

ABSTRACT

The strong ties that connect families to the businesses created by certain family members is a phenomenon common to many cultures. Extended family systems act as a mechanism of support for the family members both in emotional and financial ways. This support system is carried over into the family businesses and often helps to strengthen them. In the generation which gives birth to the family business the number of family members involved is usually relatively small and their blood relations close. The geometrical progression of generations, however, necessarily widens the base of the family and the previous unity both in the family and in the business becomes difficult to maintain.

This study is concerned with seven Jewish families in Jamaica over the period 1870 to 1930 and the merchant businesses spawned by members of the individual families. The interrelationship between the families and their respective businesses will be examined in an attempt to explore themes such as: the effect of changes in the families on the ownership and management structure of their businesses and the effect of changes in the fortunes of the businesses on the families. The network of associations established between the groups of families and businesses is also important to this study, and may be seen as a part of a larger set of links formed between the Jamaican Jews in general. Although the success of the family business in the first and second generations was

predicated on several factors, it is the thesis of this study that the cohesiveness of the family and the effective utilization of family resources were the main reasons for success. In turn, the tendency of the family to disassociate itself from the business in the third generation was primarily caused by a fragmentation of the family's former unity.