

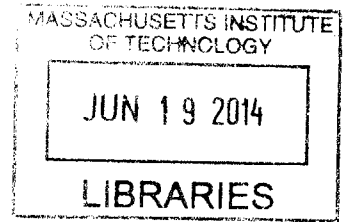
Asian American Women Entrepreneurs

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by

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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
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ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies & Planning
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ABSTRACT

There are an estimated 620,300 firms owned by Asian American women nationwide, and they contribute \$105 billion to the U.S. economy. They are also active in Greater Boston's innovation and entrepreneurship communities. This thesis explores the entrepreneurial narratives of eight women whose small-medium enterprises (SMEs) are concentrated in the professional, scientific and technical industries. My focus is on the following questions: 1) What are the conditions under which Asian American women entrepreneurs are successful? 2) Does their collective entrepreneurial narrative display any unique characteristics?

Through in-depth interviews with individual entrepreneurs, I explore these questions and identify emergent themes that add to our understanding of the realities and challenges that entrepreneurship affords. These themes include the transition from the corporate world to entrepreneurship, the early start-up stages of building a business and the role of network structures. Later themes address the broader role that Asian American women entrepreneurs play in their local communities and civic society.

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This last one goes out to all of the enterprising women in my life who I'm blessed to call *umma*, sister, fellow DUSPer and friend. You inspire me to build community wherever I go, however far that may be from the beach – and to get over my FOMO. #Sarangz

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INTRODUCTION

Across the United States, there are 620,300 firms owned by Asian American women. They represent 23% of firms owned by women of color and 7% of all women-owned firms. According to the American Express 2013 State of Women-Owned Business Report, they employ 649,000 people and contribute to \$105 billion in revenue to the US economy.

Asian American women-owned firms have higher revenues per firm than other minority-owned firms and all women-owned firms in general.

The majority of companies owned by Asian American women are concentrated in states that also have large populations of Asian Americans. Over 30% of these firms are located in California (193,000 firms). The second top state, Florida, lags significantly by 90%, with only 22,000 firms.

How do Greater Boston and Massachusetts fit into this picture? Boston is known as a global hub of innovation and its entrepreneurial ecosystem is abuzz with institutions of higher education and research, an active venture capital industry, worldwide hospitals and a plethora of nascent biotech start-ups as well as industry giants. Despite all of this, Boston is not among the top 10 metro areas in terms of economic clout among women-owned firms. This applies also to firms specifically owned by Asian American women.

The New England Venture Capital Association commissioned a survey in 2013, in which “70% of Boston-area entrepreneurs felt that the start-up community is sometimes or not at all inclusive to female entrepreneurs.” Though this study did not take race or ethnicity into consideration, it does beg the question of the barriers that women entrepreneurs face.

Asian American women may no longer be considered underrepresented minorities in American institutions of higher learning, but they certainly are in the annals of American entrepreneurship literature. That is not to say that there is a dearth of innovative companies being founded and run by Asian American women in Boston. Based upon primary data collected through in-depth interviews with Asian American women entrepreneurs, this thesis investigates the questions:

What are the conditions under which Asian American women entrepreneurs are successful? What unique characteristics do this demographic display in terms of their entrepreneurial narratives? How might their minority status affect the way they conduct business? Can we expect to see more Asian American women entrepreneurs?

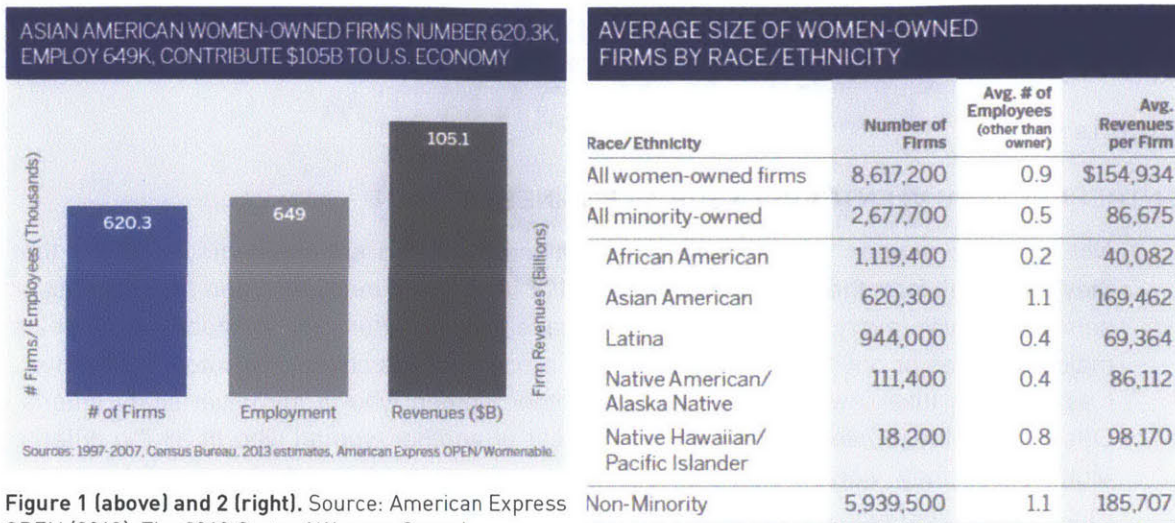


Figure 1 (above) and 2 (right). Source: American Express OPEN (2013). The 2013 State of Women-Owned Businesses Report.

Note: Subgroup numbers add up to more than total because multi-racial women-owned firms are counted in each category.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

Individual entrepreneurs are the unit of analysis in this thesis. Data collection methods primarily consisted of semi-structured interviews that ranged from one to four hours. The first round of interviews was conducted during January and February 2014. Interview questions covered broad themes, such as pre-entrepreneurial education and professional experiences, questions regarding the actual enterprise and start-up stage, network structure and civic engagement (See Appendix A for sample questions). Questions on motivations for entrepreneurship and key network structures were founded in existing literature on theories of entrepreneurial success. Existing business case studies and newspaper articles showcasing several women of this study were helpful for background information and for tailoring follow-up questions. Follow-up interviews were primarily conducted through phone and email correspondence in March and April 2014.

As a relative newcomer to Boston, I truly relied on my existing networks from MIT DUSP to begin the snowball sampling process. I used the snowballing method to create a list of potential interviewees. Preparatory interviews were conducted in November and December 2013 while I was crafting my research questions. I met with key informants, including MIT professors and DUSP alumni and affiliates embedded in the Asian American community in Boston and/or entrepreneurial networks. These initial conversations provided me contextual information on Asian Americans in Boston by ethnic group and immigration wave, civic and political activity in the Asian American community, and some of the “known” examples of successful Asian American women entrepreneurs. Although I also used open-source media, including start-up-oriented social groups and websites and news sources, to identify possible interviewees, I did

not land any interviews by cold-calling or cold-emailing these individuals. Granted, most of the Asian American women entrepreneurs of Boston cited in the media were venture-funded.¹

Criteria

ENTREPRENEURS V. ENTREPRENEURIAL BUSINESSWOMEN

Not all of the women in this study are traditionally defined entrepreneurs, meaning that they did not all form their own companies and/or develop an innovative and new product or service. Ideally, every interviewee would have founded her own company and holds majority shares or >50% of ownership. In the process of searching for women to interview, I asked each interviewee to refer me to 3 other women who fit my initial study criteria. Often times, these interviewees could not think of another woman who fit all the criteria. More often, they would refer me to women who had taken initiative by leaving the traditional or “default” path for their academic background. In other instances, they had exhibited entrepreneurship at an earlier point of their careers. As such, some of the women in this study are running an already established business that they either inherited or entered at a senior managerial position. I will aim to distinguish between Asian American businesswomen and entrepreneurs in later sections.

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION: GREATER BOSTON

As Asian Americans in Massachusetts are primarily concentrated in Greater Boston and its surrounding urban neighborhoods, potential interviewees must either a) reside in Greater Boston or have a business sited in Greater Boston. (See Appendix B for cities and/or neighborhoods with high concentrations of Asian Americans).

GENDER: WOMEN

All of the interviewees are women.

RACE: ASIAN AMERICAN

Though all of the women were of Asian descent, the overwhelming majority of them were East Asian. There are 4 Korean American and 3 Chinese American women. Only one South Asian woman, who is originally from India, is included in this study. There are no Pacific Islanders in this sample either. The women’s immigrant generation and citizenship status were recorded but not the basis for selection.

INDUSTRY: PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS SERVICES

I used the Bureau of Labor Statistics in delineating the industry sectors to be represented in this study. NAICS 54 covers Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, one of three sections in the professional and business services supersector. Within this sector

¹ Webb, C..A. “A Comprehensive List of Women-Led Startups in Boston.” *BostInno*. Retrieved from <http://bostinno.streetwise.co/channels/a-comprehensive-list-of-women-led-startups-in-boston/>

(NAICS 54), there are 9 subsectors. This supersector was chosen specifically because it represents some of the industries that women-owned firms are well represented in.² Women-owned business account for nearly 30% of firms in the professional, scientific and technical services.³ Additionally, 48% of all employed Asian Americans, both male and female, have management, professional and related occupations (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2011). The industry groups represented in this study are bolded below.

Some of the interviewees, however, run businesses in different sectors. They include retail fashion and restaurant industries. Many of them, however, started their careers in the professional, scientific and technical industries prior to launching (or running) their current enterprises.

NAICS 54 Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	NAICS Code
Legal Services	5411
Accounting, Tax Preparation, Bookkeeping, and Payroll Services	5412
*Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services	5413
*Specialized Design Services	5414
*Computer Systems Design and Related Services	5415
*Management, Scientific and Technical Consulting Services	5416
*Scientific Research and Development Services	5417
Advertising and Related Services	5418
Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	5419
NAICS 44 Retail Trade	
Clothing and Clothing Accessories	4481
NAICS 72 Accommodation and Food Services	
Restaurants and Other Eating Places	7225

Limitations

The research period for this study was temporally limited to a few months between Winter 2013 and Spring 2014 and financial limited on my graduate student budget. For a few interviewees, I was able to provide complimentary coffee beverages at our interviews, but no other monetary compensation was provided. I projected that by virtue of being based in Boston, I would be able to observe the entrepreneurs in action and conduct multiple interviews that would provide

² 17% of all women-owned firms are in health care & social assistance, although women-owned firms account for 52.7% of all firms in the health care & social assistance sector. (See Amex Women-owned Businesses for more figures)

³ This is in contrast to the distribution of women-owned firms across industries. 14% of women-owned firms are in this industry.

deeper insight into how the businesses operated over the course of several months. I was not able to fulfill all of these goals. Save for two on-site interviews, all of the interviews were conducted in coffee shops in/around Greater Boston.

The information that I present in this study is relatively one-sided, meaning that the primary sources are the women entrepreneurs themselves. I asked women about key formal networks and individuals who shaped their entrepreneurial success and civic activities. I contacted some of these networks and individuals to triangulate information. As a young researcher, my research skills improved through this individual project. It also means that the quality of the data reflects my limited experience in collecting qualitative data.

Reliability of Data

Internal and external validity concerns exist for this study. The qualitative data is exposed to bias because snowball sampling does not produce a random sample reflective of the greater population. The external validity of my findings is limited in that I cannot generalize my findings to all Asian American women entrepreneurs. As the sample of women in this study was purposefully restricted to Greater Boston, factors of entrepreneurial success or contextual information regarding civic and business dynamics, for example, may only be applied to this geographic region. Further studies on Asian American women entrepreneurs across the country would complement this initial foray well.

The eight Asian American women in this study display diversity in a number of ways, including ethnicity, immigrant generation, nationality, and country of origin. They also represent multiple industries and enterprises that range in longevity and scale. No women identified other than heterosexual. Finally, there are women with varied marital statuses and family arrangements.

Hypotheses

Prior to embarking on thesis research, I made some hypotheses.

- Women entrepreneurs whose parents are/were immigrant entrepreneurs themselves were more likely to have taken over their family businesses as a starting point for their entrepreneurial journey.
- Women with immigrant entrepreneur parents are more likely to pursue entrepreneurship than women whose parents were not entrepreneurs.
- If ethnicity is less salient and more symbolic (Gans, 1979) (or racial identification as Asian/Asian American is stronger), these entrepreneurs may not seek financial and institutional resources from ethnic-based social networks because they are not embedded in these networks to begin with.
- As the professional, scientific and technical services sector require significant human and intellectual capital, these entrepreneurs may have found more financial and institutional resources from academic and professional-based networks.

- Asian American women entrepreneurs may have had difficulty finding mentors when establishing their businesses, and as a result, express greater interest in providing mentorship to younger women. These women may also have found mentorship from older non-Asian male entrepreneurs, for whom the greater age gap helped dispel negative perceptions of older men and younger women in professional relationships. Non-Asian mentors may help also reduce East Asian cultural norms of patriarchal hierarchy and gender norms.
- Greater levels of “embeddedness” in an ethnic community will positively correlate with childhood experiences growing up in the ethnic community, greater maturity of business, and whether the woman has a family/children.
- Double minority status as being female and Asian American may afford these particular entrepreneurs multiple layers of business development support, i.e. those oriented towards women entrepreneurs versus minority entrepreneurs. (SBA 8(a) and MWSBE certification).

ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS

Introduction begins with a contextual basis for the research. This section posits the research question and outlines the methodology for the thesis.

Chapter 1 introduces existing scholarly work pertaining to entrepreneurs, including theories of entrepreneurial success as well as literature from the perspective of gender, race and ethnicity. The literature informed the topics and range of interview questions.

Chapter 2 profiles the ten women and their enterprises upon which the findings for the thesis are presented. This chapter provides background information, including family and education background as well as prior professional experiences leading up to their entrepreneurial ventures.

Chapters 3-7 constitute the findings from semi-structured interviews with Asian American women entrepreneurs. Each chapter is structured around a theme that emerged, supplemented by narratives of 2-4 individual women. These chapters aim to shed light on unique characteristics of Asian American women as entrepreneurs versus simply businesswomen.

Chapter 8 outlines key findings, summary analysis and future areas of research. It also presents initial recommendations for consideration at the policy and higher educational level.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars have been studying entrepreneurs and their enterprises as the growing body of literature on entrepreneurial theory attests. Sociologists have focused on relationships, traits of entrepreneurs and the groups they are embedded in (Butler and Kozmetsky, 2004) with attention to race and ethnicity (Valdez, 2011; Bonacich and Modell, 1980). Economists have viewed the entrepreneur as an individual actor who combines land, labor and capital to form a product with economic value. In this literature review, I present some of major theoretical frameworks for understanding entrepreneurship, which will ground the entrepreneurial narratives of this study. I do not attempt to advance a uniting theory of entrepreneurship as it pertains to Asian American women; not enough entrepreneurial research exists yet on this demographic. When there is an overlap in entrepreneurial research about women and race/ethnicity, the comparisons run across racial lines, most often white women in comparison to women of color. As more women in this study cited womanhood as descriptive of their challenges and experience, I will refer to more literature on women-owned enterprises. References to ethnic entrepreneurship literature will be included as applicable. Subsequent chapters will explore the degree to which the entrepreneurial narratives of the Asian American women in my study reflect the literature on women entrepreneur.

THEORIES FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS

The primary theoretical frameworks for understanding entrepreneurship are threefold (Coleman and Robb, 2012). I draw from research findings on women entrepreneurs, which distinguish women from men generally without specific attention to race and ethnic differences. Existing research on Asian Americans is included as apropos.

1) Motivational Theory

Under **Motivational Theory**, entrepreneurs' behaviors can be understood by their expectations and desired outcomes (Olson et al., 1996; Vroom, 1964). Orhan and Scott (2001) refer to push versus pull economic factors that may lead individuals to entrepreneurship. Push factors refer to economic need for greater household income, job dissatisfaction, inability to find work, and/or the need for more flexible schedules in order to maintain family responsibilities. Pull factors can range from seeking greater independence and self-fulfillment and/or the desire for wealth, social status and power. Lastly, the inability to enter senior level management positions in companies and organizations, described as the glass ceiling, can influence an individual's decision to leave the mainstream labor market and create her own employment opportunities.

Kirkwood's 2009 study revealed three gender differences in entrepreneurial motivations along the following factors: independence, job dissatisfaction and children. The desire for independence was a greater motivator for women than men as was the case for children. Thirdly, job dissatisfaction was more of an influencer for men to enter entrepreneurship.

Often times, entrepreneurship is positively framed as providing independence, self-sufficiency and creative outlets with emancipatory potential (Fleischman, 2006 as cited by Godwyn and Stoddard, 2011). That entrepreneurship reconnects workers in the capitalist economy back to the labor of their work with concrete products. In this fashion, there is a double bottom line where success is not defined solely on economic gains but rather other factors, such as independence and autonomy in the decision-making process (Smith-Hunter 2006: 26).

Some studies point to having parents or family who are entrepreneurs themselves increases the likelihood of an individual entering entrepreneurship (Scherer et al 1989; Boyd, 1991, Covin and Slevin, 1994). Whether or not that applies to Asian American women is a point of contention. For example, Americans of Chinese, Korean, and Indian descent are among the three Asian American immigrant groups that have displayed the highest rates of entrepreneurship, as supported by research flourishing on ethnic enclaves and ethnic economies since the 1980s.

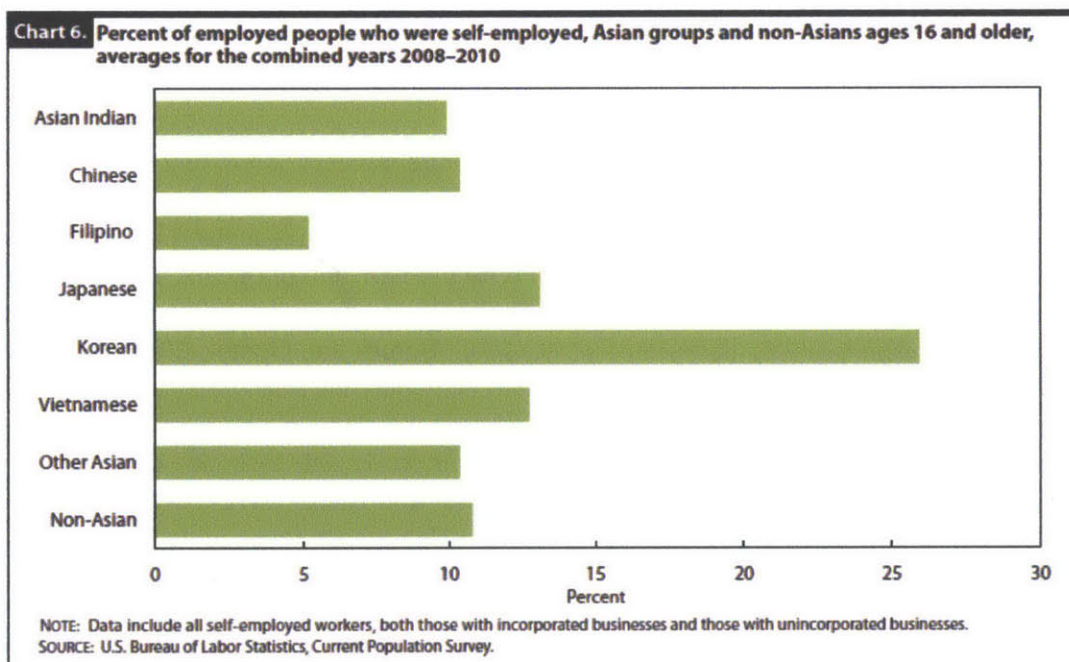


Figure 3. Source Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2011) Asians in the U.S. Labor Force Profile of a Diverse Population.”

In the case of Korean business owners, entrepreneurship has been cited as a strategy for coping with problems associated with blocked mobility, though many of this first generation of entrepreneurs do not want their children to take over their businesses (as cited by Zhou, 2004). In other words, for those Asian Americans whose parents pursued entrepreneurship out of necessity, whether actual or perceived, entrepreneurship is not perceived as an honorable path but rather as stepping stones to socioeconomic mobility for the second generation. In their study of adult children of immigrant entrepreneurs in Boston, which included Asian Americans, Wong, Watanabe and Liu found similar evidence (2011). Most of the participants expressed more reasons against pursuing entrepreneurship, citing direct experience with family-run businesses

and exposure to their parents' struggles with entrepreneurship. Careers in medicine, law and public health were more common, though understandably so, as the majority of participants were pursuing graduate degrees. Interestingly, more of the female participants in their 20s and 30s were receptive to pursuing entrepreneurship later in their lives.

2) Resource-based Theory

Resource-based theory posits that the entrepreneurs who manage to obtain and transform the firm's resources into a competitive advantage will secure a place in the market for profit and growth (Hanlon and Saunders, 2007; Bergmann Lichtenstein and Brush, 2001; Kor and Mahoney, 2000; Rugman and Verbeke, 2000; Amit and Shoemaker, 1993; Wernerfelt, 1984; Penrose, 1959). These resources can be broken down to three different types, 1) financial capital, 2) human capital, and 3) social capital. An entrepreneur may already possess these resources, but his/her ability to access these throughout an enterprise's lifetime is just as, if not more, important.

FINANCIAL CAPITAL

Financial capital refers to debt and equity, or money that entrepreneurs use to buy products and services for their firm. Researchers have found some general differences between men and women in regards to the financial capital they are able to obtain before launching a new firm as well as the types of financing strategies they use to build the firm in future years. Risk aversion theory has cited higher tolerance for risk and uncertainty as being a determinant of whether individuals seek entrepreneurship (Canizares et al., 2006; Barber and Odean, 2001; Kihlstrom and Laffont, 1979). Higher risk aversion among women than men has been suggested by some research in correlation to the tendency of women to start smaller firms in industries that they are already experienced and also finance these nascent firms more with their personal finances rather than external sources of financial capital (Coleman and Robb, 2012). Others cite that women choose to stay smaller, or are less inclined toward high-growth trajectories because they want to maintain greater control of their business (Constandinidis et al., 2006). Another component affecting the ability of women to accumulate more personal financial capital is also their decision to have children, and whether or not their career is interrupted as a result. Decisions to leave or work less will have financial ramifications.

HUMAN CAPITAL

An individual's education and experiences shape his/her human capital. What skills and knowledge has an individual been able to amass through schooling and previous employment that will help him/her build a product or service that has economic value in the market? Such things could include handling the firms' finances with accounting proficiency or acquiring the scientific research skills to conduct experiments and understand pharmacology products and molecular structures. Other important experiences could also include managerial experience in running a firm, handling business development functions and building client relationships. In

other words, one's human capital can be defined as education level and prior work experience, which can be further categorized to include prior professional managerial or supervisory experience, experience similar to the current entrepreneurial venture, and lastly, prior entrepreneurial experience (Gimeno et al 1997).

The underrepresentation of women studying business, engineering or computer science in universities matters because these are industries ripe with entrepreneurial opportunities (Coleman and Robb, 2012, Bobbit-Zeher, 2007).¹ Even though women are underrepresented in these fields, this may be less extreme for Asian American women. I refer to the U.S. Census records of educational attainment among Asian Americans in the US. However, this average masks significant disparities by ethnic groups. 52% of all Asian Americans aged 25 years and older have a bachelors degree, in comparison to 29% of non-Asians (BLS 2011).

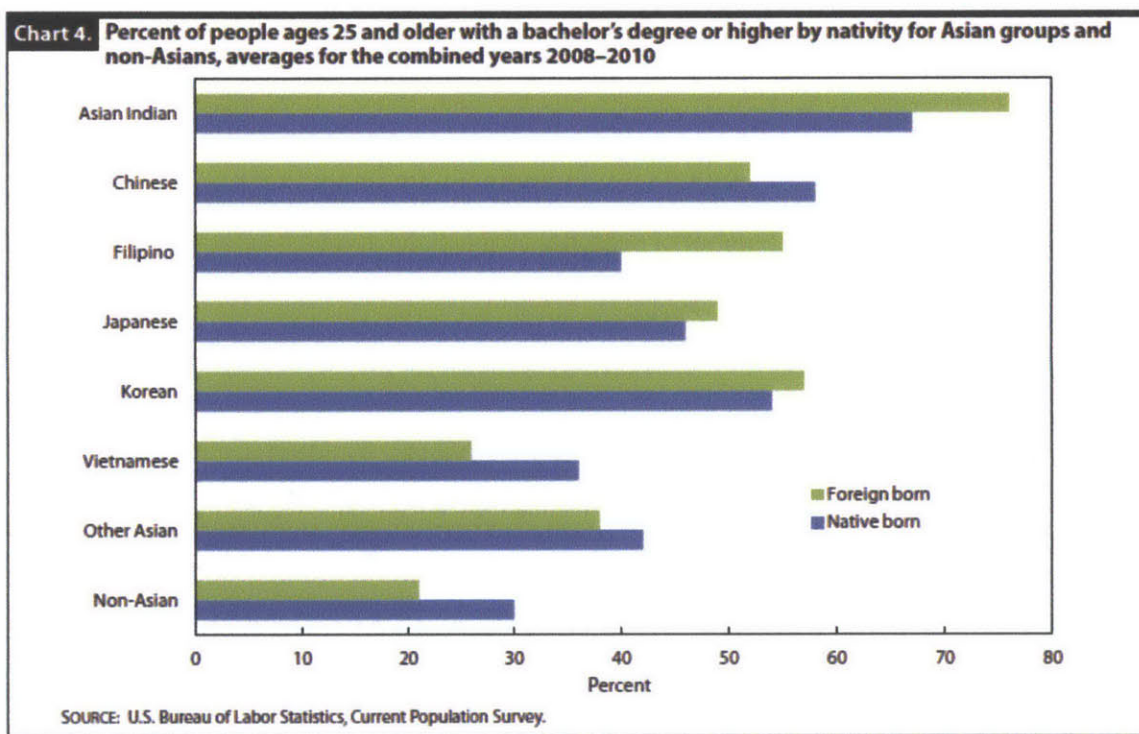


Figure 4. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2011) "Asians in the U.S. Labor Force Profile of a Diverse Population."

¹ They are not the only favorable industries, considering that women-owned firms constitute 52% of health care & social assistance industries (AmEx 2013).

SOCIAL CAPITAL

The networks of relationships among people who live and work together are the building blocks of social capital, which can be the source of resources or provide access to resources in other ways. In entrepreneurship literature, these networks are referred to network structure. Much attention has been placed on the value of social capital in its many forms on entrepreneurial success (Becker-Blease and Sohl, 2007; Brush et al., 2002; Harrison and Mason, 2007). These resources may be financial, but they could also include finding personnel to hire for the firm or building a chain of suppliers whose products and/or services are raw material for the actual firm. A support group of encouragers and mentors who offer management and entrepreneurial advice are also an invaluable resource that networks can provide to those who belong to them. Such networks can be informal and include family members, friends, acquaintances, but they can also be formal networks, such as professional associations, civic organizations, academic groups.

Research exists on the network structures of women entrepreneurs as they transition from corporates to entrepreneurial ventures (Moore and Buttner, 1997). They are broken down in to four factors, including the following:

- Propensity to network;
- Network activity (actual number of personal connections and time invested);
- Network density (how far does network extends past immediate friends and family as well as network size); and
- Network intensity (time duration of contacts and frequency of interaction).

3) Life Cycle Theory

Life Cycle Theory asserts that an enterprise has multiple phases to its lifetime, and the issues and challenges vary by stage (Berger and Udell, 1998; Leach and Melicher, 2009). An enterprise's life cycle can be divided into 5 stages, beginning with the development stage when the enterprise is in gestation.

The start-up stage follows thereafter, as the entrepreneur seeks to take the idea of the enterprise and turn it into a real entity with a real product/service that enters the market. The survival stage is the point when the business is bringing in revenues, though most likely not yet at a profit. Not all businesses survive up to this point, but if they do, they may or may not advance to the rapid growth stage, which is a point at which a firm can secure more financing to expand. More women-owned firms have exhibited decisions not to grow beyond a small and medium enterprise (SME) than male-owned firms,

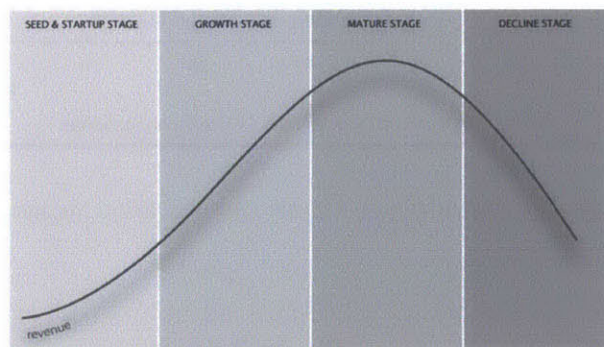


Figure 5. Source: American Society for Quality.
<http://asq.org/knowledge-center/social-responsibility-JDQ.html>

which Coleman and Robb report through a spectrum of firms (2012). The final stage is called the maturity stage when a firm is no longer growing extensively and has established itself in the market. Whether the entrepreneur stays with this firm or has exited at this point is a different matter.

IMMIGRANT AND ETHNIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP LITERATURE

Entrepreneurship literature pertaining to Asian Americans is mostly housed in immigrant and ethnic entrepreneurship research, which experienced the greatest activity in the 1980s and 1990s. Terms such as “middleman minority,” “ethnic entrepreneur,” “ethnic economy,” and “enclave economy,” have evolved conceptually through much contestation over the past three decades (Bonacich, 1973). For brevity, I will only lightly draw on this literature as all but one in this study have businesses outside of ethnic economies and enclave economies.

Being an immigrant and/or person of color does not automatically make one an ethnic or enclave entrepreneur. Enclave entrepreneurs tend to site their businesses in immigrant neighborhoods in which people of the same ethnicity (co-ethnics) are based. Individual entrepreneurs and their enterprises are embedded in co-ethnic social networks that anchor the ethnic enclave. Ethnic enclaves can evolve into multiple neighborhoods over time. More recently, ethnic enclaves have been emerging in suburbs and are dubbed “ethnoburbs” (Li 1998).

The concept of an ethnic economy rests upon one ethnicity’s control of either a business’ ownership and/or the employment network. Past examples in which one Asian ethnicity had a “controlling ownership stake” are Korean groceries, and Chinese laundry services (Light and Karageorgis, 1994). A subset of an ethnic economy is the enclave economy, which extends beyond commercial activity of co-ethnic businesses. What is significant about the enclave economy is the level of economic, social and institutional completeness existing in a geographically and ethnically bounded location. Not only are there coethnic enterprises but also coethnic formal institutions, such as merchant associations, chambers of commerce and social service organizations, supporting economic activity through social and financial capital. The spectrum of businesses ranges from those specific to ethnic products/services (i.e. restaurants, groceries) to professional services for a co-ethnic clientele (i.e. real estate, banking, and legal services).

Portes and Zhou added that enclave economies are notable for “bounded solidarity and enforceable trust, which dictate a norm of reciprocity, mechanisms of support and control necessary for economic life in the community and for reinforcement of norms and values and sanctioning of socially disapproved behavior (1992). Zhou’s study of New York’s Chinatown revealed “how informal reciprocal bonds re established between entrepreneurs and workers [of shared ethnicity] and how they functioned to nurture the entrepreneurial spirit and promote simultaneously the survival and growth of ethnic firms” (1992 as cited in 2004). Other studies

comparing entrepreneurial activities within various Asian ethnic groups include Min's study of self-employment differences between Koreans and Filipinos (1986/87, 1988) and the role of Korean immigrant churches (1992), and Light's work on Korean credit (*kye*) associations (1990).

Zhou calls for understanding the role of the enclave economy in community building and social capital formation. It is not just the economic activity generated in these economies that matter but also the level of social embeddedness fostered through existing social structures "that affects a unique social context for group mobility" (Min 2004: 1061). An enclave economy also engenders more institutional completeness, "which in turn stimulates more diverse community investment. Lastly, a high level of institutional completeness intertwined with the enclave economy creates a physical site where coethnics of diverse class backgrounds meet one another face-to-face and rebuild social networks that have been disrupted through the process of immigration" (Min 2004: 1061).

Portes and Rumbaut contributed to ethnic entrepreneurship literature with their "modes of incorporation" typology as a way of understanding why certain immigrant groups are more prone to pursuing ethnic entrepreneurship in comparison to others (1990). The conditions under which immigrants leave their home countries, the resources they bring to the host country, and the context in which they are received in the host country all influence their trajectory upon entering the United States. Are different immigrant groups coming as labor migrants, entrepreneurs, refugees, and/or professionals? What resources, both financial, material and educational, are they bringing, and how does this impact their participation in the political economy? How do they arrive, legal or undocumented? When they arrive, is there a preexisting ethnic community they can incorporate into? What are US government policies towards them? "Particular contexts of exit and reception can effect distinctive social environments and cultural conditions to the members of different national-origin groups and offer opportunities or create constraints to the individual, independent of the individual-level human capital, structural and cultural characteristics" (as cited by Min 2004: 8).

One caveat of immigrant and ethnic entrepreneurship literature is the overrepresentation of first-generation men. This applies also to studies of Boston's Asian American entrepreneurs, many of whom were operating in the retail and services sector (IAAS). This is not to say that entrepreneurship among Asian Americans rests solely in the domain of men.

Dhaliwal's study of immigrant Asian entrepreneurs in the United Kingdom revealed the "hidden role" that Asian women played in business ventures of their husbands, fathers, and/or brothers (1998). Though some of these women are influential players and involved in enterprise management and operations, they are "invisible" and "silent contributors." Motivations of Asian women for contributing to male family members' businesses were attributed more as an extension of family priorities, which are cultural norms and practices, rather than pure interest in business activity. This group of women was working in "low value-added, labour-intensive businesses" (OECD, 2010). For "hidden women," informal social networks dominate their network structures and participating in formal networks, such as professional associations and

networking activities, can be in direct conflict with their family and cultural responsibilities (Blisson and Rana, 2001). Blisson and Rana wrote, "Asian women view their gender, culture and lack of confidence as barriers to participate in formal networking activities (OECD, 2010). Since the studies in the early 2000s, Dhaliwal has found a "a new Asian super-class and a group of a different sort of entrepreneurial women...in the United Kingdom...who represent a new generation of community members fully integrated into the community, has been educated in the United Kingdom, and is fully versed in Western practices" (OECD, 2010).

ENTREPRENEUR PROFILES

- | | | |
|----------------------|----------|---------------------|
| Vienne Cheung | 1 | VienneMilano |
| Radha Jalan | 2 | ElectroChem |
| Jacque Kay | 3 | Sun Walking Group |
| Kija Kim | 4 | Clark Hill Partners |
| Hyejin Lee | 5 | The MEME Design |
| So-June Min | 6 | .406 Ventures |
| Patty Moy | 7 | China Pearl |
| Hyun-A Park | 8 | Spy Pond Partners |

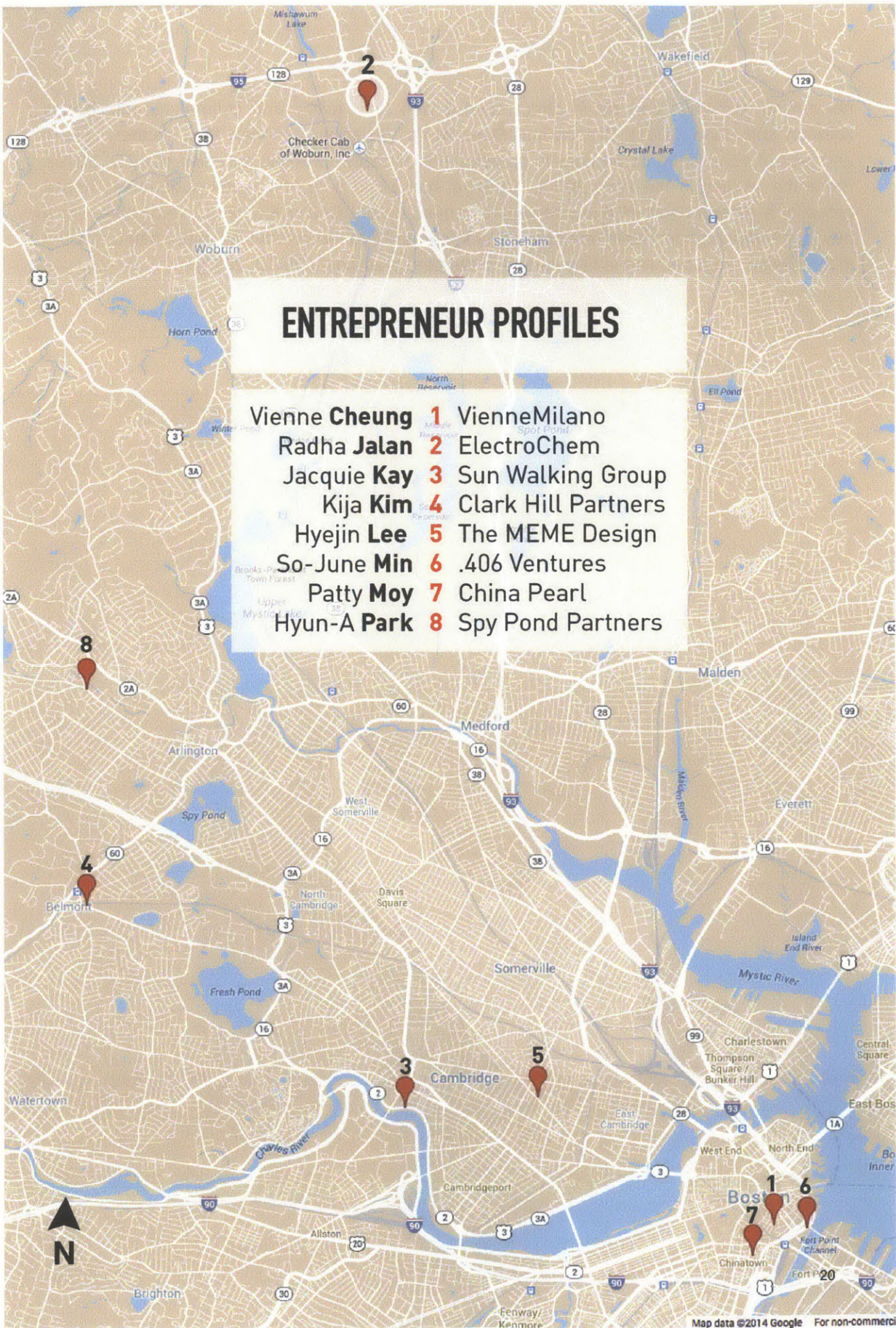


Figure 6. Brief Description of Entrepreneurs featured in this study.

ENTREPRENEUR	COMPANY NAME	POSITION	EST.	INDUSTRY	EMPLOYEES
1 VIENNE CHEUNG	VienneMilano	Founder	2011	Retail Fashion	1-10
	Motu Novu	Partner	2012	Professional Services	1-10
2 RADHA JALAN	Electro Chem, Inc.	CEO	1986	Fuel Cell	1-10
3 JACQUIE KAY	Wu Pi, Inc.	Founder, CEO	1973	International Development	N/A
	Sun Walking Group	Founder, CEO	2011	Energy & Environment	1-10
4 KIJA KIM	HDM	Co-Founder, President and CEO	1989	Mapping	51-200
	Clark Hill Partners	Co-Founder, President and Managing Partner	2007	Venture Capital	1-10
5 HYEJIN LEE	THE MEME	Founder, Thought Leader	2006	Design Innovation	1-50
	Organic Parking	Advisor	2013	Transportation	1-10
6 SO JUNE MIN	.406 Ventures	Chief Financial Officer	2005	Venture Capital	1-10
7 PATTY MOY	China Pearl Restaurant	Director of Operations	1965	Restaurant	11-50
8 HYUN-A PARK	Spy Pond Partners	Co-Founder, President	2006	Transportation	1-10

PROFILE 1:

VIENNE CHEUNG

BACKGROUND

A Boston native, Vienne Cheung is the founder of VienneMilano. Vienne Cheung holds Bachelors degrees in Fine Arts and Psychology from the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and an MBA from Bentley University. Her professional background is in e-commerce and product management. She joined the product management team at Akamai Technologies in 2006, where she managed the launch process for Fortune 500 companies, including Sony, BMG and Ann Taylor.¹ Akamai product managers manage the life cycle of a software, which provides a service that clients use to deliver their own products.²

CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

Vienne left the corporate world to join ASPIRE, a nonprofit organization that focuses on mentoring Asian American girls in career and leadership development. She first joined as a Board Member, though a vacuum in leadership drove her to serve as Executive Director of the organization from 2008 to 2011. Channeling the values of fearless leadership, which ASPIRE emphasizes in their programming for high school girls, Vienne leapt at the chance to take a risk to jump into the world of fashion when she turned 30 years old.

ENTERPRISES: VienneMilano and Mofu Novu

VienneMilano is a luxury hosiery brand and online boutique store that solely sells thigh high stockings made in Italy. Vienne founded VienneMilano in January 2011 and has since released three collections of stockings. The company has grown to 6 employees, some of whom travel between Italy and Germany. The parent company for VienneMilano is Multi-Verse Commerce, which was established in 2009. Vienne is also the co-founder of Mofu Novu, a professional firm that provides financial, marketing and advertising services to other start-up companies. Mofu Novu has been in operation since 2012.

¹ Pitts, B. (2012). "Vienne Cheung, Founder: VienneMilano: A Hollywood Star Crashed my Launch Party." *The Next Women Business Magazine*. Referred from <http://www.thenextwomen.com/2012/06/18/vienne-cheung-founder-viennemilano-hollywood-star-crashed-my-launch-party>

² What is product management? Let's take an example of Victoria's Secret as a hypothetical client of Akamai. If Victoria's Secret were planning on launching their annual fashion show and they knew that half of their viewers will be streaming the video on their smart phones, there would be questions about the requirements of the software delivering that show. How stable would the software platform have to be in order to handle 30 million viewers? Would it be secure? If Victoria's Secret wanted to charge for viewers to watch the show online, how would the platform (software) make the transaction process secure, profitable and convenient? A product manager must craft answers to these questions while paying attention to sales, finance and accounting. Product managers deal with *process* management, and that's what makes them well-suited for the CEO role.

PROFILE 2: RADHA JALAN

BACKGROUND

Radha Jalan is an Indian American originally from Calcutta, India. Radha received her Masters in Hindi Literature from Calcutta University in 1966 and immigrated to the United States with her husband two years later when he started graduate studies at the University of Florida.³ Jalan also took coursework at the same university in the Education Department, where she eventually earned both a Masters and PhD in Education.

During the same year that she began her doctoral program, Radha gave birth to her first daughter. Once her husband finished his studies, the new family moved to Connecticut where Mr. Jalan found employment. Radha completed her PhD dissertation from Connecticut during the same year that her second daughter was born, 1976. While Radha was interested in an academic career, she intended to do so once her children were older. In the meantime, Radha did some consulting work in cross-cultural education.

Once the Jalan family moved to the city of Concord, Massachusetts, Radha became involved in the local Indian community as well as her local residential community. She joined a number of organizations, including the American Association for University Women and the Concord-Carlisle Human Rights Council.

ENTERPRISE: ElectroChem, Inc.

Radha's husband, Vinod Jalan, founded Electro Chem in 1986 after inventing several patents. Electro Chem is a fuel cell company that was originally established to conduct research and development for the fledgling industry. It was not until February 1992 when Vinod unexpectedly died from a fatal heart attack that Radha would take over the reins of Electro Chem. Although she had begun to assist with her husband's business, the internal business operation and research were not within her purview.

Presented with two options for Electro Chem by her accountant, either to sell the company or shut it down, Radha thought of a third option: why not run the company herself? Without any financial or business management experience nor technical background, Radha faced major impediments to taking this task on, not to mention the precarious financial health of the company. Suspicious about the potential buyer, another competitor, and wanting to minimize the extent that her youngest daughter's life was disrupted AND feeling responsibility to pay the company's employees, Radha committed herself to the company for two years to see what she would be able to do. She recalls, "[My husband] started it with no planning, and I got into it with no planning."

³ Referred from Amatucci and Coleman's 2007 case study titled "Radha Jalan and ElectroChem, Inc.: Energy for a Clean Planet," featured in *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice*.

Now into her twenty-fourth year as Electro Chem's CEO, Radha has gone through much experiences and enacted many changes to her company. They include strategic decisions to move away from research and development government contracts towards efforts to commercialize fuel cell products, including a successful merger with a larger corporation. More negative experiences resulted from a mentor relationship and angel investing efforts gone terribly wrong, followed subsequently by a painful lawsuit that almost forced the company into bankruptcy and ownership out of Radha's hands, and the constant challenge of operating in a heavily subsidized industry that has yet to fully commercialize and meet economies of scale. Today, Radha is interested in building strategic alliances to bring fuel cell products to market.

NETWORK STRUCTURES & CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

While running ElectroChem, Radha has interfaced with many different types of organizations and communities. Though she lived in Concorde, Radha became involved in organizations based in the City of Boston, including the Asian American Resource Workshop (AARW). Though still a stay-at-home mom, Radha consulted for AARW. She facilitated diversity training workshops for university students in Boston.

She participated in the Small Business Administration of New England (SBANE) and the Mass Energy Consumers Alliances by sitting on the boards of these organizations. She also joined the Commonwealth Institute, a nonprofit organization devoted to supporting women business owners specifically. Notably, Radha was among the first members of the Boston Chapter of TiE, which stands for The Indus Entrepreneurs. TiE is an international nonprofit organization committed to supporting entrepreneurs and it was originally formed in Silicon Valley in 1992. The sole female member of TiE-Boston at its founding, Radha was pivotal in recruiting other female entrepreneurs to this group.

PROFILE 3: JACQUIE KAY

BACKGROUND: “I’m a Chinese Christian Washingtonian.”

Originally hailing from Seattle, Washington, Jacquie Kay is a third-generation Asian American of Chinese descent. Jacquie grew up in Seattle’s Chinatown and was submerged in Chinese American activities from an early age, including the Chinese Baptist Church. Even when she moved to New York City and Boston, she subsequently became very involved in the two cities’ respective Chinatown communities. Her father, in particular, also instilled in his children a strong sense of pride in being Chinese. “You have 5,000 years of history,” Jacquie recalls him saying often. Bound with this pride was a [word], “Always remember that you live in a white society, and you’re Chinese.” Jacquie has been aware of her insider-outsider status since her early years and has used it as a tool to navigate between minority and majority communities, both in her personal and professional lives. In fact, this insider-outsider status has factored into her entrepreneurial success.

Jacquie cites her parents’ influence in shaping her views of work and land, which she has carried throughout her career. Jacquie came from a lower middle class family with two second-generation Chinese American parents and two other siblings. Her father worked for the Seattle Police, and her mother became a real estate agent. Both hardworking, her parents instilled a diligent work ethic in Jacquie and encouraged her to become an educator or social worker, neither of which she was interested in. As a third generation Asian American, Jacquie did not feel any pressure to enter the family business or to pursue business at all. She wanted to become a US Diplomat to the People’s Republic of China, which was impossible at the time because the two nations had severed diplomatic ties. In the meantime, Jacquie resolved to become a scholar of Asian studies and/or religion.

Jacquie studied Asian Studies and the Far East as an undergraduate at the University of Washington. She also holds a masters degree in Asian Studies and Chinese History from New York University ’69. In 1978, she received her Doctorate in Education, Planning from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education.

Jacquie has one son.

ENTERPRISES: Wu Pi Inc. and The Sun Walking Group

Ms. Kay has founded two separate enterprises, Wu Pi, Inc. and the Sun Walking Group. Established in 1973, Wu Pi, Inc. was an international economic development consulting firm founded to build a World Trade Center for Seattle. Though that founding project did not materialize, WPI, Inc. did build its core services in education and economic development in the US and at the international scale, working with bilateral and multilateral organizations, including USAID, the World Bank, and the EPA. WPI Projects were executed in 27 countries across 5

continents. WPI Incl expanded its scope of services to include policy reform, sustainability and strategic planning and management training before closing its doors in 2009.

Kay founded her second company, The Sun Walking Group, in 2011 while completing a Mel King Fellowship at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The Sun Walking Group is a collaborative investment and development corporation dedicated to “building community resilience and promoting community asset building” (Sunwalking.net website).

CIVIC ACTIVISM:

“I always felt that I was the Asian American side of the civil rights movement.”

Jacque came of age during the civil rights era of the 1960s.

After completing one year of missionary work in Thailand, Jacquie moved to New York to begin her graduate studies in Asian Studies at NYU in 1967. She had unsuccessfully applied to seminaries to pursue religious studies. Through a connection she had made in Thailand, she was able to take joint courses at the New York Theological Seminary.

Jacque subsequently worked with the Urban League Street Academy, which was a public-private partnership between the Urban League and corporations to open up storefront schools in Harlem. These neighborhood “schools” were places for Harlem residents to receive tutoring and earn their GED certification. Jacquie helped to set this program up as an employee of the Urban League Street Academy, but she moved on to work for the Ford Foundation. For one year, Jacquie worked with the Foundation’s Director of China Studies, where she set up conferences and research on China Studies programs across the US.

Jacque is the only civic activist-turned-entrepreneur represented in this study. Jacquie’s range of civic engagement is extensive, from participating in, chairing and founding civic organizations. In Boston, she has been a Board of Director for the Massachusetts Business Development; Chinese Economic Development Council; Women’s Institute for Housing and Economic Development; Cambridge Center for Adult Education; Health and Development International; and Conservation Law Foundation Ventures, to name a few. She was also a co-founder of the Asian Community Development Corporation, which is based in Boston’s Chinatown. At one point, Jacquie served on 12 boards simultaneously.

PROFILE 4: KIJA KIM

BACKGROUND

Kija Kim is a businesswoman originally from South Korea. She comes from a family of entrepreneurs, including her father, who stressed the value of education for Kija and her siblings.⁴ He supported her when she decided to pursue Geography in 1961 at Seoul National University, one of South Korea's most prestigious institutions. During her university years, Kija worked under the tutelage of Profess Yuk, an economist and geographer whose brother-in-law was President Park Chung-hee. Under President Park's leadership, South Korea went through significant transformations in economic development, infrastructure, and industry, leaving behind its war-torn history. As a young student, Kija observed the impact of her professors in advising and leading the plans and initiatives for economic developments. Kija graduated at the top of her class in 1965, and was awarded the Fulbright scholarship to embark on a doctoral program in Geography at Clark University in Massachusetts.

Kija's initial plans to return to South Korea after earning her PhD to enter academia did not come to fruition.

ENTERPRISES: Harvard Design & Mapping, Clark Hill Partners

Kija has founded two companies with her business partner and second husband, Jim Aylward. Her first entrepreneurial venture began in 1985 with New England Mapping Company, which offered automated mapping services for real estate firms and engineering firms. She and Jim started Harvard Design and Mapping, Inc. in 1989. Though the company's first clients were in real estate and the public sector, HDM established a niche in homeland security and disaster relief following 9/11 events in 2001, establishing deep working relationships with FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). HDM made revenues of \$5 million in 2005, one year after which it was acquired by The First American Corporation. Kija stayed on throughout the transition until 2009.

In 2005, Kija and Jim started a new company, Clark Hill Partners, a venture firm that provides early-stage investing technology-centric companies in the following industries: mobile technology, new media and internet, biotech and renewable energy. CHP is affiliated with angel investor institutions in New England, including CommonAngels, Boston Harbor Angels, eCoast Angel Network and Launchpad Venture Group.

⁴ Referred from Moore and Betters-Reed's case study featured in The CASE Association's Spring 2009 volume.

NETWORK STRUCTURES & CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

Kija has built an extensive professional and political network throughout her career. She first entered the political arena in collective efforts to overturn the Small Business Administration's decision to exclude Asian businesses from its affirmative action program for federal procurements by disadvantaged and minority firms. She was tapped by Governor Bill Weld to join a trade mission to Asia in the early 1990s, after which she was appointed as one of the original members of the 15-person Asian American Commission established by Governor Weld in 1992. Kija stayed on the Commission for 21 years, finally stepping down in 2013.

Kija's volunteer activities in a number of Boston nonprofit organizations were at the leadership levels of Board of Director. She sat as the Board of Director for the Massachusetts Software Council, from which Common Angels was born, as well as the Massachusetts Data Consortium. One such organization specifically serving the Asian American community was the Asian Task Force for Domestic Violence, whose Silk Road Gala fundraising event Kija coordinated for a number of years.

PROFILE 5: HYEJIN LEE

BACKGROUND

The sole founder of THE MEME Design, Hyejin came to the United States to pursue her Master of Design Studies from Harvard Graduate School of Design, where she focused on digital media and production environments. She neither had the intent to stay in Cambridge nor to start her own business. Rather, she expected to return to Seoul, South Korea, and enter academia. Hyejin also leads the global business development for THE MEME and is the company's public face and sole liaison to her clients, the majority of whom are South Korean companies

Prior to THE MEME, Hyejin worked for Samsung and other design firms. Hyejin earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Industrial Design from Seoul National University. Most of her university classmates and cohort have all pursued academia for their career.

Hyejin and her husband live in Cambridge, MA.

ENTERPRISES

Founded in 2006, THE MEME Design is a user experience and design innovation design consultancy based in Cambridge, MA. THE MEME utilizes research and design methods to help their clients in the consumer electronic industry improve the experience of new products and services for their target users while achieving innovation excellence.

Organic Parking grew out of THE MEME, though it is a separate entity. Organic Parking is a mobile application that aims to facilitate a better city driving and parking condition. Using the application, Drivers looking for a parking spot can search the mobile application for postings for the location and times at which they seek to park. Once they choose a posted spot, they make a financial transaction with the current-spot holder that guarantees them space (<https://www.organicparking.com/>).

PROFILE 6: SO-JUNE MIN

ENTERPRISE

So-June is the Chief Financial Officer for .406 Ventures is a Boston-based venture capital firm that invests in early-stage technology companies. The companies that comprise the firm's portfolio specialize in information technology and services. .406 Ventures was founded in 2005 by three veteran entrepreneurs and investors, one of whom is So-June's husband.

BACKGROUND

Before joining the .406 team, So-June was the Chief Financial Officer for another venture capital firm, Arcadia Partners. Her husband Liam Donohue also co-founded the firm, which focuses on the for-profit education and training industry.

Prior to entering the venture capital industry, So-June worked in the energy sector as Senior Deal Specialist for PECO Energy. PECO is Pennsylvania's largest electric and natural gas utility. As part of the Power Team, So-June was directly involved with energy trading in the financial markets. With a fellow PECO coworker, So-June started her own hedge fund trading energy derivatives. So-June's brief foray into entrepreneurship was cut short by the fall of ENRON, which induced market collapse.

So-June began her business career with Sunkyong Group (SK), one of Korea's largest conglomerates. She was instrumental in the SK's successful bid for obtaining the second round of cellular licenses in South Korea. Today, SK is the largest cellular service provider in the country.

Originally from South Korea, So June Min earned her BA in English Literature from Ehwa Women's University. She holds an MBA from Dartmouth Tusk School of Business Administration.

So-June and Liam have two daughters.

PROFILE 7: PATTY MOY

BACKGROUND

Patty Moy is a second-generation Chinese American woman who was born and raised in Milton, MA. Of the women in this study, Patty is one of two native Bostonians. Patty holds a BS in Psychology from Boston University. Patty has ten years of experience in the banking industry. Prior to entering her family business, Patty was employed at CITI Bank as the Vice President of the Financial Center Management and VP of Marketing. Patty's family is in the restaurant industry, including her brother Bryan Moy, who co-owns the restaurant Shojo.

ENTERPRISE

One of Chinatown's oldest restaurants, the China Pearl was first founded in the 1960s by the Chin family.⁵ Patty's father immigrated to Boston at age 14 and began working for the China Pearl as a busboy. He bought the restaurant from the Chins and introduced dim sum to its menu.

Since 2009, Patty has been the Director of Operations of the China Pearl Restaurant, which is located in Boston's Chinatown. She has spent the four years revamping this time-honored Chinatown establishment in the context of a changing neighborhood and demographic. One significant change has been in workforce development. The China Pearl is collaborating with the Asian American Civic Association to provide English language courses for the restaurant's employees.

CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

Patty is an active member of the Chinatown business and civic community. She sits on the Boards of several nonprofit organizations based in or dedicated to Chinatown, including the Kwong Kow Chinese Language School. She is also a Board member of the Asian American Civic Association and the Chinatown Neighborhood Council. Finally, she is a member of the Chinatown Clean-up Committee.

⁵ Brothers Frank and Billy Chin were important political figures in Chinatown.

PROFILE 8: HYUN-A PARK

BACKGROUND

Originally born in South Korea, Hyun-A moved to the United States with parents when she was eight years old in 1968. The Park family first moved to Dallas, Texas before heading to Berkeley, CA. Hyun-A first arrived in Boston to attend MIT as an undergraduate, and Boston has been her home ever since.

Hyun-A Park holds a SB and Masters in City Planning from MIT. Upon graduating from MIT, Park first joined the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Division of Capital Planning and Operations as the Deputy Director. She then joined Wallace Floyd, Associates in 1989 and worked on the Central Artery Project. Her final step before launching Spy Pond Partners was with Cambridge Systematics, where she ran the Asset Management business line as the Vice President.

ENTERPRISES

Hyun-A Park is a Co-founder and President of Spy Pond Partners, a management consulting firm that provides services for transportation and infrastructure organizations around the United States. Spy Pond Partners has grown to 12 employees over the past 8 years and moved to Arlington, MA. The company provides higher-level decision support in management, ranging from data management and asset management to performance management and knowledge management.

CIVIC INVOLVEMENT: “I love joining and chairing committees.”

Hyun-A’s extroverted personality partially explains her proclivity to joining and chairing committees, but she has also honed her leadership skills through a lifetime of volunteer commitments. Learning how to be a valuable member of a volunteer organization, one who by group consensus is recognized as a leader, is something that she demonstrated at MIT as both student and alumni. As an MIT undergrad, Hyun-A was very active in campus affairs, notably as the President of the Class of 1983. As an alumna, she served on a number of committees, including the Alumni Association Campaign Strategy Committee, the Alumni Fund Board, the Alumni Association’s Board of Directors as the Vice President. From 2001 to 2006, Hyun-A sat on the MIT Corporation as a Term Member. The MIT Corporation functions as the Institute’s board of trustees, and term members serve for five years.

For twelve years, Hyun-A and her family have been devoted to Shady Hills, an independent K-8 school in Cambridge, where her two children attended. In addition to being a Fundraising Co-Chair, she also ran the school’s strategic planning initiative on the Buildings and Grounds Committee.

Hyun-A is the current chair of the Transportation Research Board’s Management and Leadership section. She joined the TRB Technical Advisory Council in January 2014,

MATRICES

	GENERATION				ETHNICITY			AGE				
	1st	1.5	2nd	3rd	Korean	Chinese	Indian	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s
1 Vienne Cheung			x			x		x				
2 Radha Jalan	x						x					x
3 Jacquie Kay				x		x					x	
4 Kija Kim	x				x							x
5 Hyejin Lee	x				x				x			
6 So-June Min	x				x				x			
7 Patty Moy			x			x		x				
8 Hyun-A Park		x			x					x		

Figure 8. Demographic information includes generation, ethnic background and age.

	FAMILY BACKGROUND				
	Single w/o Children	Single w/ Children	Married w/ Children	Married w/o Children	Remarried w/ Children
1 Vienne Cheung	x				
2 Radha Jalan		x			
3 Jacquie Kay		x			
4 Kija Kim					x
5 Hyejin Lee				x	
6 So-June Min			x		
7 Patty Moy	x				
8 Hyun-A Park			x		

Figure 9. There is an even split between marriage and motherhood among the women.

EMERGENT THEMES

My findings are presented in the form of themes that emerged from interviews with Asian American women entrepreneurs.

Theme 1 (Chapter 3) begins this section of the thesis by exploring the motivations that drive women to start a new venture. A summary of motivating factors is first presented for the group as a snapshot of possibilities. Several individual narratives provide more detail as to how these factors interact.

Theme 2 (Chapter 4) revolves around the actual process of building the business. This section is broken down into four topics, including financing, establishing the company in the marketplace, business management and risk.

Theme 3 (Chapter 5) focuses solely on the ways in which women join and shape their professional networks.

Theme 4 (Chapter 6) is centered on civic engagement, and the relationships that some entrepreneurs have with Asian American communities. This theme is a start to answering the larger questions of what role Asian American women entrepreneurs could play in society as businesswomen and civic leaders, and why that is or is not significant.

Theme 5 (Chapter 7) addresses the minority status of Asian American women in the workplace.

3. ROAD TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP (MOTIVATIONS)

The path to entrepreneurship takes shape in various forms and along different timelines. Keeping in line with the narrative that entrepreneurs weave for themselves and their businesses, this theme will explore the various motivations that led women to start their own companies. The push-pull theory of entrepreneurship is revisited to provide a theoretical framework for the actual experiences of the Asian American women entrepreneurs. More in-depth narratives follow initial findings for this group.

BRIEF RECAP OF PUSH-PULL FACTORS

The push-pull theory of entrepreneurship aims to explain the different motivations driving individuals to form their own companies. Push factors influence one's decision to leave the traditional labor market and tend to have a negative connotation. They can range from job dissatisfaction to the inability to find work and/or advance to senior management positions. Additional push factors involve children and family-related influences, including the desire for flex time or flex location. Changes in the workplace and help from an employer, i.e. becoming a contractor for one's employer, also fall under push factors.

Pull factors, on the other hand, are motivations drawing individuals to entrepreneurship. The desire for greater control over one's work and more independence are two examples of pull factors. The desire for greater wealth, or monetary motivations, is another factor. If an individual wants to seize an opportunity or has a desire for greater challenge or achievement, those goals may motivate her/him to start a new venture. Though push and pull factors work in tandem, often times, one type may be more a driver than the other. The chart below illustrates some of the reasons that interviewed entrepreneurs cited for their decisions to take action.

		Hyejin Lee	Hyun-A Park	Jacque Kay	Kija Kim	Patty Moy	Radha Jalan	So-June Min	Vienne Cheung
PUSH FACTORS	Low-paying jobs or glass ceiling								
	Inability to find work			x					
	Flexibility with Children		x						
	Job dissatisfaction					x			x
	Helped by employer								
	Changing world of work		x						
	Thought she could do a better job of running a business than her supervisor did	x			x				
PULL FACTORS	Desire for independence (also related are autonomy and more control)	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
	Personal vision of what workplace should be like (also extends to product service, customer relations)			x		x			
	Saw opportunity	x			x		x	x	x
	Desire for challenge / achievement				x				
	Monetary motivations						x		
	Lifestyle		x				x		

Figure 10. Push-pull factors that shaped women's motivations for entrepreneurship.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Based on the chart above, the influence of pull factors was cited more often although they worked in combination with push factors. Several key findings include the following:

- Not one individual felt that she was stuck in a job without prospects for promotion. Only one individual mentioned that she could not find work, and therefore, created her own work. Every woman in this study is highly educated and holds advanced degrees, so the problem of being stuck in low-paying jobs just does not apply to this group.
- The desire for independence, more autonomy and greater control over one's work was the most commonly cited motivator.
- The second most common factor was the chance to seize an opportunity, though they took different forms for each entrepreneur.
- Monetary motivation was rarely mentioned, and when they were, it was to provide for dependents and pay employees the wages they were due.
- Assistance from an employer was also not mentioned at all, although former employers became future clients for a number of entrepreneurs.

- Children elicited several different types of responses. Having children and wanting more flexibility was cited as a pull factor for one individual, whereas not having children or family responsibilities enabled several other individuals to step out and start a company.

The universal link among all of the women in my study is singular: all but one expressed an early interest in becoming an entrepreneur. Rather, far more mentioned academic aspirations, which was surprising. Some women came from academic families and internalized expectations to follow in their parents' footsteps. Others cited cultural norms emphasizing the importance of education and elevated status of professors; in some of these cultures, entering business is less prestigious than achieving academic success.¹ Understandably, most of the women are Boston transplants who came to this city specifically to pursue graduate studies. The majority of them started enterprises in the same field that they received their graduate degrees in, underscoring the significance of education on entrepreneurial direction, if not impetus for entrepreneurship.

PUSH-PULL COMBINATIONS (INDIVIDUAL NARRATIVES)

To illuminate the various combinations of push-pull motivators, the next part of this chapter will delve into the narratives of a few individuals. The section begins with Hyun-A Park's decision to leave her firm and start a company with her co-worker. Following, the evolution of Jacquie Kay's diplomatic and scholarly aspirations to her international development consulting practice unfolds. The fruition of Vienne Cheung's early entrepreneurial aspirations are documented through her transition from e-commerce and technology to luxury thigh highs and her online retail business.

1) Hyun-A Park

Push: flexibility (children), job dissatisfaction, changes to world of work

Pull: independence and autonomy

Push and pull factors of flexibility and more influence over her work, respectively, were key motivators for Park's decision to leave her job and start her own company with a colleague.

We were looking for flexibility and being on our own would give us that. We were attracted to the fact that we could create our own destiny and have more direct rewards if we made the effort.

The desire for greater flexibility was in part related to Park's wish to spend more time raising her young children. Motherhood changed Park's priorities and interests, and she wanted a workplace that supported those priorities, even if she had to create it herself. Flexibility for Park meant being able to decide when and where to work, whether that was at home or at ten in the

¹ This echoes the Confucian values prevalent in East Asian cultures. In countries, such as China, Taiwan, and South Korea, becoming a professor places an individual at the top of the social hierarchy.

evening. Wholly intending to work full time, Park wanted a schedule where she could also attend her children's afternoon activities without any regret or pressure.

At her prior position, that was becoming less possible. New leadership at her company was implementing changes to the company that, to Park, seemed more male-oriented and less friendly towards people with children. Some of these changes were adding pressure to spend a lot of time in the office as a factor for job promotions and building office relationships. The other aspect of job dissatisfaction was that Park was spending a lot of her time in meetings dealing with administrative and human resources. Though this is common and inevitable, to some extent, in large organizations, the restrictions were limiting Park from devoting her energy to the core responsibilities that were fulfilling to her.

Creative independence and more direct benefits of that work, be it in the form of monetary gains or choice of the type of work and clients to engage with, were also influential drivers.

Though not a factor itself, hearing about another woman entrepreneur's experience helped cement Park's decision to step out. Park and her business partner reached out to another woman entrepreneur for some advice. Coincidentally, this particular woman was also looking for a buyer for her company. She even opened up her books and shared much more information than she would have otherwise. Seeing firsthand the details and potential of what entrepreneurship could entail gave Park the last nudge forward.

2) Jacquie Kay

Push: inability to find work, outsider

Pull: saw opportunity

I probably feel more like an outsider to the world of work than anywhere else in the world. I'm always looking for a job and I never get one, which is why I became an entrepreneur.

In the case of Jacquie, the pull factor of not being able to find a job was the primary motivator for entering entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship was not Jacquie's first choice; rather, it was more through a process of elimination that she ended up in this particular path. Though Jacquie insists she had no desire to fulfill any stereotype of enterprising Cantonese, she has, however, been carving her own path even as a young person. She wanted to be a diplomat to China, a difficult task to imagine during an era when the United States did not have diplomatic ties to the People's Republic of China. She readjusted her aspiration and aimed to become a China scholar. Entrepreneurship was merely the vehicle through which Jacquie would eventually launch herself into the arena of international development in 1978.

In Jacquie's words, "my world of work has always been helping people find work." The seeds for her first company, Wu Pi Inc., were sown through her own frustrating experiences trying to find work and increasing civic activity around economic development issues. When Jacquie returned to the United States after a yearlong stint as a missionary in Thailand, she came to New York to begin her graduate studies in Asian studies at NYU. Subsequently she also found employment with the Urban League Street Academy, which set up storefront schools in Harlem providing tutoring for adults earning their high school diplomas (GED). Secondary education is a core building block of job training and workforce development, and Jacquie began to build her career working in this interstitial space. ²

Much to Jacquie's own surprise, the issue of economic development kept attracting her despite her other academic and international interests. While working in Harlem, Jacquie also got involved with the Chinatown community in New York and sat on the Chinatown Planning Council. Though Jacquie moved back to Seattle because her Ford Foundation contract ended and she could not find a job, she continued to work in economic development issues in Seattle's Chinatown all the while climbing the ladder of success in the broader civic arena. By the age of twenty-seven, Jacquie had led the Asian Manpower Planning Agency as the Interim Director and sat on the Board of Seattle 2000, which developed the city's Future Plan. Jacquie began to hear people suggest that she run for political office, beginning with a seat for the Seattle City Council. At this point, Jacquie recalculated her steps. Her current work was not leading her toward her unwavering desire to work internationally, so she changed her direction and scope once again.

As the Vietnam War came to a close in 1973, Jacquie decided that she was going to form a company to break into international development. The first task: secure funding to bid for and build a World Trade Center. Though this project fizzled out, Jacquie was able to find domestic education and training contracts under the auspices of her newly incorporated company, Wu Pi Inc. in 1974. Simultaneously, Jacquie pivoted and decided to apply for Asia-focused jobs on the East Coast.

I came looking for work out here because I did not want to be looking at water and sewer issues in Olympia, Washington. I wanted to be looking at water and sewer issues in Asia or Africa.

Struggling to find international development jobs, Jacquie decided to try a different route. Jacquie moved to Boston to pursue a doctorate in education at Harvard University Graduate School of Education. By spending five years studying and writing about China, Jacquie could establish her credibility as a China expert and position herself for finding employment through these relationships. Additionally, she built key relationships with her professors, colleagues and Chinatown community members, who would be pivotal players in landing international contracts with bilateral or multilateral aid organizations. When bidding for Wu Pi's first million-

² Jacquie even wrote her doctoral dissertation on work and education while at Harvard University Graduate School of Education.

dollar international contract, Jacquie sought her Harvard professor as a reference and her classmates as her budding company's consultants.

3) Vienne

Push: changing world of work

Pull: greater control over work, saw an opportunity

The path to entrepreneurship for Vienne differs from Jacquie's in a number of ways. When Vienne decided to leave her company, she was working in the e-commerce industry on product management for launches by Fortune 500 companies.³ As her company grew, they were trying to standardize the product management role. Vienne was losing the big picture component to her job, which affected her satisfaction with her work. These changes were not to Vienne's liking, and she said, "In the corporate sector, the more you become specialized in one role, your ability to learn new things becomes increasingly limited."

Unlike the other women in this study, Vienne always knew that she wanted to start her own company. Vienne had a fine arts background with an MBA, and she wondered if staying in the hi-tech industry was the best fit for her.

In 2008, Vienne left the private sector and stepped in as the Executive Director of ASPIRE, which stands for Asian Sisters Participating in Reaching Excellence.⁴ Vienne had originally started volunteering with ASPIRE as a Board Member. ASPIRE Board Members are actively involved in running the organization rather than playing simply an advisory or fundraising role, which is more traditionally seen for nonprofit entities. In this capacity, she was able to hone in on her skills in community planning, marketing and conference planning. Within the span of two years, she had increased the organization's budget by 200% and launched a new Speaker Series while also taking complete ownership of the website and monthly email newsletter.⁵ Her nonprofit activity was important for leading to her to the next step, her own company.

Permeating through ASPIRE's mission is the concept "fearless leadership," in which fear does not limit what an individual does or aims to do. ASPIRE encourages Asian American high school students to try as many things before it is too late, and spreading this message to

³ Her company's product is a cloud platform that enables users to reach the products and services of online businesses, whether that is online shopping, watching web videos, music downloads and transactions, or connecting to work remotely. The product management team's responsibilities are to manage the life cycle of that software. Their clients' ability to conduct their business with their own customers hinges upon the software's performance ability, security and convenience of use. As a product manager, Vienne's responsibilities were to account for these questions while also paying attention to the entire process, which includes sales and profitability, finance and accounting.

⁴ The Boston-based nonprofit organization provides career and leadership development for Asian American high school girls. Having grown up in Boston herself navigating cross-cultural differences between first and second generations, she believed in the cause of ASPIRE.

⁵ According to Linked In recommendations from previous ASPIRE Board Members

younger women was, according to Vienne, “a wake-up call that I should start.” When Vienne turned thirty-years old, she decided to embody this message by leaping into the fashion industry, something that she had always wanted to do. Without any family or children responsibilities, Vienne felt she was free to try something out. Around this time, she noticed that her friends and peers were getting married and having children. Though they were not Vienne’s goals at the moment, witnessing the changes that resulted for her friends confirmed to Vienne that if she continued to wait, it would be increasingly more difficult to start her own company.

Through ASPIRE, Vienne met a woman who headed her own networking group, which is where Vienne ultimately found a willing investor. Vienne saw an opportunity here. She wanted to start her own company, and she had experience in e-commerce. She wanted to bring thigh highs to the mainstream market and believed that she had a unique product to offer. The untapped market was the American professional woman. Having worked in the private sector where stockings are a part of the professional dress code, Vienne had developed a preference for thigh-high stockings that were more comfortable and classy. She could not find them anywhere but overseas and figured that other women may be having the same problem. That is her story for how VienneMilano came to be.

Entrepreneurship offers Vienne more creative control over her work as well as independence. Now working on launching her fourth collection, Vienne is busily building up her company as she establishes channels with department stores, online stores and boutiques. In her words,

Being responsible for my own outcome is a great motivator for me. I love the idea that everything I produce is within my realm.

Vienne experiences a lot of fulfillment from reaping the rewards of her labor in a more direct fashion. Entrepreneurship provides Vienne a creative outlet and more freedom to express herself.

4. BUILDING A BUSINESS

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Among the companies that the women in this study started, their lifetimes range anywhere from 3 years to 35 years of operation. Not all of the companies have reached maturity nor have all of them remained in the ownership of the original founder. Given that these companies are also in different industries and pursued varying levels of growth and expansion, it makes no sense to try to compare them as if they are equal. Rather, this section focuses on the perspectives of the individual entrepreneurs as they recount the earlier stages of their businesses, including initial start-up and expansion. In doing so, they revealed some of the ways in which they overcame entrepreneurial challenges. This section will begin to distinguish whether these challenges or responses are unique to Asian American women entrepreneurs, or common to all entrepreneurs.

Throughout this process, entrepreneurs are constantly managing risks. Their perception of risk also helps to clarify what risks they seek out and which ones they avoid. Uncertainty abounds in the amount of work to be done on any given day, whether a company will have enough time to finish contracted work, or what emergencies may suddenly arise. How much tolerance for risk and uncertainty does an entrepreneur have?

In order to build a successful business, an entrepreneur must be able to do the following: secure adequate financing, create a product/service for which there is market demand, and make sound business managerial decisions.

- **Financing** begins with the initial capital for purchasing equipment and/or materials needed to conduct business. That can include office rental space and hiring and paying employees. Sufficient working capital is critical to financing a company. It takes time for a company's revenues to grow enough to cover expenses and yield profits.
- **Market Demand.** An entrepreneur needs to create a product or service that others will want and willing to pay for. A budding company must be able to set itself apart from its competitors when entering a new market. Especially in fast-paced industries with technological advancements, how will a company maintain its presence in the market or attract new customers?
- **Business Managerial Decisions** include managing a firm's finances and personnel. They also include establishing a company culture through its hiring practices, supplier relationships, and siting decisions about headquarters and branches. Day-to-day decisions about accounting run parallel with business development and sales efforts.

Though far from exhaustive, the charts below lists some of the responses that women exhibited. This section will go into more detail by drawing on individual narratives.

RESPONSE	
FINANCING	
Reduced (or no) income	Self-financed with personal savings; partner/husband provides income support for household;
Working capital	Seek external financing
SECURING MARKET SHARE	
Securing clients / getting work	Join and influence networks; Change your product or target client; Move operations closer to client;
Evolving industry	Invest in employees; Think like your client;
Larger, More Established Competitors	Government affirmative action; Find niche market; Build strategic alliances
BUSINESS MANAGERIAL EXPERTISE	
Business acquisition / sales	Find partner with complementary skills; Build those skills in prior employment; Learn on the job
Financial management / accounting	
Hiring / firing	

Figure 11. Entrepreneurs' responses to financial capital, human capital and resource needs of businesses.

PERCEPTIONS OF RISK

Entrepreneurs were honest about the level of uncertainty inherent in entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship does not guarantee a steady, salaried job nor does it promise social status or prestige. Entrepreneurs and those working for start-ups need to be comfortable with ambiguity.

The risk of failure or financial doom could be deterrents for engaging in entrepreneurial activities. Interestingly, women shared some of the same thoughts on risk. Rather than considering the potential for failure, often times, they were both too concerned with figuring out how to make things work for their companies. So-June admitted that it may have been because she was young and fearless. That if she were to repeat her decisions now, it would be more difficult. At the time, she did not have children or a mortgage, so she and her husband had mobility on their side. Because there was little that she was sacrificing or beholden to, she did not feel like she was risking everything to start her company.

On a similar note, Jacquie expressed:

I think risk is really key in understanding entrepreneurs. There is something in the entrepreneur where we just do not deal with the risk. We focus on just

needing to get our product, service or passion out there. That in itself is already risky enough. What do we have to lose? In my case, I didn't have any money. I didn't have any work. What did I have to lose, save for another rejection? I have learned to steel myself against rejection. I never wanted to become tough, resilient, though deep inside I am.

With that, let's move on to what the women actually spent time and energy on doing.

FINANCING

	Hyejin Lee	Hyun-A Park	Jacque Kay	Kija Kim	Patty Moy	Radha Jalan	So-June Min	Vienne Cheung
FINANCING								
Self-financed with savings or business partner	x	x					x	x
Partner/husband provided income support							x	
Sought external financing (Debt or equity)			x	x		x		
Borrowed money from relatives				x				

Figure 12. Financing mechanisms for entrepreneurial ventures.

1) Supplemental Income

The entrepreneurs' financing decisions reflected the results of existing research on women-owned firms on several accounts. First, it was not uncommon for entrepreneurs to finance their company with their own personal savings and/or business partner's assets. These savings were sufficient enough to weather up to one year of diminished or no income. Four of these women have companies that provide consulting services rather than a concrete product; therefore, initial start-up costs were limited to basic office space and equipment as well as transportation costs.

Few entrepreneurs mentioned that they sought external financing. Two of them secured a line of credit (LOC) or bank loan no more than \$50,000 by using their first contracts as collateral. In the case of Kija Kim, she and her business partner Jim Aylward first borrowed \$15,000 from relatives. They then invested their borrowed funds into a certificate of deposit (CD) which they used as collateral for a line of credit at their local bank.¹ Not earning enough revenue to pay oneself is a risk that entrepreneurs experience. Kim and Aylward, for example, were unable to pay themselves for eighteen months. Only in one instance did a partner or husband provide income support for the entrepreneur's household while she started her own company.

Between So-June Min and her husband, Liam Donohue, the couple has started a number of entrepreneurial ventures, including two venture firms and an energy hedge fund. Min and her husband tag-teamed as each person sought to build his/her own business, though not simultaneously. Like many other women in this study, Min identified herself as a risk taker. That comfort with risk applies not just to her enterprise but also to the entrepreneurial ventures of her

¹ For more information, read Moore and Betters-Read's case study on Kija Kim (2009).

husband, Liam Donohue. When Donohue quit his job and the couple moved to Boston to start the first venture fund, Min was willing to take that risk.

One explanation for Min's willingness to take on risk was her ability to make enough income to support her family. Min has an MBA from Dartmouth Tusk School of Business and has built a successful career in financial management. Once her husband started to have an income from Arcadia Partners, Min then left her job with a coworker at PECO Energy in Philadelphia to start a hedge fund trading energy derivatives. With some source of income covered by her husband, Min could start a new venture without the added pressure of paying herself in the short-term.

For those who have capital in the form of savings or other revenue streams OR a partner whose income can cover household costs, entrepreneurs can quit their job to devote all of their time to their new venture. Not every female entrepreneur has this luxury.

2) Challenge of Financing

The two women who expressed that financing was one of the primary challenges they dealt with also happened to be single Asian American women with children. They posed the question to me of whether single women entrepreneurs face additional challenges. Radha's struggles with financing are partly explained by her industry but she also suspects that part of it has to do with her being a single Asian woman. Fuel cell technologies and products continue to be heavily subsidized by government funding or investment. Investment for a company such as hers is unheard of because the technology is still not commercial. In her words,

We tried to raise money several times, but it is a whole horror story that you can read in the case.² It was such a horrible experience that I pretty much almost lost the company. I had difficulty even getting bank loans. I had one experience where a bank froze the line of credit they had issued me for no good reason. Those are the kinds of things that negatively impact single women.

SECURING MARKET SHARE

My interview questions indirectly inquired about the competitive advantages that women felt that had as an Asian American woman entrepreneur. Nobody ascribed her gender and/or race as a competitive advantage in business. Rather, what emerged were the strategic decisions that entrepreneurs made to prove themselves and their company's value to the marketplace. Though profit motivations are one measure of success, some women expressed non-monetary goals that shaped their personal definitions of success.

²Read the 2007 case study written by Frances Amatucci and Susan Coleman. "Radha Jalan and ElectroChem, Inc.: Energy for a Clean Planet." *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice*.

	Hyejin Lee	Hyun-A Park	Jacque Kay	Kija Kim	Patty Moy	Radha Jalan	So-June Min	Vienne Cheung
SECURING MARKET SHARE								
Join and influenced professional networks		x		x		x		
Changed product or target client						x		
Moved operations closer to clients			x	x				
Invest in workforce development					x			
Think like client and take on client activities	x							
Government affirmative action programs		x	x	x		x		
Niche market	x	x		x				x
Build strategic alliances (mergers)						x		

Figure 13. Different responses to establish the product or service in the marketplace

One common response was the importance of professional networks in increasing an entrepreneur’s visibility in the industry. The next chapter of the thesis will specifically address the various ways in which women have joined and influenced professional networks for business success.

With the exception of a few large firms, the majority of enterprises that the women of this study run are small businesses with less than 1-10 employees. These business-facing firms (also called B2B) have built a reputation of providing high value, high quality services for other businesses and organizations. Some of the ways they have done that are by:

- Building a niche market;
- Capitalizing on technological advancements and/or changing industry practices; and
- Participating in government affirmative action programs for federal and state procurement contracts
- Merging with a larger firm in efforts to take company in different directions³

Two individual women and their companies shed more light on some of these issues. Hyejin Lee and Kija Kim have all built innovative companies in their respective industries of design and mapping (GIS) software. Let’s begin with Hyejin Lee and her seven-year-old firm THE MEME design.

³ Read case study on Radha Jalan and ElectroChem

1) Hyejin Lee and The MEME Design

USER EXPERIENCE IS A NEW PHENOMENON

Hyejin Lee's firm THE MEME Design is a user experience and design consultancy that Hyejin started in response to the changes that have taken the consumer electronics industry by storm. The distinction between products and services has dissolved as hardware and software have merged together. Users don't differentiate between when they are using the hardware (mobile device) versus the software (applications and features).⁴ Users see this as one unified device, one continuous experience, but producers still are struggling to understand this.⁵

Lee's firm provides value to consumer electronics companies trying to adapt to the new perspectives that their customers have adopted. Very few research and design firms exist that can offer this service. A young and lean organization, THE MEME design is not a traditional design firm. Working in this industry, Hyejin sensed an opportunity:

I wanted to navigate as if there were no threshold between the product and the service experience. We interpret the whole process of experience to match with the technologies to serve a user better.

To that end, THE MEME conducts research to answer questions for their clients, often in-depth interviews with technology enthusiasts who are heavy tech users. Some of the questions driving past projects, which range from 8 weeks to 4 months, include the following: What would be the ideal size of a tablet device? How does the contextual environment shape the way that people use devices? What type of user experience would people need or respond to if that context were the office setting versus at home or on the road?

UNDERSTANDING CLIENTS BETTER

As a design consultancy, THE MEME doesn't absorb any of the risks of business development of their clients. However, Lee came to a realization that a design firm that helps other companies launch products can further reinforce its value if it can also create its own product or service. If THE MEME could successfully develop a product from research to development, they would gain experience in dealing with legal issues, defining a niche market and connect with users. In Lee's words,

⁴ Similarly, consumers blend their experience at brick-and-mortar stores with their online websites so that they may register a complaint about an individual store on the virtual portals of the store.

⁵ They have divisions that operate in silos. The mobile division would focus solely on the materials, the display screens, the actual size of the device and physical use. The creation of any content or functions of the phone would be under the purview of a different division altogether.

If clients know that THE MEME is not only working on the design strategy but also designing and operating services for the end users, I think that would be more of a win-win situation.

Organic Parking, Lee's second business venture, was envisioned as that first product. Organic Parking is trying to address the supply and demand mismatch of parking in Boston, and its business model is similar to other shared use companies, including AirBnB and Uber. Buyers and sellers are people who have/leaving public parking spaces and those who are seeking a space, respectively. Through Organic Parking's mobile application, buyers and sellers can make transactions so that buyers know when they can access space instead of circling blocks in search of an empty space. A separate entity from THE MEME (though they share an office), Organic Parking has just launched its Kickstarter fundraising campaign.

GOALS BEYOND PROFITS

Lee is not motivated simply by profits or traditional measures of business success, and in this regard, she practices entrepreneurship as a vehicle for discovery. Her penchant for creativity and exploration permeates her work, and it remains a driving motivation for her business. Entrepreneurship for Lee enables her to constantly experiment with the ways in which design or design-thinking can be applied in other areas. Lee is trying to reconcile the fact that designers' roles in the economy is most often connected to financial motivations, of how to sell more products or services. She says,

I want to see how design thinking can contribute to changing the world, especially country and nation design. Trained as designers, solving the complicated problems are the strength we possess. I wonder what we could accomplish if we change the topic from consumer electronic goods to societal problems.

2) Kija Kim and Harvard Design and Mapping (HDM)

SBA 8A HELPFUL IN LANDING SUBCONTRACTOR WORK

For businesses that provide services for public sector clients, state and federal procurement programs for socially and economically disadvantaged businesses can be one way of distinguishing the business from other competitors when bidding for public contracts.⁶ The Small Business Administration's 8(a) certification is one such program.

8(a) certification was more beneficial in the firm's earliest years for landing contracts, but the biggest hurdle was getting approved. Kija first found out about the 8(a) program when Harvard Design and Mapping was bidding for one of its first contracts. The US Coast Guard had announced a Request for Proposal (RFP) totaling \$50,000. There was a lot of ambiguity in the proposal's wording, partially because GIS technology was so new at the time, the industry did not know how to approach it. Kija and HDM, however, saw a number of opportunities that they wanted to try out in their project and prescribed additional components to the project that the Coast Guard responded positively to. HDM was quite creative in their proposal, and they ended up beating out eight other contractors, all of whom were large civil engineering companies. When Kija met with the contracting officer to sign the contract, he asked her whether she had 8(a) certification, which she had not known about. As the client could benefit from having an 8a firm, they encouraged Kija to apply, which she did unsuccessfully the first time around. After waiting for six months without a reply and then a rejection, Kija and her business partner decided to give up. It was only several months later when she was invited to attend an SBA Regional Women Business Conference as a panelist that the tides changed. One woman stood up at the end of Kija's panel and asked her the same question that the Coast Guard officer had asked her months before. Kija replied that they were going to give up on the application

⁶ These businesses tend to be categorized as MWBE, which stands for minority- or women-owned business, and/or SLBE, in other words small local business enterprise. Four of the women I interviewed run businesses that fall under this category, and they specifically mentioned the role of the Small Business Administration's 8(a) Certification program, which has been in effect since 1978. The 8A program is one example of affirmative action, whereby MWBEs can bid for government contracts with special distinction, either for stand-alone contracts or as subcontractors for a larger company. In the event of the latter, companies often have a certain quota to meet for allocating 8(a) projects and/or earn points for hiring 8(a)-certified subcontractors. The logic is that the more points said company can acquire, the greater likelihood this company will successfully bid for a government contract.

In order for a company to qualify for 8(a) certification, there are a number of requirements, one of which insisting that the woman or minority owner must obtain at least 51% ownership. Following two Supreme Court decisions in *City of Richmond v. Croson* and *Adarand v. Peña*, qualification for the 8(a) program was redefined as economic disadvantage and not just race-based, and Asian American-owned firms were in jeopardy of losing their certification. A group of 20 Asian American 8(a) owners, the majority of whom were architects, banded together in opposition to a reverse discrimination lawsuit that had gone up to the Supreme Court. Kija Kim recalls that her company was very new at the time when she received a fax from one Indian CEO of a mechanical engineering company in Quincy, who urged her to get involved. Without even having the 8(a) certification at the time, Kija became acquainted with other Asian-owned businesses that participated in the program and privy to the legal debates surrounding the program.

because it was taking too much time. Luck would have it that this woman was the director of the Regional division of the SBA and helped speed up the process for Kija. From henceforth, it became absolutely much easier for HDM to land contracts.

Other complaints about the program beg the question of how beneficial the certification is. The scope of work supported by the 8(a) program has a tendency of being limited. Kija notes, "It's a double-edged sword. Big companies need you, but only for a small portion of contracts to meet quotas, so they don't give you the bigger projects." Part of this is fueled by the perception for the quality of work that 8a firms contribute, such as errors, inefficiencies and technical limitations. Kija and HDM really fought this misperception, "I was just dying to prove myself, that we're a technically competent company from Boston that happens to be small." As their businesses grew and solidified their reputation as industry players, the 8(a) certification alone was no longer needed.

GIS TECHNOLOGY

Kija stressed technical competency and innovation as her company's primary competitive advantage. She started her company right as mapping was moving away from manually drawn imaging.

Digital mapping was such a cutting-edge technology in its early stages. It's hard to imagine now considering everybody knows about navigation systems through Google Maps. Back then, we were so far ahead of everybody else that we attracted a lot of attention.

Though her first clients were in the real estate and commercial sectors, Kim shifted her target clients to government organizations following the collapse of the real estate industry in the early 1990s. In 1992, HDM landed its first multi-million dollar contract from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide "mapping software development services and quality control of digital flood insurance rate maps" (Moore and Betters-Read, 2007).

EXPANSION & SITING DECISIONS

HDM also established its Washington Office in 2000 in order to be closer to its client base, which included FEMA among other government agencies. That same year, Congress passed the Disaster Mitigation Act, which mandated modernization of flood maps across the country as well as technology for federal, state and local governments to share. HDM landed a contract to develop FEMA's new flood map system, Hazardmaps.gov. HDM's open source GIS tool, called VBIZ Tool Suite, became the platform for FEMA's Flood Map Modernization Program. HDM responded to 9/11 by developing technology products for a new client, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

BUSINESS MANAGERIAL EXPERTISE & RISK MANAGEMENT

	Hyejin Lee	Hyun-A Park	Jacque Kay	Kija Kim	Patty Moy	Radha Jalan	So-June Min	Vienne Cheung
BUSINESS MANAGERIAL EXPERTISE								
Find partner with complementary skills		x	x	x			x	
Built skills in prior employment		x			x			x
Learn on the job	x					x		

Figure 14. Acquiring business managerial skills through partnerships, previous employment or on the job.

1) Partners with Complementary Skills

Not every entrepreneur I interviewed had a business partner. For those who did, some started the venture with a partner, whereas others acquired partners later in the enterprise's life.

In the case of Spy Pond partners, Hyun-A Park and Francis Harrison began as colleagues at Cambridge Systematics. The two women have a complementary partnership where each partner is engaged in the work that she does best and finds the most fulfillment in. For Park, that is the early-stage planning and visioning. Park's strongest assets are in business development and management, and she was able to hone these skills in previous employment. Harrison holds the title of Chief Technical Officer at Spy Ponds, where she draws on her technical expertise to lead the content development and product management of the company's projects.⁷ She focuses much of her time in executing Spy Pond projects and problem-solving. In addition to being the public face of Spy Pond, Park also manages the company and works to most efficiently allocate her employees' time.

2) Managing Risks through Partnerships

Whereas Park started the venture with a business partner, Jacquie acquired a partner later in her company's life. Once Jacquie landed her first large international contract in 1981, she reevaluated whether her financial skills were sufficient to handle a larger program. Recognizing her limits, she decided to manage financial risk by hiring David Sears to run the program. Sear eventually became her business partner and CFO. In Jacquie's words,

David assisted in holding the fort down with administration and project management. I trusted that I could leave the company in his hands while I went off exploring, marketing, being the entrepreneur.

Having a valuable partner, Jacquie believes, is one way of taking on the inherent risks of entrepreneurship. Being pulled in different directions and capacities can be draining one one entrepreneur. Partners can be critical in divvying up the many roles and responsibilities in building an enterprise, and also provide a source of mutual encouragement. Jacquie's definition

⁷ Francis holds B.S. and M.S. degrees in Civil Engineering from UC Berkeley and MIT, respective.

of risk, however, does not involve change or uncertainty nor going someplace strange and being different from everybody else.

Having a male partner was helpful when women felt like they were not being taken seriously as the head of their company. Those were either externally enforced or perceptions that women had internalized themselves. Whether this resonates more for Asian Americans or simply older women is unclear. Kay replied:

I think we Asian women believe that we must be perceived as being capable of having a man and/or family to support. We [referring to Kija and Radha] are all in the same generation. Perhaps, rightly or wrongly, in the back of our minds, we felt it important to demonstrate that a man involved as a partner in some way, would enhance, give added value, to our work. Maybe it was our own insecurities as women, but it, at least, it took away from the onus of us being “women pioneers forging ahead”...leaders that could often pose a threat to the male population. We assumed that the man, a husband, a partner provided a balance to us as women entrepreneurs. It also helped immensely to have that extra income or financial backing, that financial support that allowed us to build our business. I think we felt, or I should speak for myself, that those of us who had a spouse or partner were more fortunate. In speaking about building a business, I always address three things as key: 1) having a contract or product 2) having cash and 3) having a partner.

3) One-Woman Show: “I’m the only one who does everything.”

In the case of Hyejin Lee, not having a business partner has been a challenging opportunity. Particularly in THE MEME’s earliest years, Lee wore many hats. She led her design and research team in strategy and planning while also flying back and forth between Boston and South Korea to manage client relationships and regularly present THE MEME’s progress. On top of this, Lee was running the business’s financial decisions, hiring new employees and basic office management. Plugged into every aspect of THE MEME, Lee would tend to take on projects one at a time because she did not have the bandwidth otherwise. Though Lee had fifteen years of experience in the design industry, she had never been responsible for business operations or management. As the captain steering the ship, Lee admitted there have been countless times when she did not know how to do things nor whom to turn to for advice and help. Without a business partner or mentor, she has been learning by trial and error.

Since 2013, the consultancy has been able to expand to twelve employees, one that included hiring a general manager to run the office’s daily routines and also develop client relationships in the United States. Having somebody take on this role has enabled Lee to spend more time in South Korea not simply to meet and consult with current clients but also engage in networking

with other firms and potential clients. This way she can devote more time to business development activities and build her relationships with her current clients. Just this year in February 2014, Lee stayed in Korea for an entire month, whereas she tends to spend only one week in Seoul.

Leaving the office for a longer period of time also meant that Lee had to relinquish some control in how much she is involved; and that is something that she was relieved to do. Lee admits that after running the business and knowing everything for 6-7 years, letting go was much needed but still difficult to do. She was glad to give her general manager the space and independence to run things without her, but she has found a way to stay connected to the office. During her month-long business trip to Korea, for instance, Lee scheduled time to check in with her Cambridge office for two hours daily.

I am the one who has to take the risk if something happens while I'm away. That is why I allocated time in my schedule to be available at 4-6 pm Boston time [5 am – 7 am Seoul]. I can talk to each employee during the week for 20 minutes to ask how they are doing, which is something I could have done in the kitchen while I was making coffee.

This way, Lee can trouble shoot any problems that may arise. Finding time to touch base with her employees, however, meant that Lee's workday began at 7 am while in Korea. To Lee, working longer hours and making use of communication technologies help her manage those risks.

5. JOINING AND INFLUENCING NETWORKS FOR BUSINESS SUCCESS

The roles of professional networks in navigating the journey of entrepreneurship were another theme that emerged from interviews. Professional networks include industry-specific associations as well as those promoting general commerce or entrepreneurship. Networks can be formal in nature or informal, and in some instances, informal networks are embedded in already existing formal networks. Membership can be limited to the individual level, institutional level or a combination of both. Scholars cite lack of access to networks as one barrier for women entrepreneurs, leaving them less room to obtain financing, mentorship and other forms of business development. Contrary to scholarly work, Asian American women entrepreneurs appear to fully utilize their networks.

Some of the ways that women utilize the resources of networks are listed below:

- Pursue business development goals (find new clients, retain existing clients)
- Stay abreast of scholarly research and industry advancements
- Find new employees and build partnerships across organizations
- Tap into programs lowering cost of business and/or reducing barriers to entry
- Seek support and mentorship opportunities
- Seek access and/or avenues to external financing
- Receive education and training in gender-specific challenges facing women entrepreneurs

This next section will showcase two women who join and influence professional networks for business success. Hyun-A Park represents the transportation industry and how she overlaps her business development goals with her networking activity. Radha Jalan's involvement in TiE-Boston, merely one of her many networks, illustrates the active role organizations can play in addressing barriers and challenges besetting women entrepreneurs.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT (GETTING WORK)

The story of Hyun-A Park and her company, Spy Pond Partners, illustrates how actively participating in industry networks can impact enterprises at various stages of development. Formal professional networks are important sources of news and knowledge in terms of industry advancements, but they are also an important gatherer of potential partners, be they clients, collaborators or future employees. Establishing presence and value in these networks is key for business development, which, in the case for consulting firms, means landing contracts with external organizations for its products and/or services.

Even prior to starting Spy Pond Partners, Park had already developed a strong understanding of the optimal networks for business development. Running one of the business lines Cambridge Systematics, a transportation consulting firm, Park specialized in getting work. In her industry, fostering a network of professional relationships is important for staying abreast of project

pipelines of client organizations, the ideal qualifications and skill sets for successful proposals, and staying abreast of industry trends. In Park's words,

People are sources of information and decision-making. The bigger my network, and the right type of network, the better my information will be and my ability to make better decisions, either for my company or for my client.

One of those key networks in the transportation industry is the Transportation Research Board (TRB). Held annually in Washington, D.C, TRB is the largest transportation conference. Here, researchers and practitioners from the USA and all over the world exchange new research and practices as well as network. Park has sat on the committees for over a decade. In fact, Park and her business partner Francis Harrison launched Spy Ponds at the annual TRB meeting in January 2006.

Park is quick to attribute the value of TRB in building Spy Pond. She notes,

"I had an infrastructure of activities that I was engaged in. Our biggest client came out of that relationship. It was somebody who had been involved in one of my committees. She gave me the lead to do work for her agency."

Park specifically mentioned the informal networks of women within the larger, formal TRB network. One particular women's network came out of Diva Dinners that Park helped establish at TRB. Diva Dinners were held during the TRB conference, and women attendees were invited to attend dinner and get to know one another as members of the same organization. TRB is reflective of the transportation industry in that it is male-dominated, and this informal space attracted many of the women to mingle. Naturally, some friendships were formed out of these encounters. Park noted that some of the people she met and befriended through Diva Dinners were influential in helping Spy Pond Partners get work. The woman who started these dinners, in fact, later became one of Spy Pond's first clients. What's important to note, though, is that Park helped to build up some of these informal women-only networks and leveraging them over a long period of time. She was not merely a passive member of this network, but rather active in shaping the direction of the network itself.

Getting work consistently is the biggest factor for a business' success, and having a reputation for professional excellence is an important factor in landing contracts. How does one build a reputation for delivering good work as a brand-new company that has not worked on projects yet? When Park and Francis first launched Spy Pond, they only had their individual resumes as qualification. Park spoke of the many professional relationships she sought to rely on in landing contracts as Spy Pond, and not as business development for Cambridge Systematics. She was pitching her new company to contacts she already had. Though Park had an abundance of both male and female contacts, the overwhelming support in the early stages came from women. She notes,

In a way, someone had to stick his or her neck out to give us a chance. And that was my female contacts more than my male contacts, pretty universally. And I had both types of contacts. I'm guessing that one of the reasons was that women were more supportive of another woman starting her own business, and it resonated for them. It could be that they felt a more personal connection.

Once they began to land contracts, Spy Ponds sought to execute projects with national prominence to further build their reputation. One of those was working with the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP). Another was the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). Park knew that it was important to “be in the circle of people involved in supporting national activities of the client-type.” Park’s involvement in these organizations went beyond that of a general member to chairing committees involving technology and strategy, the very area of expertise that her firm provides transportation organizations. In this capacity, Park was able to accomplish several goals: better understand the priorities of client organizations, build working relationships with senior level management of those organizations, and increase the visibility and value-add of her firm.

Spy Pond Partners provides strategic and higher-level decision support for transportation organizations. These services are not a part of every project pipeline like other bread and butter businesses, such as geotechnical analysis. Spy Pond must continuously make a strong business case for the value that they add to transportation organizations. By becoming an active, influential member of industry networks where she can build deep relationships with senior-level decision makers as co-committee members and colleagues, Park is positioning Spy Pond for further growth by strengthening its reputation and visibility.

NETWORKS THAT AFFIRM BUDDING ENTREPRENEURS

When Radha first took over the helm of Electro Chem, the odds were stacked against her. She did not have a technical background in fuel cell technology nor did she have the business managerial experience to run a company on her own. Radha cast a wide net when she began, attempting to attend as many conferences and networking events to not only become proficient on the technical and business aspects but also introduce herself to the industry. When I asked her about the impact of all of her activities and which ones were most beneficial to her at the time, she did not have a clear answer for me. In terms of securing working capital so that she could pay off Electro Chem’s debts and further invest in their technology, she did not get this from the networks she joined. She reasoned, “I was an odd-ball and I had an odd technology that is still not commercial today.”

Earlier as a stay-at-home mom, Radha had become very involved in local organizations, including the Commonwealth Institute and was a trustee for a school in her town of Concord, the Na’Shoah Brooks School. If not financial support, she did receive something else.

Talking with people who were very knowledgeable in their area and gave me the time to listen to me, whether I benefited directly or not, it was an affirmation that people believed in me, that it's possible for me to do something. In that early stage, that validation was important for me."

External recognition of the challenges that she faced and encouragement were much needed. At that time, Radha's friends and community had more confidence in her abilities than she did herself.

Confidence, or the lack thereof, affects more than individuals who are jumping headlong into new companies or new industries; it is an issue that affects all entrepreneurs. There are many risks in launching a new venture, including hiring the right people and being able to lead them; having a robust enough product or service that will generate revenue, which also requires a responsive market; and having enough cash or capital to keep the company running; to name a few. Networks that validate the entrepreneur in her exploration are important bases.

In the case for Radha, the issue of confidence and longevity also affects her industry. The fuel cell industry has been producing cutting-edge research and technology that revolutionize the status quo of energy production and distribution, yet its inability to be fully commercial without government R&D support creates a more uncertain market. How many of these companies will succeed in developing the industry and market, and how long will they last?

NETWORKS THAT ADDRESS NEEDS & BARRIERS

Radha has navigated through a variety of professional and community networks, but this section will specifically address her work with The Indus Entrepreneurs, more commonly known as TiE. TiE is an international nonprofit organization that promotes entrepreneurship through mentoring, education, and networking. Founded by a group of Silicon Valley entrepreneurs from the Indian subcontinent, TiE has expanded to 61 chapters across 17 countries with 11,000 total members. In the early 1990s, there were many successful South Asian entrepreneurs, but there was no common forum for them to gather in Boston. Additionally, many Asian American groups did not reach out to the South Asian community. TiE-Boston has become one of the most active chapters, hosting conferences and providing support for entrepreneurs of all stages. Radha first encountered TiE-Boston when the original founding members approached her and asked her to join as a Charter member. TiE has several membership categories, and Charter members are invited to join and must demonstrate past success in entrepreneurship, willingness to mentor budding entrepreneurs and also financially contribute higher membership dues than regular members. Even today, less than 10% of Charter members are women. Already active in the Small Business Association of New England (SBANE), Radha attempted to develop collaborative partnerships across the two organizations. That also meant that Radha sought to recruit more women to TiE.

In addition, Radha was part of the women of TiE who formed TiE Women in 1999. Just as TiE-Boston started out as an informal group of South Asian entrepreneurs, TiE Women was a member-initiated informal group. TiE Women was purposefully created as a separate space within the larger organization that would support women entrepreneurs through seminar series and other networking events. In organizing speaker and seminar series, TiE Women attempts to supplement the support that TiE-Boston offers to all entrepreneurs, be it in areas of assistance getting started, dealing with incorporation and business development in early stages, or funding.

TiE Women also tries to directly address areas and issues that most affect women entrepreneurs, one of which is the funding. Radha also cited financing as a constant struggle during her leadership at Electro Chem. Vanita noted that funding is a key area of difference for women, and some of their seminar series have specifically addressed the different ways in which women approach funding and seek funding. Angel investors repeatedly saw a gender difference, in which women would “underplay” projections for their companies as well as their ability to deliver on these goals, in comparison to their male peers. They presented more conservative growth projects, and, in some instances, sound apologetic. In fact, Radha also cited financing as a constant struggle during her leadership at Electro Chem.

TiE Women also addresses work-life balance and take family responsibilities into consideration when planning their events. Rather than scheduling events during after-work hours (6-9 pm), some TiE Women events are held on Friday afternoons or lunch times. With a lunch event, women may find it easier to take a longer lunch break (2 hours). If an event is held on Friday afternoon, they can leave earlier from work to attend and head home after the event. This way, TiE Women events do not have to compete directly with time that women want to be spending with their families and/or children. Particularly for the women who are in their childbearing years 30-45 years old, this special consideration in scheduling events closer to where women work or live is helpful. These family considerations seem to be limited to only TiE Women events, which has an effect of associating family responsibilities as an onus for women entrepreneurs rather than men as well.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS VERSUS ONE OF FEW

However well these women have navigated these networks, Asian American women entrepreneurs are still confronted with the reality of being one of few. For instance, Hyun-A stands out from many other Asian Americans in her industry. Hyun-A’s extroverted personality partially explains her proclivity to joining and chairing committees, but she has also honed her leadership skills through a lifetime of volunteer commitments. Learning how to be a valuable member of a volunteer organization, one who by group consensus is recognized as a leader, is something that she demonstrated at MIT as both student and alumni. While serving on the MIT Corporation, essentially the Institute’s Board of Trustees, Hyun-A was one of the few Asians present, if not the only one. The same could be said of TRB section meetings. Hyun-A just recently joined the Technical Advisory Council, where again, she is the only Asian person. The absence of Asian Americans in leadership roles in her industry and alumni networks is not

necessarily because there are not very many of them. Contrarily, many Asian American engineers are drawn to transportation for its analytic orientation and modeling-heavy work.

Advancing in organizations is also contingent on skills not tied to the core content of work but rather includes soft skills in the area of interpersonal communication, leadership and group facilitation. Those leadership skills translate into other realms beyond the workplace. The next theme on civic engagement addresses the ways in which Asian American women contribute to their local communities and civic society.

6. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND RELATIONSHIP TO ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

Whereas Theme 3 dealt with the professional and industry networks that Asian American women entrepreneurs are actively engaged in, this final section addresses their extensive civic and political engagement. When I started the thesis process, I wanted to know what impact Asian American women entrepreneurs have on local communities as civic leaders and business leaders. Many of the women in my study volunteer and participate in local community organizations, some of which specifically serve Asian Americans in Boston. During the search for women entrepreneurs, connecting with local nonprofit organizations and community leaders was the most effective way to snowball sample. They were the ones who pointed out fellow members who happened to also be entrepreneurs. In other words, those women were recognized as community leaders. One third of interview questions were devoted to civic engagement, probing about the women's reasons for volunteering and the extent to which their civic activities impacted their businesses.

This section is structured to first address the various forms of participation, motivations for civic engagement, and finally, the impact of their activities on their businesses.

FORMS OF PARTICIPATION

Based upon the women's responses, I have broken down the forms of civic engagement into the following 8 activities:

- Leadership role of nonprofit organizations as a member of Board of Director
- Employment at a nonprofit organization
- Involvement with an Asian American nonprofit organization
- Civic and political activism
- Involvement with local schools (that their children attend)
- Volunteering with organizations related to one's alma mater
- Leadership role in professional networks¹
- General member of profession network / industry association²

¹ The final two types of engagement were addressed in Theme 3 and therefore omitted from discussion in this section.

² Same as above

NETWORKS + CIVIC ENGAGEMENT								
	Nonprofit Board-member	Nonprofit as Employment †	Nonprofit-Asian American	Civic/Political Acitivism	Related to Children (Schooling)	Alma Mater (University)	Professional Networks - Leadership	Professional Network - General
1 Vienne Cheung	x	x	x					
2 Radha Jalan	x		x	x	x		x	x
3 Jacquie Kay	x		x	x			x	
4 Kija Kim	x		x	x			x	
5 Hyejin Lee								
6 So-June Min								x
7 Patty Moy	x		x	x				x
8 Hyun-A Park	x				x	x	x	

Figure 15. Different forms of civic engagement among Asian American women entrepreneurs.

The chart above displays the breakdown by individual entrepreneur. There are several key findings about this group. Of those who are involved with nonprofit organizations, the majority of women are affiliated with Asian American nonprofits and/or as Board members with advisory roles. Most of the nonprofit organizations are oriented towards social services and community development, and less of them are tied to electoral politics. The level of engagement in Asian American communities varies significantly among the women I interviewed. The older generation of women entrepreneurs has been heavily active in building organizations from the ground up and is still recognized today as community leaders. Younger generations of Asian American women entrepreneurs who came to Boston to pursue advanced graduate degrees exhibited less formal participation in Asian American networks other than close groups of Asian American friends.

Participation can take multiple forms, from being a regular member who attends meetings and functions or more leadership positions, either as staff or boards of directors. Among the women, only one founded an Asian American nonprofit organization. Jacquie Kay was one of the co-founders of the Asian Community Development Corporation, an organization formed to address critical housing affordability and economic development issues facing Chinatown families and residents.

As a brief note, not all Asian American organizations serve or represent a pan Asian American constituency. Another factor to note is that the older women were involved in nonprofit Asian American organizations that were more devoted to social service delivery and advocacy roles than fostering commerce and entrepreneurship. Those Asian American organizations that did have business missions were often focused for a single Asian ethnic group that shared a common language and culture. Asian Americans are also fragmented into smaller communities that are still very ethnically oriented. For instance, South Asians have been excluded from Asian American organizations in the past. The majority of the women in this study are East Asian.

Before delving further into to specific leadership roles that some of the entrepreneurs have played, this next portion of the section will address the motivations for involvement. It will also address specific reasons for participating in Asian American community activities.

MOTIVATIONS FOR INVOLVEMENT & SENSE OF BELONGING

For entrepreneurs with brick-and-mortar businesses that are customer-facing, there is a clear business incentive for engaging in civic affairs. To attract customers into one's business, the surrounding area needs to be safe, clean and host vibrant commercial activity. Improving the physical environment through infrastructure, public health and safety measures, and other actions, set the stage for better business environments. For such changes to take place, positive working relationships with the municipal government are incredibly valuable and necessary for timely implementation. Patty Moy, the General Manager of the China Pearl Restaurant in Chinatown, agrees,

For the restaurant to be situated in Chinatown, we need improvements in Chinatown. That comes with development, but with development, it also involves opening the relationship with the City and how we can educate our own people to make Chinatown better.

As a member of the Chinatown Clean-up Committee and Board of Director of the Chinatown Neighborhood Council, Patty can participate in these efforts. The Clean-Up Committee has been working with the City of Boston, IST Department, Boston Police Department, and the Smoking Association. She even expresses that civic engagement is a responsibility of good business owners,

I can tell you that I focus a lot on the business, but at the same time, it's about the bigger picture. I have to be involved in the civic aspect, where I work with the city and build relationships with the City and know what they need from me. How must I comply? A lot of those things come hand in hand.

How does this logic work for entrepreneurs whose clients may not be in the same geographic location as their business? What motivates them to spend precious time and energy away from their enterprises and into volunteering for nonprofit civic organizations? Furthermore, if their businesses are neither sited in ethnic neighborhoods nor have Asian American clients, what drives them to volunteer specifically with Asian American organizations?

A psychological sense of belonging in Asian American communities is one factor motivating individuals to participate structurally in organizations. Growing up in such a neighborhood is one way in which people develop a very strong sense of ethnic identity and belonging. Jacquie Kay, for example, is a third-generation Asian American who grew up in Seattle's Chinatown. Her childhood and family life were full of Chinese-American activities, such as attending the Chinese Baptist Church and writing editorials for the Chinatown newspaper. In subsequent moves across the country, Jacquie consistently found herself gravitating towards other Chinatowns, though her

civic and business activity was not exclusively concentrated here. In New York City, she became involved with the Chinatown Planning Council though she was working in Harlem. She notes,

I keep coming back, wherever I move to, to some Asian American community. And ironically, it's always around economic development and impacting my world of work.

There is a distinction between growing up in ethnic neighborhoods and having parents who run businesses in the same neighborhoods. In the case of Patty Moy, she grew up in a predominantly white suburban neighborhood outside of Boston, though her father ran his restaurant in Chinatown. Even though many people in Chinatown have seen Patty grow up, she did not strongly identify with Chinatown as a young person. Running a business in the enclave economy has significantly altered Patty Moy's perspectives on the matter. Today she feels a personal connection to the people of Chinatown, which drives her to advocate for change in her various Board positions.

LEADERSHIP ROLES IN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

It is not uncommon for successful businesspeople and business owners to be asked to join boards, exactly because they can provide input and knowledge, and the same goes for the Chinatown organizations that Patty is involved in. She is currently a Board Member for the Kwang Gow Chinese School, the Asian American Civic Association, and the Chinatown Neighborhood Council. Patty contributes a significant amount of her time and business acumen to her board commitments.

Typically, Board Members contribute in three ways, known as the "Three T's" or "Three W's." That is time, treasure, and talent, or work, wealth or wisdom. In other words, Board Members will either volunteer a lot of their time and energy to an organization. They can also play important development roles by fundraising for the organization's finances. Lastly, they bring some form of knowledge and content experience that are valuable in running the organization, be that managerial, accounting, business acumen or community relations.

Boards seek diversity of thought, perspective and background; Asian American women entrepreneurs can meet all of these requirements. In Kija Kim's experience, she brought a unique perspective to boards beyond the conventional diversity facets of race, ethnicity and gender. As someone whose company was operating at the forefront of cutting-edge technology, she brought a unique business lens. Additionally, given her political activities and government relationships, Kija brought an extensive network to her organizations.

All of the above were helpful in fundraising for local organizations. For instance, the Asian Task Force for Domestic Violence (ATASK) is one particular organization that Kim was a part of for over twenty years. She first got involved with ATASK when she offered to help the organization with its fundraising initiatives. In fact, she coordinated and executed the Silk Road Gala, an

annual event that raised one third of the organization's revenues for the year. She organized the Gala for about five years before she joined the Board as the Vice Chair. She left the Board in 2013 after more than ten years of service as a Board Member.

Another way in which Asian American women entrepreneurs can strengthen bonding³ ties is to represent the views and interests of underrepresented constituencies. In the case of Patty Moy, it is to bring a second-generation, more Americanized perspective to Chinatown, where first generation ties run deep. Having worked in corporate business culture, Moy's perspective of what it means to problem solve and conduct business in a timely matter differs at times with other community members. Though generally soft-spoken, Moy is unafraid to frankly bring up issues in Chinatown that need to be addressed. Sometimes, this generates more conflict and negative attention. One challenge from sitting on boards is the extent to which people resist change. Patty notes, "Everybody's afraid to change or to be the person to initiate the change." As a younger person who embodies more mainstream American values, including optimism and penchant for risk, Patty finds herself vocalizing issues more frequently, and she ends up having a representative function for others who are reluctant or afraid to speak up.

Extensive commitment to Asian American organizations formed the basis for other political and civic activities that bridge beyond the smaller Asian American community. Jacquie Kay has served on a numerous number of Boards, for some of which she represented an Asian American constituency. Kay's involvement in Asian American organizations and economic development issues also tipped off other organizations seeking new board members. For instance, while she was serving on the Chinese Economic Development Council and Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC), which she had co-founded, she was vetted for an additional board position with the Massachusetts Thrift Institutions Fund for Economic Development, a quasi-public state financing agency, as well as the Conservation Law Foundation Board. At one point, Kay was sitting on twelve different boards.

In the case of Kija, political activity began in 1991 when she attended a trade mission to Asia with former MA Governor Weld. She even recalls that she borrowed money from her mother to attend this trip, and deciding to take time away from her young business to attend the trip was a

³ The use of these bonding ties extends to Patty's father, Mr. Moy, the prior owner of the China Pearl Restaurant. Over a long period of time working in Chinatown, Mr. Moy has built a web of relationships with other first-generation Chinatown residents. Sometimes he plays an intermediary role between Patty and the Chinese community in Chinatown. Whether or not Patty wishes that she could be the direct representative for her business, she has accepted that first-generation connections run deep in Chinatown. Even though Mr. Moy is officially retired, he does check in on the state of the business and is in communication with clients. As an example, for Chinese New Years in January 2014, many Chinese associations held banquets and dinners at The China Pearl. While Patty was the first person to be in communication with the associations, they "call [her] dad directly and chat over things with [her] father. You know, so I'm sometimes disregarded but that's the whole culture of Chinatown." Mr. Moy insists sometimes that without him, Patty would face more difficulty in running the restaurant and that he also acts as a mediator and peacemaker in instances when Patty does not agree with the first generation.

difficult decision to make. Thereafter, she was appointed as one of the fifteen original members of the Asian American Commission, which was established under executive order by former Massachusetts Governor Weld.⁴ The Commission pulled members from different Asian ethnicities, and Kija tried to help bring younger Korean Americans onto the board throughout her 21-year term. She was the last of the original members to leave the Commission in 2013. Kija laments that the Commission members do not represent the original ethnic diversity of the first Commission, with the majority of members today being Chinese Americans. The ethnic composition of the Commission does not reflect the actual diversity of Asian Americans in Massachusetts.

Kim's civic and political engagements today extend much farther than the state of Massachusetts. More recently, she has begun looking to bridge ties between the United States and South Korea, her home country, and opportunities for transnational entrepreneurship. President Park Geun-hye's administration has expressed policy priority on promoting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to expand to the global scale through entrepreneurship and innovation, ultimately building up Korea's creative economy further. In May 2013, President Park visited the United States in order to meet successful Korean American entrepreneurs, and Kija was one of the dozen in the group. She represented the venture community at the initial May meeting as well as the First Creative Economy conference in December 2013, which was held in Seoul. Kija notes,

If I can help my home country, that would be really great – my big achievement at this juncture of my life.

Ultimately, board members are valuable additions to an organization, and word spreads of great ones. Particularly at an earlier time when Asian American women entrepreneurs were an anomaly, the same group of people would often cycle through a revolving door of board positions. Kija said, "If you ask one or two willing people, they're so busy because everybody wants them." The first vanguard has already begun to step back from the leadership roles as they age and their interests diverge. Whether their positions have been replenished with a new generation of Asian American women entrepreneurs, rather than simply women in senior level corporate management positions, remains unclear.

IMPACT ON BUSINESS

The reality is that every minute that entrepreneurs spend in their volunteer roles translates into time and energy away from their companies; both Kija and Jacquie revealed to me that they were criticized at times for making these decisions. Civic involvement rarely provided direct business opportunities, for a number of reasons. For women whose businesses revolved around landing contracts with public sector organizations, Asian American civic involvement did not bring them into contact with potential clients nor guarantee cash flow results. For that, women

⁴ Legislative actions were taken in order to extend the Commission's lifeline beyond Governor Weld's term.

entrepreneurs acknowledged that those linkages were much more transparent in the professional organizations and networks that they joined. In some cases, that was because there were geographic distinctions between their local communities and out-of-state (or country) contracts. With Jacquie for instance,

All of [her] civic engagement has been domestic, while [her] world of work was to be international. They were different worlds. The common bond was education, work and economic development.

Despite not providing direct business opportunities, civic engagement did provide other benefits. Leadership roles in Asian American organizations did contribute to higher visibility for the women entrepreneurs in the press, which reflected positively on their businesses and their reputations as civic leaders. Positive and continuous press citing one's good works in the public arena can build one's professional reputation. These organizations provided members a sense of belonging and source of close friendships and emotional support. Kija Kim was interested in strengthening the political voice and clout of the Asian American community, and she felt a responsibility to be a part of that voice as a successful businesswoman.

7. ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Up until this point, this thesis has glossed over general issues besetting most entrepreneurs with minimal insight on whether Asian American women specifically display unique characteristics. This final section aims to remedy that. For the most part, this group collectively embodies many of the oft-cited characteristics of successful entrepreneurs, such as resourcefulness, high tolerance for risk, and dogged determination to bring their ideas and vision forward. However, they do stand out as highly educated women with impressive educational and professional pedigrees. Despite the privilege they hold with their education and access to influential networks, Asian American women entrepreneurs are still confronted with the reality of minority status on multiple fronts. That includes their gender, race/ethnicity, immigrant history (or that of family) and small numbers of entrepreneurs and company heads.

Certainly, the presence of Asian American women in leadership roles in business, academia, and civic society has increased immensely over the past three decades.¹ Yet, they are far from reaching any sort of critical mass and that may never happen for entrepreneurs, too.² It is common knowledge that Asian American women are underrepresented in Boston's growing industry of biotech and the venture capital industry that supports the start-up economy. That is not to undermine their collective accomplishments.

This section will cover the experience of being an Asian American businesswoman, including some of the stereotypes they are confronted with. Other challenges and opportunities attributed to their identity will follow. As a disclaimer, the older generation of women was more vocal, and part of that is because they have more experience and have more mature businesses.³ Final remarks will offer recommendations that extend beyond individual entrepreneurs to action items for professional organizations and institutions of higher education.

PEOPLE REMEMBER WHO I AM

Asian American women can stand out from the crowd if they speak up and make their presence known. That visibility can be an advantage especially when announcing a new company. When Kija Kim first introducing her company to the Boston business world in the mid 80s, Harvard Design & Mapping was noticed for its cutting-edge technology. Part of that recognition also had to do with her gender; there were few women to begin with let alone a Korean woman. If being one of few translates to feeling like one does not belong or having to prove oneself, minority

¹ More Asian American women leaders are emerging in Boston politics, including Boston City Councillor Michelle Wu and Fitchburg Mayor Lisa Wong. When Mayor Wong was elected to office in 2007, she was 27 years old. Councillor Wu, not to be confused with America's most beloved figure skater Michelle Kwan, was elected to the seat in 2013.

² After all, Asian Americans only constitute 6% of the nation's population. (Census Bureau)

³ A longitudinal study that follows the development of the younger companies mentioned in the thesis would ideal. At that point, hopefully, the author would also have acquired more firsthand experience to draw from in order to shape the study with more nuances.

status can hurt an individuals' self-confidence. However, Kim had a different perspective and used it to her advantage. She said:

I always thought that being an Asian woman can be an advantage because you're unique. If I'm just a regular white American guy, I think would get less noticed. People wanted a different perspective for their organization, and I brought that. It also depends on how you see yourself and whether you approach being different with confidence. You have to be confident in yourself.

Asian American women entrepreneurs may bring different types of perspectives, but they will not be heard if they are reluctant to assert their value. That is easier said than done, especially if one has not been socialized to exhibit that type of behavior. That was more apparent among the women who immigrated to the United States as adults and had grown up in different countries.

Within Asian culture, they don't teach you to be very assertive. If you're not very assertive [in business], you can be taken advantage of easily. Your generation is a different generation because you guys have grown up here. Even though you have your Asian cultural values, you also have taken from American values. There is a good balance comparatively. Whereas in my generation, we came here as immigrants. I think it was more challenging to assert yourself to your mentor, or somebody like that.

As the Asian American population in Boston becomes increasingly second- and third-generation (and farther away from the first-generation immigrant experience), Asian American women may struggle less to resolve different cultural expectations.⁴ Given that many international students from Asia flock to New England universities and some of them decided to stay in the United States after graduating, Boston may always have a sizable Asian immigrant population. To simply wait several generations is not the answer.

STEREOTYPES OF ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN

Standing apart from the norm is quickly interpreted as operating in a white and/or male business culture. That is the same for the industries that many of these women are in, including transportation, management consulting, venture capital, and other STEM fields. Not only do Asian American women have to deal with gender stereotypes in the professional workplace, there are also specific stereotypes of Asian women. Any time that stereotypes impose a set of behaviors or qualities of a broader group to one individual, it leaves little room for individual expression. It is even more dangerous so if stereotypes result in outright discrimination or prejudice.

Jacquie Kay spoke of conflicting perceptions and stereotypes that she has had to deal with:

⁴ That assumes integration into the mainstream society and perhaps shedding ethnic identity in favor of racial identity (Gans, 1979; Tuan, 1998).

In the perception of those in the “majority” community, I am viewed as the Chinese woman entrepreneur for all the stereotypical views - positive and negative. “She” fulfills a stereotype either of a dragon lady or a tiger woman, therefore very competent in business – aggressive, strong, determined. Or another view: a nice “token,” a representative of a community-conscious, socially responsible person. I’m again perceived as somewhat of a threat, either way. Thus, what I’m conscious of is feeling that I’m a woman and that I am always operating in a male culture - always a white male culture.”

So-June Min echoed some of the stereotypes of Asian American women in the venture capital industry. Min is the CFO of .406 Ventures and her firm has not encountered many Asian American women entrepreneurs yet. They are seldom the founders of new companies but rather part of the founding team as the second or third person in command. She cited the powerful impression of the “Asian work ethic,” whereby Asian American women are more likely to be viewed as being highly capable in business operations. That perception and actual demeanor of cool competence may work in most professional settings, but it is a disservice for entrepreneurs, who are expected to be antsy and hungry to share their ideas and get people on board. Min believes that Asian American women may be well positioned for success in her industry, though she seemed hesitant about whether they would always be taken seriously as CEOs and founders.

Not all women expressed their experiences with these stereotypes. As a counterpoint, Hyun-A Park mentioned that being a woman of color could also be an advantage in contexts where affinity helps establish trust in professional relationships. As a woman of color, she can connect with more women and also with more people of color. They are better represented in the government sector, which she interacts with in her line of work and in her professional networks.

More examples of Asian American women in public leadership are needed in order to dispel these stereotypes. It extends beyond entrepreneurs and women in senior management positions to other positions of authority across sectors.

WOMEN, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND EMPOWERMENT

Entrepreneurship has been framed as an empowering experience in which individuals can more freely express themselves and directly reap the benefits of their labor (Godwyn and Stoddard, 2011). Many of these women entrepreneurs have adopted the pay-it-forward mentality. Whether it is in formal mentoring relationships or simply being open to advising younger people, they are role models for budding entrepreneurs to look up to. Most of them have indicated a willingness to help other women, regardless of their race or ethnicity, either because they did not receive any support when they were first starting out or specifically because other women helped them. At the end of the day, all of the women admitted that they felt the greatest challenges as women first.

Hyun-A Park replied:

I'm definitely more inclined to help women. If I retire and have a lot of energy to pour into something, it would be to help more women start their own companies because I think it is very empowering. I think we need to have more women who feel empowered. Rather than working for somebody else, working for themselves. I didn't even know that I had that much room to grow. But having my own company was very liberating and empowering in that way. I think that it would be good for more women to do that.

Another entrepreneur, Hye-Jin Lee, echoed these statements:

I keep surprising myself. I didn't know how much I could do. A lot of times, I am fighting against time to come up with new ideas and to finish projects within deadlines. If it weren't my company, I don't think I would be able to finish everything. It's like an emergency when somebody attacks your son, you fly! You jump to a different place to run away and to keep your son safe... The biggest harvest from this experience is that I understand myself better now than before I started my company.

Patty Moy said with optimism:

Now, people who come into my restaurant say it's a woman's restaurant. They see the way it's decorated with flowers but it's also that that they see a lot of women at the front representing the restaurant and having titles. I just think that women are very powerful. We're very educated and very knowledgeable and we are empowered to speak up. It's great to see that it is being welcomed. I think women really want to help other women because it is becoming a women's world. For some reason, I want to help everyone that comes into my business.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If entrepreneurship truly has emancipatory potential for Asian American women, the onus should not rest solely on individual women to figure this lesson out alone midway into their professional careers. There is much room for collaboration with existing professional and community networks, institutions of higher learning, and the government.

1) Supporting Asian American Women Entrepreneurs Now

Although starting a business is not the universal answer for empowering more Asian American women, any structural barriers that disproportionately affect them should be addressed. Given that being a woman still resonated more as a challenge for entrepreneurs, making policy changes to the workplace may be a first step. They could include the following:

FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES AND NETWORKS

For women who turned to entrepreneurship because they wanted more flexibility in their schedules in order to rear children, they may not have left their workplaces if their company had offered flex location, flextime, longer and fully paid maternity and paternity leave, or childcare facilities. All of the above should be business-as-usual, not privileges for certain women and men who want to have children.

Professional networks and industry associations should coordinate events with more attention to members with family or child-rearing responsibilities. Two Cambridge organizations that promote entrepreneurship schedule some events outside of the standard 6-9 after work hours. TiE-Women and MassBio schedule some events in the early morning and lunchtime hours as well as Friday afternoons. They also try to schedule events close to their members' workplaces and/or where they live. That way, women can go home to their families after the workday ends with little complications. These considerations should apply for the general events as well, so that tending to family responsibilities is not just a "women's problem."

NEGOTIATIONS, FINANCING & GENDER STEREOTYPES

Financing is one of the biggest challenges for small businesses and entrepreneurs. If women are underplaying their businesses' prospects and financial projections, that can jeopardize their ability to seek external financing. These interactions with financial institutions and angel investors are a form of negotiation that women can do better in. Negotiations training that help women navigate environments where gender stereotypes may be triggered would also be valuable skills for entrepreneurs to use. This type of additional training should be offered by institutions of higher learning, companies as a part of workforce development, and perhaps even nonprofit organizations that support entrepreneurs.

ENTREPRENEURIAL SUPPORT SERVICE PROVIDERS

Universities are developing programs, coursework, funding streams and other accelerator programs to promote entrepreneurship among their current students. By providing those support services for alumni, Asian American women could return to their alma mater and still benefit should the motivation for entrepreneurship comes to fruition later. Many universities are building this entrepreneurial infrastructure to develop technologies and research into fast-paced, high-growth firms, which is just one segment of enterprises.

For Asian American women who are looking to build smaller businesses that focus more on professional services, they may not find universities' targeted assistance as helpful. Local economic development offices, business incubators or other nonprofit organizations could be better sources of assistance in location siting, legal services and tapping into bulk purchasing agreements. Bridging existing resources across ethnic-oriented organizations and more mainstream organizations would integrate the entrepreneurial web better.

2) Supporting Entrepreneurs-To-Be

If there are more barriers of perception and ability, earlier messages that perpetuate these psychological barriers must be redressed.

EMPOWERING YOUNG ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN

Organizations and networks that encourage empowerment among young Asian American women can play an active role. ASPIRE, which stands for Asian Sisters Participating in Reaching Excellence, is one such local nonprofit organization that focuses on leadership training and development for Asian American high school girls in Boston. As a small organization, ASPIRE alone cannot reach out to all of them. Role models serve as individual mentors, and we need more of those whether they are formal programs or informal connections in local neighborhoods.

PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AMONG LOCAL YOUTH

Organizations do not need to specifically target Asian American youth, however. Those that support entrepreneurship for young people are also great for sowing seeds. For instance, TiE's Young Entrepreneur Program is a yearlong entrepreneurship program for high school students. A "mini-MBA" program of sorts, teams compete in the \$10K business case competition at the end of each year. There is self-selection among the program participants as the majority of the youth are South Asian whose parents are TiE members. Most teams have at least one female member, and the gender split is nearly 50:50. More of these earlier programs will also help youth develop leadership skills and positive association with risk-taking.

PROMOTING RISK TAKING IN EDUCATION - "Risk early, risk safe"

Even if entrepreneurship is not the right fit for all Asian American women, there is still value in encouraging more women to take risks. But that requires separating the risk of failure as a hindrance for trying something new and stepping outside of one's comfort (or achievement) zone. If risk taking can be framed as exploratory and adventurous earlier in education, women may be less hesitant to repeat that later in the life or careers.

6. CONCLUSION

This thesis was driven by two questions: What are the necessary components for entrepreneurial success for Asian American women? Do Asian American women practice entrepreneurship differently? Though it is too early to offer any conclusive findings based upon eight individual narratives, there are some common threads to recapitulate.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- Only a select few women had early entrepreneurial ambitions; far more of them aspired to enter academia. They have used their advanced degrees to establish their companies in the same discipline. They are highly skilled members of the knowledge economy and have not expressed frustration with low-paying jobs or a glass or bamboo ceiling. This group of women was more motivated to start their own businesses by pull factors toward entrepreneurship. The desire for independence and more control over their work was almost unanimously exhibited.
- Most of the women own small-medium enterprises (SMEs, less than 10 employees) that provide high-quality professional services to other businesses. In most cases, the firms are owner-financed through personal savings, business partners' financial assets or bank loans. Infusions of equity financing did not happen, either because entrepreneurs did not seek it or because they were unsuccessful. They have not sought to grow quickly with high profit margins nor are they seeking exit strategies.
- This group of women has embraced the ambiguity and uncertainty that surrounds entrepreneurship. They have left traditional academic and professional paths even though there was no guarantee of financial stability, business success or social status. Many have learned these lessons firsthand through failure and rejection.
- These women have invested significant time and energy into developing and maintaining their robust network structures. These networks have been influential for establishing their companies' reputations and in getting business. Their network structures extend beyond professional and industry organizations to local community organizations, some of which serve an Asian American constituency. Particularly, the older vanguard of Asian American women entrepreneurs has also laid the foundation for some of Boston's Asian American organizations and is recognized as community leaders.
- Stereotypes of Asian American women and the "Asian work ethic" are additional factors that impact the workplace for Asian American women entrepreneurs. However, they identify with the challenges of being a woman entrepreneur first and foremost.
- Seven out of eight women are either ethnically Korean or Chinese, and 50% of them are first generation who immigrated to the United States as adolescents or young adults.

This study is not representative of all Asian American women entrepreneurs who are of Korean, Chinese or Indian ethnicity. They definitely do not reflect South Asians or Pacific Islanders. This set of entrepreneurial narratives has gone beyond ethnic entrepreneurship literature because these women are integrated in the mainstream economy.

Asian American women are better situated to start their professional businesses today in Boston than they were 30 years ago. Time and regional location are in their favor. There are more Asian American women entrepreneurs today and more role models for younger women to look up to. Additionally, they have also advanced to other positions of authority, including elected office, academia, nonprofit organizations and local governments. Though Asian American women entrepreneurs may never form the majority in numbers, simply having more examples of them in business and civic society are important. Presence in numbers dispel stereotypes of what Asian American women are capable of but it should also have spillover effects to create a more inclusive and equitable world of work.

We need more examples of fearless Asian American women who defy negative messages about their ability to lead or the stigma of business as a lesser default to climbing the academic hierarchy. In other words, we need more women who can attest to the potential for entrepreneurship to be a fulfilling alternative. By no means should all Asian American women start their own businesses. To advance one option as superior to others is not the answer. However, if there are structural or psychological barriers that are disproportionately impeding Asian American women in their pursuits, be it entrepreneurial or not, they need to be addressed not just by individual women but also by government and civic society. That applies to individuals and organizations that support entrepreneurs, including venture firms, investors, and banks and in corporation C-suites.

FURTHER AREAS OF RESEARCH

This individual project stemmed from a personal curiosity about the experiences of Asian American women entrepreneurs in Boston. A third question has emerged from new hypotheses that would benefit from further research. Assuming that Asian American women have outsider (or minority) status, that means they are navigating across minority and majority communities; some may be purposefully bridging them together in their personal or professional lives. Might not Asian American women be prime candidates for entrepreneurship? After all, an entrepreneur by definition is somebody with an outsider perspective who can see opportunities where others may not. Could it be that this group could already be conducting business differently from the status quo? In what ways may outsider status affect the way Asian American women run their businesses? Whether that could be transformative requires the sharing of more stories.

- **Transnational Entrepreneurs**

Given increased business ties between the United States and Pacific Rim economies, there may be more Asian American women entrepreneurs who are utilizing their cross-cultural fluency to build global partnerships.

- **Ethnic Groups**

That includes the experiences of Asian American women of other ethnic groups, including South Asians and South East Asians. For instance, Vietnamese Americans are the third largest Asian American population in Massachusetts. Between 2000 and 2010, the Bangladeshi American population doubled in size while there was a 150% increase among Pakistani Americans in MA.

- **Younger Women**

Younger entrepreneurs in their 20s and 30s would add more nuance to this research as well. Particularly since local universities have been investing their resources into promoting entrepreneurship among their student body, further research could target university entrepreneurship programs, coursework or competitions.

- **In-depth Industries**

This study was loosely based on the Economic Census Bureau's industry classifications for the professional, science and technology sector. Focusing on a specific industry or set of related industries would enable researchers to make more pointed and applicable recommendations. Interviewing more organizations and networks that work with entrepreneurs may better reveal what information gaps between the resources they provide and what entrepreneurs actually need more of. That may also extend to Asian American women civic leaders and elected officials.

- **Longitudinal Study**

A longitudinal study following the development of several companies over a longer period of time would be much more comprehensive. A company's evolution will also shape the types of networks that its owner will engage in, and the level of outside commitment, as well as the types of financing strategies that are optimal.

- **Geographic**

A nationwide study that introduces Asian American women entrepreneurs by region would better inform state and local policies that promote small / women-owned businesses.

APPENDIX A:

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

CONTEXT QUESTIONS

Familial Expectations of Entrepreneur

- Who in your family are the original immigrants? (Tuan)
- Where are they located? Is this a different place than where you grew up?
- What do they do for work? Are any of your family members in business as business owners or entrepreneurs?
 - Follow up questions for those whose parents were in business:
 - Did you help out your parents with the family business? What tasks or roles did you take on? Did these responsibilities change with time? How so?
 - Have your parents ever expressed a desire for you to take over the family business?
- Have they encouraged you to start your own business? If so, how have they supported your entrepreneurial endeavors (financial, human, social)? If not, what reasons did they cite for why you should not go into business ownership? What specific roles and responsibilities have you carried as a daughter of an immigrant?
- Have you been a “bridge” between your family and the majority community (however defined)? In what capacities?

Ethnic Identity and Community

- What is your racial and ethnic identity? Do you identify with one more than the other?
- Do you have friends who are the same ethnicity as you? Does common ethnicity matter? (Childhood, young adulthood, adulthood, present day)
- Do you speak the language of your ethnic group?
- Do you practice ethnic traditions and customs? If so, with whom? Family group, group of friends, co-ethnic community (in what form?)
- Growing up, did your family participate in an ethnic community? Do you participate today?
- What does ethnic community mean to you, and are you part of one?
- Did you experience racial discrimination as a youth? Adult? Entrepreneur? Can you tell me about a specific encounter that left an impact on you?
- What stereotypes have you been victim of – as Asian American, woman, Asian-American female, entrepreneur, etc...

Education

- What is your educational background?
- In what ways is your education connected to your current enterprise and/or current civic activities?
 - Specific Knowledge / skills
 - Social networks
 - Civic involvement within educational setting
 - Impact on ethnic and racial identity
 - Resources for establishing business – technical assistance/financing/mentorship

ENTREPRENEURSHIP QUESTIONS

Prior Professional Experience

- Can you tell me about your professional experiences prior to starting your own business?
 - Are they in the same industry as current business, or different?
 - What relationships from your past experiences have carried over to your current business? Personal, business, mentorship, civic role...
 - How did your previous work experiences prepare you for establishing your own business?
 - Why did you leave?

Entrepreneurial Journey

- What your reasons for starting your business? What were your goals and motivations for starting this particular business, and have you been able to achieve them thus far?
 - Did you experience the glass ceiling in your prior workplaces? Were you trying to get out of a low-paying dead-end job?
 - Lack of respect in workplace
 - Lack of role models or affinity group in workplace (feeling of being an outsider)
 - Were you seeking to balance work and family?
 - Employee development
 - Did you want to effect your personal vision of what workplace should be like?
 - Did you think that you could do a better job of running a business you're your supervisor?
 - Did you experience boredom or lack of fulfillment in your previous workplace?
 - Were you looking for more autonomy and control over your professional life? Has entrepreneurship provided this autonomy?
- What challenges do you experience as an entrepreneur? Are these challenges in part due to your particular identity, or are they general challenges that all entrepreneurs face?
 - Trouble with financing
 - Trouble being taken seriously as business owner/entrepreneur
 - Trouble with growth and acquiring expansion capital
 - Childcare and domestic responsibilities
 - Lack of entrepreneurial education and training
 - Lack of confidence
 - Lack of community and/or family support
 - Lack of colleagues/loneliness
 - Lack of role models or mentors
 - Lack of people like her
 - To escape racism, sexism or other discrimination in workplace settings
- Opportunities
 - Learn/develop new technology
 - Increase acceptance of new management/leadership style?
 - Increased acceptance of women and/or minorities in management/leadership positions
 - Ability to help employees
 - **Ability to express personal vision in business enterprise and to contribute to wider change (i.e .workplace policies, new products, and/or social change)**
 - Financial independence
 - Ability to help others like herself
 - Ability to be with others like herself (i.e. other women, minorities, family members)

Actual Enterprise

- What is your business model? How is your business set up? (Sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, LLC)
- What competitive advantages do you have access to as an Asian-American female-owned business, and how do you employ them in your enterprise (if applicable)?
- How long has your business operated or have you worked for XX business?
- How did you get started? What was the rationale behind starting this business in particular, in terms of industry, size, level of financing, and social mission (if applicable)?
- Does your business have a social mission? Do you as an individual have a social mission?
- How did you first finance your business? What financing strategies have you used in starting, building or expanding your business?
- What formal networks did you tap into in creating your business?
- What informal networks, i.e. family or friends?
- How has your business matured (revenue, employees, forms of financing)? What was your decision-making process?
- Are you considering expanding your business? How so? (new market, new products/services, add'l branch)
- Do you have a mentor? Can you describe your relationship
- What business associations or professional networks are you involved in?

FORMAL AND INFORMAL NETWORKS

Social Networks

- Describe the formal networks you belong to (industry, associations, organizations, educational)
- Describe the informal social networks that you are a part of (family, friends)
- Describe the organization you are involved with, and the role that you play.
 - What issues does this organization devote its resources to? What projects are you involved in?
 - Have there been instances when your dual roles as entrepreneur and civic citizen both play out? Are in conflict?
 - Why do you participate in civic society?
 - How does this affect your business?
 - Have you held leadership positions within this organization? Did your entrepreneurial experience position you with group recognition?
- How has your affiliation with XX activity impacted your status in the community? The visibility of your business?
- Is participation in your local community a duty of businesspeople?
- Do you experience particular barriers in participating in your networks? Are you limited by your personal network, language, experience, knowledge of issues, or another other issue?

Relationship to Asian-American Communities

- How has your business or involvement in business impacted your relationship to the Asian-American communities?
- Are you more inclined to support Asian-American nonprofit organizations?
- Do you see yourself as a model? For whom? Do you feel responsible for mentoring younger women? Other Asian-American women?

APPENDIX B: ASIAN AMERICANS IN BOSTON METROPOLITAN AREA

Source:

Lo, Shauna. (2012). "Asian Americans in Massachusetts: A Census Profile." *Institute for Asian American Studies*. Paper 31. Referred from http://scholarworks.umb.edu/iaas_publications/31

Asian Americans Subgroups (Alone or in Combination)

	2000	2010	% change
Chinese	89,521	131,846	47.3%
Indian	48,588	85,441	75.8%
Vietnamese	36,685	47,636	29.9%
Korean	19,469	28,904	48.5%
Cambodian	22,886	28,424	24.2%
Filipino	11,661	18,673	60.1%
Japanese	13,997	15,358	9.7%
Other Asian, not specified	9,025	14,256	
Pakistani	2,864	7,071	146.9%
Taiwanese	2,859	5,353	87.2%
Thai	2,747	4,712	71.5%
Laotian	4,449	4,530	1.8%
Nepalese	-	2,865	-
Bangladeshi	784	2,387	204.5%
Indonesian	1,063	1,379	29.7%
Sri Lankan	771	1,254	62.6%
Hmong	1,303	1,080	-17.1%
Burmese	-	1,072	-
Malaysian	346	593	71.4%
Bhutanese	-	544	-
Other Asian, specified	1,025	490	

Cities and Towns with the Largest Asian American Populations (Alone or in Combination)

	2000	2010	% change
Boston	47,634	60,712	27.5%
Quincy	13,956	22,968	64.6%
Lowell	18,781	22,764	21.2%
Cambridge	13,265	18,124	36.6%
Malden	8,218	12,448	51.5%
Worcester	9,138	12,228	33.8%
Newton	6,965	10,999	57.9%
Brookline	7,874	10,304	30.9%
Somerville	5,558	7,545	35.8%
Lynn	6,710	6,946	3.5%
Lexington	3,572	6,836	91.4%
Waltham	4,600	6,427	39.7%
Shrewsbury	2,557	5,817	127.5%
Amherst	3,570	4,829	35.3%
Framingham	3,862	4,808	24.5%
Springfield	3,468	4,462	28.7%
Medford	2,391	4,303	80.0%
Acton	1,910	4,296	124.9%
Randolph	3,315	4,222	27.4%
Arlington	2,374	4,156	75.1%
Andover	1,970	3,741	89.9%

Source: 2000 & 2010 U.S. Census

Nativity and Citizenship Status for Selected Asian American Subgroups

	Chinese	Indian	Vietnamese	Cambodian	Korean	Filipino	Japanese
U.S. born	32.5%	27.9%	33.1%	38.1%	26.7%	26.5%	26.7%
Foreign born:	67.5%	72.1%	66.9%	61.9%	73.3%	73.5%	73.3%
<i>Naturalized U.S. citizen</i>	37.7%	25.2%	48.0%	35.6%	33.4%	35.3%	10.6%
<i>Not a U.S. citizen</i>	29.8%	46.9%	18.9%	26.3%	39.9%	38.2%	62.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

All percentages are a portion of the total.

Detailed Occupation by Sex for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over for Asian Americans and Total Population

	Asian American		Total Population	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Management, business, science, and arts:	60.0%	52.7%	40.0%	45.7%
Management, business, and financial	15.9%	16.7%	17.8%	15.2%
Computer, engineering, and science	30.0%	15.3%	10.7%	4.2%
Education, legal, community service, arts, and media	8.5%	10.7%	8.7%	16.7%
Healthcare practitioners and technical	5.5%	10.1%	2.8%	9.5%
Service:	11.1%	15.7%	14.4%	18.8%
Healthcare support	0.6%	2.0%	0.7%	4.4%
Protective service	0.9%	0.3%	3.3%	0.8%
Food preparation and serving related	7.4%	5.4%	4.6%	5.8%
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance	1.0%	2.0%	4.4%	2.4%
Personal care and service	1.2%	6.0%	1.5%	5.3%
Sales and office:	13.1%	21.4%	18.0%	30.5%
Sales and related	7.2%	8.6%	10.7%	10.4%
Office and administrative support	5.9%	12.8%	7.3%	20.1%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance:	4.3%	0.8%	14.0%	0.6%
Farming, fishing, and forestry	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%	0.1%
Construction and extraction	2.1%	0.3%	8.9%	0.2%
Installation, maintenance, and repair	2.1%	0.2%	4.8%	0.2%
Production, transportation, and material moving:	11.5%	9.5%	13.6%	4.4%
Production	8.5%	8.6%	6.6%	3.1%
Transportation	1.7%	0.1%	4.5%	0.7%
Material moving	1.4%	0.7%	2.5%	0.6%
Total number employed 16+	88,656	80,342	1,661,975	1,609,560

All percentages are a portion of the total.

Occupation for Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over for Selected Asian American Subgroups

	Chinese	Indian	Vietnamese	Cambodian	Korean	Filipino	Japanese
Management, business, science, and arts	59.4%	77.1%	29.5%	19.8%	65.8%	55.7%	70.7%
Service	15.5%	5.3%	24.5%	11.7%	8.8%	16.1%	7.1%
Sales and office	17.2%	13.1%	16.0%	21.4%	14.4%	18.3%	17.7%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance	1.9%	0.9%	6.7%	6.6%	2.6%	3.2%	1.6%
Production, transportation, and material moving	5.9%	3.6%	23.3%	40.4%	8.4%	6.8%	2.9%
Total number employed 16+	62,023	37,964	18,908	11,626	9,625	8,112	4,598

Source: 2006–2010 American Community Survey

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