

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Abstract approved:

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The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experiences of women small-scale entrepreneurs in Qingdao, China by placing their collective experiences within relevant social and economic frameworks. This study, conducted in 2011 over a six-month period, applies an ethnographic approach based in modified grounded theory to bring together in-depth interviews and participant observation to answer three research questions: (1) What are the lived experiences of women small-scale entrepreneurs in Qingdao, China and how do they navigate new spaces in contemporary Chinese culture? (2) What factors motivate their entrepreneurship? (3) What barriers and opportunities do they encountered; do women see gender as a barrier? Findings reveal that women entrepreneurs develop small-scale businesses in order to innovate within new cultural spaces, craft preferred lifestyles, and ensure their own autonomy, while negotiating traditional and contemporary expectations surrounding family and marriage. Yet niching occurs in entrepreneurship, as it does in the workforce, and even with great opportunity within gendered niches, women have limited social and economic capital compared with men.

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Self-made Women of China: Experiences in Small-scale Entrepreneurship

by
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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Mackenzie L. Searles, Author

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Self-made Women of China: Experiences in Small-scale Entrepreneurship

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Women small-scale entrepreneurs participate in rapidly growing global economic trends, and increasingly are being recognized as vital contributors to emerging economies (Mohapatra et al. 2007). The number of small-scale enterprises in China has increased substantially in recent years, and such enterprises continue to flourish despite the influx of large-format retail stores such as Wal-Mart, Carrefour, and others (Chew 2008, Shi 2005, Wong 2010). These businesses—self-employed enterprises and micro-enterprises—are independently owned, largely debt-free, profitable, and constitute a significant percentage of both urban and rural employment (Zhang et al. 2006). Women small-scale entrepreneurs in Qingdao, China tend to operate exclusively within gendered niches in much the same way as employment is split in a dual labor market. In some ways, working within this niche offers an ideal solution to employment constraints many Chinese women face after marriage and as they age; yet, such a niche acts simultaneously as a constraint.

Women entrepreneurs in this study strategize within new cultural spaces opened by interactions with global neoliberal norms. They use small-scale entrepreneurship to craft preferred lifestyles and ensure their own autonomy, while negotiating between contemporary and traditional expectations surrounding family and marriage. Notwithstanding this negotiation, these women largely are restricted by gendered expectations and, compared to their male counterparts, have limited social networks and access to economic capital.

Study Purpose

This research uses the experiences of Qingdao women in business as a local, meaningful way to approach and better understand aspects of the increase in small-scale entrepreneurship in China. By focusing on contemporary opinions and attitudes of Qingdao women in small-scale enterprise, this study attempts to recognize both the barriers and the opportunities such women encounter, and to identify key areas where strategies could help maximize their success. I focus on how women in China have chosen to navigate the rapidly shifting and increasingly gendered workforce. Having listened to the stories of women small-scale entrepreneurs, and then situated their experiences within a larger social and economic context, I now seek to contribute to the body of knowledge about women in small-scale entrepreneurship. I hope to create a clearer understanding of how local women perceive the effects of China's shifting economic system on women in work, in the family and in the urban society at large. I argue that their perspectives provide a vital context for those interested in the role of small-scale women entrepreneurs in the workforce and in the economy.

This study explores the following research questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of women small-scale entrepreneurs in Qingdao, China and how do they navigate new spaces in contemporary Chinese culture?
2. What factors motivate their entrepreneurship?
3. What barriers and opportunities do they encounter; do women see gender as a barrier?

An ethnographic exploration is an extremely useful way to approach these questions given the cultural complexities that have arisen in the wake of rapid social and economic changes. By examining the collective voices and narratives of women entrepreneurs, I hope to illustrate the complexities of women's past and present experiences, and thus to contribute to a growing body of literature about women in small-scale entrepreneurship.

Significance

Through the analysis of women small-scale entrepreneur's lived experiences, this study works to capture the complexities inherent in becoming a successful entrepreneur, and to identify the types of entrepreneurship available to women. Commonly, literature surrounding small-scale entrepreneurs in China relies on macro-level census data that often does not adequately measure diversity among entrepreneurs, including gender. In response, this study joins the recent shift towards a more situated understanding of decision-making and opportunities among women in small-scale entrepreneurship (Deng et al. 2011, Singh and Belwal 2008). Focusing on the emic perspective, this study offers an in-depth discussion of Qingdao small-scale women entrepreneurs, situating their experiences within necessary cultural and economic contexts, and thus is an important contribution to international development and public policy research. My informant's experiences, although generally mundane in their own eyes, illustrate the power and the complexity of small-scale entrepreneurship. Through channels of entrepreneurship, women can assert their agency by creating and sustaining a stable living for themselves. They do this successfully while working within structures of subordination. Yet, at the

same time, they are effectively removing themselves from the exclusion and subordination of the labor force (Bourdieu 2001:83, Light 2007).

CHAPTER TWO: Background and Literature Review

This chapter offers background information as well as a theoretical perspective on the relationships among Chinese culture, women, and global structures of modernity. It locates women's decisions to pursue entrepreneurship within the historical and the contemporary Chinese cultural contexts. The discussion begins with a review of relevant literature about Chinese women's roles in work and family to provide a context for an exploration of their agency and place within the larger structures of modernity. I also review some of the limited literature on small-scale entrepreneurship in China to compare trends among women entrepreneurs cross-culturally, where applicable. The final section centers on factors associated with small-scale entrepreneurship, such as opportunities, barriers, and benefits as they relate to work and entrepreneurship in China. While there is much positive momentum, I assert that there is also much work to be done to support women entrepreneurs in China—especially at the micro-enterprise and self-employed enterprise levels.

Modern Historical Shift: Valuing Women in Work

The precedent of women working outside the home was set during the planned economy years (1949-1978) when both urban women and men were assigned jobs by the Chinese state. The majority of a young person's life, therefore, regardless of gender, was spent in working. After 1949, women's status changed from being a “family, private” person to being a “social” person, and women began to receive more equal rights as compared to men (Li 2000). I will use Li's descriptors—“family, private” and “social”—to discuss social barriers women face as small-scale entrepreneurs. Li (2000) discusses

the shift in the spaces women occupy as part of the women's rights movement in China, but emphasizes the fact that such a shift does not parallel the development of ideas of western feminism; in China, the struggle was led by the state, and not perceived as an individual struggle (Li 2000). The result of women's participation in the workforce was a widely discussed and seemingly forward-thinking recognition that gender equality existed in the workforce. The reality however, was that a dual labor force developed: women worked, but were assigned auxiliary positions or home-maker type tasks that carried less value, lower pay, and fewer benefits. Further, women continued to carry a "double burden," working both inside and outside of the home (Li 2000, Bian 2002, Shi 2005, Wolf 1985). In other words, expectations of women during the planned economy period promoted and normalized the value of women joining the workforce, but at the same time changed little in terms of gender equality. Indeed, "the changes visible in conditions in fact conceal permanent features" (Bourdieu 2001:90). Thus labor practices engrained gendered expectations into the institutions and norms of the culture of work in such a way that they are not easily to be modified.

Through the 1990s, economic reforms pushing towards a market-based economy mandated that state run enterprises become competitive and profitable. As a part of this shift, urban men and women no longer were assigned jobs by the state, so employment depended upon the individuals' ability to network and market themselves (Zheng 2000, Wolf 1985). Unemployment rose dramatically during this period, and disproportionately among women, because the auxiliary positions to which women had been relegated were the first jobs to go. Women accounted for 62.8 percent of the total of laid-off workers,

although they only had comprised 39 percent of the original workforce (Zheng 2000:159). To support the shift away from a planned economy, Chinese women were actively discouraged from seeking employment, and encouraged to return to domestic duties instead (Zheng 2000, Bian 2002, Wolf 1985, Summerfield 1994). During the period of this shift, women who continued to work outside the home were “bullied by children and the state” into retiring early (Wolf 1985:75). Where the Mao era (1949-1976) had instilled a culture of work regardless of gender, China’s participation in the global market economy replaced the façade of gender equality with efficiency norms that promoted overt discrimination against women and sought to exclude them from the workforce.

In contemporary China, women again are expected to work. They have greater opportunities compared with men than women in many other countries in the region. However, their economic participation is continues to be valued as secondary to their primary duties as wives and mothers. Recent historical values and norms surrounding women and work were retained through the economic shift, and aspects of neoliberalism that have become central components of contemporary Chinese culture actively reinforce them today (Summerfield 1994, Bian et al. 2000). Women continue to be marginalized as workers despite the continued emphasis on the value of work as a part of an individual’s identity in contemporary China (Beck and Beck-Gernshiem 2001, Ong 2006).

Women occupy overlapping and sometimes contradictory spaces and identities throughout their lives, and so encounter differing barriers, depending upon their current space and time. While the Gender Empowerment Measure scores show gender gaps in China to be smaller than gaps in many other countries, access to income generating

activities does not automatically create a level playing field. Even with education, women may not have access to the same opportunities as men due to social expectations and workplace discrimination. Expectations about marriage and family disrupt women's working life and so limit work opportunities. Single women have significantly marketable human capital as individuals who will accept long hours, low pay, and less-than-ideal working and living conditions. Once married, however, many Chinese women face employment discrimination in part because they cannot find an employer that will support the cultural expectations that women need to bear their double burdens and find ways to balance the demands of family and of work (Zheng 2000, Wolf 1985). As long as women are considered to be the primary caretakers of family, home, and children, their participation in the workforce will continue to be devalued as compared with that of men. This is found to be true for skilled and unskilled workers alike, and is a key reason why men continue to be valued over women for most jobs.

Unequal opportunity in the workforce is both a historical and a contemporary trend that women must reckon with. During the planned economy period (1949-1976), the dual labor force was enforced by the state and the state assigned the jobs. Once China began the transition towards a market-based economy, however, employer preferences and cultural norms reinforced niching in the labor market, just as these preferences and norms reinforce the niches women may occupy today. Here is the issue as described by Wolf in 1985:

A professional woman who takes a few years off to raise a child or two will only rarely catch up with her male colleagues who work straight through the births and rearing of their children...[E]ven a six-month

maternity leave is sufficient to drop women behind in the wage scales in China. Women who come in to work for a few hours during rush periods while the men stay all day will have about as much status in the work world as Christmas help in an American department store. However much such an arrangement may alleviate the double burden of China's urban women, it only serves to peripheralize them as workers. [267-268]

Contemporary realities of the dual and discriminatory labor market also are reflected in

China's 2010 Millennium Development Goals Report:

Discrimination based on gender, age and religion still exists in the labor market [in China]. The possibilities for re-employment for middle-aged and elderly women are almost non-existent. Female college graduates and young women face more employment difficulties than their male peers. Employment quality and the structure of employment for women must also be improved further. Attention should also be paid to the issue of women having an earlier retirement age than men. [China's Millennium Development Goals Report 2010]

Although there has been government-level recognition of discrimination against women in the workplace, employers' attitudes have been slow to change, and gender equality has been difficult to regulate (Zheng 2000, Wolf 1985). Labor market realities also affect women who own businesses, as cultural expectations determine access to the necessary social, cultural, and economic capital; and yet, entrepreneurship is one way women strategize to support themselves within the realities of the marketplace. Entrepreneurship provides women with a unique opportunity to act externally to discriminatory practices. That said, however, women entrepreneurs do not operate without barriers.

Small-scale Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is widely accepted as a necessary component of economic development, and also as a potentially positive force in women's lives. Surprisingly, however, details of women's participation in entrepreneurship, and specifically in small-

scale entrepreneurship, have been little studied. (Mohapatra et al. 2007). Researchers consider small business owners in developed nations such as the United States and Germany as highly relevant and important research subjects, while small business owners in less developed countries largely are overlooked (Blanchflower and Oswald 1998). Understanding women's motivations and barriers to employment and entrepreneurship is pertinent information for anyone who wishes to help support women in work and economic development. This is especially true as women now comprise a significant portion of consumers and of the workforce—46% of China's workforce is now women (Women in China 2011). Mohapatra et al. (2007) explains that small business owners who are selling anything from toilet paper to baby clothing to TV receivers are pertinent subjects, and need to be studied.

Since the 1990's, consumerism in China has been alive and thriving (Schoppa 2002:384). The shift in the varieties and volume of consumer goods available for purchase from 1980 to 1990 was remarkable. Suddenly, people were able to buy products such as refrigerators, washing machines, color TVs, and electric fans. Making money and acquiring more possessions quickly became commonly held cultural values, shared by men and women alike. Women wanted access to the new consumer culture and some strategized that they could be successful by being small-scale entrepreneurs.

Factors that Influence Success in Small-scale Entrepreneurship

We can identify some pertinent aspects of successful self-enterprise in small and medium enterprises. A study by Singh and Belwal (2008) identifies some important

factors in the experiences of women entrepreneurs in small and medium enterprises in Ethiopia (n = 90). This is one of the few studies that, like mine, focus on the experiences of women in small-scale entrepreneurship and contextualize the data within a larger cultural and institutional framework. The authors specifically ask about aspects of women's entrepreneurship that influence their decision-making and success. Unlike much of the literature available on entrepreneurship and women in entrepreneurship, theirs does not rely on macro-level data sets, or focus on the relative success of micro-financing programs.

Even though there has been much acceptance of women small-scale entrepreneurs, more needs to be done to cultivate and support their enterprises. Singh and Belwal (2008) found that self-enterprise in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia is an accepted line of work for women, with support among friends and family at the 75% level. In addition, most said that they did not find gender to be a barrier to their entrepreneurship. Nonetheless, looking at the role of social and economic structures, women did report gender discrimination surrounding availability of employment, and other cultural and workplace barriers were apparent. Singh and Belwal (2008) describe a significant lack of access to markets, opportunities, information, and financial capital among women entrepreneurs. This is due in part to the fact that women-owned enterprises in Addis Ababa are more likely to be located in homes, which somewhat limits networking potential with other business owners, and with prospective customers.

Looking at institutional-level constraints, too, women in Ethiopia indicated that corruption—both overt and covert—negatively affects their daily and long-term business

prospects. Limited access to capital through financial institutions is also a major constraint. The lack of bank cooperation and the presence of corruption may be due to government and banking structures, and not necessarily to gender biases. The last important barrier Ethiopian women found was infrastructure based, including high tax rates and costs of telecommunications (Singh and Belwal 2008). Women are successfully pursuing entrepreneurship, but there is much more that could be done to support women starting and developing small-scale enterprises in Ethiopia.

Singh and Belwal (2008) suggest a number of ways to assist Ethiopian women in small-scale entrepreneurship. Many of their suggestions are transferrable to other cultural contexts, I believe. For example, the authors suggest helping women create networks among women entrepreneurs, as there is little opportunity for interaction and collaboration. In addition, they hope to see efforts to support women focus on job creation in the form of starting new enterprises rather than increasing employment opportunities, because entrepreneurship puts women in leadership roles. They call for programs focused on “individual and organizational capacity-building and enterprise creation, women’s participation in trade fairs in different African countries, and increased communication via interpersonal and audio-visual means” (Singh and Belwal 2008:132).

Changing Women’s Earning Power through Small-scale Entrepreneurship

Light (2007) discusses the larger impact that women entrepreneurs might have on overcrowded labor markets and women’s earnings inferiority. In his analysis, he brings the body of literature on ethnic economy to discuss gendered entrepreneurship in the

United States. While much of the ethnic economy literature is not applicable to gendered discussions, he did find the value of entrepreneurship to be transferrable. “Like immigrants and ethnic minorities, women cluster in occupational and industrial niches in which they are overcrowded and underpaid” (Light 2007:543). From the analysis of United States census data from 1987—the only year hiring preferences data was collected—and after correcting for industry, he found that in four-fifths of cases women employers were more likely to hire women than men. This is the same hiring trend seen among ethnic minority employers who prefer to hire employees of the same ethnicity. Therefore, it is possible over the long-term for women entrepreneurs to effectively increase demand for women employees and drive up wages for workers in the overcrowded, women-centered niches. In the short-term, however, women employers do not reduce niching (Light 2007).

Industry Niches

Entrepreneurship has the potential to increase women’s economic participation, but as Light (2007) discusses, participation continues to be restricted to women’s industries. Zhang and Pan (2012) explain key gendered differences among industry areas where entrepreneurship pursued. These findings are based on their analysis of the “1996 Life History and Social change in Contemporary China.” This research is a good example of literature that relies on secondary data not collected to examine trends in entrepreneurial activity and thus should be interpreted with caution because small-scale businesses may not even appear in these data sets as registration is not always necessary. That said, Zhang and Pan’s (2012) categories and conclusions are useful for discussing

my results, but their conclusions lack the depth necessary to inform policy or development.

Zhang and Pan (2012) found that men were about as likely to pursue unskilled individual self-employment as they were to pursue skilled and entrepreneurial self-employment, whereas only 25% of women entrepreneurs were found to be in skilled and entrepreneurial self-employment. They define these two categories as such:

[1] Occupations that only involve processing customer-supplied materials with some skills but require little formal training and little capital besides tools of the trade, such as butchers, tailors, and shoe repairmen, and occupations in personal services, such as barbers and maids, are considered unskilled. [2] Others that require higher levels of skills that are obtained through formal training and greater amount of means of production, such as medical practitioners, insurance or securities salespersons, and electrical or mechanical technicians, are coded as skilled. [Zhang and Pan 2012:1205-1206]

They suggest that “women’s lower human capital accumulation, less access to start-up capital, and less resourceful social networks could contribute to women’s less success in [skilled and] entrepreneurial self-employment” (Zhang and Pan 2012:1206).

The limitations of Zhang and Pan’s (2012) work are rooted in their sample. They define entrepreneur as an individual who transitioned from employment to an occupational category called “individual industrial-commercial household” (self-employment) ($n = 433$). From there, they disaggregate the data into unskilled individual self-employment ($n = 286$) and skilled and entrepreneurial self-employment ($n = 157$). These are small sample sizes and cannot be considered representative samples, although the authors discuss the data as if they are. In addition, many people in unskilled individual self-employment are not required to register their enterprises and therefore the

unskilled individual self-employment category is inherently flawed. Regardless of these shortcomings, here are their three hypotheses:

1. Men were more likely than women to enter skilled and entrepreneurial self-employment as marketization in urban China progressed.
2. As marketization (and state-sector restructuring) progressed in Chinese cities, women, especially married women, became more likely to enter the low-end, unskilled segment of self-employment.
3. Higher education had a much smaller effect on married women than on men in increasing the likelihoods of entering skilled and entrepreneurial self-employment. [Zhang and Pan 2012:1204-1205]

Zhang and Pan (2012) accepted each of these hypotheses and while the outcomes of this study make sense within China's cultural and historical context, I would like to see these hypotheses tested using a survey tool made specifically for this analysis.

Not everyone is successful in running a larger enterprise, or would want to undertake such a risky endeavor. A study by Zhang et al. (2006) focuses on understanding self-employed enterprises across rural China through the analysis of households from randomly selected counties in rural China. Data was taken from "nationally representative household-level data set [from the year 2000] that contains detailed information on household self-employment activities" (Zhang et al. 2006). They assert that small-scale enterprises in both rural and urban China are key aspects of economic development through the reform period; the rise of self-employed enterprises is not, as some might argue, "symptomatic of a failing economy" (Zhang et al. 2006). In addition, they argue that self-employed enterprises are not simply for those excluded

from the labor force, but are an “increasingly sophisticated and entrepreneurial” employment choice. Furthermore, these small-scale enterprises are flourishing without micro financing.

Zhang et al. (2006) found that small-scale enterprises are quite safe and healthy compared to larger firms that carry high financial liability. What is particularly interesting from their findings is the extent to which these enterprises are self-funded. According to their research, 54 percent of small enterprises are self-funded, and the 36 percent of businesses who did take loans usually use them to supplement personal funds. Of businesses started in 2000, a total of 81 percent of small businesses secured initial investment funds from family, while only 7 percent borrowed money from a bank. The overwhelming use of personal or family funds reflects trends in my data as well. Bank loans were incredibly uncommon among my informants, and most indicated that they simply wouldn’t feel comfortable owing the bank money. As for this study, self-employed enterprises are a difficult phenomenon study from a quantitative standpoint, because small-scale businesses may not always be registered, they may underreport earnings to avoid taxes, ownership may change hands, and so on.

Returning to the discussion of micro loans, it seems that there is little need or desire for micro financing in China as people rely on their social networks to acquire the necessary economic capital. Perhaps it is better to utilize social networks for startup, as social networks are an inherent part of successful enterprises in the long run. Lucarelli (2005) explains that micro loans are promoted, especially in post structural adjustment nations, under the expectation that poor people will start private enterprises providing

jobs and services and taking the place of state-run enterprises. Promoting small-enterprises in this fashion is also thought to decrease gender gaps. In reality, says Lucarelli (2005), poor people do not benefit from micro financing programs and there is no direct correlation between micro loans and a reduction in gender gaps.

Flourishing Boutique-Style Businesses

Women are relatively limited to unskilled individual self-employment; nonetheless, it is often these niches that provide greatest opportunity for women given cultural expectations of women outside of work (Zhang and Pan 2012, Chew 2008). The most successful of my informants in terms of profits and status gained, operated boutique-style businesses. This style of business is especially viable in China where small boutique-style stores thrive; they do not thrive everywhere. Small stores like these are and have been a major component of China's retail industry for at least two decades and have not been replaced by large-format retail stores as many predicted after China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001 (Wong 2010). There is a culture of shopping specifically surrounding "trendy apparel products for young women," but in other sectors also, (Chew 2008:13) that cannot be replaced by the large-format retail store. This is one of the advantages women have over men in business sectors catering to women. This women's niche, while restrictive, is a major component of women entrepreneurs' success.

There are two specific ways in which these boutiques-style businesses are unique: "relational marketing" and "store branding" (Chew 2008:13). Relational marketing focuses on customer loyalty, direct owner-customer interactions, and long-term relationships. It is a tool that larger-format retail stores cannot use. Not all stores focus on

honing customer relationships, but most owners create a welcoming in-store atmosphere and many customers in China wish to deal directly with the owner. Customers “often call to make sure the owner is personally at the store (instead of having nobody but a hired salesperson in the store) before they visit” (Chew 2008:13). This is also because bargaining is an important part of the shopping experience for many Chinese people and bargaining is not permitted in large-format retail stores. The small store provide a shopping experience consumers in China desire and the owner-customer relationship is an important aspect of that.

Part of success of these businesses, too, is the use of boutique-style clothing stores as a venue for acquiring fashion and lifestyle trend information. Large-format retail stores provide fashion and trend information visually, but it is “affected by preordained marketing plans or sales strate[gies]” (Chew 2008:14) and may lack local authenticity. Boutiques-style businesses, on the other hand, reflect local trends, selling both products and the lifestyle to accompany them—the shop reflects the owner’s fashion and lifestyle. The owner’s role is a part of store branding because these stores must rely on “the character of the store owner and communicating store identity through store interior design and visual merchandizing” to be successful and because it is not possible for small stores to have own-brand products—e.g. Nike stores sell Nike shoes (Chew 2008:14). Shopping in small boutique-style stores provides a unique experience.

There is a niche for women in this industry as small boutique-style businesses have a competitive advantage in the retail industry. In addition, start-up costs are low so it is relatively easy for women, who may have limited access to capital, to enter this

market. Future large-scale retailers “may want to recognize small local boutiques as a meaningful competitor as well as developing a pragmatic symbiotic relationship with them” (Chew 2008:16). The exact extent to which small-boutiques owned by women have maintained their presence or flourished, however, is unknown as shops are not always registered, deal in cash, and there are few data sets at the national or local level specifically measuring small-scale enterprises (Chew 2008). Due to a combination of cultural factors including gendered spaces and norms, women are likely to pursue unskilled individual self-employment over skilled and entrepreneurial self-employment because capital requirements for entry are low and it is an economic and cultural niche that caters directly to women who wish to sell goods and services to other women.

Importance of Personal Character in Entrepreneurship

Not everyone who pursues entrepreneurship is successful and there are many aspects of a person’s beliefs and values that can influence success. Djankov et al. (2006) conducted a survey in 2004 and 2005 on entrepreneurship across China. They examine the political and economic institutions, social networks, values, and individual characteristics commonly held by entrepreneurs. In their work they define entrepreneur as the “owner or co-owner of a business with five or more employees” (Djankov et al. 2006:348). While this is not the scale of entrepreneurship I focus on, this dataset contains relevant information on other aspects of Chinese entrepreneurs including character and institutional factors. This research is of particular interest as they are able to compare entrepreneurs (n = 414) to non-entrepreneurs (n = 561) in a meaningful way.

In terms of networks, Djankov et al. (2006) found entrepreneurs more likely than non-entrepreneurs to have family or friends in entrepreneurship. This seems obvious and points to the importance of social environment, yet what is more interesting is that failed entrepreneurs had the most family and friends in entrepreneurship. This might indicate that those less suited for entrepreneurship were pushed into it, or were encouraged to take greater risks by those around them—but did not actually have the tools to successfully manage a business. Failed entrepreneurs were also more likely to self-report being in the top 10% of their class in secondary school, yet they scored poorly on aptitude tests. They also found failed entrepreneurs have a tendency to be short. This paints a picture of individuals with low self-confidence and who perhaps fall back on entrepreneurship after not succeeding as they expected academically.

In dealing with bureaucracy and government, only “10 percent of entrepreneurs considered complicated tax rules and rackets as problems,” whereas non-entrepreneurs indicated they were more of an issue—28 percent and 43 percent respectively (Djankov et al. 2006:350). Furthermore, failed entrepreneurs indicated that they did not perceive the government to be supportive of entrepreneurs. Additionally, only nine percent of entrepreneurs indicated problems with corruption and 17 percent considered crime a problem, whereas 48 percent of non-entrepreneurs considered corruption an issue and 45 percent considered crime an issue. These differences may in large part come down to experience working or living in situations where interaction with social and economic institutions was necessary. Many non-entrepreneurs might never have even known people

who have dealt with bureaucratic complexities or been in a position where crime might directly impact them.

In terms of personal character, Djankov et al. (2006) found only a few significant differences between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. They found that entrepreneurs place a higher value on work (80 percent vs. 62 percent) and political freedom (73 percent vs. 28 percent) than non-entrepreneurs. They also found risk taking and greed to be more prevalent among entrepreneurs. In addition, entrepreneurs are more likely to rationalize bribing than non-entrepreneurs. These are interesting findings, but the study lacks the nuanced and complex experiences, which I argue makes discussing the importance of character in entrepreneurship difficult.

Gendered Personal Characteristics

Personal characteristics are an important part of understanding success in entrepreneurship, and thus highly relevant to the discussion of women entrepreneurs. Research by Deng et al. (2011) looks to kick-start a more focused, intentional inquiry surrounding women in small-scale entrepreneurship in China. They begin by presenting a framework for understanding Chinese women in entrepreneurship and argue for a consistent structure for across future studies, as much of the current literature fails to specify type, size, and demographics of enterprises and their owners. Deng et al. (2011:17) approaches the topic of character in entrepreneurship by discussing the importance of the combination of personal characteristics and “Eastern cultural values” in successful entrepreneurship. They argue that the Eastern cultural values including “traditional rule of tolerance,” “Confucian work ethic,” “human heartedness,” and “moral

discipline” are utilized by contemporary Chinese women in a way that benefits their enterprises. They continue, “in Confucian dynamism, the features of persistence, thrift and self-respect are the more important parts of Chinese women’s values system” (Deng et al. 2011:18). Personal character is an important theme among my informants, however, I wonder how many of the feminine traits presented by these authors are strictly associated with Chinese women, are generalizable to all Chinese women, or are also traits found in men, historically or contemporarily.

Motivations for Entrepreneurship

There are many reasons why people choose to become entrepreneurs. Some are motivated by pushed factors, while others by pull. Push-pull theory was developed in the 1980s as a way to classify entrepreneurial motivations. To describe each of these briefly, push factors are commonly negative and can be either internal or external in nature; for example, getting divorced or not receiving a promotion. Pull factors on the other hand attract people to entrepreneurship. These categories are significant because entrepreneurs motivated by push factors are often less successful from a financial standpoint than those motivated by pull factors (Amit and Muller 1995 as cited by Kirkwood 2009). Kirkwood (2009) expands this theory by developing a gender comparative method to understand entrepreneurial motivations. Note that these are not mutually exclusive categories, as individuals often find themselves working with a combination of factors (Table 1). Das (2000) uses similar categories for small and medium enterprise owners—including microenterprises and self-employed enterprises. These categories include “chance entrepreneurs,” “forced entrepreneurs,” and “created entrepreneurs” (Das 2000).

Table 1. Common Motivational Factors among Small-Scale Entrepreneurs

Pushed		Pulled
Chance entrepreneurs	Forced entrepreneurs	Created entrepreneurs
-to keep busy -was hobby/special interest -family/spouse had business	-financial needed	-control over time/flexibility -challenge, try something on one's own -show others I could do it. -to be independent -self satisfaction -example to children -employment to others/do something worthwhile

The framework of pull-push theory classifies “forced entrepreneurs” and “chance entrepreneurs,” as motivated by push factors, and “created entrepreneurs” s motivated by pull factors. Kirkwood (2009) reevaluation concludes that men and women entrepreneurs in New Zealand indicated similar combinations of push and pull factors; however, there were some differences.

Three gender differences were found in the incidence of motivations: women were more influenced by a desire for independence; women considered their children as motivators more so than did men; men were influenced more by job dissatisfaction than were women. [Kirkwood 2009:346]

The combination of these two frameworks for categorizing entrepreneurial motivations is useful in the analysis and discussion of my research.

Theoretical Framework

To situate this research within a larger theoretical framework, I turn to discuss the relevant political and economic contexts. Prior to the pervasiveness of globalization, there seemed to be little or no connection between local lives and global structures. But

now, there is a “direct (although dialectical) relationship” between structures of modernity, our understandings of self, and the ways we relate to one another (Giddens 1991:114). In other words, there is interplay between local cultures and the globalizing structures of modernity—neoliberalism, for example (Ong 2006, Zheng 2010). Yet, global structures of modernity do not homogenize. Below I begin the discussion of neoliberalism in relation to China, teasing out the complexities of this pairing and considering local milieus along the way. There are many aspects of social, economic, and political institutions that have recently affected contemporary Chinese culture; however, I focus on neoliberalism as it is fundamental to economic globalization and contemporary market economies.

For this research I define neoliberalism as an economic framework and logic of governing rooted in private enterprise, individualism, competition, and movement of capital as it applies to market-oriented policies and technologies as well as the social and cultural norms that support them (Ong 2006, Zheng 2010, Hoffman 2008, Harvey 2005). Note though that neoliberalism is used as a technology of governing (Ong 2006, Zheng 2010)—a set of mobile practices—not as a standard *system* because as a system it cannot take into account complex geographical and temporal differences. Ong explains (2007:4):

Because Harvey’s neoliberal typology [2005] is focused on economic management scaled at the level of the state, it is too unwieldy to take into account the variety of institutions, programs, and actors who are knotted into complex interrelationship in a nation state, including the People’s Republic of China.

Conceptualizing neoliberalism as a mobile technology of governance serves as a platform for discussion of local intricacies of social change brought on by the global movements

towards a market-driven economy. The framing of neoliberalism as technology moves discourse away from north-south power structures and away from Harvey's model that focuses on state-level economic management (2005) and allows neoliberalism to be "translated, technologized, and operationalized in diverse, contemporary situations" (Ong 2006:13). In other words, neoliberalism as a technology is a set of ideas or a logic that can be selectively applied and whose influence permeates a variety of social and economic spheres.

Looking at China's recent economic reforms, it is apparent that neoliberal logic plays a role in contemporary Chinese social and economic institutions. The outcomes of its application, however, do not mirror the outcomes of the application of neoliberalism in the west. Neoliberal technologies of governing are applied within the context of Chinese socialism; it is used in a number of ways, but it is not used as a principal logic of governing and does not play a role in the Chinese political framework.

In China, neoliberal norms are reflected in selective reconfiguring of spaces and populations. Direct state control is gone; as is the support it gave. There is a new gap between actors and the state, which allows for freedoms among individuals at the daily level and authoritarian state control from afar. Matters such as employment and healthcare are now problematized at the individual and family level. "In a fundamental sense, the self-enterprising subject begins by developing basic individual capacities to make autonomous decisions, to take initiative and risk, and otherwise act on his or her own behalf to achieve optimal outcomes" (Ong and Zhang 2008:3). For example, Hoffman (2008) says a key outcome of the application of neoliberalism as a technology

of government was the development of self-governing actors, which parallel western neoliberal subjects, but are created from a different set of conditions and may have their own trajectory. Autonomous decision-making is a part of neoliberal norms, and has arisen in China following economic reform along with the emergence of labor markets, development of free trade zones, the opening of registration and marriage systems, and other changes that encourage self-managing individuals. The emphasis on self-optimization and self-governing creates new space for individuals as institutions and society as a whole are no longer responsible for developing and reinforcing social norms and values. “The individual is becoming the basic unit of social reproduction for the first time” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001:xxii).

The presence of neoliberal logic does not demand the absence of the socialist state, only a reconfiguration. Neoliberal norms emphasize autonomy and individual decision-making for self-improvement and personal achievement, yet individual decisions may be mediated by the state to ensure socially responsible decisions; this is reflected in China’s “proactive employment policy” (Hershatter 2007). While jobs are not assigned as they had been during the planned economy period, there are policies that provide incentives for graduates who choose certain jobs or employment locations. There is no question that Chinese socialism, autonomous choice, and labor markets are all compatible. Some say China’s socialist market economy looks a lot like a capitalist market economy as it holds many principles of neoliberal logic, but the space created for entrepreneurial activities continues to be “within the political limits set by the socialist state. In contemporary China, regimes of living are shaped by the intersection of powers of the self with

socialism from afar” (Ong and Zhang 2008:2). This configuration, however, is not strictly available to China. The authors also assert that:

Any political regime can adopt a neoliberal technology of governing and self-governing without change its entire state apparatus or character. Neoliberal strategies of governing for optimization can be taken up in any political environment—whether advanced liberal, postsocialist, or authoritarian—and deployed selectively in relation to internal spaces and populations. Thus we note that the adoption of neoliberal practices in China does not thereby cancel out the legacies of central planning, nor are market-driven calculations uniformly deployed across the nation’s territory, let alone have they come to define the political ideology of the Chinese nation.

Whereas Harvey’s model sees a contradiction between neoliberalism and Chinese socialism, we view China’s selective embrace of neoliberal logic as a strategic calculation for creating self-governing subjects who ill enrich and strengthen Chinese authoritarian rule. [Ong and Zhang 2007:9-10]

Using neoliberalism as a “technology of government” highlights the changing spaces women entrepreneurs navigate since economic reform. This is not to say that all entrepreneurial activities since economic reform are new to Chinese culture or should be attributed to the recent application of neoliberal logics. There are other factors that contribute to the opportunity my informants find, in small-scale entrepreneurship, including values retained from Mao-era emphasis on gender equality and historical cultural values of entrepreneurship and moneymaking. A holistic look at a number of complex factors allows for a nuanced local level understanding of the complex “fields of power” in which Chinese women “strategize” and “innovate” (Bourdieu 2001).

Mao-era emphasized equal right for women as a tenet of modernization, but adoption of these laws varied from place to place. Overall, the Mao-era (1949-1976)

affected rapid change in the status of women and helped pave the way for women's role in the family and the workforce as autonomous individuals. In less than 50 years, Chinese women's roles shifted from private, family oriented to actively social (Li 2000, Hershatter 2007). During this time, women's work became more than simply a part of a larger family strategy. Through the 20th century Women in China acquired greater autonomy and their participation in work shifted from a family matter to an individual one. This is reflected in women's roles in the workforce, their status as equal persons under the law, and the new emphasis on decision-making within the nuclear family, although women continued to carry the double burden of homemaking and working (Hershatter 2007).

During the Republican period (1912-1949), too, there was rhetoric of women "as fully autonomous and active agents" (Huang 2001 as cited by Hershatter 2007:24), however, law and practice are often two different things. Furthermore, notions of modernity were hinged on the idea of division of labor such that women's roles and value were in domestic duties. In addition, some areas of China used Confucian womanly virtues to restrict women's roles to the home. All this said, however, there is no singular Chinese women's experiences as China is large country with many temporal and geographical differences. Furthermore, there is surprising little known about the attitudes and roles of average women pre 1949; although there is a long history in China of educating affluent women, and textile-producing centers, such as Qingdao, did hire a significant number of women in the early 1900s. Nonetheless, rapid change in China through the 20th century affected the greater majority of Chinese women's lives, although

there continues to be a disconnect concerning the legal guarantees of equality and gendered “disparities in access to resources and social power” (Hom 1994 as cited by Hershatter 2007:99).

Values surrounding entrepreneurship are not new since economic reform. “For centuries, barely literate peasants engaged in bookkeeping, accumulated savings, used credit, and bought and sold land” (Freedman 1979, as cited by Ong and Zhang 2008:6). The first half of the 20th century in China was also characterized by a market economy, although this period was also marked by political instability and poverty, especially in non-coastal regions made economic growth difficult. Nevertheless, entrepreneurship is not new to China, although I would argue that small-scale, non-family based entrepreneurship was not as common in the Republican period and small-scale enterprises operated by women were nonexistent.

While women are free to open businesses in contemporary China, gendered expectations do have limit women’s business ownership. Because men and women operate in different fields, they consequently hone different types of capital. Among women, these different experiences often result in limited access to social, cultural, and economic capital, compared to men. Because of this, women may find their opportunities restricted. Gendered expectations around family also have the potential to limit or restrict women’s business endeavors as their needs and desires are often pinned against family needs and desires; taking care of family may trump individual needs. Nonetheless, even from a potentially subordinate position, Chinese women have agency; here defined as the ability to “strategize” within “fields of power” (Bourdieu 2001:83). Yet, individuals are

subordinated within the fields of power to which they are accustomed, so they may not see the limits of the fields in which they operate. When media, application of neoliberal logic, or education open new space, however, individuals can innovate in these new cultural spaces and potentially navigate former barriers (Bourdieu 2001).

Though in a subordinate position Chinese women are not immobile and assert their agency in a number of ways (Ortner 2006:137). Their agency does not subscribe to paradigms of Western feminism in the form of overt resistance and does not need to. According to Ortner, agency can take any number of more subtle forms, and is any action that goes against cultural norms (2006:152). She describes agentic responses as “projects:” as ways individuals play the game. This is similar to the approach Li (2000) takes as she discusses the roles and actions of Chinese women in the last fifty years. She makes the point that feminism does not look or act the same in China, but that the emphasis on the individual in recent years will change how feminism is conceptualized in China. Recognizing and understanding agency and resistance in various cultural settings requires situating people’s actions and choice within relevant cultural and historical contexts (Ortner 2006:131-132).



Figure 1. "Walking Street," a Commercial Area in Qingdao, China



Figure 2. Residential Area in Qingdao, China

CHAPTER THREE: Methods

This study takes an ethnographic approach through the combination of semi-structured interviews and participant observation to gain a local, contextualized understanding of the experiences and decision-making processes of women business owners in Qingdao, China. I interviewed twenty ($n = 20$) Chinese women entrepreneurs with self-employed enterprises and micro-enterprises (See Appendix A). Each had been in business for more than six (6) months. Only women who indicated that they run their business independently were interviewed; businesses were not co-owned or family owned. In-depth semi-structured interviews combine with participant observation in businesses, shopping areas, active shopping sprees, and local life in general. This study seeks to augment the small body of literature that offers an emic perspective on Chinese women business owners. For analysis, I used a modified grounded theory approach with the goal of bringing women's experiences to the forefront of discussion, as opposed to statistical results from secondary, macro-level datasets (Bernard 2006).

Site Description

This ethnographic research project was conducted in Qingdao, China. Qingdao is a major city in eastern China located on the coast about halfway between Beijing and Shanghai, and across the sea from South Korea. Qingdao has an international history of German (1897-1914) and Japanese (1914-1945) occupation due to its strategic location, but has been fully under Chinese governance since 1949. Home to the Qingdao (Tsingtao) International Beer Festival, which features the internationally renowned Tsingtao beer, among others, Qingdao also is known for the Jiaozhou Bay Bridge, the

longest road bridge in the world—26.4 miles long. One of China’s expanding and important cities, Qingdao is a central trading and industrial hub with a history of trade, wealth and variety of workplaces that continues through today.

To ensure a varied sampling in age, socioeconomic status, and business size, I conducted interviews in two areas of town, one residential and the other commercial. Although there were a number of similar businesses in these two locations, differences include customer base and overhead costs. I had hoped that these contrasting sites might reveal contrasting entrepreneurial experiences for women along lines of age and socioeconomic status, which they did.

Commercial Area

All the women interviewed in the commercial district had storefronts in single story buildings adjacent to the “walking street,” ranging from 13-240 square-feet in size. Over time, big-box stores have taken over the central walking street. Walking through shoppers see a large department store, a fabric market, a Wal-Mart, McDonalds, KFC, and many designer brand retail clothing stores such as Nike, Hang Ten, MetersBonwe, Adidas, Puma, and so on.

As in any big city, Qingdao has a number of different shopping districts. Taidong is home to the most popular shopping area. If you ask someone where he or she has bought something, the answer will be, “Taidong.” If you ask where one can buy something, the answer will be, “Taidong.” The Taidong commercial area is not a market, but a dynamic shopping area centered around a very large “walking street” (Figure 1). Shoppers are offered a wide range of sizes and types of businesses: everything from big-

box corporate to person-on-the-street selling wallets, hair accessories, and so on. At night, the shopping area becomes a market: the walking street becomes a three-aisle night market with many sellers, which is exciting, but not the focus of this research. Another commercial district we explored was MingJiang Lu. This location was closer to downtown and significantly higher class. Shops were more upscale and owners were absent or unwilling to meet with us. Many employees told me that their owners did not even live in Qingdao. The one woman who would meet with us from this area had a boutique-style small-scale enterprise, was present in her shop daily, and was very interested in learning more about my research process and curious about my findings.

Description of Commercial Area

Life in contemporary China is not unlike life elsewhere in the world in terms of the routines of daily life and the acquisition of material goods. Qingdao is much like any bustling city. Imagine a commercial street in east China: people are walking six or eight abreast on the sidewalk, buses and cars clog the road; people are talking and laughing in groups and waiting to cross wide streets. What are they wearing? What are they driving? Where are they going?

Around Taidong, people are going about their lives: going to work, visiting friends, shopping, going to school, and so on. I see grandmothers in sweaters, trendy youth with thick black glasses, women sporting the latest Korean fashion, men in business suits, women in business suits, school children and teens in uniforms, babies with split pants, babies in strollers, gamers leaving internet cafes, middle aged women in bright sweaters and jeans, grandfathers dressed like your grandfather, young adults eating

and shopping, young women in jeans and t-shirts, panhandlers, fruit vendors, people returning with bags from the grocery store.

If you were headed towards MingJiang Lu on the weekend, in addition to the people above, you might also see people dressed for salsa dancing or clubbing, babies in really fancy strollers, Chanel, among other things. And people have cars: Ford, Audi, Bluebird, Toyota, Chang'an, BYD Auto, Dongfeng, BMW, Mercedes, Lexus, Mazda, Hyundai, the list goes on. Busses in town are shiny and new; many run on liquid natural gas. It only costs two yuan (32 cents) to ride and during rush hour buses are packed solid. Intersections and traffic patterns are consistent with expectations in the west. Very few people ride bicycles.

Residential Area

Businesses in the residential area were all located in first floor apartments of high-rise buildings, and business spaces were small, medium, or large: front room, two rooms, or the whole apartment (Figure 2). Nearby the apartment complex is a large big-box retail store that carries almost everything. None of the women entrepreneurs mentioned it in relation to their businesses. However, they did make the judgment that operating in an apartment complex means their storefronts do not receive as much traffic as one in the commercial district. The people who do shop tend to be very frugal.

This residential area was chosen based on its socioeconomic level, density of shops, and somewhat parallel presence of a night market and corporate shopping center. The customer base for the residential areas was substantially less well-off compared to Taidong and MingJiang Lu, in part because much of the apartment complex consisted of

relocated families. Twelve years ago the city moved a whole neighborhood of lower income people from near MingJiang Lu, a now shiny and gentrified business district.

Description of Residential Area

Fewer people are walking on the residential street compared with streets in the commercial districts, and there is less variety among the people you do see. Most are of lower socioeconomic status: older men and women, grandparents returning from vegetable markets and grocery stores with bags or push carts full of vegetables, meat, fruit, seafood, and so on. Early in the morning you might see these same people going for morning walks. Throughout the day you are likely to see babies and children playing, the younger children and babies accompanied by grandparents, mothers, or both. Because the first floor apartments are most often used commercially, people shopping or taking care of their businesses mingle with residents; the hair stylist with bright pink hair hangs towels to dry outside the hair salon where he works, while customers go in and out of the printing shop next door, which is like a small-scale Fed-Ex Kinkos without the shipping service. Some people show concern for fashion or dress, and some don't. Men might wear slacks and a button-down shirt, but nothing very formal, and women wear sweaters, jeans, t-shirts, etc., but perhaps they are ill fitting, handmade, or simply not fashion statements.

Sampling Technique

The study sample is made up of local and migrant women who independently operate small businesses that are more than six months old. To ensure a balanced sample, I used quota and purposive sampling (Bernard 2006). Door-to-door marketing was used

to approach potential informants. A Chinese woman named Vicky worked with me throughout the interview process as a translator. After my initial attempts to go it alone with speaking Chinese, I concluded that, between the local slang and dialects, the potentially nuanced topics, and the speed at which fluent people enjoy conversing, an interpreter was necessary. Another change that occurred was the removal of surveys. I had wanted to conduct a survey with larger sample ($n = 40$) and then randomly select women for interviews from that pool, but people primarily wanted to be interviewed on the spot. In addition, Vicky and I concluded that follow up would be tricky if not impossible due to people's busy schedules. Vicky accompanied me to all recruitment inquiries and to interviews. Her presence as an older Chinese woman, and mine as a young American was an intriguing dynamic for many. People were very friendly. Most shop owners were willing to speak with us.

Vicky, a Chinese woman from northern China, received a bachelor's degree in English Language through a self-study offered by a state university; it is a reputable way to earn a degree. She has wonderful English language skills, experience working with foreigners, and has lived 12 years in Qingdao. She was personable, yet non-intrusive, and our combined personalities made a remarkably welcoming team; people seemed comfortable speaking with us, and most interviews contained wonderful detail. After I connected with Vicky, my amazing interpreter, collecting the data used in analysis began in earnest. Prior to hiring Vicky, I had begun to conduct interviews, but the process was not as smooth as I had expected. Looking back, the combination of my obviously being

an outsider and my less than fluent Mandarin made rapport difficult to establish, which resulted in interviews that lacked depth and nuance.

The difference partnering with Vicky made was incredible. The two of us together made for a comfortable, but intriguing team. I had conducted two surveys and an interview to test out my ‘survey and then return to interview’ methods I originally had laid out. I was hoping to conduct 40 surveys, discard those who did not qualify, and then randomly select interviewees from that pool; however, from those preliminary experiences I decided that 1) my Mandarin Chinese was not advanced enough to understand the nuances their experiences, and 2) people do not have the time for the return later to interview model. So, Vicky and I partnered up, conducted a preliminary interview with a friend of Vicky’s for practice, and the next week we set off to find informants.

The process of finding informants was easier than I thought it would be. I was expecting much more skepticism and many more rejections. Although there were rejections, many people were willing to help, although they found the ethnographic interview process confusing. Others felt sure they weren’t helping me because they “weren’t successful,” or they had “no stories to tell.” I reassured them that their experiences, however simple, were what I wanted to hear. We conducted one to three interviews per week. This was a good pace, as I was I was left time to transcribe the interviews and track key concepts as I went.

Recruitment and Participant Observation

The first and third part of my research consisted of participant observation. Initially, I strategically explored Qingdao to locate potential recruitment sites, went shopping, and chatted with people. After choosing two areas of the city based on socioeconomic status and density of businesses, Vicky and I actively sought out informants, recruiting door-to-door. As interviews progressed, I began Phase Three of my research, when I returned to conduct participant-observation with small business owners who expressed willingness to let me come and hang out. As we chatted further, I gained their trust, and asked questions and observed. Participant observation in both cases helped further establish rapport, increasing my understanding of this specific area of life—all providing a stronger understanding and experiential knowledge for data analysis later (Bernard 2006).

Rejections

Nevertheless, not everyone was willing or able to meet with us for an interview. The majority of rejections came at MingJiang Lu and Taidong. The most common response was a lack of time on their part. A woman in her late 20s who owned a dress shop acted as if she wanted to participate in the study, but she needed to check with her husband first. When we returned the next week, she informed us that her husband had declined to allow it. Another woman, also in her late 20's and also running a women's clothing shop, said "No" before we finished speaking and then repeated herself: "No, No!" We thanked her for her time and respectfully departed. We approached the business of an older woman, a sweater shop. She listened peripherally to an explanation

of my research and then said curtly, “I don’t think I can help you” and moved to walk away. Vicky and I also encountered many boutique-style chains with women employees, but absent owners. One woman who owned a drapery business near MingJiang Lu agreed to be interviewed, but then found herself too busy with family issues. Another, who owns a fancy home décor business, said she would meet with us, but never returned our calls.

When we first entered and began to chat with whoever was staffing the business, it was common to be told that the owner was not present. In some cases, this was true, but in others, after a short while, our contact would admit that she herself was the shop owner. This frequently happened, both with women who had agreed to be interviewed and those who had not; understandably, they were interested in what we wanted before sharing too much with us. One small shop was selling dishes, mugs, cutlery, and so on. The women we spoke with at that shop might have been the owner, but she insisted that she was not.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews either were conducted on the spot upon meeting, or at a later date after scheduling. Informed consent processes occurred prior to interviewing, or prior to scheduling respectively. Interviews most often took place in the center of the shop or in a “back office,” when available. One interview took place at a nearby fast food establishment, and another in the lobby of her current place of work. A few women canceled, no-showed, or did not follow up by calling us.

We conducted twenty (20) interviews over six (6) months. Interviews lasted about one hour on average. Most interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder, but 5 interviewees declined to be recorded. In either case, I also took handwritten notes

throughout. These semi-structured interviews consisted of a few open-ended questions in the beginning to allow for a more casual, unguided discussion to collect information about their current (and if applicable past) business, their personal background, and employment experiences. I followed up with more specific prompts as their responses died down, with an interest in eliciting information pertaining to the intersection of work with family, gender, marriage, and children, the mechanics of starting a business, and so on. These questions came from an interview guide I had assembled.

Data Analysis

I used modified grounded theory to analyze all data including field notes from participant observation and transcripts from interviews. This approach puts the experiences of informants at the center of data analysis (Bernard 2006). To find possible themes, texts were first hand-coded following the tenets of grounded theory. This method allows the researcher to focus on what is important to the informant, rather than prescribing meaning from established theories. Once I was able to define categories, I used the computer software NVIVO to fully code interviews. The goal was for me, the researcher, to become immersed in the texts in order arrive at an in-depth understanding based on the interviews. Inductive coding and active reflection keeps analysis focused in the texts and ensures the final themes/categories of analysis arose directly from the informant's experiences (Bernard 2006).

Limitations

While I am satisfied overall with the group of informants recruited, for future studies I would focus on only one scale of entrepreneurship: self-employed enterprises,

micro-enterprises, medium enterprises, etc. because a highly defined study population would result in more focused and comparable data. In addition, there are some questions I would consider including in future studies; I did not ask about hukou (registration location) or party affiliation because two separate people dismissed it as irrelevant—so convincingly that I didn't think to return to it. With hindsight, I wish I would have dug deeper to determine if these aspects truly are irrelevant or not. I would also be interested in knowing why some women declined to be interviewed, and I would like to take into account the experiences of failed entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs outside niches for women. Focusing on women who were unsuccessful or women who pursued entrepreneurship outside the women's niche would allow for a more holistic understanding of women business owners.

CHAPTER FOUR: Case Studies

Taken together, these case studies develop a picture of some women small-scale entrepreneurs operating businesses in Qingdao, China--their experiences in entrepreneurship, as well as their personal and employment backgrounds. The first case study, Chen Xin, illustrates family-work dynamics, as well as internal and external motivators. The second presents Chen Jiahui's experiences in work through her divorce, and her use of networks. Wang Hua's experiences show the way some women recognize the opportunity to craft a new way of life through entrepreneurship. Wang Hua also emphasizes the business process and the long-term role of entrepreneurship in her life.

As for these women's sectors and niches, Chen Xin and Wang Hua are fully operating their enterprises in women's niches located in public, social space, while Chen Jiahui operates mostly within the private, family space—although aspects of her business require public, social space.

Chen Xin: Entrepreneurship and Work in Marriage

Chen Xin owns an impressively lucrative lingerie micro-enterprise located on a side street adjacent to the large shopping district informally called walking street (Figure 1). This shopping area has everything from internationally recognized brand stores, to night market stalls and street vendors. Hers is a small, somewhat makeshift store taking up only 45 square feet, including the fitting room. No more than four small people can fit inside at once, and only two or three comfortably. I say her store is makeshift because of the concrete and tiled stairs leading up to the doorway, plastic set of drawers, and the manner of which the products are displayed on the walls. It is not a shabby or dirty store;

she simply did not hire an interior decorator. This is common for small shops in the area. It is the appeal of the products themselves that brings customers in, not how they are displayed or the ambience of the shop.

In addition to her storefront, Chen Xin also acts as a distributor for four friends. She helped each of them open similar lingerie shops in other parts of town. They were all her colleagues from her last job at the insurance company. This direct mentorship is not common among small-scale entrepreneurs: Chen Xin did not receive any help in this way. However, she did have the prior experience of owning a real estate agency—selling and renting apartments—and her husband helped her find the best factory on the internet. Yet, the decision to open this shop was hers.

When I asked about her husband's response to her lingerie business idea, she said he was very supportive because of her past experience in entrepreneurship.

When I started my real estate agency he wasn't supportive. He was worried that I would lose money. But I felt I had enough experience, so I didn't worry about it. In the end he found that I had freedom and was able to go make a stable income. He found my business to be a positive thing. So, when I began thinking about this business, he was supportive because he had seen me successful before.

Later when I asked if there was anyone who was not supportive of her lingerie business, she replied:

Well, it was my idea to open the business. It was my choice. I live with my whole in-law family in my house and I make more money than anyone else. I pay the bills, buy the food, etc. Everyone's life was improved by my business.

This lingerie shop is her favorite job thus far, but she is considering becoming a provincial sales representative and distributor for a well-known lingerie brand. This goal

is dependent, however, on the success of her business and her friends' businesses. In order to afford the start-up cost, they will need to invest in the distributorship together.

Personal Background

Chen Xin is the oldest of three children who grew up about 100 miles outside of Qingdao. She migrated by herself to Qingdao a few years after high school. She had tried to get a job in a nearby town, but it wasn't a good fit:

The hours were long and there were few women working there. I went to work every morning at 8AM and got off around 6-7PM. I was very tired. I didn't mind the low pay because it was my first job, I had little experience, and didn't have to worry about anyone but myself—unlike now. [Chen Xin]

Her uncle lived in Qingdao, and he was able to help her find a job as a salesperson. This was her best option because “at that time, job fairs were not very popular, so it was difficult to find jobs. Most of the time people got jobs through introductions. My uncle helped me. I worked there for three years and then helped my younger sister and younger brother come to Qingdao for work, too.”

Past Employment Experiences

Chen Xin worked a number of jobs in three cities and had one other self-employed enterprise before opening her lingerie business. She went from working long hours at a motor oil company in a provincial-level town to selling beer and real estate in Qingdao. The jobs available outside of Qingdao were not a good fit for her, she said. Luckily she had relatives in Qingdao that could help her find a job. During the three years she sold beer and real estate she helped her younger sister and brother find jobs in

Qingdao, too. That company moved to another city due to market saturation, but she did not want to leave Qingdao because she had made friends there. For a time, she sold apartments on commission, but that company moved to a different city as well. This time she did not want to move, because she had started dating the man who is now her husband.

Her last job before opening a business on her own was working for the city of Qingdao as a real estate agent. This was in 1998 when apartments were cheap and many people were buying. After two years working, she took her skills and opened her own real estate business. Opening the real estate business was easy, she said.

The initial investment was very, very low. Rent was Y6000/year and I only had to purchase a couch, a phone, and a desk. That's it. The money all came from my savings.

Chen Xin gave this business to her sister in 2002 when she got married and pregnant.

“Before I got married I had been working full-time. Suddenly I had to stay at home, so of course it was kind of difficult to keep my same lifestyle. When my son started kindergarten, I started working again.” Her in-laws took care of him some, too.

Motivations for Returning to Work

Chen Xin's main motivations were internal, however. As the oldest child, she felt financially responsible for some of the debt she had left behind. As you can see, there were a number of reasons behind her decision to go back to work. She did not go back into real estate, because that was a temporary market in the late 1990s when apartments were cheap and many people were buying. It is not that simple now.

Three main motivations fueled her desire to return to work: 1) She found being at home for four years quite boring; 2) She was the only person in her household without an income; and 3) As the oldest child in her family, she felt responsible for her father's tens of thousands of yuan in hospital bills. Chen Xin shared a pivotal moment:

One day, my son asked my father-in-law to stay home from work and play with him. My father-in-law replied, "If I don't work, what will you eat?" I don't think he meant anything against me, but I heard it and realized that I was the only one not working. I realized that someone else pays for everything I eat. At the same time, my son said, "Mom, her mom works—she doesn't stay home..." I didn't feel good not working.

She simply didn't want to be reliant on her in-laws and husband for everything she needed. She wanted to work.

When Chen Xin began looking for work for the first time after she got married, her mother-in-law suggested that she work as a saleswoman at a department store. "I didn't want the job, but went and took the test anyway," she said. She did take her friend's suggestion and started working at an insurance agency. They trained her for the position—"It wasn't very challenging, but I enjoyed it." Her husband expressed concern because she was gone a lot and wasn't making much money. This was when she "started to think about opening [her] own business."

Entrepreneurship and Work in Marriage

Chen Xin's lingerie business is much more compatible with her family life than her old job ever could be. It is not, however, that she balances family and business in an ideal way; but that it is worthwhile for her in-laws to take care of her son while she focuses on her business. In China, it is not uncommon for grandparents to take care of

children, if they have the health and time to do so. It seems that her in-laws are particularly happy to help, however, as her business is the family's primary source of income. Family duties have changed a bit to accommodate her business. Sharing of childcare, homemaking, and cooking between husband and wife, and parents if they all live together, is common among many of my informants. Chen Xin says her husband does do more around the house and with their son than he did before she had her business.

Chen Xin's life as an entrepreneur is a positive shift away from the high stress job she had before. A high stress, low pay environment is very common in employment geared towards women, which is one reason why married women often do not seek work outside the home. She says her lingerie business is the best work she's done so far, and her success has improved the whole family's standard of living. This makes her in-laws very happy:

Every day my mother- and father-in-law take turns bringing me lunch. For Chinese people, the relationship between the wife and the mother-in-law is the most important. Many of my customers admire my relationship with my mother-in-law. I think it's partly because I make so much money. She is very happy to show me off and tell people I can buy her things.

Business Specifics

Compared to her real estate business, Chen Xin's current lingerie business is a much bigger enterprise. In fact, I would say that her first business was a self-employed enterprise, whereas her current business is a micro-enterprise. I've classified it as a micro-enterprise even though she does not have employees because a portion of her profits come from distribution activities.

Chen Xin's income from the lingerie business is more than just stable: it is large. She says she probably made Y10,000/month the first year and now makes around Y18,000/month. She was making Y2000-Y3000/month working as an insurance agent. This is untaxed income. She does not pay tax because people her age who are unemployed can open businesses and not pay tax. "It is because the government should have given me a job, but I didn't have one. [Usually] tax is 3% of your income, unless you make less than Y5000/month. I make more than that, but don't report it. People pay at least Y150/month for a business like this one."

The rent for her current place is Y200,000/year (\$32,000) and initial product cost Y60,000 (\$9700). She has never been concerned about losing money because she feels confident in her experiences. Her husband, however, was wary about her first business. "He was worried that I would lose money." In the end, however, her husband was supportive of both the real estate business and supported her idea of a lingerie shop. "He saw that I had freedom and was able to make a stable income" through my businesses (Chen Xin).

Chen Xin's experiences in entrepreneurship illustrate the way women navigate work and family, are motivated to become small-scale entrepreneurs, craft a preferred lifestyle using entrepreneurship, and gain power within their family. For other women, often from a lower-class background, or in cases of transition, it is not a matter of crafting the lifestyle they prefer, but creating a sorely needed employment opportunity. This was the case for Chen Jiahui after her divorce and the transition period that followed.

Chen Jiahui: Working Divorcee

Many women come to entrepreneurship after a transition, as was the case for Chen Jiahui. After her divorce in 2001, she needed to work, but did not feel comfortable working with people who knew the details of her divorce. She felt compelled to move to the other side of town until she could move to Qingdao with her daughter. Chen Jiahui had worked her entire adult life, so the shift to a single-parent household was not a significant transition. Yet, although she did not mention money in the discussion of her divorce, only mentioning the desire to remove herself from her social groups, I speculate that her choice to pursue entrepreneurship was best for her because it did not require social networks. Also, it would provide a higher income than a traditional job would provide, even if she could get one.

Vicky and I had stopped in the week before to ask if she would be interested in being interviewed. Chen Jiahui said “Yes,” so we returned the next week to chat with her. She was a little nervous at the beginning: she declined to be recorded, and left the television on. She also specifically asked if there were currently any negative relations between China and the United States. We assured her that all was well between our countries, and reiterated that we could stop the interview at any time. By the end of the interview, she had become comfortable with the two of us, and was sharing some of her wholesale market secrets. Her story is interesting not only in the dynamic of work after divorce, but also because of her understanding of the mechanics of working in a women’s niche.

Personal Background

Chen Jiahui is a 41 year-old woman who lives in Qingdao, China with her 16 year-old daughter. Chen Jiahui grew up in a small town of 1.8 million people about 170 miles southwest of Qingdao. She graduated from high school, got married, and had her daughter there. After she got divorced in 2001 she wanted to move to Qingdao, but needed to wait until her sister was better established. She did move across town in 2001, but waited until 2004 before moving to Qingdao. Moving to Qingdao was not as easy as she thought it would be. She discovered that finding a place to rent that could serve as both her apartment and her business was particularly difficult.

Her Business

Chen Jiahui owns a woman's clothing and accessories shop in a residential area of Qingdao, China. Operating this self-employed enterprise out of her first-floor home, she offers everything from jeans to sweatshirts, purses, hair ties, coats, and dresses. The main room of her shop also serves as her living room, and contains a couch, desk and TV. The shop takes up two rooms, or approximately 250 square feet. One long clothing rack runs down the center of the largest room, and two-tiered clothing racks are built into the walls at either end of the shop. Accessories are displayed on the flat top of the center clothing rack. The outside of the business looks like it was installed quite some time ago. The faded sign, concrete stairs, and standard glass doors are functional, but not pretty. This is not an issue because most all the business of any age in this residential area look similar.

The clothes she sells are a random collection of brands that she picks out when she goes to the wholesale market. Some sellers prefer to offer only one brand of clothing,

because the distributor fixes both the price of the items and the inventory. Selling a random collection of clothing is more difficult in some ways because the prices of items in the market fluctuate, so it is up to the business owner to create and price an inventory. The initial investment in brand store merchandise, however, is higher and thus requires customers who are willing to pay for brand name goods. She would like to transition to selling brands, but her current shop location is not conducive to this. She explains:

Dealing with business in Qingdao was not as easy as I expected. The consumption patterns of people in Qingdao are much more rational than my customers [in my first shop]. Here [in the residential district], people wait for discounts and only buy when they need something.

Chen Jiahui's first business, however, was a single-brand business and she did have the customer base to support it. In addition to her business she also helps friends who work for companies purchase the company's holiday season gifts. She calls it "empty buy and empty sell" because she can easily "buy the product and sell it at a higher price." There is zero risk for her and it is a good source of income.

When she first moved to Qingdao, she had thought about trying to find a job in real estate, but "it is hard to find a job like that with no connections," so she opened her clothing business in a residential location. The products she first purchased didn't sell. Chen Jiahui said she "had to put them in storage and spend a lot of money to buy new products. Even with products in storage, it's okay. I'm not a worrier." She says she will continue with this business until she cannot make money at it. "When it stops being profitable I can do something else."

Past work experiences

Chen Jiahui's most recent work experience was her first clothing shop, which she opened with a friend after getting divorced. Before that she had enjoyed working at a printing and office services business for nine years. She learned to type there, and part of her job was to help teach others how to use computers and learn to type. She says, "I stopped working there in 2001 after my divorce, because I was surrounded by people who knew and I was ashamed. I had to leave the job." After leaving her job she moved to the other side of town and she and her friend opened a clothing shop.

I was young and we just found a place to rent and did it! It wasn't too difficult. The hardest thing was traveling to the warehouse to buy products from the wholesalers. [Business was good, too.] I was a local with the best clothes in town. I was never worried about having customers. There were no difficulties.

She did not mention financial need. She had wanted to move to Qingdao in 2001, but her sister had just graduated from college and was not yet settled, so she waited to move until 2004.

Business Experiences

When I asked if she thinks her experience is different because she is a woman, she replied: "Well, women have to think about children, house, and family. It takes a lot of energy. Men only have to consider work. It's easier that way." But in terms of business mechanics, it is not about gender, she says.

It's about your ability to communicate. Wholesale suppliers know they have good products, so they don't worry about selling them. It's about your good attitude and your ability to communicate that gets you a good price. [And while this is true,] it is not about knowing people because

sometimes your supplier starts carrying something else, so you find another. It's expected.

That said, however, Chen Jiahui did mention that most wholesale sellers are women and if you can connect with them they will explain to you when to come to get the best prices.

Family

Chen Jiahui briefly mentioned her family and bases many of her decisions on or around her daughter. She did not, however, mention her husband or his family. She said her mother and father supported her decision to open a business across town with her friend, in her hometown after getting divorced. Her parents also took care of her daughter who was just starting school at the time.

Chen Jiahui's main motivation for migrating to Qingdao was to ensure that her daughter could get a good education. Even now, she would like to move her business, but her daughter's high school is 15-minutes away and she doesn't want to disrupt her daughter's schooling. She will wait until her daughter graduates before she makes a move. She is considering a move to Beijing; she has friends there and would open a business, but she says, "I need to keep my child in mind."

Reflecting on Entrepreneurship

When I asked specific questions about entrepreneurship in Chen Jiahui's life and her daughter's life, a number of observations surfaced. When I asked if she had thought about doing another type of work, she mentioned potentially moving her business to Beijing. She also mentioned her desire to hire someone to staff the shop. She knows she would make less money if she hired help, but she

would like to have free time to “exercise (go swimming), learn English, have fun, and go to the ocean.”

Echoing those values, Chen Jiahui says she would not encourage her daughter to pursue entrepreneurship. She would prefer to see her in a job with weekends off, time during the week for family, and little pressure. And yet, she enjoys her business and is glad she came to Qingdao. Her hometown was too small and exerted too much pressure to conform to certain norms of respectability. “Everyone knew everything. I like Qingdao because I can know and see more,” she says.

Her advice to other women who might be interested in entrepreneurship is to know their customers; she says, “You need to know what they want to buy and how much they can spend.” It is also important to be in a location that gets a lot of traffic.

Wang Hua: Single City Woman

Some women choose entrepreneurship as a way to make the most out of the resources available—they use entrepreneurship to craft a lifestyle unavailable to people who work as employees. In fact, Wang Hua and her sister are using entrepreneurship to not only move to Qingdao, but also to re-route Wang Hua’s life from country factory worker and waitress to city woman. Wang Hua successfully developed a business and now has a solid customer base and a standard of living that keeps rising.

Our interview took place in Wang Hua’s beauty products store and was recorded. However, I also took very good notes because I knew it would be difficult to make out the conversation on the recording over Lady Gaga’s “Poker Face” blasting through a

large speaker out over the walking street. The large speaker was right outside her door, although it belonged to a neighboring business.

Wang Hua's store is a very narrow room on the commercial walking street, a high traffic area. Inside there is a long glass display case about the length of the shop and there are glass shelves on the walls above the case. When you walk in there is just space enough to enter single file and if you squeeze you could pass someone. This shop is right next to the building's stairwell, so at the back of this small shop is a door that leads to a small amount of storage space under the stairs. Like most businesses, it is the quality of the products, not the interior decorating or window displays that attracts customers. She sells only high quality brands.

Her self-employed enterprise is successful, but it wasn't an easy process. It took Wang Hua and her sister a number of years to learn how to be successful in this line of work. First they had to figure out how to acquire the money to open a shop. Her sister helped by getting the capital needed and learning how to operate a business alongside her. Before Wang Hua moved to Qingdao, her sister secured the money from her friends and her sister started purchasing a few things here and there to sell on the street. Her sister began to get a feel for the market. From there, once they found a place to rent, Wang Hua needed to ask her parents and relatives to borrow some money to rent the storefront. This was not easy for her, she felt embarrassed asking her family for money. Although she and her sister started up the business together, Wang Hua independently manages the store.

Purchasing products for the storefront was much more risky than purchasing a few things here and there to sell on the street. Not only was there a question of what to

purchase, but also whether or not the items they wished to purchase were real or fake.

The business start was a bit shaky, but the store has grown in quality and stability since.

One time we accidentally bought a bunch of fake perfume. We realized, though, that if we wanted a good customer base we needed to sell real products, not fake ones. So we decided to put those aside and focus on real products. We lost about Y5,000 in fake perfumes. Because it was at the beginning we didn't dare buy too much product, it wasn't that great a loss. [Later on,] because there are so many fake brands on the street, we decided to purchase some fake brands so customers could compare them to the real brands we were selling.

Growing the business was a slow process, but Wang Hua advises that slow growth is the best approach.

You have to build step-by-step. At the beginning, people started asking for products we didn't have. Little by little we branched out and started carrying more products. People started leaving their cell phone numbers and asking us to call them when we have new products in. This is how the business grew. I've learned which products are good, which are bad... what will sell, and what won't. It's not like before. At the beginning we didn't know what would sell. Now I order based on customer requests and preferences.

Now business is a matter of working to keep customers coming back. I asked how many regular customers she has and how she keeps track of them. She pulled out a ledger-like notebook full of handwritten names, numbers, and customer information; it was full and looked well used.

Involvement of Family and Friends

Wang Hua's parents were very supportive of her sister's idea to start a business in Qingdao. "My sister is very smart and my parents trust her judgment. I am the youngest in the family and they like that my sister takes care of me." As for people outside her immediate family, they were not included in the discussion. When I asked what friends or

other people thought, the question actually elicited a quizzical response. She said, “You don’t really talk about things with people outside your immediate family.” Friends were not included either:

Most of my friends don’t know much about beauty products and fashion. Many of them live in rural places and don’t understand my life. I just told them I have a store, and if they need anything you can talk to me. I didn’t talk about opening the store with her friends (her sister’s friends) because they couldn’t help with the process.

Not only are her friends not able to help in the process of business startup, they also seem to have little use for the products she sells, given the lives they lead..

Preferred Way of Life

This is one major difference between Wang Hua and her friends now that she lives in Qingdao and runs this business. Many women who grow up in smaller towns in China expect to work in factories, restaurants, or as saleswomen. They often do not seek out “better” employment, or employment that suits their personality. This is the case for many of Wang Hua’s peers who continue to live in their hometown.

Most of my friends have tough jobs. Their jobs are related to their family’s economic situation and many are first-borns, so they have to help support the family. They are from rural places and must take care of the family. They understand the experiences they’re having as their fortune, their fate.

Her peers are in a different place both geographically and conceptually. Wang Hua and her sister have subscribed to neoliberal norms of individual cultivation and bettering life. She and her sister also help support their family, but at the same time they have the freedom to make lifestyle choices based on their personal ideas of what is good and their dreams for the future.

Past and Future Employment

This business was her sister's idea but, because she was in graduate school she did not have the time to manage it. Her sister invited Wang Hua to manage the store. Wang Hua said, "I was a worker in Wei Fang at the time and this was a better opportunity for me."

Wang Hua enjoys owning a beauty products store. She enjoys working for herself. She said, "I feel free in this work compared to working for someone. I don't like to be controlled by others."

I was very young when I left school. I worked many jobs—selling gems and gold jewelry in a jewelry store, assembled computer keyboards in a factory, worked as a waitress in a hotel, among others. I was able to travel when I worked for the jewelry store and also just for fun. I've been to many places in China and I've experienced many different types of jobs. Through my experiences I've learned what kind of jobs I like.

There are other types of work Wang Hua would like to do, however. She said, "I like to do things with my hands, so maybe making cakes. I'm also interested in salon services like facials and nails." She would be interested in opening a business like these because she considers them hobbies. Wang Hua only sees herself working for someone in the future to learn a new business. Regardless of where she ends up living (which city will likely depend upon where her husband is from) she will open a business. If or when she does want to try a different type of business, she would first "work somewhere to learn. Then over time I could learn the trade and open a business." She is not sure when this would happen though, because she needs to be at her current business every day.

Wang Hua attributes her businesses success to personal characteristics and to her sister's encouragement. She says, "Some people have the ability to be successful, and some do not. It depends on the person, not on their gender." She goes on to say that because "clothing shops and makeup shops are women's products, women understand their customer's needs better and they might care more, too. So women who own these businesses may be more successful than men." Asked about her profit, she simply says, "I've never calculated it. I've bought more products, the rent has gone up, and I've noticed that what I eat and what I wear has improved. I used to think that Y100 was expensive and now Y200-300 is cheap."

The varying experiences of Chen Xin, Chen Jiahui, and Wang Hua, four women entrepreneurs, in Qingdao, China illustrate the complexities of family-work dynamics, internal and external motivators, use of networks, and the business process. The key ideas will be presented more in-depth in Chapter Five through a theme-based analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE: Experiences in Small-scale Entrepreneurship

I would say that everything is pretty open and that people don't think there are many differences between men and women. People don't say "women shouldn't open shops." It used to be different, however. For example, before, if a woman worked in a hotel no one would want to date or marry her because people would think she is probably no good, but this isn't true anymore. ~ Yao Chen

Yao Chen's narrative illustrates the normative nature of work for Chinese women, and the freedom women perceive in their decisions and experiences in life and work. The following chapter presents the complexities of the cultural and social climate women navigate in work—self-employment and in the labor force—and in life.

Socio-demographic Profile

I conducted interviews with twenty informants and had two official participant observation locations. Of my twenty respondents, ten currently run micro-enterprises and ten have self-employed enterprises. A number of factors affect women entrepreneurs' success, including migrant status, age, education, and past experience in entrepreneurship. Success here is defined as the accumulation of financial and cultural capital necessary for business. Generally speaking, microenterprises are more successful businesses than self-employed enterprises; however, there is a complexity in defining success that I will address later on. Among my informants, those motivated by pull factors are more likely to have micro-enterprises than to have self-employed enterprises (Table 2), and younger informants were more likely to be motivated by push factors than pull factors, indicating that entrepreneurship is not a profession that young women seek out. Divorcees were also

likely to be motivated by push factors, which makes sense because employment opportunities commonly available to women cannot support a family.

Table 2. Professional Background of Informants in Relation to Enterprise Size and Motivations (Pull and Push Factors) n = 20

Professional background	Microenterprise		Self-Employed Enterprise	
	<u>Pull</u>	<u>Push</u>	<u>Pull</u>	<u>Push</u>
Entrepreneurship as primary work throughout life	1 (5%)	--	--	1 (5%)
Little relevant experience or skill prior to opening enterprise	2 (10%)	1 (5%)	--	2 (10%)
Held much relevant training or skill prior to opening enterprise	5 (25%)	1 (5%)	3 (15%)	4 (20%)
Total	8 (40%)	2 (10%)	3 (15%)	7 (35%)

The type or amount of experience or education was an indicator of the overall success of a woman's enterprise. Women who had little relevant experience or education before opening their business tended to open simple clothing shops: Zhou Kailin, Liu Meishan, and Chen Jiahui (see Appendix A for Informant Profiles). For example, Zhou Kailin's shop was her second job ever and her first job was working as an administrative assistant for a state-owned trading company. She was given that job by the state in the mid 1970's because that was the sector where her parents worked; now she has a clothing store. Others with even less experience acquired already active businesses from friends or family: Wang Hua and Wang Tong. Very few women went straight from education to entrepreneurship, but there were two: Ren Xinshu, a seamstress and Liu Shanshan, a toyshop owner. After graduating from junior middle school at the age of fifteen, Ren Xinshu learned how to make clothes as an employee and then opened her own business.

She has been operating a seamstress business off and on, wherever she is living ever since.

Table 3. Education Levels of Informants by Migrant Status n = 20

Education	Migrants	Locals
College degree (2, 3, or 4 year)	2 (10%)	3 (15%)
Certificate	1 (5%)	3 (15%)
High School (age 18)	4 (20%)	4 (20%)
Junior Middle School (age 15)	2 (10%)	--
Middle School (age 12)	1 (5%)	--
Total	10 (50%)	10 (50%)

*All with children

Informants with training and post-secondary education have a significant advantage in small-scale entrepreneurship (Table 3). Two of the five women with relevant training and post-secondary education have developed their businesses into boutique-style businesses, an accomplishment that requires a significant amount of social, cultural, and economic capital. Education also impacted women's experiences. In general, more education increased women's opportunities and likelihood of success in entrepreneurship. College educations gave the greatest potential, but only among those women who pursued entrepreneurship after their children grew up. Those with young kids did not benefit from their education. Certificates from a beauty college or a certificate in nutrition were especially beneficial for migrants and those who did not graduate from high school. Although, for most high school graduates and those who received certificates with or without high school, relevant hands-on experience took them a long way, Chen Xin, Zhou Jun, Zhou Ling, and Xie Ping, for example.

Across the board, my informants live and operate their businesses in Qingdao, but not everyone was born there: eight grew up in rural Shandong Province, two migrated from other provinces, and the remaining ten are Qingdao locals. Migration is an important factor to address when looking at women entrepreneurs' decision-making, because rural and urban individuals tend to acquire different attitudes, desires, and capital from navigating different fields growing up. Generally, rural women are at a disadvantage in terms of employment compared to urban women because they are missing dispositions that urban women acquire growing up related individual value and service-oriented business: including self-presentation, self-confidence. However, in some cases migrant small-scale entrepreneurs have an advantage over locals because they have stronger social networks and are more adept at using them.

The importance of social capital, including networks and mentorship, is reflected in the frequency of mentorship among migrants: Sixty percent of migrants were directly mentored, whereas only twenty percent of locals were mentored. Generally, mentored individuals had more stable, higher quality, and more entrepreneurial enterprises, compared to those without mentorship. I suspect that migrants are more likely to be mentored because they utilize their social capital differently than non-migrants. The migration process requires an active use of social networks to move to new cities and secure employment. For example, Xie Ping, Zhou Jun, and Sun Meng all used an employment experience as job training, learned a lot about business, gained much social and cultural capital, and then opened a business directly related to that employment experience. These three mentored women were also more likely to be motivated by pull

factors. Mentorship was particularly useful for anyone who completed post-secondary education. This group was the most likely to have successful microenterprises, namely Zhang Lei and Wang Ailing. On the other side, women with college educations but no mentorship experienced some difficult things in their lives including a difficult divorce, zero family or spouse involvement in life, and sexual assault in a business situation. These women are Liu Meishan, Liu Shanshan, and Shi Meihua, respectively.

Table 4. Age Distribution by Informants by Marital Status $n = 20$

Age Category	Single	Married*	Divorced*
21 – 25 Years	2 (10%)	--	--
26 – 30 Years	2 (10%)	--	--
31 – 35 Years	--	4 (20%)	2 (10%)
36 – 40 Years	1 (5%)	5 (25%)	--
41 – 45 Years	--	1 (5%)	2 (10%)
46 – 50 Years	--	--	--
51 – 55 Years	--	1 (5%)	--
Total	5 (25%)	11 (55%)	4 (20%)

Age and marital status (Table 4) are also important factors when considering women entrepreneurs' experiences, as women expectations differ depending on where they are in their life cycle at the time they wish to open a shop. While I did not have even numbers of married, single, and divorced women, that in itself is telling. Women under the age of twenty-eight only account for twenty percent of my informants, in part I think because women in this age group are likely to be in school, getting married, or can more easily find jobs working as employees. I also found that younger, often single or educated

and married, seek a lifestyle that emphasizes their individual accomplishments, and ensures autonomy and control over their time. This age group doesn't want to be in factory labor. These younger informants are driven by a sense of self-optimization; they want to be consumers and active participants in their lives. Wang Hua, a 23-year-old migrant sees the differences between rural and urban Chinese women. Where she is from her peers have difficult jobs, like the ones she started with. The difference, she says, is that "they understand the experiences they're having as their fortune, their fate" whereas she no longer sees her life this way. In her experiences she has developed a new, urban habitus, separate from her rural habitus, which holds tools needed for success in an urban environment and in small-scale entrepreneurship.

About half of my informants (11) are married, between the ages of 31 and 42, have school-aged children, and have spent time not working in the years after marriage and childbirth. Married women's experiences in small-scale entrepreneurship tend to involve their nuclear and extended family much more than single women. Often, women will live with their whole, multi-generational family in one apartment. Grandparents do not have the say in the family they once did (pre early 1900s), but often are still a part of family life—helping around the house, child care, and potentially emotional and financial support—just not as primary decision-makers. Married women are more likely to frame their motivations and choice to pursue entrepreneurship in relation to family. They say they want to work, but also need to balance work and family. For many married women, working not only is something to do outside the home, but also allows them not to be

dependent on their husbands. Being independent is very important to Chinese women.

Wang Ailing says,

I've seen many women who are not independent because they don't have any money. Without money they don't have any say in the family. The husband then is the one who controls the family. I want to have say in my family.

The autonomy that entrepreneurship provides is invaluable, but so is the flexibility.

Unlike many employment opportunities, successful business ownership provides flexibility and sufficient income to enable women to balance work and home, and justify working outside the home.

Divorcees also need flexibility, but unlike married women they are largely motivated by financial necessity because entrepreneurship is a way to support both them and their child, although an average job does not provide the flexibility needed for a single mother. Even for those who have grandparents present to look after children—a very common thing in China—many jobs geared towards women do not pay enough to support a family. Even among some married and single women it is necessary to be able to support yourself financially because some women do not get financial support from family or husbands. This is the case for Liu Shanshan who keeps her money separate from her husbands. She pays for everything she and her son need; her husband does not contribute. Also, Zhang Lei's parents used to have money, but now she is on her own and actually helps support them. While their reality, these two examples are exceptions to the norm among my informants. On the whole, having a stable job and a steady income is not

only necessary for individual autonomy but also for the long-term stability of the family as a whole.

Overall, women the woman I spoke with seek control over their time, autonomy, and financial stability; however, the way individual women emphasize and give meaning to these values depends a combination of factors including the time in their life, migrant status, education, and their relationship with their nuclear and extended families. Generally speaking though, small-scale entrepreneurship provides an amount of flexibility, income, and way of life that my informants cannot find as employees.

Qualitative Results

Small-scale entrepreneurship is a growing and valuable part of the Chinese economy; yet there is little research surrounding small-scale women entrepreneurs (Zhang et al. 2006, Shi 2005, Chew 2008, Mohaptra et al. 2007). This study situates the experiences of women entrepreneurs operating within the new spaces in contemporary Chinese culture opened by local interactions with global neoliberal norms. It seeks to open a window on the lived experiences of women entrepreneurs in Qingdao, China, examining the barriers, opportunities found, motivations felt, and strategies used along the way. This ethnographic study specifically examines the interface between globalizing economic forces and culture as they relate to gender and small-scale entrepreneurship. In the following section, I present a theme-based analysis of qualitative data related to gendered expectations, motivations for entrepreneurship, family and work balance, and barriers encountered.

This analysis is based on twenty interviews with women small-scale entrepreneurs living and working in Qingdao, China. Four intersecting themes have emerged, including navigating gendered spaces, crafting an individual lifestyle, recognizing opportunity, and critically reflecting on entrepreneurship.

Navigating Gendered Spaces

Women are important actors in economic development, both as employees in the workforce and as business owners in entrepreneurship, but opportunities for women still differ compared with those available to men (Mohaptra et al. 2007, Singh and Belwal 2009, Li 2000). China does well to include women in the workforce compared with other nations; yet women continue to be excluded from jobs and social spaces traditionally occupied by men. I found that women interact and react within these systems of exclusion in a number of ways in order to create new spaces and expectations.

In addition to navigating these spaces, women also navigate multiple and seemingly contradictory identities throughout their lives: daughter, worker, wife, mother, and so on. This is particularly apparent as social change affects family and social values and norms. The contradiction I center on here illustrates the disconnect between expectations of work for women as individuals and the types of employment available and expectations of marriage. It is up to the individual to define and act on these because how society or families define and value women may not align with how individual women perceive and define themselves. These cultural norms influence how a woman is perceived both in the family and in business, and often translate into gendered restrictions that may inhibit their success or options as entrepreneurs.

When women choose to be entrepreneurs, they make an individual decision that their families may or may not weigh in on. I found many women who chose entrepreneurship did not follow the path their parents would have preferred. Responses differ from family to family, but are commonly practical considerations based on family structure and rooted in generational value differences. Often it is a difference between traditional and contemporary expectations of what women can and should do. Chen Xin the lingerie shop entrepreneur extraordinaire says,

Well, it was my own idea to open it and my choice. I live with my whole in-law family in my house and I make more money than anyone else. I pay the bills, and buy food, etc. I make more money than they do. So, everyone's life was improved by my business.

However, women's lives remain shaped and influenced by cultural values and norms around women, so their choices are influenced and mediated by family and cultural expectations.

The shift to a market-based economy starting in 1978 has changed the meaning of work in China, and largely excluded women from the labor force. The bottom line has become the most important aspect of an enterprise. Both men and women are expected get an education and work, but expectations diverge at around 26 years of age. After this point men are to pursue a career, whereas women are to marry, have children, and take care of the household. A dual-labor market results, largely restricting women to low-skilled and low-paying jobs seen as appropriate for single women. Even where equal experience is involved, the more permanent, higher skill jobs tend to go to men, because

they do not have the double burden of balancing home and work. Wang Ailing, the successful baby product storeowner articulates this issue well:

In China, I think that women are at a disadvantage compared to men. It's the reality here. People don't like to choose women if they can choose a man for the same job. [This is true in part because] men don't have to worry about family. If you are a woman, you have to look after your family and the household—everything else is extra. To be a successful woman, you have a successful career and take care of the family. If a woman gives up the family and only takes care of her business, this is not a successful woman. You have to look after both; there has to be a balance.

Just as women's dispositions are shaped by cultural expectations, likewise men have different sets of expectations and therefore dispositions. Consequently, gendered spaces result from these gendered ideals.

Gendered Spaces in Contemporary China

Building on Li (2000), I propose three different spaces that men and women navigate as entrepreneurs. In her work, she discusses the changing expectations of women since the early 1900s, namely the shift from roles as “private, family” women to roles as “social” women (Li 2000). This shift occurred as a result of the move to a planned economy through the Mao Era (1949-1976). Taking these descriptions for roles of women, I have created designations for the three spaces that arose from data analysis and the gendered connotations that accompany them: (1) private, family space traditionally marked off for women, (2) public, social space accessible to both genders, yet niched, and (3) private, business space occupied primarily by businessmen. Such gendered spaces are significant because women pursuing entrepreneurship are generally restricted to operating within private, family and public, social space, and within

women's niches. This restriction limits the scope and scale of their entrepreneurship. Segregation and niching is just one challenge women small-scale entrepreneurs face.

These three spaces reflect modern historical shifts including social changes resulting from the planned economy period as well as the more contemporary changes due to local cultural interactions with neoliberal requirements, and they serve as a way to categorize gendered geographies in contemporary Chinese culture. Women find different combinations of opportunities and barriers based on the spaces in which women choose to operate. Women may choose to operate in multiple spaces or in different spaces over time—and their experiences differ depending on the space they are in. While there is no cultural signage indicating that women are not welcome, they are often excluded from areas simply because they do not have access to the networks necessary to successfully navigate them. Zhang Lei says, “Men have more friends that they can ask for help from. They have more connections and therefore a wider range of options in their entrepreneurship.” This plays out in less access to capital and restricted customer bases for women as compared with men. Traditional expectations of women also affect their entrepreneurial activities, because many Chinese women and their families continue to value marriage and motherhood as the primary roles for women. In fact, families often reinforce women's limited opportunities and make their support dependent upon the space within which a woman chooses to pursue entrepreneurship.

Women do not always follow cultural expectations, however. Some choose to value work over family duties. This was found to be more common among young women and migrant women than among local, Qingdao women. Zhou Kailin, a 55 year-old

former administrative assistant for a state owned trading company who became a small-scale entrepreneur eighteen years ago, talks about this shift.

I think women today are different from young women of my time. Women have changed a lot since China opened. Now they are more outspoken and creative. We weren't like this; you couldn't be. We were more traditional—you followed your feelings and were less influenced by others. Now society is more open, but we are getting old.

I speculate that the difference Zhou Kailin refers to is the shift to young women internalizing values and norms that have arisen since the implementation of technologies of neoliberalism. This is especially true among women who chose to pursue entrepreneurship, as this choice of work emphasizes their individuality and the value of work. Xie Ping's experiences, presented in Chapter Seven, illustrate the acquisition of new desires and attributes. By prioritizing work and individual accomplishment, sometimes over family and other traditional expectations, women demonstrate a new emphasis on individualism in contemporary Chinese culture.

Women operating in an expected niche find few barriers as busses, trains, wholesale markets, commercial shopping districts, and navigating basic bureaucratic and government systems are largely gender-neutral. This is because of expectations around work that developed during the planned economy period (1949-1978) where men and women shared the public, social space as seeming equals. This space continues to be an open and “safe” space for living and operating businesses regardless of gender. However, men and women operating businesses in this space are commonly segregated along gender lines. Niching often translates as “skilled and entrepreneurial self-employment” for men, and “unskilled individual self-employment” for women (Zheng and Pan 2012).

Private, Family Space

Four women I interviewed located their businesses within private, family space (Table 5). Women cannot operate exclusively in private, family space, as wholesale markets and government and bureaucratic activities fall outside this space, but their use of the public, social space is as limited as their networks and access to capital. Typically, their businesses are in the front room(s) of the apartments they rent or own. Women in this space are more likely to operate self-employed enterprises than micro-enterprises. I suppose that men could utilize such a private space as well, but I cannot say with confidence either way. Of the four women, Yao Chen and Chen Jiahui are divorced; Wang Ailing started here but quickly expanded her business squarely into the public, social space; and finally Sun Meng, a lower socioeconomic status migrant, operates from home. One thing they all have in common operating in this space is their limited or total lack of social capital. When they do have usable networks they are all known-persons within family and friend networks.

Table 5. Description of Private, Family Space and Available Networks

	Description	Social Capital
Private, family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditionally an acceptable and expected place for women, and contemporarily for many married women • Operating here is easy for women • Businesses tend to be small, self-employed enterprises • Individuals working in this space tend to have less education, be middle aged, or divorced, and have limited social and economic capital 	Women operating in this space are restricted to family- and friend-networks, and connections with their customers (women)

The divorcees operating in family, private space have less education and fewer marketable skills than the divorcees operating micro-enterprises firmly set in public, social space. Chao Yen, for example, operates a very small hair salon and, while she employs her brother at a basic wage, which classifies her business as a micro-enterprise, its features and day-to-day conduct of business, and her role as an owner all contribute to a classification as a self-employed enterprise.

Sun Meng

Sun Meng operates primarily within private, family space. She runs her flower shop out of the front room of the first floor apartment she shares with her husband. They have a 16-year-old daughter who lives with her grandparents 900 miles away in northeast China; they visit once a year. Sun Meng and her husband migrated to Qingdao eight years ago because there was little opportunity for her husband to have a successful business in the small town they left. Her husband works as a seafood distributor, but people owe him money and it seems his work may not be going so well.

Sun Meng's business is her own. She learned her skills from managing a flower shop for six years. Her husband can help sometimes when there is a lot to do, but he doesn't know enough about flowers to do much. She says she might start to trust him with going to the flower market, but not yet. Furthermore, while the flower business isn't a women's niche per se, Sun Meng finds being a woman does help her in this business. She thinks "because men that buy flowers often buy them for women who are not their wives, they prefer buying flowers from a woman."

Her flower shop is doing well: it occupies an interesting space; it is situated both in public and private space. Sun Meng was very warm, welcoming and comfortable with the interview. Her husband, while courteous towards us, was visibly uncomfortable with the interview process. He encouraged us to go into the back room and proceeded to turn on loud music in the front room—almost too loud for my voice recorder.

The private, family and the public, social spaces are considered ‘safe’ spaces for women in business. Women working within this space are working within trusted networks of family and friends. In this space there is a large amount of trust and leeway for individual choice, as the people they interact with are women and known men. This is a low-risk situation and a sanctioned space for women in small-scale entrepreneurship.

Wang Ailing

Wang Ailing, the woman whose business outgrew her family’s apartment, now operates a highly successful micro-enterprise that is about to become a medium enterprise. She started selling cribs out of her home when her child was about two years old. She saw a market for natural wood cribs with no chemical treatments or paint and went about working with a carpenter to serve that market. She started with one crib and sold that. Wang Ailing reinvested the money she made into making more products. As her business grew via word of mouth, she started stocking more cribs. Over time, in response to demand, she added other items such as baby bottles, toys, and baby food. Soon she was selling 50-60 cribs a month out of their second-floor apartment. Unfortunately, customers often came by at inopportune times, like when her child was sleeping. The business was starting to infringe on her family life, so she decided to start looking for a storefront to

house her business. Her child was about ready for preschool by then, so the timing was good.

When Wang Ailing first opened her business in their apartment, everyone in her family was supportive, but when she wanted to move the operation to a storefront, her father did not approve.

When I [moved my store from the house to a storefront] my father didn't approve. He thought that as a woman I should work at home. My husband was also very busy. [My father] wondered who would look after the house and family. He said, "Taking care of the family is enough for you. You don't need to get a job."

Once her father saw how successful her business was and the importance of work to her, however, he became supportive. Her parents continue to be supportive and have even put their apartment up as collateral on a loan for her expansion to a large show room in a nearby shopping center. From this example we see advantages and disadvantages to operating in family private space. This space is useful for women without adequate capital to support an independent storefront or micro-enterprise, and opens possibilities for income generation where employment opportunities may be nonexistent.

Public, Social Space

The majority of the women I spoke with ($n = 14$) operate in strikingly accessible and 'safe' public, social space. Small-scale entrepreneurship in this space, like the labor market, is niched so, while men and women both work within this space, they usually only do so within gendered niches—women tend to provide goods and services to women and men take on more "masculine" work. Women in this space often have larger and more useful family and friend networks than those who operate within the private, family

space, and may have some connections rooted in the business sector (Table 6). Men operating in this space have similar networks. They operate their enterprises external to home and often travel long distances to wholesale markets, factories, etc. This travel is within the ‘safe’ public, social space. Men’s activities are largely culturally sanctioned; however, fathers and husbands with little experience in entrepreneurship are wary about their wife or daughter’s participation in this social field, but less so if women are working within acceptable niches.

Table 6. Description of Public, Social Space and Available Networks

	Description	Social Capital
Public, social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equally available to men and women and includes public transportation, markets, shop fronts, and basic bureaucratic and government systems • Opportunities are largely niched by gender • Businesses tend to be low-risk self-employed enterprises or microenterprises regardless of gender, yet niching occurs • Individuals working in this space have greater experience working with basic bureaucratic and government systems 	<p>The majority of small-scale entrepreneurs operate here.</p> <p>Networks consist of niche-related business connections in addition to family and friend networks.</p> <p>Opportunities for women based on family and friend networks may rely on the social and economic capital of men in her network.</p>

Chen Xin

Chen Xin, for example, operates her business within this public, social space (see case study in Chapter Four). She works in her small lingerie shop, purchases her stock

online, and interacts with her customer base—all women. This combination strikes the perfect combination for a women's niche, and Chen Xin says just that:

My business is about women's items. It's not like other businesses such as clothing where your family or husband can help. With this shop, customers don't want to come in if my husband is here. But, my family doesn't worry about what I'm doing here because I'm dealing with women's items. It's a very safe business.

Other families may be unsure whether or not women and entrepreneurship go together. Such concerns expressed by men discourage larger enterprises. Wang Tong and Zhao Xiaopan, for example, wanted to open beauty salons, but their husbands were unsure about their ability to successfully run the business. Their primary concern was the start up cost. Beauty salons require a large amount of capital, and they didn't want to lose the money. Smaller shops were agreed upon—an Avon store and a beauty products shop, respectively.

What these two women have in common is their age and the fact that the money for their businesses came solely from family savings instead of personal savings. In addition, both women opened self-employed enterprises as a way to do something with their time outside the home after having been a homemaker, and not for financial reasons, or because they wanted to develop a business. This does not, however, discount their experiences in self-employed entrepreneurship. It well illustrates their strategizing.

Women are restricted to small-scale entrepreneurship in women's niches in part because they have limited networks. Wang Yen, found her personal and business life impacted by “the fact that men can make friends more freely than women. Women need to be careful about whom they befriend.” In other words, they are restricted to family and

friend networks. This is particularly important for her because, as a 39 year-old single woman, she has fewer people in her network than a man. Without adequate networks, doing business can be difficult. It can be more difficult for women than men to meet new clientele or find new customers. For some, the reliance on family and friend networks translates into a reliance on the networks of the men within their networks. This is true in both entrepreneurship and in employment.

Xie Ping

During her pre-entrepreneurship employment experience, Xie Ping migrated to different cities seeking employment. At one point, she moved to where her aunt lived to try and get a job in a restaurant kitchen where her aunt's daughter-in-law worked. She was very much a rural woman with a "thick dialect and a rural appearance." Her goal was eventually to get a job in the factory nearby, but the restaurant was okay until then. She needed a long-term stable job because, as the first-born child, she felt obligated to help support her family. Her job prospects greatly depended upon the men in her networks:

My manager [at the restaurant] knew that I wanted to work in the factory—that was why I [moved there]. My manager tried to help me get a job there by introducing me to a man. He was the driver for people in upper-level management at the factory. My manager told me he was a good man and that I could get to know him. My manager thought we might get married. He told me the man was interested in me and perhaps he could get me a job in the factory.

As part of this "plan," the man set up one of his friends from the factory with one of my best friends. They got married and my friend got a permanent job at the factory. The driver was showing me that he had the ability to get me a permanent job if I married him. But the more I got to know him the more I didn't like him. Also, I decided I didn't want to get married for a job. Because of this situation, I left my job there and moved to another city.

This is one example of how job prospects are not only dependent on knowing people in other places, her aunt for instance, but also that opportunities are often tied to the connections with men in a woman's network.

Without this safe public space women would find their entrepreneurship much more restricted. This accessible space is somewhat unique to China, as compared to much of Southeast Asia, as it is partially a product of the planned economy period (1949-1978) when men and women shared this public, social space as seeming equals. There are engrained values and norms that govern the use of this space, and that mediate behavior and make it 'safe'. Few would worry about harassment or assault operating a business in this space; however, opportunities often continue to be dependent on the networks of men.

Public, Business Space

The public, business space consists of large and medium enterprises as well as male dominated niches, yet there are aspects of this space that small-scale business could benefit from. Men in small-scale entrepreneurship can more easily utilize such aspects, but women are not expected or respected here. Zhou Kailin found this in her fourteen years of business: "While I've had my business, I've felt the need to do something to reach out to my customers, but haven't had a good way to do it. I don't think it's acceptable for women to invite customers out to dinner; to invite them for drinks." While this may be shifting, there is still a significant amount of gender discrimination as the public, business space is unfamiliar to many and has few conduct norms.

Only two (2) of the women I interviewed had experience directly operating an enterprise in the public, business space—Zhang Lei and Shi Meihua. Others have used aspects of this sector in the process of starting their businesses, but their businesses are located within the public, social space. Businesses operating here tend to be male-dominated and require networks with strangers and potentially dishonest businesspeople. Zhang Lei works as a freelance computer programmer and women's clothing shop owner navigating both sides of gendered spaces and successfully working in a primarily man's line of work without his networks.

It is not as easy for women to connect with customers and recruit new clients. You have to be careful when you meet people because they might have other intentions. If a woman wants to work outside a company [as an entrepreneur] she needs friends to introduce you to clients. All my client orders are through friends. If I meet someone I don't feel good about, I stop working with them. I don't take their order. I've heard and been warned, so I am careful.

It is less common to find women in this sector because this space continues to be highly gendered. Women are expected to do women's work, and therefore are unlikely to have the educational background or be encouraged to be interested in pursuing larger enterprises. As more people utilize this space and public acceptance grows, however, it may become more accessible to women. Currently, however, this public, business space is for men and businessmen. Women find a number of barriers in the public, business space, chief among them their own limited social networks. Public, business space is external to family and friends networks. Men are expected to have larger networks made up of private connections including: businesspeople, friends, friends of friends, unknown customers, prospective customers, and so on. Women's networks are expected to be

limited to friends and family. If navigating a space requires connections with unknown people, it cannot be considered a 'safe space' for women. Regardless of expectations, women may discover high rates of gender discrimination and may experience gendered violence such as sexual harassment or assault. In addition, women in this space may also be expected or have to rely on the networks and capital of men in their lives in order to accomplish their business, and may find that they cannot be successful in larger enterprises, or men's niches. This is largely because women may not be able to commit to their enterprise in the same way men can because of expectation of prioritizing family over work. That said, women do occupy this space, but they have less freedom and opportunity compared to men, and carry greater risks.

In the bureaucracy of business ownership there are barriers based on gender, too. I see this changing as women and families become more comfortable and accepted in this space; however, men continue to be expected to lead in the gray areas. Xie Ping registered her business, dealt with the commercial aspects of opening her franchise, and got the business health inspection certificate for her holistic wellness center in a residential area. She was able to negotiate all of this without any issues, but not without some pushback. "People told me I should ask a man to do these things." For example,

When you have to work with government offices, people think it's better for a man to do it. In general, a man communicating with other men is different from a women communicating with men—especially in work. Men can exchange cigarettes, and it's easier to connect and act like friends. It's easier to get what you want. Also, bribing is a part of it and usually women don't offer bribes. It's more acceptable for men to bribe men.

I asked her if she had ever had to bribe. Xie Ping said, “Of course!” It is not something women usually do, but

in order to get [the safety certificate in a residential area] you have to bribe the officer. It’s more acceptable for men to bribe men, but when I had to deal with the officers I said that all the men in our company were out of town on business. Actually, there are no men who work with me, but it helped. I told them I was the only person who could do this right now. I told them it was urgent, and I gave the guy some gifts. It worked well. No problem.

Shi Meihua

Gender discrimination within the public, business space is reflected in Shi Meihua’s experiences and the role of her mother while she had her business in the technology sector. Shi Meihua had a small shop from 2008-2010 in a large, multi-story electronics market. Each vendor rents the space, glass cases, and shelving from the building owner. Business ownership was not new to Shi Meihua: she had had a small beauty products store before college. However, this business was a bit different from her last; she had the only woman-run business in the electronics market, a men’s niche. She decided to open this electronics business after completing her degree in e-commerce at a private university. She experienced difficulty finding a job, as many companies will not accept a private university degree, and she felt under qualified for the jobs she most wanted. As to her past employment, she had experience working at the Qingdao Electronics Expo and had enjoyed owning her first business, so she decided to combine the two. At the time the government was encouraging recent grads to go into entrepreneurship by offering loans of between 30,000 and 50,000 yuan. She chose the

largest amount, Y50,000 (\$8,000). The loan made her business start-up possible because she “had no personal money to open a business” otherwise.

She started by selling receivers and small electronic items from her stall in the electronics market. Later on she expanded her business and started selling computers and other items to Internet cafes, clubs, and businesses. She could make a lot more money this way and it was more interesting than sitting at the stall. Working outside the market required her to work in the public, business space. Leaving the public, social space was not a comfortable thing for her or her mother and because of this, her mother went with her to every sales appointment, day or night. Shi Meihua’s mother would accompany her and sit at a nearby restaurant or wait outside. While that caution may seem excessive and time consuming, it was her mother’s presence that kept an attempted sexual assault from happening. Shi Meihua told me the story:

There was a man who had been very helpful. He introduced me to many of his friends and bosses of companies that he knew. I was very grateful for his help, but I didn’t expect that he wanted more from me. I later learned that he wasn’t a good man.

One night this friend told me about a bar that needed computers for their music. He said it was a very good way to develop my business. We were going to go and meet the boss that night.

I was young at the time and I didn’t understand enough. I trusted him because we knew each other. After we entered the bar, he wouldn’t let me leave. So, I called my mother—she was on speed dial. I didn’t talk to her, but she picked up and heard random loud noises, but no talking on the other end. She got a little scared and went to get my uncle. They came to find me. My uncle is very strong—he used to be in the army. Very fortunately for me, my mother knew where I was and they were able to get there in time.

After we got home. I felt I really didn't want to continue with this business. I felt as if a friend had suddenly betrayed me. I felt very hurt. In this business, I have also experienced the bad sides of people and society many times. I was discouraged.

She only worked from her stall after this and tried to sublease it so she could stop working there all together. "I talked with my family and told them I wanted to find a stable, ordinary job. I wanted to live a common life. This would be enough for me. My mother agreed." Reflecting on her experiences in the business world she says,

If I had the same understanding of society and people that I do now, I wouldn't have closed my business. I've learned that success is not about gender. No matter if you are a man or a woman, experience is the most important thing. The other important things are your ways and means. Now I understand successful people—they've stepped on others to get to the top and be successful. Here's another way of saying it: No businessperson is honest. There are successful businesswomen, but you have to adapt to the business world. For me, I dislike certain parts of the business world. I cannot be dishonest, so I can't be successful.

Another aspect of the male-dominated public, business space is the long-term or large-scale nature of the work. Men expect to have long term careers, whereas most women cannot commit to more permanent enterprise or employment because of marriage and family expectations. This is the case for Zhang Lei, who chose to open a shop and freelance her programming; she cannot be an employee in that sector because of her plans to marry and have children.

Fluidity Among Spaces

Each of the three spaces we have been discussing offers different opportunities and barriers. While many women in the study operate their businesses within women's niches in the public, social space, others occupy two of the spaces, or all three. Women

more commonly work in private, family and niched public, social space; however, Shi Meihua and Zhang Lei have experience operating in multiple spaces and niches.

Liu Shanshan also has experience operating in men's niches, but not recently. Her experiences well illustrate the hardship of working outside spaces considered safe for women. She started selling things on the street and in villages as an itinerant vendor back in 1992, after graduating from college with an associate's degree in accounting. Her education has definitely benefited her entrepreneurship, yet her work and decisions have not been easy. Here are two stories she shared with me:

One summer it was very hot, over 38 degrees [Celsius], and I was selling eggs. The eggs were hard to keep safe and fresh, and then maggots started hatching all over them. I had no choice but to clean them off. It was disgusting! I had maggots crawling all over my arms and it was difficult to get them all off. I had no choice, however; I had to do it or lose my money.

Liu Shanshan's second story creates a similar embodied image; what she had to do was repugnant to her and unexpected by others:

It was very, very cold the winter I sold fish. I would go out to the villages to sell them. At the time, there were no public toilets or restaurants. There was nowhere to eat! I was wearing many heavy coats and was afraid of getting sick. I had brought some baijiu [white liquor] with me to keep me warm. I had to drink alcohol at mid-day, just to stay warm!

When I needed to go the bathroom, I had to ask people if I could go in their house. There were many people living together in one house—they would all look at me and say, "you're young and a woman."

In one village, I lost all my profit in one day. I was selling my fish and there was a large group of people. They all knew each other and demanded that I weigh the fish and give them their change faster. "Quickly, quickly!" they yelled. I got confused, gave the wrong change to people, and ended up with no money.

These experiences bring to light the difficulties of doing the unexpected both internally as

her actions contradict her ideas of what women should or should not do, but also externally in being a young woman itinerant vendor selling fish in the middle of winter and being used by the crowd thus losing money. Her current enterprise is an easier experience. She still encounters problems, but shrugs them off with: “They aren’t real problems. Of course you have problems when you have a business. They don’t matter.”

Most recently, she says,

I’ve had some problems with this shop. Awhile back, some people destroyed my sign, broke my lights, and painted graffiti all over my shop door. I called the police, but they could never find who did it. There was no evidence. They said it was probably a competitor or something.

I asked her if she agrees. She said, “Yes, I do. It was probably because my prices are lower than some other places around here. It’s possible a competitor got angry.” None of my other informants experienced this type of harassment from the competition, but Liu Shanshan’s business is situated within a men’s niche in the public, social space; she primarily sells boys or gender-neutral toys.

Crafting an Individual Lifestyle

Many women studied actively approach the ideal of entrepreneurship with confidence, responding to an internal desire for individual autonomy. This is reflected by three key motivators that pull women to pursue small-scale entrepreneurship: (1) seeking greater control over time; (2) ensuring autonomy now and in the future; and (3) choosing to balance home and work in marriage, or not. These motivators especially drive the ten (10) women who actively sought out entrepreneurship, as opposed to becoming an entrepreneur out of necessity. Financial necessity certainly is a key factor in a small-scale

entrepreneur's motivation and decision-making, but will not be discussed at this point.

The women I spoke with were collectively interested in crafting or improving their lives before they came to entrepreneurship. Their mindset is individual-centered, unlike their rural peers who tend to view their life course and outcome as determined by fate. Their motivations collectively illustrate this regardless of marital status, children, or parental involvement. These women are interested in honing a long-term skill and increasing the control they have in their daily lives. Yet they must surmount a number of barriers en route.

Valuing Work

Women overcome barriers in a number of ways motivated by the overarching value of work in their lives. Working is an important aspect of a woman's identity; however, there is a contradiction between how women view themselves and how society and the market economy view women. These women want to work, make a livable income, contribute to the family, have a social life, and act as an individual, yet these goals are complicated by cultural values.

Despite changes in expectations of women and work during the planned economy period, women of a certain age generally are expected to give up their individuality—their public, social lives—to have children and care for private, family space. While not everyone conforms to this expectation, it heavily influences women's decision-making. I begin this subsection by describing motivations from the individual woman's perspective.

From there I bring in layers of complexity including family and social values and norms that influence the decisions of the women studied.

Work is an important aspect of a woman's identity in China. Wang Hua stresses the importance of work: "I will work. Chinese women must work." This is a cultural value formed during the planned economy period where men and women were both expected to work. Finding work in the new, market-based economy where efficiency is primary, however, is not the easiest task. Women's decision to pursue entrepreneurship takes place within new cultural fields of power resulting from an economic and political shift to accommodate neoliberal requirements. The choice to pursue entrepreneurship, then, puts into relief the new barriers erected against women seeking employment, as well as their personal desires to exert more control over their work and home life. More complex than this, however, is that a woman's choice to become a small-scale entrepreneur impacts on far more than her work life; that choice exposes a desire for and reinforces a far different way of life. The motivations and desires of small-scale entrepreneurs outweigh the financial risk of opening a business, for example. Thus, their daily lives diverge widely from those of more typical Chinese women, and they recognize entrepreneurship's long-term potential to ensure individual autonomy and power in the family. Working as an entrepreneur confers upon a woman an individual value as defined by neoliberal requirements, and that value cannot be attained otherwise.

Seeking Better Opportunities

Entrepreneurship is very different from working for an employer. Not only is it possible to make better money, but it is a way to craft a way of life that ensures autonomy,

opportunity, and control. Wang Hua, the small beauty products store owner from the countryside, had a very common work history, but her current self-employed enterprise has changed all of that. After working in small town outside Qingdao at many different jobs including waitress, electronics factory, and jewelry sales, she left home with her sister to find work, and came to Qingdao. She much prefers her current work. Wang Hua says,

Working for people is a different life. I would pack my things and move to where the work was—one time I shared a room with 20 girls. The women weren't just from Shandong, but from all over China. There were many different languages and habits. When it was good, it was good. We were friends and shared good times. But, sometimes it wasn't so good—we would fight and say mean things. Overall though, we were friends. Sometimes you have to wake up very early and work late. Everyone was tired. In my working life, there are some good memories, and some hard times.

Wang Hua considers herself very lucky because most of her friends have tiring, tough jobs that they need because they help support their family. In addition, many of her friends do not think about their lives in the same terms as she does. Both Wang Hua and her sister came to Qingdao seeking opportunity, and with the goal of creating a business together. She says that her friends at home cannot entertain such a possibility: “They understand the experiences they're having as their fortune, their fate.”

Developing their business to where it is now was not easy for Wang Hua, however. It took time, money, energy, and recovering from some mistakes. Yet her hard work has paid off. Although she may change the type of small-scale enterprise she has, she would only get a job to learn a new skill. “I enjoy owning my own shop. I feel free compared to working for someone. I don't like to be controlled by others.”

Yao Chen also was seeking a different life, and interested in more control over her time, money, and freedom. She was 22 when she opened her first business, a hair salon. She “thought it would be a good experience. I wasn’t too worried about making a profit.” She purchased the supplies she needed from a woman whose business went under due to poor management. This was a great opportunity for her to gain more control over her time. There was not a lot of pressure from her family to be very successful. Her parents said, “Anyone can fail.” This relaxed attitude towards entrepreneurial activity is reserved for women. Men are less likely to be offered such forgiveness.

Yao Chen attended beauty school while working at the airport—her first job after high school. Then she worked two years in a beauty salon before she thought about opening her own salon. A hair salon was feasible because the investment is modest, but a beauty salon requires a far greater investment. Having her own business would not only give her more autonomy, but the money she could make as a business owner could potentially far exceed what she was making as an employee. Having freedom and control over her time was her main motivation: “It was very difficult to get time off. My boyfriend encouraged me to open my own shop—to not have to report to a boss. I thought about it.” Things did not work out quite as she had planned, but she still considers her business to be a success. Others were motivated by the recognition that they could not work as employees forever.

Sun Meng did not mind working for someone else. When she migrated to Qingdao she needed to find a job to pay her bills. Her friend introduced her to a flower

shop that was hiring. She enjoyed this job, and her family and husband were very supportive:

My family and my husband encouraged me to learn the business. I wasn't yet 30. He thought it was a good skill. He also supported me in starting the business, because when I get old I won't be able to work for someone. My parents, too, they lent me money to start this business.

She worked six years for this very successful flower shop, independently managing it for the last few years. The only reason she left was to open her own flower business. "If I hadn't opened this store, I would have kept working there. My boss really liked my work and me. I didn't want to change my work." Her work there paid off. She is successful thus far, and she hopes to keep "this store for many, many years."

Ensuring Individual Autonomy

The value of work is an important aspect of a woman's identity as an independent individual and as a significant member of the family. This view was expressed across interviews. However, Zhao Xiaopan, the less successful beauty products store owner, brought it up more directly and poignantly than some. She says,

Chinese women want to be independent. They don't want to be dependent on their husbands. So, they have to have their own job or business to earn money—to be independent. I've seen many women who are not independent. Because they don't have any money, they don't have any say in the family. The husband, then, is the one who controls the family. I want to have my say in the family.

The value of independence and pulling one's own weight was an underlying theme, even for those who did not explicitly bring it up. Work is important; work results in money; and bringing an income to the household impacts family dynamics. For some, their

contributions translate into increased power in the household. For anyone though, the ability to support oneself financially is a safety net.

Long-term, stable employment in the workforce is hard to find, especially as an older woman.

My husband supported me in working at the flower store to learn how to deal with the flowers and a business. I only have a high school diploma; I don't have a special degree. This was a good opportunity to learn a valuable skill. My family, my husband, encouraged me to learn the business. I wasn't yet 30. He thought it was a good skill. He also supported me in starting the business because when I get old I won't be able to work for someone. My parents too, they lent me money to start this business.

Sun Meng took this approach to employment once reaching middle-age. She began working at a flower shop because she needed work to help support her family, but after four years independently managing the business she decided it was time to open her own establishment. She hopes to have it forever—only passing the business along when she can no longer physically work. Working for yourself allows for independence now and potentially into old age. Entrepreneurship can be long-term and stable in ways working for an employer is not.

Balancing Work and Family in Marriage, or Not

Of my informants, married women chose entrepreneurship because of the flexibility it provides, allowing them successfully to balance the double duties of work and home. Not everyone chooses to work to balance these, however; some struggle to keep traditional duties, other negotiate new norms, and a few fully structure their life around work. Wang Ailing, the very successful baby products business owner, is adamant

about the necessity for a married woman to balance her career and her home duties. She says,

To be a successful woman, you have a successful career and take care of the family. If a woman gives up the family and only takes care of her business, this is not a successful woman. You have to look after both; there has to be a balance.

Although Wang Ailing has a small shop in the same residential area as others, she has a privileged position compared to other small-scale women entrepreneurs both in education, non-migrant status, and success of her micro-enterprise. She and her husband both make quite a bit from their respective businesses. Last year Wang Ailing took in about Y200,000 (\$32,000) in profits from her small baby products store. Because of this, she can place a high value on this home–work balance, whereas other women are under more pressure to make the money that they need each month.

This ideal balance is not as valued for self-employed entrepreneurs, who generally have a lower socioeconomic status than micro-enterprise owners. There is a different attitude towards the home–work balance. A self-employed enterprise requires longer hours, and can potentially be more stressful. If the shop is open, you have to be there. Yao Chen learned this the hard way. The beginning of her story is in Chapter Four. When she first opened her shop she made the mistake of hiring more people than she could afford to pay. She soon realized that if she was going to make money she needed to be working in her business. Since then she has simply been self-employed. She enjoys it, but the hours are long.

Having a successful business is very important to Zhou Jun. She is a very savvy and serious business owner who migrated to Qingdao eight years ago with the specific goal of opening and managing branded baby clothing stores. The brand owner wanted to open up the Qingdao market and her boss offered her the opportunity to do just that.

I am determined to do whatever it takes to be successful in my decisions. I am determined to be successful in this business. It's been 7 or 8 years, and my business is stable. I can say it is successful.

She is one woman who chose business over family—her experiences are detailed on page

97. Zhou Jun did not even take much time off during pregnancy or after giving birth.

I stopped working only 5 days before I had my baby. And, just one month after giving birth, I started working again. For about 4 months, I came in late or went home early. But after that, I started working normally again. I had my mother-in-law to take care of the baby. After I stopped breastfeeding my child at 9 months old, she went to live with my mom. She lived there for two years until she could go to pre-school. Most of the time, we're not like other families. We can't be with the baby most of the time. My business was affected a little by having a child, but not very much. I feel a little sorry for her.

Her businesses are very important to her. Not only is it a good opportunity for her now, but this is a long-term job that provides her with a sense of accomplishment.

Sun Meng and her husband also made the decision to leave their daughter with parents—in this case 900 miles away in northeast China. This decision was based on educational opportunities. She is living with grandparents and relatives who are teachers. Such a separation of family is not, however, uncommon in China.

Single women's futures are also impacted by social and family expectations surrounding marriage; Chinese women are commonly expected to marry by age 27.

Wang Yen navigates these marriage norms as a middle-aged single woman. Because of the time she spends at her fabric shop, she has little time to date or to meet prospective husbands. She says she still wants to get married, but I'm not sure I believe her: she is now 39 years old and thus stigmatized to a certain extent. Zhang Lei is a single, 25 year old computer programmer who recently quit her job to open a women's clothing store while continuing to program on the side. In her line of work, she says, both men and women quit around 26 years-old, but men and women use their work experience differently:

Usually men around age 26 are thinking about their long-term careers and use the jobs I had as a way to learn what they need to know before opening a company. Women approach these jobs differently. They don't think about a long-term career because they will have families and children. Women find this job tiring and want to find a new one. [Regardless of this difference,] both men and women want a career or business--men to develop a career, women for safety. Women don't want to be dependent on men.

The type of work she was doing only hires young people because it requires working long hours both day and night. She took these jobs to gain experience, like her male coworkers, but will not be opening a computer programming company. Instead she is using her experience to freelance alongside her clothing store. These are skills she can use to support herself now, and keep going as a career in the future.

Zhang Lei's position as an independent shop owner and programmer will be even more important as she ages. Job prospects are almost nonexistent for women who have only worked at low-skill jobs, especially if they have been out of the job market raising their child or children. Wang Ailing says, "After having children, women need a job, but it

isn't easy to find a good job. Because of our age and lack of experiences or a degree, women are not competitive. The majority of women our age [over 30 year-old] become useless to society.”

General trends in my data indicate that relevant experience, education, mentorship, and time in life cycle are the main variables influencing women's experiences in entrepreneurship. These women small-scale entrepreneurs feel free to pursue entrepreneurship, yet their businesses are overall limited to women's niche. And, although some pursued education that opened non-traditional opportunities—in programming and electronics industries—their experiences were cut short compared to men because of cultural gender expectations. In short, women navigate a gendered landscape and while they are able to use small-scale entrepreneurship to their advantage, their business ownership tends to be valued less compared to men and they find themselves limited by their gendered social capital.

CHAPTER SIX: Opportunities in Entrepreneurship

I don't think that being a woman changes the way I can do things. I think being a woman offers advantages compared to men—things that used to be done by men, women can do themselves. Also, women have some characteristics: attention to detail, cautiousness, etc. that men don't have. So, I think that being a woman has advantages and opportunities for success in business. ~Zhou Jun

Recognizing Opportunity

The women I spoke with brought up a few areas of their lives that helped them arrive at the decision to pursue entrepreneurship. These include: (1) reflecting on personal characteristics; (2) actively utilizing networks; and (3) honing cultural capital to create boutique-style business. Women readily identify personal characteristics as important factors of success in small-scale entrepreneurship. Those with social networks to draw upon see mentorship as a key relationship as well. Success in a boutique-style business is harder to achieve because this level of business requires a certain degree of social, financial, and cultural capital. In addition, it often takes shape as a long-term, career oriented entrepreneurship in ways basic businesses do not. Women utilize these aspects of their lives to make their individual decisions to pursue entrepreneurship.

Personal Characteristics

My informants said that success in small-scale entrepreneurship is not about a person's gender, but about personal characteristics. Although gender can be useful in certain niches, in lingerie or baby items, for example, women are more likely to be knowledgeable about these, and so more able to meet the customers' needs. This theme boils down to cultural capital; personal characteristics may seem inherent, but they are a

product of a person's learned habitus. Zhou Jun, the small baby clothing shop owner, explains the importance of personal characteristics. She says they are significant because barriers are internal, not external—"they come from the inside." This is not to say that personal characteristics are stagnant because an individual can form a new habitus with new dispositions over time through exposure to new values and norms.

Perseverance has been identified as one important characteristic of a successful entrepreneur. Opening a business is not an easy endeavor, and many people quit before they have given it a chance to succeed. Zhou Ling, the makeup artist, was feeling hopeless because the first month after opening she did not make any money. However, it is not only such personal characteristics that afford success, but other aspects of cultural capital such as education and class; Zhou Ling has a good amount of both. Even so, five years ago when she started:

People didn't think about makeup much or get their hair done. [In fact,] everyone asked to get their hair cut here. People thought it was a hair salon. I was disappointed and was losing hope. In November I had my first sale. It was about Y400 and that gave me a boost I needed to continue. It wasn't a big order, but it really did something for me emotionally. That woman boosted my confidence and encouraged me.

Her business grew over time as she put up a website, encouraged word-of-mouth advertising, and expanded her business networks. Zhou Ling is still in the process of building her business and her "ideal situation would be to train many employees up to a certain standard. If I had this group of employees I could market a style. People could come to me and they would know what they are getting. I would like to create a brand."

Her goal is to create a name for herself, and to develop a solid, boutique-style business.

She has a good personal and business foundation.

First you have to have the right attitude towards your business and customers. You have to be good at interacting with people and cultivating relationships. To have a successful business you have to be a person people want to be around because many aspects of business rely on this including word-of-mouth advertising.

The combination of cultural capital and a chosen niche set the stage for her almost boutique-style business. Zhou Ling realizes that working in a women's niche provides a unique opportunity "because customers want to know the owner. If the owner is a woman, then she can easily be involved with customers. It makes customers feel the business is stable and they are often loyal to a business because of the owner." Another part of running a successful business, and especially a boutique-style business, is having the know-how to expand business networks in order to ensure social and economic capital in the future.

Actively Utilizing Networks

The extent to which women have and utilize social capital affects both the types and scale of businesses they are able to create and sustain. Social capital is a crucial part of any business, but especially for migrants, and in the form of mentorship. Among my informants, migrants were more likely to have been mentored in their entrepreneurial processes than Qingdao locals, but it seems that Qingdao locals were not hindered by a lack of mentorship (Table 7). However, fewer than half of the women I spoke with had people in their lives who actively served as mentors in their entrepreneurship process and only half (10) of the women I interviewed actively discussed mentorship. They expressed

not only a lack of mentorship, but also a lack of connection among small-scale entrepreneurs. Most were interested in connecting with other entrepreneurs, but at the same time did not want to consort with the competition. The outcome of this research therefore is of interest to my informants because they are curious about the experiences of other women entrepreneurs.

Table 7. Number of Informants Mentored Through Startup by Enterprise Size

n = 20

	Mentored		Not Mentored	
	Micro-enterprise	Self-Employed Enterprise	Micro-enterprise	Self-Employed Enterprise
Locals	2 (10%)	--	4 (20%)	4 (20%)
Migrants	3 (15%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	3 (15%)
Total	5 (25%)	3 (15%)	5 (25%)	7 (35%)

Of the eight informants who had social capital in the form of guidance or mentorship, 75 percent opened their businesses between 2008 and 2011. Women entrepreneurs in Qingdao who started their businesses prior 2000 were not mentored. This is possibly an outcome of the overall increase in the number of women in small-scale entrepreneurship, and also an increased prevalence in values and norms that encourage women in entrepreneurship. Women who were motivated by push factors were also less likely to be mentored than those motivated by pull factors (Table 2). This is probably the case because entrepreneurs who actively pursued entrepreneurship most likely had the necessary social capital and encouragement from others, whereas those who simply needed a way to make an income jumped in regardless of adequate capital.

Migration is an important factor to consider when working to understand women entrepreneurs, because rural and urban individuals usually have different upbringings and therefore different attitudes and desires, a different habitus. A migrant's success as an employee in the labor market is highly dependent on social networks and, to some extent, cultural capital and money. Starting a business for the first time as a migrant, however, is at the same time easier and more difficult than finding a job. Rural migrants tend to have less education than their urban counterparts, but seem to place a greater emphasis on hard work. In this way, migrants might have a greater likelihood of being mentored towards entrepreneurship due to their diligent work for women employers. This is especially true among first-born women, namely Xie Ping and Chen Xin, who found any work after high school, no matter how difficult or exhausting, to be good work. Migrants Zhou Jun and Sun Meng placed an extraordinary value on their employment compared to non-migrants as a way to learn a skill for later entrepreneurship. Perhaps this is why more migrants have mentors; that way the investment is a two-way street.

In many cases, local women have an advantage over migrants in terms of cultural capital and size of network. However, in other cases migrant entrepreneurs have an advantage over locals because migrants need competent and active networks to move and get settled in, and thus are more adept at using them. Zhou Jun, a baby clothes storeowner and brand promoter, had the strongest and most direct mentor-mentee experience of all the women I interviewed. Zhou Jun looked up to her boss and worked very hard and diligently "taking what pay was offered." Her boss was a role model and believed she could do anything she set her mind to:

My boss has influenced many of my ideas. She never limits herself as a woman—she thinks she can do anything she wants—even those aspects that people think a man should do. As a woman, it is harder to have a successful career because women have to take care of the family and children. It's not an easy thing to do. I've learned a lot from my boss. I admire her and enjoyed her friendship. I think a woman can be very successful.

Her hard work paid off and she now has a career developing a network of baby clothing stores in Qingdao and may expand to other cities if she can save enough money. She migrated to Qingdao for the purpose of opening stores similar to the one she worked in back in her hometown. I speculate that migrants are more likely to be mentored because they invest themselves in ways local women do not see the need to.

Migrants place such a high emphasis on employment and learning a skill because they truly have a lot at stake, personally and in relation to their families as they send money home, too. The women I spoke with found great opportunity in their successful enterprises, yet also had to make compromises as they made their move to the city. Urban Chinese culture is very different from rural culture. People value different things, have different aspirations, and desires. This is not to say that one is better than the other, but that informants who were rural migrants have changed and in doing so have entertained new possibilities and contradictions in their personal values, desires, and aspirations. There is a certain amount of compromise, networking, and risk involved in migration that local women do not experience.

Sun Meng was also mentored through employment until opening her own business, except that her boss did not encourage her to open her own flower business, and

would wish to have her come back as an employee. Her boss has a branded flower boutique in one of the larger malls in the city. Sun Meng managed the store for six years before opening her own, small, business. She used employment as a way to learn about business ownership and acquire the capital necessary to be successful. Sun Meng could not have started a flower shop directly after migrating as she lacked the cultural, financial, and social capital to do it. Over the last six years her work experience and boss's can-do disposition, along with the business connections made at wholesale markets, money she saved, and her personal need for long-term employment came together to provide this opportunity.

Not everyone was mentored through employment, however. Zhang Lei and Chen Xin had help opening their stores by a number of different friends, each of whom brought different expertise to the situation. Chen Xin's experiences are detailed in Chapter Four, and her mentorship experiences include her husband who helped her find suppliers online, and friends with experience in different aspects of business. Zhang Lei on the other hand has had help from friends who have direct experience in owning women's clothing stores, yet she does not share all her difficulties surrounding money with them.

Two years before I opened this store I'd thought about it and started preparing. My friends told me it would be a good idea. They thought my personality was a good fit for this job. I do like this work. Before I opened this shop I sold some clothing on the street, so I had a bit of experience and knew I enjoyed it. I've had some problems, but [my friends] have helped me overcome them. Some have the same sort of business, and others work in companies. They can each help me in different ways.

Mentorship also had a positive effect on size of business and attitudes towards entrepreneurship. Women entrepreneurs who were mentored are more likely than those

not mentored to have micro-enterprises, and also more likely to view their entrepreneurship as a career instead of just something to do. Because most everyone is working in women's niches, their entrepreneurship was largely unskilled, but on a spectrum, women with mentorship were more likely to be operating businesses towards the skilled end of the spectrum. Mentorship from friends and business connections was not the only support my informants received. Family and significant others also provide support and often helped open doors to success.

Boutique-style Businesses

Only three of the women I interviewed had boutique-style businesses: Zhou Ling, Wang Ailing, and Liu Meishan. Boutique-style businesses are established, longer-term micro-enterprises that sell more expensive, quality brands. There are only a few among my informants because it takes a certain level of economic capital and cultural capital—the ability to market yourself as a part of your business including class, know-how, and personal appearance. This scale of enterprise also requires greater social capital than a self-employed enterprise or small micro-enterprise might. The boutique-style business is a whole package business and is more likely to be a long-term success, as it pulls from a higher-end consumer base. A few other micro-enterprise owners used aspects of the boutique-style business model, including relational marketing, but their shops were not quite boutiques.

Liu Meishan is very much in touch with the boutique business model, but she didn't start there. She built up to it through a baby clothes store and a basic women's clothing store, which probably looked like many of the stores my other informants

currently operate. Her boutique sells specific brands from Shanghai, which gives her an advantage over other clothing stores in Qingdao. The start-up cost is higher because the items are more expensive per piece. Dresses run about ¥620 or \$100, but the profit is not larger. The benefit of only selling branded clothing is her competitive advantage and the larger, more reliable customer base it draws.

Liu Meishan focuses on relational marketing, self-marketing, and store branding. Her appearance, the interior decorating, the attitudes of her employees, and the overall lifestyle she promotes are all aspects of her success. She understands that she is selling an idea, not just clothing and accessories:

My customers like my clothes because I don't just sell clothes. I also give them a lifestyle. You need comfortable clothes. You also need clothes for a party. I usually have some party dresses, but they're currently sold out. You also need exercise clothes. I want my customers to have a balanced life. I want them to know they should have parties with their friends, exercise with their family, and relax. I want them to be happy and confident...I get to pick and choose what I present to my customers.

She also enjoys operating a store like this more than she did her other, non-boutique-style businesses. "I feel very happy and my customers tell me how much they like what I sell. I enjoy this business very much. I'll never give up this store." She is considering opening a second store. I'm planning on opening a new store in about a year. I've been observing and getting ready. It'll be an import store that only sells European brands. The prices will be high and the decorations fashionable and modern. This store will be for upper-class people, fashionable people looking to create a special wardrobe for their special personality. This is an exciting time for her. She has come a long way from her first entrepreneurial experiences after getting divorced.

Liu Meishan's first business after her divorce and after she quit her job as a stockbroker, was a baby clothing business. She chose that business because her daughter was just three-months-old at the time. It was not very successful and she did not make any money from that store and did not enjoy it. From there she tried a women's clothing store, which was more successful, and with the help of her friend switched from small clothing shop to boutique. She says, "It was a key turning point in my life. I took this [boutique store] opportunity seriously and tried my best to develop my work into a career. After five-and-a-half years my business has changed a lot."

Choosing Entrepreneurship

When women make the choice to pursue entrepreneurship there are a number of external considerations that are reflected in their experience in the (1) process of starting an enterprise, (2) responding to necessity, (3) the involvement and support of community and family members, and (4) reflecting on choice to pursue entrepreneurship. These are all individual choices, but are made possible by adequate and supportive social capital, correct cultural capital, and sufficient economic capital; not everyone can easily become an entrepreneur.

Process of Starting an Enterprise

It's really easy!
~Zhou Ling

The majority of my informants share Zhou Ling's attitude when it comes to their start up process, but some only in hindsight. Yao Chen says it is true that "anyone can open a store. It's easy to register. When you go to register, you pay them, so you are

encouraged. The government encourages people to open businesses.” Not everyone had an easy time registering. Perhaps it depends on the year they registered or the type of business they have. Businesses that sell food or offer health and wellness products must register specifically for that, but for goods and services, Chen Xin says, “After you rent the space you register the address with the government—it was only 10 yuan.” People with experience in sales or who otherwise have experiences working with bureaucratic systems had an easier time than those with little or no experience. Sun Meng was less confident and had a more difficult time registering her flower shop. She felt her husband had a much easier time opening his small seafood distribution business.

Little by Little

One characteristic of successful businesses is that they start slowly. This is the case with Wang Ailing’s baby goods business, now a micro-enterprise detailed in the case study in Chapter Two. Wang Hua also started this way:

Little by little we branched out and started carrying more products. Also, people started leaving their cell phone numbers. They asked us to call them when we have new products in. This way the business grew. Now we order based on customers’ requests and preferences.

Four women started their businesses little by little out of necessity as they were deciding if they wanted to open a business. They each began by selling items on the street before actively considering opening a storefront.

This was not only true for the products offered, but also how they grew their customer base. See the narratives of Wang Hua (case study in Chapter Two) and Zhou Kailin. Zhou Kailin laughed as she told me a funny story:

At the beginning I bought too many items from the wholesaler. The items cost Y50 per piece. It took me over 10 years to sell them all. I had to sell them at a very low price to get rid of them...like I sold Y30 pieces for Y5. At the beginning I hated to sell them for so low, but I had to get rid of them.

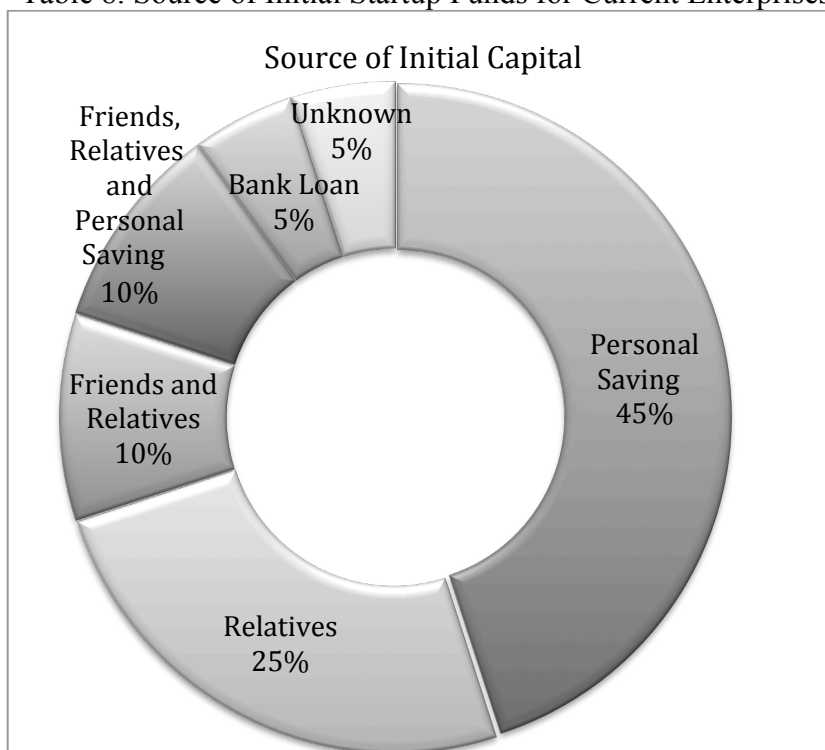
New business owners not only jumped in too quickly in terms of purchasing products, but also in terms of overconfidence and overestimation of skills and expectations. Wang Yan says, “At the beginning, I was a little arrogant and too proud. I thought I had so much experience I could do everything related to my new business. I could deal with business relationships, training, etc. But, over time I realized I couldn’t do it all. My character started to change.” Yao Chen, too, found that her expectations did not match the reality: “When I opened the place, I thought it was a lot of fun. I didn’t have to be in the salon. I could go out—I would go shopping twice a week! But, I later found that after paying for salaries, rent, and supplies...there was almost nothing left for me. It is like I was renting the shop for my employees. So, I started to go out less. After this I started making a profit.” Having a small business, while rewarding, is not exactly what everyone thought it would be like and not what most mothers would like their children to do for a living.

Value of Saving Money

About half of my informants (45 percent) funded their business start-ups with their personal savings, while an additional ten percent supplemented their savings with small loans from friends or relatives (Table 8). Thirty-five percent relied on loans from relatives and friends while only five percent took out a loan from the bank to start their businesses (Figure 1). My informants said they would not feel comfortable owing money to a bank or comfortable owing that much money to anyone at all. Money was cited as

the main, and often only, risk in business ownership. Women with past experiences in business ownership, however, were less concerned or not concerned at all, about monetary risk compared to those with little or no experience. Informants who expressed few concerns and had relevant experience, tended also to have more support from family and more self-confidence. Husbands and family members were also not concerned about losing money either, once they saw her capabilities and business success. This was true even when changing business types: real estate business to lingerie shop, for example.

Table 8. Source of Initial Startup Funds for Current Enterprises



Some needed larger sums of money for startup, while other businesses required little. Zhou Jun, a baby clothing store owner, borrowed a large sum from her relatives with the help of her father. "My father trusted me because I had done this before. I was

always careful and diligent—he saw how I worked and thought I would be successful if I owned the business, too.” Her relatives and family friends were not convinced it was a good idea and refused to lend her money. It was only possible because her parents trusted her and were

very, very supportive. My father personally spoke with relatives and friends and got me the money. He said I should do what I think is right and do what I want to do. I did feel pressure to succeed because all the money came from my family and my father’s friends. I paid it all back with interest.

While women entrepreneurs are happy to borrow money from family, and sometimes friends, most indicated they would feel uncomfortable owing money to a bank. I speculate that the process of taking out and repaying a loan is somewhat unfamiliar to many people, and certainly not a commonplace activity. In addition, loans may not be ideal for women’s business endeavors, since their enterprises are often not long-term careers like a man’s entrepreneurship might be. Without a long-term commitment, paying back a sizable loan could be virtually impossible. In addition, the small-scale enterprises that women often pursue fall within the women’s niche often do not require large amounts of capital anyway.

Responding to Necessity

Not everyone became an entrepreneur because they really wanted to. For some, entrepreneurship was a good option solely for financial reasons. Women who were “pushed” into entrepreneurship often have small social networks, limited economic capital, and may belong to a lower class. Divorcees were most likely to become entrepreneurs because of financial need, and also least likely to be mentored. Liu

Meishan said her attitudes towards work had to change after getting divorced: “I had never worked to make money before, but after the divorce I had to support my daughter.” This is not surprising because jobs commonly held by women do not provide a sufficient income to support a family. Even if the income was enough to support yourself and your child, balancing childrearing and work is difficult, and one would have to find or have a job.

Finding employment in China is highly reliant on social networks, and women often have smaller networks than men. Furthermore, the divorced women I spoke with had smaller or non-existent networks after their divorce, especially those who relocated after the divorce. Emphasizing the importance of social capital, the seven (7) women who came to entrepreneurship largely out of financial necessity were junior middle school graduates and college graduates. I speculate that the largest factor is social capital, and is compounded for some by low cultural capital and aging out (as a woman).

Other women are considered by employers to be rather unemployable either because they are at the age when women are expected to get married, they have children, or they have been out of the workforce for a period of time. As for women with children, Wang Ailing says, “Employers simply do not want to hire women with small children—kids get sick and have to stay home from school and then mothers can’t come to work. Employers don’t want to deal with that.” Middle-aged women on the other hand are often unemployable because by the time their child(ren) are old enough for them to go back to work, they no longer have marketable skills. Lastly, young women around age 26 are

generally expected by employers to be looking to get married and have children, so they will not be chosen for employment if at all possible.

Involvement and Support of Community and Family Members

My family wasn't supportive. They want me to get married.
My friends were and are supportive. ~ Zhang Lei

Family Involvement

Much of the ambivalence, where it is present, towards the entrepreneurship of wives or daughters is related to gendered cultural expectations. In other words, women's lives are shaped and influenced by cultural perceptions of what a good woman is and what a good woman does. Likewise, a different set of expectations is brought to men. Consequently, gendered spaces develop that reflect these values. Navigating gendered spaces is one of the challenges women entrepreneurs face, and that reality often goes largely unnoticed.

Private, family space is considered a safe space. Women working within this space are working within trusted networks of family and friend. In this space there is a large amount of trust and leeway for individual choice, as they interact with other women and known men. This is a low-risk situation. This women's space, combined with the public, social spaces creates a sanctioned space for small-scale entrepreneurship.

Public, social space is strikingly accessible and 'safe'. Without the public, social space and the ability to travel to wholesale markets, factories, etc. women entrepreneurs would be much more restricted. Storefronts are largely within this public, social space. However, they are far enough outside the home that fathers and husbands with little

experience in entrepreneurship often are wary about their wife or daughter working in this field. Some families are uncertain as to whether or not women and entrepreneurship are not mutually exclusive. This reality is expressed by in-network men discouraging women from developing larger enterprises, or enterprises that may step outside of women's niches. Men's niches in this space offer goods and services geared towards men.

Public, business space on the other hand is the place for larger-scale entrepreneurship that requires social, financial, and cultural capital that many women simply do not have. In addition, pursuing entrepreneurship here is a long-term career endeavor such that participation would change the way women participate in gendered roles such as wife and mother. This is an important reason why women often do not participate here. Balancing work and family, when work is with a larger-scale enterprise and you are the CEO, does not find support from current cultural norms.

Many families are supportive of their daughter's small-scale entrepreneurship and value it for many of the same reasons, but there is a level of ambivalence rooted in gendered expectations and the role of women in the home. Families and employers reinforce the private, family woman over the public, social woman in a number of ways.

Wang Yen says,

My parents' weren't supportive of my dream [to open a business] at the beginning. That's why I worked in my father's company and then the hotel. My parents had very traditional ideas about what I should do. I was told to find a stable job with a fixed salary, get married, and have a family. None of them have ever had a business before. They didn't like the idea.

Most ambivalence or lack of support was overcome when people saw her success in a women's niche and the long-term employment and freedom small-scale entrepreneurship

has to offer. There is even freedom here for women that men do not have because families and husbands are more accepting of a woman's failure in entrepreneurship than they would be of a man's failure. In this way, women have the freedom to use personal savings and family savings, but only to finance small-scale, low-risk enterprises geared towards women.

Even as women are encouraged to find employment, that encouragement may only last until marriage. Many women work in industries geared towards younger, unmarried women and find themselves easily made redundant around the time when most women get married (Wang Tong). Other times women voluntarily leave their jobs after marriage because they cannot both work and take care of the house (Wang Ailing). It was common for women to say that their parents didn't think marriage and work could co-exist, but the women I spoke with indicated that they would seek to continue to have a business after marriage, even if they had to move it. This is true for Zhang Lei and Xie Ping. They view their businesses as careers and intend continue after marriage. Xie Ping sees her work as a way to "support herself and a place for social relationships, and something to do outside the home."

Families respond in different ways to wives' and daughters' entrepreneurship. For many, work is expected until they get married. Xie Ping says that once it is time to get married, "only 40 percent of women will continue their career." Many women give up their job or business when they get married. Chen Xin gave up her shop when she got married. Also, Wang Ailing quit her job because she could not balance work and home. Higher education and expertise may help you retain your job after marriage and give a

lengthy maternity leave. However, the reality of the dual labor market is that most women are restricted to low-skill jobs that offer no incentive to offer such benefits. Yet, these unemployed women do not wish to be financially dependent on their husbands or families.

Chen Xin chose to start a new business after taking years off to raise her son (see Chapter Four). Her husband's family, while not completely supportive at the beginning, now very much enjoys her success. Everyone's life would be very different had she not made this choice, as her business is the extended family's main income. Her relationship with her mother-in-law is really good. Chen Xin's customers admire her relationship with her mother-in-law. "For Chinese people, the relationship between the wife and the mother-in-law is the most important. I think it's good partly because I make so much money."

Some families, however, are not involved enough to choose to be supportive or not. Liu Meishan for example is from a poor family and has been independent for a long time. She started saving money with her first few "mini-businesses" selling everything from house decorations, to jewelry, to fish over the course of a year. She never discussed her business ideas with anyone: "My parents knew. I told them. But they didn't care. They lived on the other side of town."

Among married migrants it is not uncommon in China to have children live with grandparents in their hometown. This is in stark contrast to Wang Ailing's ideal working woman. Both Zhou Jun and Sun Meng made the choice to pursue their financial and social mobility over nuclear family relations, while at the same time investing in multi-

generational family ties and utilizing traditional multi-generational households. In some ways, this is more true to tradition because other women such as Ren Xinshu and Zhou Jun migrated as a nuclear family, leaving grandparents in their hometowns with few or no family ties.

Community involvement

Community members and neighbors are considerably less involved. In fact, their opinion is absent. In general, most of my informants do not receive either criticism or reinforcement from people outside of their family. Extended family is almost never involved. I asked specifically about stereotypes surrounding women entrepreneurs in China. Sun Meng's response sums up everyone's reply: "Some people want to open a business and some people don't want to open a business. I wanted to open a business, so I did. I don't know how to answer that question." I received quizzical looks across the board when I posed this question.

The exception to this is Wang Li's extended family and her father's friends. They were included because her father borrowed money from them for her. Actually, they had quite a bit to say:

They thought I was young—maybe too young. My relatives thought of me as a little, gentle girl. They didn't know me very well because they didn't see me very often. They were concerned that I might get cheated, but really, when I opened the store, people who saw my management style thought I was too serious, too careful.

Those family friends and relatives were resistant to encourage or support me financially. They thought the investment was really high and they worried that if I lost money, they would lose their money. But, my parents trusted me, and my father personally talked with his friends and relatives

and convinced them to lend him some money for me.

Although family and friends may have opinions, my informants said they are largely kept quiet. Women view small-scale entrepreneurship as their private, individual choice. In many cases, the whole process is reflected in the internal nature of their decision-making. Women small-scale entrepreneurs do not feel comfortable taking out loans from non-family members and generally do not open businesses external to women's niches which would operate outside their comfort zone. Their business model is not an external, business framework, but an internal, private framework. Wang Ailing sums it up: "Chinese people don't tell other people, and other people don't care about what you're doing. It's my business what I do, why would they say anything."

Critical Reflection on Entrepreneurship

The women I spoke with are largely happy in their decision to pursue entrepreneurship, although many feel disconnected from their peers and the normal rhythms of life and might not encourage their children to pursue entrepreneurship. Wang Yan, for example, understands her parent's reluctance towards her choice to pursue entrepreneurship. After opening her fabric store she lost her friends group because her vacation time does not line up with theirs, she cannot take time off to travel, and she is not having the common experiences they are in their employment. Zhou Kailin has similar feelings. She quit her government issued job in a state run trading company after 25 years to try her hand in small-scale entrepreneurship.

Many women have their children in mind when starting an enterprise, or closing one. Liu Shanshan currently owns a toyshop selling cheap children's toys; nothing

special and about six years ago she gave up an opportunity to start a car wash company with a friend. While she is glad she can be available for her son, she regrets not taking that opportunity when it presented itself. Chen Jiahui also puts her child's needs before her desire to move to Beijing and develop her business. Some women are able to develop their business as they wish because grandparents are able to care for the child; however, this is not an option for everyone.

Others wish they had started sooner. Liu Meishan says, "I haven't thought about doing another type of work. My life is good and my salary is good—this job fits me. I regret not starting my business earlier—maybe I wouldn't have gotten divorced if I had. This business has changed my attitude towards life." Zhou Ling's attitude has also changed since she opened her store. She says she's much more open. In fact, before her baby was born, before she opened this store, she probably wouldn't have agreed to talk with us at all, she said.

Most judged that they would not encourage their children to become entrepreneurs. This sentiment, however, is most common among low-skill, self-employed entrepreneurs. Being a self-employed entrepreneur requires long hours and is not an easy way to make money. Zhou Jun said, "I think this job is too tough. I want her to go to school and study well. I hope she can get a job based on what she learns in school." The women I spoke with who have micro-enterprises and more education or are of a higher class said they would like to see their children do whatever they choose. Entrepreneurship is one option of many.

For my son, I think no matter what he does he should learn how to be a salesperson. That is a basic skill to have. Then he could do anything. He's too young at this point, but he is interested in the work I do. Sometimes he comes to work with me and later will ask me for some small things he can sell to his friends

Zhou Jun never thought she would become an entrepreneur. She expected to graduate from college and get a full time, stable job as a bank clerk or something. Zhou Jun said, "If I could choose again, after all my experiences, I wouldn't choose the full-time job. It wouldn't be a good fit. Maybe I would choose to be a professional stockbroker—something challenging. A bank clerk wouldn't be interesting or challenging." Even her experiences in entrepreneurship have not been challenging enough for her. Zhou Jun said, perhaps "I need to create challenges for myself [because] people who solve problems feel successful. If my experiences are too smooth, I worry that when I'm old I'll regret not having done more."

This chapter reflects the very important role an individual's habitus plays in their experiences in entrepreneurship. Opportunities and potential for success is highly dependent on social, cultural, and economic capital. Yet, much of these women's does depend on their habitus, their acquired dispositions, not all factors are internal. Family support or lack thereof, motivations for starting an enterprise, and the business difficulties women encounter also shape their experiences. Overall, within women's niches, women entrepreneurs feel free and operate without barriers.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusions

My research takes an ethnographic approach to understanding the experiences of women who are small-scale entrepreneurs in Qingdao, China. These in-depth interviews and the analysis of the subject's responses open windows onto the lives of Chinese women in small-scale enterprises—micro-enterprises and self-employed enterprises. I work to illuminate the social and economic spaces women small business owners both navigate and shape. I use Bourdieu's (2001) concepts of habitus to frame how women's dispositions have developed and are used to strategize within fields and negotiate the game, in order to situate their collective experiences within a larger cultural framework. Yet, any such analysis would be incomplete without addressing recent social changes and the complex relationships between local and global forces that drive those changes (Giddens 1991).

Bringing globalizing structures of modernity to the discussion situates this group of women entrepreneurs within an even larger context, and illustrates the value of the individual and the meaning attributed to contemporary gendered spaces that arise as a result of local negotiations with neoliberal logic (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, Ong 2006). This research is framed in relation to neoliberalism as a mobile technology because I understand the recently opened spaces for business and consumption my informants navigate as a result of applications of neoliberalism as a technology of governance. Neoliberal logic is applied at the local level to instill values of self-management and self-optimization; thereby providing freedom and autonomy at the local level while maintaining overarching control at the state level.

While my study does not represent the experiences of all women small-scale entrepreneurs, the findings do illustrate factors that contribute to women's successes in small-scale entrepreneurship and the changing fields Chinese women navigate. There is a new gap between the socialist state and people's daily lives. This gap provides freedom for local level negotiations and space for women to assert their agency and negotiate locally. This gap, however, also places greater risks on individuals and the authoritarian government does have influence on all areas of life, just from a distance. My informants see that the government encourages entrepreneurship, as there are few barriers, if any, and little regulation. Entrepreneurship is regulated from afar and because of the authoritarian nature of China's political system, the government could undoubtedly make entrepreneurship difficult if motivated. There is little reason to do this as entrepreneurship lowers unemployment rates and although small-scale entrepreneurship gives power to women locally within their family, the government evidently has found no reason to restrict small-scale enterprises.

The new gap that provides freedom for these women also comes with risks; risks that used to be absorbed by the government and social safety nets now fall to individuals. Yet, among many of my informants, risk is often problematized at the family level. Women may find new power in their family as a result of their successful small-scale entrepreneurs, but their success is in some ways family success. While neoliberal norms have reinforced Mao-era notions of gender equality in that women are autonomous players in the game, family continues to play a role for many Chinese women. Because of gender norms, women have family backing in ways men do not. It is okay for women to

try entrepreneurship—usually low-risk—and possibly fail, whereas men are expected to take on higher risk enterprise and succeed. Not surprisingly then, while both men and women are both participating as self-optimizing subjects, historical norms influence contemporary gender configurations. Women have more to negotiate as throughout periods of social change in China, women continue to carry a double burden, are valued less in the labor market, and have less social and economic capital, generally.

The emphasis on women's double duties—balancing home and work—along with smaller social networks are the main reason women often choose lower-risk enterprise and also why families are more involved in the risk associated daughters and wives. Women who do not rely on families for investment capital, childcare, and so on do take on risks associated with entrepreneurship differently; these women are often single or have poor family ties. Family may take on some risk even for enterprises owned by highly successful women small-scale entrepreneurs. Wang Ailing's parents are using their apartment as collateral on the loan she is in the process of getting for her business expansion. None of the parties involved, husband, parents, or Wang Ailing, feels this is a risky move; everyone is confident in her business plan and is pleased with her ability to balance home and work life.

Discussion Framed by Literature

Kirkwood's study (2009) of entrepreneurs in New Zealand illustrates the trend that both men and women entrepreneurs exhibit similar combinations of push and pull factors. However, women tend to be motivated more by independence and by the need to support children, whereas men generally are more motivated by job dissatisfaction. My

findings parallel the trends Kirkwood (2009) discusses in that the Chinese women with whom I spoke primarily are motivated by financial independence and the desire or the need to support their children. However, for some women in my study, job dissatisfaction also was a motivator as it related to a lack of independence and to insufficient income, especially in single-income families after divorce. Employment opportunities readily available to women generally do not provide a livable income. Women also indicated a collective dissatisfaction with employment that lacked long term stability; this, however, is not seen job dissatisfaction, but as dissatisfaction with the prospect of being unemployed in the future.

According to work by Zhang and Pan (2012), women in China who pursue medium-scale entrepreneurship (businesses with more than five employees) are more likely than men to undertake “unskilled individual self-employment,” as opposed to “skilled and entrepreneurial self-employment.” They argue that more support for women entrepreneurs needs to be a priority. Even though owning a small business is an acceptable line of work, women often do not have adequate social and economic capital, thereby restricting the scope, sector, and potential for their business startup or growth. Given these restrictions, even women who complete higher education are less likely than men to undertake skilled and entrepreneurial self-employment (Zhang and Pan 2012): Similarly, among the small-scale entrepreneurs in this study, very few pursued skilled and entrepreneurial self-employment, and the majority of businesses could be classified as unskilled individual self-employment. Social barriers such as limited social and economic capital confine the options of women entrepreneurs to small-scale enterprises

focused primarily on goods and services for women consumers. Although attaining higher education often corresponded with greater access to social and economic capital, and to developing larger or more skilled enterprises, more educated women still do not have the same short- or long-term opportunities as men with comparable backgrounds, skills, and education.

Some avenues have begun to open so that women may acquire the social and economic capital necessary for larger or skilled enterprises. However, a woman's success, while independently her own, too often is tied to a man's social capital because, according to cultural expectations, women's social capital does not include individuals who are not kin or not friends. Women with social and economic capital who do work in skilled and entrepreneurial self-employment are also working in niches for men, and thus find themselves at a disadvantage in an environment in which men typically have greater social capital and therefore more easily develop networks. Women operating outside of women's niches are aware of the different roles and opportunities afforded them, and understand the need to navigate public, social space outside women's niches with great care, and most especially public, business spaces, if they are to ensure their safety around unknown men and other businesspeople.

Freedom to Pursue Business, within Women's Niches

Notwithstanding these limitations, the small-scale women entrepreneurs in this study say they feel free to make independent choices and, indeed, do have autonomy as self-optimizing neoliberal subjects. I see a combination of Mao-era norms of gender equality, the historical value of entrepreneurship, and the new application of neoliberal

logics that encourage self-optimization and self-management that have opened these spaces for women small-scale entrepreneurs. Women as individuals feel free to make decisions both in the home and in public space. Single women make decisions with little family involvement, while most married women include their husbands in decision-making. Decision-making occurs within the nuclear family. Married women's parents, while many live in multi-generational households, do not get much say, if any, in her choice to pursue entrepreneurship. Yet, although their parents may not be apart of the decision, they still play an important role in the logistics and overall success of a woman's business ownership.

Under socialism, and its successor, market socialism, people have needed family and an extended web of family connections to help negotiate jobs, housing, and access to services. Thus, urban parents have sometimes remained involved in the post marital living arrangements of their children, even as their role in mate choice has diminished" (Hershatter 2007:22).

Family may assist through childcare, family loans for startup capital, and support; but generally my informants said it is up to the woman to choose to pursue entrepreneurship.

My informant's options are a product of contemporary norms of entrepreneurship and consumption, yet are indeed limited by historical cultural values of women surrounding work and family. Most of the women in this study who operate businesses within women's niches in the public, social space said they felt free to make independent choices; they do not feel constrained by their gender. In fact, many feel that they have an advantage when they are working in women's niches, as their decision-making takes place within a field that fits the disposition of their learned and inherited habitus, i.e. within socially sanctioned roles for women (Bourdieu 2001:83). Thus, the opportunities

my informants find within their gendered niches are seen as very positive. My informants capitalize on the new opportunities for small-scale entrepreneurship, while at the same time conforming to traditional norms by largely operating within women's niches.

There is an ease of opportunity, success, and enjoyment here that women may not find in more skilled and entrepreneurial self-employment. This is true in part because working in women's niches in this public, social space is easy; it is an acceptable and accessible place for women who have limited social and economic capital. Women who choose to operate within gendered niches are operating comfortably within their habitus as they strategize within shifting fields; yet they also are able to discover and take advantage of new opportunities that have arisen as a result of cultural shifts since the era of the post planned-economy (1949-1978).

This is not to say that women should not be encouraged to step outside of their habitus and pursue niches or sectors largely reserved for men. Experiences and education can help develop a new habitus that is quite different from that of one's upbringing. The result is the formation of new sets of dispositions—new values, attitudes, and desires. Xie Ping, for example, aspired to be a factory worker after finishing junior middle school at the age of 15. As many do, she moved away from home to search for a permanent job in a factory that paid more and was less stressful than the temporary factory jobs she had held. At first, she worked in restaurants near the factory and tried to connect with people who could help her to secure a job there. At one point, she almost married a man because he could get her the job she sought, but then decided that she did not want to marry for

employment; she left the city. From there, she worked a number of different jobs, including hotel front desk agent, and so on.

Xie Ping's attitudes changed as a result of her experiences; she no longer wanted a labor-intensive, difficult factory job, but sought something more relaxing where she had autonomy and disposable income. Those desires, that disposition, over time led her to a sales manager position, a certificate in nutrition, and finally a microenterprise focused on health and wellness. She experienced a shift in the dispositions that make up her habitus, and although she is not aware of the theory her life story illustrates it well. Her education and experiences transformed her cultural capital, her appearance and dialect shifted from those of a country girl to those of a city woman, and she acquired the social and economic capital necessary to open a holistic wellness enterprise, providing for herself and even employing four other women, including her sister. As Xie Ping's case demonstrates, and as Light (2007) found through his transposition of the body of literature on ethnic economy, supporting the aspirations and expectations of young women lowers the number of people seeking factory jobs, if they do choose to pursue entrepreneurship at a micro-enterprise or larger level. Women business owners often hire women, so their entrepreneurship provides jobs and experiences to other women as well.

Nevertheless, Xie Ping's new habitus as a successful urban entrepreneur and the one she acquired in her earlier years communicate conflicting and often contradictory messages. This is not uncommon, especially given the rapid cultural shifts China has experienced since the market-based economy began to be implemented. One contradiction occurs between traditional expectations of women and contemporary

cultural norms. Xie Ping, a 28 year-old single woman, hopes to get married, and soon; yet she doesn't feel as if she has the time to date. Developing her business from a four-room operation to a retreat spa is also very important to her, but seems to conflict with her desire to marry and bear a child. She says she is not sure how her aspirations will come together. From an ideal cultural standpoint, she most certainly would find a husband, then stay at home after marriage to tend the home and child. And yet she aspires to financial autonomy and success. In this she is not alone. Women in contemporary Chinese culture actively and daily navigate at the crossroads of the new and old dispositions.

The Qingdao small-scale women entrepreneurs studied must actively negotiate the intersection between two sets of dispositions: their desires as individual women and their family duties as a wives, mothers, and daughters. Many of my informants, especially those originally from rural areas, try simultaneously to juggle a traditional habitus and a contemporary habitus. In this way they are perpetually torn between conflicting fields and dispositions. Such contradictions create ambivalence, as the influx of individualist thinking encourages individuals to "lead a life of their own," even as traditional facets of culture continue to place emphasis on timely marriage and childbirth, and homemaking (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002:8). While individuals make decisions and find hospitable spaces to assert their agency, Chinese culture is becoming increasingly differentiated. Any number of lifestyles or life paths now are becoming available and more acceptable. While barriers certainly exist, more opportunities are opening for women.

Neoliberalism is a key player in the cultural shifts affecting the fields women strategize within; however, it is not neoliberalism as a global structure, but “neoliberalism as a technology of governance” (Ong 2006) that is useful to consider here. Retooling neoliberalism away from a rigid structure to a flexible technology allows for an analysis of how different social, economic, and political institutions interact and change, and encourages discussion of individual-level impacts. This framework for analysis is key, since global ideas are not simply adopted as is, but are reappropriated based on interactions within a local culture. A dialectical negotiation between local and global values and norms shapes new outcomes. Therefore, applying neoliberal logic and the potential outcomes are time and space dependent (Giddens 1991, Wilk and Cliggett 2009, Ong 2006). In China, while urban individuals self-optimize and self-manage, there continue to be aspects of self-governing that do not fall solely to individuals or the nuclear family to manage. In some cases the larger family (grandparents, aunts and uncles) takes on some risk and responsibility previously managed by the state. This is reflected in the lending of money within families for enterprise startup and families using their apartment for collateral on a loan, for example. Yes, the individual takes the risks associated with owning a small-scale enterprise, although in reality the risk does not lie solely on them, i.e. the historical cultural values of family support do still play important roles in relation to neoliberal values for women. Likewise, a combination of Mao-era roles with neoliberal values influences these families in their willingness to support these daughters and wives in their entrepreneurship.

Niching in the Labor Market and Entrepreneurship

My research reflects the idea discussed by Light (2007) that niching occurs in both labor markets and in entrepreneurial employment. Gendered niching continues in China despite attempts to provide equal opportunities for men and women in employment and education during the planned economy period (1949-1978). Cultural values and ideals around what it means to be a “good woman” in China serve to reinforce these norms. For instance, family duties continue to be valued above work outside the home for women, to the extent that employers generally expected that women would quit their jobs at marriage. Whether that expectation is met by every woman or not, such an expectation perpetuates the preference employers show for employing men instead of women in skilled positions. There is the perception that men will be more reliable employees in the long run. Women who cannot take or sustain a full-time job because of double duties or those without marketable skills are devalued in the market-based economy.

Specific women small business owners in this study were unemployed or unemployable prior to starting their enterprise; yet they created their own opportunities, thereby achieving their desired way of life and solidifying their value as individuals value under the new neoliberal logic of self-optimization (Ong 2006, Ong and Zhang 2008, Hoffman 2008). Therefore, while women entrepreneurs may be largely confined within women’s niches, this is a place for innovation as the habitus of women is more aligned to the smaller “game” in small-scale entrepreneurship. Men’s niches exist because men’s habitus aligns better to a more formal, business space. Because of these alignments, men and women have tended to operate more comfortably in their respective niches. However,

women's niches are not as valued as men's niches are; men's niches promise more wealth and status.

Both Shi Meihua and Zhang Lei have experience working within men's niches. They were able to enter through education: both held bachelor's degrees, in e-commerce and computer programming, respectively. However, they did not play the higher-stakes game for long. In both cases, their removal was because of their gender. Shi Meihua sold her business after being sexually assaulted through a work connections (details on page 79), and Zhang Lei worked as an employee in her industry for as long as she could, but both men and women age out of her specific industry at around age twenty-six (details on page 91).

Importance of Personal Characteristics in Entrepreneurship

Singh and Belwal (2008) conducted research on small-scale entrepreneurs in Ethiopia and their key findings include gender discrimination by employers, limited access to financial capital among women, the perception among women entrepreneurs that gender is not a barrier to small-scale entrepreneurship, and last, that families are largely supportive of women's small-scale entrepreneurship. Echoed in the findings of my research, Singh and Belwal (2008) found successful women small-scale entrepreneurs in Ethiopia operating within women's niches that, like small-scale entrepreneurs in China, provide distinct opportunities while at the same time restricting potential along lines of gender. Economically speaking, there is more possibility for long-term, skilled entrepreneurship in men's niches, i.e. in sectors commonly occupied by men, such as trading companies, technology-related businesses, and so on. However, these sectors

require the acquisition of far greater social and economic capital. I resonate with Singh and Belwal's suggestion (2008) that an increased support of women entrepreneurs and development of programs to increase social capital, access to economic capital, and generally encourage women to pursue entrepreneurship as a means for income generation and potential job creation.

According to Deng et al. (2011) a key factor in successful entrepreneurship among Chinese women is in the area of personal characteristics, specifically "Eastern cultural traits" which include facets of Confucian dynamism. These traits historically are associated with women. While my research does find personal characteristics to be important, they are not neatly divided along gender lines. Based on my research, I would assert that although personal characteristics, some feminine and others masculine, are indeed important, it is the combination of these traditional traits with contemporary values and norms that allow and even encourage women entrepreneurs to be successful. Perseverance, for example, is one identified characteristic. Both rural women and urban women identify with this trait; however, perseverance is a useful trait towards success in entrepreneurship only after women have chosen to become entrepreneurs in the first place. Before they can persevere, they may be pulled towards entrepreneurship by an individual desire for autonomy, control, and a larger income, or pushed towards it by sheer financial necessity. Whatever their motivations, respondents in this study asserted that any individual, regardless of gender, could hold personal characteristics relevant to business ownership.

Instead, the women I interviewed raised differences along rural-urban lines. For example, among migrants whose peers may not view entrepreneurship or individual endeavors as positive, their different dispositions can be attributed to differing experiences and to contact with the values and norms that encourage an entrepreneurial mindset. Wang Hua reported that her views of herself have changed and she now sees herself as different from her rural peers at home, who generally accept the givens of their lives as fated. This recognition arose in other interviews as well. Entrepreneurs value work as a facet of their individual worth, internalizing neoliberal requirements, and therefore strategize differently when it comes to employment and life-choices. I would agree with my informants that the personal characteristics that contribute to entrepreneurial success are not gendered; however, I would extend the statement to say that access to those traits most certainly is. Thus, the values and norms are accessible to both men and women, but are more easily accessible to men through education, work experience, and so on. Indeed, these traits often are simply expected of men, whereas expectations for women commonly focus on family, home, and children.

Exposure to cultural ideas that normalize dispositions related to individualistic and entrepreneurial values may contribute to new habitus formation and thus open new spaces for innovation, thereby affecting the way individuals strategize and assert their agency (Bourdieu 2001). With multiple fields, rural and urban, come multiple related dispositions and while each field has its own space for innovation and individuals can develop a new habitus and adopt new dispositions that will help them to successfully and creatively navigate these fields. Multiple dispositions and their related fields do not meld

together. Likewise, ambivalence is created when there are contradictions between these sets of field, habitus, and dispositions (Ortner 2006).

Conclusions

Small-scale entrepreneurship is an important aspect of economic growth as well as an important stage in the process of empowering women. However, little research has been done in that area (Mohaptra et al. 2007, Shi 2005, Singh and Belwal 2008). Women small-scale business owners in Qingdao, China are discovered to be women who successfully have navigated social and economic frameworks. In some ways, the business opportunities they have developed are an ideal solution to the employment constraints many Chinese women face after marriage, and as they age. Most of these small businesses occupy a consumer niche largely inaccessible to men, and while this line of work is changing due to rent and product inflation, many of the women studied are confident in their ability to sustain or grow their businesses in the future.

Nevertheless, even as the culturally sanctioned business niches for women afford new opportunities, they simultaneously constrain and limit options. The successes of women entrepreneurs, although real, valuable, and largely barrier-free in the eyes of my informants, in fact work to compound gendered barriers by obscuring them behind façades of equal access. This is especially true within public, social spaces. For example, women's businesses are more likely to be short-term and somewhat disposable in nature, because a woman's main focus should be on home and family. Conversely, men's businesses are more likely to be viewed as long-term career paths that should not be

disrupted. Such a view is confirmed when women who do seek to operate within men's niches encounter gendered discrimination and so are not successful.

The collective experiences of women small-scale entrepreneurs in Qingdao, China bring to the discussion nuanced experiences that are not captured by macro-level analysis. Specific details about individual entrepreneurs matter because, although entrepreneurial activity by women is increasing, niching largely confines women to enterprises identified as "women's work" (Deng et al. 2011). It is important then, to understand more fully how it is that Chinese women come to business ownership and the specific barriers and opportunities that arise. This research suggests that much work remains to be done in relation to women and work in China, despite or even, perhaps, because of the past historical emphasis on gender equality in the workplace and the current Gender Equality Measurement scores that purport to reflect relatively insignificant differences in opportunities between genders. Dual labor markets and the expectation of double duties for women are very much present in the experiences of Chinese women entrepreneurs.

Based on my study, and echoing Zhang and Pan (2012), I encourage increased support for women in small-scale entrepreneurship, not only so that they may situate themselves better within sanctioned women's niches, but also to empower and enable women to develop businesses external to those niches. Connecting small-scale entrepreneurs in a meaningful way, for example, could increase women's social capital and so effect positive change. Migrant women also deserve special attention, since their backgrounds differ from those of the local women; perhaps migrants from rural areas

could benefit from bank loans, for example. It would be interesting to look specifically at financial barriers and the availability and acceptance of credit.

Further, I would encourage future studies specifically of women entrepreneurs who have formal business education, of those who have sought and repaid bank loans, and of women who were unsuccessful as entrepreneurs in self-employed enterprises, microenterprises, or any level of enterprise. Understanding small-scale entrepreneurs is important, because channels of entrepreneurship is one way women can assert their agency, earn a living external to their husbands, choose occupations external to women's work, and potentially begin to remove themselves from structures of exclusion and subordination (Bourdieu 2001:83, Ortner 2006:130).

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Informant Profiles

<i>Name: Pinyin Age</i>	<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Children?</i>	<i>Enterprise Type</i>
<i>Name: Characters</i>	<i>Migrant Status</i>	<i>Current Enterprise</i>	<i>Shop Location, Size</i>
<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>Mentored?</i>	<i>Employees?</i>	<i>Push or Pull (see Table 2)</i>

Chen Jiahui 41	Divorced	Teenage daughter	Self-employed Enterprise
陈家慧	Migrant	Clothing Factory Extras	Residential, Medium
chen giya hway	Not Mentored	Private, Family Public, Social	Push

Chen Xin 39	Married	Young son	Microenterprise
陈欣	Migrant	Lingerie Shop	Commercial, Medium
chen sheen	Mentored	Public, Social	Push

Liu Meishan 35	Divorced	Teenage daughter	Microenterprise
刘美山	Local	Women's Clothing Boutique	Commercial, Large
le-o may shan	Not Mentored	Public, Social	Push

Liu Shanshan 40	Married	Young son	Self-employed Enterprise
刘珊珊	Local	Toy Store	Residential, Medium
le-o shan shan	Not Mentored	Public, Social	Push

Ren Xinshu 41	Divorced	23 year-old daughter	Microenterprise
任馨舒	Migrant	Seamstress	Commercial, Medium
ren sheen shoe	Not Mentored	Public, Social	Pull

Shi Meihua 27	Single, Just Married	No children	Self-employed Enterprise
石美华	Migrant	Electronics Business	Commercial, Medium
sure mei hwa	Mentored	Private, Business Public, Social	Push

Sun Meng 37	Married	Teenage Daughter: far away with his parents	Self-employed Enterprise
孙萌	Migrant	Flower Shop	Residential, Small
suun meng	Mentored	Private, Family Public, Social	Pull

Wang Ailing 33	Married	Young son	Microenterprise
王爱玲	Local	Baby Items Business	Residential, Large
wang i ling	Mentored	Public, Social Private, Business	Pull

Wang Hua 23	Single	No children	Self-employed Enterprise
王华	Migrant	Beauty Products	Commercial, Very Small
wang hwa	Mentored	Public, Social	Push

Wang Li 34	Married	Young daughter	Self-employed Enterprise
王丽	Local	Baby Clothing Store	Commercial, Small
wang lee	Not Mentored	Public, Social	Pull
Wang Lili 36	Married	Young daughter	Self-employed Enterprise
王莉莉	Migrant	Books → Candy Store	Commercial, Medium
wang lee lee	Not Mentored	Private, Family	Push

Wang Tong 42	Married	Young daughter	Microenterprise
王童	Migrant	AVON Shop	Residential, Small
waang tong	Mentored	Public, Social Private, Family	Push

Wang Yen 39	Single	No Children	Self-employed Enterprise
王琰	Local	Fabric Store / Seamstress	Commercial, Medium
wang yen	Not Mentored	Public, Social	Pull

Xie Ping 28	Single	No Children	Microenterprise
王琰	Migrant	Holistic Wellness Business	Residential, Large
shiae ping	Mentored	Public, Social Private, Business	Pull

Yao Chen 35	Divorced	Young son	Microenterprise
任馨舒	Local	Hairdresser	Residential, Medium
yao chen	Not Mentored	Public, Social Private, Family	Pull

Zhang Lei 25	Single	No Children	Self-employed Enterprise
任馨舒	Migrant	Women's Clothing and Computer Programming	Commercial, Small
jang lei	Mentored	Private, Social Public, Business	Push

Zhao Xiaopan 39	Married	Teenage daughter	Self-employed Enterprise
任馨舒	Local	Beauty Products	Commercial, Medium
jao shiao paan	Not Mentored	Public, Social Private, Family	Push

Zhou Jun 31	Married	Young daughter: far away with her mother	Microenterprise
任馨舒	Migrant	Baby Clothing Business	Commercial, Medium
joe juen	Mentored	Public, Social	Pull

Zhou Kailin 55	Married	Adult son	Microenterprise
任馨舒	Local	General Clothing Store	Commercial, Large
joe kai lean	Not Mentored	Public, Social	Pull

Zhou Ling 34	Married	Young son	Microenterprise
任馨舒	Local	Beauty Artist	Commercial, Medium
joe ling	Not Mentored	Public, Social	Pull

Appendix B

Interview Guide

(a) Personal Background and Demographics:

Where are you from?
 What did/do your parents do?
 Are you married? Children?
 How long have you lived in Qingdao?
 (Why'd you move to the city?)

(b) Employment Background:

What kind of work did you do before?
 Why'd you leave?

(c) Experience as an Entrepreneur—Startup:

How would you describe the experience of being self-employed?
 Why did you decide to do this kind of work?
 Were there specific events that made you decide to open your own shop?
 How did you initially set up shop? (Story)
 How did you feel about opening up shop?

Prompt:	Who pays/paid the rent?
(Then and now)	Who had/has the work permit?
	Who takes care of the books?
	Were there risks involved, why or why not?

(d) Experience as an Entrepreneur—Operation:

How is it operating a shop?
 What is the relationship between your family and work responsibilities?
 Suppliers, and other relationships?

What is it like for women (peers) in the world of work today? (Present vs. when opened shop or when they became owner).

In what ways is it easier or more difficult to be a women worker in Qingdao?
 How would you describe your relationship with the local community?
 What do you like about your work?
 What do you not like about your work?

Anything else I should know about being an entrepreneur in this city as a woman.
 Do you think there were benefits to starting shop when you did—easier or harder to start and operate?

(d) Future Employment:

Have you experienced certain barriers or opportunities in your experience as a women entrepreneur?

What advice would you give to someone starting one now?

Is there another kind of work that you would rather be doing?

What kind of work would you like your son or daughter to do?