

ABSTRACT

Black Commercial Under-Representation in Barbados:

Exploring Contemporary Theories

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The purpose of this thesis is to explore the reasons for the apparent commercial under-representation of Blacks in the Barbadian economy. Within the growing sphere of literature on entrepreneurship, minorities and minority businesses worldwide, it is a novel topic and adds value to this literature from a Barbadian perspective. Blacks account for an overwhelmingly large proportion of the Barbadian population, but an alarmingly low proportion of commercial enterprises. Factors affecting the development of Black business in Barbados are therefore important economic and social concerns to be addressed.

The thesis also adds a unique dimension to the debate on management and business in terms of race and culture. Specifically, it questions (i) the impact of race and culture on the success of business and entrepreneurship; (ii) the apparent innate superiority of the White race in terms of business; and (iii) the impact of marginalisation on business activity.

In seeking to address this phenomenon, an exploratory approach is used due to the paucity of literature in the area to act as a guide. The research design was essentially qualitative, utilising elite interviews and case studies. Data collected were analysed by comparison to the tenets of four theoretical approaches advanced to explain the forces which led to the under-representation of Blacks commercially in the Barbadian economy. These approaches relate to the Modernisation, Dependency, Unequal Access and Symbolic Articulation theories.

The findings revealed that a complex set of interrelated contemporary, historical, and psycho-social factors have contributed to the commercial under-representation of Blacks in the Barbadian economy. These factors, which include the impact of slavery, lack of access to resources, unflattering media reporting, and biased religious doctrines, point to the Unequal Access approach as the most relevant model to explain Black commercial under-representation in the Barbadian context.

Overall, the thesis offers a different approach to previous research in the area by employing a management perspective of the subject, as opposed to the historical and economic approaches usually employed by the limited research done so far in Barbados. The actionable findings are of value to policymakers, educators and practitioners who have an interest in promoting entrepreneurship in Barbados. In addition, a number of sociological findings emerged which, while not actionable in the short term, have been pointed up as important for future academic research.

Keywords: Marginalisation, Blacks, Entrepreneurship.