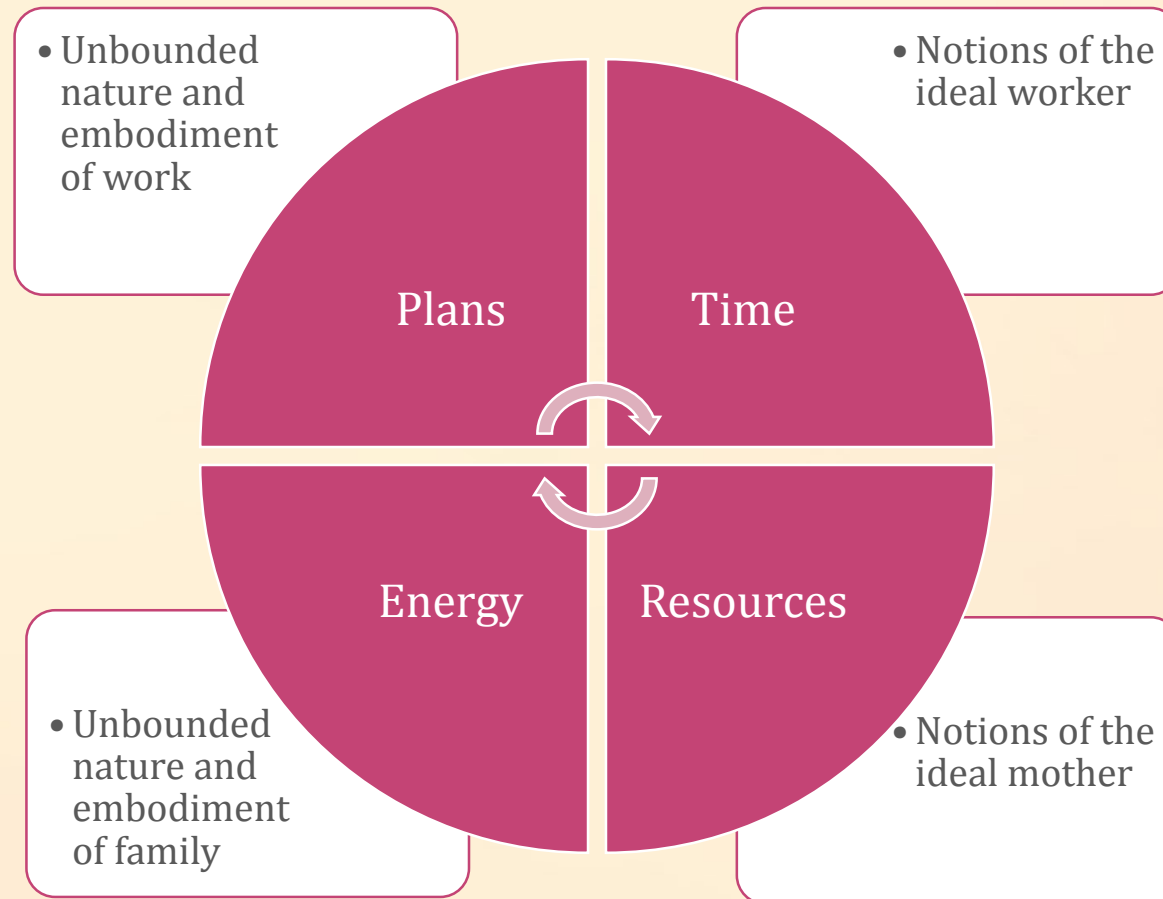
Gender as a structure

- female entrepreneurs identified with the social norms and expectations surrounding their roles as women and as mothers
- Understanding that entrepreneurial engagement does not reduce their maternal roles
- Expressed acceptance and rationalization of this reality
- Thinking that their contribution in the entrepreneurial sphere is not respected or made credible

Gender as a system of social stratification

- female entrepreneurs thought about the primacy of motherhood for women
- Perception that childbearing and rearing is natural life course for Caribbean women
- Prioritization of maternal roles over that of their entrepreneurial ones

Work-Family Conflict



Coping Mechanisms

Social support

- Friends
- Family
- Significant other

Spirituality

- Use of prayer as a coping activity
- Perception that their spiritual buffers the full effect of their social and economic reality
- Thinking that it offers a pedagogy of hope

Social and cultural capital

- Use of social ties, links and bonds
- Cultural-socializing of kids into an embodied state, ie. Into their entrepreneurial thinking and practice

Limitations

- This research is still in its exploratory stage. Thus, the study:
 - does not compare the relative experiences of male entrepreneurs who are also exposed to gendered entrepreneurial and familial spaces.
 - captured the realities of early start up female entrepreneurs.
 - limited to the use of a small, purposive and snowball sample obtained from urban areas in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago.

Discussion

- Empirically, the findings point to issues related to internalization, fusion, yet prioritization of gender roles
- These represent deeper attempts at re-defining identity and practices that:
 - intensifies related complexities
 - Introduces many tensions
 - Lead to the creative adoption of coping strategies
 - Lead to the emergence and strengthening of social and cultural capital
 - Have important yet taken for granted implications for the ways we understand and assess female entrepreneurship in the Caribbean

Conclusions

- although women emerge as conscious agents working to redefine themselves against the socially constituted tide of gender and other socially embedded constructs; their creative choices, ideas for survival and ways of repositioning themselves are yet to be recognized.
- At the heart of this invisibility is a gendering of entrepreneurship, not only as an economic and cultural space, but also as evaluative and representative process that are framed through empirical standpoints (Ahl 2004, 2006; Shaw et al. 2009; Hamilton 2013)
- It is here that I find Oser and Elliott's (2015) notion of feminine capital rather promising in unlocking the power of female entrepreneurs. It examines the ways of:
 - Knowing
 - Performing
 - Valuing
 - Framing

THANK YOU



Dr. Talia Esnard: talia.esnard@sta.uwi.edu