

Holding up Half the Sky
A Feminist Investigation into
the Making of the Chinese Urban Female Entrepreneur
by
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focused on the links among micro-enterprise development (MD), social capital building, and the accompanying social lives of Chinese female entrepreneurs in two China's urban areas—Nanjing and Haikou. It engaged with a few important discussions concerning China's liberal politics during the reform era, the global trend of neo-liberal capitalism, and the social construction of a new worker-subject—the Chinese urban female entrepreneur shaped by the hybrid marriage of state politics and global capital. The research findings from this research project contributed to the tradition of feminist theories, which endeavors to explore the relationship between neo-liberalism and gender. In particular, gender was found to concretize the ways in which neo-liberal ideological forces have attempted to capture and exploit the productivity of women's labor

Drawing upon the data from in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and secondary data gathering, I examined the diffusion of the Western-centric concept and phenomena of social capital building in order to answer the question how Chinese women's life was inscribed in the larger context of China's relationship to global capitalism. My research findings manifested that the respondents considered affections (e.g., inter-dependence, obligation, and mutual trust) to be the foundation of establishing and maintaining their social networks regardless of the government's emphasis on market principles and the utility-based social capital conception. This opened up a new way of re-theorizing social capital. This dissertation also focused on how China's integration with the global economy has affected women's social identity construction. It emphasized the interaction between gender and class as one of the most salient sites

where ideal citizens of China are imagined. Drawing from the perspectives of the respondents, I found that femininity has never been eliminated by the Chinese government. It has existed in China's MD to challenge the government's attempt of promoting the agendered (gender-neutral), universal model of women's participation in self-employment. Moreover, I asserted that class was individualized while penetrating into other dimensions of identity (especially gender). The transformed dimensions of identity constituted a set of stratification schemes that constantly reshuffled social stratifications for maximizing the state's profits from the control of citizens.

To my father, Limin Zhang,
and my mother, Wenjing Jiang

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My dissertation research project focuses on the links among micro-enterprise development (MD), social capital building, and the accompanying social lives of Chinese female entrepreneurs in two China's urban areas—Nanjing and Haikou.¹ This study is especially sensitive to gender issues. It specifically considers the ways in which contemporary capitalist ideological forces try to capture the reproductive labor of activities, traits, norms, and affections linked to gender. To put it more succinctly, it intends to examine how gender is transformed into a form of capitalizable asset. Also, the research findings from this study are going to shed light on their resistances from below against the macro-level influence of China's annexation with global capitalist economy.

Since the Chinese party-state's liberalizing of national socio-economic controls over the non-state economy started in the late 1970s, private-owned businesses at the grass-root level have been applauded as a new engine of economic growth.² The aftermath of the 2008 global economic meltdown witnessed the Chinese economy's over-

¹ A micro-enterprise is one with five or fewer employees and less than \$ 20,000 in start-up capital (Jurik, 2005). Micro-enterprise development is commonly defined as an economic development strategy that assists small business owners with small loans and technical/business training (Jones, 2004). Social capital phenomenon is usually exercised as a contingent, utility-based social inclusion/exclusion (see, for example, Putnam, 2000). Consistent with the principles of market-driven politics, social inclusion/exclusion is contingent on the contribution of people's human capital to capitalist market. In my study, I will argue against the utility-oriented conceptualization and practice of social capital based on the research findings of my empirical study.

² The Chinese party-state captures the nature of China's contemporary political reality, denoting that the Communist Party of China (CPC) controls all other major political institutions in China. The non-state economy in China generally refers to two types of ownership—collective-owned business and private-owned business. China's market-oriented reform began in 1978. Since then, capitalist market mechanisms have been gradually introduced in China's state socialist regime in order to deal with the failure of totalitarian state planning.

reliance on the huge state sector investments and state-owned enterprises (SOEs) for economic recovery (Y. Huang, 2008). Despite the long-term monopoly of SOEs in certain key sectors, the private sector has never stopped generating steady streams of growth and employment that represent a vital hedge against the government's over-emphasis on the state sector (Lardy, 2014).³ The share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) produced in the non-state economy exceeded two-thirds in 2010, and the share produced by private-owned enterprises alone accounted for more than 60% (Cheng, 2010). Further, private-owned enterprises created more than 70% of new jobs in China's urban areas. Central to the robust private sector is women's entrepreneurship during the post-1978 era.

In pre-1978 China, the SOE was originally designed to be not simply an organization for job creation and social production, but rather a unit (*Danwei* 单位)—a self-sufficient community that supplies employees with an almost perfect working condition (e.g., competitive wage, lifetime job tenure, housing provision, comprehensive medical insurance, pension benefit, etc.) (Hoffman, 1974). Significantly, the unit concept demonstrated the Maoist party-state's working-class orientation in turning labor into a "badge of revolutionary honor" as well as a primary site for the proliferation of working-class identities, strengthening SOE employees' sense of ownership of the socialist state (C. Lee, 2007, p. 61). Under such a socialist project, women were entitled to the same legal status as men, enjoying the same rights in nearly all respects such as political participation, family life, education, and employment (Johnson, 1983).

³ A few key sectors remain administered rather than market regulated for strategic reasons. These sectors include financial services, transportation services, telecommunication services, natural exaction, the energy industry, and so on.

Since the 1990s, however, an increasing number of SOEs found it difficult to make a profit. By 1996, more than one-third were unable to make money while the rest of them listed as profit-making in accounting ledges were in fact at the risk of incurring deficits (Yeh, 1998). These two types combined to constitute almost 60% of all SOEs. More than any other factor, the retention of superfluous labor force was cited as the cause of SOE unprofitability. A few surveys of selected SOEs found that redundant employees constituted nearly one-fifth of a given SOE's labor force (H. Lee, 2000). This situation directly gave birth to gendered layoffs, which illustrate the disproportionate cost paid by women as a consequence of the socio-economic reforms since 1978.⁴ A much larger number of females than that of males were either laid off or forced to retire a few years prior to the previously determined retirement age (for lower-level workers, 55 years old for males, 50 for females; and for higher-level professional or cadres, 60 years old for males, 55 for females). An official survey covering 15,600 households in 71 cities around the nation indicated that females accounted for nearly two-thirds of the laid-off labor force, while the proportion of total urban female employment was less than 40% (Wang, 2003).

Compared with other re-employment options most of which point to a downward social mobility, the national promotion of micro-enterprise development programs

⁴ China's post-1978 reforms refer to the national project of socio-economic transformations titled with "Socialism with Chinese characteristics" in the People's Republic of China (PRC). The reforms were initiated in December 1978 under the leadership of the nation's communist elites—Deng Xiaoping and his comrades. With the collapse of the Soviet Bloc and centrally-planned economic systems in 1989, the Chinese party-state were pressured to self-transform its political and socio-economic structures for the purpose of continually maintaining its regime in China (Dorn, 2002). Principally, the Chinese dual-track economy was practiced during the post-1978 era, in which the party-state frequently exercised government interventions especially with the key sectors of the state's economy, while allowing the non-state economy to develop in accordance with market principles.

(MDPs) in urban areas serves as a seemingly viable solutions to various problems that both laid-off women and the party-state have to deal with. The Chinese MDPs are established and operated by the street-level governments in an effort to assist micro-enterprise owners with technical training and asset building. The significance of these programs was further bolstered by national policies and propaganda in 2008. The shrinking demand of foreign markets after the economic crisis considerably squeezed China's export market, weakening China's economy. Self-employment and Chinese entrepreneurs (especially women) have gained unprecedented prominence and were stressed over exports as a surer route out of economic difficulty (Chow, 2010).

China's centrally regulated MD is consistent with a global emphasis on economic self-help in programs such as MDPs. To put it more specifically, China's promotion of MD typifies the process often referred to as neo-liberalism wherein government seeks to open up markets and reduce responsibility for social well-being. Neo-liberalism is generally defined as a new mode of governing that emphasizes free market and minimal government in social service provision. Since the mid-1990s, China has gradually shifted to a regime more dominated by neo-liberal ideologies. With the absence of sufficient and stable employment opportunities and of government services that promote economic subsistence and social spending, neo-liberal ideologies promote only limited social programs aimed at fostering economic self-sufficiency through informal and self-employment activities (Jurik, 2005). In this sense, MDP proponents argued that their programs succeeded by encouraging the building of social capital (i.e. social networks) for women within and across their communities. Some social capital theorists and MDP advocates promoted a utility-based theory whereby they argued that social capital

developed in MDP business support networks serve as substitutes for traditional collateral and other costly training (Rankin, 2002). Consequently, underlying China's MD is the gendered assumption that in an era of unstable and declining economic support for families, women must hold up half the sky by being responsible for state and family economic well-being.

Although existing studies of MDPs often stressed the importance of social capital building (see, for example, Servon, 1998), they adopted a very narrow and homogeneous definition of social capital and failed to examine the complex social dynamics of social capital building in MDPs over time. Worse still, these studies often ignored the experience and perspectives of entrepreneurs themselves and the social networks important to them and their businesses. Moreover, there is a paucity of research on female entrepreneurs and MD in China. In order to fill this void, this study endeavors to explicate the socio-economic dimension of China's MDPs, their social capital building practice and the gendered dynamics involved. I plan to focus on the social construction of gender and entrepreneurship in the daily lives of Chinese urban female entrepreneurs.⁵ More significantly, I attempt to trace connections between Chinese businesswomen's daily lives and the much broader national and global contexts. In so doing, this project is able to not only offer policy suggestions to help improve China's MD, but also contribute to feminist theorizing about gender, entrepreneurship, and an intersectional analysis of social identity construction.

⁵ When I talked to my respondents, all of them had acquired the urban household registration. Twenty-six of them were originally born and grew up in the urban areas, whereas the remaining 23 migrated from the rural areas and got the urban household registration through either getting married with urban males or purchasing a home in the cities.

MDPs and Women

Despite its worldwide popularity during the past three and a half decades, the concept and social phenomenon of MD is absolutely not new. Actually, the history of MDPs can be traced back to the early 1700s when a number of savings and credits groups existed around the globe (e.g., Susus of Ghana, Chit funds in India, Tandas in Mexico, Arisan in Indonesia, Cheetu in Sri Lanka, etc.). All these prototypes of contemporary MDPs were targeted at poor people, who were not eligible for getting loans from formal financial institutions. For the same purpose, governments started to provide poor peasants with agricultural credit since the 1950s. Such a type of government initiative was revamped in the late 1970s when Dr. Mohammed Yunus established the Grameen Bank, a non-profit financial institution, in Bangladesh.

Since then, this type of credit program has become a model for the vast majority of developing countries, and reported success around the world (Otero & Rhyne, 1994). For example, many saving and credit institutions were founded all over the world, operating a distinctive banking system based upon mutual trust, creativity, and community participation. In doing so, they opened up a new way of reversing conventional banking practice exclusively based upon collateral. More significantly, the poor became free from the enslavement of loan sharks, and were assisted to make profits by using loans to start small-scale businesses. Other influential MDPs include Bandhan in India, Banco do Nordeste in Brazil, Fundacion Mundial de la Mujer Bucaramanga in Colombia, Consumer Credit Union Economic Partnership in Russia, and Kazakhstan Loan Fund in Kazakhstan. Noticeably, the MDP model, which was originated in the

Southern hemisphere, has exploded in numbers and earned its reputation in the Northern hemisphere (Jurik, 2005).

MDPs on the other hand usually targeted poor women, in some cases exclusively. Of the 115.6 million MDP clients reached until the end of 2012, nearly 85% (96.3 million) were females (Reed, 2013). As a significant part of international efforts to address poverty, the MDP model fit nicely with the currently prevailing ideologies of neo-liberalism that defines poverty as an individual problem and thereby shifts responsibility for addressing poverty away from policy makers onto poor women themselves. Consequently, MDP proponents optimistically anticipated that poor women would be able to achieve economic self-sufficiency if they have access to credit. This serves as the rationale for the MDPs, like the Grameen Bank, to design and undertake the peer lending approach that replaces collateral requirements with the collective liability of the clients' groups. It means that loans were made to groups of borrowers rather than individuals. If a woman in the group failed to repay her loan, the others would either be declined to be served in the future or be held responsible for repayment. Also, loan circles were often advocated for creating networking support for their members primarily through collaborative problem solving and information sharing (Jurik, 2005). In addition to financial support, some MDPs also engaged in providing technical training and other social services (e.g., child care, transportation, etc.).

Drawing upon the optimistic expectation that small loans can empower women and substantially change their oppressed social status, MDPs have already built up part of its reputation in making social transformations. As Torri (2014) pointed out, MDP practitioners tend to assume that everyone in this world has entrepreneurial spirits and

potentials but a vast majority of them do not have access to credit. That is to say, MDPs can serve as a viable solution to women's oppressions through expanding their access to capital and enabling them to make income independently and contribute to the economic self-sufficiency of their households and communities (Koenig, Ahmed, Hossain, & Mozumder, 2003). Women's empowerment, especially their economic empowerment, aims to produce self-efficiency, independence, self-esteem, respect, and other forms of empowerment for female MDP clients.

A much closer inspection, however, tells us that this strategy of economic empowerment may not always hold true. It also shows that complacency in these optimistic expectations can probably result in overlooking not only opportunities of transforming women's lives more profoundly but also possibilities of disclosing MD as another way of continually exploiting female workers. For instance, despite the international community's attempt of giving entrepreneurial options to impoverished women, most detractors still argued that most of women-targeted MDPs had not made any important impact upon women's lives and even gender equality (Holvoet, 2005; Mayoux, 2001). A few MDP opponents even challenged that in many cases MDPs' efforts had failed to benefit impoverished females but were actually controlled by their husbands or other better-off females (Gupta, Turban, & Bhawe, 2005).

Since limited access to financial resources is only one reason for women's disadvantaged positioning in social pyramid, an investigation into the possibility of a female MDP client to change her life has to take into account the multi-dimensional and complicated nature of her self-employment career. Consequently, I am interested in understanding how China's MDPs emerged and gained national popularity, how they

changed in the process, and how Chinese MDPs clients (especially female ones) were influenced by their entrepreneurship careers. Also, Chinese gender issues have been proven productive of new knowledge and confirmed the central place of “sexual difference and gender politics in international justice and social movements” (Barlow, 2007, p. 301). This motivates me to further examine the gendered dynamics involved in Chinese urban women's massive participation in self-employment. Furthermore, while the rise of China's MD and Chinese female entrepreneurs is still attached to their own cultural and social conditions, it is rapidly shifting and being remade with the advance of China's integration with global capitalism during the neo-liberal era. The positioning of contemporary China as the world factory in the international division of labor is obviously a combined product of state power and global capital, which provides the bedrock for the social construction of the Chinese female entrepreneur. On this account, it is of great importance to examine how the increasing capitalization and marketization of Chinese society during the neo-liberal era has affected Chinese women's lives as well as their entrepreneurship careers.

Neo-liberalism and the Making of the Chinese Female Entrepreneur

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the restructuring of SOEs since the 1990s and the global economic recession in 2008 combined to give momentum to the Chinese party-state's adoption of the MDP model as a way of connecting to the global economy. Also, China endeavors to not only embrace the contemporary neo-liberal capitalism, but also persistently legitimate itself as one of the few socialist regimes, at least nominally, in the world. As a result, neo-liberal ideologies are central to China's regime during the post-

1978 era, informing new matrices of governing practice geared to both China's adoption of market economy and its persistent commitment to socialist belief.

The concept of neo-liberalism and its nation-state-level phenomenon take root in the specific context of the British and American political economies (Plehewe, Walpen & Neuhooffer, 2006). The emergence of neo-liberalism coincided with "structurally transformative transnational and globalizing developments", extending into not only "the political and ideological manifestation of economic structural change and public policy innovation at national level, but also the political driving force behind globalization itself" (Cerny, 2008, p. 2). In the human sciences and humanities, neo-liberalism has been widely accepted as the number one force that shapes multiple aspects of the contemporary social life. In this sense, neo-liberalism is not merely an economic phenomenon but rather a political philosophy.

Neo-liberalism is comprised of two major tenets (Ong, 2006). The first is that the market rather than the state is in charge of distributing public resources. The second is an allegiance to individualism—a pattern of thinking that is held as a strong part of people's lives to stress such personal characteristics as competitiveness, self-care, self-enterprise, self-management, self-fulfillment, individual achievement, and so on. In my study, I refer to these characteristics as neo-liberal values that are often imbued in women's social identity construction. At this point, China's reforms since 1978 and its attendant restructuring of SOEs blended nicely with the neo-liberal trend prevalent in the whole world, replacing the centrally-planned economy with the market-oriented economic structure. Under this situation, my research findings will manifest that women have been

required to accept and incorporate neo-liberal values in order to facilitate the state's economic growth during the neo-liberal era.

At the heart of the MDP model is the politico-historical process of globalization. In particular, dynamics of neo-liberal ideologies are crucial in shaping women's mass participation in MD—especially in the underdeveloped nations of the world. As Jurik (2005) noted, the MDP model fit nicely with the globalized trend of neo-liberalism that enthusiastically advocates the privatization of government functions. The term privatization is defined as an economic development strategy for the reallocating of “assets...from the public sector to the private sector” and “the subcontracting of services formerly performed by government to privately owned firms and nonprofits” (Filipovic, 2005, p. 1; as cited in Jurik, 2005, p. 8). In this way, the privatization trend has reshaped the orientations that government agencies have taken concerning aid to poor women.

Promotion of women's entrepreneurship has subsequently replaced heavy state investment in social service provision and state employment to be the dominant anti-poverty strategy for poor women in developing countries. It means that the transformed state has tried to shift collective responsibility for the well-being of its citizens onto individuals. As many feminist critics explicitly pointed out (see, for example, Kabeer, 1999; Prugl, 1996), such form of aid for the poor actually blended nicely with the neo-liberal agenda of economic development, relying upon individual females rather than any reform or structural support. For this reason, women's participation in self-employment has the effect of magnifying their burdens as not only bread earners for the family but also supporters of the state's economy (Poster & Salime, 2002). In other words, underlying the national and global promotion of women's self-employment is the

gendered assumption that women have to shoulder a double responsibility for both the family and the state.

Gender has a pervasive influence in structuring society, and more importantly, this process more often than not gives birth to the disadvantaged positioning of women in social hierarchy. As pointed out by Calas, Smircich, and Bourne (2009), contemporary feminist scholarship is targeted as seeking an end to this situation. In order to pursue this goal, many feminist studies on women's entrepreneurship have been devoted to examining the male-gendered nature of entrepreneurship and how it keeps women's businesses in a secondary, complementary place in entrepreneurial activities (see, for example, Bruni, 2004; Bruni & Gherardi, 2001; Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio, 2004; Bruni & Perrotta, 2009). As these studies have indicated, entrepreneurial practices are closely related to the concept of hegemonic masculinity: independence, innovativeness, aggressiveness, competitiveness, and being indifferent to pain (Connell, 2005). In this regard, Mirchandani (1999) added that most research on women's self-employment was based upon a set of entrepreneurial theories deeply rooted in economics. Thus it resulted in gender differences being interpreted as how female entrepreneurs deviate from the seemingly gender-neutral yet fundamentally male-gendered norms of doing entrepreneurship. To put it simply, the supremacy of hegemonic masculinity is rationalized to promulgate entrepreneurship as a gender-neutral, individualistic activity and to perpetuate women's subordination.

All these studies on women's entrepreneurship have encouraged to critically reflect on institutional factors outside the individual entrepreneur or her business through considering the relationship between political economy and women's labor. Despite a

much broader focus on women's work in general, Goodman (2013) showed a way of connecting women's mass participation in social production to contemporary capitalist economy and identifying women's disadvantaged socio-economic status. In particular, Goodman placed stress on an expanding paradigm of women's work which contemporary social production has depended on. Women's work refers to "a type of labor that in the industrial age was considered domestic, affective, immaterial, or reproductive, and having to do with functions of 'care' and socialization" (p. 139). Under neo-liberalism, the lines between public and private spaces have become fuzzy. Thus women's work, which used to be exclusively within the purview of private life, has begun to entail public concerns primarily through the organization of the wage. Shifting focus to women's entrepreneurship and the gender making of social identities, this study will further expand Goodman's argument to consider how neo-liberal ideologies have attempted to reinforce the male-gendered nature of entrepreneurship and transform women's entrepreneurial practice into a new productive terrain of capitalist accumulation.

Through explicating the intersection of governmentality and subjectivity, my study follows an analytic approach proposed by Foucault (1987) to examine how neo-liberalism affects human subjects (especially at the aspect of social identity construction). In his analysis of governmentality, Foucault's concern is concentrated on the procedures and techniques that are designed to govern the conducts of human subject at both individual and collective levels. Significantly, such a governance of people's minds and behaviors are not simply a matter of external determinations being imposed upon their corporeal bodies. Rather, governmentality is interpreted as practice of discourse, which works in a discursive way (in the sense of language). Here, discourses are defined as

systems of beliefs, thoughts, and knowledge claims, which exist independently from particular speakers (Foucault, 1987). Consequently, governmentality as discourses works like the grammar of a language that allows certain statements to be stated (Foucault, 2004).

Depicting the way of governing as the grammatical rules of language, Foucault made an explicit difference between discourse and ideology. In Foucault's (1994, 2000) words, ideology refers to the way in which a false picture of reality or false knowledge was created by one group to gain advantages for itself over all the other groups in the society. Arguing against the notion of ideology, Foucauldian discourse interrogates the production of truth/knowledge and refuses to link ideology with any immutable, settled complex of truth/knowledge. In fact, he gave up the use of ideology for his preferred idea of discourse. Despite a few remnants of the Marxist theory of ideology left in Foucauldian discourse (e.g., seeing capitalist structuring as a central problem), Foucault moved the analysis of power relations beyond economic structures of inequality, and developed it into an inquiry into the intersections of multiple differentiated discourses through exposing the knowledge/power model. Principally, Foucault's influential re-theorizing of power and his approach to the power-knowledge-truth complex are central to explore the way in which governmentality as discourses functions to influence human subjects.

Writing explicitly against the effects of power in negative terms (e.g., repressive, exclusive), Foucault (1978, 2003) offered an alternative understanding of power with three major features: first, power works not at the macro level but rather at multiple local sites; second, wherever power relations exist, there are opportunities for resistance; third,

since power relations operate at the local level, resistance at the macro level is impossible. To put them together, power, in my study, can be generally interpreted as social relations that operate "at the capillary level" via a complex of everyday practice but still impose a significant social and political influence upon human subjects (Fraser, 1981, p. 279). Inspired by Foucauldian power and its features, I tend to beg a difference from Foucault's preference of using the term discourse exclusively. Specifically, I prefer to use ideology in this study to describe the macro-level influence of the party-state's neo-liberal policies and propaganda, while utilizing the term discourse to depict the capillary-level influence of them. As Van Dijk (2001) argued, the interpretation a human subject makes of a given communicative context subjectively brings to bear the social and political interaction with other human subjects within the same context. That is to say, power relations operate to exert and transmit the influences of multiple discourse at multiple individual local-scale sites that would add up to be a cumulative ideological influence at the macro level.

Further, Foucault coined another term—biopower to specify the way that power relations are operating in the contemporary social life. As opposed to the juridico-institutional power exercised through laws and violence, bio-power refers to a modern way of governing that intends to acquire the scientific possibility of managing, multiplying, and transforming human life at the population level into well-being and health (Foucault, 1980, 2010). Extending the use of concept to the context of neo-liberal China, I plan to examine the way in which the making of the Chinese urban female entrepreneur involves the party-state's way of governing that produces as many good

citizens as possible with the purpose of maximizing the state's profits from the oppression and exploitation of them.

On the issue of our sense of self—subjectivity, I am interested in exploring the degree to which subjects are the effects of power relations by bracketing the autonomous potential of the subject. What is at stake is in what historical moment and in what institutional structure subjects are constituted as acceptable or desirable (Foucault, 1997). Shifting to the question of why human subjects attached to unequal power relations are subject to their differential social positionings, the answer has to draw upon the linkage of subjectivity to governmentality: people's acceptance of social inequality involves a dynamic process of the power-knowledge-truth complex whereby people incorporate discourses of domination into their sense of self—subjectivities. Such discourses corroborate large-scale mechanisms of inequality because they are accepted uncritically and strengthened consistently by individuals living in multiple local sites (in Foucault's cases, hospitals, prisons, schools, and so on). Equally importantly, my study will also pay attention to the possibility that women would resist the overwhelming influence of governmentality as discourses and therefore engage in a self-construction of subjectivity.

MD and Social Capital Building

This section presents a review of relevant literature that indicates the limitations of prior studies on the relationship between MD and social capital building. After that, it discusses the rationales and significance of my research project. Finally, it prepares for the research design through highlighting useful analytic tools or categories for operationalizing the key concepts of the research questions. A lot of literature on MD addressed the association of social capital building with entrepreneurship, and the ways

through which to examine how social capital phenomena and theories affect entrepreneurship.

Empirical Studies on MDPs Influenced by Putnam's Social Capital Theory

Social capital is a hot issue in both academia and daily life. As a justification for the globally popularized phenomenon of MD, theories of social capital have to be critically examined with a special attention to their impacts of rationalizing and reinforcing neo-liberal ideologies. In the case of China's adoption of the MDP model during the neo-liberal era, it is necessary for this study project to disclose the nature and influences of Chinese MDPs' social capital building practice on women entrepreneurs. In order to do this, I have to review the historical development of social capital theories, the popularity of Putnam's utility-oriented theorization of social capital, and the influences of social capital theories on the empirical inquiries of MDPs.

Putnam's influential tautology (1993; 1995; 1996; 2000; 2004) has earned the most credits for bringing the concept of social capital to the central place in academia and politics.⁶ According to him, social capital is "the connection among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them," and this kind of social connection is exactly the repository of a common civic virtue through which to establish a democratic civic society in order to protect individual liberty from the coercive controls of liberal state (Putnam, 2000, p. 19; 2004). The overwhelming

⁶ Bourdieu's (1984; 1986; 1998) theorization of social capital focused on the importance and the ways in which the social and political structure of a hierarchical society is examined. In contrast, Coleman (1988) pursued the economic perspective from which social capital is studied as an important resource embedded in family and community. Social capital, in Coleman's viewpoint, is of great importance in its potential benefits to children's development.

influence of Putnam's works has finally universalized all the differentiated perspectives into a consensus on the utility-based nature of social capital (Somers, 2005). These studies have been influenced to consolidate an epistemological agenda of developing social capital as "a new theory and vocabulary that would name, explain, and 'make true' for political knowledge a source of value (inherent in social networks or norms) that would serve as an alternative to the power of the state" (Somers, 2008, p. 216). Putnam's utility-oriented social capital theorizing has been recognized in the academic and political fields by virtue of being able to manage social interactions, open up an autonomous social space from the double control of market and state, and eventually benefit our society as a whole.

Putnam's utility-based social capital theory has driven many empirical inquiries (especially in the disciplines of sociology, economics, and political science) of indicators, trends, and influences of social capital building at the national and cross-national level (Patulny & Svendsen, 2007). Collaborating with several Italian researchers, Putnam's pioneering study of Italian regional governing offered an empirical evidence to buttress his theoretical hypothesis that democratic governance is associated with considerable social capital embodied in a vibrant associational life together with trustworthiness, normative reciprocity, and mutual assistance (Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1994). Following Putnam, many scholars conducted their research projects to test Putnam's famous research findings in different countries around the world. For instance, a sharp decrease of social capital in English speaking countries was captured by some large-scale quantitative analyses and considered as harmful to the democratic running of political institutions (see, for example, Inglehart, 1999; Uslaner, 2002). In contrast, a high level of

social capital accumulation in the European welfare states (e.g. Norway, Denmark, etc.) was empirically found to be the most important reason for people's democratic participation in democratic governing (Paldam & Svendsen, 2006; Wollebaek & Selle, 2002).

Putnam's ideal conceptualization, which overemphasizes its benefits to political democracy, actually glosses over the downside of the social capital phenomenon. Bourdieu was one of the first to advance a critical examination of the exploitative and repressive aspect of the utility-based social capital theories. He explicitly placed emphasis on the relationality of capital. Individuals could not be able to produce capital, and the primary focus of study on capital is social space. For Bourdieu (1984, 1989), social space is defined as the complex clustering of differentiated social groups, each of which is made up of individuals with the same amount and combination of capital (e.g., economic, cultural, social, and symbolic). As indicated in this definition, individuals positioning in differentiated social spaces are unequal in acquiring and taking advantage of various resources. Also, this inequality in possessing and utilizing capital further perpetuates the individuals' social space. To put it simply, the social position of an individual is both the cause and the effect of the amount and combination of various capital that he or she can accumulate.

Based upon this relational perspective of capital, Bourdieu (1984, 1986, 1998) mapped out a critical perspective through which to see social capital as a resource with the potential of gaining an economic and political advantage. This is because an investment into developing social networks can provide an individual with an access to much more economic and political resources. Moreover, this political and economic

advantage in social capital construction can be transferred across generations. Thus, social capital building has to be critically examined as a historical and power-laden process in which social, economic, and political inequalities could probably be produced and perpetuated.

Challenged by these critiques, Putnam (2005) acknowledged a few deficiencies in his initial theorization of social capital, “I now think that my analysis overlooked three important factors: the growth of inequality, the growth of diversity, and the decay of mobilizing organizations” (p. 1). As a result of his concession, Putnam (2000, 2004) made one of the most significant improvements in his social capital theory—the bridging/bonding typology in order to disclose the adverse consequences of the social capital phenomenon. While bridging social capital was defined as outward networks that are kept open to “people across diverse social cleavages”, bonding social capital was described as inward networks that “reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups” (Putnam, 2000, p. 22). Any study on the nature of a certain social capital phenomenon has to depend upon a clear differentiation of one from each other. For instance, a society with no bridging social capital would probably collapse into multiple hostile social groups (Putnam, Feldstein, & Cohen, 2004).

Putnam’s bridging/bonding typology was adopted by many researchers as an analytic tool to examine the nature and consequence of social capital building in differentiated contexts. The controversial social-capital-building initiative of MDPs is one of the most significant topics that these studies focus on. MDPs, as a new kind of post-welfare social service provider, pursue values consistent with the tenets of welfare reform—independence and self-employment as way of moving up the social ladder

(Bhatt, 2002; Jurik, Cavender, & Cowgill, 2009). As I will show, this description of MDPs exactly corresponds to Chinese government's objectives of establishing the Re-employment Service Centres (*Zaijiuye Zhongxin* 再就业中心) (RSCs) that encourages laid-off women not to depend on the government or social welfare but rather to become economically self-dependent.

Advocates of peer lending found that the peer lending model had bonded individual clients to a collective responsibility of repayment and therefore had achieved collective empowerment through nurturing reciprocal relationships of trust among them (Ashe, 2000; Friedman, 2001). In contrast, some critics conducted their empirical studies on the social-capital-building activities of American MDPs (Jurik, Cavender, & Cowgill, 2006; Servon, 1998). The bridging/bonding analytic rubric was adopted to investigate two types of social capital building—intra-program networking (social networks that bond clients within the program) and extra-program networking (networks that link clients with the outside communities). They concluded that the vast majority of American MDPs had failed to build social capital but simply encourage female entrepreneurs to pursue individual empowerment and economic self-sufficiency. Moreover, some researchers clearly cautioned that without any critical analysis of the existing hierarchical society the social-capital-construction efforts of MDPs would be likely to disguise and perpetuate various inequalities along the lines of class, gender, race, and ethnicity (Rankin, 2002; Young, 1994).

Social Impacts of China's Urban MDPs

The proliferation of these empirical studies has created a crucial hedge against the popularity of Putnam's ideal theorization of social capital. Also, it provided useful policy

suggestions for MD at the national and international levels. Further, the brief review of them brings attention to two major limitations that suffice to explain the rationales of my dissertation project. Firstly, the social impacts of MDPs and their social-capital-building initiatives on human subjects are insufficiently addressed in prior studies. Many researchers (e.g. Jurik et al., 2006; Jurik et al., 2009; Rankin, 2002; Servon, 1998) attempted to do it by examining the performance of MDPs in pursuing the feminist objectives. Their research findings, however, do not focus on how the impacts of MDPs and their social-capital-building activities have shaped the social construction of people's identities. The intersectionality approach and a focus on social identity construction can be utilized to fill this void.

The intersectionality perspective suggests that one should study the making of the Chinese urban female entrepreneur as a politico-historical process in which the rural-urban divide, class, sexuality and gender intersect to simultaneously produce, reproduce, and transform human subject's position in China's social hierarchies. Along this line, Bruni et al. (2004) added another layer of complexity to the intersectional approach through examining "the social practice of co-producing gender and entrepreneurship" is investigated (p. 1). Their research findings indicated the intertwined practice of doing business and doing gender: entrepreneurship is socially coded as a male-dominated field, and the gendered system of behaviors and ideas simultaneously determines "the nature of the practice of entrepreneurship (who can be an entrepreneur, what entrepreneurship is, what or who is managed by that form of governance of economic relations)" (p. 11). This social constructivist perspective of conceptualizing gender and entrepreneur reinforces the anti-essentialist view of various social identities (e.g. gender, sex, sexuality, class,

etc.).⁷ In this sense, the formation of social identities is actually an aggregation of social, cultural, and material practice that are realized through and embodied in people's experience of their daily lives.

Valdez's (2011) further developed this view in her empirical study on the social identity construction of Latino/a American immigrant entrepreneurs. Drawing from a contextual thinking of analytic categories, Valdez disclosed the process in which race, ethnicity, class, and gender are constructed through their situated experience of doing business. To put it simply, all these categories of social identity intersected to simultaneously create, maintain, and transform people's socio-economic status. Moreover, she proposed the concept of market capacity that refers to the combined product of three types of capital—government, market, and social. It provides an analytic framework that people's business experience were considered to be condition outcomes. In other words, they weaved their daily lives within social structure and thereby mapped out a link of their daily experience at the local level with the much larger context of race, class, and gender.

My study will also apply this intersectionality approach to an inquiry of multifaceted and complex nature of social identity construction that interacts with MD

⁷ Foucault's (1979) analysis of discourse has greatly influenced the theorization of social identity construction and reinforced the anti-essentialist fashion in feminist theorizing. Discourse is analyzed as a "discursive fact", unpacking the ways that sex is subject to power relations (p. 11). A proliferating discourse of sexuality gives birth to multiple differentiated sexed subjects. Drawing on the Foucauldian notion that discourses function as a "regulatory ideal" to produce docile bodies, Butler (1993) thought of sex and gender as repeated cultural performances "which enact or produce which it names" and finally engender the effect of identity (p. 13). Lorber (1994) also disrupted the distinctions between sex and gender, and argues that gender, sex, and sexuality are all social constructs. Following the social constructivist perspective, Bourdieu (1990) conceptualized class as constituting a hierarchical social space in which people "...according to [the objective] position they occupy...understand the logic of their practice and...how they will classify themselves and others..." (p. 50).

and the accompanying activities of social capital building. It will attempt to trace these interaction shaped by both the national adoption of and the global diffusion of neo-liberalism. Social identity construction has been recognized as an essential dimension of neo-liberal governmentality which manages population as a whole. Ong (2006) contextualized Foucauldian governmentality within the specific Asian context during the neo-liberal era.⁸ She re-conceptualized the practice of neo-liberal governmentality as a problem of optimization that aims at and justifies the maximization of profits from the subjugation of human bodies and the control of populations.⁹

There have been few prior studies that addressed the social influences of China's MD on the social lives of Chinese female entrepreneurs. My dissertation project is expected to fill in this gap in order to not only offer valuable policy suggestions to the improvement of Chinese MDPs but also contribute to the feminist theorizing of social identity construction. A review of the relevant studies conducted in China's context indicates a failure to sufficiently explore such a fertile field. Overall, the existing studies

⁸ In Foucault's (2010) viewpoint, governmentality was broadly defined as the complicated process in which a proliferation of manipulative techniques of governing are imposed upon populations for the specific purpose of maintaining a stable, progressive society. Meanwhile, this way of governing is justified by a particular political rationality. In this process, the state itself undergoes a gradual evolution into a modern administrative state with complex bureaucracies.

⁹ This optimizing principle is substantiated as two optimizing strategies—"technologies of subjectivity" and "technologies of subjection" that manipulate the making and self-making of ideal social identities in the specific time-space context for maximizing the profits of global capital. "Technologies of subjectivity" suggest an optimization of an individual, relying on knowledge and expert systems to induce self-government so that human subjects can "optimize choices, efficiency, and competitiveness in turbulent market conditions"; "technologies of subjection" refer to an array of macro-level spatial strategies that carve special spaces in order to achieve strategic goals by integrate a special part of population with market forces (Ong, 2006, pp. 6-7). Consistent with Butler's (1990, 1993) complement to the post-structural perspective of social identity construction, Ong's notion of the two optimizing strategies can be utilized to keep a balanced focus on both the existing social structures and human agency's self-construction of his/her own identity.

did not recognize the association of social capital construction with MD. Worse still, they missed the social dynamics and perspectives of entrepreneurs themselves due to an isolation of social from economic. These researchers shared a common focus on measuring the economic returns of participating and developing social networks (Bian, 2004; Bian & Qiu, 2000; Bian & W. Zhang, 2001, 2012). These returns involve job hunting, business opportunities, and social welfare benefits at both the individual and enterprise levels. In prior studies on Chinese urban MDPs, scholars attempted to assess the economic performance of the programs and provide suggestions for their economic sustainability (J. Yang, 2010; F. Zhang, 2004; Zhuang, 2004).

Since I will study the social formation of the Chinese urban female entrepreneur as a newly constructed/reconstructed social identity, special attention has to be paid to the multi-faceted, complex, and nuanced account of human agency. Despite multiple differentiated perspective of theorizing agency, it is commonly defined as a human agent's mediatory, contested relation to the existing social structures (McNay, 2000, 2004). Drawing upon agency, human subjects can respond actively to a variety of uncertainties unleashed in their dynamic interactions with the existing social norms. Resistance literature tended to interpret agency as a combination of resistance and accommodation. Some studies found that clients usually had preferred to protest in a subtle way in order to maintain a negotiating relationship to program staff (Fraser, 2011; McColgan, 2005). That is to say, while resisting the repressions and exploitations of an unjust social structure, human agents would simultaneously accept some of the dominant influences. In other words, agency is practiced as a mutually conflicting yet undissolvable

aggregation of resistance and accommodation that suffice to substantiate human agent's mediatory relation to the existing social structures.

In a stark contrast to prior studies, this dissertation research project intends to undertake a much more grounded inquiry of Chinese urban female entrepreneurs' daily lives, examining how they do their businesses in the specific context of neo-liberal China, how doing business constructs their daily lives, and how the increasing globalization and modernization of China influences their daily practice of doing business. By doing so, this study can better understand the complexities of the links of MD to today's neo-liberal capitalism and engage in micro-range theorization about perceivable or observable human activities in today's dynamic political and socio-economic circumstance.

Research Questions

As noted before, this research project is going to primarily study the daily lives of Chinese urban women entrepreneurs under the combined influences of the Chinese government and contemporary global capitalism. In order to do this, I plan to map the complexities and contradictions in the interactions among global neo-liberalism, China's strategic adoption of neo-liberalism, and Chinese urban female entrepreneurs' involvement in the politico-socio-economic arrangements at both the global and national levels. As framed by the literature review, the central research questions include:

- In what ways do Chinese urban female entrepreneurs perceive that MD in China affects their lives at many aspects (e.g., career, family life, personal characters, inter-personal relation, etc.)?

- How do the female entrepreneurs describe social connections upon which they often depend to do their businesses— what words, behaviors, conceptualizations or even traditional/pop culture do they use to describe and understand social connections?
- How do the female entrepreneurs describe a successful businesswoman—what words, behaviors, conceptualizations or even traditional/pop culture do they use to describe and understand the image?

Plan of Study

Chapter two is an introduction to the research methods and methodology. The extended case method (ECM) constitutes a crucial part of methodology, which calls for a reflexive consideration of the link between theory and empirical data. As noted in chapter one, the empirical study on Chinese female entrepreneurs' daily practice of doing business sets up the foundation for problematizing and reconstructing prior theories. Given this assumption, the ECM is an appropriate framework that takes context as its departure, roots a researcher in theory, guides his/her everyday social interaction with participants, and finally seeks to problematize and improve preexisting theories based upon his/her empirical research findings. Also, the ECM provides a guide of designing a set of research methods for collecting and analyzing data. These methods include semi-structured interview and participatory observation, which are conducted to collective sufficient qualitative data for the research. A snowball sampling strategy allows a small pool of key informants to refer other participants to the research project. Finally, this chapter ends with a discussion of grounded theory (GT) that is applied as the strategy for data analysis. Following the principles of GT, data collection in this study is a recursive,

reflexive process in which data gathering, data analysis, and research finding making interact with each other.

Chapter three narrates a story of how the gendered discourses of state in pre-1978 China has worked as a framing device significant in stipulating the gendered division of labor and producing normative forms of work for males and females. This is followed by an investigation into the widening and proliferation of gender inequalities during the post-1978 era. After that, I want to shed light on the historical process of how women's self-employment has gained an unprecedented prominence in China's socio-economic progress especially since the global financial crisis of 2008. Finally, I conclude this chapter with two thought-provoking questions, and each of them would be addressed in chapters four and five respectively. First, inspired by the gendered historical narrative of China's socio-economic and political transformations since 1949, I find it necessary to examine how the party-state's governmentality as discourses has strategically incorporated women's daily lives in the configuration/re-configuration of power relations during the post-1978 era. Second, given the party-state's management of women's lives, it is imperative to adopt the perspective of social identity construction, through which to scrutinize how Chinese women's lives have been constituted with the advance of China's integration with the contemporary global capitalism.

In chapter four, my focus turns to Chinese women's participatory experience of social networking under the macro-level influence of the Chinese MDPs' advocacy for social capital building. Based on my interviews with 49 MDP clients and observations of their small-scale businesses, I intend to illustrate one way in which women's lives were incorporated in and shaped by the configuration/re-configuration of power relations.

Specifically, China's MD and its attendant ideological influences have taken a gendered form whereby women's lived experience and their social networking activities were counted into the perpetuation of the party-state's subjugation and exploitation of them. The research findings, on the other side, suggest that those women are far from being puppets. Rather, women's agency has considerably shaped both their social identities and social connections. For instance, I find that those women, who were influenced by government's propaganda about creating business support networks, resisted neo-liberal ideologies through their everyday acts such as nurturing non-utility based affections between kin, friends, and neighbors. Their conflicting responses to the centrally planned MD not only substantiate previous critiques of Putnam's utility-based social capital theorizing, but also inform a reconstruction of social capital theory. Based on these findings, I argue that re-thinking the common can serve as the basis for radicalizing our understanding of social capital, where cultural factors, especially gender, are imbricated.

Chapter five endorses a gender approach to analyze women's self-employment that is found to be featured as the intertwined practice of doing business and doing gender. The focus of this chapter is shifted to a politico-historical process of their social identity construction. This finding highlights the intersection of gender and class as an underlying principle of feminist theorizing about social identity construction.

Particularly, it explicates the ways that gender becomes classed: class is individualized and articulated in other dimensions of identity (especially gender) as a series of classification schemes to organize social stratifications. The party-state's policies, as I assert, serve to organize social hierarchies in order to continue the domination and exploitation of female citizens. At this point, this research is important in today's

academic and political discussions where intersectionality has gained an influence to be dominant but is still underdeveloped in theorizing how class interacts with gender.

This study ends with chapter six that briefly reiterates my research findings concerning the link among China's MD, Chinese women's self-employment careers, and their social networking activities. Principally, it re-emphasizes to analyze the making of the Chinese female entrepreneur as a typical case that illustrates how the global trend of neo-liberalism has been invested in the specific context of post-1978 China. Equally important, this case study can also shed light on how human subjects have been influenced by such a socio-economic and political transformation at the macro-level. Lastly, I intend to discuss a limitation of this study based upon which future studies can be conducted to further the discussion on the same issues. It is necessary to study the making of the unsuccessful female entrepreneur that would probably add another layer of analysis to the ideological influences of the party-state's regime.

CHAPTER 2

EXTENDED CASE METHOD AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter presents a systematic discussion of the research methods and methodology employed in this dissertation research project. Methodology refers to a set of either theoretical or philosophical assumptions that guide the research. It serves as the underlying principles that assist the design of much detailed techniques and strategies—research methods—for data collecting and analysis. This chapter consists of three sections. It begins with a discussion of the ECM that serves as the methodology of this study for framing the design of much detailed research methods. After that, it provides a brief introduction to the field sites—Nanjing and Haikou where the fieldwork was accomplished and then turns to an in-depth discussion of both the strategies and the methods for data gathering and collecting.

Extended Case Method

My research questions and the critical review of prior research require me to seek an in-depth, detailed, and holistic view of the relevant social phenomena. Therefore, I designed data collecting and analysis strategies that give voice to human perceptions and allow for a detailed explanation of their thoughts. Underlying this research design is the assumption that respondents' words have to be treated as a valid interpretation and understanding of their thoughts and actions (Maxwell, 2005). Furthermore, as noted earlier in this chapter, I intend to trace research participant's daily experience at the local level to the much larger context at the national and global levels. Given these assumptions, I utilize the ECM in this research project not only as an essential part of methodology but also as a theoretical tool of guiding data collection and analysis.

Burawoy (1991, 1998) advocated it as a means to reflectively examine the relationship between data and theory, suggesting two ways of improving theories through their reconstructions. The first one requires a researcher to start from empirical work, search for theories that explain empirical issues inadequately, and finally let data analysis speak to theory reconstruction. By contrast, the second one allows a researcher to start with a critical analysis of a given theory. If a few deficiencies in the theory can be identified, they would be able to suggest appropriate cases for empirical research. The purpose of following the second way is to improve flawed theories through turning empirical inquiry into part of an agenda of theorizing new concepts. As noted in chapter one, my design of research methodology is epistemologically driven. In other words, the research methodology was designed with a purpose of refining some sociological and feminist theories based upon my empirical study. Therefore, the ECM was employed. In the remaining part of this section, I plan to incorporate the principles of ECM in the detailed discussion of my methods and fieldwork.

Field Site and Research Methods

The fieldwork was conducted in two Chinese cities—Nanjing and Haikou from summer 2010 to summer 2012. Nanjing is the capital of Jiangsu province and a heavy industry production center of East China. In contrast, Haikou is the capital of Hainan province in the South China Sea, intending to develop into an international tourist resort. Although I selected these two urban areas with differentiated economic structures, the limited and non-representative nature of the sample did not allow me to pursue a comparative perspective through which to examine how the Chinese party-state's macro-level influences upon women's social identity construction has been diffused across

varied local contexts. In fact, my selection of field sites was a consideration of the convenience of sampling. As discussed in the following section of Semi-structured Interview, I had the acquaintance of a few key informants who worked in the street-level RSCs and knew many female entrepreneurs.

Data Collection

The notion of triangulation was endorsed to inform the design of data collecting strategies. As Denzin (1978) defined, triangulation is “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon” (p. 291). This notion originally derived from “navigation and military strategy that use multiple reference points to locate an object’s exact position” (as cited in Jick, 1979, p.102). Namely, a combined use of multiple data gathering methods in this study enhances the accuracy of data analysis based upon a collection of convergent data bearing on the same research object. Following the principles of triangulation, I used a semi-structured interview, participatory observation, and secondary data gathering in an effort to collect sufficient qualitative data for answering the research questions of this study. The data that I gathered through these methods allowed me to disclose how these Chinese urban businesswomen’s lived experience are connected to China’s recent policies of embracing the globalized trend of neo-liberalism. Among the three data gathering methods, the semi-structured interview was the primary one, and the other two were undertaken to triangulate data uncovered in interviews.

Sampling plan and procedures. Before proceeding to the detailed discussion of sampling strategy and procedures, it is noteworthy to point out that I found it very difficult to persuade Chinese urban female entrepreneurs to participate in my research

project. One reason is that many of them were unwilling to trust me. For instance, after knowing that I was a Chinese doctoral student from an American university, many potential research participants suspected that I was working for an American media outlet or even for an American intelligence agency. For them, talking to me would put them in trouble in cases that I could probably publish their discussions on politically sensitive topics and subject them to crippling sanctions. Such a permeation of cynicism and distrust in inter-personal relations caused barriers to effective communication and even recruiting enough research participants. This point will be further developed in chapter four.

Unsuccessful urban female entrepreneurs were also reluctant to participate in the study. Once they knew my research objectives, they would refuse to talk anything about their past entrepreneurial experience. All the respondents I ultimately recruited were successful in running their businesses at least when they were interviewed. My research findings are to some extent constrained by such a sampling strategy, because interviews with unsuccessful urban female entrepreneurs would probably generate unexpected research findings concerning not only women's entrepreneurial experience but also the Chinese government's advocacy for women's self-employment. A few other reasons that potential respondents refused to join in the research project include being super busy with their businesses, interrupting with their businesses, having nothing to say, being too shy, and so on.

In order to overcome these barriers, a snowball sampling method was undertaken to recruit as many respondents as possible in order to gain a clear picture of those businesswomen's participation in the government-managed MDPs. This sampling

strategy is a perfect fit for the situation “when the members of a special population are difficult to locate” (Rubin & Babbie, 2009, p. 148). First, I decided to locate the specific RSCs where I could be able to utilize the acquaintance with two RSC officials and let them refer research participants through their own social connections. These two key informants include one friend of my father’s working in a Nanjing RSC and a friend of mine employed in a Haikou RSC. Both of them assisted me to set up and maintain field relations with those female entrepreneurs participating in the research project. After that, with the IRB approval issued by Arizona State University, I briefly explained my project to every potential research participant and then asked her for consent to an interview or be observed. At last, 26 urban female entrepreneurs were successfully recruited in Nanjing, and 23 in Haikou (see Appendix A).

For the 49 urban female entrepreneurs, the vast majority of them were middle-aged women, except seven of them in their twenties. Most of them had less than a college education, and there were only three females who had earned their Bachelor’s degrees. The three college graduates became self-employed for the purpose of earning a much higher income and enjoying a more flexible schedule than working for someone else. By contrast, the other women were actually pushed to get involved in entrepreneurship after either being laid off from the SOEs or migrating into urban areas without the original urban household registration. Despite this difference, the businesses in my sample specialized in a wide range of low-profit business fields, such as grocery store, convenient store, small restaurant, laundry, bakery and small computer repair store. When it comes to the ownership of these businesses, 33 of them were self-owned, 13

were owned by couples, and the ownership of the remaining one was split equally among the three female college graduates who had been friends before starting their business.

Semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview method combines “the flexibility of the unstructured, open-ended interview with the directionality and agenda of the survey instrument to produce focused, qualitative, textual data at the factor level” (Schensul, S., Schensul, J., & LeCompte, 1999, p. 149). Therefore, I prepared a set of questions that directly derive from the central research questions of this study (see Appendix B). For example, to what extent do you think the MDP has helped you to make social connections? What kind of social connections, if any, does the MDPs has helped you to make? How have these social connections influenced your business or even your daily life? How has doing your own business influenced your daily life? How would you like to describe a successful business woman in today’s China? How do you describe the similarities or differences between you and a successful businesswoman? All of these questions will address the dynamic, complex interactions of women’s self-employment with the national and global promotion of the MDPs. Moreover, any emergent topic that arises in the interview process was taken into account, and then the interview questions was modified to collect more detailed data relevant to that topic.

I interviewed them face-to-face in the workplace. Each interview took 1 to 3 hours. I took detailed notes because they were not comfortable to be tape-recorded. Due to the nature of this sampling method, representativeness is not the most important criteria to assess the quality of my sampling. Instead, saturation determines when I have sufficient qualitative data for answering all research questions. The concept of saturation means that a researcher gathers sufficient data to include all the available elements “of a

given population with the characteristics in which the researcher is interested” (Rajamanickam, 2001, p. 84). Thus, I did not end my sampling process until I had found some key topics relevant to the research questions repeating in my gathered data. Also, I kept "open to what is happening in the field and be willing to grapple with it” in order not to foreclose analytic possibilities too early and construct superficial analysis (Charmaz, 2006, p. 115).

Participatory observation. Participatory observation provided a detailed depiction of daily activities in which the urban female entrepreneurs undertook on a typical day. As a matter of fact, it was an important part of my interaction with the field sites. I tried to request consent from the respondents that allowed me to take notes of what I had observed in the field sites. After they agreed to be observed, I started to “shadow” before and after my interviews with them. “Shadowing” is a set of observation techniques that are utilized to gather data about the contextualized activities of research subjects within a predetermined period of time (Sachs, 1993). Bruni et al. (2004) conducted an empirical research that provided a good example of using the technique of shadowing. They behaved “as an intruder” who adjusted “his level of intrusiveness from time to time... and [maintained] an attitude of what one might call ‘diffuse attention’: settings, members of the organization, aesthetic aspects, technologies, ritual and/or simply random events were all investigated to gain understanding of how/when the shadow of the entrepreneur was projected on to them or obscured by them” (p. 199).

Following the shadowing method, I utilized my presence in the field sites as an interpretive lens in order to understand the process in which the respondents constructed their actions, words, and thoughts as institutional ones. Each observation of a business

took 0.5 to 1 hour. My observation focused on every individual present in the workplace, paying attention to what he or she did there. I was especially interested in any interaction among several individuals, such as substantial collaboration between a respondent and other helpers in the workplace, the respondent's inter-personal communication with customers and nearby self-employed persons, and so on. Another source of primary data from participatory observations was the respondents' facial expressions and bodily actions that were of great significance to the interpretation of their words. I took detailed notes of my participatory observations and triangulated data gathering through other data gathering methods.

Secondary data gathering. Secondary data were collected to cross-check with the primary data gathered from semi-structured interviews and participatory observations. As Kothari (2009) defined, secondary data refer to the data that have already been collected and analyzed by someone else (p. 111). I carefully reviewed multiple sources of secondary data, including government documents and reports, laws, census reports, newspapers, and archived data sets. I obtained these secondary data from community libraries, street-level governments, MDP clients' recommendations and Web-based searches. These data especially focused on the Chinese party-state's public policies and propaganda which have influenced women's participation in social production since the founding of the PRC in 1949. Therefore, they were apparently important in cross-checking with the primary data. Particularly, they were useful in filling out the gaps left by interview and observation notes. For instance, it was more often than not difficult for the respondents to remember every detail of her affiliated MDP's new service, so a relevant government document turned out to be a very significant supplement to the

detailed discussion concerning how this new service would influence women's businesses and daily lives.

Consideration of validity. As Maxwell (2005) defined, validity is “the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account” (p. 87). Therefore, validity depends upon two factors: first, the relationship of the research findings to the data; second, the design and implement of the research methods. Based upon these two important factors, I considered two possible validity threats to my study project: first, I tied the research findings from studying a small size of sample to the national and even global context; second, the sensitive nature of my respondents spoke, acted or thought in the same way as they were not studied.

In order to ensure the validity of my research, I paid special attentions to my interpretation of the data so that the ultimate research findings did not disjoint with the contextualized data. The basic principles of the ECM can complement my concern. Combining this approach in my dissertation project goes beyond a detailed description of routine activities to consider: first, what much larger politico-socio-economic arrangements are reflected in these activities; second, what insights about reconstructing pre-existing theories can be derived from an empirical study (Buroway, 1991). In addition, I discussed the issue of a voluntary participation with my respondents and let them feel free to quit at any time.

Data Analysis

Marshall and Rossman (2010) stressed that researcher have to deal with the messy and non-linear nature of qualitative inquiry. Miles and Huberman (1994) clarified this nature of qualitative research that studies have to recursively deal with data collection,

data analysis, and conclusion making throughout the whole process of research. I took these advice especially in my design of the data analysis method, so GT was adopted in order to enable me to engage recursively in data collection, data analysis, and conclusion making.¹⁰ As Charmaz's (2006) definition illustrates:

grounded theory studies emerge from wrestling with the data, making comparisons, developing categories, engaging in theoretical sampling, and integrating an analysis...the entire research process is interactive, in this sense, we bring past interactions and current interests into our research, and we interact with our empirical materials and emerging ideas as well as, perhaps, granting agencies, institutional review boards, and community agencies and groups, along with research participants and colleagues. Neither data nor ideas are mere objects that we passively observe and compile. (p. 510)

Following GT, qualitative researchers have to go back and forth while gathering data, interpreting data, comparing data, writing, modifying research design and reconstructing the emergent theoretical ideas. In this sense, GT is multivariate, being practiced "sequentially, subsequently, simultaneously, serendipitously, and scheduled" (Glaser, 1998, p. 1). As a result, ground theory provided me with an explanatory device through which to account for most of the change on time, context, and research subject's subjectivities.

According to Charmaz's (2006) advice about conducting a GT analysis, my data analysis was conducted as a two-stage process. First, I did an open coding to identify key themes or categories through analyzing the data. After that, I did the second stage of data

¹⁰ The debate between GT and the ECM displayed two differentiated yet not mutually exclusive ways of dealing with the relation of empirical data and theory in a sociological inquiry. For Burawoy (1991, 1998), the ECM tends to be a theoretically driven ethnography with the purpose of developing pre-existing theories. In contrast, the GT tradition seeks for theoretical insights from the lived experience of the setting participants that are inevitably shaped by various structures and norms (Charmaz, 2006). Despite these differences, both GT and ECM can be utilized together in my study as a comprehensive theoretical construction of social life that privileges ethnography as an access to the empirical world.

analysis through focused coding. In this stage, these key themes deriving from the first stage guided my revisit of the data, and more importantly, I watched for any emerging categories of analysis.

CHAPTER 3

GENDERED GRAND NARRATIVE OF THE PRC'S HISTORY—WOMEN'S EVER- CHANGING SOCIAL STATUS

The formation of the new worker-subject, the Chinese female entrepreneur, is the central theme of this research project. The Chinese female entrepreneur is a specific cultural-symbolic artifact as well as a worker-subject, socially constituted in neo-liberal China while the transnational capitalist economy and accompanying capitalist ideologies came to China during the post-socialist period. Therefore, the Chinese female entrepreneur is fundamentally a newly embodied social identity construction which is shaped by both the politico-socio-economic relations of contemporary Chinese society and the demands of global capital. This chapter seeks to provide a historical review of Chinese women's ever-changing social status and the recent rise of MDPs in China.

Prior studies (see, for example, Jacka, 2013; Summerfield, 1994; Walstedt, 1978; Z. Zheng, Zhou, L. Zheng, Yang, D. Zhao, Lou, & S. Zhao 2001;) on Chinese women and labor followed a similar trajectory of Western feminist scholarship. These studies began by highlighting women's presence in the workplace and homes, and their contributions to both the state's economy and family life. Such a dual presence at work and family life was found to be subject to the influences of the Chinese party-state's official narratives concerning women's political and socio-economic role in post-1949 China. Chinese women's increasing socio-economic mobility in return has constantly influenced the outcomes of revolutionary organizing and state initiatives. Also, these researchers commonly argued that the dimensions of identity (e.g., gender, class, urban-rural divide) have been constructed as important components of a Chinese modernity. In

this chapter, I will argue that this is indeed a valid analysis and that, following this trajectory, the phenomenon and the way it has been addressed in Chinese women's social identity construction pose a challenge to the Chinese party-state's promise of gender equality and women's liberation. Unlike these prior studies, I will argue that the making of the Chinese female entrepreneur, a recent transformation of women's social identities, has resulted in a series of new changes of women's employment, and a much closer inspection of these changes is able to bring a brand new perspective to the issue.

This chapter begins with a story of how the gendered discourses of state in pre-1978 China has worked as a framing device significant in stipulating the gendered division of labor and producing normative forms of work for males and females. This is followed by an investigation into the widening and proliferation of gender inequalities during the post-1978 era. After that, I want to examine the historical process of how women's self-employment has gained an unprecedented prominence in China's socio-economic progress especially since the global financial crisis of 2008. Finally, this chapter ends with two concluding remarks, which would be further substantiated in the following two chapters respectively: first, inspired by the gendered historical narrative of China's feats under leadership of the CPC since 1949, it is of great importance to examine the way in which the party-state has strategically inscribed women's daily lives in the organization of power relations during the post-1978 era so as to continually justify its domination and exploitation of women's productive labor; second, given the party-state's tremendous interferences with women's lives, it is imperative to adopt the perspective of social identity construction, through which to scrutinize how Chinese women's lives have

been constituted with the advance of China's integration with the contemporary global capitalism.

Women and Labor during the Mao Years (1949-1976)

After the CPC took power in 1949, Chairman Mao Zedong envisioned a new China where women would hold up half the sky. Article 91 of the 1954 Constitution promised guarantees of women's equal rights in every aspect of life. The gendered discourses of state were therefore utilized to legitimize the birth of a modern socialist China: gender equality was promoted by the party-state's policies and propaganda as the fundamental differentiation of socialism from capitalism, and women's liberation was championed as one of the key elements of the CPC's revolutionary promise (Gilmartin, Hershatter, Rofel, & White, 1994). In other words, the CPC raised a wave of state feminism which aimed to justify China's transition to socialism and established the gendered notion of the socialist state (Wang, 2005).

Chinese women's participation in the wage-jobs in a large scale, as some Western feminist scholars applauded, owed much to the effort of the Maoist party-state, which has over the years carried out a succession of progressive legislation and official policies (Hershatter, 2004). Major pieces of legislation include Labor Insurance Regulations of the PRC (1953) and the Announcement on Female Workers' Production Leave by the State Council (1955). Additionally, the Chinese central government signed up to a large number of International Labor Conventions, joining a globally collaborated initiative of protecting women's equal opportunity in employment. For example, the government signed the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Discrimination Against Women, the International Labor Organization Convention No. 45 Concerning the

Employment of Women on Underground Work in Mines of All Kinds (1935), and the ILO No. 100 Concerning Equal Pay for Men and Women Workers of Equal Value.

All these legislative efforts constituted the party-state's attempt to establish a legal system. It aimed to promote equal opportunity regardless of gender difference and to reduce women's vulnerability to all types of discrimination in the workplace. Efforts were also extended towards a radical transformation of women's role in the family, in order to emancipate them from the coercion of patriarchal family norms and make them publicly available for the paid labor force. For instance, the central government promulgated and implemented the marriage law in 1950, which prohibited arranged marriage, stipulated a legal age of getting married, and gave women and men an equal right to divorce. In doing so, the party-state during the early age of the PRC enthusiastically insisted that women would achieve self-liberation through massive participation in social production, and more significantly, contribute to China's objectives of modernization and industrialization (H. Evans, 1997).

In a stark contrast to the party-state's policy support and propaganda of women's equality campaign, the entry of women into wage-jobs in fact was not constantly expanded. Women's equality campaign during the Mao era was actually undertaken in a self-contradictory way: in periods of labor shortage (e.g. the Great Leap Forward of the late 1950s), a large number of females were urged to take on paid jobs, in many cases providing men with opportunities of doing more skilled jobs (Andors, 1983); during periods of economic recession (e.g., the mid-1950s and the early 1960s), however, the local and central governments fell short of their oath of drawing women into the labor force and emphasized women's responsibility for family life (Hooper 1984). As this

twisted historical process indicates, the party-state's way of manipulating women's labor force during the Mao era was contextually contingent. That is to say, a large-scale entry of women in wage-jobs was mobilized by the central and local governments only when men's labor force could not be able to satisfy the demand of the state's economy.

Whenever the demand tailed off, women would be immediately required to give up their job opportunities to males. Therefore, I argue that the Maoist party-state's efforts of legalizing women's equal rights in the workplace actually aimed to create and take advantage of the steady availability of a cheap, docile, and easily replaceable reserve army of labor. To put it bluntly, even though women's access to paid jobs was sometimes widened during the Mao era, the purpose of the party-state's initiative was not for promoting Chinese women's socio-economic status, but rather for exploiting women's productive labor in order to sustain the state's economic development. On this account, it would be interesting to explore how those women's lives were actually influenced by the party-state's strategic management of women's labor force.

Overall, the classed discourses of state and the accompanying illusion of class equality could not be capable of silencing various types of gender inequality which caused considerable barriers to women's employment in Maoist China. According to China's legal regulation and propaganda apparatus during the Maoist era, class equality was prerequisite for gender equality at that time. In January 1953, the People's Daily, the most influential and authoritative newspaper of the Chinese central government, published an article titled with "To work is to liberate: To struggle is to raise your social status" (Lan, 1953). This piece of news covered the first role model across the country for other local governments, which successfully set up a rough equity of wage between males

and females doing the same type of work. This explicitly gave birth to another major wave of social campaign, which focused with any depth on gender equality (especially in the workplace) since the ill-fated Marriage Law Campaign of the early 1950s.

A large number of official policies were implemented to support the Maoist party-state's legal apparatus with the purpose of promoting gender equality. For example, during the period of the late 1950s, a public policy of "replacing male with female workers" was implemented in the commercial and service sector so as to expand women's access to wage-jobs; this was followed by the period of the 1960s and 1970s, when the labor authorities at different administrative levels exercised a type of labor distribution based on a pre-determined quota of men and women in job allocations. In doing so, women and men were considered as almost equal due to their common affiliation with the working-class by working in the SOEs. As a consequence, class appeared to be the sole classification scheme.¹¹ In this sense, gender difference no longer served as a useful way in which people with different gender identities were differentially positioned in the social pyramid. This type of homogenous force climaxed in the Cultural Revolution (1967-1977), representing the socialist ideal of gender equality—"a kind of androgyny, a sexual sameness, based on the defeminization of female appearance and its approximation to male standards of dress" (H. Evans, 1997, p. 2).

Nevertheless, the socialist ideal image of gender equality, which was directed by the party-state's policies and propaganda apparatus, failed to disguise or even eliminate women's oppressions in pre-1978 China. Some feminist scholars found insufficient the

¹¹ The working-class was seen as the only social class, because the bourgeois was totally eliminated after the 1949 liberation.

party-state's efforts of fighting with the persistent gender inequality—that remnants of feudal thinking perpetuated, particularly within the peasantry (Hershatter, 2004). For instance, a gendered division of labor, as Andors (1983), Wolf (1985), and Y. Jiang (2004) noted, has always existed to track men into the higher-paying state sector and more skilled, socially prestigious vocations across all sectors: in the industrial sector, women were to a large extent confined in collective neighborhood factories, where wage and working environment were not as good as those in SOEs; in the agricultural sector, more work points were allocated to “heavy work” which supposedly involved the high-level skills of using complex agricultural machinery or raising large draft livestock and thus should be performed by men, whereas rural women were concentrated in less-work-point-earned jobs which involved more physical labor and often contributed more to the collective. Consistent with Jacka's (1997, p. 188) argument, the three gendered dichotomies with its root in the remnants of Chinese feudal thinking gained dominance in shaping people's working experience: “inside and outside, light and heavy, and unskilled and skilled”, with the latter, more socially honorable attribute associated with men's social identity making. Simply put, the gendered division of labor, which had been greatly informed by Chinese feudal remnants, apparently privileged men rather than women.

Furthermore, Chinese feudal remnants influenced not only human subjects in the workplace but also those in the household. The remaining influence of feudal thinking was in particular obvious in an extensive existence of patrilocality in the rural area of Mao's China (Johnson, 1983). Given that a male family member was allocated with more raw materials, tools, and work points than a female one was, the persistence

and prosperity of peasant households during the collectivist period (1949-1966) to a large extent depended upon the number of male family members that they had. In order to sustain the growth of family size, parents tended to value sons rather than daughters who would marry out, and to keep in control the procurement of daughters-in-law who would be responsible for giving birth to the next generation of family members (especially male laborers).

Even though an increasing number of both urban and rural women started to go out to work, domestic work and childcare were still the province of women, intensifying their burden especially after they got married, and decreasing their chance to earn more wages or work points and to engage in political activities (Andors, 1983; Hershatter, 2003; Wolf, 1985). The heavy domestic burden imposed upon Chinese women was partly due to the party-state's accumulation strategy which invested much more resources in heavy industry than in either light industry or social service provision (Croll, 1983). Having restored a viable economic basis, the First Five-year Plans (1953-1957) under the leadership of the Maoist party-state was carried out as a centrally-planned program of economic development, concentrating the state's available resources on the construction of 694 large and medium-sized industrial projects.¹² As a consequence, a lack of investment in producing consumer goods and social services was compensated by the party-state's appropriation and exploitation of women's devalued labor within their households. Take childcare for instance, Thorborg (1978) estimated that during the

¹² The Five-year Plans of PRC refer to a series of the Chinese party-state's economic development initiatives, which were centrally planned through the plenary sessions of the Central Committee and national congresses. These plans generally focus on strategies of economic growth and growth targets.

period of the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961), which even represents the peak in the Maoist party-state's attention to social service supply, almost half of pre-school children were taken care of by their mothers within the household. Like childcare, women's lower-paying jobs in the workplace and their unpaid domestic work were exploited by Maoist centrally planned economy as a necessary supplement to China's under-developed light industry.

To sum up, the party-state during the Mao period, as feminist scholars condemn, practiced a reductionist theory of women's liberation with an exclusive focus on mobilizing them into social production (Hershatter, 2004). According to Mao's (1978) well-known discussion about China's state feminism, to liberate Chinese women is primarily based upon the working-class's victory of founding a socialist state. At the very core of pre-1978 China's regime and propaganda apparatus, Mao's instruction strictly set such a reductionist trend as the tone for the party-state's relevant laws and policies concerning women's liberation. In this way, women would never be liberated unless the economic basis of the Chinese working-class regime is highly developed. Namely, the state's economic development rather than gender equality was considered to be of highest priority. The Maoist party-state, however, noticeably neglected that a complex of cultural, political, social and economic dynamics has to be factored into the practice of women's equality campaign. The result of the Maoist party-state's state feminism was simply to perpetuate gender inequality, which was particularly featured as the gendered division of labor deeply shaped by Chinese feudal remnants. In short, the newly established regime was founded and maintained in pre-1978 China at the expense of

Chinese women's plight, and the following section shows that this situation remains very much the same during the post-1978 era.

Women and Labor during the Reform Era (1978-)

This section provides a historical review concerning how women's political and socio-economic status have been changed since China's rapid economic growth began in 1978. Also, it offers another critique of the party-state's reductionist perspective of women's liberation, disproving the assumption that economic progress would readily give birth to women's liberation and gender equality. The seeds of the reductionist trend, as the section above shows, were first planted back in the pre-1978 era and blossomed during the reform era. Economic growth took off with the advance of the market-oriented reform in 1978, and accelerated dramatically in the 1990s as a result of adopting large-scale privatization programs and opening up the socialist state to global capital. Underlying this astonishing economic miracle was the unbalanced growth strategy centrally planned by the nation's communist elites—Deng Xiaoping and his comrades. As Deng famously announced: “we must make full use of regional comparative advantages, enhance the strong points and avoid the weak points, so we must allow the imbalance” (Fujita & D. Hu, 2001, p. 19). Since then, various inequalities, including gender inequality, have been officially permitted or even encouraged in order to enable more advanced regions, sectors, households, and individuals to jump-start the state's economic development.

In such a situation, gender equality has been gradually set apart from the Maoist policies and propaganda of class equality, and an intensified attention to gender difference ensued. In this context, many have found the return of a discursive

circumstance where gender differences are multiplied and upheld by both men and women, as a clear reaction against the Maoist party-state's silence of gender especially in the Cultural Revolution era. The result was a proliferation and widening of gender inequalities, accompanied by the party-state's strategic appropriation and making of women's social identities. The early years of the reform witnessed a rapid increase in the number of women employed in state-owned and collective enterprises (Robinson, 1985). Females constitute approximately 30% of the labor force in the SOEs and approximately 50% in the collective and private enterprises combined (National Bureau of Statistics, 1987). Official periodicals, however, reported a tendency that female workers with little kids were furloughed and sent back to home with only partial wages (Jacka, 1990). For instance, members of a province-level Women's Federation in Northeast China reported that a few SOEs urged pregnant women and women nursing little kids to take an extended holiday for one to two years on deduced pay (Luda Municipal Trade Union and Women's Federation, 1980). For those unwilling to take the extended holiday, they were possibly declined to be allocated with lighter work, breast-feeding time, or the breast-feeding room.

This tendency is a good case in point, illustrating the particular way in which urban women encountered gender discriminations in the workplace across all sectors. This type of job discriminations was often based upon a gendered assumption that women's "inside" workload (e.g., childcare and household responsibilities) would cause extra costs to companies, and make them less competitive and productive compared with their male counterparts (H. Evans, 2000; Parish & Busse, 2000). This directly serves as an explanation of the fact that urban women were more likely to be employed in

collective rather than SOEs and in low-wage industries that were usually seen as an extension of domestic work (e.g., early childhood education, textiles, catering) (Bian, Logan, & Shu, 2000; Robinson, 1985). Gender discrimination in post-1978, as Burnett (2010, p. 298) put, has been increasingly visible in “hiring, dismissal, earlier retirement, fines for violation of family planning regulations, wage differences, denial of certain social welfare benefit, and sexual harassment”.

As an essential part of the reform, the restructuring of SOEs since the 1990s has further undermined gender equality through smashing the life-tenured employment system, producing millions of past renowned SOE female employees, now socially abandoned laid-off females comprising a terribly large mass of newborn marginals (Overholt, 1999; Solinger, 2002). One-third of the prior SOE workers became a surplus according to the market principles of cost-efficiency and competitiveness, and many of them were laid off in the mid-1990s. With the exception of Parish and Busse’s (2000) optimistic expectations, other scholars (e.g., Jacka, 1990; Jiang, 2004) tended to be worried about the result of this economic change—worsened social stratification, both between males and females, and among women (married vs. unmarried; migrant vs. originally urban), because women retired at earlier ages or were laid off (*Xiagang* 下岗) in higher numbers compared to men. Especially for middle-aged and old women, they were more often than not treated as unskilled, and therefore most vulnerable to unemployment (H. Evans, 2002).

As is shown by a random survey conducted by the Ministry of Statistics in 1997, nearly 60% of laid-off SOE workers were female whilst female workers constituted only 40% of the labor force of those SOEs surveyed (M. Zhang & L. Zhao, 1999).

Employment statistics also indicate that the number of female workers noticeably decreased since the party-state's structuring of SOEs in the 1990s with the proportion of women in the whole workforce in 1998 (38%) 7% lower than that 3 years ago (The Ministry of Statistics, 1999). More unfairly, women being laid off or retiring at an earlier age have to endure a substantial reduction in their pension, because their retirement income is proportional to their previous wage as well as to their length of service in work units (e.g., 88% for 35 years of service; 82% for 30-34 years of service; 75% for 20-29 years of service) (Cooke, 2001). Therefore, the cost of the restructuring has fallen upon women disproportionately, and more significantly, the discourses of class equality based upon women and men's equal access to the SOEs have actually dissipated and therefore could no longer sustain the Maoist party-state's policies and propaganda concerning gender equality.

In the rural areas, land was given back to individual households, but men were allocated with more than women were (Judd, 1994). As opposed to the pessimistic conclusions that returning to household farming would probably push rural women back to isolated labor under patriarchal family structure (e.g., Andors, 1983; Davin, 1989), rural women have actively participated in household-based enterprises (Judd, 1994), vending agricultural products at periodic markets, running small-scale stores, and opening small restaurants (K. Zhou, 1996). Moreover, as restrictions to urban-rural migration were lifted in the reform era, those without urban household registration—effectively illegal aliens within the territory of their own nation—commonly known as floating population have gained an unparalleled importance in contributing to the Chinese phenomenally rapid economic growth. The term "floating population" is used

interchangeably with "rural-to-urban migrants" all throughout the dissertation to specifically refer to this group of Chinese people. Predominantly rural-to-urban migrants rushing into the industrial centers of China's southeastern coast, this internal migratory population (both inter- and intra-provincial) has exceeded 245 million until 2013 and nearly one third of them are female (Armstrong, 2013; H. Hu, 2014; Jacka & Gaetnao, 2004; Ngai, 1999; Solinger, 1999).

Despite the contribution of the rural workforce to the state's economy, prevalent urban discourses on the floating population are considerably negative (Solinger, 1999; W. Sun, 2004). Rural migrants, even those who have already acquired their urban household registration, were held responsible for all kinds of social problems, such as crime, city crowding, sanitation problems, and an inadequate supply of public goods (education, health care, water, etc.); female migrants have to struggle with extra pressures: they are usually described as easily subject to abuse and sexual harassment, and more worse, as a potential threat to marriages for being involved in sex industry and extramarital relationship with urban married men (Chao, 2003; Tan, 2000). The local and central governments failed in effectively responding to the cries of their main labor force because the party-state nowadays continues to share Mao's fears back in 1958, when the Household Registration (*Hukou* 户口) policy was first promulgated by the central government to keep in control the mobilization of the labor force.¹³ Like the Soviet

¹³ Since the twenty-first century, the party-state has started to realize that the discriminations towards rural residents caused by the HRS actually lead to serious barriers to rural economic growth and tarnished the image of China's human rights as well. Therefore, the central and local governments issued a series of influential policies to improve the social status of rural residents. For instance, Document No. 5 of the State Council 2006 was implemented to protect migrant workers from being discriminated in the workplace. In spite of this, the HRS still remains to be the equivalent of an apartheid system between rural and urban citizens because it has never stopped being justified by the party-state as an effective instrument of social

propiska system, the Household Registration System (HRS) works as an internal passport which categorizes citizens as either urban or rural. Given the large number of poor rural residents, it also legitimizes the state to specify a rigid urban-rural divide through which to treat urban residents much better than their rural counterparts. Significantly, this urban-rural divide ensured an adequate supply of cheaper labor force to industrial cities at the expense of rural citizens' oppressions (Armstrong, 2013).

We should look no further than their low income. The urban labor market for low-skilled jobs primarily consists of migrant workers, providing difficult working conditions and a subsistence-level wage rate. The results of many surveys indicate that the wage rate for migrant workers in the Pearl Delta has not obviously increased during the last decade, which in fact means their actual income decreased a lot compared with China's rising inflation rate (Research Office Project Team, 2006). In 2002, the average monthly wage of migrant workers was only \$100, which is nearly a half of the average wage of urban laborers. More unfairly, in order to make ends meet, rural-to-urban migrants working in the urban areas had to accept much more working hours per day which could probably even decrease their hourly wage. This has already been evidenced by a large-scale survey conducted in a few mid-western provinces: the hourly wage rate for rural-to-urban workers is only a quarter of that for urban laborers (Research Office Project Team, 2006). Given all these work-related discriminations against rural-to-urban migrant workers, they have exactly constituted a big part of the disadvantaged lifeblood of China's socio-economic reforms.

control (especially through supplying demographic data for the party-state's central planning) (Laquian, 2005).

Despite the central focus of this research project on urban female entrepreneurs, those currently “legal” female city residents with original rural household registration comes to provide another layer of analysis through which to explore the overwhelming influence of urban-rural divide on those women’s bumpy business careers. Significantly, the disadvantaged social status of migrant workers during the reform era deteriorates a series of gender-related discriminations particularly against those females temporarily working and living in cities. Among all these gender-featured discriminations, the gendered division of labor still remains to be a predominant way in which Chinese feudal thinking organizes female rural migrants living in post-1978 China’s cities. According to the outside/inside dichotomy, men were more likely than women to go out and look for jobs in urban areas (Fan, 2003). As was reported by China's 2014 Census, the propensity of women to migrate continues to be lower than that of men. During the period of 2009-2014, 3.2% of Chinese women aged 15-59 (9.1 million) migrated, compared with 3.8% of Chinese men (12.9 million) (National Bureau of Statistics, 2014). More seriously, most female migrants had limited and lower-paying job options (Tan, 2004), preferred to migrate before they had been married out (Liang & Chen 2004), and did not go as far away from home as men did (Davin, 1989; Jacka, 1997).

As men of all ages and unmarried girls went out of home in increasing numbers for jobs in industrialized cities or towns, agricultural production has become much more feminized, in particular the purview of older married women (Croll, 1995; Fan, 2003; Jacka, 1997; Murphy, 2004). In this sense, the inside/outside dichotomy was far from being eliminated by the socio-economic reforms since 1978 as the proponents of the reductionist approach assumed. It is because China's astonishing economic growth during

the reform era has not redeemed the Maoist party-state's promise of women's (self-)liberation. In contrary, a double disadvantage is currently imposed upon rural-to-urban female migrants in ways that the gendered division of labor is intertwined with the urban/rural divide to affect their lives.

To sum up, the double disadvantage of gender and rural origin in fact features the party-state's subjugation and exploitation of women during the reform era, particularly serving as a way of justifying China's socio-economic transition since 1978 from a centrally-planned economy to a socialist market economy. As the section above indicates, it is in pretty much the same way that the Maoist party-state's appropriation of women's devalued labor was justified by Maoist China's transition from a semi-colonial and semi-feudal state with a crumbling economy to a socialist state with a preliminarily industrialized and independent economy. Accordingly, Chinese women's oppressions throughout the PRC's history indeed served as one of the most important foundations, upon which China under the leadership of the CPC carried out two major comprehensive restructurings of political and socio-economic system. The next section analytically attends to a continuation of the history of the party-state's appropriation of women's labor force, which is particularly exemplified by the rise of the Chinese female entrepreneur.

Rise of the Chinese Female Entrepreneur

When official newspapers cover the stories of women's involvement in self-employment, there is frequent reference to the fact that nearly half of the country's private business owners are female (Wallis, 2006). When such women are highlighted, the Maoist rhetoric of "holding up half the sky" is readily invoked, and this re-appearance of the Maoist gendered discourses of women's emancipation seems to be another promise

that the post-1978 party-state has made to work for gender justice. Nevertheless, the outcome, as my empirical study will suggest, has been the continuation and perpetuation of women's subordination. In other words, women's active participation in self-employment has in fact opened up a new field in which women's oppressions remain.

Generally, the development of the private sector has been a long journey of ups and downs since the founding of the PRC. The economic reforms since 1978 brought about a revival of the private sector and self-employment after private ownership had been almost eradicated during the first thirty-year of the PRC. In a stark contrast to the radical large-scale privatization programs in post-1989 Russia and its affiliated Eastern European countries, an incremental approach of gradually fostering private ownership was adopted in post-1978 China without privatizing the whole public sector (Qian, 2000). During the early age of the reform era, the central and local governments imposed many regulations and restrictions on the growth of the private sector. For instance, legal registration was granted to only individual or household-based businesses (*Getihu* 个体户), and such small-scale businesses was required to hire no more than eight employees. For larger-scale privately-owned businesses (*Siying qiye* 私营企业), they did not exist lawfully until the mid-1980s.

Undergoing the stunning reversals during the period from 1989 to 1991, the private-sector growth gained new momentum after Deng called for all Chinese people's dedications to furthering the market-oriented reforms in his widely-known tour to the southern coast of China in 1992. Since then, non-state-owned enterprises at the grassroots level have been granted with a fully legitimized status, starting to serve as a new reliable engine of the state's economic development. Though the Chinese economy has renewed

its reliance on the huge state sector investments and SOEs for economic recovery since 2008 (Ramzy, 2009), the goal of constructing a balanced economy different from the state-centric growth model persistently emphasizes the economic importance of the private sector (Zhu & Wan, 2012). The share of GDP produced in the non-state-owned economy exceeded two thirds in 2010, and the share produced by private-owned enterprises alone constituted more than 60% (Cheng, 2010). Further, private-owned enterprises created more than 70% of new jobs in China's urban areas.

The rebirth and prosperity of the private sector in China's economy during the past few decades constituted the global trend of the new economy. The new economy refers to a globalized phenomenon, resulting from a relocation of the manufacturing-based economy in developing countries and a fast growth of both high-tech industries and the service-based economy in developed countries (V. Smith, 2001). As Jurik (2005) observes, not only developing countries from the southern hemisphere but also wealth northern countries have witnessed the advance of the new economy during the past three decades. The widespread and influential rhetoric of the new economy advocated a reorganization of national and international divisions of labor. By doing so, it intensified the worldwide competition for decent jobs, and relocated good-paying industrial jobs to the south in an efforts to reduce labor and production costs. In countries like the U.S., this meant an increased reliance on the non-state-owned sector and small-scale businesses to create jobs and improve citizens' economic well-being. As a result, the explosion of women's self-employment programs across the globe blended well with neo-liberalism, which applauds the free market philosophy of a minimalist state as the central principle of addressing socio-economic problems.

MD is usually ascribed to a southern hemisphere invention that was later adopted by their counterparts located in northern hemisphere countries (Coyle, Houghton, M. Evans, & Vindasius, 1994). This simplified description of the diffusion of the MDP model, however, glosses over both global and local economic structures (Jurik, 2005). More importantly, it ignores a much closer inspection of neo-liberal ideologies and policies that has considerably shaped the spread and development of microenterprise development model. Accordingly, the rise of MDPs in post-reform China cannot be simply seen as an outgrowth of southern hemisphere forerunners. Rather, the adoption and spread of MDP model is examined in this study as a highly contested planning strategy through which globalization articulates with national cultural-political structures (Rankin, 2002).

The context of economic and cultural strain formed by China's reform since 1978 has been a fertile ground for the adoption and diffusion of MDPs into post-reform China. This national promotion constitutes the global trend of "defining, on one hand, microcredit as the primary strategy for empowering women economically, and on the other hand, women as the primary or exclusive members for microcredit programs" (Poster & Salime, 2002, p. 217). Simply put, underlying the national and global promotion of MD, especially women's entrepreneurship, is the gendered assumption that women are responsible for economic growth. The costs accompanying this responsibility include "magnifying women's burden as providers for the family, discouraging male responsibility in household maintenance, and increasing the household workload for other family members, especially daughters" (p. 217). In other words, MD earns its

reputation through mapping capitalist ideology and practice on women's productive bodies (Ehlers & Main, 1998).

As global neo-liberalism became China's defining economic regime in the mid-1990s, the restructuring of SOEs and the accompanying social problems of women's disproportionate job loss triggered the establishment and promotion of state-sponsored MDPs in Chinese urban areas as a rapidly growing segment of non-state-owned economy (Overholt, 1999; Ru, Lu, & Dan, 1998). Also, it was designed as an essential part of the Re-employment Project (*Zaijiuye jihua* 再就业计划) (RP). Despite declaring China's self-employment sector as a new source of economic growth rather than a refuge of marginalized people (Mohapatra, Rozelle, & Goodhue, 2007), the MDPs have been operated especially in cities since the mid-1990s as a response to the social problems of laid-off workers (Ru, Lu, & Dan, 1998). In 1997, Shanghai pioneered the RSC as the prototype of Chinese MDPs (Solinger, 2002). Unlike those MDPs in other countries which are sponsored and operated by multilateral institutions, non-governmental organizations, or non-profit organizations, the counterparts in China are primarily managed by street-level government agencies. The MDPs replaced the SOEs as "trustees" for laid-off people and other unemployed persons for a certain period of time. During this period of time, the MDPs were responsible for providing basic livelihood allowances, paying medical expenses and pensions, and most important, supplying new re-employment opportunities and trainings for those people. Though the target of the Chinese MDPs was later expanded to serve unemployed city residents and rural-to-city migrants, all these services have remained almost the same until now.

According to the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), 40% of the millions of women who had been laid off from jobs in SOEs were assisted in being re-employed in getting off the ground their own businesses (Getting laid-off, 2003). Based upon this stunning number, the MDPs were therefore advocated as a big success of dealing with unemployment in an innovative way. Noticeably, the government mentioned that the ACWF and its affiliated street-level branches had to do a good job in persuading laid-off women to practice a mental conversion (*Sixiang zhuanbian* 思想转变). By doing this, the local and central governments persuaded laid-off women to get rid of their remnants of feudal thinking according to which going outside their households to do business is demeaning (Wallis, 2006).

The significance of MD in China was further intensified by the party-state's policies and propaganda during the aftermath of the global financial meltdown of 2008. The dramatically shrinking demand of foreign markets since 2008 squeezed China's export market (Wong, 2011). It also required the Chinese government to seek for other viable ways of continuing the state's economic growth. Withstanding an increasing worsening of global economy, governments across the globe, with no exception of the Chinese government, demonstrated a willingness to undertake unprecedented market interventions (Rudd, 2009). Policymakers from western countries primarily focused on credit market, and nurtured favorable conditions of both domestic and global capital accumulation, mainly through fiscal consolidation, tax reduction, and balanced budget (Dumenil & Levy, 2006; Glyn, 2006; Harvey, 2006; Peters, 2012). By contrast, the Chinese party-state did not endorse those Western countries' economic recovery plan. Rather, it embarked on a unique way of seeing women's self-employment as one of the

most important engines of the economic recovery. In other words, MD came to offer another avenue for continuing China's rapid economic growth through incorporating the economically marginalized (especially female ones) into the market economy.

The party-state proclaimed an array of policies through which to further support growth in women's businesses. On one hand, the government's policy support focused on an expansion of women's access to lending services. For instance, in 2009, the ACWF, China's central bank, and Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security jointly announced the policy of expanding lending for female entrepreneurs (ACWF, 2009). On the other hand, the central and local governments promoted women's entrepreneurship through adopting a strategy for social capital building. Many MDP proponents argued that pioneering MDPs, such as the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, succeeded in encouraging their clients to build social capital (i.e., social networks) (Ash, 2000). Taking this argument to heart, the Chinese government has implemented many public policies during the past few years through which to stress the importance of setting up the MDPs alliances (Dong, 2011; Gong, 2011). These MDP alliances are mainly targeted at bonding female entrepreneurs with each other as well as with the larger community for a better chance of subsistence and further development. For instance, Hebei Province Women's Federation reportedly endeavored to set up a province-wide female entrepreneur alliance in 2009, with the purpose of specifically urging better-off female business owners to connect with a small group of newcomers, and to share various resources and business experience with them (Gong, 2011); in Zhejiang Province, an increasing number of government-led female entrepreneur mutual aid alliances, which especially catered to the demands of university graduates, sprang up during the past several years and were

reported to considerably increase their chance of achieving business success through bonding them with other individuals and organizations from the larger community (Dong, 2011); the founding of the Chinese Entrepreneur Forum in 2012 was repeatedly acclaimed by the central government and China's central bank for its timely and unfailing advocate of mutual assistance among female entrepreneurs in such a post-crash global economy (Z. Wang, 2012).

All these policies point to a government-directed endeavor that actually exerted formidable influence far beyond the economic sphere. Noticeably, the party-state adopted neo-liberal values (e.g., self-management, self-enterprise) in women's social identity construction that has gained an unprecedented prominence as a way out of the economic slowdown (Chow, 2010; Y. Li, 2009; Lin, 2009). Like working-class women socially honored during the Mao era, Chinese female entrepreneurs were also subject to the ideological influences of the party-state's policy making and propaganda apparatus. These two types of women's social identity constructions both exemplify the way in which the Chinese party-state undertook an essentialized making of women's social identities in an effort to specify the dispositions and activities of women's labor force (Hanser, 2005).¹⁴ Also, it served as a convenient way of differentiating productive female bodied from the others. For instance, despite the Maoist party-state's several sporadic mobilizations of women back to home, it intended to set up working-class women as the benchmark through which to assess the progress of women's liberation/self-liberation through

¹⁴ By the term essentialized, I want to illuminate on the way in which the Chinese party-state's policy making and propaganda apparatus have affected women's social identity construction. Through the national promotion of Chinese urban female entrepreneurs as exemplary women, their behaviors and spirits were refined as a set of gender norms that morally regulated other women in the society.

participating in social production. Following the similar trajectory, the party-state during the reform era established female entrepreneurs as the role model that Chinese women (especially those laid-off women and migrant females) were expected to emulate. Principally, the party-state throughout the PRC's history has been obviously committed to generating a series of gender norms that morally regulate women's entry into the state's socio-economic development.

Gendered Grand Narrative of the PRC's History

Consistent with Hershatter's (2004) conclusion, this brief historical review of Chinese women indicates that women were put at the central site where the PRC's national modernity was imagined and practiced, more often than not through a language of crisis: only if the political and socio-economic status of Chinese women was raised, the newly established socialist nation would survive and even flourish; only if Chinese women were emancipated, the PRC could be remarkably different from, and more accurately, superior to the previous sovereignties of semi-colonialism and semi-feudalism. As I discussed in the previous sections, the historical transition from feudalist China to the new socialist China was to a large degree justified and reinforced by the socially privileged working-class identity in the Maoist party-state's state-feminism. Also, the making of the Chinese female entrepreneur was appropriated as an evidence, showing that China's endorsement of the neo-liberal global agenda is beneficial to the vast majority of Chinese citizens (even including those marginalized women).

Furthermore, the historical analysis in this chapter clearly shows that the ever-changing status of Chinese women is featured by both progress and reversals. Many women certainly benefited a lot from the founding of the PRC and the later socio-

economic reforms since 1978, such as a much higher standard of living, a considerably access to social production, and greater flexibility. Such progresses, however, are found to co-exist with a feudal-thinking-stereotyped image of woman that has paradoxically been intertwined with an increasing expansion of women's rights and opportunities (Wallis, 2006). To put it differently, a gendered hierarchy can be found in not only the Maoist discourses of state, but also neo-liberal discourses prevalent in post-1978 China: during the Mao era, the Maoist state feminism purposely ignored gender inequality without making any efforts to change it, assuming women's liberation as a finished work bequeathed by the modernized and industrialized nation (X. Li, 1999; Rofel, 1999); in neo-liberal China, an acquiescence or even an unabashed support of gender inequalities has in fact contributed a lot to China's integration with global capitalism, while sweatshops and the sex industry did promote women's economic self-sufficiency and free them from household burdens (X. Li, 2001).

With hindsight, Chinese women's liberation has been always utilized by the party-state not as an essential component of the state's pursuit of modernization, but rather as an excuse to mobilize as many citizens as possible in working for the interests of the nation's socio-economic development. The party-state's policies and propaganda have engaged in promulgating the seemingly completed project of gender equality, toning down the widely existence of women's subordination and thereby justifying a universal, agendered image of the rise of China. Without exaggeration, Chinese women's labor force, or more specifically, their subordination is fundamental to the founding of the PRC as well as the contemporary phenomenal success of economic growth. Extending Hershatter's (2004, p. 1034) argument that "the grand narrative of twentieth-century

revolutionary history cannot be understood without reference to gender discourse and women's participation", the grand narrative of the Chinese history of the second half of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century comprises a gender subtext that makes gender invisible and reproduces women's subordination.

On this account, it would be of great importance to explore the way that Chinese women's lives during the neo-liberal era have been inscribed into the configuration of power relations in order to continually justify the Chinese party-state's intension of perpetuating women's oppressions. In chapter four, the state's advocacy for women's social networking initiative in the MD field exemplifies a major way of weaving women's daily lives with the party-state's policy making and propaganda apparatus. Through an in-depth investigation into Chinese urban female entrepreneurs' daily practice of social networking, I am interested in examining how the party-state has strategically incorporated the global trend of neo-liberalism in an effort to continue its subjugation and exploitation of women's productivity. Equally importantly, my analysis will keep open to any possibility that women's self-employment is not only subject to the ideological influences of such power relations, but also could probably change the configuration of power relations.

Chinese Women's Social Identity Construction

Drawing upon the historical review in this chapter, I tend to argue that to manipulate Chinese women's social identity making has been the primary way in which the party-state controlled and exploited them for the sake of the state's socio-economic development. To be specific, women's social identities along the lines of class, gender and urban-rural divide have been frequently subject to the shaping force of the party-

state's policies and propaganda, and more significantly, have been utilized by the party-state as ideological evidence to justify China's peaceful rise since 1949. During the Maoist era, women's liberation was closely linked to the classed discourses of state. That is to say, when the party-state's policies and propaganda concerning women's equal social status were promoted, the collective—Chinese women were praised for their massive participation in social production as members of the working-class. Their social identities were to a large extent shaped by the discourses of class equality, so the overwhelming influence of class equality has considerably drowned the hoary crises of gender inequality.

In contrast, it is the individual Chinese woman who is celebrated when the famous Maoist slogan “women can hold up half the sky” has been invoked again during the post-1978 era. As opposed to the monotonous image of the revolutionary working-class women, women's social identity making during the reform era have been featured in multiple ways according to their differentiated placements in the Chinese-featured market economy. Typical of this kind of gendered social identity making is to hold up exemplary women who succeed in their own ways within the circumstance of the socio-economic reforms (especially when they conquered a variety of difficulties), therefore reinforcing the correctness of neo-liberal China's integration with global capitalism.

Among all those role models, the making of the Chinese urban female entrepreneur has repeatedly been showcased because they can exactly exemplify the historical transition from the “old” centrally planned China to the “new” market-oriented China. As Wallis (2006) depicted, this type of success story “has all of the familiar elements” as it narrates how the woman struggled with all kinds of difficulties during the

early years of the reform era (e.g., being laid off from the SOEs), how she matures to be unwilling to fail, how she relies on herself and ultimately becomes successful (e.g., achieving economic self-sufficiency, being able to sustain her whole family, creating jobs for others) (p. 100). To socially construct Chinese women in this way comes to serve the purpose of assuaging any guilt or even affirming the wisdom of the party-state's strategic decision of transforming the mechanism of the state's socio-economic development at the expense of women's plight. Accordingly, it would be of great importance to adopt the perspective of social identity construction through which to better understand how the Chinese party-state's frequent inventions in women's daily lives have shaped their social identity construction. In chapter five, I become interested in examining the politico-historical process in which the socially privileged construction of the working-class woman gave its way to that of the Chinese urban female entrepreneur with the advance of China's annexation with contemporary capitalist economy.

CHAPTER 4

RE-THINKING THE COMMON

This chapter focuses on the Chinese party-state's strategy of adopting social capital building in MD. Drawing from the perspective of the respondents, it begins with an investigation into women's daily practice of *guanxi* (social connections 关系)—the embodiment of social capital in Chinese society. More specifically, I intend to examine the nature of women's social networking experience. My empirical data reveal that making friends was not out of self-interest but rather was to a large degree affectively charged. This research finding would pose a challenge to the popular utility-based assumption that socializing with other individuals or members of a certain institution is tingled with instrumental considerations.

Following the ECM approach, an in-depth investigation of women's social networking experience at the local level provides a window into the national/global promotion of social capital building strategy in the MD field. Responding to the first question raised at the end of chapter three, this study particularly attempts to illustrate a major way in which the party-state has weaved women's life with the ever-changing configuration of power relations through influencing their social capital building experience. Though the term of social capital has been in circulation for many years, it did not become one of widely popular ideas around the globe until Putnam launched it as a popular focus for academic debate and daily life in 1993.¹⁵ As discussed in chapter one,

¹⁵ In 1993, Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti (1993) published the book—*Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*.

the instrumental orientation of Putnam's social capital thesis has recently become much more obvious when social capital is widely advocated as an indispensable complement to the contemporary capitalist economy. As a result, social networks have been found to be a source of value that are often utilized to offset the costs of government malfunction and market failure (Somers, 2008). In the MD field, utility-based social capital thesis frequently serves as an expedient theoretical framework to legitimize MDPs' lending services, with the purpose of socializing "the costs of lending to poor women by providing them access to credit on the bases of social collateral obtained through membership in borrower groups" (Rankin, 2002, p.12).

Many MDP proponents credited their program successes with their encouragement of clients to build social capital (i.e., social networks) for women. In the same way, the Chinese government has implemented many public policies during the past few years through which to stress the importance of setting up the MDPs alliances (Dong, 2011; Gong, 2011). These MDP alliances are mainly targeted at bonding female entrepreneurs with each other as well as with the larger community for a better chance of subsistence and further development. Since my data indicate the affective nature of women's social connections, it would be interesting to explore the tension between women's social networking experience and the government's promotion of utility-based social capital building in the MD field.

While utility-based social capital framework generated an industry of inquiries about social capital, its capitalist ideological posturing and neo-liberal roots have not been sufficiently addressed. Adopting the ECM approach, the research finding about Chinese women's affection-centered social networking experience is especially important

in inspiring me to create a new way of problematizing utility-based social capital thesis deeply grounded in neo-liberal ideologies. In particular, I intend to examine how the prevalence of affection-centered social networks in the MD field can exemplify the crisis of neo-liberalism when the forms of immaterial, affective labor have emerged in the central place of the contemporary economic production but have been marginalized by neo-liberal ideologies.

To put it more accurately, neo-liberalism, as I will argue, constitutes a fragile ideological foundation implicit in utility-based social capital thesis, rendering affective social relations external to the contemporary capitalist production grounded in the common. Here, “the common” refers to not only material resources which are shared among all inhabitants but also immaterial assets which are produced for social interactions (Hardt & Negri 2009, p. viii). As Hardt and Negri (2009) explicitly asserted, the common has become the core of the contemporary capitalist system, emphasizing immaterial capital as the paramount source of social production. Principally, this indicates a history transfer from neo-liberal capitalist economy to the contemporary biopower-based social production. As I mentioned elsewhere, Chinese women’s entrepreneurship has started to play a key role in the state’s economy. Also, my data illustrate the importance of affection-centered social capital building in their self-employment careers. Accordingly, it is necessary for this study to follow Hardt and Negri’s arguments and thereby re-theorize social capital concept.

Perfect Storm of the Social Capital Phenomenon

This section briefly reviews the historical development of social capital theory, particularly presenting the gradually increasing popularity of the social capital

phenomenon instigated by the publication of several Putnam's ground-breaking works (1993, 1995, 1996, 2001). Though Putnam is most well-known for his research on social capital, he is by no means the first to coin the term. It is commonly believed that this term was first defined by Hanifan (1916) during World War I:

In the use of the phrase social capital I make no reference to the usual acceptance of the term capital, except in a figurative sense. I do not refer to real estate, or to personal property or to cold cash. But rather to that in life which tends to make these tangible substances count for most in the daily lives of people, namely goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit. (p. 132)

Putnam nodded in the instrumental orientation of Hanifan's conceptualization of social capital (Rae, 2002). This instrumental nature casts social capital as an investment that is made beforehand in the hope of benefiting individuals or the public someday in the future. Though Putnam's works were underestimated by some scholars as a repetition of Alexis de Tocqueville's well-known attempt of "managing the tension between liberty and equality by balancing our individualism with a healthy dose of working together" (Monti, 2007, p. 35), we cannot be blind to the contributions of his scholarship to the unprecedented popularity of social capital.

Generally, Putnam has alternated between seeing social capital as a private good at the individual level and as a public good at the collective level. In his well-known 1993 research *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Putnam suggested that social capital is in fact a both individual and collective good. The definition of social capital was refined as "those features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (p. 167). The research purpose of this study was to compare the causal significance of different nation-wide institutional transformations in affecting democratic progress. After

ruling out any causal significance of political power, he finally arrived at the widely known yet controversial research findings that the southern part of Italy lagged behind the north in economic growth and governmental performance. Putnam attributed this gap to the much greater number of social capital in the north. Based upon this cause-effect relationship, he shed light on the instrumental orientation, concluding that people are willing to engage in social capital building because it has instrumental value for not only individuals but also the community as a whole.

Although Putnam successfully brought attention to the positive impact of social connections at both individual and collective levels, he seemed to indulge in a celebration of finding out the wider economic and political implications of social capital. This directly speaks to why his theorizing of social capital was labelled as ideal. Further, his empirical research on the social capital phenomenon was often criticized for virtually ignoring the possibility that social capital building could probably have a negative effect. Taking some of these critiques to heart, Putnam wrote another famous essay titled with “*Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital*” (1995) as a sounding response to his detractors. Together with the publication of his landmark monograph—*Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000), Putnam carefully enriched and improved many of his earlier arguments with the purpose of addressing the decline of civic participation in the United States.

In these two publications, Putnam brought out two differentiated way of looking at the social capital phenomenon, which he termed as bonding versus bridging (Putnam, 1995, 2000). It is noteworthy to mention that bridging and bonding are “not ‘either-or’ categories into which social networks can be neatly divided, but ‘more-or-less’

dimensions along which we can compare different forms of social capital” (Putnam, 2000, p. 23). For him, bridging refers to outward-going networks among a heterogeneous group of individuals, whereas bonding refers to inward-going connections among similar people (Putnam, 1995, 2000). Also, Putnam (2000) suggested that these two different types of social capital cause different influences and consequences. Unlike bonding, which reinforces exclusive group identities within a certain homogenous social group, bridging social capital spans much more “diverse social cleavages” (p. 24).

Consequently, bridging can give birth to an inclusive institutional structure which is more democratic in political arrangement and which therefore has benign impacts for economic growth. In contrast, bonding would even produce negative outcomes on the condition that people from outside are deprived of an equal opportunity in accessing various resources. Shifting attention to both benign and negative types of social capital, Putnam did not change his utility-based approach to the social capital phenomenon. Instead, Putnam (2000) further emphasized it by saying that the “core idea of social capital theory is that social networks have value” for individuals and even the larger community (p. 24).

Somers (2008) characterized the popularization of Putnam’s social capital framework as “a perfect storm” (p. 215). Until the term was made popular by Putnam, it had not gained an overwhelmingly crowding-out power to monopolize the conceptual space through drowning out the other contested voices. The social capital phenomenon has finally culminated in an epistemological agenda of developing social capital as “a new theory and vocabulary that would name, explain, and ‘make true’ for political knowledge a source of value (inherent in social networks or norms) that would serve as an alternative to the power of the state” (Somers, 2008, p. 216). In this way, the utility-

based social capital theory has begun to gain a hegemonic influence in the social and political fields by virtue of its capability and potential of benefiting the society as a whole.

The hegemonic influence of Putnam's utility-based social capital thesis is deeply grounded in neo-liberal ideologies. Assuming a symbiotic relationship of between capital and the industrial paradigm of capitalist economy, neo-liberal ideologies narrowly define social capital as "an aggregation of contractually interacting individual agents" (Somers, 2008, p. 223). From this perspective, individuals get access to social capital when they are willing to nurture their social networks through investing in them. In order to maximize the returns, they make instrumental decisions contingent on how their investments of time, money, affections, and so on can generate much more profits at a future point. In this sense, social capital, which used to be an important concept and social phenomenon in the realm of sociological inquiry, has been incorporated in and justified by economic theories. Consequently, the utility-based social capital theory—the marriage of social to the economist term of capital—is constructed upon neo-liberalism that prescribes utilitarian ethics for the basic rules of social life.

There are two other major sources that further reinforce this hegemonic impact in the socio-economic and political aspects. First is Coleman's (1988, 1990) theorizing about social capital. From the economic perspective, Coleman framed social capital as the resources embedded in both family relations and community organizations. For him, social capital building benefits individuals and even the larger community in a way of facilitating children's development. Second is civic thought inherited from Tocqueville, Almond and Verba. Putnam's (1993) social capital thesis explicitly agreed with them,

regarding common civic virtue as the cornerstone of a robust American democracy. Despite Putnam's emphasis on civic value that can be traced back to either Tocqueville or Almond and Verba, his theories differ from all of them in several significant ways. The most important difference lies in the meaning of "social" that is at the central place of Putnam's social capital thesis. By the way, as many other critics (see, for example, Arneil, 2006) noted, this difference actually opens up a major way of critically examining Putnam's scholarship on social capital.

According to Putnam (2001), the social dimension of social capital goes beyond the forerunners' liberal notion of civic participation. Social capital building, for him, prescribes that "we transcend our social and political and professional identities to connect with people unlike ourselves" (p. 411). Simply put, it is an appeal for civic virtues, or more specifically, unity. This unity points to a transcendence of any differences, summoning individual people together under a homogenized set of shared civic values. Based on this, Putnam's social capital theory goes beyond the economist perspective of seeing social networks simply as cooperative self-interest. It is because that "our thirst for great community life outweighs our hunger for private backyards, discount megamalls, and easy parking" (Putnam, 2001, p. 412). Indeed, this resonates with the original intension of Putnam's social capital theory, claiming that social capital involves both an individual good and a public good.

Examining Prior Critiques of Putnam's Social Capital Thesis

Although the scholarly acceptance of Putnam's works gave the concept of social capital a superstar status, it has provoked many critiques that primarily concentrate on Putnam's ideal perspective of how social capital contributes to political democracy and

socio-economic prosperity. The critical review of these prior critiques in this section aims to disclose their common limit in ignoring Putnam's capitalist ideological posturing. On this account, my empirical research on Chinese female entrepreneurs' social networking experience would clearly illustrate this limit, and more significantly, suggest a new way of re-theorizing social capital.

Bourdieu was one of the first to advance a critical perspective through which to examine the instrumental feature of social capital theory. At the heart of his analysis, Bourdieu (1985) added social capital as another form of capital to reinforce his argument concerning the fungibility of capital: economic value and power are not necessarily produced by economic capital. In this sense, social capital was raised by Bourdieu to capture part of economic value and power that is produced and reproduced by social networks. Moreover, he made the theory of social capital a central component of his theory of class reproduction—the theory concerning the reproduction of the class-based social hierarchies and even as an essential element of his later argument about the hegemonic influence of neo-liberalism (Bourdieu, 1984, 1998). Here, Bourdieu drew attention to the role that history and power play in the construction of social capital. This resonates with the much earlier advocacy, urging scholars to “represent the consequences of social position” as an investigation into the historical formation of the socio-economic and political differences (Loury, 1977, p. 176). As a result, all forms of capital, with no exception to social capital, has to be examined through a critical lens so as to uncover the easily overlooked impact that historical power relations have on different social groups, especially those who were negatively influenced.

Adopting and furthering Bourdieu's critical perspective, many scholars embarked on persistent search for various injustice problems that are caused and disguised by Putnam's social capital theory. For instance, Arneil (2006) expanded Bourdieu's critical perspective beyond the limited focus on economic and political issues, highlighting racial and gender inequalities involved in the historically accumulated social capital; Somers's (2005, 2008) critique took a further step, and attributed the dark side of Putnam's social capital to a central principle of neo-liberalism—market fundamentalism according to which both economic and non-economic spheres of society should be managed solely by market principles. These critiques, though by no means an exhaustive list, are briefly reviewed here to indicate that social capital theorizing has been considerably encroached by ideological influences (especially neo-liberal investments). Somers (2008) added that inflicted by neo-liberal capitalism, social capital was often utilized to appropriate, reconstruct and tame Tocquevillean precepts of civil society—the once unruly nurturing ground for the goals, practice, and normative ideals of political democracy. Introducing and applying social capital into the political public sphere, Putnam's influential theorizing of social capital marks an invasion of market fundamentalism into the once autonomous territory of civil society and the study on social dynamics. As a result, civil society has been reduced to an aggregation of instrumental social network. Such a deliberate political project foreshadows a consequence of undermining the resistant potentials and capabilities of the Tocquevillean-inspired civil society. That is to say, civil society has begun to fall short of Tocquevillean precepts that originally expected an autonomous third place independent of both state coercion and market control. In response to the demands of neo-liberalism, the political project of establishing a social-

capital-based civil society has managed to shift the costs and risks of social problems from market and state to the shoulders of individuals, social groups, and communities. Simply put, civil society has been transformed by neo-liberal ideologies into the utility-driven aggregation of social connections, which are exploited to pay the costs of market externality and government failure. That means once a social problem occurs, civil society would resort to neither market nor government but rather blame itself for a failure in profiting from social connections.

Despite all the aforementioned critiques, Putnam's social capital theories have still gained an influence to be dominant as both a theoretical construct and a politico-socio-economic phenomenon due to his stubborn commitment to how social capital can contribute to social stability, political democracy, and economic growth. It is particularly noteworthy to mention that Bourdieu's critical perspective has almost gone from distinction to extinction as Coleman, Gary Becker, and Eleanor Ostrom rose to the prominence in the academic field of social capital theory. This change is significant because it foreshadows a trend of silencing the critical perspective through attracting most attentions to the benefits of social connections or collective activities. In this way, Putnam's theorization of the social capital phenomenon is further reinforced.

The increasingly overwhelming influences of Coleman (2000), Becker (1990, 1996), and Ostrom (1990) have led to the ascendancy of rational-choice/utilitarian perspective to the central field of social capital theory. The instrumental rationality is central to the rational-choice/utilitarian principles, involving people's pursuit of the most

cost-effective way to achieve a specific goal.¹⁶ In this sense, social capital is regarded as an aggregation of socially regulated behaviors that are utilized to deal with the negative consequences of market and governmental regulations, especially those relevant to the provision of public goods and assistances. This would be sufficiently exemplified by my research findings, especially by those concerning the women's responsibilities for both family sustainability and the state's socio-economic growth. Based upon these findings, I will assert that the rise of rational-choice/utilitarian trend is mainly due to the limited focus of prior critiques exclusively on the negative impact of Putnam's ideal theorization of social capital.¹⁷ In contrast, my critique comes to grapple with the vulnerability of the ideological foundation of Putnam's social capital thesis. Importantly, it has to be deeply grounded in Hardt and Negri's (2005, 2009) arguments about the rise of biopolitical social production and the accompanying ascendancy of immaterial resources (affection-centered social relations in this case). It is the historical transition from the industrial paradigm of capitalist economy to the contemporary biopolitical economy that gives an end to the hegemonic impact of neo-liberalism in contemporary capitalist accumulation.

Rise of Biopolitical Social Production

This section presents Hart and Negri's (2005, 2009) theoretical discussion about the emergence of biopolitical economic system. The affective nature of women's social capital building, which is indicated by my data on their social networking experience,

¹⁶ The word "instrumental" refers to an interest in gaining a full mastery of nature which would be expected to proceed in a predicted direction.

¹⁷ Though Somers's critique touches upon neo-liberal ideologies, it tends to identify the destructive outcomes that neo-liberalism has caused, rather than thwart the theoretical construction of social capital through challenging the fundamental role of neo-liberalism in social capital theory.

would be theorized by Hart and Negri's arguments as the basis for re-theorizing social capital concept at the end of this chapter.

The hegemonic effect of Putnam's social capital theory largely depends on the predominant role that capital is assumed to play in the neo-liberal capitalist economy. Socio-economic and political changes since the 1970s, however, have transformed capitalist society so that the material relations of production and exchange are not as hegemonic as they used to be in industrial capitalism (Hardt & Negri, 2005).¹⁸ Further, these changes have led to the fact that the material relations of production and exchange are "...subordinated to immaterial factors and goods" (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 132). In fact, the contemporary world capitalist economy is primarily defined by biological labor power, and more accurately, by the productivity of subjectivities and forms of life. In other words, the common, which acknowledges the central role of immaterial resources, has replaced the economic term of capital to be the foundation of contemporary social production.

To put this historical transition more specifically, Hardt and Negri (2009) proposed three major trends of the contemporary biopolitical social production, claiming that "biopolitical labor power is becoming more and more autonomous, with capital simply hovering over it parasitically with its disciplinary regimes, apparatus of capture, mechanisms of expropriation, financial networks, and the like" (p. 142). First, economic crisis is an effective way in which capitalist accumulation frequently operates to transform socially shared wealth or resources (e.g., natural resources) into private

¹⁸ Here, the relations are specifically those explained by the Marxian theory of value.

property. Second, in addition to tangible wealth like natural resources, the contemporary biopolitical production equally depends upon an exploitation of intangible socially-owned wealth (e.g., knowledge, information, affects, and social relationships). Third, contemporary capitalist accumulation takes place not so much at the level of an individual laborer as at the collective/collaborative level of social labor, mainly through “information flows, communication networks, social codes, linguistic innovations, practice of affects and passions” (p. 142). Taking these theoretical ideas to heart, my data analysis in the next section would be further theorized to explicate how women’s affective social capital building has emerged in the central place of the contemporary world capitalist economy with no regard of the party-state’s promotion of utility-based social capital theory in the MD field.

Searching for Social Capital in China’s MD

In order to locate the concept and social phenomenon of social capital building in the context of neo-liberal China, there has to be a detailed discussion of the indigenous *guanxi* (social connections 关系) phenomenon. Social capital, as a western-centric construct, has received widespread resonance in the academic research on Chinese social connections due to its apparent similarity to *guanxi* activities (Avery, J. Sun, Swafford, & Prater, 2014). Many scholars have jumped on the social capital “band wagon”, and conceptually associate *guanxi* with social capital through simply seeing *guanxi* as a Chinese interpretation of social capital (Qi, 2013). Nevertheless, adopting Western-originated concepts and scales and applying them to a Chinese sample miss opportunities for gaining a finer-grained and contextualized understanding of complicated politico-socio-economic phenomenon in China's context. Therefore, this section attempts to

explore how social capital conceptually relates to popular notions of *guanxi* and how this type of relation facilitate the operationalization of social capital concepts in the specific circumstance of post-1978 China.

Given the complexity, flexibility, richness, and even ambiguousness of the Chinese language, a plethora of *guanxi* definitions have been made—intellectual, epistemological, cultural, economic, sociological, religious, and political, each departing from various origins, each under different circumstances, and each with differentiated objectives. Several significant typologies further complicate the conceptualization of *guanxi*, guiding my research to depict and explore the multi-faceted nature of social capital building in the case of Chinese female entrepreneurs. For instance, the family vs. non-family *guanxi* distinction is closely associated with Chinese traditional culture. To put it more specifically, Confucius’s teachings are popularly associated with family-based *guanxi* (e.g., family, kinship, birthplace) as a basic and cardinal framework of social relations in a state, and therefore, as a prototype of non-family *guanxi* (e.g., friendship, colleagues, schoolmates) (Blau, 1964; C. Yang, 1999). The affective vs. instrumental dichotomy provides another perspective of Chinese inter-personal relations. The former is primarily driven by a commitment to the intimacy of social relations, whereas the latter involves an exchange of use-value (M. Yang, 1994, 2002; Pye, 1999). The informal vs. formal typology differs social networks characteristic of affect from those featured by legality and impersonality (Blau & Duncan, 1967; X. Zhou, Li, Zhao, & Cai, 2003).

Adopting a social-capital approach to the Chinese *guanxi* phenomenon, *guanxi* is defined as an array of social connections among individuals, which emphasize the central

place of Chinese feudal ethics in inter-personal networking activities. Popularly Confucius's teachings are viewed as stipulating a regulatory and supervisory paradigm of five cardinal relations (*Wulun* 五伦) — ruler-subject, father-son, husband-wife, elder-younger sibling, and friend-friend (Confucius, 1915). The first four are hierarchical, and the last one is an equal one. Situated in a Confucian concept of society, social relations are all governed by such a paradigm, and in this way, there are no strangers since the basic relation is at least friend-to-friend. These five cardinal relations work together to weave complex, interlocking human networking activities. This has been proven to be effective until today (S. Yang, 1993). Many scholars (e.g., Tu, 1985, 1998) wrote about Confucianism as a social and political philosophy. By contrast, Confucius's teachings are analyzed in this research project as a system of popular cultural beliefs that continue to have an influence on inter-personal relations in contemporary Chinese society.

Seeing from the *lun* perspective, S. Yang (1993) proposed a condensed taxonomy of *guanxi* in an effort to explicate the impact of Chinese traditional cultural upon contemporary inter-personal relations. A list of different types of *guanxi* ordered by increasing social distance is was presented as *jia-ren* (relations among family members 家人), *shou-ren* (relations with relatives, friends, neighbors, classmates, colleagues, etc. 熟人), and *sheng-ren* (relations with strangers 生人).¹⁹ Drawing from the three types of *guanxi*, this study intends to examine how Chinese traditional culture primarily in the form of Confucian ethics has affected Chinese female entrepreneurs' daily practice of *guanxi*.

¹⁹ Social distance implies a continuous measure of intimacy or closeness among individuals (Akerlof, 1997).

Furthermore, the understanding of the *guanxi* phenomenon has to take into account the fact that the Chinese party-state has repeatedly tried to transform inter-personal relations through policy making and propaganda apparatus. Until now, the norms and behaviors of inter-personal relations in China have actually remained to be under the remaining influences of the Maoist party-state's tough control on inter-personal relations. The period from 1949 to the late 1970s witnessed a historical transformation of inter-personal relations from being featured by friendship to being featured by comradeship (Gold, 1985; Vogel, 1966). Friendship is particularistic insofar as it connects a person with some special individuals due to their uniqueness. In such a type of social relation, people trust each other, and are willing to help others if necessary. By contrast, comradeship refers to "a universalist morality in which all citizens are in important respects equal under the state, and gradations on the basis of status or degree of closeness cannot legitimately interfere with this equality" (Vogel, 1966, p. 407). Apparently, comradeship supposedly transcends any particularistic inter-personal relations based upon locality, kinship, descent, and so on. More importantly, comradeship was politicized to a large degree when the Maoist party-state tried to incorporate it in the making of the new Chinese socialist man and thereby pursue the state's gigantic project of establishing the new socialist China. In a sense, despite comradeship literally involves mutual help and concern for each other, these moral values were made into a way, in which individuals pressured each other to comply with the norms and behaviors of becoming a qualified comrade.

As Vogel (1966) pointed out, the emergence of comradeship to replace friendship was accomplished through fear. The Maoist party-state effectively intensified the risks

that private communication would probably subject one to severe sanctions if such a type of information sharing posed a threat to ideological control and regime legitimacy in China. In such a situation, people gradually became unwilling to trust each other, because intimate inter-personal relations would put their friends as well as themselves in trouble. The Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976 marks the climax that the Maoist party-state's control over private communication reached (A. King, 1991). More than any other period of time since the founding of the PRC in 1949, the party-state during the era of the Cultural Revolution made an effort to completely remove the public/private divide and bring all aspects of private life under its political regulation. The regulation of inter-personal relations through fear was further intensified when most Chinese people participated in surveilling/self-surveilling private conversations as well as identifying friends and even family members as counter-revolutionary. The dispersion and penetration of gossip and surveillance techniques into people's social life gave birth to one of the most important Cultural Revolution legacies on people's social life—the pervasive existence of distrust and cynicism in the Chinese society.

One aspect of the 1978 socio-economic reforms focused on a removal of part of the Cultural Revolution legacies that caused an erosion of the social order and public civility. The politicization of inter-personal relations during the pre-1978 era, however, has had a remaining yet discernable influence on social life until today (Gold, 1985). On the one hand, since political power began to loosen its grip on social life and economy, the survivors of the Cultural Revolution resumed their friendship. On the other hand, tension and distrust have never faded in all types of inter-personal relations. Fearing the re-emergence of the political and social turmoil in the future, Chinese people have never

forgot to keep vigilant on others. Under leftist influence, they not only avoided any discussion on potentially sensitive issues, but also collected information on others as a preparation for the next political campaign.

There has been an optimistic prediction that easy access to the Internet around the world has the potential in increasing the frequency and quality of inter-personal communication in the New Millennium. The remnants of the Cultural Revolution legacy on inter-personal relation, however, have not disappeared but rather have been to some degree reinforced by the government's Internet surveillance and censorship. Surveillance measures enable authorities to identify, warn, or even or imprison those individuals held accountable for sharing any sensitive information (MacKinnon, 2011), and the censorship program is specifically aimed at forestalling any transfer of dangerous information at the collective level (G. King, Pan, & Roberts, 2012). By doing so, the widespread use of the Internet has actually opened up a new area where the Chinese leftist legacy on inter-personal relations take effect. In the rest of this section, my data on Chinese women's social networking experience analytically attend to this issue, examining to what extent the party-state's repeated interventions in social life have shaped the nature of those women's inter-personal relations.

Compared with the aforementioned concept of social capital, it is easy to understand that *guanxi* is analyzed in this study as an embodiment of social capital heavily laden with not only Chinese traditional culture but also Chinese political dynamics. In other words, studying *guanxi* would serve as a lens through which to explore how the concept and phenomenon of social capital building has been adopted and adapted in the specific context of post-1978 China. There is a lack of widely accepted

approach, if possible with international comparability, of identifying and measuring social capital, largely caused by too many ways of defining it (Siegler, 2014). Also, recent works on *guanxi* in general focus on to what extent *guanxi* can be effective or instrumental at inter-personal level or firm-to-firm level (Avery et al., 2014), and there is a lack of studies that explore how *guanxi* has actually been shaped by the party-state's official ideologies and has caused changes, if any, to people's lives, that is Chinese women's daily and business lives in this case. Having identified the gaps in *guanxi* research, this study has to design a new set of research strategies contingent on the context of neo-liberal China.

As I reviewed prior studies on social capital building in chapter one, my research design has to learn from the studies of Servon (1998) and Jurik et al. (2006) on the American MDPs' initiatives. These two research projects commonly focused on organizational-level initiatives of social capital building. Significantly, they both drew upon Putnam's bridging/bonding analytic rubric, examining two types of social capital building—intra-program networking (social networks that connect clients with each other within the program) and extra-program networking (social networks that connect clients to both individuals and institutions outside the program). My study joins this line of inquiry, attempting to examine the two major forms of social capital formulated in those women's daily practice of social networking. Also, my research design and findings would come to serve as a comparative empirical work on this issue, investigating how the MDP model and its accompanying ideologies of social capital building have been strategically deployed in the specific circumstance of neo-liberal China.

Before proceeding to the presentation of my research findings, it is necessary to succinctly explain why this study continues to rely on Putnam's bridging/bonding analytic framework despite it ultimately endeavors to problematize his utility-based perspective of social capital. As is manifested by the review of Putnam's social capital theory, he expanded his original argument through the bridging/bonding analytic rubric in order to highlight how social capital may not always produce benign outcomes. The purpose is primarily for reinforcing the instrumental orientation of his social capital theory. My use of the bridging/bonding analytic framework serves as a convenient way of explicating the multi-dimensionality of women's social capital building. The purpose, however, is not to follow Putnam's attempt of justifying utility-based social capital, but rather prepare for an exploratory investigation into the nature of social capital building in China's MD. More accurately, I want to examine if their social networking initiatives were targeted at bonding them with those who they had already known prior to their involvement in self-employment—what I refer to as bonding social capital, or if they went beyond their prior social networks and connected with individuals or organizations from the larger community, what I refer to as bridging social capital. In doing so, my data would gain a much greater analytic potential to approach the complexity in the nature of Chinese businesswomen's social capital building.

In order to answer the aforementioned questions, my interview topics were deliberately tailored to concentrate on what the focus of women's social networking experience is, how the respondents nurtured their social networks, why they did this, and with whom these social networks were fostered. As is presented in the next few section of

my research findings, the respondents were found to place much more emphasis on bonding social capital

Bonding Social Network

In this section, I examined the extent to which the respondents engaged in maintaining their social connections with those individuals that they had already known. Significantly, all my respondents were actively engaged in such a type of social capital building, primarily through keeping or even strengthening social connections with their family members, old friends, colleagues prior to being laid off, or school classmates. This served as a convenient way of providing them with both tangible (i.e. capital) and intangible resources (e.g., access to business or policy information, consulting service, emotional assistance). For instance, when I walked into Xiaowei's restaurant close to a primary school for the first time, I saw an old couple preparing several kinds of vegetables under her instruction. Because they both looked like Xiaowei, I guessed that they were her parents. After she briefly told me her five-year experience of running the restaurant, I got to know that she, as a middle-aged urban woman, had been laid off from a SOE and then had started to do business due to economic difficulties. Also, my guess was confirmed that the old couple were her parents, and she talked a lot about how they had helped her business during the past few years:

If you asked from whom I have gotten most help while doing business during the past few years, I would admit that my parents are indeed an important part of my business and daily life... My parents have always been my most reliable support whenever I made any sudden and big changes of my life that were not understood by anyone else. Although they are retired SOE workers and can only make ends meet, they almost gave me every cent they had saved when I first started my business... More significantly, they really cared me, and this absolutely cannot not be measured by money. As you saw a few minutes ago, they are always trying their best to come here and help me with anything that they can do. To be honest,

I really do not want them to do this for me, because the long and contentious chore of running a small restaurant is not good for their health at all...In spite of this, they would look for any excuse to come here, such as doing some cleaning simply for killing time, helping me with my business as a way of working out, and so on. I really appreciate their assistance and do not know how to pay back their benevolence.

All the other respondents agreed with Xiaowei, making an endless list of all kinds of assistance they had acquired from their parents. Significantly, working for them without being paid, as I found, is one of the most common ways in which their parents gave their help to them. As is clearly shown by Xiaowei's response, her parents had assisted her business with not only a limited amount of financial resource but also free work.

Interestingly, it is especially noteworthy to point out that Xiaowei's parents were not required by her to work with no pay. Rather, they assisted their daughter's business against her will, and more importantly, considered such assistance to be a way of caring their daughter.

Though I did not happen to meet the female entrepreneurs' parent in the workplace every time I went there to observe and interview them, the responses from all the other respondents indicate a crucial role of their parents in their self-employment careers. For instance, Xiaofang, the middle-aged urban female owner of a small-scale laundry, started to get involved in entrepreneurship once she had been laid off from a large-scale SOE ten years ago. During the past decade, her parents had almost worked for her as two regular employees, but they had never been paid. As Xiaofang talked to me with mixed feelings:

Honestly speaking, I have never stopped to persuade to leave here. My mom retired several years ago, and my dad retired two years later than her. Ever since they retired, they showed up almost every day to help me... I am always feeling fortunate to have such good parents who will never hesitate to give me whatever they own, but this indeed makes me feel guilty sometimes. Having worked in the

SOEs for thirty or even forty years, they are supposed to take a good rest and enjoy the rest of their life right now. Sometimes, I wanted to pay them, but they were reluctant to get any payment from me. I know, what I owe to them is definitely not a matter of money. I will never pay up such debt since they had almost given me a second life by a persistent support of my business.

Like Xiaowei's parents, Xiaofang's mom and dad actually had become two major helpers, and more accurately, two major employees of her laundry. Different from the only regular employee working in Xiaofang's business, her parents almost did the same work but refused to be paid. In her words, such assistance gave her a kind of mixed feelings that persistently maintained and strengthened her close relationship to her parents.

In addition to working together in the workplace, my data indicate another way that the female entrepreneurs stayed connected to their parents is through frequent visits back to their parents' home. Take Xiaofang for instance, since she employed a young female employee there, it was convenient for her to visit her parents when they did show up in her laundry. Especially during a few Chinese traditional holidays, she would rather stay with her parents and offer overtime pay to her employee for working on holidays. As she said:

I visit them once a week and have a family reunion dinner with all the other members of the extended family. Indeed, this is one of the most significant ways to keep maintaining a close relationship with all of them in such a fast-paced society... More significantly, my parents can get a chance to discuss with me about something intimate that may not be appropriate to be said in the workplace. Especially when I encountered difficulty in either doing business or living my personal life, they would comfort me with unaccustomed gentleness. Only in this situation, can I behave like a daughter under the protection from their parents, rather than a strong, competent businesswoman.

As this quotation illustrates, Xiaofang would like to prefer staying with her parents rather than spending all her time in the workplace because she insisted on seeing an intimate

communication with her parents as a big part of her business and daily life. All the other respondents were closely tied with their parents no matter how far away from home they were living and working. For the respondents with the original urban household registration, they said that they had visited their parents in person at least twice a month. For instance, Xiaowei had to visit their parents not as often as Xiaofang did. One of the most crucial reasons is that she did not hire anyone else to take care of her business when she was out.

Even for the respondents with the original rural household registration, they currently lived far away from their hometowns but were still in a very close contact with their parents. For instance, Hui have migrated into Nanjing nearly 10 years ago and acquired urban residency status 5 year ago, but her words clearly illustrated a strong tie associating her with her hometown and parents:

I will never forget my lovely hometown since my parents are still there. Though I go back there at most twice a year, I am keeping in touch with my old parents and caring them in many other ways. For example, I give them a phone call at least once a week. Since the year before last, they have learned to make a video call via the Internet. In that way, I can hear their voices as well as see them. Additionally, I sent my son back to my hometown on summer and winter breaks. My son is indeed a perfect medium through which to strengthen the link between my parents and me. By doing all of these, I do not feel we are living too far away from each other.

For Hui, living a long distance away from her hometown was absolutely not a problem with her close tie with her parents. Drawing upon a few common methods of communication (i.e. phone call and video call), Hui and her parents kept each other informed on what had recently happened around. Also, the grandson was appropriately utilized as an effective way of winning her parents' hearts and thereby reinforcing the relationship among them.

Apart from keeping in touch with their parents, my data show that maintaining friendship constituted another way to the building of bonding social capital. For Xiaowei, a jam-packed schedule was never an excuse for staying away from her best friends. In such an inter-personal relationship, she acquired both material and immaterial support from her close friends especially during a rough patch. As she recalled:

No matter how busy I am with my business, I would never ignore my friends...I cannot promise to meet them up every week, because you know that everyone has to take care of his or her own personal life. Nevertheless, if they give me a call and ask me out for a dinner, I would try my best to adjust my schedule...I firmly believe that a friend in need is a friend indeed. This good saying tells the exact story that happened to me. Some of my good friends constitute a really invaluable treasure for my self-employment career. Not to mention financial support, more often than not emotional assistance is much more important and sometimes cannot be acquired from my parents. You know, not everything is appropriate to be confessed to my parents, so my good friends can be a trash bin for my complaints. They are always encouraging me to move on.

Like her, all the other research participants reported that a few good friends were in a close and frequent contact with them even though business life in fact did not allow them to spend too much time undertaking social networking activities. For instance, Hehua, the middle-aged female owner of a barber shop, talked about an equal importance of maintaining friendship to doing business:

Although I cannot spare as much time as I did before to hang out with my friends, I always see friendship as important as my business career because my persistence in pursuing my business success is largely derived from my best friends' unfailing encourage.

In the same way, Yawen, who was laid off six years ago and currently owned a small convenience store, was impressed by one of her best friends' emotional support when she was laid off. As she said, this motivated her to maintain a frequent contact with those friends even though doing business often left her drained:

She kept telling me her story of being re-employed in a private enterprise and later starting her own business, and it did help me a lot to move on and resume my life. Such help during the difficult moment will forever be treasured, and I cannot afford to lose contact with her no matter how busy I am with my business.

Furthermore, it is very interesting to notice that the vast majority of the women agreed with Xiaowei and Xiaofang to affirm that financial aid was considered not as important as emotional support while they were nurturing their bonding social capital. As Xiaowei's and Xiaofang's responses indicate, emotional support was commonly seen as the bedrock upon which their self-employment careers were established. To put it in Xiaowei's words, they were able to behave as either a daughter or a fellow woman in front from their friends and parents. In doing so, they felt much more relaxed and comfortable than sticking to the stereotyped image of a strong, self-dependent, and competent female entrepreneur. This interesting finding inspired me to explore why immaterial assistance was much more appealing than material resources to them, and how this preference has affected the nature of social networking in my sample of female entrepreneurs. A detailed discussion will go back to this point later. Also, their situated performance urges me to examine how doing entrepreneur and doing gender have combined to shape their social identity construction. An in-depth analysis of this issue will be presented in the next chapter.

Bridging Social Network

When it came to broader forms of social networking such as linking them with individuals or organizations outside the women's previous social networks, the female entrepreneurs in my sample were less active. My respondents reported that they had known a few other self-employed persons while doing business, and to link with them constituted these women's accumulation of bridging social capital. For example,

Xiaohua, a middle-aged owner of a small restaurant, discussed her personal attitude toward expanding her social networks in the workplace as follows:

I have been super busy with my business. Not to mention getting to know many new friends, I do not even have time to take care of my family. However, I happened to, and more accurately, had to know a few other self-employed persons after starting my self-employment career. After all, you cannot completely ignore someone very close to you. Even though I do not have to beg for help from other businessmen right now, I have no choice but to smile and say hello to them whose shops are located close to mine. After all, a harmonious environment nearby is good for my business. They may help me out one day. Who knows?

Her words of "have no choice but to smile and say hello to them" suggest that the extension of her social networks under such a circumstance, if any, was to some extent against her will: she did not want to spend any time to know new friends but rather focus on her own family and business life. The other respondents agreed with her on this point. For instance, Xiaowei insisted that "to be honest, I do not want to waste any time to chat with them and would probably never get any help from them because we are not in the same line of business"; Weiwei, who was running a small restaurant together with her husband, complained, "It would save me a lot of time if I do not have to get along with them, and I really do not want to do it if there is any other choice available"; Fangfang, who was a middle-aged businesswoman running a barbershop, optimistically considered such a form of social capital building as no more than "a windfall which would possibly hand you good fortune one day in the future but your daily life absolutely cannot depend on".

Interestingly, a few other studies (see, for example, Chuang, 2013) on bridging social capital were conducted in the Pan-Chinese context, finding that people had to work and live their family life that did not leave any time to make new friends. These researchers, however, were inclined to interpret this finding simply as a dimension of

work-life conflict. The similar finding, however, was interpreted in my study as women's unwillingness to extend their social networking in the workplace for two major reasons. First, as the above quotations explicitly showed, the female entrepreneurs were inclined to see making new friends in the workplace as the last choice if they really could not be able to avoid. This viewpoint is much more obvious in Xiaohua's explanation that making friends with nearby self-employed persons was to a large extent out of courtesy. Xiaohua used to be a kindergarten teacher, and this past working experience further strengthened the first impression that she left with me—a very easy-going middle-aged urban woman with a soft voice. Due to the privatization of the public kindergarten in the early 2000s, she lost her job and began her small restaurant near a primary school. Since many of her customers were students, she said that “a kind and easy-going image is very important, and to get along with nearby self-employed persons is a large part of it”. As an old Chinese saying goes, "harmony brings wealth (*Heqi shengcai* 和气生财)". She just put this saying into practice, recognizing that it is good for her business by treating nearby self-employees with courtesy. In her words, she was unwilling to “waste any time making friends with them, but did not want to be an inaccessible woman who would frighten those little kids away”.

Similarly, as is revealed by Weiwei's discussion about her way of getting along with nearby business owners, she was inclined to consider it to be the last option that she could have, and more accurately, a basic principle of becoming a successful businesswoman that she had no choice but to observe. She said:

Although many people say that businessmen specializing in the same line of business are impossible to make friends with each other, I am trying to have a friendly relationship with them. I do not want to see this type of social networking

initiative as completely money-driven, since I have not earned any money from connecting with them and do not expect to do that. Nevertheless, who knows exactly? If future customers come by my shop and see our fellow businesswomen talking to each other happily, they are more likely to see me as an easy-going woman and to do business with me. On the contrary, to shouting expletives at each other probably scares away customers...More importantly, every businessman has to understand that this is a basic principle of succeeding in doing business. Even though I am not that type of person who enjoys making new friends, I have to do it.

As this quotation shows, Weiwei's way of getting along with other businessmen was boiled down to the bottom line that the respondents had to follow in order to succeed. Once she embarked on entrepreneurship, she even had to conform her ways of inter-personal communication to the basic norms of becoming a successful female entrepreneur. For her, the divide between private life and work was blurred. Given all these responses, there is no reason to ignore many possible benefits that making new friends in the workplace could bring to their businesses. These benefits include a good strategy of attracting customers, leaving future customers with a good first impression, future help from nearby self-employed persons, and so on. In spite of this, my data still show that the respondents were more or less pressured to engage in the building of bonding social capital, because getting along with nearby self-employed people was a prerequisite for their business successes.

Second, my interpretation has to be historically contextualized in the much broader context that the Chinese party-state's policy making and propaganda apparatus have frequently tried to transform people's social life. As I mentioned elsewhere, the penetration of cynicism and distrust in inter-personal relations resulted from the worn-out yet still existing socialist control on inter-personal relations, imposing barriers to an extension of social networks (Gold, 1985; A. King, 1991). Despite the respondents did

not directly touch up the residue of such Cultural Revolution legacy on social life, an unwillingness to trust new friends is clearly stated in their discussions about the ambiguous and flexibly transformed meaning of “friend”.

They called nearby self-employed persons “just friends”, while “real friends” were their childhood friends, classmates, and prior SOE colleagues. The difference between these two types of friendship is that the respondents considered nearby self-employed friends not as trustworthy as their old friends or family members. For instance, Fangfang’s clarification of a clear-cut difference between “real friends” and “just friends” is a good case in point. She said:

My parents taught me the art of making friends when I was very young. They said I had to learn to make friends with all kinds of persons in this society. I can give you a warm hug when I met you, but it does not mean that we trust each other.... In fact, there is a very clear sheet in my mind that reminds me to treat my friends differentially. I would sacrifice everything for my real friends, but I will never give anything more than a hug to those who are just friends.

As this quotation suggests, Fangfang placed much less emphasis on “just friends” than on “real friends” because she did not consider the former as much trustworthy as the latter. Further, she drew a clear line between “just friends” and “real friends” in a euphemistic way of refusing to make friendship in the workplace. In a sense, she downplayed the importance of her daily practice of bridging social capital. For her, it was not worthwhile to waste too much time making friends with those who she was not likely to trust in the future. As she explained:

I never expect to make real friends in the workplace. First of all, it is a common sense that we should not easily trust any stranger nearby because you cannot know what he is thinking about. As a good saying goes, “a distant journey tests the strength of a horse and a long task proves the character of a man” (*Luyao zhi mali, lujiu jian renxin* 路遥知马力,路就见人心). A real friendship has to go through a lot of tests over the time. For those self-employed people, there is

always a possibility that some of them will move away one day. Where can I find them out? Secondly, everyone knows that the relationship among nearby businessmen is primarily competitive rather than collaborative. This is especially true if we are in the same line of business. So, I do not want to waste any time nurturing a real friendship with them.

Consistent with Gold's (1985) and A. King's (1991) arguments, her principles of making friends exemplified the atomizing effect that socialist regulation have imposed upon inter-personal relations. In her words, the workplace was not appropriate for nurturing reliable relations among strangers because it did not allow them to build up trust from scratch. Combining with the first reason that making friends in the workplace was the basic requirement of doing business, the respondents' emphasis on trust suffices to justify my interpretation that their passive engagement in bridging social capital was not simply an issue of work/life conflict but rather resulted from their unwilling to do it. Noticing the central place of trust in their inter-personal relations, it would be interesting to examine its nature. This question will be fully answered when I discuss the difference between material and immaterial assistances later. Given the residue of socialist control on inter-personal relations, it is necessary to examine how it has influenced the female entrepreneurs' social networking experience.

Dysfunction of China's MDPs in Social Capital Building

As was discussed in chapter three, the Chinese MDPs differ from pioneering MDPs in the other countries, because they are designed and operated by the street-level governments. Also, the central and local governments have promulgated a series of public policies in an effort to further facilitate women's self-employment programs during the aftermath of the global economic crisis in 2008. As the review of prior studies manifests, there has been a few arguments that MDPs more or less engaged in connecting

their clients with each other as well as linking them with the outside community (see, for example, Jurik et al. 2006). Countering these arguments, my interviews with the female entrepreneurs suggest that neither bonding social capital nor bridging social capital derived from the government's policy support. As the respondents depicted, a dysfunction of the Chinese MDPs in social capital building refers to their failures in connecting those women with each other as well as link them to the larger community outside the programs.

The Chinese MDPs, as I introduced elsewhere, originally served laid-off females. Though they expanded the scope of their customers towards unemployed urban residents and rural-to-urban migrants later, the services they provided were not dramatically changed. As the respondents reported, these services included policy consulting, small business lending, basic livelihood allowance supplying, technical training, and employment information sharing. None of these respondents, however, said that the services provided by the local MDPs had helped them expand their social networks within the programs. For example, Mei, a prior SOE employee and currently middle-aged female owner of a small convenient store, described her daily practice of social networking as follows:

To pull strings (*La guanxi* 拉关系) is necessary for doing business. Almost every businessmen knows that it is very very significant for them to closely connect with those who possess all kinds of or much greater amount of needy resources. Equally significantly, if I am lucky to be able to pull strings with either a bank, the local bureau of industry and commerce, or the local administration of taxation, it is probably going to save me many troubles while turning to these organizations for help. Anyways, going back to your question, the local MDP has never done anything to assist me with either maintaining old social networks or establishing new ones. So far, I have not found that the officials there focus on this issue.

Though Mei's response did not touch upon any service that the MDP provided, it is in conflict with an important role that the government expected to play in fostering bonding social capital. Also, Mei implicitly mentioned the possibility of applying *guanxi* in an instrumental way of linking her to cadres or institutions. For her, an establishment of such instrumental relations would probably produce a few benefits for her business through getting a much easier access to multiple resources.

Different from Mei's neglect of the services, Fangfang provided a detailed depiction of her personal experience of participating in various activities (e.g., professional development workshops, policy consulting sessions) organized by her affiliated MDP. Even though she confirmed the MDP's effort of connecting their clients with each other as well as them with staff, it actually turned out to be an unsuccessful attempt. As she said:

Following the party-state's policy support, our MDP did try to urge us to communicate with each other within the organization. The staff of the MDP advocated such connections by repeatedly saying that have more friends means an expansion of our access to various information or resources. For many times, I have been required to get together with other female entrepreneurs. We were organized for attending professional development workshops and high-level government officials' presentations concerning the party-state's most recently issued policies and laws. The staff there were nice, and they tried to make friends with us when we got together for an activity. Nevertheless, we started from 'get together' and ended with 'get together', and nothing happened after that. It was almost impossible for me to make real friends with strangers in this way, because trust could not be arranged by the government...Every attendant clearly knows that we were there for fulfilling some inescapable tasks imposed by the government but not simply for making friends.

According to Fangfang's response, the MDP endorsed an instrumental approach to bonding social capital, emphasizing how such social connections (especially those among program clients) can benefit their clients businesses. Also, Fangfang clarified why the MDP's efforts could not be able to facilitate their social connections with either other

clients or the staff. She laid stress on the crucial role of trust in extending her social connections within the program. All the other respondents, like Mei, found it impossible to know about and readily trust a female entrepreneur as their affiliated MDPs had expected. It is because they had classified both MDP clients and staff as strangers when they first got to know them. Lack of trust made it difficult for the MDPs in my sample to transform this type of inter-personal relationship into friendship where mutual trust is in the central place.

Furthermore, my interviews with the urban female entrepreneurs indicate the government's futile attempt of fostering bridging social capital. Xiaofang discussed the costly yet unsuccessful attempts of her affiliated MDP to associate her with individuals or organizations from the outside community mentioned. Like Fangfang, she attended those activities in the way of "fulfilling tasks imposed by the government". As she said:

It is not fair to negate the local street-level MDP's painstaking efforts of trying to connect us to the outside community. In reality, my affiliated MDP has strictly followed the lead of both the central government and the party especially through associating our female entrepreneurs with a few key officials of government departments and agencies. For several times, the MDP officials even rented a bus and took us to a brown-bag training session operated by the local bureau of industry and commerce. All their efforts, however, were ultimately in vein...I mean, it is quite easy to understand that we cannot become friends with cadres, because their social status are much higher than ours. That is to say, people, who belong to two different worlds, cannot have anything in common and thereby have nothing to establish a mutual trust.

As is suggested by Xiaofang's response, despite the central government's plan of fostering bridging social capital was indeed implemented at the local level, it did not produce the outcome that the central and local governments had expected. Interestingly, she perceived cadres as located in a very high positioning in social pyramid. For her, this perception resulted in the impossibility that she could make friends with cadres, sufficing

to explain her passive attitudes towards the MDP's attempt to foster female entrepreneurs' *guanxi* practice.

Small business lending provides another way in which MDPs in my sample attempted to facilitate their clients' connections with individuals or institutions outside the programs. Different from the peer lending model that was fervently advocated for the potential of creating social networks (Ashe, 2000; Friedman, 2001; Jurik, 2005), the Chinese MDPs in my sample adopted the individual lending model. Through interviewing the urban female entrepreneurs, it is interesting to find that many of them knew about the small business loan program, but none of them were willing to apply for any loan from the MDPs. For instance, Xiaohua said:

I am not interested in the small business lending program but I know it. The staff repeatedly introduced it to me, and they even invited me to a few information sessions together with other female entrepreneurs... I do not see how much different it is from the loans from formal financial institutions. Individual borrowers get loans from banks. MDPs are actually the bridge between borrowers and banks. Banks are in charge of a thorough inspection of potential borrowers' credit history and business performance. The only benefit for borrowers is that the central and local government investments lower the interest rate.

Having heard that an individual lending model rather than the peer lending model was adopted by the Chinese MDP, I was also curious to know if they both had the same potential to foster bridging social capital. As a result, I posed this follow-up question to Xiaohua, and she answered:

The staff have told us for a few times that we would have a chance of making friends with bank clerks while going through the procedures of small business loan application. Personally, I do not believe it is true. Not to mention bankers, bank clerks earn much higher salaries. We are two completely different types of people. I cannot imagine what I can chat with them, leave alone making friends and establishing a mutual trust.

According to Xiaofang's introduction to the small business loan service, her affiliated MDP adopted the individual lending model that ruled out the possibility of fostering social connections among their clients. Consistent with Xiaofang's pessimistic comments on the possibility of making friends with cadres, Xiaohua's response denied that the female entrepreneur could be able to make friends with bank clerks due to lack of basis for nurturing mutual trust.

Overall, from the perspective of the respondents, the Chinese MDPs in my sample failed to foster social capital building. Despite the central and local governments' repeatedly stress on the instrumental dimension of social capital building, many of the respondents were found to lay much more stress on mutual trust rather than on utility in their daily practice of social networking. Apart from lack of time and energy, it would be interesting to examine how mutual trust was played out in the female entrepreneurs' experience of social networking. Also, I am interested in what made possible the urban female entrepreneurs' resistance against the party-state's national advocate for the key role of the MDPs in fostering their social capital building.

Affective Nature of China's Social Capital Phenomenon

The party-state's failure of fostering social capital building in the MD field makes it necessary to examine the complexity in the nature of Chinese female entrepreneurs' daily practice of social networking. Consistent with M. Yang's (1994, 2002) arguments about the affective nature of *guanxi* practice, my interviews with the female entrepreneurs suggest that their daily practice of social capital building was affection-centered. In the affectively charged relationships, people place an emphasis on the long-term bond of the relationship, and such a bond mainly consists of trust, inter-dependence,

and mutual responsibility. Despite both tangible and intangible favors are inevitably involved in the affection-centered relationships, they actually serve as the means rather than the ends of maintaining these relationships. Consequently, this research finding contradicts the Western instrumental approach to social capital that sees personal gains and losses as the ends of nurturing the relationships. Furthermore, my data on the urban female entrepreneurs' *guanxi* practice suggest that the affective nature of *guanxi* derives from the influences of Chinese traditional culture (especially those of Confucius teachings), which is apparently in a dynamic interaction with not only the residue of the Cultural Revolution legacy on inter-personal relations but also the diffusion of neo-liberal ideologies in post-1978 China.

Among all the affectively charged inter-personal relationships, friendship is featured by an emphasis on trust. People involved in such relations are mutually attached and committed. As Fangfang's description of the long-term friendship with her childhood friend is illustrative of how mutual trust made her friendship different from the utility-based inter-personal relation. She said:

A real friendship absolutely cannot be measured by money. As I told you, my best friend helped me a lot when I started my own business. She lent me a large amount of money that I used as an important part of my start-up capital. In addition to this financial assistance, her emotional support was much more precious and important. To be honest, I could probably borrow money from someone else or the nearby MDP if I did not care interest. The emotional support, however, cannot be acquired from anyone else...I would say if she encountered the same difficulties, I would not hesitate to give her whatever I have as she did it to me. It is because we have been good friends ever since we were still in the primary school. We have experienced too many things together, so we share both good and bad memories with each other. In other words, our friendship has undergone innumerable tests as we grow up, and it definitely cannot be measured by money. That is why she is almost the most dependable person in this world for me, and vice versa.

Such an inter-dependent bond, which consists of mutual trust, serves as a good case in point to explicate the affective nature of the respondents' daily practice of social connecting. Consistent with M. Yang's (1994, 2002) arguments concerning the affectively charged *guanxi* practice, Fangfang's description of her friendship indicates that both material and immaterial resources acquiring from her friendship were absolutely not the ends of her friendship.

As Fangfang declared, mutual trust was founded upon their common life experience, especially the ups and downs they had shared with each other. This is exactly the most significant reason why one would try to help the other out by any means when she was in trouble. Her friend's support of her business is a good case in point. Significantly, her friend's assistance made her feel grateful and got her prepared to return the favor in the future. By following the codes of mutual trust and inter-dependence, frequent exchanges of favors would repeatedly happen via the friendship. By saying "she is almost the most dependable person in this world for me, and vice versa", Fangfang implicitly re-emphasized that mutual trust derived from and served as the basis for such an exchange. Consequently, I argue that an exchange of favors, as Fangfang's example illustrated, was definitely not the ends but rather the means of maintaining and reinforcing the friendship. In this sense, Fangfang's affection-centered friendship is explicitly in conflict with Putnam's utility-based concept of social capital. It is because Putnam's (2000, 2001) asserted that the establishment of mutual trust is supposed to be contingent upon the rational calculation of costs and benefit (more specifically, the instrumental principle of reciprocity). In other words, personal gains are the ends of nurturing utility-based social relationships.

Moreover, Fangfang's emphasis on the importance of common life experience sufficiently explains why the respondents treated "real friends" and "just friends" differentially. Compared with "real friends", "just friends" shared less life experience with the respondents. Although they did not completely rule out the possibility that "just friends" would become their "real friends" in the future, there had not been reliable mutual trust there until then. Due to lack of mutual trust, they cared "just friends" much less than "real friends". For example, Meimei and her husband, who were laid off six years ago, specialized in desktop repair services. She got to know a nearby businesswoman one year ago, and they shared a few common topics of conversation only because they were in the same line of business. She talked about to what extent she cared the nearby self-employed woman:

I knew her just a year ago, and we are both very busy with our own businesses every day. Most of our communications focused on our business, because we shared some business information with each other...I do not really know about a person unless we experience a lot of things together and our friendship goes through many tests. That is why I do not trust her and treat her in the same way that I treat my best friends... Everyone, however, has a chance of having good friends at any time in his life, so I might get to know another real friend who is a businessman or businesswoman nearby as the life goes on.

Consistent with Fangfang's emphasis on common life experience, Meimei asserted that a few common topics of communication on doing business were far from being able to have her fully know about the nearby self-employed woman and thereby nurture mutual trust with her. Lack of trust resulted in much less attention that Fangfang paid to the nearby businesswoman. In her opinion, only through experiencing many things together, can people set up a real friendship based upon mutual trust.

The difference between "just friend" and "real friend", as the respondents (e.g., Fangfang and Meimei) suggested, corresponds to the rules of friendship that is defined by

both Chinese traditional culture and the Cultural Revolution legacy on *guanxi*. According to Confucian ethics, trust decreases in proportion to enlarged social distance when *guanxi* practice go beyond the realm of *shou-ren* and expand into the field of *sheng-ren*. In the respondents' words, they were more likely to trust old friends rather than new ones. It is because they knew much more about old friends, and the dependability and reliability of their friendship had endured many tests especially during the hardest time of their lives.

Also, treating the two types of friends differentially has to be ascribed to the pervasive existence of distrust and cynicism in contemporary *guanxi* practice. As I previously discussed, this reason to large degree derives from the remaining yet discernable impact of the Cultural Revolution upon inter-personal relations. The Maoist party-state's harsh control on private communication during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976 has remained to remind Chinese people not to easily trust strangers for the sake of self-protection. This is much more obviously illustrated in Fangfang's explanation. Unless the relationship with the nearby businesswoman underwent enough tests, she would always assume that the businesswomen was not trustworthy. Therefore, I assert that this assumption not only provides a telling example of the atmosphere of distrust permeating the contemporary social life, but also fuels the perpetuation of such an atmosphere. In pretty much the same way that distrust was assumed to be predominant in the relationships between strangers, Chinese traditional culture and the Cultural Revolution legacy have combined to influence the urban female entrepreneurs' daily practice of social networking.

Noticeably, Fangfang and Meimei both claimed that friendship had to go through the test of time. A few other respondents also joined to substantiate how the test of time would work. For instance, Yawen clarified:

As time goes by, a few things would come up to test whether we are real friends. For example, friends have to be willing to share a few important business information with each other. Borrowing money is another good opportunity to test if he is your best friend. Even though she does not know if I am able to make a repayment, she is still willing to lend money to me. By doing this, she is your real friend.

Xiaohua added:

Being real friends is not the same as being business partners. If she is my real friend, I will never do a complex calculation concerning whether we earn equal benefits. For instance, she helped me with tax issues, and in return I shared my customers with her. The two favors involved in the exchange does not need to be equal. What is at stake is that we both appreciate each other's favor and get prepared to return it in the future. As time passes by, such an exchange goes over and over again. In this way, our friendship will be ultimately established.

These two responses addressed the test of time, providing another clarification of how friendship is gradually established. As opposed to Putnam's (2000, 2001) utility-based social capital theorizing, Yawen and Xiaohua both claimed that a real friendship takes its root in a gradually strengthened affection-centered bond. More significantly, such a bond has to be able to stand the long-term test where frequent exchanges of favors take place between friends.

In addition to friendship, the parent-child relationship is another kind of the affection-centered relationship that relies more on obligation than trust. Recalling Xiaowei's and Xiaofang's aforementioned responses, they both discussed that the parent-child relationship was substantiated by their parents' persistent assistance with their businesses. More significantly, their parents showed benevolence to them through a provision of both material and emotional support without an anticipation of reciprocity.

For instance, Xiaofang's parents even declined her repayment by doing unpaid jobs as a support of her business. In this case, underlying a supply of both material and emotional support was the parents' obligation of caring their child. For Xiaowei and Xiaofang, getting help from their parents was in fact a way to witness and experience their parents' practice of showing benevolence to their children. Meanwhile, children involved in such a type of the affection-centered relationship have to maintain filial piety to their parents. For Xiaowei and Xiaofang, they paid frequent visits to their parents' home in an effort to sustain the obligation code. Countering Putnam's (2000, 2001) utility-based perspective of social capital, an exchange of favor was not the ends but rather the means of nurturing the relationships with their parents. Again, this makes clear the clash between the affectively charged inter-personal relations and the Western instrumentality-based social relations.

It is noteworthy to point out that the parent-child relationship, as the respondents suggested, was considerably influenced by Chinese traditional culture. Seeing from the perspective of Confucian ethics, family is the most intimate inner relationship that is maintained by "blood, marriage, or adoption and having a common budget and common property" (Lang, 1946, p. 128). The rule of exchange within the realm of family was dominated by the code of *Ren* (affection and benevolent 仁). As Xiaowei's and Xiaofang's responses indicate, the code of *Ren* was interpreted in their parent-child relationships as a sense of obligation or that of mutual responsibility. Playing a parent role, they have to show their benevolence to their child through supporting their self-employment careers. Importantly, parents supported their children's businesses without anticipating any return. On the other side, one must be loyalty to his/her family and show

filial piety to his/her parents. For Xiaowei and Xiaofang, multiple ways of showing filial piety included buying their parents some gifts, trying to get together with their parents as frequently as possible, taking care of them when they were sick, and so on.

Having examined the affective nature of the respondents' *guanxi* practice, it is understandable that the party-state's adoption of the Western utility-based social capital theorizing has not successfully fostered their social networking initiatives. The government shifted its attention to urban female entrepreneurs' daily experience of social capital building with an emphasis on how it would benefit their businesses. Nevertheless, an affective bond, as the respondents suggested, still remained to be the basis for their social networks. To put it differently, the instrumental principles of cost-benefit analysis upheld by the party-state did not drown out the combined influences of Chinese traditional culture and the Cultural Revolution legacy on inter-personal relationships.

To put it in the respondents' words, trust, inter-dependence and mutual responsibility cannot be built up simply by a few activities organized by the local MDPs. Rather, they have to be gradually accumulated in their daily lives and stand the test of time. As Xiaowei declared:

My affiliated MDP seems to be in a hurry to transform its training sessions into a best-friend assembly line, but it is doomed to be a failure. I cannot imagine that I would have a real friend simply by joining several sessions together with other self-employed females. There is no way to build up trust so fast.

Yawen's words touched on the same point,

I stayed in a session for two hours with the other twenty women. After that, I did know a few of them, but that is it. I really cannot be optimistic to say that we will be real friends, because it usually takes me at least five years to have a real friend if I am lucky enough.

Based upon these responses, I conclude that the female entrepreneurs in my sample insisted on their usual way of *guanxi* practice regardless of the overwhelming influences of the party-state's public policies and propaganda.

Furthermore, Fangfang's response suffices to be an answer to the question why the urban female entrepreneurs in my sample were found to appreciate immaterial assistance more than material support acquired from their social networking activities. Since immaterial assistance (e.g., emotional support) more often than not can only be acquired from affection-centered social connections, the respondents tended to consider it to be the decisive factor that makes their social connections radically different from those utility-based ones. In addition to Fangfang's response, my interviews with the other females suggests the topic of *renqing* (human feelings 人情) that serve as another way of substantiating the abstract form of the affective bond. Meanwhile, it re-emphasizes the affective bond as the foundation of nurturing and sustaining social connections among the women participating in my study project.

The Chinese word *renqing* can be roughly translated into human feelings, but it has much more complicated meanings contingent on the distinctive socio-economic and cultural context of China. As my interviews manifest, I tend to generally define *renqing* in this study as a medium of social exchange through which persons have to abide a set of social norms and get along with each other. Through analyzing a few quotations from the participants' responses, I would highlight how *renqing* differs from the utility-based principle of mutual reciprocity, and therefore reinforce my argument that the type of social connections among the research participants is in conflict with Putnam's instrumental view of social capital. First, while mutual reciprocity allows each other to

get a roughly equal benefit, *renqing* emphasizes the flexibility in the amount of exchange for each time. As was recalled by Hehua,

When my parents lent money to me, they had never expected me to return it. Although I wanted to return it later, they refused... I love them regardless of whether they have given me any money. Also, I really appreciate the financial support that they gave to me, and do not know how to repay their benevolence... One year after I borrowed money from them, I earned approximately 20,000 yuan in total and spent 4,000 yuan buying a new television for them. Although it was worth much less than the money they lent to me, it was indeed a big surprise for them. As I said, they had never anticipate a repayment. They loved it so much and wanted to show it to everyone by saying “that is the gift given by my daughter”.

As this quotation illustrates, the parent-child relationship absolutely cannot be equal to the debtor-creditor relationship. For one thing, Hehua’s parents actually gave the money as a support of her business in the name of loan, for another Hehua’s filial piety to her parents was represented in the gift for her parents. What is at stake is absolutely not a calculation about which side got much more from this exchange, but rather the exchange in itself that places emphasis on mutual obligation in an effort to strengthen the parent-child link.

Second, the type of favor involved in the exchange is also flexible. As I argued above, since the parent-child relationship does not correspond to the reciprocity code, parents, who show benevolence to their children in advance, do not require an equal benefit in return, let alone to the specific type of benefit. In Hehua’s case, giving the television was not the only way to repay her parent’s enormous support of her self-employment career. As she said,

They brought me up, spent a lot money marrying me out, and gave me almost every cent they had collected to support my business. I really do not know how to repay their benevolence. I am pretty sure that I will owe a lot to them forever. I will spend my whole life repaying what they did to me. My heartfelt love is probably the most precious thing that I can give back to them. As I told you, I pay

a visit to their home at least twice a week no matter how busy I am with my business. I take care of them whenever they got sick. I am just doing whatever I can do in order to let them know we care them so much.

As this quotation indicates, Hehua in the parent-child relationship had enormous discretion in selecting the specific form of filial piety as a return to her parent's benevolence. These possible forms included frequently getting together with her parents, taking care of them if necessary, and so on. This flexibility constitutes the norms that she observed to preserve the long-lasting connection with her parents.

Third, the instrumental principle of mutual reciprocity requires a pre-determined time when the debtor should repay, but *renqing* does not specify when one person should repay the favor to the other. Like Honghong's example that she would spend her lifetime repaying her parents, Hui insisted that she should devote her whole lifetime to caring her friend,

When I had failed in looking for a new job for several times after being laid off, it was my best friend who consistently encouraged me to stand up to all kinds of difficulties ... We used to work in the same SOE and were laid off in the same year. All these common experience had brought us closer to each other, and had made it easier for me to take her suggestions of becoming self-employed. With no exaggeration, her encouragement and suggestion have consisted one of the most important turning point in my life ... Although she has never asked anything in reward for her help, I will never forget her favor and try to spend my whole lifetime to care her in the same way that I care the other family member.

As Hui recalled, despite her best friend did not specify when she should get something in reward, Hui actually had started to see caring her as a lifetime task. That is to say, a flexibility, or more accurately, an ambiguity in the time when one should pay back is in fact a strategy for extending the duration of a friendship. As long as one always feels grateful for the other's favor, a long-term commitment to such a relationship would last forever.

Accordingly, *renqing* serves as a way of concretizing the abstract form of affection embedded in the women's social networking activities. In more specific terms, *renqing* takes its root in the socio-economic and cultural context of post-1978 China, highlighting the distinctive way and content of the women's *guanxi* practice. Significantly, this way of *guanxi* practice and its content remarkably differ from the instrumental calculation of costs and benefits, and therefore collide with Putnam's utility-based social capital theorizing.

Despite the limited and non-representative nature of this sample, my data analysis nonetheless generated some interesting and significant findings that can serve as hypotheses for future investigations. Adopting the ECM (Burawoy, 1991), the arguments that I make in the rest of this chapter are boiled down to a further development of my research findings. Basically, the ECM is utilized in this chapter to reflectively examine the relationship between data and theory, proposing a way of problematizing and improving prior theories. To put it more specifically, this chapter departs from the existing utility-based perspective of social capital, and then manifests how it is challenged by the empirical study of Chinese female entrepreneurs' *guanxi* practice. It ends with a reconstruction of social capital concept by turning my data analysis into part of the new theoretical insights.

Biopolitics-based Critique of Putnam's Social Capital Theory

Based upon the aforementioned research findings, the section presents a new critique of Putnam's utility-based social capital theory and prepares for a reconstruction of the social capital concept at the end of this chapter. Noticeably, this critique differs from prior critical reviews by its special focus on neo-liberalism. I will argue that neo-

liberalism, as the ideological foundation of the utility-based social capital concept, has been increasingly obsolete when it is recognized as being incompatible with the emergence of contemporary biopolitical production.

The Western utility-based social capital theorizing has been adopted and adapted by the Chinese party-state as a way of intervening in women's daily lives, repeatedly emphasizing how social capital building can benefit their self-employed careers. Also, it has served as an attempt of integrating post-1978 China with the contemporary global capitalism, advocating the free market philosophy of a minimalist state as a solution to socio-economic problems. To put it more specifically, a series of social connections, which bonded female entrepreneurs together as well as linked them to the outside community, has been planned by the party-state in an effort to replace the governments to be a sufficient supply of both public goods and business assistance. As explicitly evidenced by my data on Chinese urban female entrepreneurs' *guanxi* practice, their social connections to some extent did ease the Chinese government's workload of improving women's socio-economic status and sustaining the state's economic growth.

For instance, the parent-child relationship and the relationship between friends both constituted a reliable supply of material and emotional support for those women's self-employed careers. Also, as many of the respondents said, they made friends with some nearby self-employed individuals. There was a possibility that they could probably help each other via sharing both business information and customers. Without exaggeration, all these types of social networks emerging from those women's entrepreneurship experience to some extent have reduced the government's burden of not only fostering their economic self-sufficiency but also sustaining the state's economic

development. This was especially important in the aftermath of the 2008 global economic crisis when the declining demand of foreign markets had caused a real problem to China's export sector and the mighty manufacturing industry as a whole (Chow, 2010). In short, those women's *guanxi* practice has actually substantiated the importance of women's entrepreneurship in the state's economy, falling prey to the party-state's control and appropriation. That is to say, it has created a new way in which women's productive labor is subjugated and exploited by the party-state.

In spite of this, my data show that the respondents engaged in social capital building in an entirely different way from the Western utility-based perspective of social capital prescribes. I want to highlight that this is where the Chinese party-state's embracement of Putnam's utility-based social capital theory collides with the combined impacts of Chinese traditional culture and the Cultural Revolution legacy upon social life. In more specific terms, those women's engagement in social capital building did not result from the party-state's policy making and propaganda apparatus. My interviews with them clearly show that the central and local governments' efforts (e.g., basic livelihood allowance supplying, small business lending, technical training, policy consulting) failed to foster their social networking initiatives. It is because that those women did not follow Putnam's (2001) advocacy that required them to act like business capitalists and develop their social networks into the market type of resource exchange. Instead, Confucian ethics and the remnants of the Cultural Revolution legacy converged to gain prominence in the realm of inter-personal communication, bringing the affective bond to the central place of Chinese urban female entrepreneurs' *guanxi* practice.

Theoretically, the clash between women's affective social networks and the Western utility-based social capital theory poses a challenge to neo-liberal ideologies that are at the very core of Putnam's utility-based social capital theory. The Chinese party-state's control of women's labor force has in fact been targeted at the social dimension of their self-employed careers, and more accurately, their daily practice of social capital building. As I argued elsewhere, those female entrepreneurs' *guanxi* practice to large extent has replaced the government's policy support to be the driving force of women's entrepreneurship in particular and that of the state's economy in general. I can further extend this argument on the condition that women's self-employment has played a vital role in both the contemporary global economy and China's economic growth (Zhi, Z. Huang, J. Huang, Rozelle, & Mason, 2013). Extra-market social relations, in the case of Chinese urban female entrepreneurs' *guanxi* practice, have started to disconnect with the economic logic of capital and thereby get rid of the exclusive status of a valued source of streaming utility. Consequently, the material relations of production and exchange have given way to immaterial factors that are exemplified by the central place of women's affectively charged social connections in social production.

This corresponds to the last two of the three major trends of biopolitical production proposed by Hardt and Negri (2009). According to these two trends, contemporary social production has shifted from the industrial paradigm of capital production to biopolitical production, relying on an exploitation of intangible socially-owned wealth (i.e. immaterial factors) at the collective level. The female entrepreneurs' daily practice of *guanxi*, as I discussed before, was targeted at maintaining and strengthening the affective bond that consists of mutual trust, responsibility, and inter-

dependence. An exchange of both material and immaterial resources was involved in their daily experience of social networking, but it actually served as a means rather than the ends of nurturing their social networks. To put it much more accurately, social capital per se rather than its potential of being transformed into the utility-based form of asset is subject to the appropriation and exploitation of the state's economic growth. In this sense, those Chinese women's participation in self-employment exemplifies the fact that China's contemporary economic development—one of the top players in today's world economy—has been driven and organized by an exploitation and oppression of women's immaterial socially-owned wealth at the collective level (i.e. women's collective involvement in social production via self-employment).

In Hardt and Negri's words, my research findings concretize and substantiate the argument that capital has no longer been able to capture and organize contemporary social production grounded in the common. Based upon neo-liberalism, social capital has become a source of utility-generating asset that has the potential of benefiting community well-being and productivity. Neo-liberal ideologies, however, attempt to marginalize the social dimension of inter-personal relations as peripheral to capitalist social production. From this perspective, social capital is not productive unless it is processed through the economist term of capital. Countering this argument, my empirical study in this chapter indicates that the productivity of those women's *guanxi* practice has taken its root in affections and therefore has become independent of market principles (especially the economist term of capital). As a result, I argue that contemporary biopolitical capitalist production has exceeded the domain of neo-liberalism when capital is unable to capture and incorporate productive social capital in the industrial paradigm of capitalist

production. To put it simply, neo-liberalism has actually become a fragile foundation upon which Putnam's utilitarian view of social capital theorizing is founded. This provides not only the rationale but also the starting point of a reconstruction of social capital theory.

Re-thinking the Common and Re-theorizing Social Capital

Since the immaterial relations of production and exchange gains prominence with the advance of the contemporary biopolitical production, I want to shed light on the possibility that social capital would ultimately stay away from the colonizing effect of market principles. More importantly, a re-theorizing of social capital concept should have the potential to redeem Tocqueville's promise of transforming social capital into a source of civil society independent from both market and state. As my research findings suggest, this possibility has actually come into being at least in the specific socio-economic and political circumstance of China's MD. Specifically, I argue that the party-state-civil-society-market complex rather than the party-state-market complex has actually functioned to channel on-going social forces in the contemporary Chinese society and to provide the bedrock for nurturing the rise of the Chinese female entrepreneur. Consistent with Ngai's (2005) argument that the post-1978 reform era witnessed an array of short-lived, spontaneous resistances at the grass-roots level, the female entrepreneurs in my sample were found to take on daily initiatives of social networking as a series of resistances at the collective level against the ideological influences of the party-state's policies and propaganda. In a circumstance in which confrontational actions at the collective were severely suppressed, a motley collection of spontaneous, transgressive actions were taken by the businesswomen to nurture social connections in a different way

from that is required by the party-state. I firmly believe such a form of resistance has to be a fertile land where relevant theoretical works should thrive.

Though I do not intend to bring out a fully developed re-theorizing of social capital, I prefer to provide a possible way in which future works should follow. Hardt and Negri's (2009) notion of the common could probably be an appropriate foundation of reconstructing social capital theory. I argue that the most important task of re-theorizing social capital is to revitalize civil society as a major source of rebellion against both market control and state coercion. Putnam successfully draws attention to the immaterial aspect of social connection or network, but his utility-driven perspective tends to conceive it as peripheral to the primary forms of capital, and more exactly, as external to the process of social wealth production. In contrast, the idea of the common is capable of bringing social capital back to the core of biopolitical social production because it has the potential of highlight the social production of both tangible and intangible resources as a real source of resistance against market and state coercions. In this way, the colonized civil society can be rescued through opening up a third autonomous place between government and market.

CHAPTER 5

RULES OF BECOMING A SUCCESSFUL FEMALE ENTREPRENEUR

Through the government's advocacy for utility-based social capital building in the MD field, the daily lives of Chinese urban female entrepreneurs have been incorporated in the party-state configuration/re-configuration of power relations. By doing this, the party-state aimed to continue and justify women's oppression during the post-1978 era. Adopting the perspective of social identity construction, this chapter presents another way of examining how the party-state's annexation with contemporary global capitalism has constituted women's daily lives. Through an in-depth investigation into those women's daily experience of getting involved in entrepreneurship, I want to understand how the making of the Chinese urban female entrepreneur emerged, how it became popular, how it changed in the process, and how it constituted Chinese women's daily lives.

From the perspective of the respondents, my data depict the historical transfer from the socially privileged construction of the Chinese working-class woman to that of the Chinese urban female entrepreneur. Following the ECM principles, this transfer at the individual level reflects the party-state's strategic interventions in Chinese women's social identity construction during different historical periods. Also, my data on the making of the Chinese urban female entrepreneur provide a window into the political-historical process of globalization. To put it more specifically, it serves as a good case in point to explicate how the global trend of neo-liberalism has been invested in post-1978 China and has influenced Chinese people's daily lives.

Prior concerns, still present in today's research about the relationship between entrepreneurship and women's social identities, specifically focused on the gendered nature of entrepreneurship, addressing how women's business activities constitute gender relations and gender identities (see, for example, Bourne & Calás, 2013; Bruni et al., 2004). My research project presented in this chapter joins this line of inquiries, exploring how the gendered nature of entrepreneurship has been manifested in the specific context of China during the neo-liberal era. Following a gender approach to entrepreneurship (Bruni et al., 2004), the formation of the Chinese female entrepreneur, as the data indicate, features the intertwined practice of doing business and doing gender. Also, drawing from both Foucault's analysis of governmentality and the Bourdieusian concept of habitus, the data analysis attempts to shed light on the dynamic process of social identity construction in which both the party-state and women themselves have simultaneously engaged.

The following presentation of this chapter consists of five sections. First, it presents a literature review that sets up the theoretical framework for data analysis. Drawing from Foucault's conceptualization of governmentality and the Bourdieusian notion of the habitus-field-social identity complex, the theoretical framework is constructed in order to explicate the making of the Chinese urban female entrepreneur. In light of these theoretical claims, those women's social identity making is examined as not only the constructive influence of the party-state's public policies and propaganda, but also the self-constructive role of their agency. This is followed by the analysis of my data that addresses the complexity in the historical transfer from the socially privileged construction of the working-class to that of urban female entrepreneurs. Such a historical

transfer, as my data manifest, witnessed that the party-state's construction of women's social identities had shifted the focus from the working-class identity to gender. In spite of this change, Chinese women have never been freed from oppressions, discriminations, and exploitations. On the other side, the research findings suggest that the agency of the female entrepreneurs has been more or less constrained by the party-state's macro-level influence but still has been effective in striving for a work-family balance. Based on these empirical findings, the third section presents two concluding remarks on the gendered nature of China's MD and the interaction between gender and class. Finally, this chapter ends with a brief summary of the findings from this study.

Habitus and Intersectionality in Neo-liberal China

Intersectional Perspective of Gender and Class

The intersectionality perspective or the recognition of multiple interlocking identities, which is understood in the context of power relations, is "the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made thus far" (McCall, 2005, p. 1171). In a very broad sense, intersectionality is a heuristic device through which to understand boundaries and hierarchical structure of social life (Anthias, 2013). It was initially coined by Crenshaw (1989, 1991) to study the production and reproduction of gender oppression of women of color, and more specifically, the overlapping of multiple categories of domination. Later feminist theories further advanced the evolution of intersectionality, expanding its application in non-Western social and cultural circumstances. Among them, Hill Collins's scholarship has contributed the most to the unprecedented popularity of intersectionality in feminist

theory and method. Collins (1990) utilized intersectionality to illustrate various forms of interlocking oppressions in people's daily lives.

However, there has been a substantial number of recent literature, disclosing the limitations of existing intersectionality theories and offering alternative methodological and theoretical approaches to research (see, for example, Anthias, 2013; Davis, 2008; Erel, Haritaworn, Rodriguez, & Klesse, 2011; Shields, 2008). These voices commonly point to the viewpoint that an intersectionality perspective often looks like a traditional factorial research paradigm but fails to fully take into account the notion of mutually constituted categories. In other words, these flawed intersectionality perspectives focus on the listing of categories that intersect, but ignore "how" questions concerning this plurality—how these categories intersect. This study will attend analytically to this plurality, utilizing Bourdieu's notion of habitus to illustrate how gender interacts with class.

Using Habitus to Explain How Gender Interacts with Class

Habitus is of outstanding insight in the culturally inflected approaches to class, and these approaches are highly sensitive to gender-based inequalities. This accounts for my attempt of disclosing the intersections of gender and class through critically embracing the Bourdieusian approach to social hierarchy. As Bourdieu (1990) suggested, class divisions constitute a hierarchical social space in which people "...according to [the objective] position they occupy...understand the logic of their practice and...how they will classify themselves and others..." (p. 50). Namely, class is a human-involved process of social stratification, combining the objective influence of social structure with the

constructive role of people's corresponding perceptions and appreciations.²⁰ Bourdieu coined another term habitus to describe the way that society is imprinted and encoded in human subjects in the form of power-laden dispositions and becomes classed. It was stated as:

systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practice and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (Bourdieu 1992, p.53)

As this definition suggests, habitus is clarified with three key points. First, habitus carries a historical importance. In so far as a human subject is endowed with habitus, his/her incorporated scheme of perception (appreciations, preferences, tastes, etc.) is the combined product of collective and individual history (Bourdieu, 1986, 2005). Second, habitus is generative due to its indebtedness to history. Since schemes of perception are “an active presence of the whole past”, habitus is “an acquired system of generative schemas” which engenders thoughts, perceptions, and actions consistent with objective conditions (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 95, 1992, p. 56). Third, the dialectic relation between “structured structure” and “structuring structure” indicates the relationality of habitus. By being relational, habitus makes sense only in an interaction with specific fields, which are various socio-economic and institutional contexts (Bourdieu, 2005). Power relations happen through this interaction of agency and structure so that people experience differentiated power relations depending what dispositions they express and reproduce in

²⁰ Bourdieu (1977) thought of the constructive role as the active presence of the process in which human agency both influences and is limited by objective structures. In contrast, objective structures refer to the objective existence of (cultural, political, social, or economic) rules and systems which to some extent constrains the full play of human agency.

a given circumstance. Also, habitus is relational in another sense: a habitus interacts with other habitae (Lawler, 2004). Specifically, multiple habitae are in an unequal interaction so that some of them are normalized and the others are sidelined. Extending Collins's (1990) argument that gender, race, and class are modes for the practice of power relations, this study adopts the Bourdieusian concept of habitus to treat gender and class as two different domains of power where people's social identities are shaped. In each domain, people express and reproduce certain dispositions depending upon what outcomes the practice of power relations causes in the specific circumstance. Instead of treating these two domains separately, I examine the interaction among multiple habitae by investigating how the shifting link between two domains influences the construction of the Chinese female entrepreneur.

There has been a group of British scholars (see, for example, Lawler, 1999, 2004, 2005; McNay, 1999; McRobbie, 2004, 2004; Skeggs, 2009; Skeggs, Thumim, & Wood, 2008) who utilized habitus to see social identity construction along the lines of gender, race, and ethnicity as classed. However, utilizing habitus in this way, as Anthias (2013) claimed, is arguably in danger of being Eurocentric and ethnocentric. In contrast, my use of Bourdieu in the context of China comes to serve a comparative empirical work on this issue and hopefully can better extend the application of his ideas in the non-Western world. Another limit of their studies is that they were inclined to overemphasize either structure or agency in social identity construction. We should look no further than Lawler's study on media representations of British women's political protests. Lawler (2004) stated that "...there are some people who, by virtue of their habitae, are able to pass judgment...on others, and to make that judgment count" (p. 113). To put it more

clearly, not only does objective structure construct social identities, agency also engages in an active self-construction. The Bourdieusian concept of habitus, however, is distorted by Lawler's overemphasis on how objective structures confer certain identities on female, which ultimately leans towards objectivism. Also, to ignore a much closer inspection of agency contradicts her original intention of equally focusing on structure and agency. Learning from these scholars' inappropriate adoption of habitus, my study tries to pay attention to agency in order to keep a balanced focus on structure and agency.

Agency is a socio-political account of experience, allowing an investigation into “the contradictory forms of identification and affective force that underlie these ambivalences” (McNay, 2004, p. 189).²¹ Since agency is not simply an opposite of structure, its mediatory feature makes it possible to overcome the dualism of mind and body, physiological and psychological, and objectivism and subjectivism. Specifically, it is actually “a generative theory of subjectification” through which human subjects respond in an active way to multiple uncertainties embedded in the interaction between agency and social norms (McNay, 2000, p. 161). On one hand, agency is expected to be an emancipatory force which is able to expose the underside of objective structure — the state's coercive regulation of people's daily lives (Fraser, 2011). On the other hand,

²¹ Butler's (1993) notion of performative agency has had a great influence on feminist theories of gender identity for her influential critique of the post-structuralist trend of equalizing human agency with the mechanical inscription of social orders. In this study, I prefer Loic McNay's idea of agency because it is constructed upon an improvement of Butler's theory of agency. McNay (2000) found that Butler actually had replicated the post-structuralist mistake because her notion of the temporality of the performative is equivalent to “a property of sedimented symbolic construction rather than as an anticipatory element inherent in praxis” (p. 35). Based on this critique, McNay (2000) claimed that gender identity is enacted at the reflexive level, resonating with Bourdieu's commitment to addressing the antinomy between objectivism and subjectivism. By clarifying it in Bourdieu's words, McNay saw gender identity construction as “a form of practical mimesis: the body believes in what it plays at: it weeps if it mimes grief” (2000, as cited on p. 39). Therefore, McNay's notion of agency complements the post-structuralist account of social identity construction through emphasizing the active role of identity self-construction.

agency is basically contextualized in structural and cultural properties that objectively shape the situations human agent involuntarily encountered (Archer, 1995, 2003, 2007; Valdez, 2011). On this account, this study resolves to investigate how the making of the Chinese female entrepreneur is shaped by the interactive relation of the party-state to women's daily and business lives.

Furthermore, an inappropriate use of habitus is also caused by not systematically scrutinizing the complexity in the constructive role of objective structure (especially that of neo-liberalism). These scholars (see, for example, Lawler, 1999; McNay, 1999; Skeggs et al., 2008) commonly saw their works as against theories of reflexive identity transformation. Nevertheless, their utilization of habitus tends to romanticize agency, foreclosing an analysis of the fact that enacting agency inevitably gets human agents (especially the marginalized) involved in oppressive social norms and structures (Pfeffer, 2012). Namely, the Bourdieusian concept of habitus emphasizes that reflexive individuals are inescapably embedded in and impacted by power relations. These inappropriate uses of habitus calls for a critical investigation into neo-liberal governmentality which has considerably affected gendered identity making.

Neo-liberal China's Construction of Women's Social Identities

My study of gender in this chapter draws upon a gender approach to entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is historically embedded in the symbolic space of maleness (Bruni, 2004) and, as Connell (2005) noted, it is often constructed as a form of hegemonic masculinity which is an idealized Western manhood linked to such attributes as independent, innovative, aggressive, competitive, and indifferent to pain. Prior studies—even those on female entrepreneurs—engaged in “othering” the non-male,

rendering hegemonic masculinity invisible and therefore justifying a universal and agendered model of economic rationality (Bruni et al., 2004). Simply put, entrepreneurship comprises a gender subtext which makes gender invisible and reproduces the Western normative manhood (Bruni, 2004). In this regard, utilizing the gender approach to entrepreneur means an investigation into the gendered nature of entrepreneurship through identifying doing gender and doing entrepreneurship as intertwined practice (Bruni et al., 2004). In the case of my inquiry, I seek to explore how the way that the role of entrepreneur is played out relates to the performance of gender.

Assuming a sensibility moulded by West and Zimmerman's (2009) ethnomethodological take on "doing gender" and Butler's (1993) performative concept of gender identity, my study treats gender as a situated performance which is no longer an attribute of the individual but rather a social practice done in power-laden human interactions. Identity, therefore, is seen as a heterogeneous mechanism of discursive and material practice (Bruni & Gherardi, 2001). Under these definitions, people do gender within social interactions in ways that they render their gender identity legitimate but at the same time what can be done is confined by social norms (mainly heterosexual). In fact, the flexibility and fluidity of gender identity has gained prominence as the meanings of masculinity and femininity constantly shift among differentiated contexts. Also, gender is done and redone as a response to the strictly delineated norms imposing on sex categories (West & Zimmerman, 2009). To put it differently, human agency plays an active role in revising the normative expectation of how a man or woman should be performed. Furthermore, class provides another means of doing/redoing gender. It interacts with gender norms to constitute stratification schemes that socially construct

women of a certain social class (Trautner, 2005). My analysis of the gendered social identity making in this chapter aims to explicate this interaction shaped by both agency and structure.

Furthermore, my inquiry into the making of the Chinese female entrepreneur has to be situated in globalized capitalism, and more specifically, its most recent historical moment—neo-liberalism. Social identity has been recognized as part of neo-liberal governmentality which manages populations. In the specific Asian circumstance, Ong (2006) contextualized Foucauldian governmentality within neo-liberalism. Specifically, she sees neo-liberal governmentality as a problem of optimization that pursues and justifies the maximization of profits from the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations. In practice, it is applied as two optimizing strategies—“technologies of subjectivity” and “technologies of subjection” which target at the making and self-making of ideal social identities in the specific time-space context for the purpose of profiting from global capital (pp. 6-7).

I argue that the two strategies actually configure relationships between governing and being governed, or in Bourdieu’s (2005) words, the dialectic relation between structured structure and structuring structure via cutting through such antinomies as subjectivism/objectivism and structure/agent. Ong’s ideas therefore can be utilized to operationalize the habitus-field-social identity complex through substantiating the dialectic relation between structure and agency in the specific circumstance of neo-liberal China. In this sense, the party-state’s domination assumes a nature, self-evident status through its interaction with women’s agency, which is embodied in the dispositions of individuals and then influences their social identities. By tying Ong’s arguments to my

study, I am able to examine how women's entrepreneurship and social identities are constructed through the party-state's integration with globalized neo-liberalism. On the other side, women's agency may be where women are found as disturbing the party-state's impact.

Disappearance of the Working-class

Since I was born and grew up in a working-class family, I got used to hearing that people around me were inclined to frequently use the term "working-class people" in their self-descriptions. Take my father for example, when I was little, he repeatedly talked to others, "I, as a working-class person, am employed in a large-scale SOE and have to make a contribution to the state's economic growth". I still remembered that such an association of the working-class identity to the employment status had remained to be effective in SOE employees' self-descriptions of their social identities until the early 1990s. Due to this personal experience, I became interested in how the urban female entrepreneurs in my sample would consider the working-class identity when they were not employed by the SOEs.

When I talked to my respondents, they did not mention anything about the working-class identity. This absence of class further motivated me to investigate their perceptions of the working-class identity. When I asked them about how they considered their relationship to the working-class identity, it quickly became clear that all respondents—whether from the urban or rural areas associated their affiliation with the SOEs as the main criterion of their working-class identity. Twenty-six of them with the original urban household registration had been affiliated with the SOEs in the past but had been laid off within the past decade. Since they were not SOE employees any longer,

they did not consider themselves to be working-class people. It was also clear from their responses that working in the SOEs had delivered the promised gender equality of the pre-1978 era.

Mei's response is largely representative on this issue. As introduced in chapter four, Mei was laid off from the SOE nearly eight years ago, and was running a small convenient store. When I asked why she decided to become self-employed, Mei recalled the experience of being laid off:

The economic pressures forced me to start my own business...I used to work in a SOE. Before I was laid off, everything was OK and everyone was equal... We were all working-class people, enjoying a life-tenured employment as well as steady income and benefits... I am not saying that everyone was absolutely equal... Everyone knows that our traditional culture privileges men over women at many aspects...Equal pay for women, however, allowed you no chance to make any complaints...Since the mid-1990s, more females than males have been laid off. I lost my job 10 years ago. Since then, everything has changed...

Witnessing China's political and socio-economic reforms in 1978, Mei provided a vivid image which accurately depicts how the party-state's ever-changing policies and propaganda have affected Chinese women's daily lives. Although working in a SOE used to raise her positioning in the social pyramid considerably influenced by Chinese feudal remnants, the restructuring of SOEs broke off her liaison with the SOE and abruptly left her a worsening life of grinding poverty.

Similarly, the other 25 women with original urban residency status reported that gender inequality was dramatically yet incompletely disguised by working for SOEs and the accompanying illusion of class equality before the mid-1990s. Also, they all experienced the worsened gender inequalities when Chinese female workers were disproportionately laid off due to the 1978 socio-economic reforms. For instance,

Xiaofang, the middle-aged urban female owner of a small-scale laundry, recalled her past experience of working in a SOE:

Having a job in an SOE might not be able to completely change a Chinese woman's fate, but I suppose it is still much better than nothing. After being laid off, I lost a monthly income and other stable benefits. Not to mention gender equality, I almost could not feed my daughter.

Like Mei, Xiaofang insisted that the problem of gender equality was absolutely not alleviated but rather worsened with the advance of the restructuring of SOEs. Consistent with the arguments (see, for example, Hershatter, 2004) concerning gender inequality in pre-1978 China, their responses indicate that gender inequality was never eradicated by class equality and in fact has been worsened since the party-state's policies and propaganda of class equality were subsumed by the economic restructuring.

The benefits of the working-class identity (e.g., a life-tenured employment) for the original urban women attracted my attention, motivating me to ask all respondents if they still consider themselves to be working-class women. When I posed this follow-up question to Mei, she replied:

I do not think that the old-fashioned word of the working-class would occur to my mind again...I was laid off. I used to be a working-class person by working in that SOE. But now, this link was cut off, so I am absolutely not a working-class woman.

The other 25 original urban women agreed that their definition of the working-class was synonymous with an affiliation to SOEs. Also, they thought that the working-class has already disappeared. For the reason of being laid off, they did not consider themselves to be working-class people. Agreeing with Mei on this point, Fangfang defined the working-class identity simply "an employment status", which was deprived of by the nation-wide restructuring of SOEs in the 1990s.

For the 23 rural-to-urban female migrants, they have never seen themselves as the working-class. Apart from defining the working-class as working for SOEs, they added that the working-class identity was the past privilege of urban residents because only urban residents were able to be recruited by SOEs. Due to the current self-employed status, they did not believe that they were working-class women. Given that working in SOEs would never bring any privileges as it did before, they claimed that there was no reason to emphasize the working-class identity nowadays. Take Xue for example, she migrated from a small village in the Northeastern part of China to Haikou in the late 1990s. She decided to start a small restaurant together with her husband because she could not be admitted to the SOEs due to her original rural household registration. Nevertheless, it is explicit from her response that working in a SOE was not very necessary and important to her:

I originally come from a village... The working-class used to be the title of SOE employees... I have never been a SOE worker, so I am not a working-class woman... Moreover, it was a privilege for only urban residents because an urban residency status is the prerequisite requirement of being admitted to SOEs... Though you are a SOE worker now, people would seldom ascribe that title to you because it is nothing. Working in SOEs does not make you more privileged than anyone else.

Agreeing with the respondents (e.g., Mei) with the original urban household registration, Xue considered an affiliation with a SOE as the most significant criterion of becoming a working-class person. She refused to be self-described as the working-class because she had never been employed by any SOE. Also, her discussion of the past privilege reinforced her argument that she was not a working-class female. As she suggested, the privilege of working in a SOE served as another important criterion of a working-class person.

Furthermore, the past privilege of becoming a working-class person evidenced the argument that gender inequality existed prior to the 1978 reforms (see, for example, Hershatter, 2004). Gender inequality in pre-1978 China could be even worse for the reason of the urban-rural divide: rural women (comprising nearly 85% of the Chinese female population) found it almost impossible to be admitted to SOEs due to the restriction of the HRS. Comprising the vast majority of Chinese women, rural females found it much more difficult to envision and achieve gender equality even during the pre-1978 period when the working-class identity could seemingly constitute an ideological illusion of class-based women's liberation.

Ruonan's personal experience provided another evidence that indicate how the urban-rural divide had deteriorated women's oppressions during the pre-1978 era. Ruonan left her hometown in the rural area of a southwestern province at the age of 25, and had relocated in Nanjing for almost 15 year. Her entrepreneurial experienced to a large degree constituted a typical example of the successful self-made rural-to-urban female migrant, who achieved economic self-sufficiency through running a small computer repair store and earned the urban household registration. In spite of this success, she still remembered that the original rural household registration had caused barriers to her earlier life in Nanjing. As she said:

In my opinion, the stringent urban-rural divide was consistently maintained by the HRS, and this turned out to the fact that our rural women lived a much harder life than those urban ones... we should look no further than the qualifications specified by the SOEs during the pre-1978 era. Due to this reason, I would never consider the possibility of working in a SOE when I first came to Nanjing... In this way, I had to deal with two kinds of difficulty in the job market. First, all males—whether from the urban and rural areas were more likely than females to be tracked into the higher-paying, more skilled vocations across all sectors had I had no choice but to start from some low-paying jobs. Second, urban females

were more likely than rural ones to get high-paying jobs by being employed by the SOEs. As a result, I had to start from the lowest-paying, least skilled jobs during the first few years in Nanjing. After that, I started to do my own business in order to make more money and change my life.

Consistent with Xue's response, this quotation indicates that the original rural household registration caused one of the main barriers to working in the SOEs. More seriously, Ruonan's response illustrated the double difficulty endured by rural-to-urban female migrants. To put it in her words, all males and urban females had advantages of competition in the job market during the pre-1978 era, and therefore this situation made rural-to-urban female migrants the victims of both socialist control on internal population migration and the Chinese feudal patriarchal legacy.

Refusing to be self-described as a working-class woman was also found in the responses of the three urban respondents with college degrees. As noted much earlier in this chapter, these three college graduates had become good friends ever since they were studying in the college. Rather than look for a job and work for someone else, they preferred to start a Western-style bakery specializing in selling fresh-baked breads and sweets. Since the three respondents and I were about the same age, we shared many common conversation topics with each other. When I shift to the topic about my father's past use of the working-class identity in his self-description, they all claimed that the working-class identity was almost silenced in the contemporary social life. In addition to the reason of not working in SOEs, they contextualized the disappearance of the working-class within the historical context of the 1978 reforms. As Lily explained:

Before the reform, you were called a working-class person by working for a SOE... Afterwards, the working-class identity has gradually been silenced in the new political and social culture by the progress of privatization, so nobody is identified as the working-class now. Instead, the identities that we use to describe others have proliferated. For instance, you call me a young female entrepreneur,

and I call you a Ph. D. student...All these identities are the same thing as the old working-class identity.

Lily's response suggested that the working-class identity had been removed from the new political and social culture with the advance of the 1978 socio-economic reforms.

Further, she lay emphasis on the multi-dimensionality of social identity construction by stating that the working-class identity had been replaced by many other dimensions of identity (e.g., entrepreneurship, gender, and educational experience).

Consistent with my memory of my father's class-based self-description, Rong emphasized the past association of the working-class identity with their parent's employment status. As she noted, "The working-class identity used to be a label belonging to my parents before they retired from their affiliated SOEs, but it does not make any sense to me because I am not and will never be employed there". Yuan further clarified how the new generation at her age perceived the working-class identity, "I firmly insist that the working-class identity does not appeal to persons at my age, because a stable employment status, if any, is not as attractive as other jobs like self-employment from which we can earn much more money". Similar to the female entrepreneurs with the original household registration, Yuan did not care any advantage of working in a SOE (e.g., a stable employment status), so there was no reason for her to be self-described as the working-class and take pride in doing that.

With hindsight, Lily's words of "the same thing as the old working-class identity", for me, signify more interpretations than simply a title change. Such a possibility of interpreting "the same thing" in other ways aroused my interest in examining the complexity in the historical transfer from the socially privileged construction of the working-class people to that of the Chinese urban female

entrepreneur. In order to shed light on the nature of this historical transfer, I asked the respondents a few more questions about their personal experience of the 1978 socio-economic reforms as well as their perceptions of the link of the reforms to the rise of Chinese urban female entrepreneurs. On this issue, my research findings would be able to answer the question whether or not the working-class identity simply disappeared without a trace.

Complexity of the Historical Transfer

I asked my respondents about how they compared the importance of the working-class identity with that of the Chinese urban female entrepreneur. It is clear from their responses that the latter was incorporated into the respondents as classification schemes in much the same way as the former was adopted by the past SOE workers. As I was told by Lily:

The newly emerging social identities, such as female entrepreneurs, are the same thing as the previous working-class identity. That is because a female entrepreneur is advocated by our country as a very positive image in the exactly same way that a working-class person was depicted... I agree with the government on this point because our business successes have contributed to our nation's socio-economic progress as much as those working-class people did. I am very proud of being a business-woman.

As this quotation illustrates, Lily stressed two points when explaining “the same thing”.

First, the party-state, as she stated, directed the making of the Chinese female entrepreneur and the working-class for the same reason of sustaining the state's socio-economic growth.

This research finding partially differs from Ong's (2006) arguments concerning the practice of neo-liberal governmentality. Promoting the making of ideal social identities for the well-being of a state is not the invention of the neo-liberal era, but rather

has existed in pre-1978 China. Second, Lily demonstrated that the making of the working-class woman resembles to that of the contemporary urban female entrepreneur. Like the former, the Chinese female entrepreneur is basically a class-based social identity making which privileges one group of citizens over the others as much more important to the well-being of the state. For her, the key features of female entrepreneur (e.g., supporting the state economy) were linked to her social identities, enabling her to classify others and herself.

The resemblance of the working-class to the female entrepreneur is much more apparent in the lived experience of the middle-aged respondents, especially for those who experienced both the state-directed making of the working-class and female entrepreneurs. This speaks to the historical importance of habitus (Bourdieu, 1986, 2005) since women's social identity making is at least to some extent the historically contingent product of the party-state's social engineering. Take Ying for example, she was a middle-aged woman with the original urban household registration. She experienced the 1978 socio-economic reforms and the accompany restructuring of SOEs in the 1990s, and was laid off from a medium-scale SOE in the mid-1990s. Although she underwent a really tough period of economic difficulty after being laid off, she ultimately launched a successful entrepreneurial career by operating a stylish florist shop. When I asked about her experience of being laid off and participating in self-employment, it is evident from her response that she dealt with all these difficulties in a very self-confident, optimistic way. As she said:

I take pride of my business success in the same way as I used to be proud of being a SOE worker...A female entrepreneur is highly respected by many people and even our government in the same way as a SOE employee was in the past... A

title change does mean a decline in the importance of our female labor force. In fact, we have remained to make contributions to the state's economic development...After I was laid off, I did have to encounter economic difficulties in sustaining my family life, but I never lost the hope of striving for a much better life. God helps those who help themselves... Ultimately, I have already retrieved my honor by becoming a successful female entrepreneur.

Her experience of ups-and-downs directly speak to the resemblance. For her, these two idealized identities gave her almost the same type of classification scheme through which she classified others and self-classified herself as socially honorable. The only difference lies in the different historical moments when these two are honored.

The party-state's role in leading the transformation of women's social identities was also evidenced by such responses as "setting up a successful self-made female entrepreneur as a role model" (Hua), "the prize of Female Re-employment Star awarded by the RSC to those who self-dependently succeeded in their entrepreneurial careers" (Aili), "the government's praise of female entrepreneurs for their contributions to both job creation and the state's economy" (Shanshan). With hindsight, these words illustrate the way that the party-state has connected neo-liberal values (e.g., self-management, self-enterprise) to the symbolic space of entrepreneurship, and sealed them together into the making of the Chinese female entrepreneur. Therefore, these women were depicted by the party-state as good citizens of neo-liberal China, who are capable of boosting the state's economy through job creation and economic self-sufficiency.

Moreover, this description suggests that the party-state's ambitious interferences with women's lives complies with Bruni's (2004) and Connell's (2005) findings concerning the masculine stereotype of entrepreneurship—principally, that of the entrepreneur as innovative, aggressive businessmen who engage in a competition for market shares. As noted by the quotations from Hua's, Aili's and Shanshan's responses,

the central and local governments' description of a successful urban female entrepreneur actually turned a blind eye to their gender roles especially in family life, such as the wives of their husbands, the mothers of their kids, and so on. By contrast, all of them were actually middle-aged laid-off women, and enjoyed a good family life through maintaining a strong blood tie (*Xueyuan guanxi* 血缘关系) with their husbands and kids. Through placing an overemphasis on the seemingly agendered (gender-neutral) set of neo-liberal values, the party-state's policy making and propaganda apparatus tremendously downplayed the importance of gender roles in social identity construction and therefore disguised the feminine dimension of women's participation in entrepreneurship. Consequently, the party-state has intended to adapt and reproduce the order of the Western normative manhood in the field of China's MD via the agendered making of the Chinese urban female entrepreneur. Also, it is the agendered nature that is at the very core of the party-state's essentialized construction of women's social identities.

In this way, the party-state's attempt of constructing female entrepreneurs, as Poster and Salime (2002) assert, has actually contextualized the global trend of MD in China so as to tap the enormous potential of women for the interests of the state's sustainable socio-economic development. Given the party-state's previous transformations of women's social identities prevalent in the pre-1978 period, I argue that this attempt evidently has continued the domination and exploitation of Chinese women, but has been noticeably in a different form through adopting neo-liberal ideologies within the specific circumstance of neo-liberal China. Substantiating the habitus-field-social identity complex, which is elaborated by Ong's (2006) optimizing strategy of

“technologies of subjection”, the party-state’s interventions with women’s social identity making are basically a time- and context-contingent process. In this process, the influences of the party-state’s policies and propaganda at the macro level have been exerted upon a set of women’s acquired schemes of perceptions, dispositions, and appreciations through its inscription in the specific field of neo-liberal China, which is then embodied in the habitus of individuals and determines women’s social identities.

It is especially noteworthy to mention the middle-aged respondents who experienced both the state-led restructuring of SOEs and the state-advocated making of the Chinese female entrepreneur. Their experience show that they would rather appreciate the party-state’s support of their businesses than blame the governments for their agonizing memories of being laid off. It is because they ascribed their better-off lives to their self-employment careers which were largely under the guidance and encouragement of the local governments and their affiliated MDPs.

For instance, Aili, who owned a small florist shop after being laid off eight year ago, talked about the nearby MDP’s support of her entrepreneurial career. She said, “I was laid off due to the state-led economic restructuring, but the governments have compensated my loss with a policy support of my business”. Xiaomei’s response further suggested that she was inclined to perceive being laid off not simply as a setback in her life, but rather as a turning point of her fate. As she said, “Being laid off might not be a bad thing since our government has wisely assisted me to become wealthy through self-employment”. As this quotation narrates, she lost her job at in her thirties and then started a small restaurant together with her husband. By doing business, she earned much more than she did in the SOE. Sharing the similar personal experience with Xiaomei, Shanshan

owned a small computer repair shop close to her community. She response re-emphasized how the government's support policies and propaganda had influenced women's lives:

If you do not know where to go and what to do next, the best bet is always to listen to the government's teachings. My personal story of starting my own business is a good case in point. When I felt hopeless after being laid off, I chose to follow the local MDP's instruction and it ultimately turns out to be one of the most brilliant decisions I have ever made in my life.

It is also clear from Mei's response that my respondents were willing to perceive the central and local governments' interventions with their lives as a support. As she discussed:

I have no idea what a socialism would look like even though Mao presented an attractive image of socialist dream to us in the past... Anyways, what is at stake is that the central and local governments will never desert our common Chinese people. Even if we have to sacrifice a little bit comfort for the state's grand plan, we would certainly be compensated later.

Like all of these respondents, the other middle-aged respondents to a large degree were willing to follow the party-state's public policies and propaganda concerning women's massive participation in self-employment, either being re-employed in the sector of self-employment or doing non-agricultural self-employed jobs after a rural-to-urban migration.

The other respondents were also found to be more or less willing to take the local MDPs' suggestions through which to start and run their own businesses, though they were not in an outspoken support of the party-state's policies and propaganda as the middle-aged ones did. Partially different from the middle-aged respondents' uncritical advocacy of the nearby MDPs' guidance, the other respondents in fact tended to see self-employment as the last resort that they could be able to come up with while encountering

serious economic difficulties in their lives. Especially for the rural-to-urban migrants in my sample, the party-state's influential adoption of the MDP model in post-1978 China appears to be the only choice available to them, after migrating into the urban areas and staying away from their previously familiar agricultural production. As I was told by

Ruonan:

I really had no idea about what I was able to do when I first came into the city in the early 1990s. I used to enjoy my expertise in doing agricultural works, but it did not help me at all with hunting for a non-agricultural job in the urban area. The only option for me was to take the government's suggestions and start my own business.

Like Ruonan, Xue even compared her decision of becoming self-employed to a gamble:

It is just like there is no way out. When I had to earn some money and feed my family after first migrating into the city, the only option available to me was to go after the government's lead and lay my own business off the ground. Even if there was no guarantee, I would still have to take a try. Only in that way, could I have a little chance to win. Fortunately, I won the gamble in the end.

Drawing from these responses, I assert that their advocacy (either uncritical or tacit) of the party-state's policies and propaganda was in fact complicit in the party-state's interventions with women's social identity construction, and more exactly, the party-state's regulation of their productive bodies. In accordance with Ong's (2006) optimizing strategy of "technologies of subjectivity", these women are exactly the active reproducers of the macro influence of the party-state's propaganda and policies, whose self-government collaborates with the government on the regulation and exploitation of their own business lives. In order to further substantiate Bourdieu's (1992, 2005) arguments concerning the habitus-field-social identity complex, the making of the Chinese female entrepreneur, as their responses (especially Aili's and Xiaomei's) indicate, is also a practice of agency. That is to say, these individuals actively responded

to the objective influences of the party-state through self-governing their own way of living as a businesswoman according to the government-stipulated entrepreneurship norms. Therefore, to socially construct these women's social identity is not only the result of the party-state's strategic adoption of neo-liberal ideologies, but also the practice of their agency.

Apart from making an important decision of starting their new business career, to sacrifice family life for their businesses serves as another typical instance to exemplify the practice of agency. Consistent with Archer's (1995, 2003, 2007) and Valdez's arguments about structured agency, it is evident that a large portion of the respondents' entrepreneurial activities was conditioned by the imperative of maintaining a dual presence at work and family life. In order to juggle the two domains and needs, these businesswomen, as their responses manifest, acknowledged a double-responsibility for both work and family life while obsessing over guilt of sacrificing much of family life. This situation was reported by almost every respondent. For example, "doing business takes me too much time which should have been spent taking care of my family" (Hui); "being a good businesswoman involves a trade-off between doing business and relaxing" (Ruru); "my parents often blamed me for not having a boyfriend at the age of 27, but it is not my fault... I really want to get married with someone and enjoy family life, but I do not even have time to know a man and date with him" (Rong).

Again, such a type of sacrifice illustrates Ong's (2006) two optimizing strategies, and more exactly, the practice of habitus: these human agents behave in the business world through embracing its norms to consciously or unconsciously develop the dispositions of coping with the dual presence at work and family life. Consistent with

McNay's (2000) and Pfeffer's (2012) arguments, it also indicates one aspect of agency—human actor's adoption of social norms, and such an enactment of agency is found among those females who have been undergoing the party-state's gender oppression and economic marginalization.

Making sacrifices, however, does not necessarily rule out the possibility that the women were to some extent aware of inequalities and thus engaged in a contested relationship to the party-state. Instead, to sacrifice foreshadows these women's awareness of and even resistances to the inequalities caused by the party-state's interferences with economic activities, and more exactly, adumbrates the other aspect of agency to be resistant (McNay, 2000; Fraser, 2011). The resistance has its value in illustrating West and Zimmerman's (2009) definition of doing gender: gender is not only done but also redone by these businesswomen to modify the party-state's expectation of a good female entrepreneur. For instance, Yueyue sobbed when she talked about her son:

I cannot imagine how my son went through these years when I could not be a good mother... Especially during some important traditional festivals, it would be super hectic in my restaurant...I can only buy some instant food right before the holiday dinner...My son is so good that he understood why I did that...I would often recall the government official's words when I felt depressed. She is probably the first and most important person that showed me the way to start my business. She said for many times that I have to do trade-offs. So, I think that is fair.

As this quotation illustrates, she complained that her business career was unfair to her son since he did not get as much care as other children did.

Such a complaint about women's double burden can be found in every research participant's response. For instance, "I really feel sorry for my negligence of my family because doing business is really time-consuming and energy-consuming" (Hui); "To achieve economic sufficiency absolutely is one side, and to take care of my family is the

other thing. It is just like a coin with two coins. I always feel helpless because I really do not know how to keep a balance between these two sides. Indeed, I owe too much to my family" (Fangfang). Being counted as a contribution to the state's economy, these women were at the same time expected to take care of their families. Complying with Poster and Salime's (2002) argument, they were treated as docile laborers important to both their family lives and the state's adoption of globalized neo-liberalism. In this sense, all respondents are actually desperate yet somewhat regretful to pursue their business successes, and therefore differ from the party-state's description of the Chinese female entrepreneur as persistent, independent, hardworking and indifferent to pain. To put it differently, these women's agency has been effectively practiced to counter and modify the normative influences of the party-state's policies and propaganda, and more significantly, they have engaged in a self-construction of their own social identities through adding another disposition of being regretful about their sacrifices.

Moreover, it is interesting to find in the instance of the sobbing mother (Yueyue) that her regret was ultimately relieved by not only the government official but also the self-soothing strategy of praising her considerate son. Similarly, the respondents' negative feelings, if any, were reported to be offset by either the government's propaganda, their self-soothing practice, or the combination of the two. From this point of view, the dual presence of work and family life required these women to set fuzzy borderlines between the two different domains which are not completely dichotomized but rather blurred. While physically alternating between the two domains, these women managed to comply with the neutral yet fundamentally masculine entrepreneurial attributes and to ultimately facilitate a perpetuation of masculine entrepreneurship.

Intertwined Practice of Doing Gender and Doing Business

Having discussed how these women's participation in self-employment has affected their social identities, I wish to propose a summary description of the gendered nature of entrepreneurship in neo-liberal China through identifying the interactive relation of doing business to doing gender. In accordance with Bruni et al. (2004) argument, my research findings in this chapter manifest that doing business involves a gender performing, and more exactly, gender is performed as a set of situated practice contingent on how entrepreneurial rituals and norms influence human subjects. In order to continually profit from the domination and exploitation of women's labor force, the party-state has undertaken an essentialized construction of Chinese women's social identities, enticing them to comply with the seemingly neutral yet apparently masculine set of neo-liberal attributes.

A dual presence (work/family; businesswomen/housewives), however, is found to highlight the role of agency in modifying the influence of the party-state's interferences. As opposition to the party-state's deployment of the Western normative manhood, feminine features, which the party-state tried to downplay, have been noticeably shown in these women's deep regret about not taking good care of their family lives and then embodied in their social identity construction as the Chinese female entrepreneur. Thus, I argue that the apparent existence of femininity in China's MD has considerably undermined the party-state's attempt of othering the non-male and legitimizing the agendered, universal model of women's participation in self-employment. Women's self-employment managed to frequently cross, transgress, and blur the symbolic dichotomy (e.g. masculinity/femininity, businesswoman/housewife, family/business) for the purpose

of coping with both economic burden and the influences of the party-state's policies and propaganda. This process, as I argue, illustrates the indivisibility of gender and entrepreneurship as two intertwined social practice. More significantly, to undertake entrepreneurial activities necessitates an appropriate performance of gender.

Intertwined Stratification Schemes of Gender and Class

In this chapter, my study draws upon the relationality of habitus to uncover how gender interacts with class. During the pre-1978 era, class was the predominant field where Chinese people encountered the party-state's official ideologies. Such an encounter resulted in their perceptions, dispositions, and appreciations which were finally embodied in the habitae and influenced their social identities. Here, class does not follow Marx's realist notion of class that sees class as a clearly defined social group. Rather, it complies with the Bourdieusian concept of habitus, referring to a dynamic, human-engaged process of social stratification. That is to say, the working-class identity was the result of the interaction of the working-class people's habitae with the class-based field, and more importantly, was utilized by these people (e.g., Lily) as a set of stratification schemes to classify others and self-classify themselves as socially honorable.

Unlike the women's responses concerning the disappearance of class and class divisions, I find that class has never been a dead category of analysis in feminist theorizing concerning social identity construction. Having undergone a historical transfer, it has actually been dispersed and penetrated into gender. In this way, a new set of stratification schemes have been constructed along the lines of gender and class to reorganize social hierarchies. The social hierarchies, which used to be articulated through the working-class, have been recently transformed and rearticulated through the gendered

making of the female entrepreneurs. This transfer implies that class divisions have been individualized as multiple differentiated gendered identity constructions, and these identity makings are hierarchized based upon their contributions to the state's socio-economic development. Simply put, gender has become classed so that the two dimensions of identity has collectively constructed Chinese women's social identities and ultimately perpetuated the gender and socio-economic oppressions. In this way, my research finding furthers the development of intersectionality theories via clarifying the how gender interacts with class.

Conclusion

My study in this chapter has explored the historical, political and socio-economic process in which the global phenomenon and idea of the MDPs has been invested in China. The making of the Chinese female entrepreneur provides a typical case to disclose China's contingent, strategic adoption of the imported phenomenon and idea in order to constantly produce ideal citizen. By doing this, the party-state can maximize the profits from the exploitation of populations. As a matter of matter, the global financial crisis of 2008 just provided another favorable chance for China so that it can reorganize social hierarchies for continuing to capitalize on Chinese citizens (especially women).

The research findings have addressed the theoretical problem—how gender interacts with class. I argue that class has never been a dead category of analysis in feminist theorizing concerning social identity construction. In contemporary China, class is no longer the sole dimension of identity through which to construct social stratifications. Rather, it has been individualized and penetrated into other dimensions of identity. For instance, the research findings illustrate that it can be transformed and

rearticulated as gender identities, shaping political, socio-economic, and gender norms. This linkage of class to gender is significant in recognizing and further developing the instability of feminist analytic categories. Feminist theorists' attention is attracted to those gender inequalities which would probably be disguised by deemphasizing class.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Making of the Chinese Urban Female Entrepreneur Revisited

My study examined the making of the Chinese female entrepreneur lying at the heart of the national and international promotion of the MDP model. It engaged with a few important discussions concerning China's liberal politics during the reform era, the global trend of neo-liberal capitalism, and the social construction of a new worker-subject—the Chinese female entrepreneur shaped by the hybrid marriage of state politics and global capital. During the post-socialist, neo-liberal era, what are the meanings and practice of becoming the Chinese female entrepreneur appropriate for both the state's economic growth and the global diffusion of neo-liberalism? These matters are vital for grasping the ever-shifting matrices of power relations and governing practice to regulate society.

Recent scholarship on governmentality as discourses (see, for example, Ong, 2006), under the influence of Foucault, endeavored to identify the specific forms of control geared up to the production of ideal citizens (the production of appropriate worker-subjects in the case of post-1978 China). Significantly, this production exemplifies biopower—the contemporary way of governing that optimizing human life at the population level for the purpose of justifying and maximizing of the state's profits from subjugating and exploiting human bodies. My investigation into the making of the Chinese female entrepreneur provided an in-depth study of this issue, furthering an understanding of how the global trend of neo-liberal governmentality has been invested

in a specific national context, and how the daily lives of its citizens have been influenced by this diffusion of neo-liberal ideologies.

Furthermore, the research findings from this research project contributed to the tradition of feminist theories, which endeavors to explore the relationship between neo-liberalism and gender. As my data indicated, neo-liberal ideological forces have considered the gendered making of women's social identities as a new source of capitalist accumulation. Specifically, the Chinese urban female entrepreneur served as an image of ideal citizen who incorporated neo-liberal values (self-management, independence, self-enterprise) and thereby contributed to the state's socio-economic development. Also, those women's daily practice of social networking illustrated that the lines between public and private spaces have become fuzzy: on the one hand, since their social networks were affectively charged, sociability still remains to be embedded in the private space; on the other hand, exchange of both tangible and intangible resources involved in *guanxi* practice suggested that sociability has been appropriated by neo-liberal ideologies as a profitable terrain of social production. To put it much more bluntly, gender to large extent concretizes the ways in which neo-liberalism has attempted to function in the way of governmentality as discourses in an effort to capture the productivity of women's labor.

Chapter two briefly introduced the methodology and detailed the research methods utilized in this research project. The ECM allowed the analysis of the urban female entrepreneurs' daily experience as the departure point, and more importantly, traced the link of their participation in entrepreneurship to the Chinese party-state's strategic advocacy for the diffusion of neo-liberal ideologies. Semi-structured interviews

were the primary data gathering method through which to collect qualitative data for answering the research questions. Also, participatory observations and secondary data searching were conducted to gather convergent data bearing on the same research object of Chinese urban female entrepreneurs' daily practice. Such a combined use of multiple data gathering methods enhanced the accuracy of data analysis through cross verification from multiple sources of data. Following the principles of GT, the process of data analysis in this study was basically recursive: I collected data, sorted them, paid special attention to the emerging significant topics, and then repeated earlier steps over and over again.

In order to historically contextualize my study, chapter three illuminated on the gendered nature of the party-state's grand narrative of the PRC's history. Beginning in the second half of the twentieth century and into the new millennium, gender inequality and women's oppression have never been eradicated by the party-state's laws, public policies and propaganda. Even though gender equality was officially promoted by the Maoist party-state's legal regulation and propaganda apparatus, women's disadvantaged socio-economic positioning in social pyramid was hardly changed (Hershatter, 2004; Rofel, 1999). In fact, the Maoist rhetoric of "holding up half the sky" actually launched the party-state's subjugation and exploitation of Chinese women throughout the PRC's history primarily through directing women's social identity construction.

During the pre-1978 period, the Maoist rhetoric of gender equality constituted a reductionist theory of women's liberation with an exclusive focus on their potential to be productive in social production. Especially in the workplace, Chinese women had to make their own way by proving that they could be able to contribute to the state's

economy as much as their male counterparts. It is only in this way that women were transformed into part of the working-class and were considered equal to men based upon their common working-class identity. Consequently, the Maoist party-state downplayed gender equality to be a by-product bequeathed by the rise of the working-class in the industrialized and modernized China (X. Li, 1999; Rofel, 1999). Although the party-state during the Mao era never stopped to advocate women's liberation as a fundamental justification for its socialist regime in China, gender issues were frequently sidelined at each period of either economic downturn or political unrest without any recognition that such a type of deliberate treatment gradually devalued the Maoist language of state feminism to be a hallow slogan.

Like the working-class woman socially honored during the Mao era, the urban female entrepreneur emergent in post-1978 China was also subject to the party-state's essentialized construction of worker-subject. Principally, the party-state incorporated agendered neo-liberal values (e.g., self-management, self-enterprise) in the social construction of the Chinese urban female entrepreneur, especially disguising women's gender roles in family life. Also, such an exemplar of social identity construction was advocated as the role model for all the other Chinese women (especially those laid-off women and rural-to-urban migrant females). In this way, the party-state's regulation and appropriation of women's labor force was practiced in a way of emphasizing women's certain dispositions of productivity and differentiating productive ones from the other. Given the fact that a few dispositions and activities of Chinese women were selectively emphasized and geared up to the contingent demands of the state's economic growth, the making of the Chinese female entrepreneur was undertaken in much the same way as that

of working-class woman of the past. They both exemplify the way in which the party-state throughout the PRC's history has always been engaged in generating a series of gender norms so as to morally regulate women's entry into the state's social production.

The historical review of women's ever-changing socio-economic status in chapter three ends with two questions, and each was addressed in chapters four and five respectively. In chapter four, my study focused on Chinese women's social networking activities while participating in self-employment. In this way, the diffusion of the Western-centric concept and phenomena of social capital building provided a perspective, through which to answer the question how female human bodies were inscribed in the configuration of power relations geared up to the party-state's integration with global capitalism during the post-1978 period. Endorsing the ECM approach, I have examined the experience of Chinese urban female entrepreneurs in Nanjing and Haikou, and attempted to map the link among their self-employment careers, their social networking activities, and the larger picture of the Chinese party-state's configuration of its relation to global capitalism. Drawing upon the data from in-depth interviews, participatory observations and secondary data searching, my research findings manifested that the research participants were found to consider affections (e.g., inter-dependence, obligation, and mutual trust) as the foundation of establishing and maintaining their social networks regardless of the party-state's influential advocacy of the Western utility-based social capital concept.

Meanwhile, this findings foretold Chinese women's resistance against the party-state's public policies and propaganda. Though their daily and business life were to a large extent in the grip of the party-state's governing practice, I argued that if

opportunities emerged they would never hesitate to carry out everyday struggles in a nuanced, plural, and generally unrecorded way. In the case of Chinese urban female entrepreneurs, my research findings revealed that an exchange of both tangible and intangible resources had frequently happened in their routine practice of *guanxi*, considerably easing the government's burden of facilitating women's entrepreneurship. Such an exchange, however, was actually not the ends but rather the means of maintaining and strengthening their social networks. This was explicitly in conflict with the utility-based social capital theory promulgated by the party-state's policy making and propaganda apparatus. To put it simply, the Chinese urban female entrepreneurs in my sample undertook their *guanxi* practice in a completely difference way that the government had expected.

Theoretically, my empirical research in chapter four opened up a new way of challenging and reconstructing utility-driven social capital concept. Following the ECM principles (see, for example, Burawoy, 1991), those women's affectively charged experience of social networking posed a challenge to the hegemonic impact of neo-liberalism, which is at the very core of utility-based social capital thesis. Given the vital role of women's self-employment in both the contemporary global economy and China's socio-economic growth (Zhi et al., 2013), my research findings, to a large degree, evidenced Hardt and Negri's (2005, 2009) argument that neo-liberalism—the ideological foundation of Putnam's social capital theorizing—has already been fragile because the material relations of production and exchange gave way to immaterial factors. Consistent with two of the three major trends of biopolitical production proposed by Hardt and Negri (2009), those Chinese women's participation in self-employment exemplified the fact

that China's contemporary economic development—one of the top players in today's world economy—has been driven and organized by an exploitation and oppression of women's immaterial socially-owned wealth at the collective level (i.e. women's collective involvement in social production via self-employment). In other words, such a type of exploitation and oppression have in fact transcended the realm of women's entrepreneurship, expanding to all the other individuals (e.g., family members, schoolmates, prior colleagues, and best friends) involved in those women's intimate social relations.

At the end of chapter four, I argued that the most important task of re-theorizing social capital was to revitalize civil society as a major source of collective rebellions against both market control and state coercion. With the advance of the biopolitical capitalist accumulation, the reconstruction of social capital theory, as my empirical study suggested, had to incorporate the concept of the common. This concept can provide a viable way of emphasizing the productivity of both tangible and intangible resources in the biopower-based social production. In this sense, intangible resources, which used to be downplayed by neo-liberal ideologies, would be brought to the central place of contemporary social production. By doing this, social capital could be able to gain an opportunity to realize Tocqueville's dream of a third place of civil society free from the coercions of both market and state.

From the perspective of social identity construction, chapter five focused on the politico-historical process in which the party-state's repeated inventions in women's social identity making have influenced their daily lives. Specifically, it examined how the party-state's strategic embracement of neo-liberal ideologies has given birth to the

making of the Chinese urban female entrepreneur. Through interviewing and observing a few female entrepreneurs, the research findings explicated the interaction between gender and class, emphasizing it as one of the most salient sites where ideal citizens of China are imagined and constructed. Following the approach of the ECM, my study in this chapter sought to analyze the respondents' personal experience that directly reflected the historical transfer from the centrally-planned economy to the contemporary market-centered economic structuring. Also, it mapped out the link of the respondents' daily experience to the much broader context of China's integration with globalized neo-liberal capitalism.

Drawing from my interviews with the urban female entrepreneurs, the research findings manifested that class used to be the predominant field where Chinese people encountered the Maoist party-state's official ideologies. Such an encounter resulted in their perceptions, dispositions, and appreciations which were finally embodied in the *habitae* and influenced their social identities. Here, class does not follow Marx's realist notion of class that sees class as a clearly defined social group. Rather, it complies with the Bourdieusian concept of *habitus*, referring to a dynamic, human-engaged process of social stratification (Bourdieu, 1986, 1990). That is to say, the working-class identity was the result of the interaction of the working-class people's *habitae* with the class-based field, and more importantly, was utilized by these women as a set of stratification schemes to classify others and self-classify themselves as socially honorable.

Further, I found that the social hierarchies, which used to be articulated through the working-class, have been recently transformed and rearticulated through the gendered making of the Chinese urban female entrepreneur. This transfer implies that class

divisions have been individualized as multiple differentiated gendered identity constructions, and these identity makings are hierarchized based upon their contributions to the state's socio-economic development. Simply put, gender has become classed so that the two dimensions of identity has collectively constructed Chinese women's social identities and ultimately perpetuated the gender and socio-economic oppressions. In this way, my research finding contributed a lot to the development of intersectionality theories by clarifying how gender and class converge in directly feeding into socio-economic hierarchy. To be more specific, this linkage of class to gender is significant in recognizing and further developing the instability of feminist analytic categories. Feminist theorists' attention is attracted to those gender inequalities that would probably be disguised by deemphasizing class.

Business Failure and Women's Entrepreneurship

As I mentioned the limitation of my research project in chapter one, the importance of studying failure is not sufficiently addressed. During the past few years, there has been a consensus on the importance of studying failure in developing a more holistic understanding of entrepreneurship (R. Smith & McElwee, 2011; Singh, Corner, & Pavlovich, 2007). In spite of this, the experience of venture failure remains to be an underdeveloped field of inquiry. Actually, there has been a much greater focus on business survival and success than on failure in entrepreneurial activities (Shepherd, 2003). Moreover, prior literature on entrepreneurial failure have mainly sought for various reasons of failure so that the possibility of entrepreneurial success can be raised (Ahmad & Seet, 2009; Borchert & Cordozo, 2010). Generally, these reasons include economic hardship (Carter & Auken, 2006; Ekanem & Wyer, 2007), lack of business-

related skills or experience (Abdullah, Hamali, Deen, Saban, & Abdurahman, 2009; Hogarty, 1993; Hiemstra, Kooy, & Frese, 2006), problems with service and product (Bruno, Mcquarrie, & Torgrimson, 1992; Hogarty, 1993), and unfavorable political and socio-economic environment (Zacharakis, Meyer, & DeCastro, 1999).

Shifting their attention to women's mass participation in self-employment around the globe, policy makers have been specifically concerned about various barriers that hinder their entrepreneurship-related activities. Given the gendered division of labor and the widely existence of gender-related discrimination in both at home and in the workplace, the search for reasons of women's unsuccessful entrepreneurial experience has primarily revolved around two salient issues—funding and family support. Since females have to meet much higher standards than males in getting loans from formal financial institutions (Hisrich & Ozturk, 1999), lack of capital has beaten down many promising female entrepreneurs. Even though venture capitalists have started to appreciate women's potential in doing business and increased their investment in women-led businesses, it is still paltry. In the first half of 2013, only 20% of venture capital investment went to women-led businesses (Stengel, 2014). This funding gap illustrates a major market failure in efficiently allocating resources, which prevents women from achieving a high-level entrepreneurial success.

Furthermore, family structure involves critical familial and societal variables that are imposed upon women to form the gendered nature of women's entrepreneurship. In the previous chapters, my study examined how women's double burden has been caused by the combined influence of the state's macro-level interventions and Chinese feudal remnants. In such a situation, working in the workplace became disconnected to

housework, with women constrained within the province of supportive domestic work for male bread-earners. Many empirical studies on this issue (see, for example, Fernandez, 1981) have proven that women would usually distract from doing their own businesses when encountering a dilemma between continuing their self-employment careers and supporting their husbands.

Given the central focus of this study on the recent emergence of Chinese urban female entrepreneurs, my future research will turn towards those women's lived experience of venture failure. This would probably generate new research findings on how Chinese urban female entrepreneurs (including those unsuccessful ones) have been shaped by the hybrid marriage of the state's governing and global capital. For instance, on condition that the gendered making of the Chinese urban unsuccessful female entrepreneur was not socially privileged for being unable to serve the state's economy through job creation and economic self-sufficiency, it would be interesting to explore if multiple dimensions of identity (e.g. gender, class, urban-rural divide) interact with each other in the same way as they have done in the make of the Chinese successful urban female entrepreneur. Also, my future study on failure can assist policy makers, educational institutions, and MDPs to better understand the real demands of existing and budding female entrepreneurs.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACWF the All-China Women's Federation

CPC the Communist Party of China

ECM the extended case method

HRS the Household Registration System

MD micro-enterprise development

MDP micro-enterprise development program

PRC the People's Republic of China

RP Re-employment Project (*Zaijiu ye jihua* 再就业计划)

RSC the Re-employment Service Centre (*Zaijiu ye Zhongxin* 再就业中心)

SOE state-owned enterprise

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APPENDIX A
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Demographic profile	Variable	Number
Age	20-30	7
	31-40	10
	41-50	19
	51-60	13
Marital status	Single	3
	Married	46
Education	Primary school	20
	High school	26
	College	3
Line of business	Bakery	5
	Florist shop	13
	Barber's shop	5
	Convenient store	7
	Computer repair	10
	Restaurant	9
Type of ownership	Self-owned	33
	Family-based	13
	Commonly owned with non-relatives	3
Original <i>hukou</i>	Urban	26
	Rural	23

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND CONSENT FORM

Note: The serendipitous questions were not listed here

1. When did you join this program?
2. How did you know about the program?
3. How does the program reach you?
4. Could you please tell me why you join this program?
5. Do you know about the goals of your program?
 - a. If yes, could you please tell me how the purpose of program fits what you expected before you joined?
 - b. If no, I will read the purpose of program that I get from the interview with the program leader to the client, and ask “what do you think of this purpose?” and “could you please tell me how the purpose of program fits what you expected before you joined?”
6. Does your program do anything to bond you with other clients within the program?
 - a. If yes, what kind of services or assistances does your program provide to serve for this goal?

What kind of benefits for the business do you get from this connection to other clients within your program?

Could you please tell me how your reasons for joining the program fit program’s efforts to connect you to other clients?

 - I. If the loan is provided, what type of lending do they provide?

How about the amount of loans? What is the cost of getting a loan?

II. If the program offers continuing education or technical assistance, what type of these services?

b. If no, why not?

What kind of services or assistances does your program provide for clients?

I. If the loan is provided, what type of lending do they provide?

How about the amount of loans? What is the cost of getting a loan?

II. If the program offers continuing education or technical assistance, what type of these services?

7. Does your program do anything to get clients together with institutions or persons outside your program?

a. If yes, what kind of services or assistances does your program provide to serve for this goal?

With whom you are connected to?

What kind of benefits for the business do you get from this connection to the outside community?

Could you please tell me how your reasons for joining the program fit your efforts to link your clients with the outside community?

I. If the loan is provided, what type of lending do they provide?

How about the amount of loans? What is the cost of getting a loan?

II. If the program offers continuing education or technical assistance, what type of these services?

b. If no, why not?

What kind of services or assistances from the outside community does your program provide for clients?

I. If the loan is provided, what type of lending do they provide?

How about the amount of loans? What is the cost of getting a loan?

II. If the program offers continuing education or technical assistance, what type of these services?

This consent form outlines my rights as a participant in the study of Examining the Implications of Micro-enterprise Development on Social Capital Building conducted by Nancy C. Jurik and Dongling Zhang, Justice and Social Inquiry, School of Social Transformation, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287-4902.


The interview will study the implications of Micro-enterprise Development Programs (MDPs) for micro-enterprise owners who are clients of the program in China's urban areas. We are interested in the services and the assistances that program clients receive from the program.

It will take about 40 minutes.

I understand that



1. Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary.
2. It is my right to decline to answer any question that I am asked.
3. I am free to end the interview at any time.
4. I may request that the interview not be taped.
5. My name and identity will remain confidential in any publications or discussions.
6. My name will not appear on any tapes or transcripts resulting from the interview.

APPENDIX C
IRB APPROVAL



Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To: Nancy Jurik
WILSN

 **From:** Mark Roosa, Chair 
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 03/22/2010

Committee Action: **Exemption Granted**

IRB Action Date: 03/22/2010

IRB Protocol #: 1003004970

Study Title: Examining the Implications of Micro-enterprise Development on Social Capital Building

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.