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## 4 Family Heterogeneity and Migrant Entrepreneurship

**Abstract:** Family can play various roles in the entrepreneurial process of migrants; yet the literature tends to consider family as a homogeneous unit. In reality, families comprise different structures ranging from a nuclear family to an extended family. Furthermore, given that migrant entrepreneurs may have family in their countries of origin as well as often in their countries of residence, we should consider that the notion of family and its influence can vary from one country to another.

In this chapter, we aim to better understand the role of family heterogeneity in starting a new venture by migrant entrepreneurs by looking into family functions. We address the following research questions: (i) What family functions are present in the countries of origin and residence in the process of migrant entrepreneurs starting a new venture and (ii) How do such functions facilitate or hinder the new venture?

The chapter proposes three family functions – or family ways of working – that facilitate the new venture-creation process: (i) changing family responsibilities; (ii) family acting as a catalyser; and (iii) family acting as bedrock. These functions are not static features; they are processes influencing the venture-creation process. Family functions change as needed during the venture-creation process. Such changes, however, are limited to the pool of resources available to the migrant entrepreneur and his or her family in the countries of origin and residence.

**Keywords:** Migrant entrepreneurship, family, heterogeneity, embeddedness, venture creation process

### Introduction

Migrants' ventures often involve the presence of family; yet, little is known about the functions that family perform in the process of migrant entrepreneurs' starting new ventures and how such functions help the entrepreneurs overcome discrimination. The literature on migrant entrepreneurship acknowledges the presence of family in the process of creating a new venture (Baklanov et al., 2014; Dana, 1995; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). The influence of the family is recognized in the generation of the entrepreneurial idea and the running of the venture (e.g. Aliaga-Isla & Rialp, 2012; Vinogradov & Elam, 2008). Still, as migrant entrepreneurs launch new ventures, their

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families perform different “functions”, which influence the venture (Jaskiewicz & Dyer, 2017).

According to the migrant entrepreneurship literature, examples of family functions include being supportive in the start-up (Bagwell, 2008; Dana, 1995; Dana et al., 2019); working as employees (Ramadani et al., 2014; Tata & Prasad, 2015); financing the start-up and expansion of the venture (Bagwell, 2015; Baklanov et al., 2014; Ram et al., 2017); and sharing practices to maintain a competitive advantage (Bolívar-Cruz et al., 2014). While the literature concentrates mainly on these functions, it neglects to provide a broader understanding of varied functions performed by migrants’ families in their countries of origin and residence or how such functions relate to the development of the migrant entrepreneurs’ new ventures (Evansluong et al., 2023). Understanding such family functions is important, as doing so helps obtain insights into migrants’ resourcefulness in situations when they are segregated and lack networks, finances, and knowledge of the society of residence (Bagwell, 2018; Vershinina et al., 2011). Family is an institution that provides trust and support when migrants experience discrimination (Evansluong & Ramirez-Pasillas, 2019). Disentangling family roles might help researchers obtain insights into how migrants use the support of family members to overcome discrimination when starting a new venture.

This chapter aims to better understand the role of family heterogeneity in starting a new venture by migrant entrepreneurs by looking into family functions. We address the following research questions: (i) What are family functions present in the countries of residence (COR) and origin in the process of migrant entrepreneurs starting a new venture; and (ii) How do such functions facilitate or hinder the new venture? To answer these, we use the perspectives of family embeddedness (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003) and family heterogeneity (Jaskiewicz & Dye, 2017) to develop a conceptual framework on the connection between family functions and the migrant’s venture creation process.

Our conceptual framework contributes to the field by highlighting that family functions are not static; instead, they can be approached as heterogeneous processes. Family functions are ways of working from and with family in the countries of origin and residence. We develop three family functions in the countries of residence and origin: (i) changing family responsibilities; (ii) acting as a catalyser; and (iii) serving as bedrock. Our framework portrays the distinct purpose of the family functions in the countries of residence and origin dynamically. Investigating the family functions as processes helps us understand the relevance of family in the countries of residence and origin to migrant entrepreneurship.

The chapter is organized as follows: first, following the problem statement, we discuss the perspective of family embeddedness. Second, we introduce the perspective of family heterogeneity, specifically exploring the discussion of the functions identified by prior studies in migrant entrepreneurship. Next, we present the conceptual framework. Finally, we discuss our theoretical contributions.

## Family Embeddedness and Migrant Entrepreneurship

Family has been acknowledged as a social institution in which entrepreneurs are embedded (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003; Jack & Anderson, 2002). Embeddedness implies being part of a larger societal structure (Granovetter, 1985; 1992; Kloosterman et al., 1999). As a consequence of this structure, migrant entrepreneurs have relationships and networks including the ones with family that affect their social and economic actions (Dana, 1995; Dana et al., 2019; Porter & Senseberg, 1993).

Literature on migrant and ethnic entrepreneurship indicates that the influence of the family is a pervasive phenomenon because migrants' venture activities are embedded in family relationships and networks not only in the country of origin but also in the COR (Kloosterman, 2010; Kloosterman et al., 1999; Nee & Sanders, 2001; Sanders & Nee, 1996) because migrant entrepreneurs occupy a unique position in two geographical locations – the country of origin and the COR. Due to this geographical uniqueness, these entrepreneurs mobilize resources (e.g. Drori et al., 2009; Evansluong, 2016; Ram et al., 2017; Ribeiro et al., 2012). In the specific case of migrant entrepreneurs, family plays a central role in providing social, emotional, and financial support when migrants face discrimination in their new COR (Evansluong & Ramirez-Pasillas, 2019). Because of discrimination, migrants are treated differently than the native residents, and their qualifications might not be valued nor considered suitable in their COR (Evansluong, 2017; Khosravi, 1999). Migrants may also face language and practical challenges since they might not always have language proficiency and may lack networks or relevant knowledge in their COR (Evansluong et al., 2019).

Due to their unique position in two geographical locations, migrant entrepreneurs have families in these places who constitute a central support to help them overcome discrimination. Furthermore, as their families extend to two different countries, they vary in terms of size and structure, which may evolve when a migrant entrepreneur migrates with his or her nuclear family, leaving the extended family in the country of origin (Aygören, 2015) or when an entrepreneur marries and forms a nuclear family in the COR (Evansluong, 2016; Evansluong & Ramirez-Pasillas, 2019). In the migrant entrepreneurship literature, entrepreneurs are embedded in the family in their countries of origin and residence. Still, family is the first source of social, human, and financial capital available to migrant entrepreneurs (Evansluong & Ramirez-Pasillas, 2019). Therefore, their venture activities are influenced by family in various ways.

Although the influence of a family on a migrant entrepreneur's venture is significant (Kloosterman, 2010; Kloosterman et al., 1999; Nee & Sanders, 2001; Sanders & Nee, 1996), the literature on this topic is fragmented, and the roles played by the family have not been sufficiently researched in relation to the development of the new venture. We thus attempt to examine the role of family in this context.

## Family Heterogeneity and Migrant Entrepreneurship

Research suggests that family influences entrepreneurship (e.g. Aldrich & Cliff, 2003; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Jaskiewicz & Dyer, 2017). The influence of family on entrepreneurship is complex due to its heterogeneity across and within countries including the influence of the family structure, functions, interactions, and events (e.g. Jaskiewicz & Dyer, 2017). There is a growing awareness of the family structure due to its composition and preferences. According to Fitzpatrick (1998, p. 45), the “definition of the family depends on how family defines themselves”. In the migrant entrepreneurship literature, the concept of family is vague and treated unsystematically. A family includes not only a nuclear family but also divorced couples and partners from several marriages, relatives, couples in long-term cohabitation, voluntary kin, single parents, and adoptive members (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003; Galvin & Braithwaite, 2014). In the specific case of migration, entrepreneurs often have families with others of different nationalities and live outside their country of origin (Ram et al., 2008; Evansluong & Ramirez-Pasillas, 2019). Thus, considering the variety of family structures provides a broader frame of reference.

The family has been indirectly related to different functions. Traditionally, families are responsible for providing childcare, elder care, employment, and status (Jaskiewicz & Dyer, 2017). Family members develop stronger ties amongst themselves that result from higher trust. Thus, the family is prepared to sacrifice for other family members (Chand & Ghorbani, 2011). Because of this and the varied family structures, it is possible to consider that the family functions change over time (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003). This is relevant since we need to learn more about how changes in family functions affect the development of the venture.

The migrant entrepreneurship literature suggests that different family functions are present in the venture development. These functions include providing support to the formation of the venture (Anwar & Daniel, 2017), accepting employment at a lower salary, doing voluntary work (Ram et al., 2008; Sanders & Nee, 1996), sharing highly abundant social capital with an economic payoff (Cheong et al., 2007), financing the launch of the new venture (Alden & Hammarstedt, 2016; Jones et al., 2010; Ram et al., 2008), and providing access to and mobilization of resources for the exploitation of entrepreneurial ideas (Ram et al., 2008). Overall, the variety of family functions indicates that such functions should be dismantled and related to the process of starting a new venture as well as how these functions help an entrepreneur overcome discrimination in the new COR. The above-mentioned points suggest that to learn more about the role of family, it is important to understand the functions it perform at the start of a new venture in granting access to the family’s resource pool (Jaskiewicz & Dyer, 2017).

## Conceptualizing Family Functions for Migrant Entrepreneurship

We propose that family structures – those of the migrant entrepreneurs, specifically their nuclear family, and those of their extended family in the countries of residence and origin – perform different functions and contribute in various ways to the formation of a new venture. We propose three core family functions: (i) changing family responsibilities; (ii) acting as a catalyser; and (iii) acting as bedrock. These functions vary between the family in the country of residence and the family in the country of origin. They are linked to the venture’s pre-launch phase (e.g. Arshad & Berndt, 2023), the launch phase (e.g. Karayianni et al., 2023), and the post-launch phase (e.g. Bird & Wennberg, 2016; Centeno-Caffarena & Discua Cruz, 2021; Chavan et al., 2022). The pre-launch phase of the new venture is prompted by a change in family responsibilities in both the countries of residence and origin. The new family responsibilities of the migrant entrepreneur correspond to being the breadwinner in the COR and “paying back” his or her family in the country of origin. Next, the launch process involves the family acting as a catalyser for developing the entrepreneurial idea. In this process, family members in the countries of residence and origin act as advisers to the migrant entrepreneur. The post-launch process implies that family members in the countries of residence and origin act as bedrock: in the COR, the nuclear and extended family become lifetime supporters of the migrant entrepreneur’s new venture, and in the country of origin, the extended family provides sweat equity. Sweat equity refers to “unreimbursed labor that results in the increased value of property or that is invested to establish or expand an enterprise” (Dictionary, 2023). We elaborate on these functions and their connection to migrant venturing.

The central idea is that specific functions of the family in the countries of origin or residence encourage migrants to become entrepreneurs and develop an entrepreneurial idea. Although the literature on migrant entrepreneurship identifies several family functions that influence the migrant’s decisions and motivations to become an entrepreneur and create a venture, little is known about how these functions affect different moments of the creation process of the new venture (Williams et al., 2023). Literature on migrant entrepreneurship has not discussed in detail the influence of family functions on the venture-creation process (e.g. Afreh et al., 2019; Boateng & Seaman, 2018; Cederberg & Villares-Varela, 2019; Dana et al., 2019). Our proposition is that specific family functions regulate the expectations and actions of the migrant entrepreneur. Family functions correspond to “family ways of working” with the migrant entrepreneur.

## Pre-launch Phase: Changing Family Responsibilities Prompt Migrants to Develop the New Venture

We suggest that changing family responsibilities prompt migrants to develop a new venture in the pre-launch phase. We introduce the concept of “family responsibilities”, defined as *being the breadwinner for the nuclear family in the COR* and *“paying back” the family in the country of origin*. The changing responsibilities functions prompt migrants to launch a new venture in their COR.

a) *COR*: Being the breadwinner for the nuclear family motivates migrants to launch a new venture.

Studies on the influence of the family in the COR on migrants’ motivation to generate an entrepreneurial idea (e.g. Evansluong & Ramirez-Pasillas, 2019; Katila & Wahlbeck, 2012; Liargovas & Skandalis, 2012; Vershinina et al., 2019) focus on family survival as the influencing factor but do not indicate whether this need for survival is that of the nuclear or extended family. In comparison with these studies, we propose that there are specific influences from the nuclear family. Being the breadwinner for the nuclear family in the COR implies that a migrant fulfils the basic needs of his or her nuclear family (food, shelter, clothing, healthcare, security, and education) when he or she has no alternative source of income or cannot find employment due to labour market discrimination. With the birth or adoption of their children, migrant entrepreneurs’ roles as parents instil in them a sense of duty that leads them to work hard to provide the best for their children. Becoming an entrepreneur of a new venture is a means to achieve this and overcome labour market discrimination.

b) *Country of Origin*: Paying back the extended family motivates migrants to launch a new venture.

Migrants are often very close to their family and friends including parents, uncles, aunts, and cousins in their home countries (Arshad & Berndt, 2023; Vershinina & Discua Cruz, 2021). The extended family influences migrants’ decisions to generate a new venture. Individuals prioritize family expectations over individual expectations to obtain long-term advantages across cultures, which are collectively oriented in developing countries (Evansluong & Ramirez-Pasillas, 2019). This implies that in the country of origin, *parents expect their children to be successful in the COR and directly or indirectly pressure the children/migrant entrepreneurs to financially support the family in the country of origin*. These two functions extend previous literature (Evansluong & Ramirez-Pasillas, 2019; Gold, 2014; Ram et al., 2008), which emphasizes the importance of migrants’ providing financial support to their relatives in their countries of origin by indicating that, in addition to financial support, the migrants’ extended family in the country of origin expect the migrants to be successful in the COR. When parents in the country of origin expect their children to be successful, in the COR, migrant entrepreneurs embrace the decision to be entrepreneurs to pay back their families in the country of origin.

The literature on migrant entrepreneurship has not distinguished the differences in how the nuclear family in the COR and the extended family in the country of origin influence why migrants launch their new ventures (Evansluong et al., 2023). Migrants' nuclear families in the COR and extended families in the country of origin simultaneously motivate migrants to be self-employed, but for different reasons. Migrants embark on the entrepreneurship journey to give back to their extended families in their country of origin and their nuclear families in their COR. Such decisions influence how and why these migrant entrepreneurs develop their new ventures.

## Launch Phase: Family Acting as a Catalyser in Starting the New Venture

New ventures are developed through repeated interactions between migrant entrepreneurs and their families in their countries of residence and origin (Karayianni et al., 2023). Family acts as a catalyser for migrants to start their new ventures, which implies an ongoing process of shaping and refining the new venture by two functions, that is, *being advised by the nuclear family and the extended family in the COR* as well as *by the extended family in the country of origin*. We elaborate on this as follows:

a) *Country of residence: Being advised by the nuclear and extended family to shape and refine the new venture.*

In the literature on migrant entrepreneurship, little is known about the process of how the family advises migrant entrepreneurs when starting their ventures (i.e. Dabic et al., 2020). The literature on migrant entrepreneurship shows that the new venture is indirectly or directly discussed with the family (e.g. Boateng & Seaman, 2018; Cederberg & Villares-Varela, 2019). Also, the role of family functions in migrants' new ventures has not gained much attention in the literature on migrant entrepreneurship. We argue that migrant entrepreneurs are advised by their nuclear family members on the new venture through exchanging thoughts with the nuclear family and/or visiting the extended family members in the COR. When starting a new venture, entrepreneurs continue to shape and refine specific components of these new ventures through conversations with the family in the COR. If the family has a business in their country of origin or a relevant profession (i.e. accounting, advertising, digitalization, and engineering), the migrant entrepreneur relies on conversations with their families.

b) *Country of origin: Being advised by the extended family to shape and refine the new venture.*

We argue that talking to extended family members in the country of origin supports the development of the new venture. Aunts, uncles, cousins, and family friends are part of the extended family and provide additional human capital. These family members help entrepreneurs refine the new venture intensively when migrant entrepre-



neurs visit their families in their country of origin. Conversations about the venture and/or specific issues happen spontaneously or purposefully. Since the conversations are held in a safe space within a limited, short time, they support the migrant entrepreneur's venture development. Since the extended family is far away, these conversations occur via social media by exchanging thoughts with family members.

## Post-launch Phase: Family Acting as a Bedrock to Support the New Venture

We further propose that family functions in the countries of origin and residence continuously influence the migrant entrepreneurs' new ventures. We introduce the concept of "bedrock" to explain how the constant presence of family trust assures entrepreneurs ongoing access to and mobilization of family resources in the new venture. Studies have focused on intergenerational solidarity or reciprocity (Bengston & Roberts, 1991) to understand family trust. In the case of migrant entrepreneurs, we propose two family functions occurring in the post-launch phase, that is, *the nuclear and extended family in the COR act as lifetime supporters*, and *the extended family in the country of origin performs sweat equity*, to ensure the development of the new venture. The quantity, quality, and form in which the bedrock manifests vary depending on the resource pool available to the family in the countries of origin and residence. We elaborate on these functions as follows.

a) *Country of residence*: The nuclear and extended family acting as lifetime supporters to ensure the development of the new venture.

Acting as lifetime supporters refers to the efforts made by spouses, parents, visiting relatives, and family friends when needed by the migrant entrepreneurs in the new venture. This support varies from gathering information to offering free labour (Elo et al., 2022; Haq et al., 2023; Jones et al., 2019; Ram et al., 2017). Employing these low-cost or free resources facilitates migrant entrepreneurs' ability to sustain the development and survival of the new venture. For instance, if a partner or a spouse owns a business in his/her COR, he or she uses it as a platform to gather customers' insights and connections for the migrant entrepreneur. If a partner or a spouse works in a relevant area that can support the migrant's venture, insights are shared on how to adjust the venture's services or product and better position it in the market. If the nuclear family members have an area of expertise, they provide advice accordingly. For instance, spouses or partners can provide recommendations, referrals, and networks to migrant entrepreneurs in the COR. Such help is key to developing the migrant's venture.

b) *Country of origin*: *The nuclear and extended family acting as lifetime supporters to ensure the new venture development.*

The sweat equity of the nuclear and extended family refers to the efforts of parents and extended family in the country of origin to support the migrant entrepreneurs'



new ventures. These efforts may involve finding a relevant labour force, gathering information, and accessing the resources needed to ensure the development of the new venture. We propose that having access to sweat equity implies that migrant entrepreneurs can cut the costs of searching for and finding the pool of resources needed and that resources cost less or even are free. Such resourcefulness benefits migrants' development of new ventures.

## Towards the Future

This chapter aimed to better understand the role of family heterogeneity in starting a new venture by migrant entrepreneurs. Our proposed conceptual framework develops a connection between the family functions and the migrant's venture creation process; it supports the growing argument that researchers must account for social and geographical contexts to illustrate the complexity and multiple dimensions of the (migrant) venture-creation processes (Dana, 1995; Welter, 2011). Our conceptual framework suggests the influence of family functions from the countries of origin and/or residence on the migrant venture-creation process. Family functions are manifested in specific processes (i.e. changing family responsibilities, acting as a catalyser, and acting as bedrock). The proposed family functions have a particular place to support the new venture in the pre-launch, launch, and post-launch phases. These functions originated in and are linked to two geographical contexts – the countries of residence and origin – and contribute in different ways to the new venture. However, two geographical contexts or more can influence the migrant's venture creation process (Evansluong et al., 2023). Migrant entrepreneurs might first migrate to one country in order to get to their final COR (Elo et al., 2022).

We contribute to the literature on family heterogeneity and migrant entrepreneurship in three ways. First, our conceptual framework illustrates the bi-directional influences between family and the venture-creation process. Changes in family responsibilities trigger the start of a new venture. Future research can examine how such changes provide migrant entrepreneurs and their family additional motivation to launch the new venture. For example, as the migrant entrepreneur starts a new venture, the family is assigned new functions, such as emotional supporter, business advisor, employee, or investor/owner, thereby aiding the new venture and supporting the creation of an income in the new COR.

Second, our conceptual framework highlights the interplay between family in the country of origin and family in the COR in the venture-creation process. We show that at least two families influence migrants' economic activities in two geographical contexts. In line with Aldrich and Cliff (2003) and Jaskiewicz and Dyer (2017), we distinguish influences from different families instead of one family, which is critical to understanding the roles played by the family. Our framework recognizes the constant

parallel influences of the two families at different points in the venture-creation process. Such influences from the two families differ due to (i) family background; (ii) family structure; (iii) the functions of the family; and (iv) the location of the family. These functions are the outcomes of a combination of contextual circumstances. The functions of the nuclear family originated in the COR, while the influence of the extended family came from the country of origin. We do not argue that these influences remain the same throughout the development of a new venture, but instead propose that the family functions manifesting in the venture-creation process are contextual and a product of culture (Dana, 1995; 1993; Dana et al., 2019); they play different roles when considering the countries of residence and origin (e.g. Rajiman & Tienda, 2003; Urbano et al., 2011). Future research can investigate how variation in these contextual circumstances is related to aspects of social class including access to education, financial situation, and family business existence (e.g. Bagwell, 2008; Boateng & Seaman, 2018; Cederberg & Villares-Varela, 2019; Gold, 2014; Jones et al., 2010).

Third, while previous literature recognizes the significance of a family for a migrant's venture (Bhalla et al., 2009; Ram et al., 2008; Sanders & Nee, 1996), this chapter contributes to the literature on migrant entrepreneurship and venture creation by highlighting that the presence of neither the nuclear nor extended family can be taken for granted since they play different roles in the venture-creation process.

Finally, in line with Jaskiewicz and Dyer (2017), we suggest a bi-directional relationship between individual migrant entrepreneurs and their families. A research agenda on the bi-directional relationship can aid in understanding how families influence the functions of their members as well as the functions that families expect a member to perform.

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