

What is the impact of family support on Chinese immigrant women entrepreneurs from the perspective of family unit capital?

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Abstract

Title: What is the impact of family support on Chinese immigrant women entrepreneurs from the perspective of family unit capital?

Summary: This qualitative study addresses knowledge gaps related to Chinese immigrant women entrepreneurs (CiMWEs) by focusing on the revealed entrepreneurial experiences of women immigrants from China with an established company in Germany and strives to give exposure to this group of women as the research counts for one the few studies which sheds light on the narratives of Chinese immigrant women entrepreneurs in Germany and their family support by evidence. Adopting an interpretative phenomenological analysis approach on 10 CiMWEs in Germany, women entrepreneurs' perception about family support is made sense and analysed within family unit capital theory framework. The factors affecting family unit capital and the conceptualised dimensions in this specific phenomenon are demonstrated. Interesting nuances are discovered in the intra-group, inspiring narratives and voice are highlighted.

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Introduction

Due to increased global mobility and internationalisation of cooperation, more entrepreneurs tend to engage in entrepreneurial activity in a country other than their countries of birth, they are thus defined as immigrant entrepreneurs (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2013; Ashourizadeh and Saeedikiya, 2023). However, immigrant entrepreneurship is such a substantial phenomenon that the methods and types of immigrants for entrepreneurship have been analysed from different perspectives (Vertovec, 2004). Immigrant entrepreneurship depending on the factors shaping and influencing immigrant entrepreneurs, can be concretized in such as a refugee context, transnational context or considering the gaps that this specific study has identified, in a gendered dimension (De Luca and Ambrosini, 2019; Liao, 2021). Prior research on female immigrant entrepreneurs has focused on the vulnerability of their entrepreneurial activities in host countries and the challenges they encounter compared to the male counterparts. However, an in-depth understanding of their entrepreneurial experiences, particularly the role that social capital can play has been largely missing (Arregle et al., 2007; Pearson et al., 2008; Sharma, 2008; Vought et al., 2008; Mani and Lakhali, 2023; Sarihasan et al., 2023). Social capital is hence a key angle for immigrant entrepreneurship because social capital can be prescribed as any feature of a social relationship that yields reproductive benefits (Machalek and Martin, 2015).

To put this theorising in a Chinese context or more general Asian context, where the society has more patriarchal traditions, best considering the unique post-socialist transitions in China, it is to contest if Chinese people thus encounter both material necessity to rely on their families given the marketization of socialist work unit systems and the privatization of family life, and many women have drawn on intergenerational support to deal with their double burden. Consequently, given the limited welfare support outside of families, both individual market success and family resources have gained greater importance in people's lives (Song and Ji, 2020). Arregle et al. (2015) contend family ties are an important conduit of resources for entrepreneurs, and valuable resources to entrepreneurs in new ventures that may be acquired through network ties include tangible resources, knowledge and advice, and emotional support.

Specifically in a gender role context, females can be expected to appreciate and acquire emotional satisfaction from membership in small social networks consisting of close personal relationships constructed from strong social ties. These types of relationships would be particularly adaptive for women by supplying assistance in foraging and caring for children (Machalek and Martin, 2015). Thus combining family and entrepreneurship context, the authors believe the theoretical lens "family unit capital" can be adopted to better visualise how support and resources from other family members and the tightened or sustained relationship (Burleson, et al., 1994; Goldsmith, 2004; Chang & Basnyat, 2017) have an impact on immigrant women entrepreneurs. Also, in order to associate but also literally differentiate with the term "family social capital" which has been employed particularly in the context of family business and represents a form of social capital that is both available to and created by members of the family unit (Bubolz, 2001) as well as resources that become available through the kinship ties between members of the family owning the firm (Sanchez-Ruiz et al., 2019), authors apply "family unit capital" to familiarise with a form of bonding social capital that emerges from the trust, shared sense of purpose, and solidarity between members of an exclusive 'ingroup' (Putnam, 2000), presenting likewise in the form of moral (emotional) support and instrumental (tangible) support. The focus is shifted towards "significant" family members, or those whom a person perceives as such (Dubrov, 2019).

As a result and in order to react to calls for: contextualising in the intersection of social structures and ideological values that shape women's interests and actions in non-traditional careers in the

gender domain of Chinese context (Song&Li, 2021); further theory development and empirical investigation about social exchange relationships to Chinese entrepreneurs (Xu et al., 2020); further study of entrepreneurs' engagement in support process and their action towards discouraging and demotivational household support (Cogan et al., 2022); family involvement idiosyncrasies in women entrepreneurs' enterprises (Welsh et al., 2017); roles of cultural factors for determining the performance consequences of women entrepreneurs' experiences of such interference (De Clercq et al., 2022), then by integrating Chinese immigrant women entrepreneurship and family social capital, this research aims to explore the impact of family support on Chinese immigrant women entrepreneurs in the post start-up stage. In doing so, a research question is raised, *how does family support from the elder family members in China and the potential family support from the spouse in host country impact Chinese women immigrant entrepreneurs?*

Why is family support worth researching?

To begin with, authors believe in the proposition that family is unit that is based on moral love and characterised by the capability to flourish the individuals' mind to be able to fit into the society and diverse environment in which they are self-aware of (Ogormegbunem, 2014). A true and ideal family provides its members with emotional and spiritual kinship through: shared values, beliefs, traditions, common experience, actions, unconditional and non-judgmental support (Ibid.). As the world develops in the direction of appreciating individuality and unique personal expertise (which entrepreneurship represents at its best), it is important to remember that these qualities and resources are rooted back in family unit (Raevskaya and Tatarko, 2022). Social capital in a family context is a promising step for female entrepreneurship research because everyone needs some degree of social and emotional sustenance to cope with the challenges of daily life.

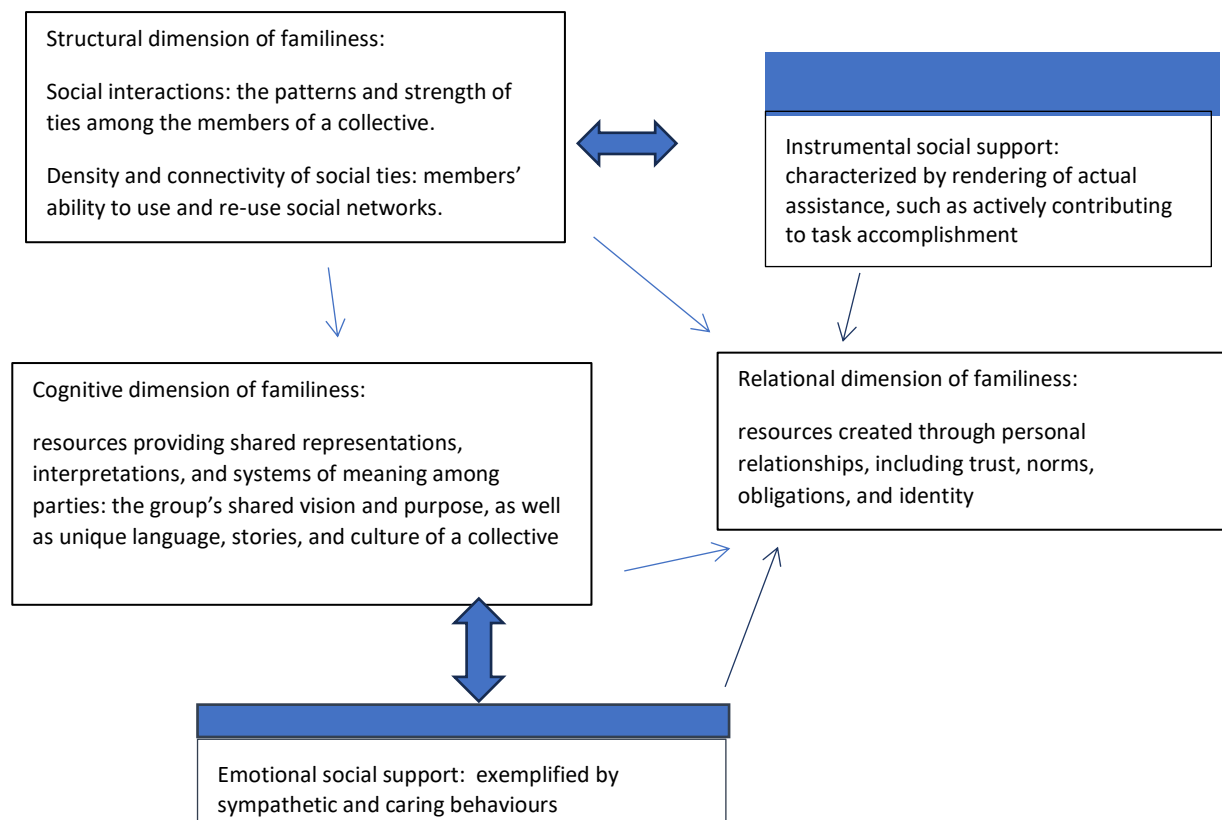
Secondly, the changing nature of gender roles, family structures, working conditions, and women's careers should be paid more attention to in the Chinese context. Bearing the repercussion of one-child-policy, having the world's biggest aging population and being the second biggest economic power (expected to overtake US' GDP around 2035), all has brought the country onto a crossroad. Blalock and Lyu (2023) allege this 'triple-role' responsibility exhibited in China's strategic narrative of women entrepreneurs as the "patriot-preneur", who create business for the love of her family and country. Looking ahead to the future, the ruling two-child policy may aggravate another vicious circle of gender inequality to Chinese women who are having fewer resources and diminishing bargaining power in the labour markets (Qian & Jin, 2018). However interestingly, Gao et al. (2021) find emotional support was less significant in its effect on entrepreneurial passion than were financial support and social capital support to novel Chinese entrepreneurs, and speculate younger Chinese entrepreneurs may have less fear of failure and be more prepared to learn from failure, or without much family burden. These not entirely congruent findings raise more question marks lead to necessary and additional exploration of the current role of family to Chinese entrepreneurs.

Further, research attempting to elucidate Confucianism's role, the cornerstone of Chinese culture, in activity participation among Chinese migrants in the Netherlands and Belgium reveals four acknowledged principles of Confucianism: hierarchical relationships, family system, benevolence and emphasis on education which are known to work as a double-edged sword to the overseas Chinese (Pan et al., 2021). The author contends that these four principles intertwine with each other and impose influence on Chinese immigrant women entrepreneurs, they also function as background for understanding Chinese family and social context (Park and Chesla, 2007). More specifically, parents and older siblings are expected to be a role model for their younger siblings and younger members

are to respect to the older ones (*hierarchical relationships*). Confucianism posits the family as the fundamental unit of society and family cohesion is taken as the foundation for sustaining the human community (family system). By combining these three principles into the context of Chinese immigrant women entrepreneurship, it is again proposed that *family unit capital* is an appropriate angle to look into the impact of family support.

One notable exception that leads to constructs and theories that describe why certain causal relationships comprise the “family” aspects that exist in these firms and has emerged as a concept uniquely related to family business research is “familiness” (Pearson et al., 2008), describing it as “. . . the idiosyncratic firm level bundle of resources and capabilities resulting from the systems interactions” (Habbershon, Williams, & MacMillan, 2003, p. 451). Literature linking “familiness” and “social capital” to construct “family social capital” in the phenomenon of family business enlightens the development of family social capital is accomplished through the influence of four dynamic factors, including *stability (i.e., time)*, *interaction*, *interdependence*, and *closure*, which together influence the “flow” of social capital into the family firm, which in turn determines the development of organizational social capital. Since social capital is conceptualized as three dimensions constituted —structural, cognitive, and relational—(Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), these three can contribute to present the specific elements of familiness resources (Pearson et al., 2008).

The figure below adapted from Leana and Van Buren (1999), Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), and Tsai and Ghoshal (1998) can help visualise the three dimensions from a *Social Capital Perspective of Familiness*:



According to Beehr (1985), emotional social support is exemplified by sympathetic and caring behaviours, while instrumental social support is characterized by rendering of actual assistance, such as actively contributing to task accomplishment. Family support is defined in this research as support a family provides to entrepreneurs during the venture development process in terms of resources and encouragement as a demonstration of family social capital (Chang et al., 2009). The role that family social capital can play for migrant entrepreneurs both in the home and host countries should be investigated (Dimov, 2007; Evansluong and Ramírez-Pasillas, 2019; Arshad and Berndt, 2023). Deducting from family social capital, it is believed that two additional forms of family support, emotional social support and instrumental support (shown in dark blue arrows) also contribute to the coherence of family social capital underpinning holistic dimensions of familiness at the same time.

Methodology

In resonance with the nature of qualitative research, which is more likely to provide meaningful contextualisation and clarity to the research questions and concepts within the social setting rather than hypothesising and testing variables (Azungah, 2018), insights and in-depth descriptions in real-life contexts of CiMWEs are produced in this research. Also given the limited understanding and evidence of the role of CiMWEs' family support in the business development stage so far, a phenomenological research method will be considered the most appropriate, as it is useful in areas that are not well advanced theoretically (Surangi, 2016).

The aim of research within an interpretive paradigm is to "understand the subjective experience of individuals" (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), and explain the "point of view of the actors directly involved in a social process" (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Therefore, the aim of this research, to investigate how family support in the country of origin and family support in the host country influences the post start-up entrepreneurial experience of CiMWEs, is in line with reflecting on and understanding women's experience and explaining the role and actors engaged in the entrepreneurial process. The author is in agreement with the reality, also it is personally echoed with an interpretive paradigm's ontology, which suggests that there is no single reality, and its epistemology seeks to understand through individuals' constructions of experience in the world rather than some external actuality. The author believes that the structures that exist and are still present outside, cannot be objectively grasped because the research is in theory supposed to be structured by the concerns of those, who are the subjects of the research.

An abductive approach to build upon the theory of family social capital would be to start by interviewing a sample of these women about their experience and perception of family support and its impact on the women, and possibly also their family members (from the perspective of these women). The task would be to make sense of the interview data collected through analysis. Semi-structured interview is employed in this study because it allows the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of the participants' responses and the investigator is able to probe interesting and important areas which arise (Smith&Osborn, 2012). The data used in this study comes from interviews conducted on 10 Chinese migrant women entrepreneurs living in Germany, who will be recruited through interviewer's personal networks, from Chinese forums abroad and through other social networks. The participants are homogeneously selected, and the sample size limited by data gathering (Eisenhardt, 1989; Alase, 2017).

In line with the major purpose of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) that the researcher is trying to find out how individuals are perceiving particular situations they are facing, how they are making sense of their personal and social world, an IPA approach guide (Larkin, Flowers, Smith 2021) is followed. At the beginning of analysing, multiple close reading of the transcript and making notes of self-observations and reflections about the interview experience or any other thoughts and comments of potential significance are necessary. It is necessary to focus on content (what is actually being discussed), language use (features such as metaphors, symbols, repetitions, pauses), context, and initial interpretative comments. At the same time, it is useful to highlight distinctive phrases and emotional responses. Then the next step is transform notes into emerging themes. The next stage involves looking for connections between emerging themes, grouping them together according to conceptual similarities and providing each cluster with a descriptive label. Last but not least, writing a narrative account of an IPA study involves taking the themes identified and writing them up one by one.

Findings

Although elders' dependence on their children for support is one of the core values of the culture of filial piety in China (Cong & Silverstein, 2012; Liu et al., 2021), the initial findings suggest that CiMWEs take a relatively loose stance on the necessity of taking care of their parents in China in person mostly because of the generosity and open-mindedness of their Chinese parents as well as their health condition so far. As Fu et al. (2020) present the Chinese elders' understanding on filial piety is changing and the collectivism has been appearing in Chinese culture over centuries, has become more nuanced through communism and socialism than its original principle of giving a group priority over each individual (Yamagishi et al., 1998). This outcome speaks against the proposition of Blalock and Lyu (2023) that Chinese women entrepreneurs are portrayed as "patriot-preneur", and with an additional identity of immigrant, individualism overlays patriotism. Further, it is confirmed by this study that contemporary elders in China hold less authoritative but more reciprocal stances toward filial piety. As CiMWEs reveal, most distant family members in China are open-minded about their entrepreneurship in Germany, as long as the women themselves are having a comfortable life in Germany. Also, CiMWEs have taken positive lessons from their elders who have obtained an advanced education or who have had an entrepreneurial experience in China. It's their parents who practise what one preaches and this positivity and entrepreneurial experience is being passed to this younger generation, their daughters. However, a lack of deep interaction and communication with their elders regarding their career development is shown apparent in the narratives. Most women reveal there hasn't been any news about the progress or obstacles that they have encountered during the journey that was divulged to their parents in China. Participants propose that not giving too much information about their current business situation is a way to not worry their parents, which is a kind of "regretful habit". Besides, not knowing about how life goes in Germany nor possessing professional knowledge about implementing entrepreneurship also accounts for the reason of deficient reciprocation between Chinese women abroad and their parents in China. Surprisingly, married CiMWEs reflect that their biggest support usually comes from their spouses, rather than from their elder parental side, if there is any.

This research question can be answered by dividing explanations into a few parts. As distant family support from CiMWEs' parents in China hasn't played a noticeably huge role in motivating CiMWEs in terms of their sustainability of entrepreneurship in an overtly positive way, neither has it impacted CiMWEs negatively or put them in an unfavorable condition or circumstance. Even to women whose marital status is single, although Chinese parents are generally worried about if and when their daughter can be married, which is often prioritised by Chinese parents over women's entrepreneurship, the Chinese parents tend to be reluctant to interfere with the decisions their daughters have made regarding entrepreneurship due to the long geographical distance between them.

For example, a woman talks about the simple and brief contact with her parents in China and how they exchange news about their life:

... But talking to parents, has been quite rare. I feel it's a shame, I can feel the warmth from my parents, they often say when it's cold, you wear something warm, or keep healthy don't lose weight too much, then eat well and so on, (they show) this kind of caring for my life. Sometimes I do need to know that I am concerned nonstop by people unconditionally, naturally I would call them, and they would tell their own stories of what happened to them recently. But while you were listening to these things, you couldn't let them know any negative things that happened to you. Whereas with my husband, we keep no secrets from each other. (Helen, 40+, owner of a high-tech company)

This women implies a need to be cared emotionally from family, and despite this interactive emotional companionship occurs superficially and sketchily. The authors entitle it the implicit

emotional support. Meanwhile, the women keep advice their parents gave them regarding their decisions about how to live in mind:

My parents understood me well. "You should live for what you think is comfortable with. Your life should be free and enriching, as long as you feel comfortable with it, then it's okay. After all, your life is depending on you, it's you who can experience it, please be responsible for your life. But don't tell us it's hard, also don't tell us how hard it is." They really said that. (Ivy, middle-aged property manager)

My parents never rebuffed the idea that I wanted to live abroad. Because from the beginning, I've made my position about my own life very clear. My parents are relatively open-minded, my father told me "your life belongs to you, I couldn't impose things upon you, not like your grandparents did, they have enforced lots (their will) on us," therefore I'm very grateful and lucky, because to my parents, it's not that they have a very high academic degree, but they are fairly well educated.... (Ellen, 40+ years old, property manager and consultant)

Taking emotional responsibility and self-efficacy as a result of being trusted to be independent are unveiled to help set gravity to women's psychological autonomy. Nevertheless, some of the Chinese parents' own experience in their previous life and their attitudes towards entrepreneurship and its practice have influenced CMWEs' thoughts of being persistent in the choices they make, and the habit of keeping learning new knowledge and being open-minded too. This tacit knowledge combined with the experience what their parent have engaged in, have scattered seeds for undertaking this career in the women's mind.

My parents' being independent (in career) gave me more time and opportunity to be an entrepreneur, also my father has a MBA degree, he inspired me a lot because he has learned non-stop in his life. (Sally, middle aged owner of a real estate agency)

My parents are not like most parents. They retired quite early and don't have a lot of things to do now, perhaps they do some square dancing. But both of my parents like to learn new things, especially my mom, she loves learning, she's still learning a foreign language and I do communicate with her frequently. Regarding recruiting personnel to my own company, I think I have gained lots of support because her previous job was very favourable. She worked in a large corporation as a financial manager, hence she could give me some guidance. (Amy, 40+, owner of a tax consultancy firm)

The tacit, subjective and informal knowledge from parents' experience as well as the verbal advice are believed to belong to instrumental support as none of the women discloses financial support from parents. Not only being independent financially, but also parents' demeanor about the gender role has a profound but inherent impact on these Chinese women:

We have lots of siblings at home, and plus I'm from XX (a Chinese province), where people value male children more over girls. But to my mom, she maintained no matter boys or girls, as long as we are her children, we must go to study. Therefore, four of us all went to university and even obtained Master's degree, including the ones recommended for uni admission (without taking an exam). Now we brothers and sisters are spread out living all over China, I have younger brothers and sisters, I'm the eldest one. And my mom was always very supportive (in our education), and what impressed me was firstly, at that time, they fed the whole family including 4 kids and supported us to go to school, to go to university, it was very difficult for them. Besides, 3 out of 4 came outside of the state plan (one child policy), therefore at that generation they had to pay 3 times more tuition fee to compensate for being fined, so that we could read the same (books) as others, therefore my parents had to do business by themselves in order to feed us. (Helen)

Both my parents were entrepreneurs. When I was little, I stayed with my grandparents in the village and they went to Shenzhen to build their own business, a toy factory. They didn't come home very

often. There was once that I still remember clearly that they drove a car back home. I was on the bridge in our village and saw them remotely when they were at the entrance of our village. I realised oh that's my parents and it was nice to have a car and return from the city. I realised the changing power of being wealthy and having plenty of money by then. While growing up, we were not very close because we didn't live together for a very long time. But I've seen how people can be financially independent and achieve something through their own business, actually everyone can, not matter men or women. (Alice, 28, owner of a logistic company)

From my very early age, our family roles were like "put the cart before the horse." When I was little, I was doing household work at home. My mom wasn't a housewife, didn't do anything for the household, she didn't cook for us or clean... But she was like a national hero to me (Winnie, 65, owner of a training school and manager of several training programmes)

The extracts tell a pre-adulthood nurture and tangible support from parents, which is both educational and inspirational. The fulfilling and enriching retired life of parents, named by authors tangible reassurance, can also comfort Chinese women entrepreneurs as they are not the only spiritual support, or spiritual sustenance to their parents anymore:

I think on one side, my parents appreciate I'm being so diligent and successful in entrepreneurship in Germany, whereas on the other side they'd feel lonely because I'm their only child. Then this old couple, they take care of themselves well in China. But it's alright, my parents are both open-minded people, they look forward to their life. Hence for example my father likes travelling, he's outdoors all the time. Everytime I called him, he was outside travelling around in different cities. My mother likes singing and dancing, everytime I called her, she's on her way to dance. Either she's dancing or on her way to dance. ... My parents are still relatively young, and they live with freedom. So if I were living in China, I surely wouldn't need to feed my kids by myself, I'd live easily and gnaw old people (a Chinese expression for relying on parents financially) and they would have to help take care of my children. But now that I've seen my parents living in a relaxing way and they have nothing to care particularly for, neither do I have to take care of my children that hard (in order to please them). On the contrary, I'm making great effort, and they (my parents) can live easily and freely. Therefore, every lifestyle has pros and cons. ... My parents didn't make a comment or participate in my entrepreneurship journey, because they knew I'm a reliable and conservative person. I don't do things out of a sudden. Therefore I believe my parents know me well and if I've decided on something, they won't stop me. (Sally)

They travel around, spend holidays here and there every year, hence they live happily. So if these 2 sides (China and in Germany) both have good life, in fact you are also pleased and you don't need to convince them of anything (Helen).

However, the narratives from women of all ages suggest that there is a sophisticated distinction between parents' attitudes towards CiMWEs' decision on entrepreneurship and life when it comes to two different marital statuses, namely being married or single. Research about the role of social capital amongst female entrepreneurs suggests marriage, in the context of developing country, increases the propensity for entrepreneurial success (Babajide et al., 2022). The initial findings suggest that Chinese parents still express concern regarding the decisions and challenges faced by single or newly married women without children who strive for independence, resulting in a struggle for autonomy in resolutions. As a result, confrontations and negotiations between the two sides are common.

One single woman admits, concerning the pressure from parents, her biggest motivation to manage her company in Germany is her parents' understanding of her idea that she has been wanting to live abroad by herself: *"Their thinking has a huge impact on me. If they weren't being supportive, it would become a liability to me. It could be the same issue to me as I don't want to be forced or urged (to get married). If they imposed the same thought upon me, it would affect the things I do here.*

Because we are a family after all, and a harmony must be there. If they could understand me and I could understand them, it would be the best situation. If they couldn't understand me, ultimately we would have to find a way to compromise. If it weren't me to compromise more, it would have to be them. Right, therefore their thoughts are of great importance." (Vera, 30+, owner of an export company)

Another young but freshly married female entrepreneur unfolded her parents' expectations on her: I think my parents, it's not I guess, it is what it is that they really want us (me and the husband) to go back to China. Because we then would be around them or be simply physically in China. They'd like to help assist us in this way better at any time. We choose not to go back, but still they are being "supportive". Because first I need to finish my study here, counting on my entrepreneurship which is also my career, they are backing us up. However under the skin they still want us to return, sure I believe they are still quite dependent on us, psychologically they need us. (Fiona, 30-, owner of a flower design shop)

My parents have been constantly asking me about if I could meet someone and get married soon. Not only them but also other relatives at home. I'm being busy at work and also have to deal with their remarks. My father in particular didn't want me to stay here at all, he believes I should come back to China. I have to explain to them many times, I can't just marry anyone. It has been a few times that our communication was intense while talking about this topic, I have to negotiate with them in peace. (Alice)

I came to Germany in 2013. It has been such a long time since left my parents. Also my parents are divorced. My father has got a new partner, and my mom is the one that I'm concerned of. I considered all before I started my entrepreneurial journey and at the beginning of my business. I tried to contact my mom as often as I could. My mom is also concerned about my condition because I'm still single. But over the past years, I began to be more independent mentally. Actually it's better because parents are not as weak as you'd think they are. Before, I thought I needed to be commuting often between these two sides (Germany and China), but now I'm more concentrating on myself and staying mostly in Germany. My mom has also become more open-minded. It's important to communicate with parents more frequently. If you have any thought, you should first convince yourself and then try to convince them. Considering they are so far away and if you were being hesitant, it would be almost impossible to convince them. At my beginning, I had to persuade my mom, (because I didn't talk to my father very often) about my decision more than ten times and after a while, they went back to their old idea. It's frustrating. All your life just got tied down and you had to spend lots of time on it. Then I realised their thought became so rigid. There was once I had a serious word with her and told her that if every time I try to talk to you, but the result made me more unhappy, then we should reduce our communication. If my life were being influenced so badly by this, this shouldn't be a result you'd like to see. I think every time we chat, our conversation should be pleasant because we are a family. Family should be fun. It shouldn't be like this frustration. I'm also very sincere and honest to my mom, I believe home is a wind-proofing haven where you'd love to return. If one day, you were scared or stressed about the family, shouldn't be happening at all... recently I was wondering why my mom didn't contact me at all. So I contacted her, and she said she's met someone, a partner. I was so happy for her. I think sometimes when the communication with parents doesn't go smooth, maybe they focus too much on you, or their whole spiritual breath is on you. If you could have them distract from you or keep them occupied by themselves, you'd be successfully released. (Taylor, 30+, owner of a logistic company)

Again, to Chinese women who are single, they consider the image of family unit in a traditional harmonious spot and almost all admit a direct conflict should be avoided. On the other hand, to married CiMWEs living in Germany, their husband has demonstrated offering enormous support and team spirit in women's entrepreneurial journey and family life. Mutual understanding is seen to be the most important quality alongside entrepreneurial persistence. This finding varies from those studies

about the role of spouses of migrant women entrepreneurs in their occupational trajectories in a different context. For example, middle-class south American women, who experience severe descending social mobility due to their immigration to Spain, regard the entrepreneurial strategy as a sacrifice that guarantees their spouse's career advancement (Villares-Varela et al., 2017). Polish women migrant entrepreneurs awoke to similar same situation, described as trailing wives, following the lead migrants (their husband) into migration to UK and they prioritize their household's settlement including children's education and husband's career at the expense of their own career prospects, and ultimately, at the cost of their entrepreneurial actions (Lassalle and Shaw, 2021).

To get along well with the husband, Chinese women show an awareness of achieving equivalent status as husband financially and spiritually. It entails that common topics to share deeply and embark on indicate a harmonised share of family roles.

The following women give each of their version of mutual support with husband in their entrepreneurial track:

To balance the different roles (as mom and entrepreneur, as well as wife) I play, you need to race against time. My advantage is that my husband is German, and his family doesn't live in my city, therefore we can just visit them once a month, and they don't really know how I'm doing here. But I share half of the job in taking after our kids with my husband. Each role matches with each job. (Sally)

... I think I'm lucky (in being a women) indeed, but my fortune has lots to do with my personal choice. ... He appreciates my lightening, I might be better in dealing with small things, I'm willing, on the whole, in my heart I'd rather that he's better than me, as long as he's more excellent than me, I'd be proud and I'm so glad, he also thinks like this. But in some dilemmas, I'm quite emulous, then I'd like to win over him or something like that. Or when I acted differently, at that time he chose to be tolerant, I find that great. You should find one like this, generally you won't be frustrated. ... In my entrepreneurial journey, my husband has been quite generous. It's not that he doesn't have any male chauvinism, I reckon every man has a little androcentrism, more or less. When it comes to you who have to do things outdoors or make more money, I guess inside him, he could have a bit inferiority. But I believe he's thinking straight and clear. (Helen)

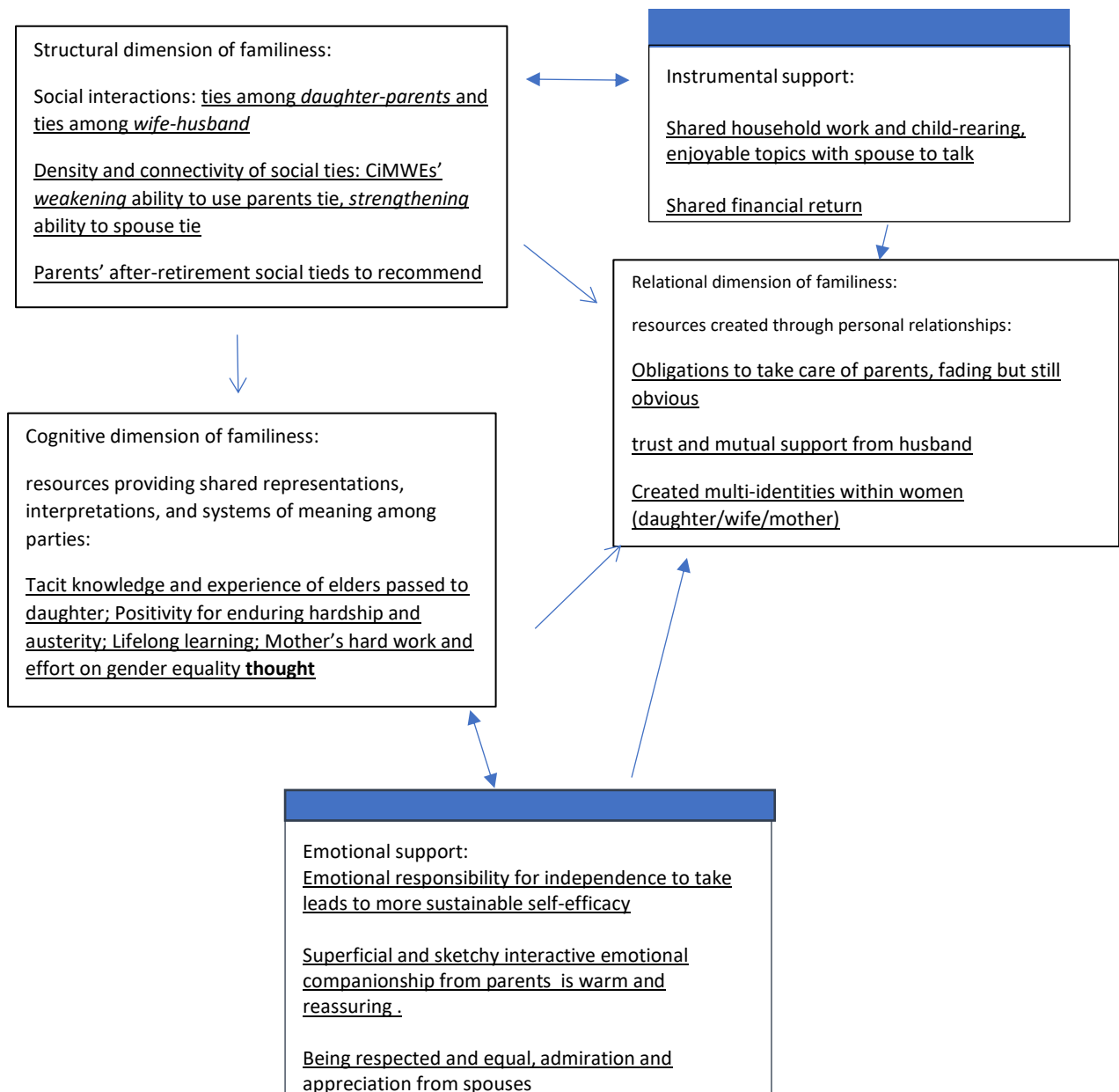
I think the perfect match these days doesn't necessarily have to be in finance, Germans don't recognise it either, it's our Chinese old-fashioned thinking. Whereas actually Germans also have the perception of how a good match should be. My understanding is that your awareness and values should be matched. It's not like you have a bachelor degree and I'm a doctor, but it should be a recognition of education, both your horizons should be levelled up. Both parents can't be like, one side is Eugénie Grandet (a novel character from Honoré de Balzac, famous for her innocence to experience, ignorance to knowledge, illusion to disenchantment) while the otherside is open-minded. There should be mutual respect. Thus in this process by the time you select me as your partner, I have already known that our lots of things are matchable. In fact I've tried by sight of him to understand him, he as well. (Ellen)

It shows an emotional feeling of being respected and equal is repetitive among narratives, the emotional support embodies particularly admiration and appreciation from spouses.

Considering the theoretical framework of family unit capital, this emergent finding validates that persons who possess more family social capital, are the married ones who have their spouses on the side, which might further lead to couple businesses (El Shoubaki et al., 2022). The lived-experience of CiMWE is consistent with the notion that the family is prone to offer support and resources that can be utilised to operate a business (Siqueira, 2007). This research indicates that family can provide intangible support such as encouragement and solidarity that affect migrant entrepreneurship

(Sanders and Nee, 1996) as well as tangible support, guidance from parents; verbal and reassuring remarks and mutual trust and respect.

Conceptualised figure configurating family support in the theoretical framework of family social capital



Conclusion and Implications

The finding from this research speaks against the general vulnerability of migrant women entrepreneurs and of their exposed intersectional identities including ethnicity, gender, migration status and family status. While underlining the importance of family for migrants' entrepreneurship, the findings add more nuances to the evidence from a domestic Chinese context that having family living together increases Chinese urban migrants likelihood of starting an entrepreneurial activity (Hu et al., 2021). Integrating into the theoretical framework of family unit capital, this research enriches the context on the role of family support, delivers more in-depth questioning individually within family unit and indicates the impact of the strength of family ties, as this would provide further insight not only just to the levels of support but to enhance business sustainability for the female entrepreneurs (Dewitt et al., 2022).

According to the theory, family unit capital is achieved through the influence of four dynamic factors and two additional capital, which are unfolded in the discovery of the conceptual framework. For instance factor *stability*: the investigated women entrepreneurs are positioned at a post start-up stage, and have accumulated various experience in the country of host while studying, working and living in Germany. The financial and familiar stability compiled through their entrepreneurship and dynamic family support and relationships grants them a continuity and visibility of mutual obligations concerning family (Misztal, 1996), as well as the progress of trust and norms of cooperation (Granovetter, 1985; Putnam, 1993; Hitt et al., 2002). Likewise, the changing nature of interaction, the second factor, assists the negotiation between family members and CiMWEs against obstacles in family social network and further maintains and reinforces ongoing motivation. Clearly these immigrant women live independent to the parents in China but at the same time partially dependent to the local family, attached to husband and putting a premium on children. This manifests the inevitable interdependence and exchange, both factors play a role to family unit capital possessed by Chinese women entrepreneurs.

This research provides a theoretical contribution in terms of setting the impact of family support in the context of female entrepreneurship in a migration backdrop. The influence of family support on Chinese women's experience and perception, and on their action indeed draws out factors that are worthy of exploration in female entrepreneurship. Specifically, family support and its result in the family dynamics and cohesiveness, particularly altruism, can be analysed through the theoretical lens of family unit capital. It is worthwhile to further research and discuss this phenomenon in the follow-up study. The evidence of a positive effect of family ties on entrepreneurship provides another justification for policies or reforms intended to stimulate economic growth by not only simply promoting family members to physically live together such as in mainland China (Hu et al., 2021), but also by drawing lessons from strategic coping strategies within family utilised by women in particular, that are considered under various social and economic statuses as well as geographical distance to achieve an entrepreneurial sustainability.

Participant	Age range and marital status	If siblings or parents are divorced	Industry
1. Vera	30+ single	The only child	Export
2. Ivy	30+ married with kids		Real Property
3. Ellen	40+ married, no kid	The only child	Consulting and Real Property
4. Fiona	25-30 married, no kid	The only child	Florist
5. Sally	30-40, married with kids	The only child	Real Property
6. Amy	40+, married with kids	One elder brother	Financial consultant
7. Helen	40+, married with kids	Siblings in China	High tech
8. Winnie	60+ divorcee with kid	One elder brother	Education and training programmes
9. Alice	25-30 single	One younger brother	Logistics
10. Taylor	30+ single	The only child	Logistics
Profile of anonymous participants (interviewees)			

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