

María Eugenia Verdaguer. *Class, Ethnicity, Gender and Latino Entrepreneurship*. New York: Routledge, 2009. 216 pp.

Scholars of Latino immigrant entrepreneurship in the United States have traditionally examined the experiences of immigrant groups exhibiting high levels of entrepreneurial activity, such as Cubans in Miami or Dominicans in New York. Beyond these groups, there is a dearth of knowledge on the entrepreneurial experiences of “Other” Latino newcomers, whose growth rate is faster than that of any other immigrant group in America. In *Class, Ethnicity, Gender and Latino Entrepreneurship*, María Eugenia Verdaguer helps fill this void by examining the ways in which gender, class, nationality, and the local environment shape entrepreneurial experiences among Salvadoran and Peruvian first generation immigrant entrepreneurs in the Greater Washington, DC area. By taking an explicitly intersectional approach, Verdaguer is able to paint a rich and compelling portrait of present-day Latino immigrant entrepreneurship.

The bulk of Verdaguer’s data is drawn from survey interviews with Salvadoran and Peruvian men and women entrepreneurs, expert interviews with Latino business leaders and institutional gatekeepers, and in-depth interviews with selected Peruvian and Salvadoran men and women small business owners. Informants’ businesses range in type from restaurants and apparel retail stores, to janitorial and home improvement services.

The study is predicated on the concept that, in everyday life, class, ethnicity, and gender constantly intersect to shape entrepreneurial behavior. Yet, for purposes of clarity, it addresses each variable and its effect in separate chapters. It begins by examining government policies affecting immigrant small business development, paying particular attention to gatekeepers’ and informants’ perceptions of the opportunity structure for Washington’s Salvadoran and Peruvian entrepreneurs.

It then introduces a supply side analysis of immigrant entrepreneurship, advancing the theoretical proposition that social relations based upon class and/or ethnic ties mediate Salvadoran and Peruvian business ventures. Continuing with a supply perspective, the book examines the economic power of ethnicity and the mechanisms through which it mediates Salvadoran and Peruvian entrepreneurship. This includes a comparison of Salvadoran and Peruvian ethnic-based resources, a discussion of the value of family and extended kin in the management of immigrant businesses, and a review of Salvadorans’ and Peruvians’ business strategies.

There exists, as Verdaguer points out, a myopic tendency in the ethnic

entrepreneurship literature to overlook the role of gender as an analytical organizing principle. In response to this, Verdaguer offers an examination of how gender interacts with class and ethnicity to mediate Salvadoran and Peruvian entrepreneurs' access to resources and their articulation of business strategies. Finally, she describes the ways in which Salvadoran and Peruvian participants' class, ethnic, and gender-based networks act as conduits of financial training, assistance, and/or emotional support for members.

Verdaguer is to be commended for including gender in her analysis, although the book would benefit from further exploration of the ways in which immigrants' gender relations undergo substantial transformation in their new environment. As it stands, she traces participants' gender role ideology back to static ideological constructs such as 'Marianismo' and 'Machismo.'

Class, Ethnicity, Gender, and Latino Entrepreneurship draws from and engages with four bodies of work: economic sociology, the sociology of immigration, the ethnic entrepreneurship literature, and the gender and migration literature. It should be of great interest to scholars doing work in any of these fields. It should also be of relevance to policy-makers interested in fostering the development of ethnic small businesses. By systematically comparing and contrasting Salvadoran and Peruvian experiences, Verdaguer challenges the tendency to subsume divergent national experiences under broad notions of Latino panethnicity while failing to recognize within group variation. Verdaguer's nuanced understanding of Latino business experiences rests on a theoretical framework that accounts for the intersectionality of class, ethnicity, and gender in entrepreneurs' lives, as well as for their degree of resilience and agency at recasting the terms of their opportunity structure.

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