This is the published version


Available from Deakin Research Online

http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30069645

Reproduced with the kind permission of the copyright owner

Copyright: 2014, ABC-CLIO
The purpose of this chapter is to contribute to the discourse on migrant women entrepreneurs by identifying possible factors that act as barriers to these minority entrepreneurs. Interestingly, despite facing a plethora of barriers and disadvantages, migrant women entrepreneurs are the fastest-growing group of business owners in advanced economies—more entrepreneurial than their male and native-born women counterparts (Baycan-Levent 2010; Hacker, Harpel, and Mayer 2008). Migrant women entrepreneurs play a crucial role in their host country's economy, in terms of generating revenue and jobs, and creating an inclusive society, yet they remain "largely invisible and marginalised in mainstream entrepreneurship research" (Collins and Low 2010; OECD 2004, 30). This is due to the fact that gender dimensions are often ignored in the literature on immigrant or ethnic entrepreneurship, while the literature on female entrepreneurship generally ignores the immigrant or ethnic dimensions (Collins and Low 2010). In this chapter, we aim to address this void, and attempt to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon of migrant women's entrepreneurship by identifying and providing an overview of the possible barriers faced by migrant women entrepreneurs.

The problems of women are universal and, to varying degrees, women in organizations worldwide face a glass ceiling (Heilbrunn 2004), both in developed and developing countries. Furthermore, past research indicates that migrant women entrepreneurs face additional multifaceted and diverse problems, which can be explained largely by these women's ethnicity and gender (Baycan-Levent, Masurel, and Nijkamp 2003; Dhaliwal, Scott, and Hussain 2010).
The phenomenon of migrant women's entrepreneurship is shaped by the dual effects of ethnicity/migrant and gender, with the behaviors and attitudes of the entrepreneurs being influenced by their ethnic as well as their gender-related characteristics (Baycan-Levent, Masurel, and Nijkamp 2003). This is further supported by the empirical findings of a recent study by Davidson, Fielden, and Omar (2010, 58) who report that more than half of the black, Asian, and ethnic minority women respondents in their study had experienced discrimination, either due to their gender, ethnic background, or both. This discrimination was attributed to a number of factors, which included stereotypical images of specific ethnic cultures, religions, and practices. This confirms, therefore, that migrant women entrepreneurs are the victims of double disadvantage (Dhaliwal, Scott, and Hussain 2010; Rajman and Semyonov 1997; Smith-Hunter and Boyd 2004) and, in some cases, even triple disadvantage (Rajman and Semyonov 1997).

While the term double disadvantage refers to the problems faced by women, first as migrants and second as women, triple disadvantage adds a third dimension, which is as migrants from developing countries (Rajman and Semyonov 1997). The notion of triple disadvantage is also consistent with the arguments put forward by a number of scholars (Boyd 1984; Phizacklea 1983; Sullivan 1984) that the socioeconomic disadvantages are likely to differ according to the migrant women's country of origin. Migrant women entrepreneurs from developing economies starting their ventures in developed economies constitute the most disadvantaged group (Rajman and Semyonov 1997; Rubin et al. 2008), as they find it hard to adapt to the labor markets and institutional framework of developed economies.

The notions of double and triple disadvantage are important for understanding migrant women's entrepreneurship. These disadvantages provide insights into the barriers faced by women entrepreneurs and the reasons for their entrepreneurial activity lagging behind that of their male counterparts, despite their entrepreneurial potential. The barriers range from disadvantages in the labor market, which include race, gender, and ethnicity (Davidson, Fielden, and Omar 2010; Light and Rosenstein 1995), to lack of resources such as financial capital, human capital, social capital, knowledge, and self-confidence (Davidson, Fielden, and Omar 2010; Dhaliwal and Kangis 2006; Light and Rosenstein 1995), or a mix of the cultural and labor market disadvantages (Dhaliwal and Kangis 2006; Rubin et al. 2008).

Although some research has been done on identifying the barriers that migrant women entrepreneurs face, the effort has been limited to focusing on selected dimensions. There has been no consolidated effort to come up with a framework that outlines all the possible barriers and their interplay on entrepreneurship. In this chapter, we attempt to fill this gap in the literature and
Migrant Women Entrepreneurs: Exploring the Barriers

present a theoretical framework identifying the factors that act as barriers in migrant women's entrepreneurship initiatives, by reviewing the existing literature. With the rising number of migrant women entrepreneurs, this topic has important implications to facilitate their growth and to understand the problems they face.

The chapter is theoretical and starts by briefly reviewing the existing literature. Based on existing research, it then presents a theoretical framework identifying a number of dimensions that act as barriers for entrepreneurs. Each dimension is then discussed, followed by the conclusion, the implications of this research, and avenues for further research.

Entrepreneurs: A Review of the Literature

Migrant entrepreneurs—male and female—contribute to their host country's economy in varied ways. Contributions include: bringing new skills, providing flexibility and innovation in the labor markets, helping address labor shortages, contributing to the economy not only as employees but also as entrepreneurs, and creating new firms and businesses in a wide range of occupations and sectors beyond traditional ethnic businesses (Desiderio and Salt 2010). Due to their transnational ties, migrant entrepreneurs can also contribute to expanding trade between the host country and their countries of origin (Desiderio and Salt 2010). Further, the prospect of entrepreneurship opening up new possibilities for socioeconomic cohesion and integration has also emerged as an area of interest (Baycan-Levent 2010). Interestingly, research indicates that women's enterprises are different from men's as women create a clear culture of their own in their enterprises (Jalbert 2000). For example, women entrepreneurs have more abilities "to build and maintain long-term relationships and networks, to communicate effectively, to organize efficiently, to be fiscally conservative, to be aware of the needs of their environment, and to promote sensitivity to cultural differences" (Jalbert 2000, 24).

Past research suggests that migrant entrepreneurs face a number of challenges regardless of their gender (Baycan-Levent and Nijkamp 2011; Collins 2008). These gender-neutral challenges include factors like access to capital, restrictive government regulations while operating in the start-up phase, language barriers, and lack of local knowledge and culture (Collins 2008; Dhaliwal, Scott, and Hussain 2010; Liversage 2009; Rajman and Semyonov 1997). Research further indicates that migrant women face more hardships in the labor market compared to migrant men (Boyd 1984; Evans 1984; Rajman and Semyonov 1997). This is because, in addition to the gender-neutral challenges, there are gender-specific challenges (Roomi and Parrott 2008), which women face due
to their gender, giving rise to the term *double disadvantage*. Baycan-Levent, Masurel, and Nijkamp (2006) further argue that the gender-based differences in migrant entrepreneurship are similar to the gender-based differences observed commonly in entrepreneurship. As a result, despite the dual influence of gender and ethnicity, the characteristics of ethnic women entrepreneurs are close to those of women entrepreneurs (Baycan-Levent, Masurel, and Nijkamp 2003).

Based on the data from OECD countries, Baycan-Levent (2010) suggests that there has been a critical change in the ethnic female profile of migrant women entrepreneurs. This is a result of changes in the understanding of the role of women in the family and family strategies over the years. Some of these changes include a shift in the self-employment experience, from that of a family strategy toward an independent strategy, with women venturing into self-employment as a result of their desire for "independence" and "autonomy" (Baycan-Levent 2010). In addition, women are also changing roles from unpaid workers to co-decision-makers in their husband's business and, in some cases, are also moving away from their caregiving responsibilities and setting up businesses outside the home (Baycan-Levent 2010).

Research on women's entrepreneurship has been and is still growing, indicating several interesting trends. First, despite the fact that entrepreneurial activity among women is increasing, research indicates that women are less likely to become entrepreneurs than their male counterparts because of sociocultural norms, migration patterns, and occupational segregation (Barrett 2006). Second, research indicates that the ventures of women entrepreneurs are small (Fleck, Hegarty, and Neergard 2011; Gonzalez and Husted 2011), and are characterized by low growth with low levels of funding (Gonzalez and Husted 2011). Third, migrant women entrepreneurs are not a homogenous group (Collins and Low 2010; OECD 2004). They are a diverse group differing in ethnicity, age, skills, experience, financial and educational resources, and linguistic skills, all of which have important implications for their entrepreneurial orientation as well as their success. Fourth, the socioeconomic disadvantages of women are likely to differ by country of origin, giving rise to the notion of triple disadvantage (Boyd 1984; Raijman and Semyonov 1997; Rubin et al. 2008; Sullivan 1984), particularly for migrant women entrepreneurs from developing economies. Finally, migrant women's entrepreneurship is evolving and is shaped by sociocultural, political, religious, and economic factors, as well as women's own subjectivity. Research suggests that in advanced economies, migrant women entrepreneurs are moving away from a family strategy toward an independent strategy to venture into entrepreneurial activities. This is, in fact, a positive trend but requires sufficient levels of confidence as well as skills, knowledge, and experience on the part of the women entrepreneurs, which,
unfortunately, not all migrant women entrepreneurs have. Therefore, this trend is more pronounced among entrepreneurs who have education and skills that provide them with the confidence to break sociocultural barriers and existing norms regarding their responsibilities in the family (Baycan-Levent 2010).

**Migrant Women Entrepreneurs: Exploring the Barriers**

Despite the multitude of problems faced by migrant women entrepreneurs, research suggests that they are the fastest-growing group of business owners (Baycan-Levent 2010). This indicates their great potential for future growth if the barriers they face are minimized. Entrepreneurship is always evolving and is influenced by multiple economic, sociocultural, and political factors, as well as women's own subjectivity. Given the importance of migrant women entrepreneurs, their increasing numbers, and the fact that they remain largely ignored and underresearched (Collins and Low 2010), there is a need for research to provide a clear and comprehensive overview of the possible barriers faced by these entrepreneurs. Subsequently, in this chapter we present a theoretical framework of the possible barriers that migrant women entrepreneurs face in their entrepreneurship journey, drawing upon previous research and emerging trends (Figure 8.1). Overall, seven dimensions are identified in this framework, which include human capital, family, culture, institutional factors, gender, race/ethnicity, and social capital. In the following section, we explore each of these dimensions, based on the review of the existing literature.

![Figure 8.1](image-url)  
*Figure 8.1* A framework showing the possible barriers faced by migrant women entrepreneurs
Human Capital

According to Brush et al. (2001, 9), "human capital relates directly to the knowledge and capability level of individuals and represents initial 'endowments' that are useful in obtaining and developing other types of resources." Appropriate human capital—education, skills, and experience—is extremely important for entrepreneurs to start and operate a new enterprise, and get access to information, training, and other available facilities. Research suggests that, in most cases, women migrants lack the human capital of marketable skills or qualifications (Alcorso 1989), which is likely to disadvantage them in terms of accessing the normal labor market. In addition, the lack of prior employment and managerial experience faced by many women (Fischer, Reuber, and Dyke 1993; Hisrich and Brush 1984) also affects their entry into the mainstream labor market. These disadvantages apply particularly in the case of migrant women from developing countries as they have had less opportunity to be educated, to acquire business skills, or even to gain entry into their home country's labor market, thus explaining the thesis of triple disadvantage.

Dolinski et al. (1993) report that less-educated women may face financial or human capital constraints that limit their business pursuits. Similarly, Jalbert (2000) argues that technology, education, and training are tightly interwoven, and lack of knowledge in any of these areas can act as a barrier for women entrepreneurs to reach their potential. Education helps women entrepreneurs not only to comprehend laws and regulations but also to take advantage of existing training and technological services. Research suggests that among the migrant women entrepreneurs, those better able to comprehend laws and regulations are more likely to succeed (Desiderio and Salt 2010). It is further argued that males, in general, possess scientific, technical, and managerial skills that are "not only easily internationally transferable but also more often in high demand" (Desiderio and Salt 2010, 245). This is in contrast to women, who generally move within fields such as medicine and teaching, where qualifications can be more difficult to transfer (Liversage 2009, 121). Further, Baycan-Levent (2010) found that among the OECD countries, Canada was found to have the highest performance of migrant women entrepreneurs, as well as high levels of education and skills among migrant women.

Research also indicates that, in most cases, even if migrant entrepreneurs have high levels of human capital, it is devalued relative to nonmigrants, as these qualifications are obtained in another country, shaping minority migrant experiences in the labor market (Collins and Low 2010; Liversage 2009; Rubin et al. 2008). A recent study on Asian migrant women entrepreneurs based in
Sydney found that, contrary to popular belief, they were educated and had significantly higher human capital than the average Australian women. However, they faced greater problems with the recognition of overseas-obtained qualifications and skills than other migrants in Australia (Collins and Low 2010). The nonrecognition of overseas qualifications for Asian migrants not only blocks the labor market mobility of immigrants from a minority background but also raises the issue of racial discrimination faced by migrants in the mainstream labor market (Collins and Low 2010; Rubin et al, 2008). This is also consistent with the earlier findings of Dumont and Liebig (2005) who report that these migrants are more susceptible to brain waste, as they hold higher qualifications than are usually required for the jobs they hold. Rubin et al. (2008) further confirm this to be true for migrants from all countries, particularly, those from non-OECD countries.

In sum, migrant women entrepreneurs, compared to their male counterparts, lack the required human capital skills of experience and education, which acts as a barrier for them to pursue their business ventures. This is particularly the case with migrant women coming from developing countries. Also, even if migrant women entrepreneurs have the required skills and qualifications, in most cases, overseas qualifications are not recognized in the host country, thus disadvantaging them.

Family

The dual effects of being an ethnic/migrant and the role of gender in women's entrepreneurship act as double barriers or disadvantages rather than double opportunities, and this is pronounced in the literature (Baycan-Levent 2010; Dhaliwal, Scott, and Hussain 2010; Raijman and Semyonov 1997). The traditional role of women as homemakers, and the accompanying notions of sacrifice and duty to the family, have long prevailed in both developed and developing countries and have important implications for their entrepreneurial activities. The role of women as homemakers—looking after the children and carrying out the household chores—is so deeply embedded in societies socioculturally that "even when men spend less time on employment-related activities than their female partners, they do not necessarily increase their contribution to domestic labour and childcare" (Dhaliwal and Kangis 2006; Keen 2007). Consequently, despite changes and ongoing feminist movements, women in both developed and developing countries are still responsible for child care and home management, and these responsibilities often lead to work and family conflict (Das 2001; Kupferberg 2003). For example, even in developed countries like Australia, where women are
generally empowered and educated, research suggests that domestic responsibilities continue to fall to women regardless of their partners' labor force status. Women are responsible for household work, despite their partners spending significantly less time at work compared to them (Smyth, Rawsthorne, and Siminski 2006).

This situation of gender inequality applies more to developing countries where societies are patriarchal and sexist. In these societies the notion that women have a subordinate position to men is so embedded in the culture and society that, in many cases, women themselves do not realize that they are equal to men. In some societies, gender bias and role prescription start within the family and are influenced by religion, societal norms, and the prevailing culture. Despite the increasing spread of education among women and their entry into varied occupations, even in developing countries, the institution of family in many societies remains unchanged with the exception of a few cases. Although women entrepreneurs have successfully earned respect in the workplace, “women have yet to win respect for their work in the home” (Schultheiss 2009, 28). Therefore, changes in the role of women from homemaker to breadwinner in these societies are not easily accepted by the family or even by their own community. These attitudes act as a major barrier for migrant women entrepreneurs to venture into their own businesses. However, research suggests that in OECD countries, migrant women entrepreneurs are moving away from their responsibility of caregiving to become more independent and autonomous (Baycan-Levent 2010). In some cases, even if women overcome the attitudinal barriers from their family and community for economic benefit, they are still responsible for child care and home management leading to work–family conflict.

On the contrary, research also suggests that for some entrepreneurs, the family acts as an enabler as it plays a crucial role in helping entrepreneurs in terms of providing moral, financial, physical, and mentoring support (Dhaliwal, Scott, and Hussain 2010). In addition, research in OECD countries suggests that entrepreneurs are venturing into entrepreneurial activities and are changing their strategy and orientation from family to independence and autonomy. Nevertheless, women in both developed and developing countries are generally responsible for caregiving—looking after children and other household chores. Not only is their labor unpaid and not incorporated into the discussions of paid work but it is also not recognized by the family, society, or even at workplaces. As a result, for migrant women to venture into entrepreneurial activities, they have to extend their roles beyond the domain of responsibilities for domestic work (Liversage 2009). This creates challenges for women becoming involved in career development or venturing into entrepreneurial activities.
Migrant Women Entrepreneurs: Exploring the Barriers

Culture

The literature on migrant entrepreneurship places emphasis on the importance of ethnic resources for the establishment of ethnic businesses (Drori, Honig, and Ginsberg 2006; Watts et al. 2007), with culture being one of the most important ethnic resources. Cultural capital is regarded as one of the three main sources of capital possessed by individuals alongside economic and social capital (Watts et al. 2007). As culture is a very broad term, in this chapter we focus on traditions, values, beliefs, religion, norms, and practices to refer to culture. Watts et al. (2007) further argue that traditions, beliefs, values, and norms developed in home country's cultural settings form the basis of cultural capital, and are important as they explain the differences in values, insights, tastes, and appreciation experienced by migrants in the host country. Experiencing a new culture can be challenging for migrant entrepreneurs as it leads to acculturative stress, culture shock, homesickness, and confusion about expectations in the host country. These challenges are compounded by the additional barriers faced, which include lack of family support and the lack of adequate human capital, as discussed earlier.

Research attributes the social structure of work, family, and social life for the slower growth of women-owned businesses as they influence the development of women's human and social capital in a different way from their male counterparts (Brush et al. 2004; Roomi 2012). Although social values and cultural traditions in different societies play a crucial role in affecting the growth of migrant women entrepreneurs, they remain underresearched (Roomi 2012). As discussed earlier, in most cultures and societies, the notion of women as homemakers and men as breadwinners is deeply embedded. Consequently, women in both developed and developing countries face restrictions when they venture into business and have to extend their role beyond the responsibilities of domestic work.

In addition to traditions, beliefs, values, and norms, migrant women entrepreneurs, in some cases, are also subject to religious restrictions, which further disadvantage them. These restrictions and gender bias are deeply integrated into society and act as barriers for women's mobility and career orientation. For example, Muslim societies are very specific especially in regard to gender relations, sexuality, and women's roles, with a clear-cut gender division, where women are mainly seen as wives, mothers, and as persons whose honor should be protected (Heilbrunn and Abu-Asbah, 2011). Further, in most Muslim societies women are secluded and segregated with veils and head scarves, and are not encouraged by their families and community to work alongside their male counterparts. These values have been deeply embedded in these societies
for decades, although there is no rule written in the Quran (the Holy Book for Muslims) that prevents women from working outside the home (Roomi and Parrott 2008).

Traditions, beliefs, values, norms, religion, and practices, in most cases, create barriers for migrant women entrepreneurs. The barriers are not easy for them to overcome, particularly, if they do not have adequate support from the family and community, and also if they lack the optimum level of education and skills to make themselves confident enough to overcome the obstacles.

Institutional Factors

Mixed embeddedness theory focuses on the embeddedness of entrepreneurs in the socioeconomic and political–institutional environments of the country of settlement, and how these environments shape the opportunities of the entrepreneurs (Dana and Morris 2007). According to Volery (2007, 35), the concept of mixed embeddedness “recognizes that the structures of a local economy and legal–institutional factors exert a strong influence on the creation and existence of the small business economy in general.” It can, therefore, be argued that the concept of mixed embeddedness is closely related to the institutional environment of a country, as “firms are embedded in a broad set of political and economic institutions that affect their behaviour” (Campbell 2007, 948). Embedding can, therefore, be viewed as “the mechanism enabling the entrepreneur to draw upon and use resources and become part of the local structure” (Heilbrunn and Abu-Asbah 2011, 46).

The thesis of triple disadvantage can be explained to a large extent by the mixed embeddedness theory. Migrant entrepreneurs coming from developing countries are used to operating in a social and institutional environment where the regulatory frameworks and the formal legal institutions are weak, and there is lower, limited compliance with voluntary standards, codes of conduct, and enforcement of regulations (Azmat and Zutshi 2012). As a result, they depend largely on informal practices. These entrepreneurs, therefore, face problems in starting a business and adapting to the social and institutional environment of the host country, which requires strict adherence to law, regulations, and enforcement. These problems are further compounded for women entrepreneurs from developing countries who generally lack the necessary knowledge of the local labor market and the human capital, such as skills, experience, and language proficiency, to start a business. Their lack of human capital also restricts their access to advice and business information (Heilbrunn and Abu-Asbah 2011).
The literature on migrant entrepreneurs contends that migrants face certain disadvantages such as a lack of language proficiency and human capital, and inadequate knowledge of the local culture and labor market (Roomi 2012; Dhaliwal, Scott, and Hussain 2010; Liversage 2009; Raijman and Semyonov 1997), which limit their access to information, and restrict their employment in the mainstream labor market. As a result of these disadvantages, they accept jobs of lower status and low pay, thus incurring occupational costs, which are greater for women than for men (Raijman and Semyonov 1997). Similarly, research also suggests that woman entrepreneurs face constraints in accessing loans and financial resources compared to their male counterparts (Roomi and Parrott 2008).

Gender

Although the problems of women are global phenomena, they are more pronounced in developing countries. Women worldwide face glass ceilings in organizations to varying degrees (Heilbrunn 2004) both in developed and developing countries. Women are increasingly turning to entrepreneurship as a way of coping with the glass ceiling that seems to prevent them from reaching top managerial levels in organizations (Das 2001). However, it is also argued that although entrepreneurship is an alternative for women, their "opportunities as entrepreneurs are still constrained by the double bind of racism and sexism" (Collins and Low 2010, 103).

Although migrant women's entrepreneurship is influenced by the dual effects of ethnicity and gender, research suggests that gender has a greater effect than ethnicity in the characteristics and behavioral attitudes of migrant entrepreneurs (Baycan-Levent, Masure!, and Nijkamp 2006). The problems faced by migrant women entrepreneurs are multiple and diverse and are best explained by the double disadvantage thesis articulated by Boyd (1984, 92-93):

sex adds another dimension to the stratification of migrants within the workplace and within the larger society. In addition to the status of being a migrant, they experience additional difficulties in the labour force as women ... Overall, the position of migrant women in the labour force can be understood as reflecting the combined impact of sex and birthplace or the "double negative" effect.

Heilbrunn and Abu-Asbah (2011) in their study have confirmed that Arab women entrepreneurs in Israel suffer from double disadvantage, as women and as belonging to a national minority. Similarly, Raijman and Semyonov (1997) also found double disadvantage to be evident in the Israeli labor market with regard to both labor force participation and occupational attainment.
Migrant women entrepreneurs, regardless of their skills and experience, are more likely to be involved in traditional women-specific sectors (Phizacklea 1983; Roomi and Parrott 2008; Rubin et al. 2008; Wright and Ellis 2000) such as child care, health care, cooking, cleaning, and teaching, which limits their career opportunities (Liversage 2009). Involvement in these women-specific sectors is the result of a number of factors such as sociocultural expectations, women's own attitudes, lack of human capital, and a lack of support from the family that limit women's access to other sectors. In addition to limited employment opportunity, the disadvantages faced by women in the labor market, when compared with men, include greater difficulties in acquiring financial resources (Aldrich 1989; Roomi 2012), and fewer informal support systems and networks (Das 2001; Dhaliwal, Scott, and Hussain 2010). Moreover, it is possible that constraints associated with commitment to traditional family roles and responsibilities are especially pronounced among migrant women. DeCarlo and Lyons (1979), through their comparative empirical study, found that minority women entrepreneurs tended to be more disadvantaged than their white peers. Similarly, an empirical study by Inman (1999) comparing minority and white women owning service-oriented businesses, further revealed that minority women were more likely to be motivated by their limited options in the mainstream labor market, and faced greater problems in acquiring financial and other resources for their businesses than their white counterparts. Furthermore, research suggests that as victims of double disadvantage, migrant women entrepreneurs are mostly found to be concentrated in the lowest-skilled sectors, which limits their "rights as workers, their mobility in the labour market, their opportunities for career progression, and their chances for human capital development" (Rubin et al. 2008, xxi).

Race/Ethnicity

Race/ethnicity, in some cases, can also act as barriers for migrant women entrepreneurs. Research indicates considerable ethnic variations in relation to disadvantages faced by women in the labor market. Raijman and Semyonov (1997) found that women entrepreneurs of Western European origin arriving in Australia, Canada, or North America were more successful in their entrepreneurial orientations compared to women entrepreneurs coming from developing countries. This can partly be explained by the triple disadvantage theory that suggests women from developing countries face additional hardships. Furthermore, research suggests that women minority entrepreneurs generally have to deal with poor opinions others have about "their intellectual and educational capabilities because of the colour of their skins and ethnic background."
Migrant Women Entrepreneurs: Exploring the Barriers

(Davidson, Fielden, and Omar 2010, 66). However, it is also argued that with the passage of time, the effect of ethnicity diminishes as the migrant women gradually settle in their host country (Raijman and Semyonov 1997).

Social Capital

Social networks and social capital are among the ethnic resources commonly used by migrant entrepreneurs (Light and Rosenstein 1995). Both formal and informal networks are important for all businesses, however, research on the topic of networking among women entrepreneurs has led to mixed findings. Some studies suggest that women have lower levels of networking (Katz and Williams 1997), while others report that women are using informal social networks rather than established formal networks (Blisson and Rana 2001; Collins and Low 2010; Heilbrunn and Abu-Asbah 2011; OECD 1998). Blisson and Rana (2001), in their study of South Asian women entrepreneurs and white women in the United Kingdom, found informal social networks to be more important than formal business networks. This was mainly due to factors such as their gender, culture, family, and cultural commitments as well as a lack of confidence, which limited their participation in formal networking activities. Similarly, Collins and Low (2010) also report women migrant entrepreneurs being more dependent on social rather than business networks. In a similar vein, Ahmad (2011) found that women entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia relied on informal networks of family and close friends to minimize the risks of their new business venture. Similarly, Heilbrunn and Abu-Asbah (2011), in their study of Arab women entrepreneurs in Israel, also found that women entrepreneurs mainly used informal networks, which helped them to serve the needs of their local, national or ethnic communities and kinship group. However, the study also reported that women entrepreneurs using informal networks were also found to face many barriers, and also complained about the lack of counseling opportunities.

In sum, it can be concluded that women migrant entrepreneurs mostly use informal networks—family, friends, and ethnic and kinship ties—to support and develop their businesses rather than formal business networks. Although the use of informal networks is extremely important for these entrepreneurs, it hinders them from entering the mainstream market and being socially included in mainstream society. This is supported by Roomi (2012) who argues that this lack of appropriate social capital to make meaningful exchanges within business networks limits migrant women's opportunities to raise capital and other resources crucial for the growth of businesses. The reliance on informal networks by migrant women entrepreneurs can mainly be explained by a number
of factors which include culturally rooted constraints, gender seclusion, family commitments, and lack of human capital, all of which limit their access to and participation in formal business networks.

**Conclusion and Implications**

Despite their growing numbers, migrant women entrepreneurs as a group are relatively invisible and marginalized in the entrepreneurship literature (Collins and Low 2010; Dhaniwal, Scott, and Hussain 2010; Liversage 2009; OECD 2004). The literature on this topic has so far focused predominantly on women entrepreneurs in general. There has been no consolidated effort to come up with a theoretical framework that outlines all the possible barriers that migrant women entrepreneurs face. In this chapter we fill the gap in the literature. Based on the review of existing research, in this chapter we have attempted to provide insights into the multifaceted barriers migrant women face in their entrepreneurship journey. These barriers are presented in the theoretical framework in Figure 8.1, which include human capital, family, culture, institutional factors, gender, race/ethnicity, and social capital. These barriers are diverse and multifaceted, but are mostly the result of the double disadvantage migrant women face—first as a migrant and second as a woman. Although the phenomenon of migrant women entrepreneurs is influenced by the dual effects of ethnicity/migrant and gender, this research reinforces earlier findings (Baycan-Levent, Masurel, and Nijkamp 2003) that gender has a greater influence on their entrepreneurship.

Given the importance of migrant women entrepreneurs in the host country’s economy, in generating employment, reducing poverty, and creating a socially inclusive society, the barriers faced by them have important policy implications. The insights into the barriers faced by migrant women entrepreneurs reinforce the importance of designing effective policies to overcome the identified barriers. The policies could be in the areas of training programs to develop their human capital, access to credit, child care facilities, assistance, and easy access to information that is easy for them to comprehend. Particularly, training and educational program at women-only facilities could be developed, which would cater to a wide range of migrant women entrepreneurs, especially who are restricted by their cultural norms and religious beliefs. Further, the chapter also sheds light on their unique cultural values, beliefs, and traditions, which also act as barriers. The challenge therefore, is to create effective policies while remaining sensitive and respectful to their culture and beliefs to facilitate their growth and strengthen and create a socially inclusive society.
In this chapter, we offer several important contributions to the literature on migrant women's entrepreneurship. First, the core theoretical contribution of this chapter is to develop a theoretical framework outlining the possible barriers faced by this marginalized group of women. This framework serves as a foundation for further research on migrant women entrepreneurs to investigate the different barriers identified. Second, it adds to the evolving research on migrant women's entrepreneurship by focusing on an underresearched yet important topic. Finally, given the limited literature on migrant women entrepreneurs, this chapter makes a significant contribution to two different but important interrelated discourses on gender and migrant entrepreneurship.

There are some limitations in this chapter that could be addressed in future work. First, given the diversity of entrepreneurs and the various cultural/legal/institutional differences that they face in the host country, it is hard to identify all the possible barriers through a single framework and to understand the complexity of the situation. Second, this is a theoretical study. There is, therefore, a need for empirical research to test this framework including surveys and case studies of practitioners, policy-makers, and other stakeholders. This could not only validate the framework but will also determine whether any of the barriers identified also have the potential to act as enablers, and whether any of the barriers could become strengths as well. In particular, it would be interesting to find ways to overcome the barriers for women migrant entrepreneurs to enable their entrepreneurship initiatives to succeed. Nevertheless, despite these limitations, the chapter provides useful insights into the possible barriers migrant women entrepreneurs face, and lays the foundation for future research on this topic which, to date, remains underresearched.

References


