

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN
ACTIVATING ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION AND LEARNING:
A CASE STUDY OF RURAL KYRGYZSTANI WOMEN

by
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A dissertation submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education

Baltimore, Maryland
November 2021

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Abstract

This case study examines the role of social capital in addressing the problem of persistent unemployment among rural Kyrgyzstani women. Social capital, connections to others who may help or connect one to needed resources (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Woolcock, 1998), opened the pathway for a group of rural women in Kyrgyzstan to become nascent owners of a community-based enterprise (CBE). An initial literature review and a mixed methods needs assessment confirmed that key challenges facing unemployed rural Kyrgyzstani women are a scarcity of jobs nearby, few reliable support services, low entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and family dynamics and domestic responsibilities within a patriarchal society that left them feeling isolated. An additional literature review, exploring a variety of interventions typically used to alleviate persistent unemployment among low-income rural communities, provided best practices or key features used to guide the case study analysis. Semi-structured interviews based on Mertova and Webster's (2019) questions for conducting a narrative inquiry on critical events and Stephenson's (2013) social network analysis (SNA) guided the data collection method. Critical events and SNA confirmed that social capital emerged from embedded close-knit relationships. These relationships developed further connections with the wider community, opening the door to acquiring knowledge and capacity building. Through the development of new social networks (Stephenson, 2013), NGOs offered relevant training and access to information about government affordances, such as the State Land Redistribution Reserve Fund (SLRRF). Over time, as the rural women began to learn, plan, and set goals, their mindset shifted to prioritizing collaboration. Their activities bore a striking resemblance to the Plan-Do-Study-Act improvement science cycle (Bryk et al., 2016). In alignment with andragogy (Knowles et al., 2005) and sociocultural theory of learning (Vygotsky, 1978), the nascent owners invested in

developing social networks as active learners pursuing the entrepreneurial goal of co-operatively establishing a farm.

Keywords: Kyrgyzstan, post-Soviet, transitioning economy, rural unemployment, patriarchy, family systems, social capital, human capital, financial capital, social network analysis, critical events, andragogy, active learning, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurial learning, women entrepreneurship, community-based enterprise.

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Dissertation Approval Form



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A Case Study of Rural Kyrgyzstani Women

The student has made all necessary revisions, and we have read, and approve this dissertation for submission to the Johns Hopkins Sheridan Libraries as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the Saltanat I met in Kyrgyzstan in 2005. With your story—a single mom and widowed before 21, after surviving betrayal and bride kidnapping—you captured my heart and inspired me to move to Kyrgyzstan. You opened your home to my family and made me fall in love with Kyrgyzstan during our visit to Ala Archa.

Acknowledgements

I thank God for giving me the opportunity to pursue a doctorate and carrying me through to completing my research, whether I was grounded stateside or able to return to Central Asia amid the third surge of COVID-19 in Kyrgyzstan. Finishing this dissertation is the result of encouragement and support from a broad community of colleagues, friends, and family. I want to thank my dissertation committee. Dr. Richard Rosen, thank you for the many brainstorming sessions and sprint meetings that helped me cross the finish line. Dr. E. Todd Brown, thank you for your wisdom and guidance in helping me become a better writer and researcher. Dr. Eric Rice, thank you for asking tough questions that challenged me to articulate my ideas better.

Thank you to all the faculty, instructors, and classmates at Johns Hopkins University. In particular, I would like to thank Drs. Carey Borkoski, Karen Caldwell, Sherri Prosser, and Yolanda Abel, whose mentorship helped shape my writing and research. To my classmates, I often found inspiration and encouragement from hearing about your work and study.

Thank you to my beloved Caligirls, Denice Inciong, Patricia Szasz, and Kyla Wegman. I am so grateful we sat together and met during the first orientation back in 2018. Thank you for making it fun to wake up in the middle of the night to register for classes, for helping me pass comps, and for getting me through every group research project. I could not have finished this program without your support and humor. We now have a collection of three-plus years of daily chat messages that can fill volumes, much longer than all our dissertations combined.

Thank you to Asel Dunganaeva and the many Kyrgyzstani women who answered my questions, supported my research, and inspired me to share your stories with others. I hope that my writing about your struggles, challenges, and successes begins to close the gap in the literature to reflect your strength in character, creativity, and resilience.

Thank you to all the staff at Inkubasia, especially Han Schipper, who gave me the freedom I needed to focus on my family and studies. Thank you to my friends who put up with my absence when I was preoccupied with my studies. Thank you to my parents, who taught me not to back down from challenges and encouraged me to take every opportunity to further my education. Thank you to my parents-in-law, especially my mother-in-law, who lovingly sought ways to lighten my workload, allowing me to concentrate on my studies. Thank you to my sisters, especially my sister-in-law, for always being generous with your time to help me, including finding technical solutions to being more efficient and organized as a student.

Thank you to my children, Audrey, Elliot, and Coby, for your loving encouragement and patience in listening to your mom ramble on about her research. Thank you for being an example to me in pushing hard when school was tough. I am honored to be in the same graduating year as two of you. Thank you especially to Coby, the last to leave the nest, for bringing me many cups of coffee and cheering me up when all I saw in front of me was my computer screen. Finally, thank you to my wonderful husband, co-conspirator, and best friend, FuMing, for all your love and support, from deciding to apply to the program to the very end as I bounced idea after idea off you. You deserve more than half of this degree!

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Executive Summary

This case study explores the problem of persistent unemployment among rural Kyrgyzstani women through a narrative inquiry. It analyzes the role social capital played in overcoming challenges facing many rural women in Kyrgyzstan. Social capital, connections to others who may help or connect one to needed resources (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Woolcock, 1998), opened the pathway for a group of rural women in Kyrgyzstan to overcome marginalization to become nascent owners of a community-based enterprise (CBE). As a result, social capital connected them to learning opportunities, helping them find employment and a way forward in improving their livelihood.

Political and Economic Context

When Kyrgyzstan declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the country transitioned from a centrally controlled communist political system and economy. In the 30 years since independence, the country has undergone three political revolutions, with the most recent coup occurring in October 2020. Kyrgyzstan has also had nine constitutional amendments, with most amendments swinging between extending or limiting presidential power. As a former Soviet Republic, Kyrgyzstan is a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), along with nine other former Soviet Republics; Russia continues to have a strong presence and influence. Despite many attempted economic reforms and the adoption of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Kyrgyzstan remains ranked as the second-lowest country in Central Asia on the human development index, which measures life expectancy, average educational opportunities, and living standards (United Nations Development Programme, 2018).

In 2018, the reported unemployment rate of Kyrgyzstan was 6.9% of the labor force (International Monetary Fund, 2019). However, unemployment is likely four times more than the reported numbers because experts estimate that only one in four unemployed persons register with the State (International Labour Organization, 2020). Between 2012–2018, the employed-to-population ratio decreased from 58.8% to 56.1%, and the percentage of inactive persons among the working-age population increased from 35.2% to 41.2% (International Labour Organization, 2020). Labor experts look to these numbers to confirm the growing problem of job scarcity in Kyrgyzstan (International Labour Organization, 2020).

The Problem of Practice

As the future of work becomes more complex, demanding higher skills and knowledge, the most adversely affected will be the lower-skilled (Hodgson, 2016) facing fewer social mobility opportunities (Mok, 2016; Rapa et al., 2018; Walker, 2015). Rural communities in Kyrgyzstan continue to face concentrated poverty despite many economic reforms (Atamanov & Van Den Berg, 2012b; O’Neill Borbieva, 2012). Most Kyrgyzstani rural families are subsistence farmers (Atamanov & Van Den Berg, 2012a), and many also rely heavily on remittances—money transfers they receive from migrant family members working in nearby wealthier countries (Ivlevs, 2014; Sulaimanova & Bostan, 2014; Toreev, 2014). Kyrgyzstani women, left behind with children and the elderly to care for (Ismailbekova, 2014) in a predominantly patriarchal society (Ismailbekova, 2014; E. Kim et al., 2018; O’Neill Borbieva, 2012; Werner, 2009), face heightened constraints in securing employment (World Bank Group, 2015), leaving women with limited affordances to advance their skills, along with many adult learning challenges (Knowles et al., 2005). Rural women with mainly primary school education and living in regions characterized by inadequate socioeconomic infrastructures and policies are

even more likely to face discrimination (Karlan et al., 2015; Kasabov, 2016; Ocasio, 2016). Despite evidence that women-owned small businesses contribute to entrepreneurial and economic diversity (Jamali, 2009), as well as social cohesion and stability (Minniti, 2010; Thurik & Wennekers, 2004), rural women's low levels of engagement with the banking system (Davis & Abdiyeva, 2012) indicate exclusion from formal employment. Across the Commonwealth of Independent States, including Kyrgyzstan, unemployment is a persistent issue among rural women.

Contributing Factors

Factors contributing to persistent unemployment, examined through Bronfenbrenner's (1979) nested ecological systems theory (EST) framework, confirmed that in the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstani women faced a tumultuous chronosystem change in their employment opportunities (Croix, 2014; Kuehnast, 2000). With few state-sponsored jobs available, political leaders reconstructed Kyrgyzstan's history by promoting entrenched values of clan and tribal lineages (DeYoung, 2008; Gullette, 2008), calling for a return to patriarchy, kinship, marriage practices, and placing a high value on women staying home to dedicate themselves to domestic responsibilities (Ismailbekova, 2014; E. Kim et al., 2018).

As job scarcity grew, many husbands sought work abroad as migrant workers, resulting in leaving many Kyrgyzstani women to care for the young and old (Ismailbekova, 2014). With weakened social services in their exosystem, most rural Kyrgyzstani women do not have adequate social healthcare, childcare, and legal services supporting them. Compounding the problem is the continued deterioration of the country's education system (DeYoung et al., 2013; Heyneman, 2007; Merrill, 2012; Teleshaliyev, 2013), especially in rural communities, where they have struggled to maintain a formal education system (DeYoung et al., 2013). For rural

Kyrgyzstani women, microsystem factors contributing to persistent unemployment include family dynamics (E. Kim et al., 2018; Sagynbekova, 2017), social capital (Atamanov & Van Den Berg, 2012a; Chebel d'Appollonia & Kasymova, 2014), entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial intentions (Naktiyok et al., 2010; H. Zhao et al., 2005).

To assess how the salient contributing factors to unemployment manifested in the rural Kyrgyzstani woman's microsystem—her pattern of activities, roles, and personal relationships in her immediate setting—I conducted a mixed methods needs assessment in the summer of 2019. I recruited 12 unemployed rural Kyrgyzstani women from two rural villages in northern Kyrgyzstan through my connection with the director of a rural women's association. All participants were unemployed women attending training classes through the association.

A key theme emerged from the study—family dynamics hindered women from pursuing their employment goals, impeding or prohibiting them from leaving home for employment. The women reported that they needed to keep ideas hidden and secret, only speaking about their goals after accomplishing them secretly. They did not share their financial needs openly with family members. While the presence of family social capital can ease the path to employment (Carr & Sequeira, 2007; Edelman et al., 2016; Sanders & Nee, 1996; Sequeira et al., 2007), participants in this study did not possess such capital and faced additional challenges. The study verified that social capital was neither present nor available to help these rural women find work or start their own businesses.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks Guiding the Study

The theories of human capital, social capital, sociocultural learning, and andragogy set the stage to discuss the findings and implications. Human capital theory claims that investing in training, education, and work experience has expected returns, such as increasing productivity

and economic stability and security (Smith, 2007). Social capital theorists emphasize the importance and potential of building up social networks and relationships to improve overall well-being (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004).

Related to social capital, sociocultural theory of learning emphasizes that learning is a social process and takes place through social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978). Sociocultural theory of learning is relevant for understanding interventions for communities facing high unemployment. Andragogy, principles of adult learning, is also relevant for rural Kyrgyzstani women's learning opportunities. Two of Knowles et al.'s (2005) unique characteristics of adult learners are especially relevant to rural women learners in Kyrgyzstan. One, Knowles et al. emphasized that adults possessed a "learner's self-concept," as they tend to be responsible for their decisions and their own lives (p. 65). Second, Knowles et al. emphasized that adult learners bring with them more accumulated experiences. Most of the respondents during the needs assessment fell into the category Knowles et al. warned about: adults "tend to develop mental habits, biases, and presuppositions that tend to cause us to close our minds to new ideas, fresh perceptions, and alternative ways of thinking" (p. 65).

I developed a conceptual framework emphasizing how family dynamics affect social capital, playing a decisive role in rural women's employment opportunities. Since the participants indicated that they did not have anyone to seek help from and could not voice their needs, I concluded that the women's family dynamics contributed to low social capital.

Family dynamics also contributed to limiting rural women's education level, the investment in human capital. The needs assessment participants acknowledged that they did not have enough education to be hired for work and had low entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Barakat et al., 2014; Naktiyok et al., 2010). Having low skills and low self-efficacy, rural women

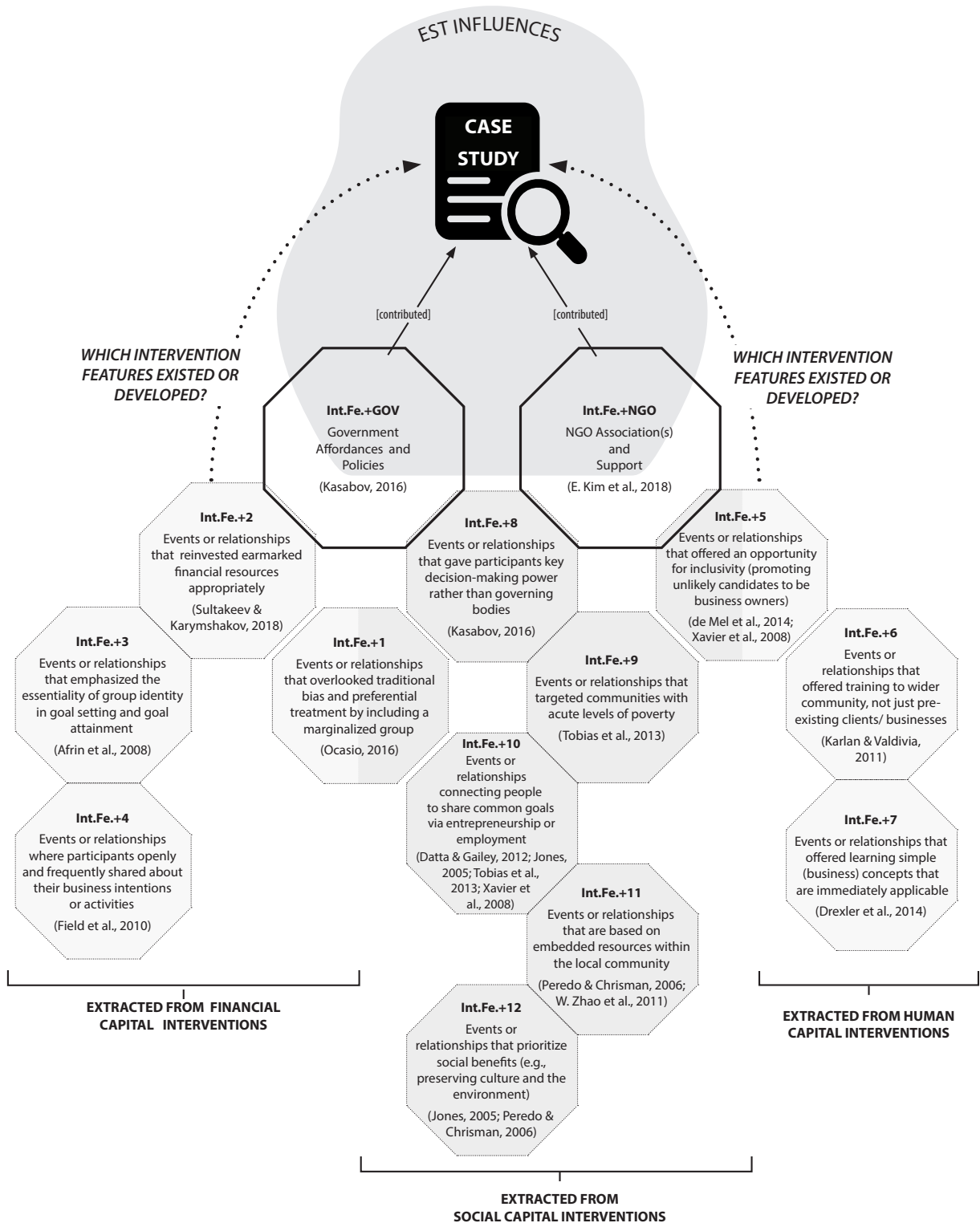
face additional challenges in accessing financial capital. Not being able to access financial capital hinders one from being ready to start their own businesses, even though there are many interventions in the developing world focused on improving financial capital to address economic factors related to unemployment (Afrin et al., 2008; Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; Ocasio, 2016). With the scarcity of jobs nearby, the unemployed either look for work further away, thereby needing transportation mobility, or are motivated to start their own business nearby. The conceptual framework highlights the relationships between the limitations to investments in social and human capital caused by family dynamics, and access to financial capital, leading to limited motivation levels and pursuance of employment or entrepreneurship.

Extracted Features from Intervention Programs Addressing the Problem of Practice

An additional literature review, exploring a variety of interventions typically used to alleviate persistent unemployment among low-income rural communities, provided best practices or key features for further examination. The extracted best practices or key features from the intervention literature became the building blocks for comparing and contrasting intervention features with the exceptional case study of how a group of marginalized Kyrgyzstani women overcame the problem of unemployment in their rural community. Listed in Figure ES.1 below are the extracted features from the literature and each study's author(s).

Figure ES.1

Extracted Intervention Features and Corresponding Intervention Studies



Research Design

The case study explored the role of social capital in understanding what types of intervention led a group of rural Kyrgyzstani to establish their own community-based enterprise (CBE). The study compared and contrasted the intervention features extracted from the literature review to the experiences of the community-based farm owners and addressed the following research questions:

RQ1: What contributed to the emergence of social capital for the main actors in this case?

RQ2: What events, factors, or relationships do the participants identify as contributing to the success/struggles of reaching their goal, starting the CBE?

RQ3: How do the participants explain how they learned to overcome the traditional challenges of limited resources, restricted opportunities, marginalization, and discrimination, to start the community-based enterprise?

RQ4: How do the participants describe what they learned from starting their own community based enterprise?

As a qualitative case study, I explored what constructs nurtured an environment that supported training, learning, motivation, and development for a group of marginalized women in rural Kyrgyzstan. Data collection included online interviews with key actors, secondary documents, artifacts, and a researcher journal. Using narrative analysis and analysis of the narrative (Polkinghorne, 1995), the narrative inquiry discusses the critical events and key relationships that emerged using social network analysis.

Findings and Discussion

In the spring of 2020, a group of four rural Kyrgyzstani women from the northern rural region of Kyrgyzstan submitted a bid to lease three hectares of farmland from Kyrgyzstan's

State Land Redistribution Reserve Fund (SLRRF). Upon receiving the lease grant, four women established a community-based farm, sharing the workload between themselves and hiring others from within their community (other unemployed rural women) to help them harvest and sell their produce. The land leased from the SLRRF program provided them an opportunity to rent land at a substantially reduced rate, often referred to as a land grant.

RQ1: Emergence of Social Capital

Social capital stemmed from embedded close-knit relationships that helped women connect to the wider community. These embedded relationships often led to an awareness of the social services available to them. Over time, relationships prioritized capacity-building, leadership, and confidence-building over job skills training. NGO support laid the foundation for those who are often marginalized to have the capacity to drive their own decisions according to their interests and needs.

RQ2: Events, Factors, or Relationships that Contributed to Goal Attainment

The events, factors, or relationships that participants identified as contributing to the success or struggles of reaching their goal are those that led to attending NGO events. By attending NGO training events, they had an opportunity to build their confidence, learn about their legal rights, take actionable steps, and eventually reach their goal of becoming recipients of the land lease and establishing the community-based farm.

RQ3: How Learning to Overcome Challenges Occurred

The nascent owners explained that they changed their mindset and began openly collaborating with others, sharing their knowledge and resources, and experiencing several epiphanies. Together, they supported each other's development in learning how to seek help and

support and offer others help and support—as their self-confidence grew, learning and epiphanies centered on developing an openness to both accept help and offer help.

RQ4: Description of Learning Outcomes from Starting the CBE

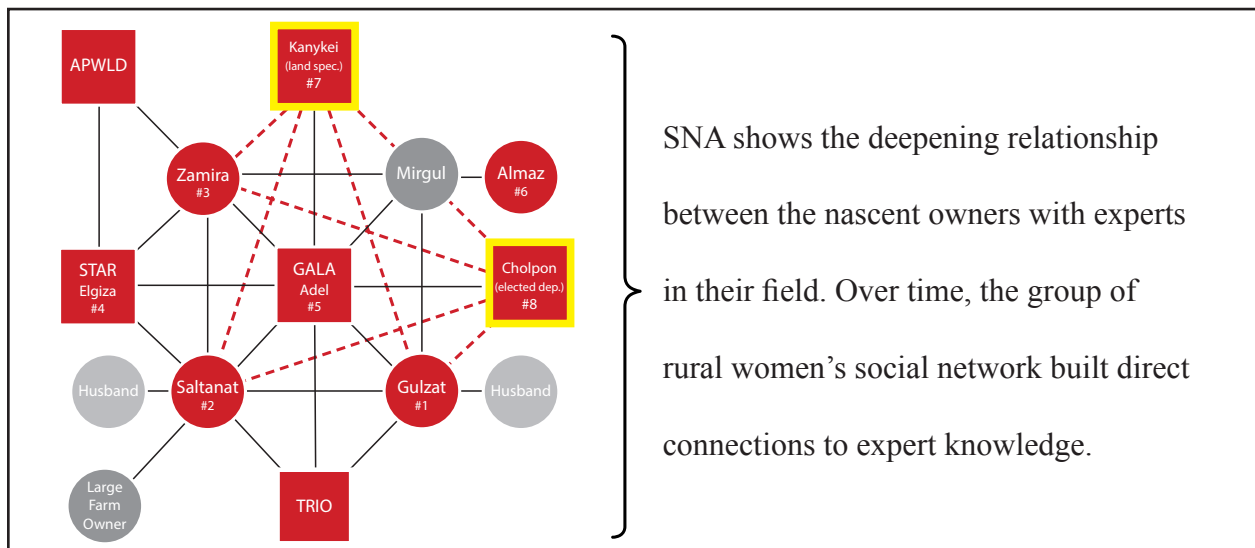
The nascent owners described acquiring knowledge on how to set goals, take steps towards their goals, and then, when they met their initial goals, make grander plans. The nascent owners’ examples bore striking similarities to the Plan-Do-Study-Act improvement science cycle (Bryk et al., 2016).

Social Network Analysis and Critical Events from Unemployment to Farm Ownership

Using social networking analysis (SNA), a narrative retells the journey experienced by a group of rural women who came together to establish a community-based enterprise (CBE). A series of digraphs depicting the relationships and various types of social networks among the group of nascent owners culminates in Figure ES.2.

Figure ES.2

The Nascent Owners Connect Directly with their Expert Knowledge Network



Ten critical events that accelerated learning frame the discussion, highlighting how events led to learning opportunities. Their journey from unemployment to farm ownership is a story about learning, beginning with how they expanded their social network when given the opportunity to connect to the wider community. Supporting the conceptual framework and in alignment with andragogy and sociocultural theory of learning, their story strongly indicates that investing in social capital increased learning opportunities, developed active learners, and activated entrepreneurial intentions.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

The reflective process of participating in interviews led the participants to recognize that they possessed supportive social connections. Through the deliberate expansion of their social network, the nascent owners came to recognize their growing capacity to overcome challenges. Future research through the lens of transformative learning theory, linking the role of social capital, can shed insight on how marginalized adult learners can learn from a “disorienting dilemma” that grows out of developing social connections with their broader community (Mezirow, 1981, p. 7). Exploring how expanding one’s social network challenged pre-conceived assumptions can increase learning opportunities for adult learners. Further research matching their journey to Mezirow’s ten elements on the “dynamics of perspective transformation” and exploring which of the two paths of transformation developed (sudden awareness vs. a sequence of transitions) can provide further understanding on adult learning theory and enhance practice in supporting marginalized rural communities (Mezirow, 1981, p. 7).

Taking the research into practice means needing to build reflection into learning processes. My interviews offered a new opportunity to close a learning loop for the nascent owners, realizing they had changed in confidence, self-efficacy, learning protocols, and critical

evaluative skills in problem-solving. My meetings with the nascent owners provided me with learning about their entrepreneurial journeys, but the interviews also allowed me to observe how the practice of reflection enhanced learning cycles, which unfolded because of their willingness to meet with me. Practitioners should institutionalize reflection into development programs for active learners to learn about their own learning. Additionally, this case encourages practitioners to employ and invest in developing communities of practice that encourage active self-learning. Developing social connections and networked improvement communities between learners with the more experienced can open the door to more teaching, mentoring, and coaching opportunities. Supporting interventions that consider structures of social interactions, inclusivity of the marginalized, and active learning emphasize the features of a system that are present but need to be activated. By encouraging insider participation, improving agency, capacity building, and reflection, intervention participants will focus on their “concept of self-directedness” (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 214), moving from dependent recipients of intervention programs to “independent learners” who are motivated and oriented to learning and improving (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 183).

Chapter One

Literature Review Related to the Problem of Practice

In 2015, the General Assembly of the United Nations (U.N.) adopted 17 sustainable development goals to transform our world (United Nations, 2015). Eleven of these 17 goals directly referred to, or are related to, economic inclusion and development, such as: ending poverty, ending hunger, ensuring inclusive and equitable education, building industry, reducing inequalities, promoting sustained and inclusive economic growth (United Nations, 2015). Ending poverty is at the heart of the U.N.'s (2015) promotion of economic development.

When Kyrgyzstan (Figure 1.1) declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the country transitioned from a centrally controlled economy to a free market. As a transitioning economy, Kyrgyzstan does not have many large employers (N. Abdubalieva, personal communication, September 28, 2021; Kamchybekova, 2021; Kuzmin et al., 2010). In addition, Kyrgyzstan began to adopt a democratic parliamentary political system. Although the majority ethnic group was Kyrgyz, the newly created country of Kyrgyzstan found itself home to many ethnic groups, and Kyrgyzstani became the accurate nomenclature describing the nationality of all those living in the country.

As a former Soviet republic, Kyrgyzstan is a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), an intergovernmental group consisting of nine countries, all formerly Soviet republics, and two additional countries that hold non-member statuses (Figure 1.1). Kyrgyzstan, along with most other CIS countries, has adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). However, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) network reported that the country still ranks the second-lowest in Central Asia on the human development index,

which measures life expectancy, average educational opportunities, and living standards (United Nations Development Programme, 2018).

Figure 1.1

Kyrgyzstan Map



Note: Adapted from: *File:BlankMap-World-Compact.svg*, by Canuckguy et al., n.d. (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BlankMap-World-Compact.svg>) In the public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

In 2018, the reported unemployment rate of Kyrgyzstan was 6.9% of the labor force (International Monetary Fund, 2019). However, unemployment is likely four times more than the reported numbers, as experts believe that only one in four unemployed persons register with the State (International Labour Organization, 2020). Unemployment is likely underreported for several reasons. First, people living in Kyrgyzstan do not report their unemployment status because government unemployment benefits amount to only US\$3.90 per month (OECD, 2018). Second, many employed are likely underemployed, as they are marginally involved in subsistence farming and do not qualify as an unemployed person (Atamanov & Van Den Berg,

2012a; World Bank, 2011). Third, the unemployment rate is also under-reported because of CIS countries (in dark gray) Kyrgyzstan “time underemployment” (people working much less than they need or desire), as 20% of the employed within the country are not working as much as they would like or need (OECD, 2018, p. 49). Unemployment and underemployment primarily affect families in rural areas, where 67.7% of Kyrgyzstan’s poor live (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2015). A more accurate assessment of employment is an analysis of inactivity in the labor market, which has steadily increased more than the employed (International Labour Organization, 2020). Between 2012–2018, the employed-to-population ratio declined from 58.8% to 56.1%, and the percentage of inactive persons among the working-age population increased from 35.2% to 41.2% (International Labour Organization, 2020). This increase confirms the scarcity of jobs in the country.

As in many developing nations, becoming employed can often mean starting and owning a small business due to a lack of available stable jobs (Fields, 2011). In this review of the literature, references to being or becoming an entrepreneur differ from the typical archetype of what an entrepreneur is in the West, where definitions of an entrepreneur are typically related to risk-taking, creative thinking, and recognizing and exploiting opportunities (Eroglu & Picak, 2011). In lower-income countries, an entrepreneur is often described using the term own-account worker. An own-account worker is a self-employed worker who essentially sells their labor to themselves instead of working for an employer and selling their labor to the employer (Fields, 2011). An own-account worker chooses to work for themselves because there are few jobs nearby, and out of necessity, they can no longer wait and continue looking for work (Fields, 2011). Own-account workers are looking to provide a living income for their own families (Fields, 2011). Needing to support their family may differ from the preconceived ideas and

concept of entrepreneurship in wealthier nations, where an individual pursues entrepreneurship with the possibility and hope of achieving great wealth and success. This literature review adopts Yalcin and Kapu's (2008) definition of entrepreneurship as "a process with different important dimensions, including entrepreneurial motives, problems, and opportunities," because their study focused on entrepreneurship in the context of a transitioning economy (p. 186).

Problem of Practice

As the future of work becomes more complex, demanding higher skills and knowledge, the most adversely affected will be the lower-skilled (Hodgson, 2016) facing fewer social mobility opportunities (Mok, 2016; Rapa et al., 2018; Walker, 2015). Rural communities in Kyrgyzstan continue to face concentrated poverty despite many economic reforms (Atamanov & Van Den Berg, 2012b; O'Neill Borbieva, 2012). Most Kyrgyzstani rural families are subsistence farmers (Atamanov & Van Den Berg, 2012a), and many also rely heavily on remittances—money transfers they receive from migrant family members working in nearby wealthier countries (Ivlevs, 2014; Sulaimanova & Bostan, 2014; Toreev, 2014). Kyrgyzstani women, left behind with children and the elderly to care for in a predominantly patriarchal society (Ismailbekova, 2014; E. Kim et al., 2018; O'Neill Borbieva, 2012; Werner, 2009), face heightened constraints in securing employment (World Bank Group, 2015), leaving women with limited affordances to advance their skills, along with many adult learning challenges (Knowles et al., 2005). Rural women with mainly primary school educations and living in regions characterized by inadequate socioeconomic infrastructures and policies are even more likely to face discrimination (Karlan et al., 2015; Kasabov, 2016; Ocasio, 2016). Despite evidence that women-owned small businesses contribute to entrepreneurial and economic diversity (Jamali, 2009), as well as social cohesion and stability (Minniti, 2010; Thurik & Wennekers, 2004), rural

women's low levels of engagement with the banking system (Davis & Abdiyeva, 2012) indicate exclusion from formal employment. Across the Commonwealth of Independent States, including Kyrgyzstan, unemployment is a persistent issue among rural women.

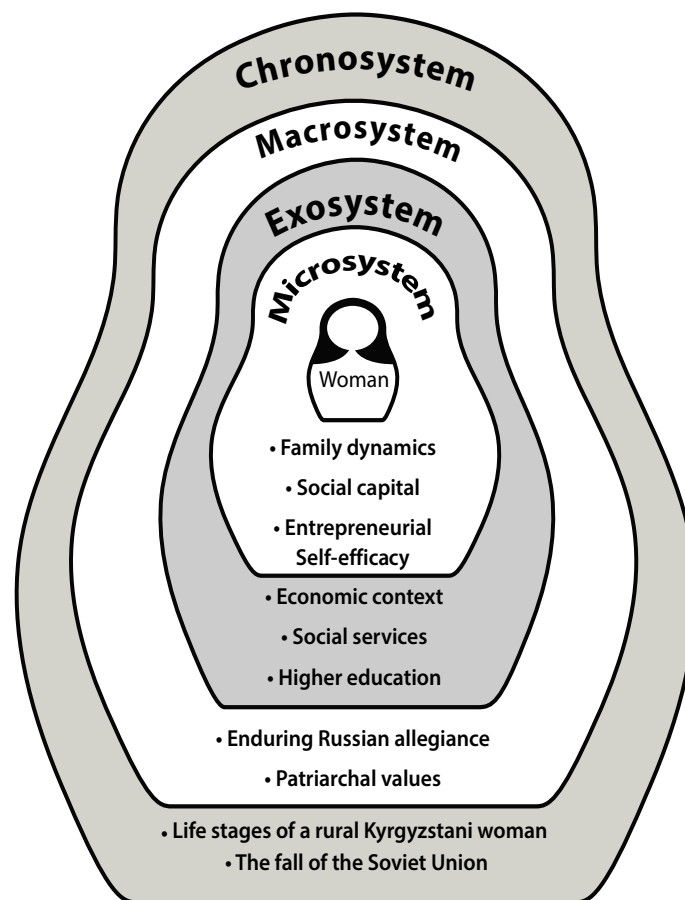
Theoretical Framework

This literature review uses Bronfenbrenner's (1979) nested ecological systems theory (EST) framework. EST relies on the principle that people are shaped and developed by their interactions with their surrounding environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The EST framework, first developed to study children's development, begins by examining the child's most immediate environment, the microsystem, which describes their direct relationships with family, teachers, and friends (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Applying the EST to examine the factors contributing to persistent unemployment among rural Kyrgyzstani women, the framework would have a rural Kyrgyzstani woman in the center, in her surrounded environment, in a nested structure. The Kyrgyzstani woman's microsystem includes her pattern of activities, roles, and personal relationships in her immediate setting. The mesosystem describes the interactions between two or more microsystems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The third environment, the exosystem, which Bronfenbrenner (1994) described as environments that do not actively include the focal individual, affect the individual, nonetheless. Examples of exosystem factors include government policies and social services. For a Kyrgyzstani woman, the exosystem related to her employability includes her economic context, social services, and the higher education system. Beyond the exosystem is the macrosystem of broader attitudes, beliefs, and cultural patterns of interaction. A Kyrgyzstani woman's macrosystem is the overall pattern in society based on belief systems, culture, and subcultures (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), which includes patriarchal values and an enduring Russian allegiance. Finally, beyond the macrosystem is the

additional dimension of time, the chronosystem. The chronosystem includes changes during the woman's lifespan and the nation's historical events (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), such as the rise and fall of the Soviet Union. Using the EST framework (Figure 1.2) will help develop an understanding of the factors contributing to a rural Kyrgyzstani woman's unemployment.

Figure 1.2

Factors Contributing to Persistent Unemployment Among Kyrgyzstani Rural Women Based on the Ecological Systems Theory



Note: Adapted from *The Young Child and Social Relationships in Developing Countries* (p. 8) by S. Wortham, 2008, New York, NT: Springer. Copyright 2008 by Springer. Adapted with permission.

In what follows, I will first examine the chronosystem of a rural unemployed Kyrgyzstani woman, examining the events and effects related to the rise and fall of the Soviet Union, and then an outline of her life stages. Next will come an overview of the macrosystem factors, patriarchal values, and the enduring allegiance to Russia. This synthesis will detail the exosystem factors related to the economic context, social services, and educational environment. Finally, the microsystem factors related to the women's family and entrepreneurial self-efficacy, which contribute to entrepreneurial intentions and motivation, will be described.

Factors Contributing to Persistent Unemployment of Rural Kyrgyzstani Women

The following literature synthesis provides an overview of the many factors contributing to persistent unemployment among Kyrgyzstani rural women. The chronosystem includes the fall of the Soviet Union and a rural Kyrgyzstani woman's life stages.

The Fall of the Soviet Union

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan declared independence in 1991. Before the arrival of the Russians, the Kyrgyz were traditionally clan-based, nomadic, shamanistic, Turkic-speaking people (Tromble, 2017). In the late 19th century, as ethnic Russian colonists began arriving in the area, the regional Kyrgyz clans resisted the colonists (Dadabaev, 2017). These clans were met with a violent response from the Russian army and subsequently annexed by the Russian Empire (Dadabaev, 2017; Silova et al., 2007). In 1926, the Soviets created the Soviet republic of Kirgizia, demarcating loose boundaries (Reeves, 2017) with what would later become the borders of independent Kyrgyzstan (Kuehnast, 2000).

Kuehnast (2000) began conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Kyrgyzstan before the fall of the Soviet Union initially to study "the impact of Sovietization upon Kyrgyz women" (p. 101). Over time, the author shifted her focus to the impact the fall of the Soviet Union

had, including the devastating economic and social effects on Kyrgyzstani women (Kuehnast, 2000). Through observation and direct interviews between 1990–1996, including surveying 600 women in 1993, Kuehnast (2000) gathered data from her informants on their experiences during Kyrgyzstan’s transitional years before becoming a post-socialist state. The author discovered that the Soviets had created the narrative of “the emancipated Central Asian woman,” which remained a theme for the whole duration of the Soviet regime (Kuehnast, 2000, p. 100). The Soviets had included rural women to be active participants in building up the economy, during which Russian was the common language in schools and work (Kuehnast, 2000). Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the rural areas no longer benefit from generous state-sponsored programs, the use of Russian is diminishing in the villages, and the rural regions have deteriorated yet still hold memories and of their former prosperous life before the withdrawal of the Soviets (Dadabaev, 2017; Kuehnast, 2000).

During the years of Soviet rule, the concept of work and the role of women were defined to fit the socialist agenda, and the legacy of the Russian experience continues to affect rural women, as evident in how they still compare the nature and value of work in the context of their socialist past (Croix, 2014). Like Kuehnast (2000), Croix (2014) also conducted an ethnographic study focused on work and employment in the lives of rural Kyrgyzstanis. Croix’s 18-month long ethnographic study took place between 2006–2010 and used loosely structured interviews and participant observation of three rural workers: two men and a woman. Each informant had very different professions: a woman pastoralist, a Muslim cleric, and an agricultural entrepreneur. However, they all came from the same rural village in Kyrgyzstan. The author discovered that to those living in a post-socialist state, work in itself has moral value because it produces a good person and that the rich are not necessarily thought of as good workers (Croix, 2014). Instead,

recognition and dignity given to good workers were not necessarily dependent on whether a great return or reward for the work existed (Croix, 2014). Thus, as a post-Soviet state, rural communities in Kyrgyzstan suffered from rampant unemployment and economic instability and the loss of value, dignity, and recognition they placed on being good workers.

Life Stages of a Rural Kyrgyzstani Woman

The chronosystem examines how the focal individual's environment changes over time and can include life events and transitions. Ismailbekova (2016) studied how Kyrgyz women's life stages were related to their agency and authority levels. The author conducted an ethnographic study in the village of Bulak between 2006 and 2013 by interviewing and observing four Kyrgyz women (Ismailbekova, 2016, p. 267). The author recounted the typical life stages of rural Kyrgyz women, starting with the youngest woman, as a new bride subservient to her mother-in-law. Through the retelling of vignettes from her ethnographic study, Ismailbekova showed how a Kyrgyz woman struggled to gain status and authority through difficult life situations. This long and challenging journey required a young woman to incorporate her life into her husband's family. A young bride can slowly rise in the ranks of her new family as she bears children to achieve the higher status of being a mother (Ismailbekova, 2016). When she eventually becomes a mother-in-law, as her sons marry and bring home their young brides, she will gain full respect and standing within the family (Ismailbekova, 2016). Tracing a Kyrgyz woman's life journey, Ismailbekova concluded that a Kyrgyz woman could gain status in the larger community by slowly rising in ranks within her own family. The author discussed how the women struggled in the context of rising nationalism and the call to return to patriarchal values. The author also concluded that the women were able to negotiate the patriarchal system by connecting to the larger community, making their husbands look good publicly, and eventually

being able to gain social legitimacy through developing years of respect from within the home, among the extended family, and in their village (Ismailbekova, 2016).

Nedoluzhko and Agadjanian (2015) examined marriage practices and trends in Kyrgyzstan, using the hypothesis that as Kyrgyzstan modernized, the trend to have traditional marriages would decline. The authors also provided historical-cultural background information about traditional Kyrgyz marriages, namely about bride-kidnapping and arranged marriages. Bride abduction, often referred to as bride-kidnapping, is a practice where an unwed young girl is taken by force to a prospective groom's home. There, she is pressured by the prospective groom's family members into accepting the proposal and immediate marriage. After prolonged pressure, the young woman often acquiesces by accepting her fate in a shame-based culture where the option of refusal would shame both herself and her family (Werner, 2009). Although the law prohibits bride abductions, cultural traditions of shame and honor discourage young women and parents from reporting incidences to the police (O'Neill Borbieva, 2012; Werner, 2009). The pressure to remain in a forced marriage is high, with the main reason being that Kyrgyzstanis believe the girl should accept her fate due to the fear of being judged by the community—by parents, extended family, friends, and neighbors (O'Neill Borbieva, 2012; United Nations Population Fund in Kyrgyz Republic, 2016; Werner, 2009). Nedoluzhko and Agadjanian used data from 2032 Kyrgyz households from the 2011–2012 national quantitative survey, *Socio-Economic and Migration Processes in Kyrgyzstan*. Among the survey questions, questions on types of marriages asked whether they were forced (bride-kidnapped), arranged, or married by choice. The authors compared their data between rural and urban families and found a decline in forced and arranged marriages and that the ages of women getting married were slowly increasing. The authors determined that this was an indication of post-Soviet

modernization (Nedoluzhko & Agadjanian, 2015). Although the reported trend implied that modernization had given women more options in their future, over 33% of marriages between 16 and 21 years of age were still *forced* bride-abductions (Nedoluzhko & Agadjanian, 2015). This number jumped to 69% in rural areas (Nedoluzhko & Agadjanian, 2015).

Young marriage and forced marriages affect a young woman's opportunity to seek and find employment as many need to adhere to the wishes and desires of her new family. Most rural women tend to start with low levels of agency and cannot make decisions related to their employment outcomes, despite participating in intervention training programs to increase their agency and empowerment (E. Kim et al., 2018). E. Kim et al. (2018) discovered this contradiction after conducting an ethnographic study using in-depth interviews of 30 women on the outcomes of an international development intervention in the province of Naryn, Kyrgyzstan, in 2012. Because the project did not account for differences among the women regarding age, familial status and structures, gender issues, class differences, and other pre-existing hierarchies, only participants unhindered by familial or cultural obligations completed the intervention program. As a result, the authors discovered that the program managers of the intervention systematically excused and excluded women with the lowest social status, the most marginalized, to ensure the remaining sample of participants reflected well on the project outcomes. Thus, the project became a contradiction by *causing* disempowerment and social inequalities through exclusivity. While this single ethnographic study cannot be generalized, as it does not necessarily prove similar interventions are failures, lessons learned about adhering to overzealous guidelines must be considered. E. Kim et al.'s study is valuable because it highlighted that village women should not be treated as "homogenous, ahistoric, static and willing" (or even eager) recipients of an international development effort (E. Kim et al., 2018, p. 242). Instead, each comes with

differing backgrounds, assets, family support, and religious beliefs. Many of these women can only connect to the broader community and gain social legitimacy through the respect developed from their successive roles from the bride, to mother, to mother-in-law (Ismailbekova, 2016). A lesson from this study highlights that intervention programs need to consider the larger ecological systems affecting women and the problem of unemployment.

While Kuehnast (2000), E. Kim et al. (2018), and Croix (2014) all examined the nature of work, each study provided a slightly different perspective. The Kuehnast study focused on the ethnographies of women before and directly after the fall of the Soviet Union and discussed the demoralizing effects on the immediate economic and social transition. When combined with Ismailbekova's (2016) findings of a Kyrgyzstani woman's life stages, the E. Kim et al. study explained how a Kyrgyzstani woman's life stage might affect her freedom and agency to work. Moreover, Croix's study focused on rural workers and the value placed on work itself in Kyrgyzstan's context being a post-socialist state. Both Croix and Kuehnast examined women's inclusion and emancipation by the Soviets, and both authors concluded how their informants placed a high value on having work and working hard. In Soviet times, women were encouraged to be significant contributors on the path to utopia as part of the collective community (Croix, 2014; Kuehnast, 2000). This utopia was a community centered around organized labor and political and daily social life (Croix, 2014). In this utopian environment, a woman's life was stable and predictable (Kuehnast, 2000). Under the Russian socialist establishment, women benefitted the most as the recipients of free education, childcare, and guaranteed work (Kuehnast, 2000). The chronosystem consists of events and life transitions. Within this system, factors contributing to a Kyrgyzstani woman's struggle with unemployment are the historical events related to the rise and fall of the Soviet Union and the woman's various life stages whereby

historically, women who once held esteemed positions in an inclusive society must now endure exclusion and limited agency based on gender and age.

Enduring Russian Allegiance

The rural Kyrgyzstani woman's macrosystem consists of society's overall patterns based on beliefs, culture, and subculture. Her macrosystem includes the enduring Russian allegiance and Kyrgyzstani patriarchal norms.

Reliable historical archives have indicated the Soviets governed through authoritarianism, corruption, and coercion to enforce a socialist-economic market and a communist political system (Kragh, 2013). The legacy of the Soviet system remains deeply entrenched in the country (Bader, 2012). The Russian language is one of Kyrgyzstan's official national languages, and many of the country's Soviet social and legal institutions remain (Bader, 2012). The country has also maintained strong ties with Russia, evident from its continued association and preference for Russian political involvement (Dzyubenko, 2014). In 2014, Kyrgyzstan chose to revoke its agreement to host a U.S. military airbase, for example, under pressure to do so from Moscow (Dzyubenko, 2014). Furthermore, Kyrgyzstan has chosen to be a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the opponent to NATO. Kyrgyzstan also joined the Eurasian Economic Union, the Russian counterpart of the European Union (Chernysheva et al., 2018; De Haas, 2017).

The impact of Kyrgyzstan's enduring allegiance and preference for Russian influence impacts the rural women's macrosystem in several ways: One, it places Russia as the primary partner in the political and economic spheres whereby 80% of migrant workers working abroad work in Russia (Kurmanov et al., 2017). Migrant workers are laborers who travel and live away from home due to work. Two, maintaining membership in the Collective Security

Treaty Organization increases Russia's presence and involvement in security and cooperation in the Russian-led military alliance (De Haas, 2017). A deepening relationship with the Russian military aligns Kyrgyzstan's politics and economy closely with Russian interest and influence, deprioritizing the needs of marginalized rural communities and favoring Russian priorities.

Patriarchal Values

Within the macrosystem, which consists of attitudes and the cultural environment, patriarchal attitudes are another factor influencing rural Kyrgyzstani women's employment opportunities. Following the 70 years of Soviet rule, in 1991, Kyrgyzstan declared independence, and subsequently, its political leaders promoted a return to patriarchal values. As a young independent nation, it has undergone three violent coup d'états; the constitution has been amended nine times, eight times by referendum (Pannier, 2016; Putz, 2021; S. Toktogazieva, personal communication, September 21, 2021). During these tumultuous events, the political elites reconstructed Kyrgyzstan's history by drawing on both the Russian method of ethnogenesis and historically entrenched values of clan and tribal lineages (DeYoung, 2008; Gullette, 2008). Ethnogenesis is a practice by political leaders using one's history and customs to create a selective view of history and an idealized narrative to build a stable and unified state or sense of kinship among its citizens (Gullette, 2008). Ismailbekova (2014) examined kinship and marriage practices in rural Kyrgyzstan and discussed how women upheld patriarchal norms within the context of mass emigration of husbands and men leaving as migrant workers. While conducting ethnographic research in the same village of Bulak, the author studied the effects of work migration (Ismailbekova, 2014). Men were departing for work abroad and leaving behind a wife to care for their children and the elderly (Ismailbekova, 2014). The practice of sending men abroad for work occurred in the context of political leaders sponsoring nation-building projects

to promote Kyrgyzstan's national identity (Ismailbekova, 2014, 2016). Through these political projects, the country promoted a social history of a male-dominated patriarchal society as they attempted to de-Sovietize the nation, inviting women back to "their natural destiny" and leaving their "unnatural tasks" of working outside the home (Ismailbekova, 2014, p. 376). The author, observing how women who remained behind upheld the patriarchy, discussed marriage practices such as patrilocal residence and the importance of tracing one's patriarchal lineage seven to ten generations back (Ismailbekova, 2014). Patrilocal residence is the practice of a bride moving in to live with her husband's family upon marriage. Following the rules of patriarchal marriage practices, such as the bride's requirement to be a distant relative going back at least seven generations, rules and expectations are placed on a bride (Ismailbekova, 2014). She is expected to be obedient and respectful and serve the husband's family when joining her husband's lineage (Ismailbekova, 2014). Using two case studies, the author recounts the mother-in-law's role in arranging marriages, including marriages based on bride abductions (Ismailbekova, 2014). The author also recounted two other case studies from the young bride's perspective in their roles as participants in a patriarchal system. Women who remain behind in the village, and in the author's case study examples, mothers and mothers-in-law, can hold influential positions within a strongly patriarchal society, but these women need to be strategic in how they negotiate within the cultural value of remaining subordinate because their interests are supposed to align with their male kin (Ismailbekova, 2014).

Along with the same argument that women strategize to optimize their life options within patriarchal systems, Kandiyoti (1988) examined and compared how women managed under different forms of patriarchy across sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Comparing prior findings based on others' research, Kandiyoti argued that patriarchy cannot be understood

simply as one form of male dominance but that women strategized within the rules of patriarchy and introduced the term “patriarchal bargain” (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 275). The author proposed that there are typically two types of patriarchy and male dominance: one leading to women who openly resisted, typically found in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the other consisting of women accommodating the system, typically found in North Africa, the Muslim Middle East, and parts of Asia (Kandiyoti, 1988). The critical difference between the two types of patriarchy lies in patrilocal residence (Kandiyoti, 1988). Those who practice patrilocal residence, with the bride moving in to live with her husband’s family, are categorized as “classic patriarchy” (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 278). Traditional patriarchy involves the successive roles of a new bride, a servant to her new household, and her ability to gain authority only by bearing male heirs and eventually exerting control over her daughters-in-law (Kandiyoti, 1988). The author described how in this form of patriarchy, since bearing sons is the only promise of future security, women living under this system are preoccupied with ensuring loyalty and allegiance from their future married sons (Kandiyoti, 1988). Thus, instead of openly resisting the patriarchal system, these women will rarely step out of line so that they can continue to receive protection and ensure shelter from the men in their household, seeing that any imposed restrictions as a small cost for “security, stability and presumed respect this order promised them” (Azari, 1983 as cited in Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 283). For women seeking work outside the home, Kandiyoti provided evidence that these women tended to intensify their modesty practices, such as veiling, to symbolize and signify their continued worthiness of protection (Kandiyoti, 1988).

Patriarchal attitudes and patrilocal residence discussed by Kandiyoti (1988) and Ismailbekova (2014, 2016) depicted how this macrosystem influences rural Kyrgyzstani women. Rural Kyrgyzstani women’s choices are affected by the cultural expectations of respecting a

patriarchal system. The re-introduction of placing a high value on women staying home and dedicating themselves to domestic responsibilities influences rural employment expectations for women in Kyrgyzstan. Rural Kyrgyzstani women are affected by patriarchal expectations and roles (Ismailbekova, 2014, 2016; Werner, 2009). However, having experienced life as part of the Soviet Union, they have also been exposed to freedoms and being active participants in the economy. After the fall and withdrawal of the Soviets, rural Kyrgyzstani women are being called to return and remain in their homes and have lost many of the economic and social benefits they had experienced during the Soviet regime (Croix, 2014; Kuehnast, 2000).

Economic Factors

Rural Kyrgyzstani women face a set of challenges within their unique economic context of the post-Soviet transitioning economy where there are very few jobs and weak economic policies. Many of the former Soviet economic policies disappeared when the country became independent. The exosystem, an environment that does not actively include the rural Kyrgyzstani woman but affects her unemployment situation, includes her economic context, social services, and the higher education system.

Uncertainty and Economic Instability of Unemployment

During the politically tumultuous years following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, women living in Kyrgyzstan also survived drastic economic upheavals. The Kuehnast (2000) study described earlier that the sudden switch from a centrally controlled economy to a free market meant a substantial and swift reduction to Kyrgyzstani women's living standards. The transition of privatizing collectivist farms, losing Russia as their natural export market, and no longer having guaranteed employment amid rising living costs meant rural families had to endure dangerous economic circumstances (Kuehnast, 2000). Collective farms are small farms

not under private ownership but typically organized and operated by a socialist government. For the first time, women who grew up under the socialist system faced poverty and economic uncertainty levels with increased societal problems such as “violent crime, loss of social benefits, and high unemployment” (Kuehnast, 2000, p. 113).

The concept of unemployment did not exist as a category for workers until after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Croix, 2014). Croix (2014) found that unemployment in Kyrgyzstan meant not having formal employment, a salary, pension, or other job entitlements that come with being employed by the Soviets. Kuehnast (2000) described the experience of unemployment and not being able to meet the rising costs for necessities as socially isolating for rural women in Kyrgyzstan. When the economy shifted away from socialism, the group most affected by the changes were women (Kuehnast, 2000). Unemployment affected women the most because they were the ones who had worked for the state-sponsored and subsidized services such as childcare, healthcare, and collective farms (Kuehnast, 2000). For women responsible for meeting the household’s needs, this change in employment status was demoralizing as it challenged their self-confidence and capacity to plan for the future (Kuehnast, 2000). Women who once had confidence in family planning, meeting extended family obligations, and making their own career choices, were suddenly uncertain about their futures and could not meet family obligations because of a loss of income (Kuehnast, 2000). Thus, perpetual unemployment led to instability, uncertainty, and hopelessness, especially among women. One woman indicated, “Socialism is better for women. Capitalism is better for men” (Kuehnast, 2000, p. 111). For rural residents, the sweeping changes have meant immeasurable difficulties for the women to accept their new reality, affecting them psychologically and socially (Kuehnast, 2000).

Additional supporting evidence confirmed the problem of unemployment among rural post-Soviet women from a national survey conducted by UNDP and UNICEF at the end of 2009 in six other post-Soviet countries: Kazakhstan, Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan, and Ukraine (Ivlevs, 2014). With a sample size of 15,901, participants selected by random sampling (approximately 2,700 participants per country) met for face-to-face interviews (Ivlevs, 2014). The author found that rural women and those with the least education faced minimal employment options or no way out of subsistence farming (Ivlevs, 2014). Both Kuehnast (2000) and Ivlevs (2014) reported severe unemployment among rural populations, especially how unemployment affected rural women in post-Soviet countries, resulting in hopelessness and furthering economic instability. Within the macrosystem focused on the economic context, besides instability and uncertainty, characteristics in the financial sector also played a contributing role in perpetuating unemployment.

Banking and the Financial Sector

Kyrgyzstanis do not trust the banking system because of their experience in losing all their savings when the largest bank in the country collapsed in 2010 (Kumar et al., 2018). In an IMF country study on Kyrgyzstan, Gicquel et al. (2015) used secondary data sources to analyze the country's economic situation. The report considered income inequality, federal policies on taxation and spending, the banking and finance sector, migrant worker remittances, and the financial impact of joining the European Economic Union on Kyrgyzstan. The authors reported that the percentage of citizens above 15 years old with bank accounts remained relatively low in 2014, at 55% (Gicquel et al., 2015). Of those who have bank accounts, 87% are from the capital city of Bishkek, as banking services are sparse in the rural areas (Gicquel et al., 2015)—not engaging in banking limits one's ability to receive loans from a bank. Bank loans for businesses

are uncommon in Kyrgyzstan, with only 8% of small business investments relying on bank loans (Gicquel et al., 2015). With borrowing rates hovering just below 35%, taking a bank loan can be a risk. Female participation in receiving loans remained extremely low in 2014, at 3.3% (Gicquel et al., 2015).

Kumar et al. (2018) also studied how the weak banking system in Kyrgyzstan limited economic growth. While Kumar et al. mainly focused on how remittances, versus financial development, impacted economic growth in Kyrgyzstan and Macedonia, they also discussed the banking system's inefficiencies, transfer fees, and exchange rates (Kumar et al., 2018). Remittances come from the compensation migrant workers receive when working abroad as workers transfer money back to their home country as a source of income for the emigrant's families (Kumar et al., 2018). Taking secondary data from *World Development Indicators and the Global Development Finance database* from the World Bank, the authors examined Kyrgyzstan's GDP, capital stock, remittances, and domestic credit from 1990 to 2015 (Kumar et al., 2018). Since remittances provide a way out of poverty for many immigrant families, large transfers of money can affect a home country because they can stall the home economy from growing as workers are disincentivized to work locally (Kumar et al., 2018). The authors argued that for an economy to develop, there needs to be a strong, well-developed financial sector that allows for information sharing and investment and economic growth opportunities. The authors concluded that remittances harmed economic development in Kyrgyzstan in the short run and that in the long run, remittances had a permanent negative impact on Kyrgyzstan (Kumar et al., 2018). Remittances only alleviated poverty but were rarely used for investments (Kumar et al., 2018).

The authors also concluded that one of the main hindrances to economic growth and investment was the banking system (Kumar et al., 2018). Most rural families still chose to keep

cash over bank accounts (Kumar et al., 2018). The financial sector is only well developed in three main urban centers (Bishkek, Osh, and Jalal-Abad), while the rural areas, where most migrants originate from, only have minimal access to the banking system (Kumar et al., 2018). Rural communities faced high bank fees and suffered from weak financial infrastructure and limited financial literacy (Kumar et al., 2018). Both Kumar et al. (2018) and Gicquel et al. (2015) concluded that inefficiencies in Kyrgyzstan's banking system stalled economic growth.

Migrant Labor Practices and State Policies

As previously discussed, mass emigration also affects the local economy and workers. Migrant work is prevalent in Kyrgyzstan and mainly aims to maximize household income (Atamanov & Van Den Berg, 2012a). An analysis of the determinants for migrant laborers in Kyrgyzstan, based on data from the Asian Development Bank's 2007 household budget survey (Atamanov & Van Den Berg, 2012a), examined the determinants for international migration of labor compared to the decision to remain and work in the local economy (Atamanov & Van Den Berg, 2012a). A quantitative survey conducted during the first two months of 2007 selected households using random sampling. A total sample size of 3995 households was divided into three groups, proportional to the population: those from the capital city of Bishkek, those from other urban areas, and those from rural areas (Atamanov & Van Den Berg, 2012a). A household was defined as those who shared a budget or shared the same budget before moving away as a migrant laborer (Atamanov & Van Den Berg, 2012a). To study the rural population specifically, 2485 households consisting of 7686 working individuals between 15 and 65 were included in the study. Among these rural households, 17.3% of the households had at least one migrant worker abroad in the previous year. Among the rural sample, there were 592 migrants, and 300 were permanent migrants, those living abroad for more than one year and without repeatedly moving

during that time (Atamanov & Van Den Berg, 2012a). The authors concluded that permanent migration was more likely among the more educated landowners, indicating the likelihood that wealthier rural families benefitted more from migration practices and permanent long-term migration (Atamanov & Van Den Berg, 2012a). This study's results indicate that migration leads to a brain drain even in rural areas.

In a similar study that focused on the long-term outcomes of labor migration, Sagynbekova (2017) also found that brain drain was happening due to migration. The author conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with 55 randomly selected households living in the rural province of Naryn, Kyrgyzstan (Sagynbekova, 2017). Naryn is the poorest province in northern Kyrgyzstan (Sagynbekova, 2017), and the author examined the environmental challenges and impact of labor migration in the region. Included in the study were migrants from Naryn living in Moscow, and Sagynbekova conducted interviews in Moscow to understand the effect of migration on the family. The author's findings, supported by the earlier work of Kumar et al. (2018) and Gicquel et al. (2015), included that households with limited income-generating opportunities in rural Kyrgyzstan have turned to labor migration as a coping strategy (Sagynbekova, 2017). Failing to find employment locally, family members leave for the city or leave the country to become migrant laborers to send money home in the form of remittances to provide for the family (Sagynbekova, 2017). Remittances bring income into a family and serve as a supplemental income or repayment of debts (Sagynbekova, 2017). Sagynbekova's findings also agreed with Atamanov and Van Den Berg (2017) as the authors all concluded that migration contributed to a brain drain of the rural communities, with the more educated leaving the rural areas to find work elsewhere.

In another labor migration study, Sippola (2014) examined emigrating countries in post-Soviet countries. Sippola focused on two emigrating countries: Estonia and Kyrgyzstan. Studying the same constructs as both Atamanov and Van Den Berg (2012a) and Sagynbekova (2017), Sippola discussed the massive immigration situation in Kyrgyzstan and the country's dependency on remittances. Using secondary data from national and international statistics on employment and unemployment trends, the author concluded that unofficial estimates place up to one million migrants from Kyrgyzstan working abroad (Sippola, 2014). With lower interest and opportunities for investing and developing the local economy, families migrate elsewhere for work. Mass labor emigration and remittances affect the local labor supply, brain drain, and economic development and investment levels that affect job creation for rural communities. Mass labor emigration also impacts government taxation and long-term investment in economic development. Sippola (2014) highlighted that untaxed remittances received in Kyrgyzstan were between 30–50% of Kyrgyzstan's gross domestic product (Sippola, 2014), reaching US\$1.5 billion in 2011 and growing (Chebel d'Appollonia & Kasymova, 2015). Chebel d'Appollonia and Kasymova (2015) concluded that remittances were not directed into long-term investments for economic development in agreement with the previous studies. The authors evaluated Kyrgyzstan's labor emigration situation by using data from a United Nations' 2013 report on international migrants, the OSCE 2009 report on the impact of the financial crisis on Kyrgyzstan's labor migration, Kyrgyzstan's 2000 Law on External Migration, the National Statistical Committee report of the Kyrgyz Republic of 2011, Kyrgyzstan's Ministry of Labor data, Employment and Migration (MLEM), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Chebel d'Appollonia and Kasymova (2015) reported that many short-term financial gains in migrant work have long-term consequences. Most families reported they spent the

remittances on buying livestock, paying off loans, supporting life cycle events and celebrations, home renovations, cars, children's education, medical bills, consumer and household goods, and costs related to farming and cultivating agricultural lands (Sagynbekova, 2017). However, the mass emigration of laborers can stall the growth of human capital within the country (Chebel d'Appollonia & Kasymova, 2015; Sippola, 2014) and reduce the country's ability to become politically and economically stable (Chebel d'Appollonia & Kasymova, 2015; Ivlevs, 2014).

While Kyrgyzstan's government has attempted to create policies on mass labor migration, many policies serve short-term political agendas (Chebel d'Appollonia & Kasymova, 2015). For example, during the 2010 elections, in an attempt to win over voters, one of the most significant political parties pushed for setting up specialized election centers abroad, promoted migrant labor rights, and emphasized local corruption, economic weakness, and the lack of options for employment locally (Chebel d'Appollonia & Kasymova, 2015). Kyrgyzstan has done little to slow the mass emigration of skilled workers, and now workers prefer to work abroad rather than remain in Kyrgyzstan to help improve the labor market (Sippola, 2014). Public policy has yet to address the declining social and economic conditions due to laborers having easy access to exiting the economy and finding work elsewhere (Sippola, 2014). Instead, state policies have focused on improving bank transfers of remittances and building up needed financial institutional systems for remittances (Chebel d'Appollonia & Kasymova, 2015).

Mass labor migration has become critically important for the economic stability of Kyrgyzstan (Chebel d'Appollonia & Kasymova, 2015), yet the money received is too often used to solve temporary problems, with little spent on long-term gains in the form of investment and economic development (Kumar et al., 2018; Kurmanov et al., 2017). Without state intervention and improved policies to regain the loyalty of Kyrgyzstani citizens, the country will continue to

lose its laborers who end up developing foreign economies as a short-term solution for families facing problems with local unemployment, rather than investing in Kyrgyzstan's economy and creating jobs at home (Sippola, 2014).

Social Services

Aside from economic factors, rural women's exosystem also includes the social services available to them. Social services can play a significant role in supporting rural families. Rural Kyrgyzstani women need a variety of social services which remain unmet, such as better transportation mobility (Turdalieva & Edling, 2018), legal and protection services (Childress & Hanusa, 2017), healthcare (Guillot et al., 2013; Penkala-Gawęcka, 2016; Sanghera & Ilyasov, 2008), and access to preschools (Tiuliundieva, 2006) to be active participants in the labor market.

Transportation Mobility

Kyrgyzstani women need to regularly negotiate the transportation system for safety and reliability (Turdalieva & Edling, 2018). Road transport is the primary transportation mode in rural areas, with 90% of the country being mountainous and 65% of its population living in rural areas. Kyrgyzstani women rely on unsafe transportation methods to get around, which impedes their travel to work (Anonymous, personal communication, February 6, 2019). Traffic accidents in Kyrgyzstan account for more deaths than the rest of Central Asian countries combined (Artikova et al., 2011). Traffic fatalities are alarmingly 30 times higher than in Western European countries, and fatality and injury rates continue to grow (Artikova et al., 2011).

Exacerbating transportation safety for women is the reliance on marshrutkas, a relatively cheap minibus privatized transportation system. In Kyrgyzstan, at least 30,000 marshrutkas link the territories, villages, and larger cities together (Turdalieva & Edling, 2018). This interconnected marshrutka transportation system is the primary mode of connecting

people to markets (Turdalieva & Edling, 2018, p. 541). However, marshrutkas are often in disrepair, driven by unlicensed drivers who travel at high speeds to cover more terrain to pick up as many passengers as possible (Turdalieva & Edling, 2018). There are no limits to how many passengers are allowed on the bus at a given time. These buses are also notorious for incidences of pickpocketing and molestations. As a result of the conditions of marshrutka travel, Kyrgyzstani women often practice self-exclusion by avoiding marshrutkas for less essential activities (Turdalieva & Edling, 2018). Turdalieva and Edling (2018) conducted many hours of participant observation between October 2015 and January 2016 by riding on Kyrgyzstan's public transportation system. The authors concluded that since Kyrgyzstani women rely heavily on marshrutkas for mobility, their challenges to mobility results in social exclusion (Turdalieva & Edling, 2018). Women facing this dilemma are considered "mobility-poor" (Turdalieva & Edling, 2018, p. 544), and avoiding the primary and possibly only accessible mode of transportation due to safety concerns is a "public service failure" (p. 542), resulting in being socially disadvantaged and marginalized.

Legal and Protection Services

Rural Kyrgyzstani women experience other forms of marginalization due to a lack of legal and law enforcement services. Examining police corruption levels, Gutierrez-Garcia and Rodríguez (2016) concluded that a negative correlation existed between the labor participation among women and the level of police corruption in a country. The authors developed socioeconomic profiles for 103 countries using survey results from Transparency International's *Global Corruption Barometer 2013* and the United Nations' 2014 report, *Social Indicators* (Gutierrez-Garcia & Rodríguez, 2016). They concluded that the lower the level of involvement of women in a society, the higher the police corruption level (Gutierrez-Garcia & Rodríguez,

2016). On a scale of one to five, with one being not at all corrupt and five being extremely corrupt, Kyrgyzstan has a police corruption score of five (Gutierrez-Garcia & Rodríguez, 2016).

While Gutierrez-Garcia and Rodríguez (2016) provided a global comparison of police corruption between countries, Childress and Hanusa (2017) explained the effects of insufficient legal support from a country-specific study on Kyrgyzstan. Childress and Hanusa focused not on police corruption but domestic violence survivors' experiences in needing and seeking help from public services and the legal system. The authors conducted 16 in-depth interviews at a domestic violence shelter between November 2012 and December 2013 with participants between the ages of 20 and 49. All participants had experienced domestic violence and lived at a women's shelter at the time of the interview. Childress and Hanusa supported Gutierrez-Garcia and Rodríguez's conclusion about Kyrgyzstan's prevalence of police corruption. Childress and Hanusa found that police and legal services often failed to protect or even endangered women in violence cases against women. An event in the spring of 2017 demonstrated how victims of violence are not protected, even in the care of the judicial-legal system. A 20-year-old girl, who had been bride-kidnapped, was left alone in protective custody at the police station (Putz, 2018). While in police custody, the kidnapper murdered the young girl after the police placed the kidnapper alone with her in the same cell (Putz, 2018).

First-hand accounts from kidnapped brides claimed the police tend to send them home or not take allegations seriously (Childress et al., 2018). Even with well-meaning protective laws, such as those that make bride-kidnapping illegal, the first responders tend to fail to protect women because of social stigmas, attitudes influenced by patriarchal traditions (Childress & Hanusa, 2017), as well as corrupt police hierarchies, influential local politicians, and the control of organized crime syndicates (Kakachia & O'Shea, 2012). Kakachia and O'Shea (2012)

interviewed 70 informants from Russia, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan to compare police reform between the three countries and concluded little progress in Kyrgyzstan since the Soviet era. Using information from surveys conducted by a cooperation between the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in 2012, the International Republican Institute in Kyrgyzstan's survey of 2010–2012, and in-person interviews with informants in Kyrgyzstan between July to December 2008, the authors concluded that patrimonial systems reinforce the high levels of corruption in Kyrgyzstan (Kakachia & O'Shea, 2012). Power is held arbitrarily, and subordinates depend heavily on superior officers competing for resources controlled by corrupt officials through nepotism (Kakachia & O'Shea, 2012). In this system of patrimonialism and nepotism, protection can only occur through personal relationships (Kakachia & O'Shea, 2012), and women are often left without a formal official system to protect them. As a result, very few Kyrgyzstanis trust the police and view police performance as very low (Kakachia & O'Shea, 2012). Rural women, marginalized and face deteriorating public services (Childress & Hanusa, 2017), lack awareness of their rights, and cannot access needed institutional services (Childress et al., 2018).

Healthcare Services

Another institutional social service marginalizing rural women is the healthcare system. Because malnutrition can cause poor health, limiting one's ability to attend school or be gainfully employed, "health is both a determinant and a dimension of poverty" (Falkingham, 2005, p. 347). Kyrgyzstan inherited a Soviet healthcare system that had relied heavily on state resources. After the Soviet Union's fall, public spending for healthcare services was limited and has remained low (Penkala-Gawęcka, 2016). Using qualitative interviews, conversations, and participant observation with approximately 80 participants of various ages and ethnicities

in Kyrgyzstan, Penkala-Gawęcka (2016) conducted an ethnographic study between 2011 and 2013. The authors examined risk, uncertainty, and trust among those seeking medical services in the capital city of Bishkek. Most of the participants interviewed were women. All were either medical patients, had been patients, family members of patients, doctors, other healers, or pharmacists (Penkala-Gawęcka, 2016). The author discovered that despite international interventions and subsequent positive evaluations, Kyrgyzstanis continue to suffer from weak healthcare services, known for their low quality, burdensome financial costs to the family of the sick, and inadequately trained medical workers (Penkala-Gawęcka, 2016).

In support of Penkala-Gawęcka's (2016) findings, Guillot et al. (2013) also concluded that healthcare providers in Kyrgyzstan were believed to be incompetent. Guillot et al. studied infant mortality rates during and after the Soviet era using quantitative national statistical data from 1987, 1989, 1999, and 2006. The authors also used two quantitative health surveys conducted in Kyrgyzstan in 1997 and 2006 and concluded that in addition to the decline of healthcare after the fall of the Soviet Union, rural communities faced considerably heightened risks than official reports (Guillot et al., 2013). In the rural areas where service is sparse and incredibly under-resourced (Balabanova et al., 2012), conditions are even worse than in the city of Bishkek (Guillot et al., 2013; Penkala-Gawęcka, 2016), where more than 50% of the city residents remained wary and anxious when needing to see a doctor because healthcare services were unsatisfactory and offered by poorly trained workers (Penkala-Gawęcka, 2016).

Adding to the burden on the ill and the poor is the common practice of informal payments, sometimes referred to as "gift-giving," which are requests made by medical professionals to patients needing services that ought to be free of charge or minimal (Sanghera & Ilyasov, 2008, p. 658). Participants from the study conducted by Sanghera and Ilyasov

(2008) represented five professional fields, including medical professionals. The authors collected qualitative data from 21 semi-structured interviews and 12 open-ended questionnaires (Sanghera & Ilyasov, 2008). The face-to-face interviews were conducted in Russian using questionnaires in both English and Russian (Sanghera & Ilyasov, 2008). Sanghera and Ilyasov concluded that patients considered medical professionals as untrustworthy. The authors examined how professionals excused corrupt practices in their workplace and how corruption inhibited Kyrgyzstan's professionalism. The authors also concluded that three primary factors led to the erosion and fragmentation of professional communities in Kyrgyzstan: the legacy of Soviet control, ineffective professional associations, and economic inequalities experienced by these professionals (Sanghera & Ilyasov, 2008). These informal payments are often morally justified as a necessity to make ends meet by medical professionals (Sanghera & Ilyasov, 2008). However, the persistence of informal payments undermines the medical profession (Sanghera & Ilyasov, 2008) and harms those who require medical attention because costs are the primary factor for not seeking medical care when needed (Balabanova et al., 2012). Kyrgyzstan has actively reformed healthcare by combating informal payments through public awareness campaigns against corruption (Penkala-Gawęcka, 2016). Despite some improvement in lowering corruption, informal payments to access health services continue to be prevalent, most notably for medical specialists. Without improved support for the sick, a study showed poor health in the post-Soviet states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine and how poor health can be a limiting factor to labor participation (Goryakin et al., 2014).

Access to Preschools

Another factor limiting women's labor participation is the lack of accessible and affordable childcare. Gradskova (2015) explored the changes in preschool that had occurred after the fall of the Soviet Union using both secondary and primary data. Gradskova's secondary data consisted of documents concerning the policy and pedagogy of Russian preschools (Gradskova, 2015). The author conducted 12 in-person semi-structured interviews in 2009 and 2010 in Moscow and Samara (Gradskova, 2015). This study is relevant to Kyrgyzstan's rural areas because Kyrgyzstan is also a post-socialist nation that has withdrawn state-sponsored childcare and early education for children. Gradskova interviewed mothers, a grandmother, and three teachers, asking the participants about preschool alternatives, schedules, communication, and impressions (Gradskova, 2015). The participants also spoke about parent work schedules. In addition to the 12 interviews, the author used data from her prior research on maternity practices, three interviews with mothers from 2003 and 2005 in Moscow and Ufa (Gradskova, 2015). During the Soviet era, kindergartens and preschools were the norm and promoted as the answer to how women could join the labor market (Gradskova, 2015). Women were encouraged to make pro-birth decisions with promises of guaranteed employment and quality nurseries and preschools, which not only provided childcare but ensured the children's well-being and development (Gradskova, 2015).

After the fall of the Soviet regime in 1991 and with Kyrgyzstan's independence, state funding for education dropped dramatically from 6.1 % of gross domestic product to 4.2% in 1993, and parents had to make up the difference by paying school fees for preschool (Tiuliundieva, 2006). Using quantitative national census data and government budgetary practices, Tiuliundieva (2006) examined gender inequalities in preschools and education in

Kyrgyzstan between 1989 and 2003. The author differentiated attendance records between rural and urban families and compared national spending between the two settings over the years.

Tiuliundieva reported that, over time, as preschool seemed optional, more impoverished families who could not afford the cost of preschool ended up keeping their children at home, leading to more closures and privatization of preschools (Tiuliundieva, 2006). Thus, the deterioration of state-sponsored early childcare options led to many preschools closing, with more significant losses in the rural areas (Pinskaia et al., 2014).

Despite a growing rural population in Kyrgyzstan, preschool attendance declined, especially among rural girls (Tiuliundieva, 2006). As for primary education, the numbers illustrate the problem. The year before independence, in 1990, 97.2% of Kyrgyzstani children attended primary schools, with more girls attending than boys, but by the mid-1990s, this number dropped to 83% and continued to decline to 71% by the early 2000s, with 38% of girls dropping out in the primary years (Tiuliundieva, 2006). Preschool attendance continues to decline, and the latest numbers report that 24% of children age 3–5 attend preschool (Ajwad et al., 2014). These numbers are well below the 77% average of the other 36 countries that are members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (Ajwad et al., 2014). Lower government funding has naturally contributed to women's employment restrictions perpetuated by families opting for girls to be kept at home to help care for younger siblings and help with domestic chores (Tiuliundieva, 2006). First, mothers without accessible childcare options need to stay home instead of working outside the home (Tiuliundieva, 2006). Second, young girls dropping out of school will suffer in the future when they want to find work but do not possess the required skills (Tiuliundieva, 2006). Women who work for wages tend to have more decision-making power and influence in their households, as confirmed by Blumberg's general theory of

gender stratification, which points to the conclusion that if the woman in a household has greater control of economic resources (e.g., earns an income), overall family wellbeing is improved (Blumberg, 1984, 1988). However, dropout rates are higher among the rural poor, especially for girls, because impoverished families tend to have more difficulty accessing education due to growing costs and more preschool closures in the rural regions. Kyrgyzstani children who attended preschool are more likely to be employed adults (Ajwad et al., 2014). As a young girl's opportunity to complete higher grades declines (Tiuliundieva, 2006), employment opportunities also diminishes.

Higher Education

A paradox exists in Kyrgyzstan, where enrollment in high school is decreasing while enrollment in higher education is increasing (DeYoung, 2008). To explore this, DeYoung (2008) conducted an open-ended qualitative survey with 40 university students in the capital city of Bishkek in 2007, investigating student motivation towards higher education, parents' and friends' support, and college preparedness (DeYoung, 2008). The author explained the paradox to indicate that educational "performance" lacked accountability in Kyrgyzstan (DeYoung, 2008, p. 652). DeYoung pointed out that in 2008, attendance in higher education ranged between 41 and 63% of high school graduates (DeYoung, 2008), and a report in 2014 showed that as many as 39% of those between the ages of 25 and 29 completed tertiary education (Ajwad et al., 2014). High attendance records may seem promising since investing in education is critical for lifting a transitioning economy towards economic growth and economic complexity and diversity (DeYoung, 2008; Vinod & Kaushik, 2007). However, even with the promising numbers of higher education enrollments, the economy continued to lag, and unemployment for university graduates ranges from 53 to 80% (DeYoung, 2008).

School Attainment Over Educational Attainment

DeYoung et al. (2013) conducted a study based on qualitative oral histories. The authors followed Marxist collective theories to show how the Kyrgyz nomadic lifestyles and schooling developed into Russian-styled collective communities (DeYoung et al., 2013). After the fall of the USSR, the rural education system crumbled during the transitional years when the country turned to democracy and the free market (DeYoung et al., 2013). The authors conducted open-ended interviews with 26 participants. Many were elderly and had been leaders in the community during the Soviet occupation, including former Soviet collective farm administrators, specialists, teachers, and nurses. A few younger residents of the valley were also among the 26 participants. DeYoung et al. also used official regional administrative documents. The authors studied place and community (school and education) as constructs, looking specifically at the history behind informal education, how the Soviet occupation made it formal, and how with the fall of the Soviet Union, education returned to informality in the rural regions. The authors found that the Soviets had introduced and established rural schools with an education system that had never existed in the region before (DeYoung et al., 2013). With this introduction came the indoctrination of the value of education.

When the Soviets left, rural villages' infrastructures deteriorated, which affected the school buildings and the quality and access to education (DeYoung et al., 2013). The authors discovered that what remained in the rural communities' mindset emphasized the importance of *being* educated but not the *knowledge* gained from education (DeYoung et al., 2013). Thus, a strong emphasis on obtaining a diploma was more valuable than skills gained for future benefits. Mixed in with the teachers' corruption and low salaries, education became a process focusing on attaining higher education credentials instead of knowledge or skills (DeYoung et al., 2013).

Confirming DeYoung et al.'s (2013) conclusion on the over-emphasis on school attainment, Hanushek (2013) used secondary data from United Nations monitoring reports on literacy and OECD test results to compare higher education outcomes in developing countries. Hanushek concluded that a gap remains in the quality of education in many developing countries and that although many developing countries have achieved high levels of school attainment, these countries have not seen a corresponding improvement in their economy. In Kyrgyzstan and much of Central Asia, low teacher salaries, corruption, and bribery undermine education quality (K. H. Anderson & Heyneman, 2005; Heyneman et al., 2007; Teleshaliyev, 2013). Merrill (2012) also conducted a study looking at another aspect of education quality in Kyrgyzstan. The author's focus was on the quality of higher education in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, between 1996 and 2001, and then again from 2007 to 2009 (Merrill, 2012). As a Fulbright scholar, Merrill's work focused on education reform and relied on a mixed methods approach, including an undisclosed number of qualitative interviews, participant observation, a group meeting, and secondary sources from agencies belonging to the European Union (Merrill, 2012). The study confirmed that due to a failure in systemic integration, the consistency in quality and instruction varies greatly among university graduates. Thus, as Kyrgyzstanis emphasize the importance of obtaining a diploma, many graduates are poorly prepared for the workforce (Merrill, 2012).

Inefficient Public Spending

The Incheon Declaration of 2015 set the benchmark for countries to efficiently allocate 15 to 20% of public expenditure on education (UNESCO, 2016a). Even though Kyrgyzstan reported that its 2017 spending on education amounted to 15.7% of public expenditure (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020), its efficient allocation is questionable. Teacher salary at one of the most respected vocational schools in the country is approximately US\$40 a month

(Anonymous director of vocational school, personal communication, June 24, 2021), and wealthier parents in Bishkek prefer to send their children to private schools because of the low standards in the public school system (G. Sydykova, personal communication, June 25, 2021). Even the National Scholarship Testing (NST) initiative, set up to support more marginalized communities, failed to meet its purpose effectively. Shamatov (2012) examined and reviewed the effectiveness of the NST initiative in Kyrgyzstan. The NST is a government initiative aiming to reduce economic inequality by awarding high-scoring students the opportunity to receive university and college scholarships from the government (Shamatov, 2012). The author conducted a mixed methods approach by reviewing secondary data, employing individual and focus group interviews and informal conversations (Shamatov, 2012). In total, 30 individuals were interviewed, including subject matter expertise ranging from those working in the Ministry of Education and Science, international donor representatives, country experts in education, professors, teachers, and students (Shamatov, 2012). Shamatov reported the continued decline of rural education and that the average NST scores of rural students consistently rank lower than their urban peers. NST test results confirmed that rural areas remain additionally disadvantaged due to the inferior quality of education in the rural regions (Shamatov, 2012). To add to the stratification, the author reported that rural families typically spent 30% of what urban, wealthier families spent on tutoring in preparation for taking the NST (Shamatov, 2012).

Compounding the problem is the continued deterioration of the country's education system (DeYoung et al., 2013; Heyneman, 2007; Merrill, 2012; Teleshaliyev, 2013), and especially in the rural communities, where they have struggled to maintain a formal education system (DeYoung et al., 2013). The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), officiated by the OECD, assesses 15-year-olds from over 70 countries worldwide every three

years. After Kyrgyzstan ranked the lowest in reading, math, and science among all the countries participating in the 2006 and 2009 PISA (World Bank Group, 2015), the country has not participated again. The PISA test revealed that 83% of 15-year-old students could not draw conclusions after reading simple text, and 86% were at the lowest level in foundational math (Ajwad et al., 2014).

Declining Higher Education Attendance Among Lower-Income Families

As mentioned earlier, declining early school attendance affects high school and higher education opportunities. Exacerbating the problem, specifically among more impoverished rural families, is that they cannot acquire needed textbooks and school supplies, school uniforms, nor can they afford the informal payments (Pinskaia et al., 2014) requested by teachers and school administrators for services that ought to be free. In a World Bank report using secondary data from the 2009 national census of Kyrgyzstan, the 2009 PISA test scores, and the 2005–2006 Multi-cluster Indicator Survey, researchers confirmed that school enrollment was as high as 93% for children between the ages of 6 to 16 (Tiwari & Mitra, 2012). However, in the same report by the World Bank, the researchers also examined the data by gender, socioeconomic status, and region of residency (Tiwari & Mitra, 2012). The authors discovered that when measuring factors contributing to 6- to 16-year-old children’s opportunity to be enrolled in school, gender, socioeconomic status, and region of residency could explain 5%, 30%, and 58% of the observed inequality, respectively (Tiwari & Mitra, 2012). The high percentage (58%) reflected by regional inequality “implies that it is not households or individuals of certain characteristics but entire regions that are underserved in the Kyrgyz Republic” (Tiwari & Mitra, 2012, p. 19). In another report by the World Bank (2011), in cooperation with the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, the researchers indicated that for girls aged 7–10, from families which ranked

as being in extreme poverty, attendance was significantly lower for girls than boys, at 45% and 74% respectively. Similar numbers continued into high school and revealed that lower-income families tended to keep their girls at home, gender inequalities existed, and gender inequalities perpetuated among families in the lowest socioeconomic status. (World Bank, 2011). Girls had the worst school attendance rate among the rural poor, with only 23% among those aged 17–19-year-old attending school, compared to their urban peers at 74% (World Bank, 2011).

With lower NST scores, fewer rural students qualify for needed scholarships, and fewer offers from universities and colleges meant access to higher education was both unattainable and unaffordable. Furthermore, the concentration of universities is in the capital city of Bishkek. To continue further studies beyond high school, students from other regions need to move to the city (DeYoung et al., 2013). As most university students live at home or those from the rural areas seek out relatives who can host them, without financial assistance or family connections, moving to the city to continue higher education would prove very difficult for promising students (DeYoung, 2008).

The numbers from the NST scores, PISA results, and the World Bank report all indicate that girls from impoverished families, especially those from communities further away from the capital region, face barriers in continuing education due to either a lack of access, quality, or families not prioritizing sending their girls to school because of low perceived returns in higher education and training. The widespread practice of rural girls being kept at home to help with family chores (Tiuliundieva, 2006), combined with limited opportunities and barriers due to the decline of education in the regions farther from the capital, further limit rural girls from reaching educational pursuits. Not having adequate education and learning opportunities restricts rural women's human capital and future employment capacity (Knowles et al., 2005).

Family and Individual Factors

The microsystem is the immediate environment influencing the Kyrgyzstani woman. For the rural Kyrgyzstani woman, microsystem factors contributing to her persistent unemployment include family dynamics, social capital, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial intentions.

Family Dynamics

Family dynamics are “the forces at work within a family that produce particular behaviors or symptoms” (D. M. Anderson, 2002, p. 675). Since family interactions frequently set and reinforce the rules and expectations of family members, familial influence can mean the difference between an open or closed door to employment for a woman (International Labour Organization, 2017).

Married life. As reviewed earlier in the chronosystem and the macrosystem, the life stages of a Kyrgyzstani woman, patriarchal values, and patrilocal residence means a bride ought to move in and live with her husband’s family (Ismailbekova, 2016). Early marriages are common in Kyrgyzstan, where almost one in seven girls between the ages of 15–19 are married, especially in the rural areas where it is 2.5 times more likely to occur than in the cities (United Nations Population Fund in Kyrgyz Republic, 2016). Getting married and joining the husband’s family start in various forms. Some marriages are consensual based on love relationships (Nedoluzhko & Agadjanian, 2015). Others are pre-arranged or start with a bride abduction whereby the bride is taken by force into the prospective groom’s home. The practice of bride abductions is more prevalent in Kyrgyzstan’s rural areas than in the larger cities (O’Neill Borbieva, 2012), with a 3.8 times increase of registered abductions reported between 2010 and 2015 (United Nations Population Fund in Kyrgyz Republic, 2016). As reviewed in the

exosystem, those who go to the authorities are often not protected, placing the woman at further risk (Putz, 2018).

In an ethnographic evaluation, E. Kim et al. (2018) discussed the relevance of family dynamics and how they contribute to a women's participation in the labor market (E. Kim et al., 2018). The authors evaluated the outcomes of a five-year-long project led by four large international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The project, intended to improve female empowerment through economic growth, assumed that helping them move beyond subsistence farming would help women have a chance to increase their income, provide better for their families, and increase their decision-making influence within and beyond their family unit. The ethnographic evaluation study discovered how familial relationships and structures contributed to a woman's commitment to participate in the intervention program and how the project managers manipulated their program to report a successful intervention. However, upon closer examination, the program increased income disparity by excluding women who faced barriers to participating in the program. Stories of participant dropouts turned out to be sagas of disempowerment, deprivation, and exclusion. These stories of exclusion occurred because the project had not considered the specific barriers to familial obligations imposed on some of the most marginalized women. E. Kim et al. concluded that participants were blamed as unsuitable candidates anytime the outcome was not successful, much to the detriment of these women's health and livelihood.

The authors explained that for many, participating in the program required them to betray more critical responsibilities, values, obligations, and family relationships (E. Kim et al., 2018). The researchers found that for a young bride to participate would have required her to borrow from and be in debt to (and in tension with) her mother-in-law to cover the startup costs. The

conflict between the program's goals and the women's personal obligations created a problem the women could not resolve independently. The program leaders failed to understand that their general theoretical definition of empowerment would lead to women's disempowerment in their specific context (E. Kim et al., 2018). This program essentially failed the women who faced concrete familial barriers to needing support from their patriarchal family because young women are expected to move in and live peaceably with their husband's family (E. Kim et al., 2018).

Patrilocal residence. Patrilocal residence, discussed earlier as part of the enduring patriarchal value within the chronosystem, is the practice of the bride moving in to live with her husband's family upon marriage. Affecting a woman's microsystem, Landmann et al. (2018) extensively studied the effect patrilocal residence had on a woman's level of participation in the labor market and reviewed empirical data obtained from the Life in Kyrgyzstan (LIK) survey, a nationally representative sample of households tracked annually between 2010 and 2013 and again in 2016. The LIK survey gathered quantitative data on sociodemographic information, employment, and other details (Landmann et al., 2018). After limiting the sample size to only include married women between the ages of 20–50 and with at least one parent-in-law still living, the study resulted in a final sample size of 1,048 women. Landman et al. concluded that living with the husband's family did not significantly impact women's labor participation rate. However, Landman et al. had decided to remove from their sample all those who were not available for re-interviews, citing unavailability. This decision systematically removed all potential participants who had no time to be surveyed or had fallen out of touch with the researcher, including those who had husbands working as migrants (e.g., those who had to travel and live away from home due to work). In the Kyrgyz culture, the youngest son remains with the aging parents and cares for them in their old age, while older sons are free to move out and live

independently. Landman et al. also concluded that in contrast to patrilocal residence practices in China or Japan, a Kyrgyzstani young woman living with her in-laws did not receive help with household chores from her in-laws but had an increase in the number of household duties when compared to other cultures that also practiced patrilocal residence (Landmann et al., 2018). It is possible that not re-interviewing a segment of the original participants due to unavailability provided different conclusions.

Kinship and marriage practices in the region have been affected by labor migration (Ismailbekova, 2014). Conducting case studies through observation and qualitative research, Ismailbekova (2014) discussed the repercussion of mass labor emigration: many villages are inhabited solely by women, the elderly, and young children. Those who can work, the younger and middle-aged men, live and work away from home (Ismailbekova, 2014). In a society that practices patrilocal residence, women who remain behind are then the ones who are responsible for keeping a form of patriarchal order despite the absence of their husbands and sons (Ismailbekova, 2014). Grandmothers are then responsible for keeping up with oral traditions, passing stories to the grandchildren to preserve a solid patrilineal system (Ismailbekova, 2014). Young brides carry on living with their parents-in-law, even while the husband is absent. These young brides are left to maintain the household, ensure the children's well-being, and take care of the elderly, all while staying respectful and subservient to their mother-in-law (Ismailbekova, 2014). While women have also recently become migrant laborers, most of those who leave for work are men. The negative consequence of migration is the additional burden placed on the women who remain behind to care for the family farm during peak harvest season and care for the elderly and the young (Sagynbekova, 2017).

Family composition. Looking deeper at patriarchal effects and other factors that may affect a woman's participation in the labor force, Spierings (2014) examined the effect of underlying family dynamics on women's labor participation and household composition. Relying on quantitative datasets from the Demographic Health Surveys, Pan Arab Project for Family Health, and IPUMS International, all available through Database Developing World, Spierings analyzed data from 28 patriarchal Muslim-majority countries. The author restricted his datasets between 1997 and 2008, resulting in a sample size of 250,410 women. Spierings discovered that aside from marital status and the number of children in the household, other factors contribute to whether a woman works outside the home or not. In situations where a woman is the head of the household or in households with fewer adult men, the likelihood of a woman working outside the home is higher (Spierings, 2014). The author concluded that in these situations, where women were either the head of the household or where there were fewer adult men, women were most likely pushed to work out of necessity (Spierings, 2014). As for inhibitors to working outside the home, variables such as households with more seniors, or households with fewer women adults, negatively affected a woman's participation in the labor force (Spierings, 2014). Spierings' results can be understood in light of Ismailbekova's (2016) conclusion that in patriarchal societies where the role of women is more clearly delineated, women are the primary caregivers of the elderly and the young. Having more women within a household means the possibility of shared household responsibilities and an increase in the likelihood that a woman can overcome more barriers to employment (e.g., the need for childcare or the need to care for the elderly). Family composition plays a role in a woman's level of participation in the labor market, and this agrees with E. Kim et al.'s (2018) conclusion that for a woman to participate in the labor market,

she must have the support of the extended family as she will also need to rely on her extended family to help with the responsibility of childcare (Landmann et al., 2018).

Social Capital

Aside from family dynamics, social capital also affects the opportunities for a rural Kyrgyzstani woman to work outside the home. Bourdieu (1986) was the first to define social capital as the collective resources retained by a network of mutual acquaintances. He focused his definition on the benefits individuals could accrue solely by belonging to a group with the social purpose of creating resources and solidarity. Following several more theorists, social capital is now widely understood as “the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures” (Portes, 1998, p. 6). Sanders and Nee’s (1996) study recognized the family’s role in extending social capital for economic advancement and, in particular, starting one’s business venture. The authors conducted interviews with Chinese, Korean, and Filipino immigrants in Los Angeles and members of ethnic associations and reviewed ethnic newspapers (Sanders & Nee, 1996). Sanders and Nee also examined secondary data using the 1983 U.S. Bureau of Census on self-employment, specifically on immigrant families in the New York and Los Angeles areas where a substantial concentration of immigrant families settled. The authors discussed that as immigrants, many turn to self-employment when facing limited employment opportunities. However, to start their own business, they need access to resources and turn to their families and relatives for help (Sanders & Nee, 1996). Examining how Asian and Hispanic families immigrating to the United States were affected by family composition and resources regarding self-employment, the authors concluded that social capital and resources were vital in helping families start small businesses.

In agreement with the findings of the importance of family social capital, one's family connections to people or resources, in starting business ventures, Edelman et al. (2016) tested their hypothesis that family social support contributed to starting one's business by evaluating data from the 2011 Global University Entrepreneurial Spirit Students' Survey of university students from 19 countries. With a sample size of 12,399, Edelman et al.'s conclusions supported Nee and Sanders' (1996) findings that family social capital played an important role in helping nascent entrepreneurs get started. Both studies confirmed that family relationships and interaction give rise to mutually beneficial exchanges, allowing for sharing resources and fulfilling favors for each other. These cooperative transactions are not only motivated by self interest but often by existing obligations or common shared interests (Sanders & Nee, 1996). Examples of these interactions can include pooling resources, sharing household responsibilities, strategies for lowering living expenses, obtaining intrafamily financial loans, and sharing family laborers (Sanders & Nee, 1996). Relying on the family is a safe method since there is a high level of trust and accountability. Thus, the family can become a trusted network ready to invest socially and economically to achieve shared goals (Sanders & Nee, 1996).

In Kyrgyzstani culture, where kinship is highly valued (Ismailbekova, 2014), family social capital opens the door to job opportunities (Atamanov & Van Den Berg, 2012a; Chebel d'Appollonia & Kasymova, 2014). For example, families who have previous experience with migrant labor can offer information about the conditions, living arrangements, connections to people at the destination, and other helpful advice to ease the transition and lower migration costs (Atamanov & Van Den Berg, 2012a). In the form of networks and vital information, social capital is more important in finding work abroad than government policies or assistance (Chebel d'Appollonia & Kasymova, 2015). Similarly, those with previous experience in starting

a small business can ease the learning and discovery process by sharing information needed for becoming an own-account worker (Carr & Sequeira, 2007; Sequeira et al., 2007).

Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy

A person's self-efficacy level influences their motivation and intention to engage in an activity (Bandura, 1982; Schunk, 1990). Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) is one's confidence in their ability to engage successfully in entrepreneurial endeavors (Naktiyok et al., 2010; H. Zhao et al., 2005). H. Zhao et al. (2005) conducted a study to test the relationship between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and the intention to start a business. In 1998, the authors conducted a longitudinal study of MBA students across five universities as the students started their program and then surveyed them again two years later (H. Zhao et al., 2005). With a sample size of 778 students in 1998, the authors matched 267 responses to their first round of participants in 2000 (H. Zhao et al., 2005). The sample consisted of 66% males, with most of the students majoring in finance and an averaging age of 28 years old. Testing a hypothesis that self-efficacy is an antecedent to starting a business, the authors conducted a qualitative self-reporting survey. They confirmed that those who choose to pursue entrepreneurship have higher entrepreneurial self-efficacy levels, as entrepreneurial self-efficacy is correlated with creating new businesses. H. Zhao et al. also concluded that there was no gender gap in self-efficacy levels among the students, but that gender did make a difference in entrepreneurial intentions as fewer women had reported entrepreneurial intentions. However, the authors did not question whether this finding on (Barakat et al., 2014) the gender gap was generalizable or not.

Naktiyok et al. (2010) also conducted a study focusing on the relationship between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions. Gathering data through a survey of 245 undergraduate students during the academic year of 2006–2007 at Ataturk University

in Turkey, Naktiyok et al. found that high entrepreneurial self-efficacy did, in fact, influence entrepreneurial intentions. The Turkish study has relevance to the situation in Kyrgyzstan as Naktiyok et al. also described nascent entrepreneurs as those who faced few viable options for employment, and as a result, sought to become own-account workers. The authors concluded that those with higher entrepreneurial self-efficacy levels see the marketplace as full of potential and opportunities. In contrast, those with low entrepreneurial self-efficacy levels saw all the challenges and possible threats. This difference in attitude affects the intentions behind starting a business because a positive attitude will make the task seem feasible (Naktiyok et al., 2010). Higher levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy are positively correlated with many of the much needed entrepreneurial activities such as taking risks, mitigating uncertainty, improving and innovating products, discovering resources, and developing interpersonal relationships within a given business environment (Naktiyok et al., 2010). Both studies highlighted here show that entrepreneurial self-efficacy is a vital microsystem factor because it affects one's intention to start their own business (Naktiyok et al., 2010; H. Zhao et al., 2005).

Entrepreneurial Intention and Motivation

Dawson and Henley (2012) reviewed secondary sources from the *U.K. Quarterly Labour Force Surveys* between 1999–2001 and found that 22% of women respondents listed family commitments as motivators for pushing them into self-employment. Women face many challenges in finding work that will afford them the flexibility to balance work and family responsibilities (Dawson & Henley, 2012; Robinson, 2001). As a viable option, they may choose to start their own business (Dawson & Henley, 2012; Robinson, 2001). Positive opportunities that attract potential entrepreneurs are pull factors because they pull a woman towards deciding to start a business. Examples of these positive motivations include wanting to take advantage

of a market opportunity (Dawson & Henley, 2012); the desire for more wealth; personal aspirations, goals, or dreams; or finding self-fulfillment (Apergis & Pekka-Economou, 2010; Friedman et al., 2012).

However, a woman's motivation to start her own business tends to differ from that of men. More women cite needing to meet family obligations as a critical motivational factor over the desire for financial success (Dawson & Henley, 2012). Robinson (2001) explored how negative push factors motivate necessity entrepreneurship in starting a business among rural women in the United States. Relying on a case study of rural women businesses in rural Pennsylvania, Robinson interviewed five rural women entrepreneurs and their employees in the summer of 1999. The Robinson study results showed that for women, in particular, the decision to start a business was a natural outcome of her specific circumstances as it provides an alternative when no other work is available or suitable (Robinson, 2001). Rural women in the United States showed how those more affected by limited options due to geographic location, the difficulty of commuting, and family circumstances, turned to become own-account workers (Robinson, 2001).

Similar to the study conducted in the United States, Apergis and Pekka-Economou (2010) investigated women's motivational factors in Greece's entrepreneurial activity. Conducting interviews and a 38-question questionnaire between 1999–2009, the authors randomly selected 1600 small businesses led by female entrepreneurs from the Piraeus region. The authors found that examples of the negative motivation factors pushing a woman into starting her own business are the need to avert a financial crisis, the problem of insufficient family income, persistent unemployment, the need to meet both work and family obligations, or poor working conditions (Apergis & Pekka-Economou, 2010). Both the Robinson (2001) study and the Apergis and

Pekka-Economou study highlighted that one major motivational push factor for women was the need to juggle family responsibilities and obligations.

More specific to the region studied in this dissertation, Aziz et al. (2013) studied entrepreneurial motives among entrepreneurs operating small or medium-sized companies in Kyrgyzstan. Between February 2012 and June 2012, Aziz et al. gathered 211 completed qualitative surveys. The majority of the respondents were between the ages of 25–34 (37%) or 35–54 (33.6%), and 40% of them were women (Aziz et al., 2013). The authors evaluated motives for why the entrepreneurs started their own business by measuring the following categories: financial (e.g., to meet a need or to become wealthy), recognition (e.g., to gain respect or to achieve a goal), freedom (e.g., to control one's destiny), family tradition (e.g., to keep business within the family), marketing opportunities (e.g., to be creative or make decisions on what and how to sell), economic conditions (e.g., the existence of structural conditions like pro-self-business taxation policies), and government policies/motives (e.g., policies easing or encouraging entrepreneurial activities) (Aziz et al., 2013). The study results confirmed that the primary motive was a financial need, a push factor (Aziz et al., 2013). All other motives were less critical (Aziz et al., 2013).

The result that financial need was the primary push factor aligns with another study conducted in Kyrgyzstan. Yalcin and Kapu (2008) studied various dimensions related to entrepreneurship, one of which was entrepreneurial motivation. Using Kyrgyzstan as a case study to represent transitional economies, the authors conducted 71 quantitative interviews with local entrepreneurs and members of the Kyrgyzstani government's *State Commission for Small and Medium-Sized Business Support*. Respondent to Yalcin and Kapu's study included entrepreneurs from a variety of sectors such as retail (33%), nutrition (18%), transportation

(15%), tourism (12%), handicraft (9%), construction (8%), and technology (5%). Among the respondents, 22% were women, and 46% were between 36 and 50 years old (Yalcin & Kapu, 2008). The authors concluded that workers in developing countries are most typically motivated by financial and family tradition factors when deciding to become own-account workers (Yalcin & Kapu, 2008). In developing countries, most workers possess less experience and capital, and fewer skills, so they are typically not pursuing a dream to start or own a business (Yalcin & Kapu, 2008). Instead, as both studies confirmed, nascent entrepreneurs opt to start a business because they face few options and low wages, as is the case in Kyrgyzstan (Aziz et al., 2013; Yalcin & Kapu, 2008), where most cited they started their own business because of their need “to earn more money” and because of there was a “lack of appropriate job opportunities” (Yalcin & Kapu, 2008, p. 195).

With very few rural jobs available (Sippola, 2014; Anonymous, personal communication, February 4, 2019, February 6, 2019), and the need to meet financial needs (Aziz et al., 2013), unemployed women may choose to become own-account workers as discussed in a study by Davis and Abdiyeva (2012). The authors conducted exploratory research in the neighboring country of Kazakhstan to collect data on female business owners to compare with other women entrepreneurs in other countries (Davis & Abdiyeva, 2012). The authors collected 28 survey responses from women entrepreneurs in Almaty, the largest city in Kazakhstan, but indicated that the results could not be generalized because the sample size was small (Davis & Abdiyeva, 2012). However, this exploratory research provided a glimpse into what motivated Kazakhstani women to become entrepreneurs and what challenges they faced (Davis & Abdiyeva, 2012). A large majority of the respondents were operating a new business (less than two years old), 89% owned either a retail, hospitality, or services business, and all of the businesses had 30

employees or less (Davis & Abdiyeva, 2012). The closed-ended survey questioned motivation factors for starting a business, and the authors discovered that the Kazakhstani women were motivated mainly by their desire for “increasing their earning potential (71.5 per cent) and doing work they were passionate about (78.5 per cent)” (Davis & Abdiyeva, 2012, p. 130). The authors acknowledged that because Kazakhstan is a much wealthier country and the research took place in an urban setting, the results may have differed had the authors focused their research in a rural setting of another transitional economy (Davis & Abdiyeva, 2012). Of importance is that the authors tied motivational factors to contributing to the woman’s commitment to her work (Davis & Abdiyeva, 2012).

Another study in Bangladesh may be able to provide additional insight into women’s entrepreneurial motivational factors. Although not conducted in a post-Soviet state, Hossain and Nuseibeh’s (2009) research can provide insight into another developing economy’s context. Hossain and Nuseibeh studied factors that contribute to women choosing to start their own business in Bangladesh, and one of the factors they looked at was motivational factors. The authors deployed their questionnaire, which they had pilot tested, with women business owners of micro and small enterprises. The International Labor Organization defines micro-enterprises employ 1–9 employees, and small enterprises, 10–49 employees (Hossain et al., 2009). The selected women had passed at least fifth grade and were not homeless or living in the urban slums (Hossain et al., 2009). Of the 300 surveys distributed in mid-August 2007, 166 were correctly completed by September and tested high for reliability (Hossain et al., 2009). The women indicated that motivational factors indeed affected their decision to become business owners and that financial independence was the most critical motivator (Hossain et al., 2009). This result supports Davis and Abdiyeva’s (2012) findings, as both studies confirm that financial

independence was the main driving force motivating women business owners, regardless of their economic status (Hossain et al., 2009). Understanding the motivational factors behind a woman's decision will provide insight into her intentions and willingness to endure and launch a business (Baron et al., 2016; Davis & Abdiyeva, 2012; Hossain et al., 2009).

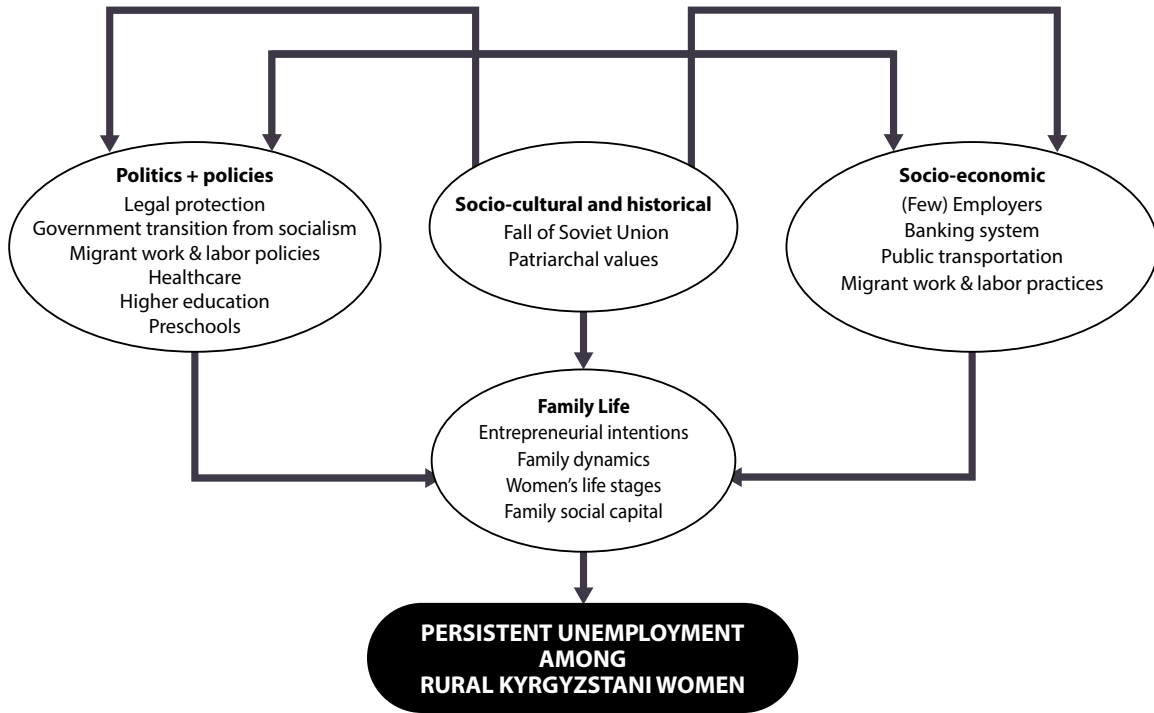
Summary

The synthesis of the research literature related to persistent unemployment among rural Kyrgyzstani women highlighted factors needing further examination, as illustrated in the exploratory conceptual framework (Figure 1.3). The exploratory framework guides the needs analysis study in Chapter Two. Under the broader family life category in the conceptual framework, family dynamics play a pivotal role in a rural woman's employment opportunities (E. Kim et al., 2018; Landmann et al., 2018; Sagynbekova, 2017; Spierings, 2014) and will be further explored. To better understand the barriers and challenges these rural women face, inquiring about their particular situations within their patriarchal family will provide insight into where they face barriers or support within their household.

Second, social capital eases the path to employment, or conversely, the lack of such capital poses additional challenges (Carr & Sequeira, 2007; Edelman et al., 2016; Sanders & Nee, 1996; Sequeira et al., 2007). Questions regarding the effects and presence of social capital will highlight areas in need of support. Finally, examining these women's entrepreneurial self-efficacy will provide insight into entrepreneurial intention and motivation and what drives them to consider micro-business ownership (Baron et al., 2016; Naktiyok et al., 2010). A needs assessment will help align the research literature to the rural context of Kyrgyzstan and provide considerations towards making informed intervention decisions.

Figure 1.3

Exploratory Conceptual Framework: Factors Contributing to Persistent Unemployment



Chapter Two

Needs Assessment of Contributing Factors

As the literature review revealed, there are many contributing factors related to the problem of persistent unemployment among rural Kyrgyzstani women. Factors to be explored in this study are challenges to employment (E. Kim et al., 2018), including family dynamics, social capital, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and the availability of social support services. Services such as childcare (Tiuliundieva, 2006), healthcare (Guillot et al., 2013; Penkala-Gawęcka, 2016; Sanghera & Ilyasov, 2008), and transportation (Turdaliev & Edling, 2018) tend to be unreliable. In addition, family dynamics and social capital will be explored. With few jobs nearby, rural women can turn to entrepreneurship out of necessity (Xiong et al., 2018). Examining the factor of entrepreneurial self-efficacy can provide insight into entrepreneurial intentionality. Empirically studying the rural woman's entrepreneurial self-efficacy can help predict their ability to succeed if they turn to entrepreneurship to alleviate joblessness (Baron et al., 2016; Chen et al., 1984; Naktiyok et al., 2010).

Context of the Study

I lived and worked in Kyrgyzstan for over nine years, but in 2015, I began to divide my time between living in the United States and Kyrgyzstan. While living in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, I co-founded a software technology company in 2007, managed an educational publishing nonprofit foundation for eight years, and then, in 2018, established another non-profit technology and business accelerator in Kyrgyzstan. As a researcher, business trainer, and social entrepreneur, I met my executive sponsor, "Adel" (a pseudonym), in Bishkek during the summer of 2018 when Adel attended a workshop led by my team. Adel is the current director of the Rural Women's Association "GALA" (a pseudonym), a non-profit organization. Since Adel and I

shared a common interest in training and supporting rural Kyrgyzstani women struggling with unemployment, we have continued to collaborate and work together.

In the summer of 2019, through my connection with Adel, I invited rural women living approximately one to two hours outside the capital city of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, to learn about participating in a mixed methods needs assessment study. The study participants were all unemployed rural women attending jobs skills training classes at the Rural Women's Association GALA. As a non-profit, the GALA association is a non-governmental organization (NGO), established in 1995 by rural women from the Ata district of the Chui province. GALA's activities actively improve rural women's socioeconomic status and living conditions by developing job skills, providing information, and advocacy.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the needs assessment was to assess how the salient contributing factors to unemployment manifested in the rural Kyrgyzstani woman's microsystem—her pattern of activities, roles, and personal relationships in her immediate setting. Unemployed rural Kyrgyzstani women from two rural villages in northern Kyrgyzstan participated. The study explored participants' experiences in seeking employment and, specifically, what factors served as challenges in their search for work and what levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy they possess if they were to turn to entrepreneurial activities to alleviate joblessness. Based on the literature review, constructs identified and included in the study are the challenges to employment, availability of support services, the role of family dynamics, social capital, and levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

Research Questions

In considering these factors, the following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are unemployed rural Kyrgyzstani women's perceived challenges to employment?

RQ2: What community support is available for unemployed rural women in Kyrgyzstan?

RQ3: What role does the family system of an unemployed rural Kyrgyzstani woman play in her employment options?

RQ4: What motivates unemployed rural Kyrgyzstani women to pursue employment?

RQ5: What level of entrepreneurial self-efficacy do unemployed rural Kyrgyzstani women have?

By exploring the women's perceived barriers to employment, resources, and motivational and self-efficacy levels, the needs assessment seeks to explain better factors contributing to unemployment among rural women in Kyrgyzstan.

Method

The needs assessment study used a mixed methods design that included quantitative and qualitative strands. It aimed to identify gaps in support services and resources available to women and identify the challenges and barriers rural Kyrgyzstani women face when seeking employment. Primary data were collected using a quantitative questionnaire followed by two qualitative focus groups. I deployed the following procedures to gather data on barriers and challenges to employment.

Measures and Instrumentation

The study used two instruments. A quantitative survey gathered demographic information, perceptions of barriers to employment, family support levels based on family interactions and dynamics, and the women's self-efficacy level in pursuing entrepreneurial

activities. A qualitative semi-structured focus group followed the completion of the survey.

The focus group discussion used semi-structured questions to measure perceived employment barriers, availability of support services, family dynamics and support levels, levels of social capital, and entrepreneurial motivations.

The following are definitions of the constructs based on the review of the empirical literature. Barriers to employment include personal situations that make it difficult to find or keep a job (E. Kim et al., 2018). Support services are any services or resources available to assist the women, such as dependable public transportation, reliable legal protection, and accessible childcare services (Childress & Hanusa, 2017; Tiuliundieva, 2006; Turdalieva & Edling, 2018). Family dynamics are “the forces at work within a family that produce particular behaviors or symptoms” (D. M. Anderson, 2002, p. 675). Family dynamics are essential because rural Kyrgyzstani women living in a patriarchal society are affected by patrilocal residence and family composition. Social capital is any connections the women may have to people who can help them by providing connections to customers, other entrepreneurs, or financial assistance (Bourdieu, 1986; Edelman et al., 2016; Sanders & Nee, 1996). Support services, family dynamics, and social capital are resources that may either help or hinder women in their search for employment. Self-efficacy is a person’s belief in their skills and what they believe they can accomplish under various circumstances (Bandura, 1986a). This particular study focuses on entrepreneurial self-efficacy, what the woman believes she can accomplish as an entrepreneur (Naktiyok et al., 2010; H. Zhao et al., 2005). Entrepreneurial self-efficacy contributes to entrepreneurial motivation and intention, all of which play a role in whether an unemployed woman would be motivated to pursue entrepreneurship to solve unemployment (Apergis & Pekka-Economou, 2010; Dawson & Henley, 2012; Friedman et al., 2012).

Quantitative Questionnaire

The questionnaire (Appendix A) was created and administered by me in June 2019, and aside from collecting demographic data, the quantitative survey addressed research questions one, three, and five. The survey asked participants to rank what they thought were the three most significant barriers to employment to address research question one. This question's items originated from information collected from an earlier observation of potential participants (see the end of Appendix A Survey Questionnaire).

To address research question three concerning the role of family systems, the quantitative survey used two validated instruments to inquire about family dynamics: The Family APGAR scale (Smilkstein, 1978) and Sequeira et al.'s (2007) instrument measuring the level of family support women received within their families. The Family APGAR scale (Appendix A) measured self-perceived family levels of adaptation, partnership, growth, affection, and resolve. Physicians developed the APGAR scale to evaluate a family's functional state (Smilkstein, 1978). Medical doctors who wanted to recommend improvements in patient care emphasized the need to record how well a family functioned to solve problems and manage resources. Using the APGAR measurement, doctors were informed of "the structure and function of the patient's family" and could suggest ways to accelerate recovery (Smilkstein, 1978, p. 1232). Based on the 1973 Pless and Satterwhite Family Function Index (FFI), the APGAR measurement measures family function using 15 questions to evaluate interactions, communication, satisfaction, and feelings of happiness and intimacy within a nuclear family (Smilkstein, 1978). The FFI is reliable and accurate (Smilkstein, 1978). The APGAR measurement was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and the alpha coefficient was 0.83 (Philbrick & Fitzgerald, 2007). The quantitative survey and qualitative focus group questions used the APGAR measurement (Appendix A and Appendix B).

To address research question five, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, the survey used a Likert scale, asking the women to rate their level of confidence and readiness in pursuing entrepreneurial activities using a validated Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (H. Zhao et al., 2005). H. Zhao et al. (2005) developed the entrepreneurial self-efficacy scale (Appendix A) to test a set of hypotheses in a longitudinal study of 265 MBA students from five different universities. H. Zhao et al.'s first set of hypotheses examined the antecedents to entrepreneurial self-efficacy. The second part of H. Zhao et al.'s study examined whether entrepreneurial self-efficacy was positively related to entrepreneurial intentions. H. Zhao et al. based his entrepreneurial self efficacy scale on Bandura's social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their skills and what they believe they can accomplish under various circumstances (Bandura, 1986b). H. Zhao et al. developed a measurement of self-efficacy specifically related to entrepreneurial tasks: how confident one was in "identifying new business opportunities, creating new products, thinking creatively, and commercializing a new idea of development" (H. Zhao et al., 2005, p. 1268). H. Zhao et al. confirmed that entrepreneurial self-efficacy was significantly positively related to entrepreneurial intentions. For this study on rural women's unemployment, I received permission from H. Zhao et al. to use the Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy Scale to explore and predict the women's level of entrepreneurial intentions. (Appendix A).

Qualitative Focus Group

Following the questionnaire's completion, I conducted focus group discussions basing my protocol on the constructs identified from the literature review. The goal was to include at least six and up to nine participants per focus group. The group size was based on the feasibility of giving participants ample time to share in a focus group. A minimum of six participants is the recommended focus group size when "the goal is to understand the essence of experience"

(Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 116), and up to nine is recommended, with 12 being too many for the facilitator to moderate (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). To further elaborate on research question one, addressing the barriers and challenges described earlier, I asked women about challenges they have already overcome and challenges they still face in seeking employment. To measure research question two, the level of support or resources available to the rural women, I asked open-ended questions about where they sought help in their job search. The discussion then inquired about family dynamics and social capital. Questions about family dynamics were adapted from the Family APGAR measurement (Smilkstein, 1978), and social capital encompassed questions about access to financial capital, social connections and contacts, and potential business partners or customers (Edelman et al., 2016).

To measure motivational factors, research question four, open-ended qualitative questions, asked about extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Data collection centered around whether the women in the focus group have to meet financial needs, alleviate poverty from subsistence farming, or resolve a problem with low income. Intrinsic motivational factors captured whether rural Kyrgyzstani women have career aspirations, entrepreneurial dreams, ideas, and goals.

Procedure

Participant Selection Process

Rural Kyrgyzstani women received an invitation to participate in a quantitative survey and a qualitative focus group. Using criterion sampling, the inclusion criteria for the study participants were as follows: (a) study participants must be unemployed women living in rural Kyrgyzstan, (b) study participants must be seeking employment, and (c) study participants must be attending a job training at the GALA Center. The exclusion criteria for study participation

were as follows: (a) any individuals who were not currently seeking employment, (b) any individuals who were not attending the job training at the GALA Center, and (c) any participants who were not living in rural Kyrgyzstan. The student population from the GALA Center is appropriate because they are rural unemployed women seeking help and support to find work or start their small businesses. Selecting the study sample from this training center restricts the research to one region rather than multiple rural populations. Two focus groups, each consisting of six women, met to complete a quantitative survey and discuss qualitative questions. Completion of the survey qualified the respondent to participate in the focus group discussion.

Two informational meetings were held, attended by potential participants invited to hear more about the research study. I described the study through a trilingual interpreter (English, Russian, and Kyrgyz). After each informational meeting, those willing to volunteer in the study verbally consented and received a copy of the written informed consent form (Appendix C).

At the time of the study, I explained (through a trilingual interpreter) to the participants the study's purpose in very straightforward terms. Through the trilingual interpreter, I asked the participants if they had any questions and reminded them that the study was voluntary. After I answered their questions, the volunteers completed the quantitative survey and immediately participated in the focus group discussion. Two separate meetings took place within four days, each consisting of six participants. After the focus group sessions, I verified the returned surveys and asked those who skipped or misunderstood any questions to review or complete their responses.

Special considerations include literacy levels and language barriers. A researcher consultant who is familiar with the context of researching Kyrgyzstan recommended using only verbal consent. She also recommended that I set aside time with the participants and read

through the consent forms and the quantitative survey to address any literacy and language issues (S. Childress, personal communication, April 16, 2019).

Data Collection

The participants completed the 20-minute paper survey that was available in Kyrgyz and Russian. All participants chose the Kyrgyz version. In addressing the possible problem of low or varying women's literacy levels, the quantitative survey was completed as a group, whereby each question was read aloud and explained before the women selected their answers. The trilingual interpreter and I were available to answer any questions regarding completing the survey. The quantitative survey is in Appendix A. The Family APGAR questions and the questions on family dynamics are from reliable and validated studies.

After completing the quantitative survey, I proceeded with a focus group guided by the semi-structured questions as outlined in Appendix B. Field notes and audio recordings of the focus group meetings were collected. All participants were made aware of the recording and consented orally. Although I could understand Russian, a trilingual interpreter was present to interpret all the questions I asked and all the participants' answers to mitigate any potential language barriers. A trilingual translator transcribed the second focus group discussion into English for further analysis.

Data Analysis

The quantitative survey's data management and cleaning involved entering the paper survey responses into IBM'S SPSS® Statistics software. Survey answers were manually entered into SPSS® Statistics and used for calculating descriptive statistics. Descriptive analysis created the means and summaries of closed-ended responses and Likert scale ratings.

Analyses of the qualitative data included reviewing field notes and discussing the accuracy and understanding of the notes with the interpreter. The second focus group recording was transcribed and translated into English by a trilingual translator. I coded the English transcription using the following process: The first cycle involved in vivo coding, where I used short phrases from the participants' own words to represent salient topics. Then a second cycle involved I categorized similar topics together to create emergent themes. I then reviewed this two-step cycle three additional times and then grouped the themes that emerged into categories matching the research questions:

- barriers and challenges they faced as they searched for work
- support systems availability
- family dynamics, based on the Family APGAR scale (Smilkstein, 1978)
- motivation and self-determination.

Findings and Discussion

In total, 12 rural women participated in this study. The participants answered questions regarding their age, ethnicity, highest education level, marital status, age when they were first married, the number of brothers and sisters-in-law they had, whether their husband was the youngest son in the family, the number of children they had (and their ages and genders), and whether their marriage was consensual, forced, or arranged by others. The women's ages ranged from 20 to 59 years old, with the average age being 42 years old, while the average age at which they were married was 21 years old, with the youngest at 17 years old (Table 2.1). All the women's ethnicity was Kyrgyz, and their education levels ranged from less than high school level to an incomplete master's level (Table 2.1). None of the women were single, five were married, three were divorced, and four were widowed. Half of the women's husbands were the

youngest son in the family. Marrying the youngest son means she is the expected caregiver to in-laws when they age and must live with, and care for, her parents-in-law. The participants' range for the number of children ranged between two and six, with most of them having between three or four children.

Table 2.1

Distribution of Demographic Variables of the Rural Women Focus Group Participants

Measure	M	SD
Current age (years)	42.00	10.85
Age at time of marriage	21.08	3.26
Number of children	3.83	1.27
	Frequency	Percent
Highest Education Level Attained		
Incomplete high school (up to grade 9)	2	16.7
Graduated high school (completed grade 11)	5	41.7
Incomplete technical education	1	8.3
Graduated technical/vocational school	3	
Bachelor's Degree	0	0
Incomplete Masters	1	8.3
Marital status		
Married	5	41.7
Divorced	3	25.0
Widowed	4	33.3
Husband is the youngest son	6	50.0
Type of Marriage		
Consensual	6	50.0
Bride kidnapping	3	25.0
Arranged (decided by others)	3	25.0

N = 12

RQ1: Perceived Challenges to Employment

To answer the first research question about employment challenges, I included a list of challenges from a participant observation exercise completed in the fall of 2018. In the quantitative survey, participants ranked their top three most challenging barriers to finding employment, including an option to add their own under “other.” Aside from the first reason that there are no jobs nearby, the rest of the women’s perceived challenges apply to employment situations. Participants reported the top three barriers to employment as no jobs nearby, the men limit the women and tell them they should stay home, and it is difficult to get access to capital and loans from the banks. The list in Table 2.2 indicates the challenges the women identified the most often when asked to choose their top three challenges (frequency of selection as a barrier).

Table 2.2

Ranking of Most Difficult Barriers to Employment

Rank	Barriers to employment	Frequency
1	There are no jobs nearby	10
2	Men tell us we should stay home	8
2	It is difficult to get access to capital and loans from the banks	6
3	We have to take care of our families and children	5
4	Buses and transportation make it difficult to get to work	4
5	I do not have enough education	3

During the focus group discussion, the women agreed that those without husbands had more freedom than those who were married and that it was easier for those without husbands to make their own choices. The participants shared stories about how common it was for a husband or the husband’s family to prohibit a wife from working. One mother spoke about how she had to defend her daughter’s right to work after marriage, “Later, my daughter got married, and her

husband's relatives did not want her to work because they had financial stability, thanks to Allah. But I told them that she had finished the Business Academy, and that she would work not to trouble her father and mother-in-law, and that she had her own life vision" (Anonymous, focus Group, June 21, 2019). The second focus group agreed when one of the participants estimated that 50% of the wives they knew were prohibited by husbands from working, even if they were educated (Anonymous, Focus Group, June 21, 2019). The group also agreed that besides the absence of nearby jobs and husbands controlling their wives, other employment challenges they faced were transport, poor health, and the need for childcare (Anonymous, Focus Group, June 21, 2019). The employment challenges the rural women spoke of were all supported by the literature, which discussed rural women facing barriers with transportation mobility (Turdalieva & Edling, 2018), poor healthcare services (Guillot et al., 2013; Penkala-Gawęcka, 2016), and the decline of preschool options available to support rural women (Tiuliundieva, 2006).

RQ2: Availability of Community Support Systems

To answer the second research question, during the qualitative focus group, I asked the participants, "If you wanted to get help in your job search, where could you go for help?" All the women agreed that there was no other help available to them besides the GALA Center when they sought work. In the first focus group, they referred to a local social worker who visited them and offered them advice, but she, of course, had no jobs to offer, so her help and support were primarily emotional. The participants indicated that they had little or no community support. However, during the first focus group, when I asked this question, the participants looked around the room at each other with knowing smiles, indicating to me that they likely sought this peer group for support, although none of them admitted this verbally.

RQ3: The Role of Family Systems Affecting Employment

To address the third research question about family systems, in the quantitative survey, participants first answered demographic questions about marital status, educational attainment, the number of children, family composition, whether the marriage was by choice (consensual, arranged, or forced), and what birth order their husband is in his family (Table 2.1).

How much the family supports a woman and how well her family functions affect her ability to set goals, overcome challenges, adapt, and succeed. Thus, measuring the functional state and inquiring about how much freedom they had, such as making financial decisions, provide information on how her family overcame employment challenges. Related to the family system are social capital and family social capital. Social capital, the connections one has to others who may help them or connect them to needed resources, is an essential type of support, and those who are well connected will have a more robust support system to help them reach their goals (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Woolcock, 1998).

The survey participants also answered questions about how much control they had over how money was spent in their families. Nine out of the 12 women indicated they almost always had control. The survey also included the Family APGAR instrument, which asked how satisfied they were with the levels of support they received from their family (Table 2.3). The average APGAR score for the 12 participants was 8.6 out of 10. A score between 7–10 places a family as highly functional. A moderately dysfunctional family score is between 4–6, and a severely dysfunctional family score is 0–3.

Table 2.3*Rating of Family Dynamics*

Measure	Almost always	Some of the time	Hardly ever
I am satisfied with the help that I receive from my family when something is troubling me	11	0	1
I am satisfied with the way my family discusses items of common interest and shares problem solving with me.	11	0	1
I find that my family accepts my wishes to take on new activities or make changes in my lifestyle.	8	3	1
I am satisfied with the way my family expresses affection and responds to my feelings, such as anger, sorrow, and love.	9	0	3
I am satisfied with the amount of time my family and I spend together.	9	2	1
I have control over how the money is spent in my family	9	1	1

N = 12

A look at the qualitative data revealed much more about whether the woman felt supported by her family. Contrary to the quantitative survey responses, participants indicated that they felt they received very little family support. The women shared stories about their family situations that seemed to contradict their survey responses. It was during the qualitative discussion that the women more openly shared about how they kept their emotions to themselves, had no one to talk to, and could only speak a fraction of their thoughts or emotions because they could not burden others or did not want to be a disappointment to others. The women shared that if they had an idea, they would accomplish it or try to accomplish it before asking for advice or communicating with anyone what they had in mind. As one respondent

noted, “They will scold us. We need to do everything and realize the planned action. Then when it is done, we reveal it to the family. And this way, you gain trust” (Anonymous, Focus Group, June 21, 2019). The women agreed that “This is our difference from maybe other communities, other nationalities. We do, we plan, and when we get results, then we say to our husband and relatives: ‘I did it’” (Anonymous, Focus Group, June 21, 2019). The qualitative data aligned with the literature from Chapter 1, while the quantitative data contradicted their extended open-ended responses.

Since the Kyrgyz culture is clan-based and connections are made mostly through their families and extended families (DeYoung et al., 2013), questions about social capital focused on asking about the women about their family social capital. As indicated in their qualitative responses about family dynamics, it is clear from the women’s reactions that they primarily relied on themselves for resolving problems. The question about family social capital, adapted from Edelman et al. (2016), was also posed (Appendix B). The participants provided answers about family connections and if anyone in their extended family could help connect them to others with business experiences or capital. They all indicated there were no such connections available to them. They noted that they rarely made their needs known beyond infrequent financial needs and that their families were not eager to help them. A few participants in the first focus group indicated that extended family members sometimes connected them to seasonal opportunities to work on a farm. Still, most connections were temporary work and tended towards the less desirable jobs that were labor-intensive and low paying.

Again, contrary to the quantitative responses, the qualitative data indicated that the women did not have a supportive extended family to help them pursue their career goals. When prompted, the women spoke about whether their extended family assisted them financially; a

few women in the second focus group instead shared stories about their self-sufficiency. “For example, I bought this [dining] table [set] with a payment plan for five months ... [I bought] this table and chairs ... [I] borrowed money [and] repaid it in five months. Also, I added some money from [selling] milk.” (Anonymous, Focus Group, June 21, 2019). One woman shared about not relying on others, “Kyrgyz wives can be artful [cunning]. They will have something done, and only then tell people” (Anonymous, Focus Group, June 21, 2019).

To triangulate the women’s responses about perceived family support, after comparing the contradictory quantitative data with the qualitative responses, I consulted the trilingual interpreter to provide insight into what might have happened during the data collection sessions and consider cultural norms in the Kyrgyz culture. The interpreter suggested two plausible explanations. First, it is possible that the way the quantitative survey was presented, the women repeatedly chose the first options in the chart just because it was easier to select, and thereby skewing the results to indicate they had high levels of family support and healthy family dynamics. Alternatively, and more likely from the interpreter’s perspective, when I first presented the quantitative survey, the participants provided answers to me that they thought made them look good because I was still a stranger to them. Then, as time passed during the focus group conversation, the women opened up to me and offered a more honest and transparent response to the questions. The qualitative data provided greater detail and explanation based on the participants’ answers, indicating that their families do not provide strong support for rural women pursuing employment. Many of the women indicated they needed to find ways to work around opposing or unsupportive family members.

RQ4: Motivational Factors

To address the fourth research question about factors motivating rural Kyrgyzstani women to pursue employment, the focus group participants answered the question, “What is motivating you to attend classes at this center (e.g., “Why are you here”)?” And, “Why do you want to be self-employed?” (Appendix B). Asking specifically about self-employment reflected the reality that employment in the rural areas often meant self-employment due to the lack of nearby jobs. The participants answered that they were attending training at the center because they felt they had missed the opportunity to be better educated when they were younger because they married so young. A few spoke about how they were unsure of their rights, and attending the classes helped them better know the laws and share any information that may be of use for them in seeking employment. One theme that arose during their discussion was that attending the classes at the center had helped them be more confident in their knowledge, and they learned that women could do just as much as men. Unprompted, no one mentioned an extrinsic motivational push factor. Instead, the women spoke about being motivated to better themselves, improve their knowledge and skills, and the importance of meeting with other women and sharing ideas. The extrinsic motivational factors (e.g., the need for income, poverty alleviation) were not discussed because they were implicitly obvious. However, conversations about the need for income were implied in their descriptions of exploitive seasonal farm work and their desire to seek other less laborious options.

As for intrinsic motivational factors, the participants among the first focus group who desired to be self-employed said they wanted to earn income and set their own goals. They spoke of wanting flexible work and complained of the conditions seasonal farm work offered. The first group of participants shared that they would work a whole week in the fields for a wealthy

farmer only to receive one bag of sugar as payment. When they each received one bag of sugar, they could not even trade it to diversify amongst themselves. “What can we do with just a bag of sugar after a whole week of hard work?” Another participant stopped me to point out that this was the payment they each received after working outside, and it was strenuous and hard labor. The women indicated that this seasonal work was too labor-intensive, unreliable (seasonal), and paid too low. Instead, they wanted to find opportunities through self-employment to help them realize their plans and dreams of providing a good education for their children, improving their health and living conditions. The dreams and desires among the rural women align well with the literature that indicated the deterioration of services available in rural communities where their preschools are expensive and scarce (Tiuliundieva, 2006), higher education is far from their homes and expensive (DeYoung et al., 2013), and healthcare services are inadequate (Penkala-Gawęcka, 2016). As few jobs are available nearby, and the women face transportation mobility challenges, starting a small business could help them realize their plans and dreams. Hence, an assessment of their level of entrepreneurial self-efficacy followed.

RQ5: Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy

H. Zhao et al. (2005) entrepreneurial self-efficacy scale was used for the quantitative survey to address the fifth research question. Participants rated themselves based on their confidence level to accomplish each of the following entrepreneurial tasks, with 1 being no confidence to 5 being completely confident. The averages of the 12 women’s answers are shown in Table 2.4 below and compared to H. Zhao et al.’s results. H. Zhao et al.’s results were used as a comparison because he tested business students. His results provide context to entrepreneurial self-efficacy levels for business students who had received adequate training and opportunity to develop their confidence in entrepreneurship.

Table 2.4*Self-Ranking of Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy*

	Mean	
	Needs assessment participant	H. Zhao et al.'s (2005) results for business students before entrepreneurship training
Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy	2.08	3.20
Identify new business opportunities	1.67	n/a
Create new products	1.92	n/a
Thinking creatively	2.25	n/a
Commercializing an idea or development	2.25	n/a

When asked about how they approach challenges or ideas, they agreed that women could solve some problems better than men, “Women can see who can do it, and what works, [and what] should be done” (Anonymous, Focus Group, June 21, 2019). Another woman shared, “I just believe I can do it and that it is the right thing to do” (Anonymous, Focus Group, June 21, 2019). Despite their confidence levels, they also indicated they want access to more training and, if possible, online. “It would be good if we have an option to study online Something related to business. Also, I’d like to learn programming, more computer-using skills. Basically, I can use the computer, but it is not enough for me” (Anonymous, Focus Group, June 21, 2019). While the women indicated that they are good problem solvers and have learned to rely on themselves, their confidence in needed entrepreneurial skills and tasks was low.

Limitations

The sampling population was selected because of my connection to the center’s training director, who guaranteed access to the participants. Since the participants came from the center’s student population, some may have felt obliged to participate. Or, if the participants

had ulterior motives for participating, their reasons might have affected the study's findings. For example, suppose they believed or hoped that participation would deepen connections to future employment opportunities. In that case, they might try to respond according to what they felt I wanted to hear. To mitigate this problem, I explained the purpose of the study and also that participation was voluntary.

Conclusions

The needs assessment study investigated both the barriers and support services that affect unemployed rural Kyrgyzstani women as they sought employment. It further investigated how community support, family dynamics and social capital, entrepreneurial motivations, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy manifested and contributed to or eased unemployment among rural women in Kyrgyzstan. The theme that the women do not have adequate support and face isolation aligned with the literature findings as it identifies similar salient factors contributing to rural unemployment among Kyrgyzstani women.

The literature review indicated that sociocultural factors affected the rural unemployed Kyrgyzstani women because they live within a patriarchal society and are expected to fulfill well-defined roles in the family (Ismailbekova, 2014, 2016; E. Kim et al., 2018). Factors related to family systems (Edelman et al., 2016; Spierings, 2014) were explored in this study and represented additional barriers to employment for rural Kyrgyzstani women. In the Kyrgyz culture, the youngest male child remains to live with his parents to care for them in their old age (Landmann et al., 2018). This cultural practice has implications for the wife who, through marriage, may have specific roles and expectations to fulfill regarding caring for her in-laws (Landmann et al., 2018). As the youngest son's wife, her status may affect how she spends her time (Landmann et al., 2018). Six (50%) of the women surveyed had been married to the

youngest son, and only two were still married. Although the sample size was small, the women indicated they struggled with serving the family, and life was difficult.

Furthermore, although most of them indicated on the quantitative survey that they had supportive extended families when asked during the focus group discussion about how their families helped them, most women could not indicate any types of consistent support. A key theme emerged from the study: how family dynamics hindered women from pursuing their employment goals. The women indicated their family impeded them and agreed that 50% of the husbands they knew prohibited wives from leaving home for employment. In inquiring about family dynamics and support, the women reported that they needed to keep ideas hidden and secret, only speaking about their goals after accomplishing them secretly, on their own. When it came to relying on family, they did not share their financial needs openly with family members, although they were grateful whenever another family member offered them financial assistance.

While the presence of family social capital has been shown to ease the path to employment (Carr & Sequeira, 2007; Edelman et al., 2016; Sanders & Nee, 1996; Sequeira et al., 2007), participants in this study did not possess such capital and faced additional challenges. The study verified that social capital was neither present nor available to help these rural women find work or start their own businesses. The literature also highlighted that rural Kyrgyzstani women participating in the labor market need reliable social support services (Childress & Hanusa, 2017; Gradskova, 2015; Guillot et al., 2013; Penkala-Gawęcka, 2016; Tiuliundieva, 2006; Turdalieva & Edling, 2018). Intentionally asking about the availability of support services and places or people who could support them as they sought employment confirmed these women had little support. The women indicated that no other services or resources were available to help them find employment besides the Rural Women's Association GALA. The participants shared stories

that indicated they had little emotional support and kept their goals and ideas to themselves.

Aside from the Rural Women's Association GALA, where I had recruited the participants for this study and one social worker who provided them with emotional support, there appeared to be no other help available.

The literature review also revealed how with very few jobs available nearby (Sippola, 2014; Anonymous, personal communication, February 4, 2019, February 6, 2019), the unemployed rural women needed to become own-account workers (Davis & Abdiyeva, 2012; Hossain et al., 2009) or entrepreneurs. The women indeed indicated that the biggest challenge was that there were very few jobs nearby. They also shared how they believed they could consider starting their own small business. Questioning the focus groups' participants about what motivated them to seek work provided insight into their willingness and ability to endure and launch a business (Baron et al., 2016). As the women shared about what motivated them, they indicated they had financial needs. However, when asked about what motivated them to attend classes at the GALA Center, the main was because they had a common desire to better themselves, improve their knowledge and skills, and the importance of meeting with other women and sharing ideas.

The literature review confirmed the importance of entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986b; Naktiyok et al., 2010). Although the quantitative survey indicated the women scored low, the qualitative discussion between the women showed a high sense of motivation and confidence in overcoming challenges, setting goals, and resolving to reach their goals before sharing their ideas with their extended family.

The participants were all seeking employment in challenging situations. Although their ages varied, and some were divorced or widowed, their answers regarding the challenges they

faced did not differ. The main problem they encountered was that there were few or no jobs nearby, coupled with the fact that they received little help from their families. Despite these challenges, they showed high levels of motivation and resolved to learn and attend classes at the GALA Center with the hope of either finding employment or establishing their own small business to generate income for their families.

Chapter Three

Intervention Literature Review: Discovering Common Building Blocks for Success

A mixed methods needs assessment conducted in the rural region of Issyk Ata in Kyrgyzstan explored 12 rural women's family and individual factors related to their challenges in finding employment. The study gathered quantitative and qualitative data to measure self-perceived family levels of moral support received at home (Smilkstein, 1978). The assessment also measured entrepreneurial self-efficacy, a person's confidence in their ability to engage successfully in entrepreneurial endeavors (Barakat et al., 2014; Naktiyok et al., 2010; H. Zhao et al., 2005). The study's qualitative section comprised of focus group meetings, guided by questions concerning entrepreneurial motivation, family dynamics, social capital, and challenges in seeking employment.

The needs assessment confirmed that the women faced substantial challenges in finding paid work, with an absence of available jobs in the rural vicinity, unreliable public transportation, and the men wanting them to stay home (or nearby). Living within a patriarchal environment, rural women are under pressure or required by their husbands or fathers to remain home and care for household responsibilities such as caring for the children and the elderly. Any paid work they were able to find was likely to be exploitive, seasonal work. The participants also spoke about not having much support when seeking solutions to find paid work or improve their economic situations. They tended to keep their ideas, goals, or thoughts to themselves and only shared their plans if they could achieve them. The participants confirmed they felt isolated and did not have outside help from others who are more knowledgeable or connected to help with job opportunities; they struggled with unemployment in silence.

However, despite these challenges, the participants expressed high motivation, wanted to start their own business, and wanted to learn about ways to improve their family's economic situation. Although the participants were highly motivated, the needs assessment confirmed they had low entrepreneurial self-efficacy and faced challenges in starting their own business because they could not access financial capital due to low education levels. Contributing factors to unemployment were due to low human, financial, and social capital, with social capital as the critical factor expressed by most participants. Thus, a revised conceptual framework in the following section (Figure 3.1 on page 103) guides this chapter's review of interventions targeted at easing the problem of unemployment for rural women by improving their human capital, financial capital, and social capital.

Purpose of the Intervention Review

The purpose of conducting this intervention literature review is so that, as a researcher, I can examine a variety of interventions typically used for alleviating persistent unemployment among low-income rural communities and extract key features from these studies for further examination. Building on earlier research, extracted key features from the intervention literature will become the building blocks for developing a map comparing and contrasting common intervention features with an exceptional case study of how a group of marginalized Kyrgyzstani women overcame the problem of unemployment in their rural community.

Chapter Three begins with a brief overview of the theories of human capital, social capital, sociocultural learning, and andragogy, adult learning theory, which will be presented along with their relevance to rural Kyrgyzstani women. Presenting these theories sets the stage for the final chapter in discussing the case study findings and implications. To align the review to my previous research, I will organize this review by whether an intervention targeted developing

human, financial, or social capital (Figure 3.1). Then, in the later chapters, the features I gather from my intervention literature review will help me uncover commonalities (or differences) with my case study to consider what intervention features may effectively support marginalized communities to overcome persistent unemployment. This chapter concludes by introducing the specific case study under examination to answer the overarching question about effective features, especially those related to social capital as discussed in my findings during the needs assessment, supported a group of rural Kyrgyzstani women to overcome challenges of persistent unemployment.

Theoretical Frameworks

The Theory of Human Capital and Implications for Kyrgyzstan

Adam Smith (2007) described four types of fixed capital: “useful machines ... profitable buildings ... improvements of land ... [and] the acquired and useful abilities of ... members of the society” (p. 179). All these forms of capital serve as building blocks to the economy. His first three descriptions are physical capital, and his final form of capital is a description of human capital. Smith explained that human capital is acquired through education and work experience because human capital is a person’s ability to perform profitably and productively (Smith, 2007). Human capital theory postulates that investing in human capital has expected returns, such as increasing productivity and economic stability and security.

More simply, Becker (1993) explained human capital by first explaining the concept of capital. Capital, typically understood as bank accounts or company stocks, are investments that produce a return on investment over time (Becker, 1993). Becker described that expenses related to schooling, training, medical care, and even “lectures on virtues of punctuality and honesty” are investments that offer a return on the person receiving training (p. 15). Such investments

produced human, rather than financial or physical capital, since this type of capital cannot be separated from the trained and educated person (Becker, 1993). The return on investments in human capital is the individual's improved health, employability, and earning potential (Becker, 1993). Becker also explained that the most important forms of investment into human capital were education and training, arguing that investments into scientific and technological skills and knowledge help propel the country to experience continued sustained economic growth. Human capital, depicted in the center column of the conceptual framework, connects how having low education levels can contribute to low entrepreneurial knowledge and skills and low entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Figure 3.1).

This chapter will review human capital interventions based on training and education in alignment with Becker's (1993) view, where he correlated economic growth to increased investment into education and training for a country's labor force. Becker cited research confirming a correlation between improved education investment in the U.S. and a 25% increase in per capita income between 1929 and 1982. The author also emphasized the importance of human capital by highlighting how Asian countries experienced outstanding economic growth after concerted investments in human capital and education, even though many Asian countries did not have many other natural resources to exploit (Becker, 1993).

In Kyrgyzstan, human capital manifests as underdeveloped due to low education levels among rural women (HC1) since rural families do not prioritize investing in their daughters' education (Tiuliundieva, 2006), as depicted in the conceptual framework highlighting that family dynamics (SC1) contribute to low education levels among the women (Figure 3.1). Investing in human capital through training and education is a form of capacity building because it helps an individual succeed at a higher capacity. Training and education can reward a person's

efforts to better their economic condition, both individually and for society (Smith, 2007). Also emphasizing the importance of human capital and its role in personal and societal/economic development, the World Bank measures and ranks the human capital index figures per country (World Bank, 2019). The human capital index ranges between zero and one (with one being the highest outcome) and indicates how much human capital is lost due to the country's education and health situation (Edwards, 2019; World Bank, 2018). Kyrgyzstan's human capital index for 2018 was 0.58, placing them 76th out of 157 countries (World Bank, 2018). The purpose of the World Bank (2019) report is to increase equality and spur economic growth by raising awareness and increasing worldwide cooperation to invest in human capital (World Bank, 2019), clearly believing in the correlation between investments in education and economic improvement. As part of their work in economic development, the World Bank's Human Capital Project aims to help end extreme poverty by investing in children to reach their potential in becoming "healthy, skilled, and productive adults" (World Bank, 2019, p. 3).

The World Bank (2018) also measures Learning-Adjusted-Years-of-School (LAYS) for each country. Since this chapter will include reviewing human capital interventions through education and training to address unemployment, LAYS is particularly important. LAYS is a combined single measurement reflecting access to schooling with learning outcomes (Crawford et al., 2019). In essence, the LAYS measurement allows for "cross-country comparisons" (Filmer et al., 2018, p. 25) of education-based human capital in a given country since it is a combines "quantity (years of schooling) and quality (how much kids know at a given grade level) into a single summary measure" (Crawford et al., 2019). Kyrgyzstan's LAYS for 2018 was 8.4 years (World Bank, 2018). Since this is a country-wide number, for rural women

whose education is often deprioritized due to family dynamics (Figure 3.1), their LAYS number is most likely even lower.

Thus, as a result of family dynamics (SC1) where women traditionally have heavy family household obligations (SC2) and girls' education is deprioritized (HC1), rural women in Kyrgyzstan who were not afforded the opportunity to education and training face enormous employment challenges. The conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 3.1 depicts that social capital is related to human capital because social capital is essential for opportunities to increase human capital (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

The Theory of Social Capital and Implications for Kyrgyzstan

Social capital theorists emphasize the importance and potential of building up social networks and relationships to improve overall well-being (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). A network approach defines social capital as “the norms and networks that facilitate collective action” (Woolcock, 2001, p. 70), emphasizing that the definition should focus on the source of social capital, not its outcomes (e.g., trust) and that social capital is about relationships, not political or psychological variables. The network approach classifies social capital into three types: bonding, bridging, and linking (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004; Woolcock, 2001).

Bonding social capital, emphasizing shared social identity (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004) among relationships within the same group (e.g., relationships between family and close friends), is prevalent in Kyrgyzstan (Ismailbekova, 2016; E. Kim et al., 2018; Werner, 2009) and can cause exclusivity (Woolcock, 2001). In the context of Kyrgyzstan, a patriarchal society where the people emphasize family and clan relationships, a women's level of agency and authority are determined by her status within her family (Ismailbekova, 2016; E. Kim et al., 2018; Werner, 2009). As portrayed in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1), a woman's marital status and

her family's functional state, level of moral support from her family (SC3) can contribute to her isolation and exclude her (SC4) from accessing help and needed social capital resources (E. Kim et al., 2018). Since bonding social capital can contribute to isolation, it inadvertently limits human capital development opportunities, as indicated in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1).

Bridging relationships are more inclusive than bonding social capital because they are external relationships with others with different social identities but shared goals and interests (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). Bridging social capital builds connections between people through membership in associations and organizations, such as relationships with colleagues (Woolcock, 2001). During the needs assessment, the small sample of rural unemployed Kyrgyzstani women expressed their experiences with isolation and silence (SC4), and as a result, this group did not demonstrate high levels of bridging social capital (Figure 3.1).

Linking social capital, often considered an extension of bridging social capital, consists of the “norms of respect and networks of trusting relationships between people who are interacting across explicit, formal or institutionalized power or authority gradients in society” (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004, p. 655). Linking social capital is especially relevant to those living in developing countries as connections to those beyond their context, such as microfinance institutions, health professionals, and international non-government organization (NGO) workers, can shape and affect the well-being of those in developing communities (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). As reviewed in Chapter One, most Kyrgyzstanis do not trust the banks (Kumar et al., 2018), and women receiving bank loans are scarce (FC1) (Gicquel et al., 2015). The network perspective offers a starting point in understanding the types of social capital unavailable to Kyrgyzstani rural women, but it offers less insight into how to intervene and

develop needed social capital. The structuralist perspective on social capital helps make sense of how interventions may address unemployment among Kyrgyzstani rural women.

The structural social capital theorists define social capital as “the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit” (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998, p. 243). The structuralist perspective is very relevant to the rural women in Kyrgyzstan because it looks at social capital as the sum of all actual and potential embedded capital. In this case, the embedded family dynamics (SC1) of a patriarchal system dictate these women’s social capital (SC6).

Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) proposed that social capital has three interrelated aspects: “the structural, the relational, and the cognitive dimensions” (p. 243). Structural elements (SC:St) of social capital are the patterns of connections between individuals within a given context (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Structural aspects emphasize network ties—their presence or absence, configurations (e.g., density, hierarchy, organizational), and purpose (Coleman, 1988; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). The structural dimension can impact the availability of needed resources such as equipment, labor, facilities, and financial capital (W. Zhao et al., 2011). For rural unemployed Kyrgyzstani women who already confront embedded family limitations as depicted in the conceptual framework (see Family dynamics in Figure 3.1), they do not have the needed patterns of connections to the broader community (SC5 and SC6), especially after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Kuehnast, 2000).

The second aspect of social capital, relational social capital (SC:Re), refers to personal relationships (e.g., friendships) that have been developed over time through a shared history together (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Relational social capital, most similar to Woolcock’s (2001) bonding social capital, is created and influenced by friendships and affects people’s

behavior because these relationships rely on trust, socially accepted norms, expectations, and identity (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). For Kyrgyzstani women obligated with family responsibilities and patriarchal social norms of needing to bear male heirs to rise in the ranks of authority and agency (Ismailbekova, 2016), many are isolated and do not have access to help or support (Figure 3.1). Thus, relational social capital can worsen negatively, offering little support for women who want to find employment or meet self-employment goals.

The relational dimension is essential to business owners since the quality of these personal relationships affects one's decision about whom to approach for assistance and whether the entrepreneur will successfully receive help. Social trust is an essential factor within this dimension because trust encourages sharing information, resources, and cooperation (W. Zhao et al., 2011). In Kyrgyzstan, their shared history of 70 years under the Soviet colonial regime and subsequent independence, followed by tumultuous political changes that included three violent coups and eight referendums modifying their constitution (Pannier, 2016; Putz, 2021), social trust is meager. As of yet, the country has not truly experienced a peaceful transition of presidential power. The recent transition where former President Atambayev stepped down after meeting his term limits eventually resulted in the storming of his residence, his arrest, and a police officer's death (Roth, 2019).

Thus, even as a democratic republic, Kyrgyzstan has suffered years of political mistrust, corruption, and instability. For families in the rural regions, social norms, trust, and identity are based on keeping with the tradition that is dictated by a shame and honor culture, even to the extreme of young women accepting their fate when they are abducted for marriage (O'Neill Borbieva, 2012; Werner, 2009). Thus, relationships set by social norms and expectations in this

type of context can heighten the women's barriers to social connections that can link them to the help and support they need for fulfilling their employment goals and self-employment ideas.

The third aspect of social capital discussed by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) is the cognitive dimension (SC:Co). Here, the authors refer to resources that provide shared meaning among those in the network—such as a shared language and history (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). The cognitive dimension is essential for entrepreneurs to facilitate “organizational legitimacy and entrepreneurial culture” (W. Zhao et al., 2011, p. 1573). The shared history for rural Kyrgyzstani women related to employment is that they were once beneficiaries of Soviet state employment (Kuehnast, 2000). The deterioration of available social services and state employment after the Soviets withdrew left rural women mostly unemployed (Kuehnast, 2000). The decrease in school attendance among rural girls is exacerbating their loss of employment opportunities due to the growing tendency to encourage them to stay home to care for domestic needs (Tiuliundieva, 2006). With less education and fewer networks promoting learning opportunities from more knowledgeable and experienced women business owners, rural women face limited shared cognitive social capital. Social capital is an asset shared and jointly owned by the members, helping its members achieve outcomes that would not have been possible were it not for the network's relationships and connections (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Without such social networks, rural Kyrgyzstani women cannot create entrepreneurial knowledge and skills (HC2) and self-efficacy (HC3), depicted in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1), necessary for employment and self-employment. The literature review of Chapter One highlights the missing elements of all three types of social capital, structural, relational, and cognitive. However, looking specifically for these three types of social capital within intervention literature will provide a map for examining the exceptional case in the later chapters.

Sociocultural Theory of Learning, Andragogy, and Implications for Kyrgyzstan

Sociocultural theory of learning, which provides insight into how learning occurs, is relevant for understanding interventions for high unemployment communities. The theory emphasizes that learning is a social process and takes place through social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978). The theory explains that the transfer of skills and learning occurs through interactions between the learner and a more knowledgeable person (Vygotsky, 1978). As the learner receives this information, the learner will learn, practice, and gradually develop abilities towards independence (Gee, 2008). The space of this interaction, a form of scaffolding or support, occurs in a person's zone of proximal development (ZPD), a space that is just beyond the learner's existing knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). The emphasis on social interactions leading to learning aligns well with social capital theory because both theories highlight development by having relationships with others who can help offer guidance and assistance. Thus, an intervention that creates or nurtures a zone of proximal development for an unemployed Kyrgyzstani rural woman would provide them with the opportunity to learn, practice, and develop the skills needed for them to meet their goal of employment.

Furthermore, culture and environment influence one's background, prior knowledge, affordances, and effectivities (Gee, 2008; Lim & Renshaw, 2001). Sociocultural theory of learning describes that affordances are what a learner sees as possible within their context, and effectivities are having the set of abilities within their context to turn affordances into reality (Gee, 2008). Kyrgyzstani women have limited affordances because, within their context, they are isolated and do not have the social connections to mentors or role models who can show them what is possible. Since the theory emphasizes assisted learning yet does not answer where

such opportunities and assistance will come, rural Kyrgyzstani women experience a gap in their opportunity to learn.

Andragogy, principles of adult learning, is also relevant for rural Kyrgyzstani women's opportunities to learn as adults. Knowles et al. (2005) posed that adult learners differed from children, as the authors emphasized six unique characteristics of adult learners (for the complete list, see Knowles et al., 2005, p. 149). Of the five aspects, two seemed especially relevant to the group of rural women learners in Kyrgyzstan. One, Knowles et al. emphasized that adults possessed a "learner's self-concept," as they tend to be responsible for their decisions and their own lives (p. 65). A learner's self-concept is similar to entrepreneurial self-efficacy's can-do attitude since a positive attitude makes reaching an entrepreneurial goal seem more attainable (Naktiyok et al., 2010). However, this aspect differed from how the rural women from the needs assessment study viewed themselves. Within a patriarchal family unit, most indicated high levels of passivity and resigned themselves to not having high levels of agency, depending on their family dynamics and family obligations (as shown in the conceptual framework).

Second, Knowles et al. (2005) emphasized that adults had a greater "role of the learner's experience," that is, adult learners bring with them more accumulated experiences (p. 65). Aligning with Knowles et al.'s conclusion that learner experience can bring along adverse effects, most of the respondents during the needs assessment fell into the category Knowles et al. warned about; adults "tend to develop mental habits, biases, and presuppositions that tend to cause us to close our minds to new ideas, fresh perceptions, and alternative ways of thinking" (p. 65). The task and challenge are to consider interventions that appropriately address adult learning and consider how best to take advantage of the other characteristics of adult learners: they need to know why they need to learn before they are willing to take on the task of learning;

they want only to learn needed knowledge; they are more oriented to learning; and, most adult learners are motivated by wanting to learn how to confront problems they encounter in real life (Knowles et al., 2005).

Conceptual Framework

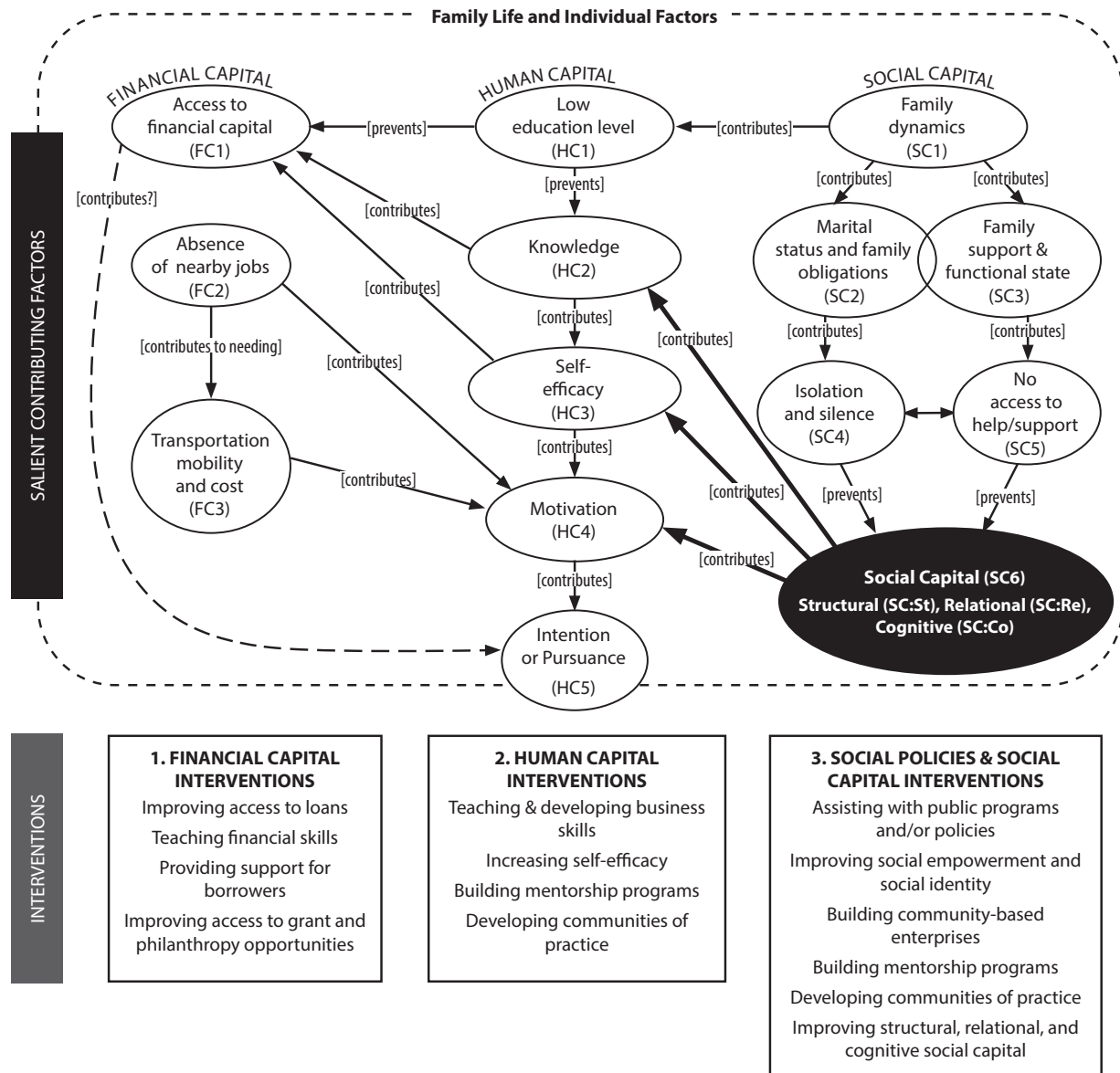
The salient factors contributing to unemployment among rural Kyrgyzstani women emerged from the literature review in Chapter One fall under the broad category of “Family Life and Individual Factors.” Following Maxwell’s (2006) purpose for dissertation literature reviews, Chapter One’s literature review and the needs assessment informed the design of the conceptual framework, highlighting the conditions of rural Kyrgyzstani women. The literature also helped organize both salient factors and intervention strategies into the three convenient categories: financial factors, human capital factors related to skills and knowledge, and social capital factors (Figure 3.1). Moreover, in alignment with Maxwell, who also stipulated that literature reviews ought to inform a planned study by creating a focus and justification for a study, Chapter Three’s literature review of intervention studies will develop a map for the case study in Chapters Four and Five.

The conceptual framework includes codes (e.g., SC1, SC2, SC3, etc.) to quickly refer to the various factors within the conceptual framework during later analysis. Under the social capital column in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1), family dynamics, labeled as SC1, play a decisive role in rural women’s employment opportunities (E. Kim et al., 2018; Landmann et al., 2018; Sagynbekova, 2017; Spierings, 2014). Family dynamics are “the forces at work within a family that produce particular behaviors or symptoms” (D. M. Anderson, 2002, p. 675). Family dynamics can affect a woman’s level of family responsibilities (SC2), such as

caring for the elderly and young, and the level of moral support she receives (SC3) within her family (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1

Conceptual Framework: Factors Contributing to Persistent Unemployment Among Rural Kyrgyzstani Women and Traditional Interventions



I conducted a needs assessment study in Kyrgyzstan and confirmed that most participants did not have the support needed within the family to voice their ideas and goals safely. Instead, they reported remaining silent (SC4) and attempted to reach their goals alone. Since the women indicated that they did not have anyone to seek help (SC5) from and could not voice their needs during the focus groups, I concluded they had low social capital (SC6). Social capital affords (or blocks) the women's pathway to employment (Carr & Sequeira, 2007; Edelman et al., 2016; Sanders & Nee, 1996; Sequeira et al., 2007) and limits their opportunities to learn because they do not have the opportunity to interact with more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978).

Family dynamics can also contribute to limiting rural women's education level (HC1), as highlighted in Chapter One, where the literature confirmed that rural families tend to deprioritize a girl's opportunity to attend school (Pinskaia et al., 2014; Tiuliundieva, 2006; Tiwari & Mitra, 2012). This was confirmed during the needs assessment focus group when the women acknowledged that they did not have enough education to be hired for work and did not have the knowledge and skills (HC2) needed to start businesses. Low education and skills are forms of low human capital (Spengler, 1977). The women did not have the required knowledge and skills to start a business and exhibited low entrepreneurial self-efficacy (HC3).

Self-efficacy is an essential factor for those deciding on becoming business owners because it affects motivation (HC4) and intent (HC5) (Barakat et al., 2014; Naktiyok et al., 2010). Low self-efficacy among rural Kyrgyzstani women is a problem since it prevents them from pursuing their employment goals, including any self-employment goals (Figure 3.1).

Having low skills (HC2) and low self-efficacy (HC3), rural women face additional challenges in accessing financial capital (FC1). Not being able to access financial capital hinders one from being ready to start their own businesses, even though there are many interventions in

the developing world focused on improving financial capital to address economic factors related to unemployment (Afrin et al., 2008; Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; Ocasio, 2016).

Another economic factor, confirmed as the most challenging from the needs assessment, is the absence of jobs in their community (FC2). Not having access to income nearby (limited access to financial capital) pushes the unemployed to either look for work further away, thereby needing transportation mobility, which is both unsafe and costly (FC3), or motivating them to start their own business nearby (Figure 3.1).

Intervention Literature Review

The following literature review explores interventions related to unemployment among low-income communities and extracts best practices or features of these interventions that address the gaps in financial capital, human capital, social policies, and social capital. This literature review includes microsystem intervention studies focused on the individual local level instead of macro-level interventions that target exosystem factors such as government policies related to unemployment, migrant workers, legal, and public services, as mentioned in Chapter One. Specifically, the literature review includes micro-level evaluations targeted at investing in financial capital, human capital, and social policies and capital in the context of improving employment situations for those in a developing economy (see Interventions in Figure 3.1).

Interventions Targeting Financial Capital

This first section of the literature review examines financial capital interventions to support women's employment and entrepreneurship. Microfinance institutions (MFIs) are banks that offer credit to low-income families to improve socioeconomic situations (Karlan & Valdivia, 2011). These banks typically offer smaller loans at lower interest rates, often requiring less collateral, so low-income borrowers can access working capital to make small business

investments. Muhammad Yunus introduced microfinance loans to the poor without offering business training because he believed that access to financial capital was the critical constraint to the poor in growing their investments (Karlan & Valdivia, 2011). Globally, the United Nations has turned to MFIs as the economic development cure-all, with many governments and non-government organizations (NGOs) believing that microfinance can spur small business development, alleviate poverty, and build up the economies of developing nations (Afrin et al., 2008; Xavier et al., 2008). However, Nobel prize award recipients Banerjee and Duflo (2011) found that “the effect [of microfinance] was not dramatic” (p. 171). Microfinance institutions also operate in rural Kyrgyzstan, and the needs assessment confirmed that rural women had difficulties getting access to financial capital and loans from the local financial institutions. A review of interventions targeted at improving women entrepreneurship through financial capital access concludes that microfinance can offer positive but only limited sustained effects.

Access to Loans, Unaccompanied by Broader Approaches

Microfinance institutions (MFIs) have had limited effects on women in developing countries (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; Ocasio, 2016). When evaluated through the lens of structural social capital theory, several studies showed that MFIs could instead perpetuate the problem of excluding women from needed financial loans (Ocasio, 2016; Sultakeev & Karymshakov, 2018). In a Bangladesh study, Ocasio (2016) evaluated whether rural microloans, targeted at impoverished women, generated positive income effects and economic growth, hypothesizing that women only marginally benefitted from microfinance loans while men, especially in the higher income percentiles, benefitted the most. Using a longitudinal study, Ocasio gathered data from more than 1,656 Bangladeshi households from 87 villages between 1991 and 1999. By splitting the data by gender, the author evaluated three microloan programs for small

landowners, tested the association between average village income and village inequity, and performed a regression analysis to explore the effects of loan programs on income distribution (Ocasio, 2016). Ocasio discovered an increase in mistargeted participation, with more loans going to the men who already had higher incomes. As a result, income inequality within the villages worsened.

Evaluating the Bangladeshi MFI intervention results from the perspective of a structural social capital theorist and sociocultural theory of learning, the outcome fell short since the program perpetuated the problem of exclusion. In essence, the bank did not address any human or social factors (Ocasio, 2016). Those who needed the loans most were excluded and did not receive resources from the banks. Extracting this particular financial capital intervention feature, the label Int.Fe.-1 will represent program managers showing bias and preferential treatment of excluding target participants. The negative sign represents the negative consequences of the intervention as this financial intervention did not adequately provide the needed scaffolding to make connections to additional assistance and instead exacerbated income inequality (Ocasio, 2016).

Similarly, Sultakeev and Karymshakov (2018) reported mixed results based on a study in Kyrgyzstan evaluating microfinance loan intervention, where they reported that women were also excluded from receiving loans. The authors tested the hypothesis that having financial resources positively impacted entrepreneurial activities and specifically examined the framework of microfinance loans in low-income countries (Sultakeev & Karymshakov, 2018). Using the 2013 Kyrgyz Integrated Household Survey (KIHS) conducted by the National Statistical Committee of Kyrgyzstan, the authors examined the quantitative survey results from 5,000 households. Among all the borrowers, 70% were from rural areas, 62% were women, and loans

averaged US\$817 (Sultakeev & Karymshakov, 2018). Here, the authors found that even though most borrowers of microloans were women (62%), the men were significantly more likely to pursue entrepreneurship using their loans (Sultakeev & Karymshakov, 2018). Although there was a positive effect on entrepreneurship, the authors suggested MFIs were not maximizing their goals due to a faulty selection process and not helpful in female entrepreneurship (Sultakeev & Karymshakov, 2018), as the women indicated their obligations to family responsibilities took precedence over entrepreneurial endeavors.

Aligning this finding with the needs assessment and the conceptual framework, providing access to loans, while important, seems insufficient because rural Kyrgyzstani women faced additional social barriers related to their obligations to their families. I will label this second feature where a misdirection of funds occurred for earmarked financial resources as Int.Fe.-2. To help rural Kyrgyzstani women use their loans towards investing in a business would require additional scaffolding to help them invest the loans into entrepreneurship. Scaffolding rural Kyrgyzstani women to learn how to use their loans towards business investments align with andragogy, adult learning theory, as adults learners learn best when they feel the subject matter's relevance to their immediate needs (Knowles et al., 2005). Sultakeev and Karymshakov (2018) research identified and confirmed that microfinance loans alone did not sufficiently address women's social factors. In agreement with Ocasio's (2016) study, Sultakeev and Karymshakov confirmed that although microfinance can spur entrepreneurial activity, MFI loans benefitted the businesses owned by men more. For the women, placing a higher priority on family relationships, whether by choice or obligation, meant they concerned themselves more with relational social capital as their behavior followed social norms and expectations (Figure 3.1).

Considering the conclusions of both sets of authors (Ocasio, 2016; Sultakeev & Karymshakov, 2018), along with the needs assessment, potential interventions need to address the problem that women face additional challenges when trying to access financial capital. Thus, on its own, a financial capital intervention may only be addressing a symptom and not the deeper social problem specific to unemployed rural women in Kyrgyzstan. An intervention focused on improving the structural dimension of social capital (Figure 3.1) and increasing cognitive social capital may counter the barriers faced by rural women borrowers.

Access to Loans, Accompanied by Broader Approaches

In another financial capital intervention study focused on improving access to financial loans, Afrin et al. (2008) found that financial management skills and group identity contributed to successfully accessing and using financial capital for entrepreneurship. Afrin et al. identified and tested factors related to entrepreneurship development among Bangladeshi rural women micro-credit borrowers. The 246 respondents belonged to a program targeted for impoverished farmers and rural women in Bangladesh, owners of at least a few productive assets (Afrin et al., 2008). Participant selection included only women borrowers with at least three years of experience with the MFI (Afrin et al., 2008). Afrin et al. used a quantitative five-point Likert scale survey to rate 40 entrepreneurship-related variables and four dependent variables (independence, complex decision-making skills, risk-taking, and opportunity seizing abilities). The majority of the participants had no prior technical or business training. Of the 40 variables, the authors discovered that financial management and group identity were the essential factors contributing to rural women entrepreneurship (Afrin et al., 2008). Specifically, Afrin et al. concluded that the higher the level of financial management skill (human capital) and group identity (relational social capital) were among the rural woman entrepreneurs, the higher the likelihood the borrower

exhibited entrepreneurial behaviors. Extracting this finding of the essentiality of group identity in reaching a goal, I will label this intervention feature as Int.Fe.+3, with the positive sign representing positive intervention outcomes.

The conclusions from this study in Bangladesh support the theory of social capital, as depicted in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1) because the authors concluded that developing financial management skills along with group identity (relational social capital) helped Bangladeshi women exhibit entrepreneurial thinking and behaviors (cognitive social capital). The authors concluded that by focusing on improving these two factors, rural women would gain a sense of self-identity and enthusiasm to initiate new business projects (Afrin et al., 2008). This study also supports both adult learning theory and sociocultural theory of learning because although the women had not received any formal training, their group identity, or concept of self (Knowles et al., 2005), supported their ability to succeed, implying that the women's environment aided in turning their goals into reality. While financial capital plays a role in developing entrepreneurship, Afrin et al.'s (2008) study confirmed the critical factor that social capital supported rural women business owners' development. This study indicated that MFI solutions could offer great promise when limitations in social capital are also addressed. However, in the subsequent two seminal studies on MFI interventions, researchers concluded that while MFIs are helpful, their tendency to overpromise should be kept in mind.

Access to Loans, Its Limitations, and Need for Broader Approaches

In a seminal study, Banerjee et al. (2015) conducted a longitudinal study between 2005– 2010 in 52 neighborhoods in Hyderabad, India, surveying 6,850 households, and concluded that MFI interventions showed limited results. Spandana, the MFI in this study, did not require the women to attend any training nor require that the loans be invested for

business purposes, believing that their borrowers can decide for themselves how best to spend the money (Banerjee et al., 2015). Thus, this randomized control trial (RCT) tested only for the impact of the loans. Banerjee et al. gathered data on household demographics, spending, loan amounts, loan access, business investment, revenue, and employment information. The authors concluded that while Hyderabad's microloan project allowed some small businesses to increase their investments, it did not significantly increase the average business owners' profits, nor did the loans spur households towards entrepreneurship (Banerjee et al., 2015). Although microfinance helped some families, the authors concluded that microfinance's impact should not be overstated (Banerjee et al., 2015). This study indicates that it is vital to link financial capital interventions with entrepreneurial intention, as depicted in the dashed line in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1).

Another study, led by Field et al. (2010), confirmed this finding, demonstrating the limited and mixed results of microfinance. The authors examined how traditional beliefs and values (cognitive social capital) affected women's employment in India (Field et al., 2010). Specifically, they explored whether a financial training program improved the business outcomes of a randomly selected group of self-employed women. The women in the study were all married, aged 18–50, and had savings accounts with the Self-Employed Women's Association (Field et al., 2010). The Association conducted a two-day training program 57 times between September 2006 to April 2007, training 289 women (Field et al., 2010), providing basic financial skills, including setting concrete financial goals. Of the 636 women surveyed, 597 participants completed the training, including the control group (Field et al., 2010). Quantitative surveys took place after the training program, and the authors split the data into three categories: Muslims and lower- and upper-caste Hindus, to measure whether restrictiveness (e.g., religious backgrounds

and castes) affected business outcomes (Field et al., 2010). The women in the three categories had similar baseline demographics but differed in their outcomes after the training program (Field et al., 2010). The upper-caste women tended to discuss their businesses within their social community openly, re-invest their profits into their businesses, and experienced nearly double return on investments than those in the lower castes (Field et al., 2010). The phenomenon of trainees sharing their business intentions and activities openly and frequently will be labeled Int.Fe.+4.

Since the authors credited that the main difference in behavior among the castes was that the upper caste women discussed their ideas with their social networks, this study provides an example for considering the different outcomes through a social capital theory lens. What set the groups of women apart was their different shared values and beliefs (cognitive social capital). Cognitive social capital among the upper-caste women led them to openly speak about their business activities and decisions with their social group. Openly sharing their ideas indicated that the upper-caste women valued creating knowledge exchange opportunities and were motivated to create and share knowledge, which is foundational for creating social capital. The study's data confirmed how women from different religious and social statuses differed in their business practices and outcomes, regardless of receiving the same training (Field et al., 2010). This study also supports the theory of adult learning and sociocultural learning. Adult learners are affected by their life experiences (Knowles et al., 2005), and combining this with their environment (e.g., its relationships and networks), produced differing practices and business outcomes. All the women received loans but experienced a differing return on investments due to their varied social relationships. The conceptual framework displays the connection between social capital contributing to motivation and (entrepreneurial) intention or pursuance (Figure 3.1).

The differing outcomes seen among the different groups indicate the effect of the sociocultural environment and cognitive social capital and motivation, as each social group had distinctive shared knowledge, routines, and values.

Summary of Financial Capital Interventions

Field et al.'s (2010) conclusion aligns with Afrin et al.'s (2008) study; business outcomes and behaviors differed not based on the access to financial capital but additional underlying sociocultural contexts and social capital factors. In agreement with Ocasio's (2016) conclusion, training programs and support for small business owners to help them grow their business need to address additional conditions besides a lack of financial resources. Limitations in MFI outcomes increase the need to consider additional avenues in supporting rural women, as Banerjee and Duflo (2011) emphasized that microfinance showed limited results, and alone, they are not enough. However, when Banerjee and Duflo presented their conclusions about microfinance interventions' limitations, many microfinance leaders denied the conclusions. Instead, they chose to "rely on the power of denial" rather than reassess and improve microfinance approaches and treat MFI as one of many approaches to fighting (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011, p. 172). The structural (SC:St), relational (SC:Re), and cognitive (SC:Co) components of social capital, including relationships in the family (SC1), as evidenced from microfinance initiatives (Afrin et al., 2008; Field et al., 2010), influenced women entrepreneurial activities and returns and is of particular relevance for examining features that may contribute to alleviating unemployment for rural Kyrgyzstani women. Social capital relationships are represented in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1), and the following table (Table 3.1) lists the key features discovered from a review of relevant financial capital interventions related to

developing entrepreneurial opportunities among low-income women nascent entrepreneurs. I will refer to these intervention features later in subsequent chapters.

Table 3.1

Summary List of Financial Capital Intervention Features with Assigned Labeling Scheme

Assigned label	Features
Int.Fe.-1	Events or relationships that showed bias and preferential treatment by excluding participants (contributed to a negative outcome)
Int.Fe.-2	Events where relationships that misdirected earmarked financial resources (contributed to no long-term outcome)
Int.Fe.+3	Events or relationships that emphasized the essentiality of group identity in goal setting and goal attainment
Int. Fe.+4	Events or relationships where participants openly and frequently shared about their business intentions or activities

Interventions Targeting Human Capital

The second section of the literature review examines human capital interventions. Human capital interventions targeting alleviation of unemployment rely on education and training and are touted as a tenet to economic development (World Bank, 2019). As indicated in the literature review in Chapter One, in the exosystem factors for Kyrgyzstani women, school attendance is emphasized over educational attainment (DeYoung et al., 2013). The Soviets introduced the importance of school attendance. After the fall of the Soviet Union, communities continued emphasizing attendance without emphasizing learning, as public spending on education deteriorated (DeYoung et al., 2013). Valuing school attendance without learning meant that rural communities invested little in cognitive social capital. The needs assessment interviews with rural Kyrgyzstani women confirmed that their low education levels (HC1) hindered

employment. Therefore, skills training can potentially be a critical path to addressing rural unemployment in Kyrgyzstan.

The following section reviews four intervention studies that tested the effectiveness of business skills training. The first three articles from three different developing countries showed similar results and long-term outcomes. The final review considers the effectiveness of complex training versus simplified business training.

Three Studies on Business Skills Training

A longitudinal study in Sri Lanka, conducted between September 2009–June 2011, used randomized control trials (RCT) to measure the impact of the internationally well-established business training course, Start-and-Improve Your Business. The authors found that the training course produced no lasting long-term effects on business profitability, sales, and growth (de Mel et al., 2014). However, the course improved women’s inclusivity (de Mel et al., 2014).

With two sample groups, one consisting of existing business owners ($n = 624$) the other of prospective business owners ($n = 628$), de Mel et al. (2014) split the participants into three groups: a control group, a group attending just the training, and a group receiving a US\$130 grant upon completing the training course. The authors found no positive correlation existed in business outcomes among those who received only the training (de Mel et al., 2014). Any positive association from the grants, for both existing and potential business owners, were only short-lived; suggesting an influx of financial capital only helped speed up business ownership, and that business outcomes merely converged “to a steady-state, but not dramatically changing the trajectory of the enterprise” (de Mel et al., 2014, p. 205). It may be that as adult learners, the prospective business owners who were ready to start their business had higher levels of “readiness to learn” and, therefore, were able to start their businesses sooner after they received

the timely training offered in this study (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 67). De Mel et al. discovered that for both groups who received training, there was an increase in business ownership among women who typically would not start a business, namely those who tested to be less analytical and less educated (de Mel et al., 2014). The intervention feature or practice, that training offered an opportunity for women inclusivity, as unlikely candidates became business owners or leaders, will be labeled Int.Fe.+5 for later examination. While this study confirmed that training subsistence business owners had little long-term impact in scaling a business, de Mel et al. indicated that the training improved women's inclusivity, allowing them to establish their businesses and become profitable sooner than usual. The authors indicated that these positive outcomes occurred even among less-educated women with less cognitive skills. From a social capital perspective, it is possible that the training provided an opportunity for improving structural inclusive social capital (network ties) for those who traditionally faced discrimination in accessing resources and loans (e.g., women and those with less education).

In the second study related to human capital interventions, Karlan and Valdivia (2011) also questioned the impact of entrepreneurship training and evaluated a training partnership with the microfinance institution, FINCA Peru. Both de Mel et al. (2014) and Karlan and Valdivia's RCT studies shared the similar conclusion that training focused on improving human capital showed limited long-term results. Karlan and Valdivia evaluated and measured business outcomes and processes, household outcomes, and FINCA's institutional outcomes after an established US-based non-profit led 22 business training sessions with women borrowers in Lima and Ayacucho, Peru. The RCT ($n = 4591$, FINCA clients) involved three groups: one group received mandatory training along with their loans, the second group could voluntarily attend training along with their loans, and the control group received no training with their FINCA

loans (Karlan & Valdivia, 2011). A follow-up survey was conducted after one year and again two years after the treatment. The authors discovered that any improvements in business outcomes and processes were small or negligible, noting that the training did not impact the expected positive outcomes such as increasing business registration or licensing or increasing the start of new businesses (Karlan & Valdivia, 2011). They also found no changes in household decision-making outcomes and no statistically significant difference in lowering child labor (Karlan & Valdivia, 2011). The findings from Karlan and Valdivia's study, which focused on women who were already clients of FINCA, agreed with (de Mel et al., 2014) study, indicating that training only proved minimally, in the long run, worthwhile for its existing clients. The critical difference between the two studies focused on evaluating human capital interventions is that Karlan and Valdivia only included existing MFI clients.

By only including existing clients in their study, Karlan and Valdivia's (2011) could not account for whether human capital interventions could increase social capital or any consequential outcomes of inclusivity since all the participants already had existing relationships with the lending institution. The feature, that training included only pre-existing clients, will be labeled Int.Fe.-6. In comparing the outcomes of the two studies, Karlan and Valdivia demonstrated that training alone, as an isolated mediating variable, may not have any long-lasting impact on business outcomes. In contrast, de Mel et al. (2014) demonstrated that training emphasizing the inclusivity of women (Int.Fe.+5) helps them start their businesses sooner than the expected.

In a third study that similarly examined whether investing in human capital would improve small business outcomes, Karlan et al. (2015) evaluated how improving human capital and financial capital constraints could stimulate growth among small businesses. Between

2008 to 2011, the authors provided costly consulting services for free (human capital) and grants (financial capital) to microentrepreneurial tailors in Accra, Ghana. This third RCT included urban tailors from eight different neighborhoods: 36 tailors received US\$133 in grant money, doubling their average working capital; 41 received a year of one-on-one management consulting/mentoring services from the international consulting firm, EY; and 36 received both the cash and consulting/mentoring services (Karlan et al., 2015). A control group of 45 tailors received nothing (Karlan et al., 2015). The final total sample from who completed all the rounds of follow-up surveys totaled 149 microenterprise tailors (Karlan et al., 2015). Qualitative interviews focused on measuring business literacy and practices were conducted face-to-face for over two years, from 2008–2010 (Karlan et al., 2015). The authors discovered that changes were short-lived among the various groups, and after one year, there were no lasting differences. With a few exceptions, the targeted businesses that received the interventions looked identical to the control group (Karlan et al., 2015). Since this third study only included small, established tailors, it is possible that training already established business owners meant not developing social capital. Extracting this feature, offering training only to pre-existing business owners, is similar enough to the Peruvian FINCA study and will therefore receive the same label, Int.Fe.-6, training only offered to pre-existing clients. Thus, just like the Sri Lankan and Peruvian studies, an intervention targeting human capital, with or without financial capital support and only directed at those already in business, produced no lasting difference (Karlan et al., 2015).

All three human capital intervention studies demonstrated that training, with or without relaxing financial constraints, provided few entrepreneurial outcomes changes in the long run (de Mel et al., 2014; Karlan et al., 2015; Karlan & Valdivia, 2011). While the conceptual framework illustrates that low education level inadvertently prevents intention (Figure 3.1), the results of

all three studies indicate that interventions targeted at reversing the effects of low education levels offered only short term results, even though low education is a contributing factor to unemployment (World Bank, 2019).

Complex vs. Simple Training

A final human capital intervention that compares complex versus simple training provides data that can be valuable for developing a relevant intervention. In a random control trial ($n = 1,193$), Drexler et al. (2014) compared two different types of business training for clients of ADOPEM, a savings and loan bank for low-income small businesses owners in the Dominican Republic. The focus of Drexler et al.'s study differed from the three previous studies in that this was a comparison between different curricula. Drexler et al. argued that globally, many small business owners are not equipped to make business-critical financial decisions due to a lack of financial literacy (Drexler et al., 2014). The authors tested two types of financial training: a traditional financial accounting principles-based course emphasizing accounting techniques versus a simple "rule-of-thumb" course emphasizing simple decision-making rules and the need to keep business and personal records separately (Drexler et al., 2014, p. 8).

Drexler et al. (2014) randomly split the participants into three groups: a more complex, traditional financial accounting training group ($n = 402$); a simpler rule-of-thumb treatment group ($n = 404$); and a control group who received no training ($n = 387$). Drexler et al. discovered that the rule-of-thumb training improved business practices and outcomes, whereas there was no change among those trained with the more traditional and complex program. Teaching simple concepts that are immediately applicable for the participants will be labeled Int.Fe.+7. Teaching what is immediately applicable aligns with Knowles et al.'s (2005) adult learning theory. Furthermore, those with the simpler curriculum had significantly greater sales

(18% during the weeks when sales were lower across the board) than the control group. Thus, the authors concluded that simple training provided adequate and valuable skills to help business owners make better decisions (Drexler et al., 2014). Simplifying relevant financial rules was more effective, easier to understand, and more likely to be implemented (Drexler et al., 2014) and, as a result, impacted cognitive social capital of the participants.

Summary of Human Capital Training Programs

In agreement, the first three randomized control trials showed insignificant long-term improvements due to training business owners, concluding that business training did little to impact long-term business and process outcomes (de Mel et al., 2014; Karlan et al., 2015; Karlan & Valdivia, 2011). The insignificance of long-term improvements may indicate that the entrepreneurs shared implicit practices that were not affected by human capital interventions. However, the fourth study by Drexler et al. (2014) showed that simpler was better, and training rule-of-thumb practices changed cognitive social capital as simpler lessons were more likely to be adopted and business outcomes for micro-enterprise improved.

In light of data from the four reviewed studies, an effective training program needs to emphasize simple, relevant, and easy to implement business skills that prioritize business outcomes. Furthermore, applying the lessons learned from the de Mel et al. (2014) study, designing an intervention that includes structural social factors related to women entrepreneurship would be essential to improving entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. The conceptual framework highlights this relationship between social capital and developing knowledge and skills (Figure 3.1). If the goal is to help women start businesses, providing them with the opportunity to learn and practice would propel early-stage ideas into business start-ups. Similarly, both adult learning theory and sociocultural theory of learning support the

learner to turn their affordances (what the learner sees as possible within their context) and their personal life experiences into reality by developing their set of skills and abilities. The case study that follows in subsequent chapters considers whether human capital interventions considered additional social factors and barriers beyond only relaxing financial and human capital constraints. Gathering the building blocks for the map, the following table (Table 3.2) lists the key outcomes discovered from the review of relevant human capital interventions related to developing entrepreneurial opportunities among low-income women nascent entrepreneurs.

Table 3.2

Summary List of Human Capital Intervention Features with Assigned Labeling Scheme

Assigned label	Features
Int.Fe.+5	Events or relationships that offered an opportunity for women inclusivity, promoting unlikely candidates to become business owners or leaders
Int.Fe.-6	Events or relationships that offered only opportunities to pre-existing clients or those with already established businesses (contributed to not long-term outcome)
Int.Fe.+7	Events or relationships that offered an opportunity to learn simple (business) concepts that are immediately applicable for the participants

Interventions Targeting Social Capital

Social capital interventions and community-based entrepreneurship case studies conclude the intervention literature review. Interventions related to social capital are challenging to conduct, as Woolcock (1998) acknowledged that “different policymakers from opposing political camps can agree that social capital is important while offering contradictory measures for attaining it” (p. 158). Moreover, social capital is not always best maximized but better as “resources to be optimized” (Woolcock, 1998, p. 158). The difficulty of evaluating social capital interventions is that social capital is a multidimensional resource. As such, since there “are

different types, levels, ... [and] dimensions of social capital, different performance outcomes associated with different combinations of these dimensions, and different sets of conditions that support or weaken favorable combinations,” any effective intervention would require a dynamic understanding of social capital (Woolcock, 1998, p. 159). In this section of the literature review, seven studies are described that explore social policy and social capital interventions. Based on the potential benefits of social capital, as shown in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1), the following literature review examines three public programs and policies interventions, one social empowerment intervention, and three community-based enterprise interventions, all around improving structural, relational, and cognitive social capital.

Government and Public Sector Entrepreneurship Programs

In a study evaluating the effectiveness of a government entrepreneurship program in Thailand, Kasabov (2016) found that government programs can develop undesirable business behaviors. These business behaviors of risk-aversity and an over-reliance on government resources ultimately led to business failures when the entrepreneurs could not meet program expectations rather than actual market failures. The Thai government created the “One Tambon One Product” (OTOP) program to support underdeveloped rural areas and assist local farmers and artisans to produce and bring high-quality, certified local products to market (Kasabov, 2016, p. 682). By interviewing 55 entrepreneurs in the Thailand program in addition to 26 peripheral stakeholders, such as spouses, advisors, and managers, Kasabov explored personal experiences to identify challenges faced by the entrepreneurs.

Four key themes emerged from Kasabov ‘s (2016) study: a scarcity of resources made rural entrepreneurship difficult, but not the cause for failures (a priori code); risk-aversion and passivity caused failures (emergent code); failure was defined not by bankruptcy but

by not meeting policy expectations (a priori code); and failure was strongly associated with regional context and policies (both based on a priori and emergent codes). Kasabov concluded that government interventions encouraged passivity and risk-averse decisions, developing an over-reliance on the non-profit sector (e.g., for training, branding, and marketing), which became hindrances causing business owners the inability to moderate their decisions with a realistic concept of resource limitations. Interventions where key decisions are made by governing bodies rather than giving participants key decision-making power will be labeled Int.Fe.-8. Kasabov discovered that when a social program runs a top-down intervention, with “authoritarian governance,” failure is determined by meeting the non-profit’s goals, thereby redefining failure, not as an exit or bankruptcy (Kasabov, 2016, p. 697). In the end, Kasabov concluded that the project failed because the businesses were over-reliant on government decisions, yet financial assistance was insufficient.

Evaluating the OTOP project’s failure from a social capital perspective, maximizing relational social capital meant moral obligations, and social norms dominated the project and discouraged the entrepreneurs from taking needed risks. Entrepreneurial activity cannot succeed when participants are silenced and obligated by an authoritative source (Kasabov, 2016). The OTOP project, rather than optimizing structural networks to needed resources, ended up silencing the participants by directing them to a set of priorities determined by the project leaders, not the business owners. The project controlled and limited the entrepreneurs’ activities and decision-making by maximizing relational social capital with obligations and expectations. Thus, the project created an over-reliance on limited public funds rather than developing and optimizing structural social capital in the face of resource deficiencies. From a sociocultural theory of learning perspective, this project failed because it did not encourage the learners to become

independent but rather over-reliance. The goal of teaching and learning, from the perspective of sociocultural theory of learning, is for the learner to acquire skills through a role model, with the goal of learning and practicing towards gradual independence (Vygotsky, 1978), which failed to happen as the entrepreneurs became more risk-averse and more reliant on the government program. Furthermore, the approach taken by the OTOP program did not align with andragogy, adult learning theory, as adult learners who “maintain the concept of responsibility for their own decisions” are more oriented towards learning (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 67). Interventions initiated by or supported by a government policy or affordance will be labeled Int.Fe.+GOV.

A second study also concluded that non-profit projects supporting rural entrepreneurship could fail when outsiders set subjective measurements and attempt an intervention using conventional authoritative training methods to meet subjective goals. E. Kim et al. (2018) evaluated a seven-country-wide intervention led by four large international non-government organizations (NGOs) with an overall US\$350 million budget. Interventions initiated by or supported by an NGO will be labeled Int.Fe.+NGO. The authors found that when an intervention program’s definition and measurement of success differed from the participants’ lived experiences, the program ended up causing harm (E. Kim et al., 2018). The NGO targeted village women to teach them improved farming techniques in the context of capacity-building and self-help groups (E. Kim et al., 2018). After completing the program, the authors, unrelated to the NGO, carried out an ethnographic study by observing and interviewing 30 participants in a remote village in Kyrgyzstan (E. Kim et al., 2018). Like Kasabov ‘s (2016) study, E. Kim et al.’s conclusions are another example of not sharing in the same cognitive social capital where program leaders had different shared meanings from the participants. Even though the large NGO reported successful outcomes for women who participated in the program, E. Kim et al.

discovered contradictory evidence from those unwilling to compromise their religious, family, or social values and were subsequently removed from the program.

Without considering the implicit dimension of shared cognitive social capital and the priority of relational social family capital, the project managers in E. Kim et al.'s (2018) study paid little regard to implicit knowledge. They removed many participants who could not adhere to the project goals because meeting the goals required them to betray their families and personal relationships, thereby punishing women who prioritized relational social capital. Unfortunately, program managers excluded the very participants who seemed most in need of the intervention (E. Kim et al., 2018). E. Kim et al.'s study aligns with two previous extracted features, managers showed preferential treatment and excluded participants (Int.Fe.-1), and decision-making powers remained with governing bodies rather than the participants (Int.Fe.-8). In the end, the NGO-directed project increased economic disparity, and E. Kim et al. had similar findings to Kasabov's (2016) study: a program can fail due to a difference in the definition of goals and success between project leaders and participants (Int.Fe.-8). Both projects approached the participants "as eager project beneficiaries" (E. Kim et al., 2018, p. 243) and applied global programming concepts and methods to manage and measure its outcomes without practical engagement with the participants (Kasabov, 2016; E. Kim et al., 2018). Since learners do not learn in isolation or abstraction from their context and environment (Gee, 2008), these programs contradicted sociocultural theory of learning because the interventions did not consider the critical role of the learner's environment and culture. It also contradicted adult learning theory by ignoring that adult learners are problem-solvers and adults prioritize their learning by the problem that most needs solving (Knowles et al., 2005); their priorities differed from the program's subject matter, farming skills. The program managers followed strict guidelines that

contradicted the learners' priorities, culture, and values. These large, well-funded, and well-meaning social programs measured success differently and did not consider the participants' context, situations, and goals.

Furthermore, both E. Kim et al. (2018) and Kasabov (2016) showed how when those with resources control decision-making, and when their interests do not align with their target audience (Int.Fe.-8), a project fails. The needs assessment participants expressed a reluctance to share their ideas with others because they feared others would dissuade them from taking the necessary steps to reach their goals. In light of both these large publicly funded projects and the findings from the needs assessment, rural Kyrgyzstani women need opportunities to speak their minds and act in their own best business interests. When participants can speak their minds and set their agendas, they can counter the effects of social obligations, isolation, and silence depicted in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1).

In contrast, a third public policy intervention study demonstrated how it is possible to improve social cohesion by decreasing poverty gaps through supporting local entrepreneurial activity. In the aftermath of the ethnic genocide between the Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda, where 74% of the population lost a family member to the killings, the government initiated sweeping policy reforms to promote entrepreneurship as a means to rebuild the economy and improve social cohesion (Tobias et al., 2013). The Rwanda government policies encouraged coffee farmers to take advantage of the new "entrepreneurship-friendly reforms" that opened the door to accessing resources and built up the specialty coffee supply chain (Tobias et al., 2013, p. 733). In 2008, Tobias et al. (2013) studied the transformative effect of entrepreneurship among these specialty coffee farmers in Rwanda and the relationship between poverty reduction and conflict resolution. Gathering data from rural dwellers on their perspective about the quality

of their social connections and their economic situation, the authors examined how poverty reduction and conflict resolution changed since becoming involved in the specialty coffee business (Tobias et al., 2013).

Approved by the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, trained interviewers used validated and reliable quantitative questions to complete 239 surveys with coffee workers in 10 rural locations where poverty had been most acute. Extracting the intervention feature of targeting the locations with the most acute poverty levels to reduce poverty levels will be labeled Int.Fe.+9. Statistical analysis examining perceived changes over time, mean differences between the Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups, and exploratory path analyses confirmed that positive increases in personal wealth correlated with perceived improvements in their quality of life (Tobias et al., 2013). Additionally, the authors found that perceived improvements in their quality of life predicted positive changes in prejudices (Tobias et al., 2013). Furthermore, Tobias et al. (2013) found, among both ethnic groups, an association between increased personal wealth and increased social trust. While Tobias et al. were not arguing for causality, Tobias et al. demonstrated that their study indicated that social policies supporting local business ownership effectively improved interactions between entrepreneurs, especially between two groups who had a shared history of antagonism between them. Additionally, as a result of the participants' increase in personal wealth, higher social trust benefitted not only the entrepreneurs but their wider community and the entire country "because studies at the country level have shown that social trust spurs economic development" (Tobias et al., 2013, p. 737).

Tobias et al. (2013) explained how opportunities created through entrepreneurship motivated and connected people in sharing common goals, leading to transformative socioeconomic development and "social value creation through intentional and/or unintentional

mechanisms involving a diverse set of entrepreneurial actors” (p. 737). Extracting this intervention feature of connecting people who shared common entrepreneurial or employment goals (increasing other forms of social capital) will be labeled Int.Fe.+10. This third study on public policy highlighted that investing in structural social capital networks by releasing access to resources such as increasing foreign investments can connect farmers to build shared cognitive social capital of collective meaning and goals. This relationship between investing in structural social capital to improve entrepreneurial motivation is illustrated in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1). Policies such as increasing access to foreign investments without government over-reliance can motivate local entrepreneurship, and the success in Rwanda is especially notable because of the level of ethnic violence the country experienced. Furthermore, the program’s success demonstrated how public policy building social cohesion through entrepreneurship and supporting structural and cognitive social capital can help economic development. Thus, government social policies can effectively intervene to assist business owners in becoming social entrepreneurs, addressing social, cultural, and environmental concerns. The following study addresses the issue of social empowerment.

Social Empowerment

Fourthly, Xavier et al. (2008) evaluated the efficacy of social capital interventions by examining Unilever’s Shakti project in India. Shakti representatives trained and provided a selection of village women the opportunity to sell Unilever products, including vouching for the women for loans and becoming their first customers to kick-start the business, Int.Fe.+5 (Xavier et al., 2008). The project also linked the participants to self-help support groups (Int.Fe.+10). Xavier et al. concluded that even though the participants initially expressed low business potential and lived in inaccessible markets, the project effectively created entrepreneurs from

among them (Xavier et al., 2008). The authors determined that after training and connecting rural women to the needed resources for starting their businesses (Int.Fe.+10), Unilever's Shakti project improved women empowerment through female entrepreneurship (Xavier et al., 2008).

The authors conducted their research in two phases. Phase one involved qualitative, hour-long interviews with 12 randomly selected participants (Xavier et al., 2008). Relying on narrative analysis, three themes emerged from the participants' description of their experiences: economic empowerment, social empowerment, and entrepreneurial development (Xavier et al., 2008). Phase two consisted of a quantitative survey of 258 participants. The authors gathered information using a survey about participants' demographics, leadership positions in the self-help groups, occupation details, household income, and how income is apportioned within the household (Xavier et al., 2008). The authors measured social empowerment by asking questions that included the women's involvement and leadership roles in public activities, relationships, and confidence in working with the local banks and relationships with others in the broader community (Xavier et al., 2008).

The training program effectively led to social empowerment because it led to very positive financial outcomes in women's lives, leading to improved living standards (Xavier et al., 2008). The study results indicate that when women are afforded opportunities to learn and start their businesses, they develop higher social capital levels. The inverse was true in the study described next: having higher social capital also increases the likelihood of entering into entrepreneurship.

Community-Based Enterprises

Community-based enterprises (CBEs), defined by Peredo and Chrisman (2006), are grassroots efforts of when "a community act[s] corporately as both entrepreneur and enterprise

in pursuit of the common good” (p. 310). CBE’s unique characteristic results from a process that draws deeply from its social connections from within the community, relying on its “existing social structure” to establish and operate the business (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006, p. 310). The business’ goals serve both the social and economic goals of the group in a sustainable effort that benefits the community. Interventions that aid in the establishment of CBEs falls under the category of social capital interventions because both the entrepreneurs and the business are treated as embedded within the local social network; both are interconnected with all the involved actors and organizations of that local environment (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). The feature of social capital interventions embedded within its local community will be labeled Int.Fe.+11. Peredo and Chrisman distinguished CBE businesses as those that act corporately and prioritizes more than just economic goals, such as those that are socially beneficial to the whole community, including “culture and environmental preservation” (p. 310). Social capital interventions that prioritize social benefits (e.g., preserving culture and the environment) will be labeled Int.Fe.+12.

In a study evaluating the effects of social capital on entrepreneurship, W. Zhao et al. (2011) found that entrepreneurs had higher structural and relational social capital levels. The critical catalyst propelling them to start their own community-based tourism business was tangible assistance and resources, gained through personal experience or indirectly through social relationships (W. Zhao et al., 2011). In the study in Guangxi, China, W. Zhao et al. made their conclusion after measuring and comparing all three dimensions of social capital (structural, relational, and cognitive) between rural entrepreneurs ($n = 233$) and rural residents who did not start their own tourism business ($n = 249$). To measure relational social capital, the authors used a five-point Likert scale asking participants about the extent of their relationships with

family and friends who provided or connected them to needed resources and their levels of trust and reciprocal interactions (W. Zhao et al., 2011). For assessing the structural dimension, the authors measured social ties to people with start-up business experience and other related work experiences and leadership roles (W. Zhao et al., 2011). For assessing the cognitive dimension, the authors measured how much the participants agreed with statements about entrepreneurial culture and attitudes within their network (W. Zhao et al., 2011). The resulting statistical analysis of the data confirmed that the entrepreneurs, at the time of start-up, were advantageously endowed with “a significantly richer stock of structural and relational capital than the general public” (W. Zhao et al., 2011, p. 1581). Within the cognitive dimension, the only factor entrepreneurs significantly differed from the non-entrepreneurs was the likelihood that role modeling was an important factor contributing to choosing to start a business (W. Zhao et al., 2011). The authors concluded that the key motivating factor was tangible assistance and resources, suggesting that “familiarity with a specific business domain, whether it is gained directly from personal experience or indirectly from social relationships,” (Int.Fe.+11) served as critical catalysts in entrepreneurial decision making (W. Zhao et al., 2011, p. 1586).

More critical than prior start-up experience (W. Zhao et al., 2011), the study in China supports the conceptual framework factors portraying the vital role of providing social capital to assist and support entrepreneurs (Figure 3.1). Applying the findings from W. Zhao et al.’s (2011) study to the Kyrgyzstani rural women who do not have relevant work experience or the needed education, they also do not have the critical factor of role models or more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978). Combined, the challenges Kyrgyzstani rural women face in becoming entrepreneurs are many. They have had few opportunities to learn and now need support connecting them with human, financial, and social capital resources.

Confirming the importance of having such connections to knowledgeable others, Datta and Gailey (2012) examined how a cooperatively owned social enterprise contributed to women's empowerment in a second CBE study. Lijjat, founded in 1959, is a for-profit social enterprise offering business ownership to poor urban women in India (Datta & Gailey, 2012). Selling a popular savory snack, Lijjat has more than 42,000 women member-owners in 72 branches across 17 states in India (Datta & Gailey, 2012). Membership is open to any woman, and as collective owners, they share in all its profits and losses. As a non-hierarchical organization, an elected central committee makes decisions based on consensus, with each of its 72 branches run by branch committees (Datta & Gailey, 2012). Unlike W. Zhao's (2011) quantitative study, this qualitative study consisted of interviewing seven member-owners to gain an in-depth understanding of the women's perspectives and life experiences as business owners (Datta & Gailey, 2012). The authors developed a historical storyline by coding the interview transcripts and field notes and comparing them with secondary data (Datta & Gailey, 2012). Using their codes, the authors identified key themes, settling on two broad themes: (1) factors of empowerment entrenched in Lijjat's business model and (2) the member-owners' perspective of empowerment (Datta & Gailey, 2012).

Despite living in a strongly patriarchal society where the women faced employment discrimination, the authors discovered that in Lijjat's business model, member-owners were collectively able to overcome many typical employment barriers such as low education and low skills and limited time due to heavy responsibilities at home. Thus, this study's findings align with the conceptual framework factors that social capital interventions can bypass the pre-existing problems of isolation, silence, and not having access to needed support (Figure 3.1). Offering formal employment and income to women who would otherwise not be able to

work, Lijjat offered women-owners the opportunity and the power to transform their lives. As collective owners, the women-owners called themselves “Lijjat sisters,” emphasizing the equity-based women’s organization where cooperation, joint ownership, and profit-sharing are among its core principles (Datta & Gailey, 2012, p. 578). Business ownership through Lijjat empowered women, gaining economic stability, an entrepreneurial mindset, and increased contribution to the family (Datta & Gailey, 2012). As adults, they exhibited characteristics that align with adult learners; they embodied a high level of motivation, readiness, and orientation to learning (Knowles et al., 2005). While the Lijjat study did not focus exclusively on examining social capital, it was through joining and cooperatively owning a social enterprise (Int.Fe.+10) that these women overcame employment barriers. Through employment and belonging to an equity-based network, the authors concluded that Lijjat exemplified how a job afforded women membership in a structural network that had “empowerment elements ... embedded in the business models of for-profit social entrepreneurial ventures” (Datta & Gailey, 2012, p. 582).

Examining social capital within the context of community-based enterprises (CBEs), Jones (2005) found that high levels of social capital (cohesion, coordination, and cooperation) contributed to the development of an eco-tourism CBE in the village of Tumani Tenda, Gambia. Comparing social capital levels between two communities, Jones conducted a mixed methods study comparing social capital levels between Tumani Tenda and the control village of Kafuta. In Tumani Tenda, Jones used a quantitative questionnaire along with conducting 35 semi-structured interviews. The author also conducted a focus group discussion and interviewed selected key informants (the village head and association leaders). In Kafuta, Jones used a shorter structured questionnaire to interview seven village members. In Tumani Tenda, the quantitative questions inquired about structural and cognitive social capital attitudes. They included Likert-scale

questions asking about reciprocity and sharing levels, involvement in association life, mutually beneficial community action, trust, decision-making powers, and social norms (Jones, 2005). Open-ended questions inquired about the participants' perceived social capital changes over time, including the involvement and time spent on collective activities and village decision-making not directly related to the CBE.

Supporting the relationships portrayed in the conceptual framework factors (Figure 3.1), Jones (2005) confirmed that heightened levels of social capital were vital in developing the CBE tourism business. This intervention feature of heightened levels of social capital being vital for entrepreneurial development aligns with the Rwandan study on the importance of connecting people with a common shared goal (Int.Fe.+10). The study also showed evidence that beneficial collective action increased in the village as a result of the CBE. Tumani Tenda exhibited significantly higher levels of structural capital, indicated by its level of “vibrancy of associational life” (Jones, 2005, p. 312) and its adherence to social norms and rules compared with the control village. The higher vibrancy of associational life improves another specific form of social capital, namely relational social capital. As for cognitive social capital, Tumani Tenda displayed higher trust, higher sharing and reciprocity levels, and a lack of conflict (Int.Fe.+12); but not all factors were significantly different between the two villages. The study results showed that community unity, cooperation, and shared goals (Int.Fe.+10) increased resource provisions from external sources, thereby increasing bridging social capital (Jones, 2005).

Summary of Social Capital Interventions

Intervention studies on the relationship between social capital and entrepreneurship emphasize the fundamental need to align shared goals and expected norms. For example, relational social capital becomes a hindrance when government policies and public programs'

goals do not match the struggling entrepreneurs' goals (Kasabov, 2016; E. Kim et al., 2018). However, Rwanda's case provided an example of the power of social capital (Tobias et al., 2013). When entrepreneurs have shared goals and actively invest in supporting the community's interests, transformative development is possible (Tobias et al., 2013). All three CBE studies confirmed the importance of social capital and the positive influence of family and close friends in supporting opportunities to learn, opportunities to employment, as well as how entrepreneurial activities further invests and develops social capital (Datta & Gailey, 2012; Jones, 2005; W. Zhao et al., 2011). As demonstrated in the literature, top-down outsider interventions proved less helpful in supporting nascent entrepreneurs (Kasabov, 2016; E. Kim et al., 2018). Key features of social capital interventions, emphasizing the critical role of socially embedded relationships within the community, are summarized in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3

Summary List of Social Capital Intervention Features with Assigned Labeling Scheme

Assigned label	Features
Int.Fe.-1	Events or relationships that showed bias or preferential treatment and excluded or silenced participants (contributed to a negative outcome)
Int.Fe.-8	Events or relationships where governing bodies held key decision-making power rather than participants (contributed to a negative outcome)
Int.Fe.+9	Events or relationships that targeted the most acute levels of poverty
Int.Fe.+10	Events or relationships connecting people who shared common entrepreneurial or employment goals
Int.Fe.+11	Events or relationships that are embedded within its local community
Int.Fe.+12	Events or relationships that prioritize social benefits (e.g., preserving culture and the environment)
Int.Fe.+GOV	A government affordance/policy
Int.Fe.+NGO	NGO(s) association involvement/support

Synthesis of Extracted Intervention Features

Gathering the features from various intervention approaches for addressing the problem of persistent unemployment among rural women provides the building blocks for a map to examine an extraordinary case in Kyrgyzstan about the establishment of a community-based farm. The focus of the case study will continue to be about the role of social capital in alleviating unemployment since both the needs assessment and the intervention literature confirmed that traditional financial and human capital interventions proved limited in alleviating the problem of unemployment in developing countries (Banerjee et al., 2015; de Mel et al., 2014; Karlan et al., 2015; Karlan & Valdivia, 2011). Nobel prize recipients Banerjee and Duflo (2011) claimed that microfinance institutions (MFI) have overpromised and overstated their effectiveness, and others also concluded that rural women continue to experience exclusion from receiving assistance and loans (Int.Fe.-1), including those in rural Kyrgyzstan (Ocasio, 2016; Sultakeev & Karymshakov, 2018). Furthermore, researchers found that in three different large-scale RCT studies, training programs targeting human capital capacity building showed only limited long-term business improvements (de Mel et al., 2014; Karlan et al., 2015; Karlan & Valdivia, 2011); unless the training offered simpler concepts, Int.Fe.+7 (Drexler et al., 2014).

These studies, along with the needs assessment data, show that underlying the traditional approaches' ineffectualness are social capital problems related to rural Kyrgyzstani women's exclusion and isolation (SC1–5 from Chapter One). Kyrgyzstani rural women face expulsion or exclusion whenever they need to decide between committing to staying with an intervention program or abiding by family obligations and social norms (E. Kim et al., 2018; Sultakeev & Karymshakov, 2018). Thus, while important, offering financial loans and training are insufficient in addressing unemployment because rural Kyrgyzstani women face additional social

obligations that keep them from becoming beneficiaries of programs targeting to improve their unemployment problem. As a result, many rural Kyrgyzstani women remain isolated, without the needed connections to others who may help or support them in reaching their goals.

Rationale for Proposed Case Study

In the spring of 2020, in response to a global pandemic that closed international borders, the original plan of conducting an intervention study in the summer or fall of 2020 became no longer feasible. In the fall of 2020, I received a set of WhatsApp messages from Adel, the director of the Rural Women's Association showing me photos of an unusual story—unusual, given the findings and conclusions of Chapters One and Two.

Her photos showed a group of rural Kyrgyzstani women enjoying their first harvest from their own farm. Specifically, Adel wanted to update me about a group of rural women who had been receiving training and support from the GALA Center (the office building and meeting rooms belonging to the Rural Women's Association GALA), approximately two hours from the capital city of Bishkek, and who had successfully submitted a bid to receive government land. Since receiving the land in the summer of 2020, the new owners planted and established a community-based enterprise (CBE).

Given that the participants were associated with the same center with which I had planned to conduct an intervention training study, the opportunity arose to tell their story of success through the lens of a narrative researcher using my unique positionality to effectively guide my interviews about a story that I had not come across in my research or literature review. After hearing about how a group of rural Kyrgyzstani women broke out of the expected cycle of unemployment and discrimination, I inquired whether this event could be examined further as a qualitative case study. Consequently, I revised my approach to take advantage of this timely

opportunity to document what happened with the aim that the story could further the research and practice of effective methods of support for rural women in similar situations.

Since the Rural Women's Association GALA played a key supportive role for many of these unemployed women, I planned to examine which external factors supported the realization of their cooperatively owned farm. Inquiry about the informants' relationship with Rural Women's Association GALA and how the network formed and developed will help establish how localized knowledge and learning can be shared and supported. Specifically, I planned to examine how a group of rural women met, organized together to learn, and submitted a winning proposal for receiving a land lease grant from Kyrgyzstan's government and then established a community-based farm.

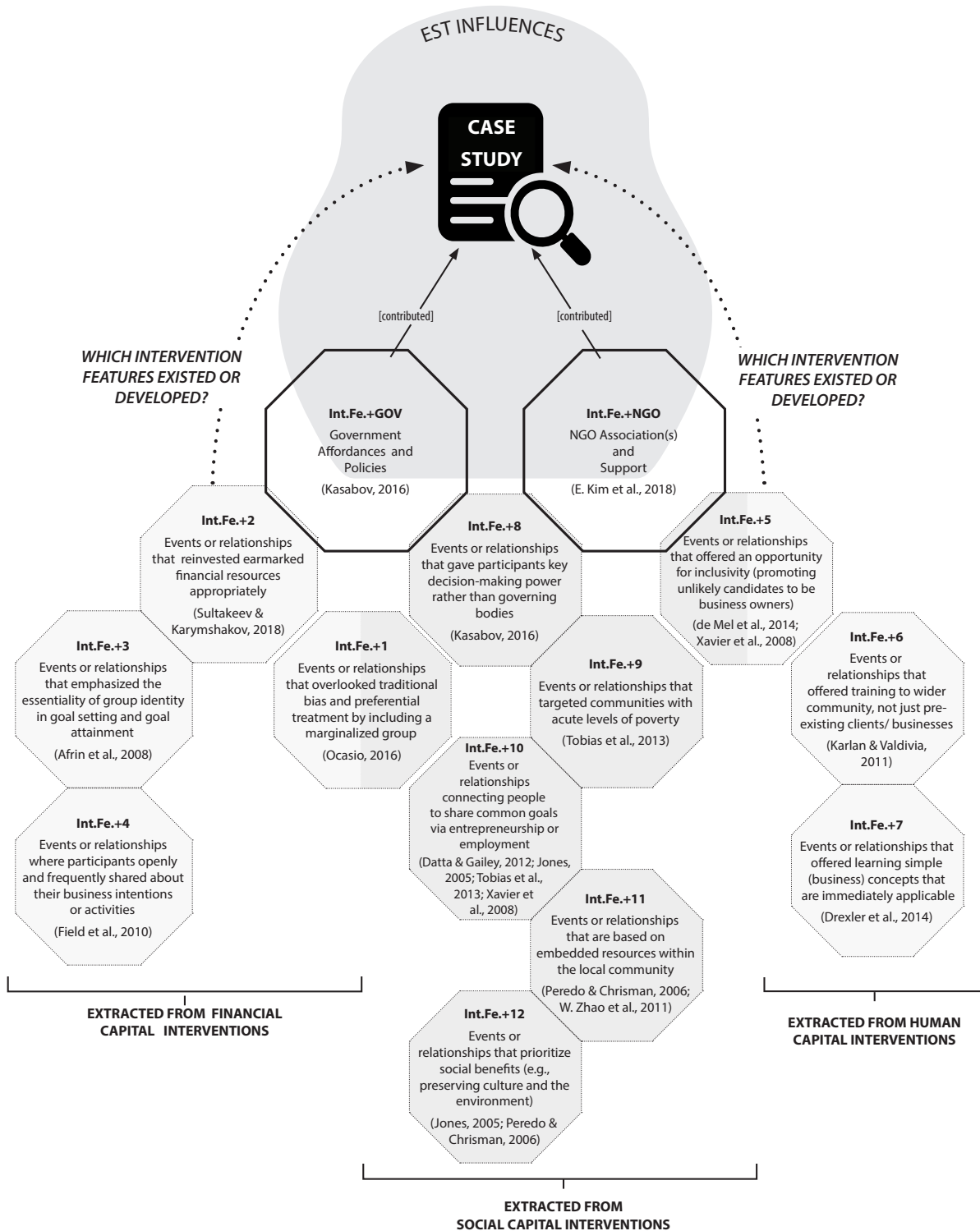
The map in Figure 3.2 gathers the extracted features from the literature review on interventions. The map's purpose is to serve as a guide in subsequent chapters for studying which intervention features were present, or developed, in the case study. The case study's focus emphasizes the role of social capital in alleviating unemployment because the literature confirmed that social capital has more influence than financial and human capital interventions. Since the study is about a positive case where its positive outcome is known, the previously labeled negative features will now be re-framed to represent positive features. For example, Int.Fe.-1, which represented events where program managers showed bias and preferential treatment by excluding participants, will now be labeled Int.Fe.+1, representing events or relationships that overlooked traditional bias and preferential treatment by including a marginalized group.

In Figure 3.2, the government policy of setting aside land for marginalized communities is depicted as both a financial and social capital affordance, as it provided land leases at a deeply

discounted rate. The NGO, offering both jobs skills training (investing in human capital) and opportunities for connecting with other women (investing in social capital), also contributed to the case. Guided by the building blocks gathered from this chapter's literature review, I will examine the case study to determine which interventions features (Int.Fe.+x) existed or developed to establish the community-based farm. Appendix D summarizes the features of Tables 3.1–3.3 from this chapter, showing the negative and positive cases and summarizing all the intervention features extracted as building blocks for examining the case study.

Figure 3.2

The Building Blocks: Map of Extracted Intervention Features



Chapter Four

Case Study Procedure Methodology

The needs assessment study and literature reviews indicated that unemployed rural Kyrgyzstani women intending to start small businesses needed additional training and support to reach their goals. The needs assessment participants (N = 12) had low entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) and expressed their desire and need to learn business start-up skills. Furthermore, they felt isolated and had few connections to others who could help or support them towards achieving their goals. The literature review of possible interventions on the problem of persistent rural unemployment highlighted three options: (a) increasing human capital by training business skills, (b) lowering barriers to financial capital by improving their access to loans, or (c) optimizing social capital by developing communities of practice or supportive mentor relationships.

Studies confirmed that addressing unemployment among women in developing countries through human capital and financial capital showed few long-term effects (Banerjee et al., 2015; de Mel et al., 2014; Karlan et al., 2015; Karlan & Valdivia, 2011). However, the research cited in the literature review also confirmed that developing social connections helped address isolation among rural women and served as a longer-term catalyst in supporting women towards entrepreneurial activity (Datta & Gailey, 2012; Jones, 2005; W. Zhao et al., 2011). The purpose of the intervention literature, extracting key features from the different intervention approaches, provided the building blocks for a map to guide the research study (Figure 3.2).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the case study was to understand what types of interventions helped lead a group of rural Kyrgyzstani to establish their own community-based enterprise (CBE)—closely

examining the case study allowed for comparing and contrasting features found in the literature. The focus of the study emphasized the role of social capital since both the needs assessment and the literature emphasized its essentiality. The following research study compared and contrasted the intervention features experienced by the community-based farm owners to the features extracted from the literature review to answer the following research questions below. A Research Matrix summarizes the study (Appendix E).

RQ1: What contributed to the emergence of social capital for the main actors in this case?

RQ2: What events, factors, or relationships do the participants identify as contributing to the success/struggles of reaching their goal, starting the CBE?

RQ3: How do the participants explain how they learned to overcome the traditional challenges of limited resources, restricted opportunities, marginalization, and discrimination, to start the community-based enterprise?

RQ4: How do the participants describe what they learned from starting their own community-based enterprise?

Research Design

A narrative case study is a qualitative approach exploring a specific phenomenon within a bounded system (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). Situated in a real-world setting, a case study is “a set of parts or operations ... [that] work together to create the whole” (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017, pp. 102–104) and can be incredibly valuable for exploring or explaining “post-hoc” why or how something happened (Yin, 2009, p. 272). Guided by this method, this case study retrospectively examined the establishment of a community-based farm by a group of rural Kyrgyzstani women to understand what factors led to its outcomes. Developing a narrative based on a case study blends many disciplines from the social sciences because collecting

and interpreting narrative data considers perspectives that borrow from sociology, history, psychology, anthropology, and the study of literature (Cortazzi, 1993; Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004, as cited in Saldaña, 2013).

Instrumental Case Study

This qualitative case study was an *instrumental* case study, as I documented what resources and social networks supported explicit and tacit learning among the group under analysis. Stake (1995) defined instrumental case research as using a case to gain insight into a theory or issue. Baxter and Jack (2008) explained that an in-depth case study inquiry allows a researcher to scrutinize the activities in detail, and the case serves as an instrumental study when it helps a researcher pursue an external interest. The external interest here was to contrast and compare the extracted features of intervention approaches with the types of interventions the group experienced over time. Thus, with the case as the backdrop, the primary goal was to understand further what features or factors, especially those related to social capital, motivation, support, and training, created a learning community among the actors in addressing unemployment.

Case studies allow a researcher to consider the genre, setting, thematic plot(s), characters and characterization, and spoken words and tone (Saldaña, 2013). Researching and exploring the relationships between lived experiences, one's identity, cultural context and meanings, and critical choices and actions, researchers can further "understand the human condition through story" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 132). Thus, narratives are appropriate for this study as it focuses on examining how social relationships and networks supported learning and entrepreneurial intentions among a group of unemployed rural Kyrgyzstani women.

Analytical Approaches that Guide This Study

The following is an overview of three approaches that guided this study. The *narrative inquiry* method documented the lived experiences of the case study actors. *Critical event theory* identified causal events that influenced the case's outcome. *Social network analysis* framed the inquiry used in answering the research questions.

Narrative Inquiry

This instrumental case study used a qualitative narrative inquiry approach to examine how the Rural Women's Association GALA effectively supported a group of rural women to establish a community-based enterprise. Narrative inquiry is a research approach to capture a phenomenon by exploring an individual's or a group of individuals' lived experiences within their context. By organizing events and framing personal experiences in a story, researchers can understand the critical "intervening stages" (Mertova & Webster, 2019, p. 3) of a phenomenon, with all "its complexity and richness" (Mertova & Webster, 2019, p. 2). Using stories to explore human actions and events allows researchers to develop knowledge that cannot be explained using only quantitative methods because quantitative methods do not consider ambiguities and multiple interpretations (J. H. Kim, 2016).

Narrative inquiry continues to gain prominence as a research method because it offers the capacity to consider complex situations related to culture and social context (J. H. Kim, 2016). The inquiry method and the data collection techniques include interviews, conversations, documents, surveys, and observations, all of which help enrich the scene's descriptions, time, plot, character, and critical events (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Guided by research design protocols, I connected the informants' lived experiences with knowledge construction.

As an instrumental narrative inquiry case, the study examines the case holistically, focusing on following a group of women facing challenges en route to a goal (Gibbs, 2015). The stories that the informants offered were chronologies, providing casual inferences of their lived experiences (Gibbs, 2015) with persistent unemployment and how they reached their goal of owning and establishing their community-based farm. A holistic approach means that, in an attempt to study the problem, I explored and “report[ed] ... multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in [the] situation, and generally sketch[ed] the larger picture that emerge[d]” to establish a “holistic” depiction of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014, pp. 592–597). The informants’ stories were based on their personal perspectives and reflected their understanding of how and why events unfolded. In reconstructing what happened using the human-centered approach of narrative inquiry, I did not aim for an objective reconstruction but a “verisimilitude” of the truth, aware of the informants’ subjectivity (Mertova & Webster, 2019, p. 9). Narrative inquiries can be a powerful research method by organizing the data gathered in a story (Mertova & Webster, 2019). Through exploring lived experiences, I contrasted and confirmed the features extracted from the literature (Appendix D), which depicts the factors that support or inhibit entrepreneurial intentions. As such, which stories informants chose to highlight or emphasize also told which critical events and relationships were important to them (Mertova & Webster, 2019).

Critical Event Analysis

By applying informant stories into research, narrative inquiry blended human experiences with the issues that I explored. An event becomes critical when it changes the informant’s worldview and impacts them on a professional level (Mertova & Webster, 2019). The concept of critical events originated from a method known as the critical incident technique (CIT) utilized

and developed by Flanagan (1954) for analyzing high incidences of pilot failure in training during World War II. Collecting first-hand accounts of pilot training experiences provided the necessary data to explore which critical behaviors led to outcome failures or successes.

Critical events are realized in retrospect when the informant recalls an event and the powerful effect the event had on them (Mertova & Webster, 2019). Critical events are meaningful because they serve as accelerated learning opportunities bringing about holistic change, both for the learner and the teacher (Woods, 1993 as cited in Mertova & Webster, 2019). Over time, as the story is repeated, the storyteller will reframe their story by highlighting the essential components with enduring value as they focus on the lessons from experience and how their understanding or behavior has altered as a result (Mertova & Webster, 2019). This study explored the critical events and the underlying essential components that led to learning outcomes and entrepreneurial intentions among a group of rural Kyrgyzstani women.

Social Network Analysis

This case study used social network analysis as a guide to explore the relationships depicted in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1). I followed the narrative by analyzing the critical events that led to the outcomes and interpreted the findings by representing the data using social network analysis. Social network analysis (SNA), a way of considering the role of relationships when examining a problem (Marin & Wellman, 2014), uses directed graphs (digraphs) to illustrate the relationships connecting people or groups, such as relationships between or among families, organizations, clans, and communities (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2011). While quantitative methods are often used to evaluate social networks' connections and their strength, this study took a qualitative approach to look at the social networks among rural Kyrgyzstani women. Early qualitative studies on network analysis include British

anthropologists' ethnographies on class structures on Norwegian islands, social networks in African villages, and organizational research at Western Electric company (Hollstein, 2014). Many early social network analysis studies collected data through participant observations and unstructured interviews (Hollstein, 2014). Likewise, this study used a qualitative approach to examine the types of relationships and patterns within culture and context (Hollstein, 2014).

There are three approaches in analyzing social networks: a position-based approach, looking at the formal positions held by the members of the network; an event-based approach, defining the boundaries of the network by participation in key events as defined by the informants; or a relation-based approach, defining the network beginning with a small set of participants of interest and expanding to include others deemed relevant (Marin & Wellman, 2014). Since the three approaches are not mutually exclusive, the study first relied on an event-based approach to define the relevant nodes in an initial digraph. However, the study also employed a relation-based approach when informants identified additional pertinent nodes or social relationships. As network members were identified, exploring the types of social relationships informed the study about collaboration, the flow of learning, exchanges of social and professional support, and connections to resources and ideas (Marin & Wellman, 2014). This study used the network-based theory to ask what kinds of social networks led to establishing a cooperatively owned farm and explored whether and how network ties served as channels through which information, support, and learning occurred (Marin & Wellman, 2014).

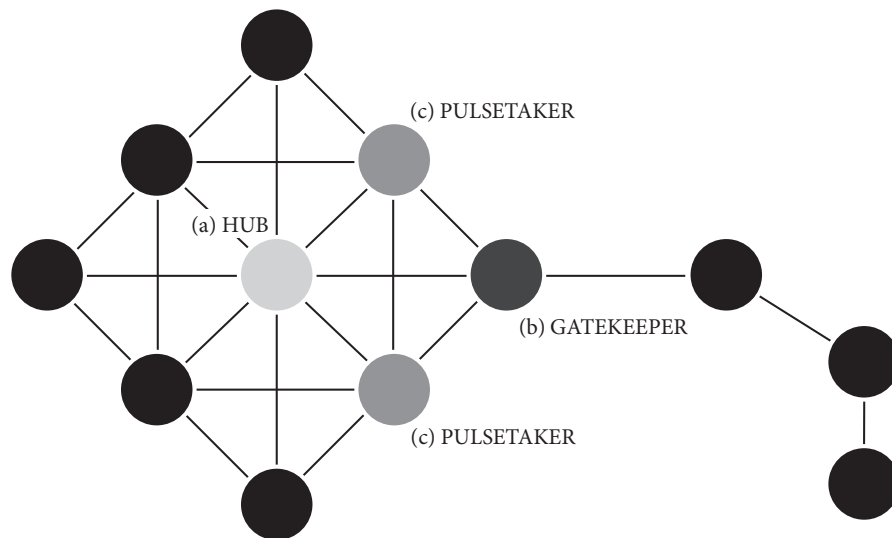
Trusted relationships and social networks. Relationships create a pathway for knowledge exchange and tacit learning (Stephenson, 2013). Stephenson (2011), a corporate anthropologist who specializes in examining social networks, highlighted that in any organization, there are two sets of relationships: the formal bureaucratic hierarchy and the

informal trusted social network where “a good portion of ‘real’ work gets done” (p. 282). Stephenson measures the often missed and unmeasured trusted networks within corporations, contending that most companies overlook the value of trusted relationships when they only see and measure social capital based on the formal organizational structure. Trust is essential within social relationships, where “there are natural ebbs and flows of shared knowledge that link people together ... to solve problems” (Stephenson, 2011, p. 282). Stephenson measures trust between members of an informal network, not by directly asking whom they trust but by asking them about their learning and decision-making process. For example, questions should investigate “how [they] go about changing the way [they] do things currently (improvement or learning), ... how [they] “kickback” and “shoot the breeze” (informal or social murmurings), ... who “makes the call” (decision making) and ... who divines the future trends (shamanistic or strategic thinking)” (Stephenson, 2011, p. 282).

Trusted relationships and cultural norms. Stephenson’s (2011, 2013) research about how corporations operate is relevant in this case study analysis as it guided the questions on how to measure informal social connections where social capital existed. Furthermore, Stephenson emphasized the role of trust by explaining that trust determines cultural beliefs and practices. Homophily is the tendency that people seek out others or associate with others who are like themselves. Likewise, fitting in and belonging as a social network member starts with trusting others who are alike and distrusting those who are unlike themselves (Stephenson, 2011). Thus, membership in a social network requires its members to conform and fit into a set of cultural norms (Stephenson, 2011).

Figure 4.1

Three Prototypical Social Network Patterns.



Note: From From Tiananmen to Tahrir: Knowing one's place in the 21st century (p. 288) by K. Stephenson, 2011. Copyright 2011 by Elsevier. Used with permission.

Consequently, measuring social networks means measuring the trusted connections among its members, and this process reveals the cultural practices of three “prototypical patterns” (Stephenson, 2011, p. 287). The social patterns (Figure 4.1) which emerge are: (a) the “hub” where the individual is centrally related to others, much like the center of a spoke, in one to one relationships, where the sharing of knowledge is fast and efficient; (b) “the gatekeeper” who may not have as many one-to-one relationships but is situated in the network in a way where they can control the access and flow of information and knowledge; and (c) “the pulsetaker,” an individual who is not as centrally located but has many indirect connections with others in the network to understand and know the “pulse” of the group (Stephenson, 2011, p. 288). This study will examine the types and patterns that emerge amongst the informants of the case study.

Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research

Research design follows a step-wise process in collecting and analyzing empirical data (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). For research to be of value, any meanings, interpretations, or conclusions drawn from the data need to be reviewed and evaluated for “goodness” or trustworthiness (Miles et al., 2014, p. 289). In qualitative research, testing for trustworthiness means confirming whether the findings reflect the truth and are reliable and credible (Krefting, 1991). One way for readers to verify its trustworthiness is not only to evaluate “what” was discovered and concluded but also “how” the research was conducted, which led to the conclusions (Miles et al., 2014, p. 289). Guba (1981) posited four concerns related to testing for trustworthiness in qualitative research: (1) Credibility, whether the research and its findings are reasonable and plausible, and whether their “truth value” can be established; (2) Dependability or reliability, whether the findings would emerge “consistently” if the research were repeated; (3) Transferability, whether the findings apply or generalizable to other contexts; and (4) “Neutrality,” whether I conducted the inquiry objectively and without bias (p. 80). The following sections discuss credibility, dependability, transferability, while confirmability and researcher positionality address the fourth concern, neutrality.

Credibility

Credibility is how well the findings accurately describe the phenomena, and in this case of qualitative research, accurately represent the “multiple realities revealed by informants” (Krefting, 1991, p. 215). I employed four types of triangulation highlighted by Creswell and Miller (2010) for ensuring credibility. First, I compared findings to certify that they rang true and were “plausible” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 306) by employing a variety of methods such as interviews, documents, and archival records (Creswell & Miller, 2010, p. 127). Second, I

checked across data sources by seeking multiple informants to interview to confirm and contrast informants' stories (Creswell & Miller, 2010, pp. 126–127). Third, I also employed member checking to ensure that my English transcriptions were accurate and reflected the informants' voices. Finally, I also applied peer debriefing by asking another peer researcher familiar with Kyrgyzstan to review my interpretations and findings (Creswell & Miller, 2010; Guba, 1981). Through triangulation, I was able to check my results to consider whether “the findings of the study make sense? Are they credible to the people we study and to our readers? Do we have an authentic portrait of what we were looking for?” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 306). In addition to triangulation, I provided details of the context with “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973, p. 10) so that readers will have substantial evidence to evaluate whether the narrative “rings true, makes sense ... and enables a vicarious presence for the reader” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 306)

Dependability

Qualitative researchers seek to ensure the stability and consistency of the research findings (Guba, 1981). In addition to engaging multiple methods, Guba (1981) recommended using an audit trail so that readers, or external auditors, can follow the research process to evaluate how I collected and analyzed the data and reached my conclusions. Dependability confirms whether the study's process was “consistent ... [and] reasonably stable over time” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 305). For this study to be dependable, the research questions need to be clear, the research design needs to align with the research questions, my relationships with the site and the informants need to be clearly described, the data collection process needs to be transparent and auditable, and review and audit checks need to be made available or possible (Miles et al., 2014). These requirements were met by including a researcher reflexivity statement

and maintaining a researcher journal and an audit trail documenting the series of activities and interactions with informants during the research process.

Transferability

Researchers place value on generalizable research, believing that findings that can apply to another context offer worth. However, qualitative researchers believe that “all social/behavioral phenomena are context-bound;” therefore, the value and worth of research are not determined by its transferability (Guba, 1981, p. 86). Instead, qualitative researchers seek to collect and provide “thick” descriptive data and descriptions so that readers can compare their context with another (Geertz, 1973 as cited in Guba, 1981, p. 86). I provided thick, rich descriptive narratives so that readers can use the findings for comparison and make judgments about whether there is a fit with other possible contexts. The value of rich descriptions is for readers to understand the narrative from the first-person perspective and appreciate the contextual findings’ nuances rather than emphasize its transferability. Thick, rich descriptions also provide readers with enough detail to judge for themselves the validity and credibility of the research, whether the findings reflect reality, and ultimately, the study’s trustworthiness.

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research resolves the problem of researcher subjectivity in two ways (Guba, 1981). First, triangulation in qualitative research seeks to gather data from various perspectives, methods, and sources. I provided documentation and an audit trail of the triangulation process, ensuring my assumptions were tested and could be further examined by reviewing the audit trail and comparing the findings to literature (Guba, 1981). A second method to ensure confirmability is researcher reflexivity, which intentionally reveals assumptions and positionality.

Researcher Positionality

Qualitative researchers bring their viewpoints into their studies, even as they strive to establish credibility, dependability, and objectivity (Creswell & Miller, 2010). The following discussion is about the lens through which I approached this study, as researcher positionality affects decisions over all aspects of the research—such as how long to engage with those in the field, how to evaluate when data collection is completed, and how to interpret, analyze, and make sense of the data (Creswell & Miller, 2010). Since I was the primary interviewer, researcher subjectivity and bias existed.

Working with rural women in Kyrgyzstan and exploring ways to support their employment is a culmination of many years of interest and professional work. My professional career started in Silicon Valley, where I first experienced working in start-ups. Later, as an entrepreneur, I wanted to use my skills in a part of the world that would have a more significant effect than remaining in the United States, amongst numerous start-ups. The desire to start new and to seek out adventure led me to Kyrgyzstan. Although I initially wanted to establish a business accelerator to help incubate local businesses, without local work experience in a post-Soviet context, I instead decided to launch a technology start-up. At the same time, the opportunity to manage an educational publishing non-profit foundation also presented itself. Co-owning a web and software development company and managing the foundation provided me with the opportunity to raise my children and work in Bishkek for more than 14 years.

During this time of prolonged engagement as a cross-cultural practitioner-scholar, acquiring language skills and an understanding of the local culture, I have developed “multiple identities and positionalities” (Srivastava, 2006, p. 210). In my research, I can “‘slip in between’ (Rossman & Rallis, 1998) two analytic languages: the ‘language of the data’ [Russian] and the

‘language I use to think in’ [English]” (Srivastava, 2006, p. 212). As a cross-cultural researcher, I am always “aware of the need to mediate my positionality [and] to mediate the gulf in our positionalities” (Srivastava, 2006, p. 213) concerning those around me. As I attempt to mediate this gulf, I am often accepted and treated as an “external-insider” (Banks, 2016, p. 141). As an “external-insider,” I am socialized within the Kyrgyz culture and have acquired many of its “values, behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge,” and my new community began viewing me “as an “adopted” insider” (Banks, 2016, p. 141). As an adopted insider, I also face a number of “hidden dilemmas” about whether my background helps in providing a unique and deeper understanding of my context or whether my background hinders the research with an “unbiased understanding that an outsider could bring to the study” (Labaree, 2002, p. 99). As a researcher, I attempt to balance the advantages of my “insiderness,” such as having “greater access, the value of cultural interpretation, and the value of deeper understanding and clarity of thought” by disclosing my position and in an effort to maintain my objectivity to retell the story as accurately as I heard it (Labaree, 2002, p. 103).

I am also a participant since qualitative research relies on a researcher to decide what to research, document, and emphasize. Over the many years of prolonged engagement, I acquired many stories about discrimination and oppression against women, especially when my values of gender equity differed from the local context. As a cross-cultural researcher, I struggled with the widespread mistreatment, discrimination, and oppression of women in Kyrgyzstan, especially in the rural regions.

When my technology company continued to grow and stabilize, I finally established a business incubator and began training social entrepreneurs to kick-start their businesses. After training social entrepreneurs, I began to follow through on my colleagues’ challenge to

consider the rural areas' needs and support and teach rural women directly. When I first met the informants for my needs assessment study, they already knew my reputation as a foreigner who had spent years working professionally in the capital city and was now training and teaching other women in the rural context. Upon my initial meeting with the informants, they quickly accepted me as an insider, telling me they felt comfortable with me and could understand my intentions and body language well enough to be at ease.

The case study I am focusing on follows some of the women I met during the summer when I was in the field conducting my needs assessment study. As a result of this work, several of them told me that they felt inspired and encouraged and decided not to give up their dreams and goals after meeting me, as they thought I was brave for returning to school at my life stage. I believe that many of them were surprised that I chose to return to school after having raised my children, all of whom were now in college. I may likely be the first woman they have ever met who returned to school in my life stage. Fourteen months later, my executive sponsor told me that those who worked on the SLRRF application project were motivated to do so after participating in my needs assessment study. In this way, I have a participatory role as an insider to the community-based farm because of my existing relationship.

The goal of collecting and retelling their story is not to provide a prescriptive detail of what worked, what did not work, and what to do next. Instead, my goal was to provide a descriptive narrative of what happened. Cho and Trent (2006) asserted that the concept of validity based on thick descriptions is not “attempting to draw grand conclusions that can be transferable,” but I believe that “thick descriptions ... delve[s] into interpreting locally constructed meanings from the emic or insider’s worldview” (Cho & Trent, 2006, pp. 328–329).

My emphasis on social networks and social capital resulted from my research and literature review on the problem of persistent unemployment. My focus on inquiring about their learning opportunities and factors that affected their learning, motivations, and intentions results from my studies in the Ed.D. program. However, my goal was to tell the story of my informants' lived experiences as accurately and transparently as I could while answering the research questions with detailed descriptions. Cho and Trent's (2006) framework is that there needs to be a holistic view of validity, that it is an ongoing process, that it is recursive, and that validity is based on both theory and practice. As a researcher, my goal was to "let the readers 'see' for themselves" (Wolcott, as cited in Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 334) what happened and read the detailed story of what led this group of rural women to reach their goal in establishing a community-based farm.

Method

The following section describes the study's participants, measures, and procedures.

Participants

The target participants of this case were the four owners of the newly established community-based farm. The owners of the farm were all external migrants or refugees living in rural Kyrgyzstan, approximately two hours from the capital city of Bishkek. Migrants or refugees are the most marginalized group in a primarily agricultural economy because they do not own land. Migrants and refugees in the region moved from even more economically or politically difficult situations. After resettlement, they typically acquiesced to exploitive work conditions. As the needs assessment confirmed, most have spent time working in the fields of larger farm owners for meager wages. This particular group of women, who established the new farm, consisted of external and internal migrants and refugees. External migrants initially moved from

elsewhere outside of Kyrgyzstan. Internal migrants are a little better off since they may be more familiar with the language and customs and can still visit family living elsewhere in the country. External migrants from other countries who moved to settle in Kyrgyzstan are much more vulnerable and isolated, with some having lost their legal documents during their relocation.

The Rural Women's Association GALA is a non-profit organization established in 1995 by rural women from the Ata district of the Chui province. GALA's activities actively improve rural women's socioeconomic status and living conditions by developing job skills, providing information, and advocacy. Through the support of the Rural Women's Association GALA, this group received training in feminist participatory action research (FPAR) and subsequently joined together and collaborated to submit a land bid from the government of Kyrgyzstan. Of the four women who are the owners of the newly established CBE, three agreed to volunteer and participate in the study, along with the fourth owner's husband. Additionally, four other women leaders from the community and two others who also won a similar land lease agreement five years earlier, but are from another nearby village, also volunteered to participate in the study. In total, the sample size included 10 participants.

My executive sponsor, Adel, the director of GALA, introduced the study to the participants. Using the script that I provided (Appendix F), Adel invited potential volunteers to meet to learn more about the study, telling them that participation would have no bearing on their relationship with GALA. Although the initial expectation was that the online interviews would take place between February to March 2021, planned online meetings with the rural women were often delayed or canceled due to the winter weather, surges in the pandemic, or road conditions for the interpreter to be on location with the interviewee. In the end, interviews took place over six months, between February and July 2021.

Measures and Instruments

The following section outlines the measures and instruments, elaborating how they measure the constructs of this study.

Interviews

Through purposive sampling, I met with participants following an interview protocol (Appendix F), where informants had an opportunity to retell their experiences related to the purpose of this study, determining which intervention features in their prior experiences led them to reach their goal. I developed the interview protocol based on Mertova and Webster's (2019) leading questions on developing useful questions for gathering data for conducting a narrative inquiry on critical events and Stephenson's (2013) questions on social network analysis. The semi-structured interview protocol allowed me to follow up on any new ideas or constructs during the interviews. Gathering the informants' reported experiences measured the constructs and critical events, including the activities that transpired while applying and receiving the land grant. In particular, asking the informants questions such as, "To whom do you turn for advice?" or, "To whom do you look for new ideas and new information?" explored the constructs of lived experiences, key relationships, attitude on developing social networks, pertinent lessons, skills, or knowledge acquired, and social capital (Appendix F). Questions asking the participants to share memories of how they overcame challenges provided data on the constructs of motivation, self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial intent. Following the interview protocol, I maintained a record of the time, place, date, pseudonyms of informants, the questions, and a recording of the answers.

Existing Secondary Documents and Other Physical Artifacts

Existing secondary documents such as video presentations documenting the SLRRF application process and former intervention training materials saved by the participants

provide details about prior intervention experiences, useful for comparing and contrasting best practices. These secondary documents provided additional evidence about the informants' lived experiences—photographs that recorded their meetings, farmland activities, harvest, other training intervention programs, and opportunities. Secondary documents provided the data about critical events and lived experiences with prior intervention training sessions that emphasized developing human, financial, and social capital.

Archival Records

Archival records include emails and chat correspondences between Adel, the director of the Rural Women's Association, GALA, and me. In the fall of 2018, Adel kept me up to date about the developments of a group of unemployed rural Kyrgyzstani women through WhatsApp conversations. Throughout 2020, I kept in touch with Adel and received updates on any developments related to the employment and training of this same group of participants as my needs assessment study. WhatsApp allowed for continuous conversations as I followed along vicariously. Archival records provided data on the constructs of human and financial capital (Appendix E), with stories about various training opportunities and grant competitions.

In addition to WhatsApp conversations, I also communicated using email. The majority of the correspondence was with Adel. Email updates provided information about challenges and opportunities addressing unemployment, agricultural work, and gender issues such as gender stereotypes and discrimination.

Researcher Journal and Notes

I kept a researcher journal and audit trail to keep records of the data collection process and reflections on my assumptions. I used an observation protocol (Appendix G) to describe the informant and my impressions, feelings, and known biases. Employing a researcher journal

during and after interviews, I recorded observations and topics that led to further inquiries and member checking.

Procedure

This final section of the chapter provides the details on participant recruitment, data collection, and coding and analysis, using an instrumental case study qualitative research design (Creswell, 2014; J. H. Kim, 2016; Polkinghorne, 1995). I conducted the study entirely online, starting with conducting Zoom interviews from my home in California. Even as I relocated to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in May 2021, I continued my final interviews online as Kyrgyzstan was in its third COVID-19 surge. Exclusively conducting research using online interviews has its limitations, as will be discussed in Chapter 5. However, I continued through only online inquiries due to health safety requirements, even though the rural communities had returned to conducting their lives without social-distancing restrictions.

Participant Recruitment

In the spring of 2021, I began the case study by employing purposive sampling. Purposive sampling allowed targeting and recruiting a specific homogeneous group sharing particular traits and characteristics (Pettus-Davis et al., 2011). The goal was to recruit as many of the owners and others who supported the owners to participate in the study. Initial recruitment took place through Adel, the director of the Rural Women's Association GALA. Adel helped identify the community-based farm owners and others involved in the bidding process, and, using the script provided to her (Appendix H), she invited them to meet with me online and find out more about the study. If a potential participant showed interest, Adel sent a Kyrgyz and Russian electronic copy of the informed consent form (Appendix I for the English version) to the potential participant before the online meeting. Adel helped with organizing the meeting

time. Next, when I met online with a potential participant, a trilingual interpreter (English, Russian, and Kyrgyz) was present, and the potential participant was again asked to confirm their interest. After describing the study, I, through the trilingual interpreter, read or reviewed (if they had indicated they already read it) the informed consent form (Appendix I) out loud in the language preferred by the informant. After reading or reviewing the informed consent form, I asked the informant whether they agreed to the terms of the form and, if so, to provide verbal consent before they participated in the study. Upon agreeing to be part of the study, I asked the participant if they wanted to receive another electronic copy of the informed consent form (Appendix I). Video recording of the online interview started only after receiving verbal consent from the informant and confirmation that the participant understood the volunteer nature of participating in the study. The interviews then proceeded, following the interview protocol (Appendix F).

The study also used snowball sampling to recruit additional informants. The additional informants, expected to emerge from the narrative inquiry process of asking informants about their connections to others and sources of learning, followed the same recruitment-consent process described above. Once new volunteers gave their verbal informed consent, I recorded the online interviews with the recruits following the interview protocol (Appendix F).

Special Considerations. Special considerations included privacy and confidentiality, literacy levels, and language barriers. Since the interviews delved into how they overcame challenges and difficulties, I needed to be sensitive by protecting the privacy of those who shared their personal stories, including intimate negative experiences. I kept all information confidential and the retelling of the stories anonymous, using pseudonyms. A researcher-consultant who is familiar with the context of Kyrgyzstan previously recommended using only verbal consent

to address literacy levels. She also recommended setting aside time with the informants at the beginning of the interviews to read through the consent forms and address any literacy and language issues (S. Childress, personal communication, April 16, 2019).

Data Collection Process

I was the “key instrument” (Figure 4.2) in this study, as the one gathering the data through interviewing informants (Creswell, 2014, p. 592). Conducting a narrative inquiry is about reliving and retelling a lived experience, and it allowed for an inductive exploration of the factors that this study aimed to identify and understand. Following Yin’s (2009) approach in collecting data, I collected and analyzed the data to relive and retell participant experiences and compare and contrast the case under investigation to the extracted features from the intervention literature.

Interviews. I conducted one-on-one interviews with a trilingual interpreter guided by the interview protocol in Appendix F. The interviews took place in the spring of 2021. Adhering to all the travel restrictions related to COVID-19 safety requirements, I conducted the interviews online. Most of the interviews took approximately 1 hour, not including the time needed for introductory remarks and receiving verbal consent. All informants were informed of the recording and consented orally to participating in the interview and having the interview recorded for research purposes. Although I understand Russian, a trilingual interpreter was present with the informants to interpret all the questions and the informants’ answers to mitigate any potential language barriers. I checked and corrected all the English portions of the Zoom autogenerated transcriptions before a professional translator translated and transcribed the Kyrgyz and Russian portions. Most interviewees preferred Kyrgyz; thus, the translator mainly translated between English and Kyrgyz.

Existing Secondary Documents and Other Physical Artifacts. Several informants spoke about or showed me additional secondary documents, videos, or physical artifacts during the interviews as they provided their answers. As described in the measurements section above, existing secondary documents and other physical artifacts that surfaced from the interviews provided more details about the types of interventions the informants had taken part in previously. Surfacing from the interviews, I followed up by asking for copies of these artifacts and received some of them electronically either through WhatsApp chats, email attachments from Adel, or links to websites.

Archival Records. I also gathered archival records of prior email and WhatsApp correspondence with Adel and others addressing unemployment among rural Kyrgyzstani women. Downloading all the WhatsApp conversations and email correspondence into text, I saved the files and set them aside for further analysis.

Researcher Journal and Notes. Furthermore, I kept a researcher journal and provided an audit trail documenting the series of activities and interactions with informants during the research process (Figure 4.2). Following Creswell's (2014) observation protocol in Appendix G, I also collected observation notes and saved all my notes using Coda.

Data Analysis

Following the steps to data analysis for qualitative research set out by Creswell (2014), I also integrated the steps with Polkinghorne's (Polkinghorne, 1995) guide for narrative analysis (Figure 4.2). Guided by the qualitative research procedures (Creswell, 2014), data analysis occurred in conjunction with data collection, whereby I began analyzing collected interviews, cataloging secondary documents and archival records, and writing notes for developing a narrative. Qualitative research is an iterative and emergent process that may change as more

data and findings are discovered (Creswell, 2014). Thus, the iterative qualitative data analysis process meant I organized and sorted the data, even during the data collection process. Unlike quantitative research, which seeks to preserve all collected data, qualitative researchers can winnow the data down as it comes in (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012, as cited in Creswell, 2014, p. 621). Following this process, I determined what parts of the collected data were relevant to the study and disregarded other parts that were not relevant. The following describes the data analysis process in more detail.

First, Zoom's online interviews allowed for the automatic machine transcription of the English portions of the conversations. I then listened and watched the recorded videos to correct mistakes made by the automated machine transcriptions. Once corrected and verified, I sent the videos to 4 professional translators to transcribe the Russian or Kyrgyz portions into English, hoping to have the videos transcribed more quickly in parallel. Upon receiving the completed translated transcripts, I again watched the videos, following along with the transcribed text to evaluate the quality of the translations. Several times, I asked for clarification from the translators and, on one occasion, forwarded one of the interviews to a different (more experienced) translator to re-translate and re-transcribe the interview to ensure a higher standard of translation.

Second, I conducted multiple readings of the completed transcriptions to consider meanings and patterns following Braun and Clarke's (2006) first phase of conducting a thematic analysis. The purpose of conducting repeated readings of all the data is to familiarize oneself with the qualitative data. I then followed up with any questions I had by conducting member checking for clarification; member checking occurred on nine occasions. These first two steps completed the first phase of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Analysis of the Narrative. Third, I applied paradigmatic analysis, *analysis of the narrative*. Part of the iterative sorting and organizing required that I extract translated-transcribed respondent data from the interpreter to avoid double-counting the data during the second phase of thematic analysis, the coding data. I only included the interpreter's words when the recording of an interviewee's responses was unclear due to either Internet connectivity problems or when contextual clarification served to provide a proper understanding of the informant's answers.

I first analyzed the data following a "theory-driven approach," as I "approached the data with specific questions in mind," rather than using a data-driven approach of developing codes from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). The theory-driven approach allowed for comparing and contrasting the intervention features from the literature review that existed or developed over time from the case concerning the community-based farm (Figure 3.2).

During this next phase of thematic analysis, the first coding cycle, I used the extracted features from the literature review as a priori codes. Using a priori coding, I coded the interview transcripts using a software program. Again, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) method, I matched the list of 12 extracted features from the literature review on interventions to all the interview data and then collated the data under each of the a priori codes. I followed this same process to categorize secondary documents received during the interviews, such as images of training materials and videos retelling the stories about how the group applied for receiving government land.

This first cycle of coding analyzed the data in preparation for exploring the themes from the intervention literature about human, financial, and social capital, with particular emphasis on social capital and how it contributed to learning (human capital), entrepreneurial motivation, and entrepreneurial intent. I reviewed the coding process to verify accuracy and consistency

in tagging the transcripts and secondary documents, keeping in mind to “code extracts of data inclusively” by keeping the data in context and also keeping in mind that parts of the transcripts “may be uncoded, coded once, or coded many times, as relevant” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). Collating the results, I followed the third phase of thematic analysis and attempted to search for themes based on how the a priori codes matched the context of informant responses. Collating the results required paying the most attention to the codes with the highest frequency. Phase four required refining the themes whereby I reviewed the interview transcripts thematically to ensure that the data reflected the candidate themes—this refining process allowed for the development of a thematic map of the data (Appendix K). Phase five involved defining and naming the themes to come together to tell a story in preparation to answer the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Next, in the second coding cycle, I took only the interviews belonging to farm owners and their families, the group who submitted a bid and received land from the government in 2020, and one video that retold their application process. Using only responses from this sample, I conducted in vivo coding. The reason for segmenting the sample size was that research questions 2–4 focused on the perspective of the new farm owners, not all the actors in the case. In vivo coding helps capture the voices of the marginalized; thus, segmenting the sample size focused on hearing only from the recipients of past interventions made sense. After in vivo coding the relevant transcripts, I repeated the second coding cycle process to review my codes to ensure consistency and accuracy. Next, I extracted the codes and categorized the codes into groups to develop emergent themes from the in vivo codes. Thematic analysis allowed me to look for the core ideas, categorize them, and compare their stories with the factors depicted in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1). During this review, I followed Braun and Clarke’s

(2006) recommendation not to paraphrase codes into themes but ensured that themes “fit ... into a broader overall ‘story’” related to the research questions (p. 92). In telling the story, I used qualitative causation coding¹ (Miles et al., 2014), extracting the participants’ beliefs about why events occurred and not just what happened. Using causation coding involved grouping the codes with “antecedent conditions” and connecting them to “mediating factors,” which led “towards [a] certain outcome” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 70), the establishment of the farm. At this point, I developed a list of the emergent themes and their definitions in preparation for writing up the final analysis (Figure 5.2 and Figure 5.3). Causation coding allowed me to begin answering research questions.

Narrative Analysis. After conducting both a priori and in vivo thematic analysis, I returned to the data for developing a narrative analysis (Appendix L). In this sixth step of analysis (Figure 4.2), the goal was to learn from the informants about a problem, acquire information to understand the phenomena (Creswell, 2014), and allow the narrative to answer the research questions. In narrative studies, a researcher weaves together the informants’ stories and retells the narrative that highlights the setting, plot, and events culminating to a conclusion (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), filling in the missing gaps so that the story can retell a phenomena’s nuances rather than rely only on abstract themes and definitions (J. H. Kim, 2016). Narrative analysis considers the uniqueness of each situation, acknowledging that “each situation [is] remarkable,” and emphasized the holistic retelling of the “coherent whole” (Polkinghorne, 1995, as cited by J. H. Kim, 2016, p. 197).

¹ Not to be confused with *causal relationships* in scientific investigations that determine if one variable causes another variable to occur or change

The final product was a narrative that offers a “storied description” of what occurred among a group of rural Kyrgyzstani women (Polkinghorne, 2010, p. 396). The caveat of comparing intervention features to what happened in Kyrgyzstan is that qualitative research does not necessarily provide a prescriptive “list of techniques or procedures” (Polkinghorne, 2010, p. 396). As a narrative inquiry, the goal was not to produce a prescriptive list of what to do but instead, provide “readers a vicarious experience” so that with their “experiential background enlarged,” they will know what is possible and then decide for themselves how their new understanding can sharpen their practice, in their context (Polkinghorne, 2010, p. 396).

Thus, the first step in developing a narrative analysis was to conduct multiple readings to retell the stories by connecting events and context and drawing out the critical stories to answer the research questions. Accordingly, I again returned to the interview transcripts and carefully reviewed the transcripts to acquire a sense of the overarching story and meaning. By returning to the data, I then attempted to develop a “Gestalt, the general narrative thread” of an informant’s story, encompassing an organized, holistic approach (Josselson, 2011, p. 231); abbreviating the stories to organize the context, setting, and plot of the story so that I will have similar stories, or those related to each other, grouped (Creswell, 2014). Then, I drafted a narrative, piecing together the key informants’ (three of the farm owners and one of the husbands) stories in a chronological form to help answer the second research question, what events, factors, or relationships do the participants identify as contributing to the success/struggles of reaching their goal, starting the CBE? Since Adel also provided the opportunity to interview two other women who belonged to a group who had received another plot of leased land five years before this case study, I seized upon the opportunity also to interview them and hear about how their stories

compared with the key informants. Their additional data provided a deeper understanding of the setting concerning rural women's farm ownership challenges.

As part of this step, I configured the collected data, including descriptive details from my observation protocol notes and archival records of my WhatsApp conversations with Adel, my executive sponsor, into a story that included detailed descriptions about the informants, such as their cultural context as well as observations about their emotional state, appearance, and self-identity (Polkinghorne, 1995). To complete this sixth step, I applied Dollard's (1935) suggested seven criteria for evaluating a story by organizing the data, as described by Polkinghorne (1995), by considering:

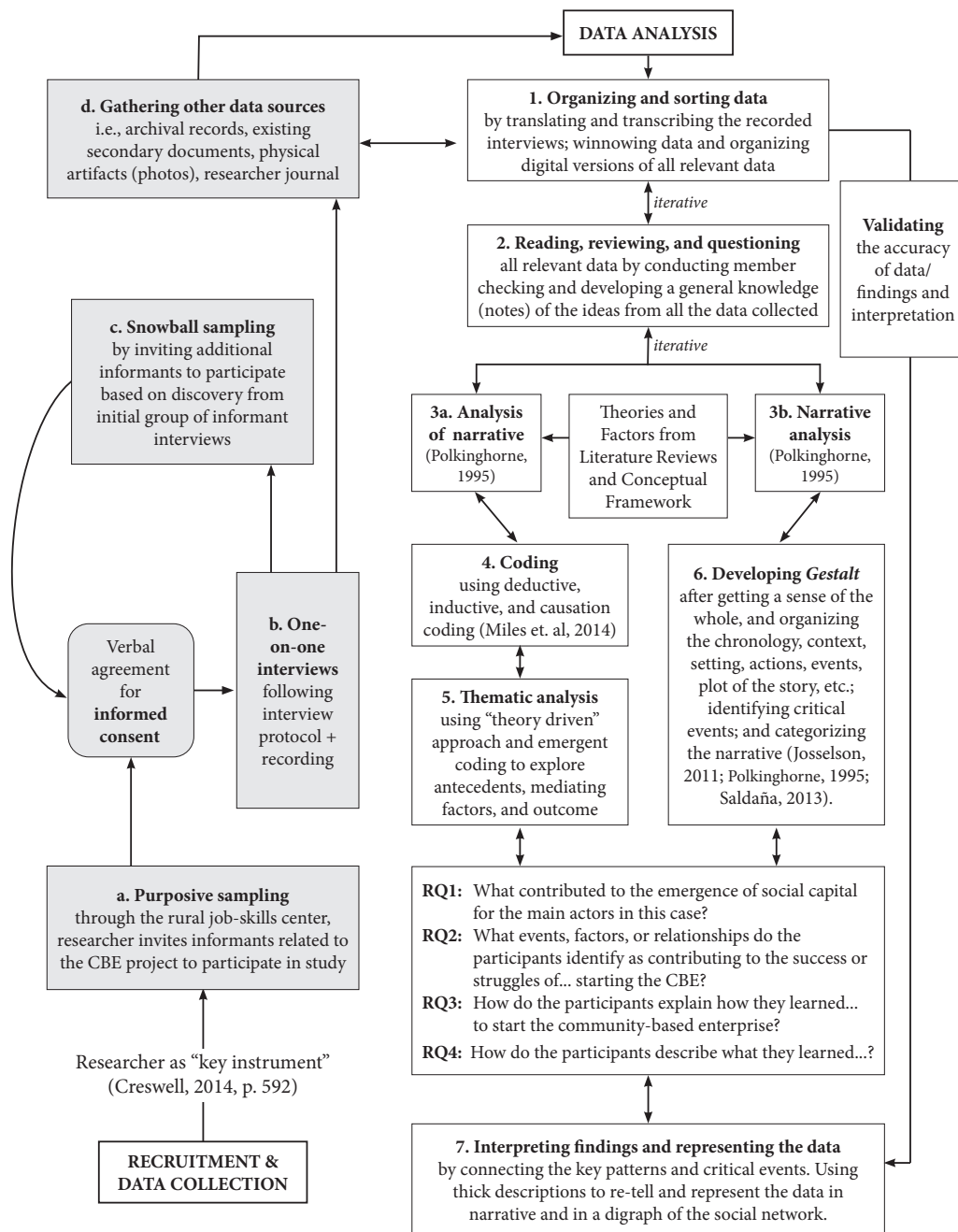
- the “cultural context” ... such as its “values, social rules, meaning systems, ... expected personal goals, ... normal strategies for achieving these goals” (p. 16);
- the informant's physical appearance and life stage;
- the relationships between the informant with those around her, and how her relationships affect the story's plot;
- the informant's context and the events that occur around her affect her life choices and actions;
- the historical context and past experiences which continue to affect the informant's actions and future actions;
- the boundaries that define the narrative, where the story begins and the “point of denouement” (p. 17); and
- the plausibility and understandability of the storyline that has been configured by “the disparate data elements” and organized to provide a “meaningful explanation of the protagonist's responses and actions” (p. 18).

For the narrative analysis, I assembled the informant's descriptions about their context, the actors, and the setting, to first extract a chronological order of the story and then identified the components that contributed to the establishment of the CBE (Polkinghorne, 1995). Connecting the key elements of the story determined the actions and critical events binding the story together with the "because of" and "in order to" explanations that lead to the final dénouement (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, as cited in Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 18).

Blended Analysis. Since I followed the narrative by analyzing critical events and interpreting the findings by representing the data using social network analysis, social network analysis will frame the narrative to explain how social relationships contributed to the outcome. A narrative mode of study fills in the gaps so that readers can understand the events and actions together as a plot in understanding the final story (J. H. Kim, 2016). I then answered research questions three and four by combining the findings from the analysis of the narrative and the narrative analysis to understand how social relationships developed over time, whether these relationships supported learning opportunities to develop entrepreneurial motivations and intentions, and how teaching and learning emerged among the informants.

Figure 4.2

Data Collection and Analysis Procedure



Note: Adapted from Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods

Approaches (p. 627) by J. Creswell, 2014, Thousand Oak, CA: SAGE. Copyright 2014 by SAGE

Publication. Adapted with permission.

Summary

This qualitative case study explores those constructs that nurtured an environment that supported training, learning, motivation, and development for a group of marginalized women in rural Kyrgyzstan. Data collection includes online interviews with key actors, secondary documents, artifacts, and a researcher journal. Using narrative analysis and analysis of the narrative, the instrumental case study answers the four research questions. A narrative inquiry discusses the critical events and key relationships that emerged using social network analysis

Chapter Five

Case Study Findings and Discussion

In the spring of 2020, a group of four rural Kyrgyzstani women from the northern rural region of Kyrgyzstan submitted a bid to lease 3 hectares of farmland from Kyrgyzstan's State Land Redistribution Reserve Fund (SLRRF). Upon receiving the lease grant, the four women established a community-based farm, sharing the workload between themselves and hiring others from within their community (other unemployed rural women) to help them harvest and sell their produce. The land lease from the SLRRF program provided them an opportunity to rent land at a substantially reduced rate, often referred to as a land grant.

In light of the findings from the needs assessment, where rural women indicated their problems with social isolation and not knowing whom to seek help from in their search for employment, this study is an exceptional case about the group establishing and owning a community-based farm in rural Kyrgyzstan. As a lease, the four women do not consider themselves owners of the farm since they do not own the land. However, since they established the community-based enterprise and became the owners of the enterprise, the four women will be referred to as *the owners*, *the nascent owners*, or the *farm owners* in the rest of this chapter. Pseudonyms replace all names, including location names and organization names. An example of the format used for citing interview verbatims is: [Coda (3/10) 21:54:02]. In this example, the citation indicates the location of my saved transcript (under my researcher journal Coda workspace), the date of the interview (March 10th), and the closest timestamp in the transcript associated with the quote (21:54:02). There are 12 codes and six different types of social networks embedded in the findings and discussion. I encourage the reader to refer to or print out

Appendix D and Appendix M since I refer to them often throughout this chapter. Chapter Five's organization is as follows:

- **Case Study Context:** The chapter begins with a description that provides the background on the context of the study, such as geographic and population information, the political context, and the State Land Redistribution Reserve Fund.
- **Process of Implementation:** Next is a description of whether I adhered to the data collection and analysis procedures described in Chapter Four.
- **Findings:** I provide relevant demographic information, including the positionality of key actors and a brief description of partnerships that occurred in the mesosystem.
- **Response to Research Questions:** I answer the four questions about social capital, reaching goals, overcoming challenges, and what learning occurred.
- **Discussion:** A narrative retells how the nascent owners established the community-based farm using social network analysis and highlighting ten critical events.
- **Conclusions:** I connect the narrative back to the theoretical and conceptual frameworks and the learning outcomes about how social capital supported the key actors' learning and entrepreneurial intentions.
- **Implications for Future Research and Practice:** In this final section, I emphasize the importance of the reflective process in the learning loop and supporting structures that improve social interactions, inclusivity of the marginalized, and active learning.

Case Study Context

Geographic and Population Context

The geographic region where this case study took place consists of many migrants and refugee families. It is a diverse area, with many ethnic groups such as Koreans, Uzbeks,

Tajiks, Tatars, and Dungan people, residing together. Even among ethnic Kyrgyz, many in the area are referred to as *kairylmans*, (literally means returnees) from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan, and many returned to Kyrgyzstan speaking different dialects and practicing different Kyrgyz customs and practices. Each of these groups, with slight cultural and historical differences, tend to keep to themselves, differentiating whether others ought to be treated as outsiders or whether they are accepted as insiders, evident from the use of Kyrgyz phrases, evaluating whether others are matching us (*bizgeh ilaiek*) or just like us (*bizdei ele*). As discussed earlier in Chapter Four, *homophily*, the tendency for people to mainly associate with others similar to themselves, plays out in rural Kyrgyzstan, in alignment with Stephenson's (2011) research on social networks where social networks are segregated by trust and fear, with "trust being the glue" that holds each social group together (p. 247). Historically, ethnic tensions within Kyrgyzstan have boiled over, resulting in violence and displacement.

Political Context

Politically, Kyrgyzstan faced several political upheavals. The situation began in 2020 when, due to COVID-19 restrictions, municipal elections that were supposed to take place in the spring of 2020 were postponed for one year and reset for April 2021. Then in October of 2020, immediately after Kyrgyzstan's national elections, the country experienced its third political revolution, with the ousting of the elected president and the jailbreak of Japarov, a convicted kidnapper who rose to power to immediately become the interim president (Nechepurenko, 2021). As a result of the revolution, another set of national elections took place in January 2021, one month before my case study data collection began. The elections resulted in a landslide victory for Japarov, with 80% of voter support (Nechepurenko, 2021). Following the January elections, the newly formed government drafted a revised constitution in February to concentrate

presidential power, and the referendum vote on the drafted constitution took place in April 2021, on the same day as the postponed municipal elections of 2020.

The State Land Redistribution Reserve Fund (SLRRF)

Kyrgyzstani women face discrimination in land ownership, management, and inheritance (Dubok & Turakhanova, 2018; International Labour Office, 2009). Although the legal framework allows women to inherit and own land, in a patriarchal society where patrilocal residency is typical, most households protect their family lands by passing ownership only to sons (Dubok & Turakhanova, 2018; United Nations Development Programme, 2012; USAID, 2016). Landless rural families are considered one of the most vulnerable groups in Kyrgyzstani society and understandably desire land ownership.

While land from the SLRRF does not bestow ownership, subsidized lease agreements can provide a path for farmers to save up their profits from each season and eventually buy land to own, as their savings allow. However, land grants are typically bestowed to the highest bidders, and even the recipients of SLRRF land grants historically are male farmers or established farming companies owned by men. Women are conventionally marginalized during the bidding process (Dubok & Turakhanova, 2018).

There are five main steps to the process of applying for SLRRF land:

1. Request a local land surveyor to provide information about available SLRRF land.
2. Appeal to a municipal social worker to aid in preparing official documents that prove one's qualifications in meeting the prerequisite of societal vulnerability.
3. Register the prepared documents and submit them to the secretary of the Land Commission of the Municipal Parliament.
4. Meet with the local Land Commission.

5. Wait on the committee's decision whether to provide land to the applicant (Ismoilova et al., 2019).

Process of Implementation

Recruitment and Interview Process

With the municipal elections and the referendum set for April, many of the women leaders in the rural communities were heavily involved in the election process and reaching out to their constituents, affecting the availability of interview candidates. The referendum resulted in reducing the powers of the parliament and giving more executive power to the president. With the pandemic, the revolution, the referendum, and the municipal elections setting the scene, my interpreter was also occupied with preparing for and supporting women leaders and their involvement in supporting election participation. Out of respect and practicality, I did not push for an aggressive timeline to finish the interviews, which initially was set for two months, but instead took closer to six months to complete.

Setting up interview times that worked for me, the candidates, and the interpreter was not straightforward due to time zone differences between California and Kyrgyzstan. The interview process began in February when I was 14 hours behind Kyrgyzstan's time zone, and in March, this changed with daylight savings to 13 hours behind. The last interview I conducted took place while I relocated to Bishkek, and even though I conducted the interview online via zoom, being in the same time zone with the interpreter and interviewee allowed us to find a more suitably convenient time. A more flexible time also allowed for a three-way online call since the interpreter did not have to travel to be with the interviewee because the interviewee could go to a better location with better Internet connectivity.

Although I adjusted to adhere to COVID-19 restrictions, some aspects of the data collection process were unexpected. Steps (b) and (c) in Figure 4.2 described my intention to conduct one-on-one interviews and employ snowball sampling. Due to the remote nature of the interviews and my limited control of who would appear on the monitor when we all connected online, two of the interviews I conducted included more than one interviewee. Smaller than a focus group, the first interview involved three actors, two women owners of the CBE and the husband of another owner. Although this differed slightly from my expectations for conducting one-on-one interviews, having all three actors together helped with their recall and allowed me to confirm their answers when one replied and another agreed. The other interview that included more than one individual during the same session was with two women in another village who received SLRRF land five years earlier.

When I met with candidates, explaining the purpose of my study and reviewing the informed consent, I realized that whenever more than one person showed up for the interview, they all expected and preferred to be interviewed collectively, during the same time. It became clear that I had to interview them as a group mainly because the trip to the remote location was arduous for the interpreter and everyone's availability was limited. Both of these interviews involved more than one actor because these locations were more challenging to reach, mainly because they took place while rural Kyrgyzstan was still in the middle of winter, where travel conditions and arranging the time for the interpreter limited meeting opportunities. Meeting times were often delayed as the interpreter would send me WhatsApp messages to postpone the meeting time due to weather or road conditions, pushing me to stay up later into the evenings in order to be able to connect online with those in Kyrgyzstan.

As for snowball sampling, a potential recruitment method I thought I could employ and mentioned in Chapter Four, this did not occur as I planned. During the interviews, interviewees rarely mentioned potential interviewees to me, making snowball sampling not a viable method. Furthermore, interviewees rarely recommended or mentioned other actors in the context of offering them to be interviewed, resulting in my relying solely on my executive sponsor to suggest potential interview candidates.

Data Collection and Analysis

Following the steps outlined in Chapter Four, I began conducting interviews entirely online, adjusting due to the COVID-19 pandemic; I was in California, and my interpreter lived 1 hour outside of Bishkek, the capital city of Kyrgyzstan. Although the pandemic hit Kyrgyzstan hard, the country mainly remained open, with few social distancing protocols and restrictions in place. Since many of the actors lived in very remote locations, my interpreter and I decided that she would need to be in person with the interviewees in order to connect them using her stable Internet hotspot.

Following the methods outlined in Chapter Four and using the interview protocols (Appendix F), I also requested secondary documents during the interviews. During the second step of the data collection and analysis procedure, as depicted in Figure 4.2 (Reading, Reviewing, and Questioning), I discovered that most of the secondary documents offered less relevant data for my analysis since the documents did not provide data about the participants' learning experiences. For example, sometimes, they sent me their drawings and notes from seminars, and when I attempted to conduct member checking, they could not recall the meaning of their notes or drawings. However, I also received secondary documents that focused on farming skills, such as manuals and instructions on building a greenhouse; these documents

showed me they valued and safeguarded resources that enhanced their learning. In the end, after I reviewed their manuals, I focused my data collection and analysis on the most relevant data sources, the interviews.

Findings

Demographics of Interviewees

Exploring the case involved interviewing ten individuals, and their demographics are listed in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1

Descriptive Demographics of Case Study Interviewees

	Pseudonym Age	Marital status Number of children	Education Role/relevance to the case
1.	Gulzat Age 39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Married, One adult daughter and 2-year-old son 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low education level CBE owner, Member of TRIO
2.	Saltanat Age 47	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Married 2 divorced daughters 6 grandchildren 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low education level CBE owner, Member of TRIO
3.	Zamira Age 36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Divorced 3 school-aged children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical college CBE owner, Member of TRIO
4.	Elgiza Age 45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Married 2 sons ages 9 and 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Bachelor's in jurisprudence, second Bachelor's in economics, and a Master's in management and local government Director of STAR, a GALA trainer, Deputy of the local council, consultant on the SLRRF application process

	Pseudonym Age	Marital status Number of children	Education Role/relevance to the case
5.	Adel Age 41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Married • 2 school-aged sons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's in Economics • GALA director and trainer
6.	Almaz Age 35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Married 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Husband of Mirgul, the fourth owner and member of TRIO
7.	Kanykei Age 56	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widow • Adult children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved higher education level • Chief Land Specialist, GALA trainer, previously the speaker of the local parliament (an elected position)
8.	Cholpon Age 55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Married • Adult children (2 sons and 1 daughter) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduate of a trade school, majored in finance • GALA consultant trainer, previously: a horticulture accountant at collective farms, a member of the local Women's Council, an elected Deputy, and the head of the Resident's Council in her village
9.	Eldana Age 64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Married • 2 adult sons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the 7 original owners of another CBE using SLRRF land
10.	Gauhar Age 52	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Married • 2 daughters (one unmarried) and 1 son 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the 7 original owners of another CBE using SLRRF land

The key non-governmental organizations and the interviewed actors involved in this case study are in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2*Key Non-Governmental Organizations Involved in Case Study*

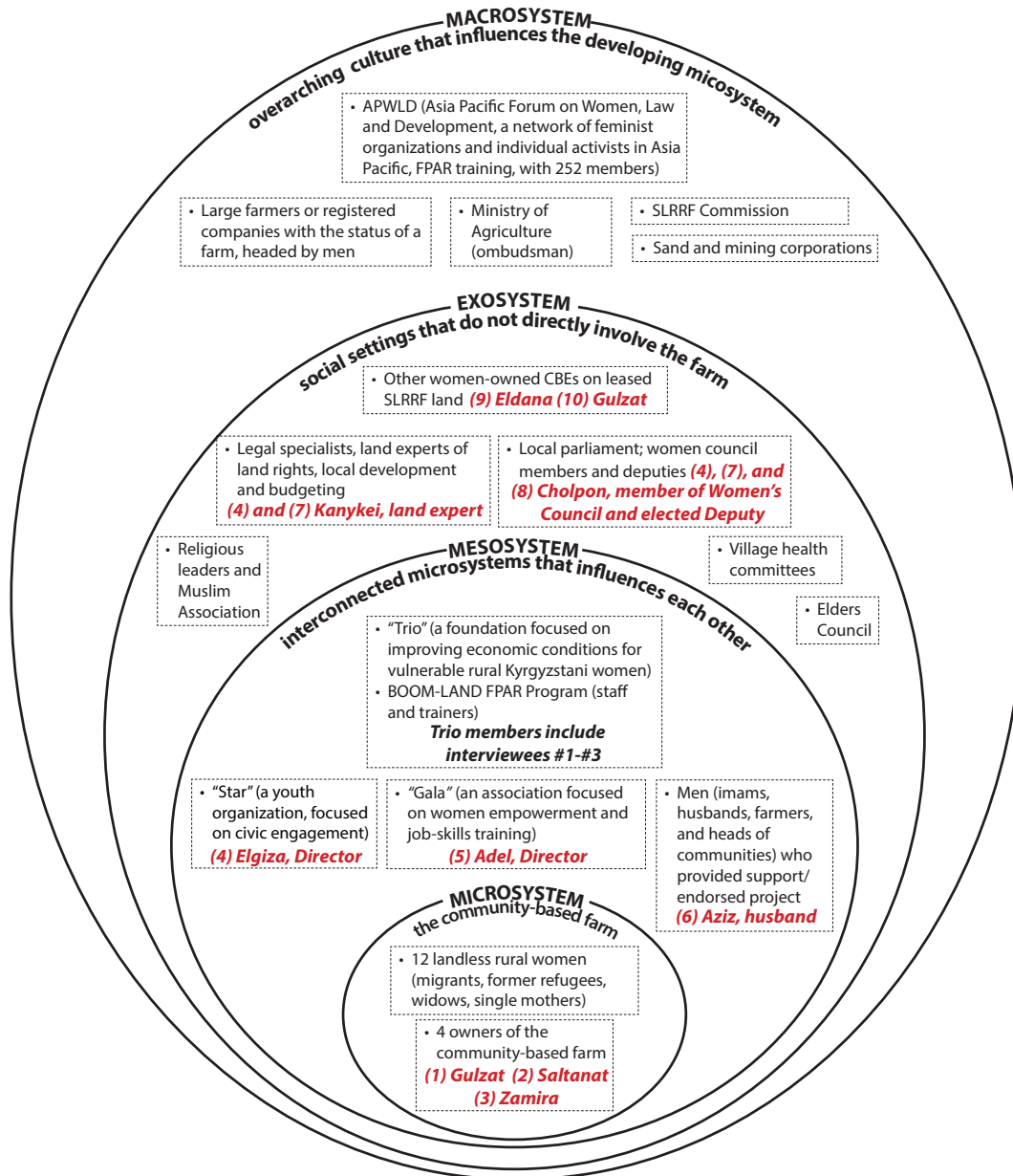
NGO (Pseudonyms)	Description	Key Actors
GALA	A women’s rural association that offers training, focusing on improving rural women’s socioeconomic status and living conditions by developing job skills, providing information, and advocacy	Adel, director (Actor #5) Cholpon (#8) Elgiza (#4) Kanykei (#7)
STAR	A youth organization focused on capacity building, increasing civic participation, and the improvement of the welfare of women and youth	Elgiza, director (#4)
TRIO Fund	A self-help group whose members consist of landless rural Kyrgyzstani women	Gulzat (#1) Saltanat (#2) Zamira (#3)

Positionality of Case Study Actors

One of the farm owners, familiar with Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR), developed a report summarizing her initial findings of the SLRRF program (Ismoilova et al., 2019). The report offered a description of the main actors and organizations involved in the case and provided data for me to use Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 1994) nested ecological systems theory to depict the stakeholders’ positionality (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1

Positionality of Case Study Actors Through the Lens of Ecological Systems Theory



The four farm owners directly managing the farm are in the community-based enterprise's microsystem (Table 5.1). In this case study, all four new CBE owners are migrants or refugees who moved out of necessity and settled in a village with many other migrant families.

As such, they rent their homes and are considered landless migrants. Within the mesosystem are the interconnected microsystems influencing each other and influencing the microsystem. These included STAR, a youth organization; GALA, an association of rural women; TRIO Fund, a group consisting of landless migrant rural women; and the men in the community. The mesosystem also includes the men from the community. Mirgul, Gulzat, Saltanat, and Zamira are all members of TRIO Fund, a self-help association whose members consist of landless rural Kyrgyzstani women.

The exosystem consists of social settings that do not directly involve the women farm owners but affect them. The village health committees, legal specialists of land rights, the Elders Council, local parliament, religious women leaders, and the Women's Muslim Association are within the exosystem. Eldana and Gauhar are owners, along with five other women who had started a CBE five years before this case study. These two women's lived experiences paralleled the main case study actors and provided additional perspectives that approximate five years into the future of the main actors in this case study (Figure 5.1).

The macrosystem represents contexts that influence the overarching culture and affect the farm owners. In this case study, the nearby large farmers, the sand and mining corporations, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Commission on the Commission on the State Land Redistribution Reserve Fund (SLRRF), and the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law, and Development (APWLD) belong in the macrosystem. APWLD is a network of feminist organizations and individual activists in the Asia Pacific where several actors in the case study learned how to conduct the feminist participatory action research (FPAR) process.

The purpose of the SLRRF, which controls 25% of agricultural land in the country, is to allocate land use among the rural communities. Through bid applications, competition, and

auction, farmers may apply to receive up to 25 hectares of land, which, if awarded, they can lease from the government for up to ten years. Not having their own lands to farm, many rural women, especially those divorced and widowed, live below subsistence living standards and remain vulnerable to exploitive employment situations (Anonymous, personal communication, June 18th, 2019). During the fall of 2019, in partnership with the TRIO Fund, The Rural Women's Association GALA supported a group of migrant, landless women in researching how to apply and qualify for receiving land from the SLRRF program. Before attending the seminars and conducting research with the support of GALA and TRIO, the case study actors, the group of marginalized rural women, did not know about their rights to claim these leasing opportunities. By participating and attending consultations with land law experts, the women learned about their legal rights and developed confidence to pursue and obtain land from the SLRRF.

RQ1: Emergence of Social Capital

The first research question inquired about what contributed to the emergence of social capital for the main actors. Determining the answer necessitated exploring the conditions of human capital; financial capital; entrepreneurial self-efficacy, motivation, and intent; and the group's attitudes towards investing in the development of social capital. Social capital intervention features dominated the top-ranked a priori codes (Table 5.3).

After reviewing the transcripts and secondary data again to ensure that the codes reflected the data accurately, I analyzed the codes, considering how and whether they relate to each other, and developed a thematic map that represented the relationships between the a priori codes (Appendix K). As the map depicts, the three overarching themes related to contributing to the emergence of social capital are: Events or relationships that developed a connection for the actors to the wider community, events or relationships that increased one's awareness of available

support services, and events or relationships that afforded the actors to drive self-beneficial decisions. Of these groupings, the most frequently mentioned a priori codes are highlighted below to answer the first research question.

Table 5.3

Ranking of Top Ten A Priori Intervention Features and Codes

A Priori Codes	A Priori Code Definitions	Intervention Type
Int.Fe.+11	Events or relationships that are embedded within its local community	Social Capital
Int.Fe.+5	Events or relationships that offered an opportunity for women inclusivity, promoting unlikely candidates to become business owners or leaders	Human Capital
Int.Fe.+12	Events or relationships that prioritize social benefits (e.g., preserving culture and the environment)	Social Capital
Int.Fe.+NGO	NGO Associations(s) involvement/support	N/A
Int.Fe.+10	Events or relationships connecting people who shared common entrepreneurial or employment goals	Social Capital
Int.Fe.+9	Events or relationships that targeted communities with acute levels of poverty	Social Capital
Int.Fe.+8	Events or relationships that gave participants key decision-making power rather than governing bodies	Social Capital
Int.Fe.+1	Events or relationships that overlooked traditional bias and preferential treatment by including a marginalized group	Social Capital, Financial Capital
Int.Fe.+GOV	A government affordance/policy	Social Capital
Int.Fe.+3	Events or relationships that emphasized the essentiality of group identity in goal setting and goal attainment	Financial Capital

Events or Relationships that Developed a Connection for the Actors to the Wider Community

Analyzing interviewee responses about their lived experiences revealed that their journey in developing social capital began with an event or relationship that connected them to the

wider community. A priori codes that matched the interview transcripts the most often included events of relationships embedded within the local community, events or relationships offering an opportunity for women inclusivity, and events and relationships that prioritized social benefits.

Events or Relationships Embedded Within the Local Community (Int.Fe.+11). When asked to recall an early memory related to starting the CBE, the most frequent response was a memory about a specific relationship embedded within their close-knit, trusted social network.

Respondents often shared how a trusted person invited or encouraged them to attend an event that led to developing a connection to others who could help them. For Gulzat, one of the four owners of the CBE, the catalyst was her sister's invitation to attend a GALA training event. For Saltanat, she said, "Diana and Gulzat invited me" [Coda (2/12) 20:29:42]. For Zamira, during her time at the women's shelter, the staff provided her refuge and encouraged her to attend self-development courses. The stories the interviewees shared always involved a trusted persons' invitation or encouragement to take steps in seeking additional support and not an individual's proactive decision to step out of their comfort zone on their own. Even Zamira, who decided to divorce and move to another region in the country, shared that "I turn to my parents for advice They are [my] first advisors" [Coda (7/21) 22:09:35]. As her most trusted source of advice and support, Zamira would not have made those life-altering decisions seeking independence without her parents' counsel, guidance, and support.

Likewise, even the women leaders and trainers in the case study emphasized the effectiveness of embedded relationships, boasting about the competence of a GALA trainer, Adel, the director of GALA said,

she's from the rural area herself, and she understands the context of work in rural areas. Because sometimes trainers from Bishkek or trainers from other areas,

they have good, solid theoretical knowledge. But they use academic language for providing training Elgiza's training is successful for women Such trainers, as Elgiza, are very strong, and their training are [*sic*] very useful, and they have an effect for TRIO women [pseudonym, implying a members of a group of vulnerable, migrant, marginalized women] and immigrant women. [Coda (3/10) 20:58:02]

Further emphasizing the importance of embedded relationships and understanding, Adel later continued by saying, "We are involved in mobilizing and ... in activating women because we [can] work on the grass-root level" [Coda (3/10) 21:02:16]. Elgiza, the director of STAR, also emphasized the importance of trusted, close relationships as she spoke about how she was influential in helping support rural women because "The local community respects me" [Coda (3/05) 20:28:58]. To further emphasize the importance of support at the grassroots level, Elgiza also said, "Initially, when migrant women come for a training, we sometimes have difficulties ... sometimes they don't know the language We ... speak both Russian and Kyrgyz. And we explain to them, give them handouts in two languages" [Coda (3/05) 20:39:41].

In agreement with other leaders in the community emphasizing embedded relationships, Cholpon, a respected woman leader in the community and a member of the Women's Council, also said, "Yes, unemployment is very high level now in our country. And we should help ourselves, by ourselves, we should help ourselves" [Coda (2/09) 21:41:27].

As for the two women interviewees, Eldana and Gauhar, living in a different village nearby who had received land five years prior to this case study, they also confirmed that they started their process of learning by connecting to opportunities through close-knit trusted relationships. Gauhar recalled that despite having migrated to live in a new area of the country,

the relationships she relied on were relationships with women who originally also came from the Naryn *Oblast* (administrative region) in Kyrgyzstan. Both Eldana and Gauhar share that at first, having few connections with the community in their new village, they relied on relationships with those who shared the most similarities with them. Years later, when Eldana became a leader in her community, she became the trusted, more knowledgeable other. Eldana conscientiously kept up-to-date and reached out to help vulnerable women; others also referred to Eldana as someone very familiar and trusted, embedded in the local village.

Events or Relationships Offering an Opportunity for Women Inclusivity Promoting Unlikely Candidates to Become Owners/Leaders (Int.Fe.+5). The next most emphasized factor among the interviewees was how an event or a relationship offered them the opportunity to be included. Almaz, the husband of one of the CBE owners, offered his support for the women, commenting that his support was unique because most of his contemporaries did not agree with him (see Critical Event # 5: Saltanat and Others Gain the Support of Their Husbands in the narrative inquiry on page 218). In agreement with their husbands, the CBE owners emphasized that their inclusivity hinged on the support of the men around them, “Yes, it’s a problem because they are women. Because without the support of men, they cannot water their fields. They can work on plant[ing] the fields, they can cultivate ... but watering, it [needs] support from the men side” [Interpreter speaking on behalf of Saltanat, Coda (2/12) 21:17:58].

From the perspective of the community leaders and trainers, they also acknowledged that women needed more specific and focused intervention support because rural women were more often excluded from the process of bidding for land. Kanykei, a Chief Land Specialist and GALA trainer, shared that she “always helped women, consulted on what they need to do, ... [and] never refused to help them ... despite problems and conflicted situations that happened” [Coda

(4/13) 21:18:34]. Kanykei began the interview by emphasizing her targeted approach because of the systemic problem of discrimination, “I worked with them [marginalized women] closely, registered them in departments of social protection, and helped them to get social passports so that precisely they would be included in the competitive auction, for the participation of the preferential auction” [Coda (4/13) 20:50:55].

Cholpon, a member of the Women’s Council, also iterated the importance of including women, saying, “I try to find funds for projects wherever I hear about them to implement them for the benefit of our people, especially for the benefit of women. I try to help them” [Coda (2/09) 21:12:33]. Again, Cholpon emphasized her role in providing support that prioritized including women, “And especially, it’s a difficult situation for women. And we try to support each other as women. And we must join to support each other because women, they think about their kids” [Coda (2/09) 21:41:49].

Events or Relationships that Prioritized Social Benefits (Int.Fe.+12). The third most frequently mentioned type of event or relationship that interviewees spoke about when reflecting on the development of social capital were events or relationships that emphasized other social benefits. When I asked Cholpon, the head of the Women’s Council, about how she supported the CBE owners towards the eventual outcome of establishing the farm, Cholpon reflected on a time when she supported, sponsored, or hosted social activities that promoted social cohesion, highlighting,

we have a club and different kinds of activities and training, and seminars are held in that club. I take an active part in them. I invite these women to this club.

Oksana [pseudonym] had a training on women’s rights, I show[ed] them anti-

violence videos. We held 16-day protests/campaigns against domestic violence.

We hold general meetings of rural area women. [Coda (2/09) 21:25:55]

Cholpon believed in inviting marginalized, vulnerable women to such events “so that women can express themselves. We, the women of the Chui Oblast [administrative region], got together to exchange experience with the women from other oblasts” [Coda (2/09) 21:27:48]. Her goal is to help rural women connect with others like themselves, participate in the wider community, change their attitudes about the need for social connections, and become more interested in developing their strengths. Cholpon proudly shared, “I have implemented 18 social projects” [Coda (2/9) 21:12:33], including projects that improved their community parks, schools, hospitals, and freshwater wells. As the rural women became more involved, their participation eventually led them to act entrepreneurially to improve their lives.

Furthermore, Cholpon shared about how communities that prioritized improving social benefits fare better in times of crisis. For example, in response to growing ethnic tensions, Cholpon supported various communities in hosting social events that promoted cross-cultural learning and understanding, with the intent to build a more cohesive and stable life for all its residents. Over time, at each subsequent event, she saw the fruits of her efforts as participants grew in their curiosity of learning about each other’s culture and appreciation for making social connections with other women outside their immediate circle of friends or ethnic group, “Yes, and they become more closely [*sic*], more friendly, and they support each other, and it’s a very good initiative for keeping international friendship” [Coda (2/09) 22:07:24].

Similarly, Elgiza, with many years of experience in training and supporting marginalized rural women, emphasized that effective long-term outcomes required that “Initially, we need to make them [rural women] active. So, training on leadership liberates them. And then we go

on to more serious topics like ‘rights to land’ and more legal matters” [Coda (3/5) 20:41:19]. When I inquired about the purpose of STAR, whether the non-profit youth organization focused on skills and career-building, Elgiza replied that STAR focused on capacity-building, not for one’s career. Rather, STAR focused on developing one’s confidence (self-efficacy), power, and leadership skill, adding, “This is not for career it’s more about social career. It’s a career in the community. It’s important” [Coda (3/05) 20:57:13]. Elgiza emphasized that long-term improvement for women and youth welfare depended on building up women and youth to become more civic-minded, more focused on caring for their community and strengthening intergenerational relationships to improve the ease of public information exchange between its members and bringing about the overall improvement of civic life and services.

Likewise, the CBE owners, Gulzat, Saltanat, and Zamira, who initially did not understand the importance of attending training on anything besides job skills training, all realized that, more importantly, one needs to know their rights and be able to advocate for themselves. Now, Saltanat is welcoming visitors to hear about her experience with establishing the CBE, and Zamira is rising into the role of a leader in her sphere of influence, an entrepreneur who can advocate for herself, knows whom to approach for advice, and informs other women on how to reach their goals.

Events or Relationships that Increased Awareness of Available Social Support

Connections to the wider community often led to an awareness of the available social support for the marginalized. The code that most often reinforced this theme, becoming aware of social support, was participating in training workshops offered by NGOs, non-governmental organizations working to support rural women.

NGO Associations(s) Involvement/Support (Int.Fe.+NGO). All respondents spoke about the significant role played by non-governmental organizations (see Figure 5.15: NGOs Reinforcing the Social Network in the narrative inquiry on page 227 of narrative inquiry). The women community leaders spoke of their involvement in a multitude of activities through non-profit organizations. In particular, Adel, the director of the Rural Women's Association GALA, provided details about the history of NGOs in her community, starting from the 1990s, right after the collapse of the Soviet Union. During that time of economic and political chaos, when most rural women lost their jobs, several large international non-profit organizations started to work in the rural communities of Kyrgyzstan. Adel highlighted one organization from the U.K. and one from the Netherlands that helped start GALA, leading to the development of many current women community leaders, including Elgiza and Cholpon. Furthermore, although these leaders, Adel, Elgiza, Cholpon, and others, are all considered insiders from within their rural communities, their own learning and training on advocacy issues started from the support of these larger international organizations many years ago. Through international training opportunities, nascent community leaders learned how to research local issues related to human rights, fundamentalism, patriarchy, militarism, and other aspects related to U.N.'s 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 2030). Adel credits the support and cooperation of international organizations, stating that these international non-profit organizations, in the past, built the capacity of the first NGOs in Kyrgyzstan, and one of the first NGOs in Kyrgyzstan was GALA. These organizations offered many, many trainings ... and it was a comprehensive program for building capacity, and they supported GALA [with] very good financial and institutional support After our trainings,

many women became leaders ... and now they work as their own leaders in their own communities. [Coda (3/10) 21:06:25]

As for the CBE owners in the village five years ahead of the current case study, the owners of that farm spoke about how much the Rural Women's Association GALA training helped them become landowners—breaking out from answering the interview questions, one of the respondents, Gauhar, specifically named GALA for being the catalyst in starting a flurry of entrepreneurial activity after bringing relevant and valuable training in supporting her community. All the CBE owners, new and old in both locations, spoke about how, at various stages of their development towards being able to start their farm, GALA, STAR, and TRIO had supported their learning, opening up opportunities to capacity building or helping connect them to more knowledgeable others. Gulzat credits the beginning of her journey to attending a GALA training workshop. Likewise, Saltanat credits Gulzat's invitation to accompany her to another GALA training session. Zamira credits both ALGA and the TRIO Fund in helping her turn her life around by walking her through the process of collecting all her legal documents and rewarding her with a grant for a serger sewing machine. Zamira also credits NGO-supported training in helping her learn how to conduct FPAR studies about landlessness, land rights, and how to use research findings to support other rural women in advocating for their rights to receive land lease grants.

Events or Relationships that Afforded the Actors to Drive Self-Beneficial Decisions

The importance of self-driving decisions encompassed responses related to setting goals and events or relationships connecting people who shared common entrepreneurial goals.

Events or Relationships Connecting People that Shared Common Entrepreneurial Goals (Int.Fe.+10). One of the a priori codes among the top five most frequently mentioned by

respondents when reflecting about how they established their community-based farm concerned events or relationships that connected them to others who shared common entrepreneurial goals. The needs assessment study indicated that many rural Kyrgyzstani women remained silent and isolated as they tried to reach their goals in private. Furthermore, Kyrgyzstani culture, as mentioned earlier, tends to segregate those on the outside as opposed to accepted insiders. However, the nascent entrepreneurs in this study and those who supported them spoke frequently about how different groups of women associated together because of their shared entrepreneurial motivation and intentions. Gulzat, one of the nascent owners, spoke about how families supported each other every chance they had, openly inviting each other to attend training workshops or pursue job opportunities to work in the nearby fields together. Saltanat recalled how when she first began making plans about the future of the CBE, she immediately thought about gathering other unemployed women together for the project.

Zamira spoke about how before starting the farm, she found support and offered support to others, learning from the experience of women who were grouped together based on common shared interests—whether it was a group interested in improving their sewing opportunities, or a group interested in starting beauty salons, or a group of women cooks desiring to start small cafes or food services, or a group wanting to build up their capacity to advocate for improved transparency about land rights. Gauhar spoke about the importance of sharing ideas and resources among those with shared interests and shared business needs. She highlighted that they helped women group together in her community based on their skills and the types of businesses they wanted to start. Adel, the director of GALA, spoke of her desire to create more video lessons for women, record messages from the nascent CBE owners, and share those videos with

others who could not attend GALA trainings, but had the common interest and desire to start their own CBEs.

Cholpon also spoke about how she created opportunities for women to meet together, focusing especially on bringing together women with common entrepreneurial goals,

Last year we got a yurt from the ARIS project [Agency of development and investment in communities]. Those women, wives of shepherds in the mountains will be making money by treating people medically with *kumys* [horse milk] and selling *kurut* [dried sour-milk balls] to tourists [Coda (2/09) 21:31:53]

In summary, in answering the first research question about what contributed to the emergence of social capital for the main actors, social capital began from embedded relationships that helped connect women to the wider community. These embedded relationships often led to acquiring an awareness of the social services available to them. Over time, these relationships deepened and prioritized capacity-building, leadership, and confidence-building over job skills. NGO support laid the foundation to pave the path for those who are often marginalized to have the capacity to drive their own decisions according to their interests and needs.

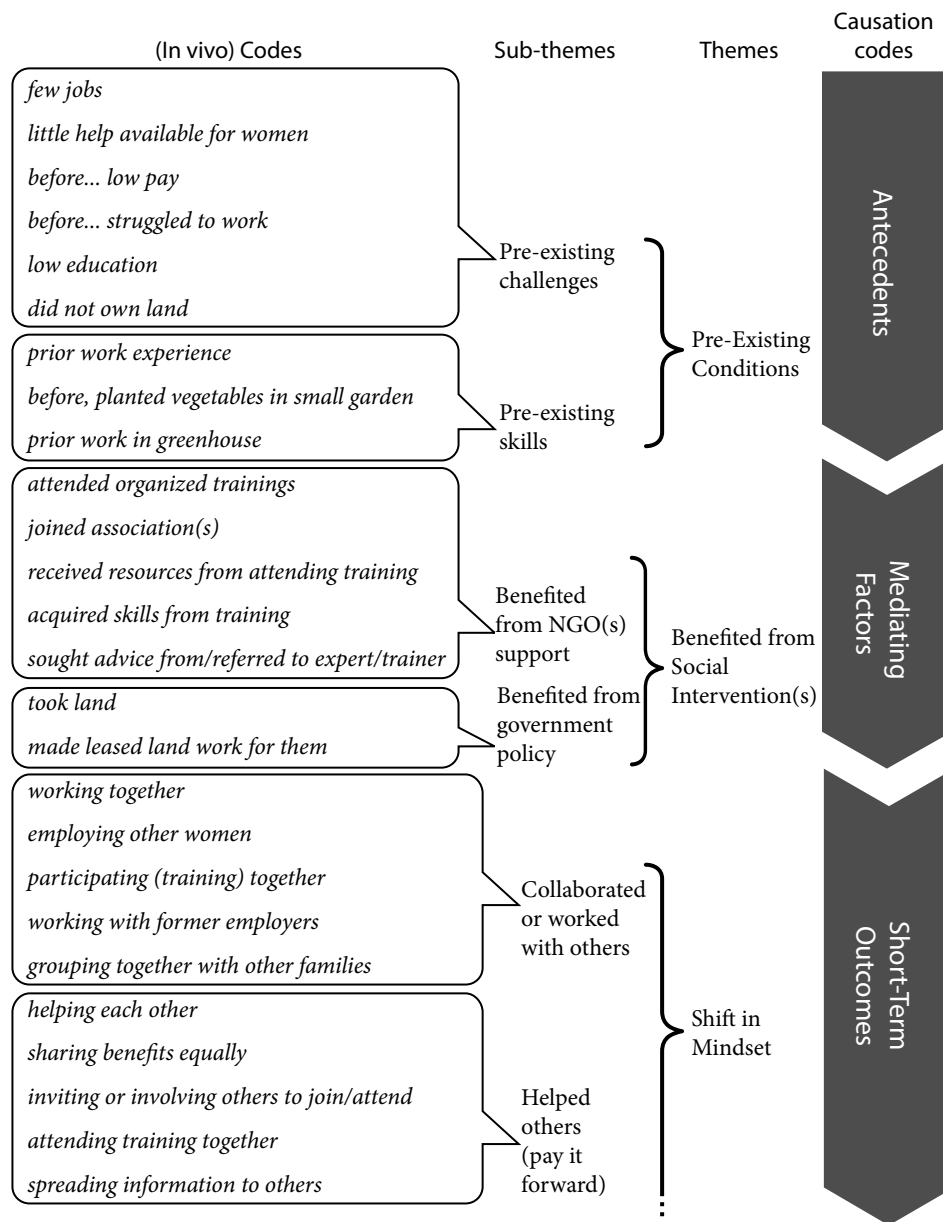
RQ2: Events, Factors, or Relationships that Contributed to Goal Attainment

The second research question asked about what events, factors, or relationships the participants identified as contributing to the success or struggles of reaching their goal, starting the community-based farm. Since the remaining three research questions inquired about the owners' perspective, I segmented the sample to include only the responses of Gulzat, Saltanat, Zamira, and Almaz (Mirgul's husband). Emergent themes reflected the participants' beliefs on why events occurred and not just what happened. Following causation coding principles, I

ordered the themes chronologically into antecedent conditions and connected them to mediating factors that led to the short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes.

Figure 5.2

Emergent Themes From In Vivo and Causation Coding: Antecedents, Mediating Factors, and Short-Term Outcomes



An emergent theme arose after conducting in vivo coding: social capital contributed to establishing the farm, as the nascent owners benefitted from social interventions and prioritized collaboration (Figure 5.2). However, before exploring the theme of the benefits of social interventions, the antecedent theme, pre-existing conditions, is briefly described below (Figure 5.2).

Pre-Existing Conditions

To explain what led to the establishment of the farm, participant responses first focused on rural women's pre-existing conditions. Under this theme are two sub-themes, pre-existing challenges and pre-existing skills.

Pre-Existing Challenges. In my interviews with Gulzat and Saltanat, they recalled how they struggled with the lack of jobs in their area, and any job they found only offered low wages for extremely harsh working conditions. They explained how they took the jobs only because there was no alternative, or they were unfamiliar with any sources of support or help for them. Both women described how they struggled to find work and improve their conditions while living on rented land, not knowing how to overcome poverty. Gulzat also acknowledged that she had a low level of education and was passive, relying on her husband to make all the decisions, especially those related to planning for the future. Even as each household struggled with subsistence living, Almaz, Mirgul's husband, like all his neighbors, used to believe that women should remain home and not attend training. Many of the conditions the respondents spoke about confirmed the findings in my literature review and needs assessment study.

Pre-Existing Skills. However, in addition to confirming the pre-existing challenges rural Kyrgyzstani women faced, in vivo coding also revealed that as the rural women struggled, and even though most had low levels of education, some had learned skills in farming. Over

time, as they worked for large farms, they had learned how to plant, sow, and cultivate the land. The reality contradicted the stereotype that only men could work the land. Other pre-existing skills that came to light later when the women and others in their community started to think more entrepreneurially include cooking, sewing, and beauty salon services that could be further developed and improved with additional training opportunities.

Benefitted from Social Intervention

The nascent owners all attributed their success in starting the farm to being recipients of NGO support and government policy. The key relationship(s) the nascent owners emphasized were close-knit, trusted relationships that first led them to become aware of NGO training programs; friends, sisters, and neighbors brought others to attend events that offered opportunities to learn from more knowledgeable others. As a result, the group of rural women began to benefit from NGO support and government policies.

Benefitted from NGO(s) Support. The role of NGOs in the rural regions of Kyrgyzstan cannot be understated. Although the in vivo coding did not include the two owners from the other CBE farm five years ahead of this case study, their responses also confirmed the essential role NGOs played in supporting rural women to bid and receive government land. One of these owners, Gauhar, emphasized that NGOs offered much-needed additional support because “Women ... in villages are the most vulnerable group. They have [face] multi-discrimination, and [have] many, many ways of failing ... many types of violence, economical [*sic*] violence, physical, and many others” [Coda (2/19) 21:52:48]. As discussed earlier in answer to the first research question, NGO support played a vital role in helping the group establish the CBE. Specifically, respondents recalled incidences where they directly benefitted from NGO-hosted events, “TRIO helped us a lot” [Coda (2/12) 20:27:02], the “trainings were organized by USAID

and in this community through GALA” [Coda, (2/12) 20:30:03]. The nascent owners continued to attend NGO events because they were very useful and practical. Through attending organized training, joining associations, and receiving resources (e.g., TRIO Fund grants), the rural women acquired skills, knowledge, and confidence. GALA, STAR, TRIO, and other non-governmental organizations offered the nascent owners the opportunity to learn to believe in themselves, that they could seek the answers they needed. The nascent owners learned how to learn from experts in various government departments, and over time, the rural women “saw it [NGO training] was useful, not wasting time” and so they “began to come to ... trainings and seminars and joined the groups” [Coda (2/12) 20:59:40].

Responses from the CBE owners confirmed that NGOs played a significant role in helping them to establish the farm. By exposing the SLRRF program and helping them through the application process, the women learned how to qualify and bid for the land. Moreover, although the government provided such a beneficial program to marginalized communities, the government also placed barriers to accessing the benefit by not being transparent about the SLRRF program. Although the nascent owners benefitted from the SLRRF program, most of them believe that some government officials preferred to keep the SLRRF program hidden so that the local government could claim no one was coming forward with bids, freeing the municipal government to sell or auction the land leases to the highest bidders. This government affordance would have remained untapped were it not for NGOs’ role in exposing this information offering training on the process required to make a proper claim to the SLRRF. NGO support played a critical role in addressing a failure in the system where although an affordance was available, few knew about its existence.

Through relationships with the rural women, NGOs helped women overcome high levels of self-doubt and built up their confidence and legal literacy to understand the importance of advocating for their rights. NGOs focused on supporting vulnerable rural women then connected rural women to the land experts who knew the details of how to receive the land leases.

Benefitted from Government Policy. The SLRRF offers substantially subsidized land leases to poorer farming communities. The objective of the program is to offer a way for landless rural families to lease government lands at a rate that would allow these vulnerable families to save up their profits from farming and then, over the term of the lease period, be able to buy their own land at market rate to become landowners. The respondents share about how through this program, “They took the land from the SLRRF” and “made it [the land] work for us” [Coda (2/12) 20:21:39, 20:41:39]. This program acknowledges that vulnerable families living in rural Kyrgyzstan need extra support for opportunities to overcome subsistence farming. Many local land experts willingly helped support this process by providing information about getting registered and collecting all the necessary documents to qualify for the program.

Thus, to answer the second research question, the events, factors, or relationships that participants identified as contributing to the success or struggles of reaching their goal (despite pre-existing challenges) are relationships that led to attending NGO events. By attending NGO training events, they had an opportunity to build their confidence, learn about their legal rights, take actionable steps, and eventually reach their goal of becoming recipients of the land lease and establishing the community-based farm.

RQ3: How Learning to Overcome Challenges Occurred

The third research question asked the new owners to explain how they learned to overcome the traditional challenges of limited resources, restricted opportunities,

marginalization, and discrimination, to start the community-based enterprise. When asked to reflect and share their involvement with the bidding process for land, respondents spoke about how they collaborated with others, how they paid it forward by helping others along the way, and how they experienced epiphanies about themselves and those around them. Combined, these subthemes indicated that the overarching theme of how the participants overcame challenges was that they all experienced a shift in their mindset (Figure 5.2).

Shift in Mindset

In contrast to many rural women feeling isolated, results from interviewing the owners of the newly established community-based farm revealed that change and learning occurred when the group of women collaborated and worked together. They openly shared their ideas and goals, unreservedly telling others about learning opportunities, and in their openness, they developed a desire to help others experience improved lives. Through each new opportunity to work together, the respondents spoke about how they learned, crediting their learning to joining a group and collaborating.

Collaborated and worked with Others. When asked to share about early memories related to the bidding process, Saltanat excitedly started talking about her farm's successes, "Yes, we took this land this year. It was 2 hectares of land [referring only to the portion used for planting vegetables] ... we planted tomatoes, bell pepper." Gulzat interrupted by adding, "cucumbers, eggplants, chili pepper We have worked together" [Coda (2/12) 20:14:28]. Both women went on to tell stories of how they supported each other through collaboration after learning about "the unity of women and the opportunities of work when they work together. And after such trainings, they started to be more active" [Interpreter speaking on behalf of Gulzat, Coda (2/12) 20:30:03]. Over and over, when the nascent owners restated their experiences of

working together, they emphasized that they had collaborated, “Then we worked together having some benefits” [Coda (2/12) 20:21:39] and again, repeating, “Yes, and they know each other. And they work together and go to [the] fields” [Coda (2/12) 20:31:56].

When I asked Zamira about how she became connected with the TRIO Fund, the self-help fund for marginalized rural women, Zamira shared her memories about how she began to get connected with other women during her stay at the shelter and how she found out that many of the other women staying there belonged to various self-help groups and interest groups.

There are groups of five to six women. Each group is involved in a different sphere. For example, one group of women works with land ... another group in sewing, the other group does handcraft, like embroidery, which is similar to sewing. And there is a group of cooks they are not rich, they are poor, vulnerable and they suffered from violence, from poverty, from climate change, from I don't know, different hard situations. [Coda (7/21) 21:53:06]

Before concluding the interview with Zamira, I asked her to elaborate about anything else she felt was important for others to understand about the process of learning to bid and receive land from the government. In response, Zamira emphasized that “First, the most important is to join, to have a group. Because without supporting each other, we couldn't have results” [Coda (7/21) 22:20:03].

In one of the videos about the land bidding process, Adel, the director of the Rural Women's Association GALA, acknowledged and addressed the underlying tension between what the men in the community typically wanted and what the women wanted by directly saying,

I'd like to tell the men: do not be afraid of feminism; women will not stop to care for family, children, home. But women will also learn how to take care and

protect themselves. Women will be able to talk about their rights, request its fulfillment and open closed doors to their rights. [Coda (2/25) 07:36]

However, for the owners of the community-based farm, when talking about overcoming challenges, Saltanat and Gulzat spoke of overcoming challenges by having the support of the men in their families and communities. They both spoke about the difficulties they faced with watering their lands and how they collaborated and relied on the men's support. Mirgul's husband, Almaz, explained how he and other men in the community supported the women-owned community-based farm by helping them manage the heavy iron gates to the watering system in the fields. Almaz explained there were at least two ways women struggled with cultivating their land: the need for physical strength and the need for physical protection. Watering the fields needed the support and help from men, "It is hard for them, for women, to close the small gateways to the water channels, to [physically] manipulate this system. If there is no man, it is really hard for women to work on the field" [Coda (2/12) 21:18:57]. Aside from physical strength, in being able to lift and close heavy iron gateways to the watering system, they also needed physical protection to ensure their safety after dark, "There is one more point. Day and night ... men should finish some watering works at night, because women can't do anything at night" [Coda (2/12) 21:19:55], indicating that for women to wait for the water channels to fill up with water for their fields sometimes required staying out in the fields late at night. During these crucial times, the women owners relied on their husbands, brothers, or adult sons to accompany them for safety and protection.

Helped Others (Pay It Forward). Closely related to collaboration and working with others, the owners spoke of the support they received and the support they offered to other rural women. As the owners responded to questions and retold their experiences, their stories

about how they received help quickly blended into stories about how they also applied what they learned towards helping other rural women. For example, recalling her experience from attending a series of workshops, Gulzat said,

The idea was to have an equal chance for all of us to improve their livelihood. It was the first idea in overcoming poverty because they had no land, they had no houses, they had no jobs, and they had not literacy and education. And if one of the women has some good chance or, for example, go into training. or go to a new job ..., we tried to involve other women. [Coda (2/12) 20:32:36]

Referring to how they started to invite other rural women to join them and how they themselves became more involved in the wider community, Gulzat said, “Yeah. We invited all of them” [Coda (2/12) 20:32:35]. (See Critical Event # 4: Gulzat has an Aha! Moment About Equality in the narrative inquiry on page 216).

As a result, seminar attendance began increasing among their community, as did creative means of attracting and garnering interest from among the community of rural women,

While going to those trainings, first we gave to other women who came, some flower seedlings. And they got interested. Then we all went to a training about soap making. One lady came and showed [us] how to make it. And after that, they joined to [*sic*] us for going to trainings. [Coda (2/12) 20:56:53]

Through the interpreter, Saltanat also shared,

When they [Saltanat’s group] started, they were four women, and ... they became more active, and they existed as a small, sustainable group. They started from four, and as a group of TRIO, they began to provide meetings, and then they applied for land to the local government, and after that, they involved other

landless women for hiring them and sharing the profit with the other landless women. [Coda (2/12) 20:17:29]

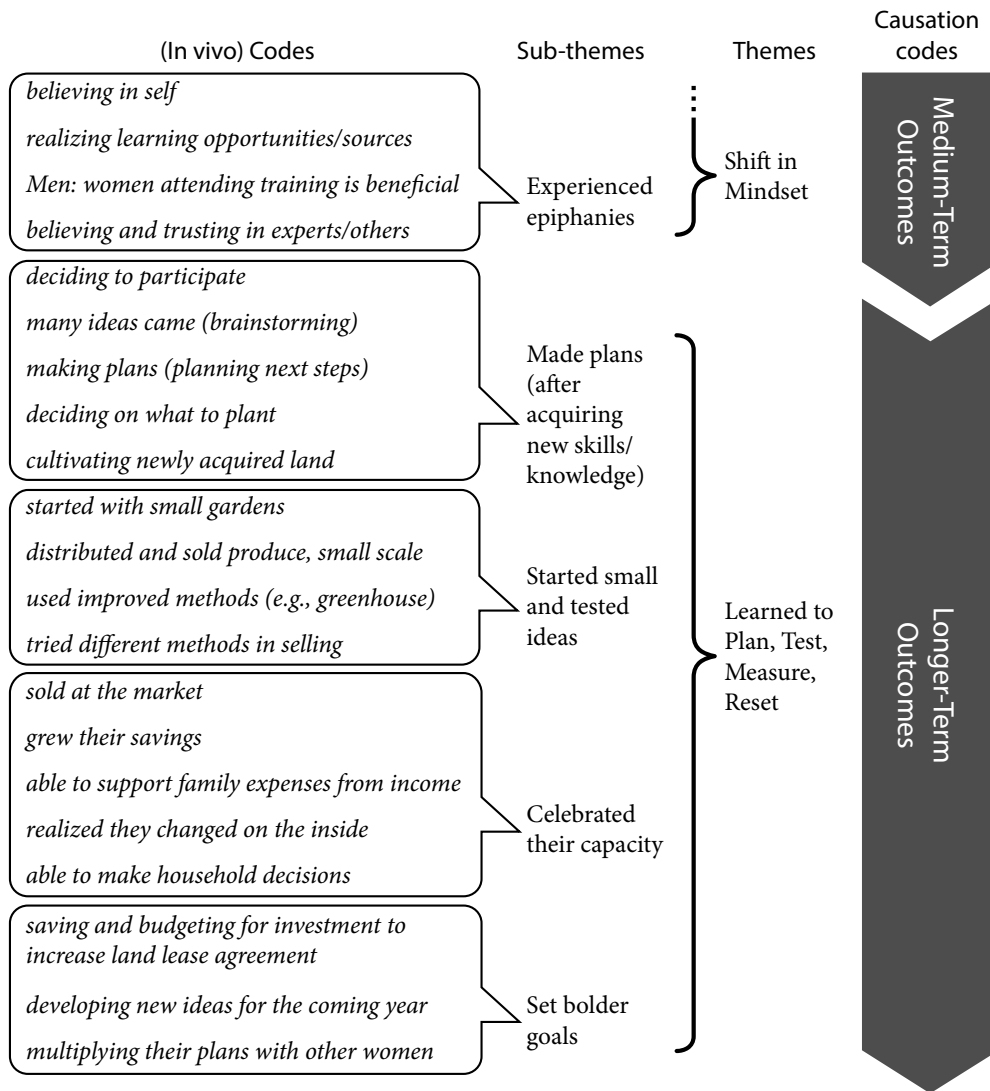
During my interview with Zamira, the interpreter paused and elaborated on Zamira's answer by adding,

And she [Zamira] started to support other women in working with self-help groups. Self-help group, mutual help group, you know, such types of groups? They support each other ... and [are] joined by their interests. And [in] one of these groups ... she became a leader of this group because she had ... confidence, after overcoming her own problems with her previous family. [Coda (7/21) 21:49:30]

As trainees became encouragers and leaders within their community, they realized they also developed a new understanding and awareness of their capabilities. This shift in mindset falls under short- and medium-term outcomes (Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3

Emergent Themes From In Vivo and Causation Coding: Medium- and Long-Term Outcomes



Experienced Epiphanies. In contrast to many rural Kyrgyzstani women struggling with unemployment who cited low education levels, Saltanat and Gulzat spoke about their expert knowledge in farming, cultivating, and managing a farm. As they contrasted their lives before attending training seminars to after, I noticed they conveyed new attitudes in believing in themselves, appreciating various sources of learning opportunities, and men began believing

in supporting women in their endeavors. Furthermore, they began to believe, trust, and seek out help from more knowledgeable others.

The first type of epiphanies the owners experienced was realizing their increased confidence. Zamira credited her strength to having surmounted past struggles, and she said that a life lesson she learned along the way was that “Difficulties is [*sic*] also good for going forward” [Coda (7/21) 22:20:58]. By meeting challenges and finding ways to improve their lives, this group of nascent owners learned to believe in the importance of learning how to advocate for themselves. Zamira also spoke about the changes she experienced through applying for and receiving the land grant, “In the past, we weren’t confident. After this process, we can tell that we are more confident now” [Coda (7/21) 22:07:04]. In her confidence, Zamira concluded, “I learned that I can call on the experts ... that the government must help women according to the law” [Coda (7/21) 22:09:35].

The second type of epiphanies is the nascent owners’ acknowledgment in realizing they had learned and picked up skills along the way. Saltanat reflected on how even though her experience on the larger farms was low paying and extremely arduous, she gained valuable skills and knowledge,

Before, they [the Chinese farm owners] used to pay a little. It was like 40 tyin [money currency-like cents] for 1 item [e.g., a bag of mushrooms]. At that time, women were struggling to work We learned there [how to plant] some things. And now we can do it by ourselves, in our houses. And can do our own business, thank God. [Coda (2/12) 20:24:09]

Saltanat continued recognizing the role the Chinese farmers played in her learning, despite the poor work conditions on their farms, “So taking money from them [the TRIO Fund] and learning

from the Chinese, now we are good, by the will of God” [Coda (2/12) 20:27:05].

The third epiphany was when the men changed their attitude towards supporting women in attending training and business goals. Mirgul’s (the fourth owner of the community-based farm) husband, Almaz, emphasized that he developed an understanding that women attending training had benefits. “There is nothing bad if a woman goes to a [*sic*] training. It gives some extension [the Russian word meaning improvement] and knowledge. But some people [men] don’t understand such things” [Coda (2/12) 20:55:17]. With the support of the men in their immediate family, the group of owners had much more freedom to continue to learn and pursue their business. Almaz further elaborated on the importance of supporting the women owners, for example, in his explanation of helping them manage the heavy lifting of the watering system in order for the CBE to succeed.

The last set of epiphanies the owners spoke about was knowing how and where to seek help and advice. Seeking help from experts can be intimidating because attempting to build bridges with an expert knowledge network can mean breaking through a closed-off group that does not welcome outsiders (Stephenson, 2013). Zamira believed that her superpower was in knowing when and how to seek help from more knowledgeable others.

After the FPAR process, after these activities with the program, [Zamira] realized [that] gaining this knowledge was her main achievement, that every sphere has an expert. If she need[ed] a lawyer in a juridical consultation, she tried to find an expert of the law. If she needs an expert on social issues, she tries to find an expert in this sphere. The ability to ask (for) help, to ask (for) advice, to find a specialist on particular issues, it is her empowerment, to ask (for) advice. She said

it is a very important skill—to ask, to search for experts, for people who can help her. [Interpreter speaking on behalf of Zamira, Coda (7/21) 22:09:35]

In summary, to answer the third research question about how the nascent owners explained how they learned to overcome traditional challenges to establish the community-based farm, they explained how they shifted their mindset, openly collaborated with others, shared their knowledge and resources, and experienced several epiphanies. Together, they supported each other's development in learning how to seek help and support and how to offer others help and support—as their self-confidence grew, learning and experiencing epiphanies centered on developing an openness to both accept help and offer help.

RQ4: Description of Learning Outcomes from Starting the CBE

The final research question asked how the new owners describe what they learned from starting their community-based enterprise. During the in vivo coding and analysis of the qualitative interview responses, I collated their answers and discovered the central overarching theme of how they described what they learned: knowing how to set goals, knowing how to take steps towards reaching their goals, knowing how to measure and celebrate their capacity, and then being able to set new goals. Reinforcing this goal-setting theme are subthemes similar to improvement science's PDSA cycle (Bryk et al., 2016): making plans, starting small and testing ideas, celebrating their accomplishments, and setting bold goals.

Learned to Make Plans

During the interview, when asked to recall memories of what happened after they first heard about their rights to the land leases, the nascent owners explained how they met Maxim, a land specialist and auctioneer, at a training seminar hosted by the Rural Women's Association GALA. They continued to explain that the SLRRF program allocated 20% of government

land for subsidized leasing to marginalized groups in the community, of which they qualified. Then Saltanat immediately recalled her immediate response upon hearing about this land lease opportunity, “Many ideas came. To buy land, to sow seeds, to have a rich harvest, to help women. During the harvest time, there will be a need for about 12 people. So, they [the 12] can be paid for this work” [Coda (2/12) 20:37:54]. Saltanat continued to explain, “Good ideas, thoughts came; to take (rent) the land, to write an application for that, to gather with women” [Coda (2/12) 20:39:50]. Making plans is the first step of the PDSA inquiry cycle (Bryk et al., 2016). Saltanat and Gulzat shared, through the interpreter, how “At first, they plan. Because at first, there should be vision: What we will do. It was the first step” [Coda (2/12) 20:41:17]. They made plans, expecting to be able to obtain the land-lease, and made more detailed plans on what to plant and cultivate, saying they “decided to cultivate vegetables” and “decided to write an application to the funds,” with complete confidence and belief that they “could do such business” [Coda (2/12) 20:41:52].

Learned to Start Small and Test Ideas

In vivo coding of the transcripts also revealed the theme of testing—starting small and trying out new ideas. As I inquired about how and what they learned through the process of applying for land, they spoke about the important experiences from the past and about starting small, “Before, they started to work for themselves [as a collective group], they worked individually in their gardens. They have ... small vegetable gardens in their house, homes” [Interpreter speaking on behalf of Gulzat, Coda (2/12) 21:02:58]. Reiterating the importance of trying first with taking small steps, Gulzat referred to her previous experience of sowing and growing on her small patch of rented land next to her rented home, “When we planted cucumbers and sold them, we had got a good benefit from that,” and in the same breath, she connected that

small success to, “And then we got rented land. And used that land” [Coda (2/12) 21:03:49].

Continuing, speaking through the interpreter, Gulzat said,

a very important thing [is] ... that when you start from small land, small garden, you have good skills for planting and growing cucumber and potato. [Then] you could work with big hectares of land because without such experience ... you couldn't cultivate big lands. [We] started from small gardens and then keeping and accumulating ... skills [and] knowledge, after that, [we] start to work with big hectares. [Coda (2/12) 21:03:55]

Even after successfully establishing their farm, they continued to test their ideas. They tried out using small greenhouses (small wooden structures covered in a clear plastic tarp) and tested to see if greenhouses would prolong the growing season. Testing their ideas on a small scale aligns with the PDSA cycle of testing out their plans (Bryk et al., 2016). Another example involved testing ways to sell their produce. They “had problems with the market and selling their harvest” and when they “tried to sell *optum* [in bulk at wholesale prices]” but the return was not very good [Coda (2/12) 21:11:40]. Then they tried other methods and settled on a hybrid model as Gulzat explained that they tested the idea of renting a small space at the bazaar so that they could “sell their harvest not only *optum* but also [at a] good price in [the] market, in [the] bazaar” [Coda (2/12) 21:31:21]. Saltanat elaborated on how they went about selling their produce both at the wholesale and at the market rate for improved profitability,

We go to the market by ourselves. From 6 to 8 o'clock in the morning, we sell our crops in bulk. Then we sold retail [the rest of the vegetables] at that place in the market [for the remainder of the day]. [Coda (2/12) 21:32:59]

Learned to Measure and Celebrate Their Capacity

When they spoke about their accomplishments, Saltanat proudly smiled and announced, “And thanks be to God, we had a profit of 500,000 *soms*” [Coda (2/12) 21:33:06]. Five hundred thousand *soms* is equivalent to more than \$5,950. As the nascent owners celebrated their capacity to succeed, they measured their successes by stating how much profit they brought in, how many other women they hired, and the several ways they successfully sold their produce. The third step of measuring their outcomes aligns with the “Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle” (Bryk et al., 2016, p. 122), as the nascent owners compared their outcomes to their original ideas and plans. The owners exhibited pride and joy as they reminisced about their successful harvest. Saltanat continued to share, “From the money I got, I had the opportunity to [financially help] my son to marry and help my daughter to start a business. She is selling now” [Coda (2/12) 21:29:33]. The nascent owners shared equally in the joys and success of the farm, with Gulzat adding that from the farm’s profits, “We purchased a selling place in the market. After, in spring-summer [referring to how they used greenhouse over the colder months of spring], we harvested our own crops, we sold them at our own place during the summer” [Coda (2/12) 21:29:47]. They continued to recount the ways their lives changed after the first year of success and compared this to “Before ... they couldn’t ever have such money” [Interpreter’s words speaking on behalf of Gulzat, Coda (2/12) 21:35:57].

Above all, the nascent owners acknowledged that they had changed as a result of having experienced success. Saltanat admitted, “We came to our senses since having some [of our] own money. We started to go to beauty salons and take care of ourselves” [Coda (2/12) 21:40:59]. Self-care suddenly became a priority for them, and they gained the confidence to speak up for

themselves, not fearing challenges by declaring, “It’s our challenge, but we will overcome it!” [Coda (2/12) 21:42:27].

Summarily Gulzat concluded, “There is a change in me ... between what I was like before and now. And we all realized what amount of money we can get. So that’s why we started to try [to] make it separately” [Coda (2/12) 21:35:40]. And having learned what they are capable of, Gulzat continued to share about the idea of venturing out to attempt to start another CBE on her own, meaning they wanted to multiply their success by guiding other groups of rural women in starting community-based farms, which leads to the final theme, setting bolder goals.

Learned to Reset Goals

Like the last step of the PDSA cycle (Bryk et al., 2016), after the nascent owners accomplished their plan to obtain land and establish the community-based farm, they began to make bolder, grander goals. Gulzat shared that once she saw their success on their new farm, she had “ideas to take land from the state fund, individually, and work for herself ... and create her own group. And that’s why they can continue their work ... in many, many groups” [Interpreter speaking on behalf of Gulzat, Coda (2/12) 21:34:21]. Gulzat also said that because they still plan to save and purchase land to own permanently, with the increase in the cost of purchasing land, they all wanted “to try and buy [lease] more land this year, like five or six hectares [more]” [Coda (2/12) 20:44:41].

Associated with setting bolder of branching out and starting more groups among additional rural women, the group of nascent owners also made plans to share their ideas with the wider community, saying,

We must create videos. Video lessons for women: How to get land ... how to cultivate land, and how to work together. Because sometimes women couldn’t

participate on trainings, physically. But, she can see video lessons ... success stories Last summer, and they were inspired [by] her work And she provides them a master class [training classes] ... how to plant ... vegetables and how to get profits. [Interpreter speaking on behalf of Saltanat, Coda (2/12) 21:22:42]

From their answers on what they learned, the theme of planning, doing, evaluating their accomplishments, and then setting bolder goals emerged from their responses. By setting goals and reflecting on how they met those goals, they felt changed. Now,

they were more sure, more confident that they can overcome their own problems by themselves ... and she believed herself. And other women also, they believe [in] their power, they believe their passions, that if they set some goals, they would gain them. It was their sense of confidence, sense of hope that everything is possible, even in their cases, even if they are vulnerable. [Interpreter speaking on behalf of Zamira 7/21) 22:07:40]

In summary, to answer the fourth and final research question about how the new owners described what they learned from starting their community-based enterprise, they described acquiring knowledge on how to set goals, how to take steps towards their goals, and then when they met their initial goals, how to make grander plans. The nascent owners' examples bore striking similarities to the Plan-Do-Study-Act improvement science cycle (Bryk et al., 2016).

Discussion: Social Network Analysis and Detecting Critical Events of the Journey from Unemployment to Farm Ownership

Moving from using field text in answering the research questions to discussing their lived experiences justifies a narrative inquiry because it provides a way for understanding the actors' story from four dimensions: "*inward and outward, backward and forward*" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described the four dimensions as: (1) a participant's "internal conditions, such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions;" (2) external as their environment; (3) backward and (4) forward, as their setting in time (p. 50).

What frames the following discussion is how I "contextualiz[ed] ... the work both socially and theoretically" (p. 135), as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also highlighted that the process of researcher positioning borrows from different disciplines, based on the researcher's experiences and focus. Like all narrative inquiries, the following narrative analysis discussion has autobiographical elements since my research came "out of [my] own narrative of experience and shape[ed the] narrative inquiry plotlines" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 121). My experience and background as a business incubator of small businesses in Kyrgyzstan, based on my work addressing unemployment with entrepreneurship, led me to study how this group of rural women accomplished all they did. Delving deeper into their experiences, and comparing their experiences to the literature, eventually led me to focus on social capital and its role in activating entrepreneurial intention and learning.

Through looking inward, outward, forward, and backward, I listened carefully for instances when respondents emphasized events that met the criteria of being a critical event—

those events that, in retrospect, accelerated learning opportunities and outcomes for actors.

Table 5.4 lists the ten critical events that emerged from interviewing the case actors.

Table 5.4

List of Critical Events Detected from Nascent CBE Owners

Critical Event	
#1	Zamira Makes a Life-Changing Decision to Seek Help
#2	Gulzat Receives an Invitation to Attend GALA Event
#3	Gulzat Brings Resources Home
#4	Gulzat has an Aha! Moment About Equity
#5	Saltanat and Others Gain the Support of Their Husbands
#6	Saltanat Learns the Importance of Collaboration and Getting Help
#7	Zamira Joins the Social Network
#8	Zamira Obtains a Social Passport
#9	Zamira Attends the APWLD Conference
#10	Saltanat, Zamira, Gulzat, and Mirgul Submit Their Bid for Land

Throughout the discussion, I highlight these critical events and apply social networking analysis (SNA) to show the developing relationships between the actors in the case study (e.g., Figure 5.5). Applying SNA by using digraphs illustrates the relationships that connected the actors. I use SNA to discuss the role of trust and how trust created pathways to collaboration and the flow of learning, connecting actors to resources and ideas. All the digraphs come together, connecting all the actors in the story into one social network (Appendix J). Appendix J is useful as a preview or as a reference for the reader to use while following the narrative of critical events. Actors or organizations depicted in gray were not interviewed; circles represent individual actors; squares represent organizations or the actor's job position; and, when relevant,

I include names of key actors under the organization's name. As the narrative progresses through each critical event, the social network diagram grows, reinforcing the theory that social capital plays an essential role in activating entrepreneurial intention and learning.

Critical Event # 1: Zamira Makes a Life-Changing Decision to Seek Help

Like many rural women in Kyrgyzstan, Zamira (EST-Actor #3²), living in Talas, married young. Almost immediately, she began suffering as a victim of domestic violence; yet she remained in her marriage for over nine years, living under the control of an abusive husband.

Seven years ago, she made the critical, life-changing decision to leave after realizing that

when you live agreeing with everything he says, it won't end well. And that's

why I had to be decisive and make that decision. Otherwise, it harms only me.

Even when you get sick or something, that kind of husband doesn't take care of

you. I thought about that a lot and made the decision to leave and get a divorce.

[Coda (7/21) 21:45:21]

Zamira's decision forced her to move from a village outside of Talas, a remote region of Kyrgyzstan (Figure 5.4) and become an internal migrant. After a year, she found refuge at a women and children's shelter in a rural area in the Chui Oblast, the same administrative region as Bishkek, the capital city of Kyrgyzstan. At the shelter, Zamira lived among refugees, migrants, and other economically and socially vulnerable women. At that time, her children were young—her daughter was in second grade, and her two boys were five and three years old. She recalls her two years at the shelter with her children as a remarkably challenging time—her children were so young, and Zamira had to rebuild her life completely.

² EST-Actor #3 in Figure 5.1 Positionality of Case Study Actors (page 183)

Figure 5.4

Map of Kyrgyzstan, former Soviet Republics, and Neighboring Countries



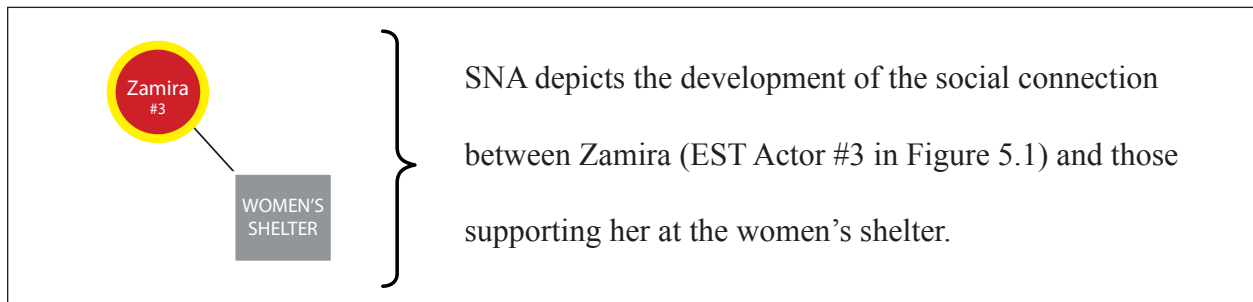
Note: Adapted from *Scientific publication trends in Central Asia, 2005–2014*, by UNESCO, 2016, (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Scientific_publication_trends_in_Central_Asia,_2005%E2%80%932014.svg) CC BY-SA 3.0 IGO, via Wikimedia Commons.

However, while at the shelter, Zamira received support from psychologists, lawyers, and others. Living at the shelter became a time of healing for her to find her voice. Her time there also allowed her to meet other migrant women, others like her who came from different regions or countries, leaving behind terrible situations such as civil wars, bride-kidnapping, and persecution.

As migrant women living at the shelter, they suffered from “multi-discrimination” (Ismoilova et al., 2019, p. 36). Some of the women Zamira met had crossed international borders to arrive in a region with an unfamiliar local language and culture, often without official documents, and certainly without any sense of stability or permanence in work, land, or home, and safety.

Figure 5.5

Zamira Connects with Others at the Women's Shelter



During my interview with Zamira, she kept her camera off. It was unclear whether keeping her camera off was due to connectivity issues or whether it allowed her to speak more openly. Knowing the subject matter and the type of questions I intended to ask, I did not press to have her turn on her camera. I first met Zamira in the summer of 2019, even before conducting my needs assessment study, when she enrolled in one of my computer courses for rural women. Although I was already familiar with some of her past struggles, the interview was the first time she spoke to me directly about her divorce and being a domestic violence survivor. As the interview progressed, I was amazed at how articulately she expressed herself and how her tone of voice remained so well composed.

Zamira's story supports the literature concerning the challenges faced by rural Kyrgyzstani women; she married at a very young age and was controlled by a dominating patriarchal figure.³ For many years, Zamira remained isolated and marginalized, with very little social support, even as a victim of domestic violence. Comparing her story with the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1), the beginning of her story explains her situation of why she had a very

³ See "Life Stages of a Rural Kyrgyzstani Woman" on page 21 and "Patriarchal Values" on page 26

low level of social capital; undergirded by family dynamics (SC1⁴) in her marriage, marital status, and family obligations (SC2), she faced isolation and silence (SC4), with no access to help/support (SC5). All these factors contributed to limited social capital (SC6). However, she also spoke about her parents' support and how they were and continue to be her primary counsel. What made a difference for Zamira to break out of the social norms was her family support and function state (SC3), not from her marriage but from her parents. Their support counterbalanced SC2, marital status and obligations, and helped her step out to seek freedom. Her relationship with her parents exhibits a deep level of trust, serving Zamira as a "Strategic Network" that provided guidance for her decisions about her future (Stephenson, 2013, p. 252).

Critical Event # 2: Gulzat Receives an Invitation to Attend GALA Event

Around the time Zamira got married, Gulzat (EST-Actor #1⁵) emigrated from a neighboring country with her husband and young children as refugees and resettled in a small migrant village also located in the Chui Oblast (Figure 5.4). As a refugee, Gulzat slowly overcame isolation by meeting her neighbors who shared similar backgrounds and experiences. In her new community, she met refugees from neighboring former Soviet republics, including distant relatives who also emigrated from the same area in Tajikistan (see map in Figure 5.4) after their civil war. Gulzat's nascent friendships are founded on a shared cognitive social capital of a shared language and history (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) and her "Social Network," those whom she "*check[s] in [with]* to find out what is going on" begins to form in her local community (Stephenson, 2013, p. 251).

⁴ See Social Capital column, in Figure 3.1 Conceptual Framework: Factors Contributing to Persistent Unemployment Among Rural Kyrgyzstani Women and Traditional Interventions (page 103)

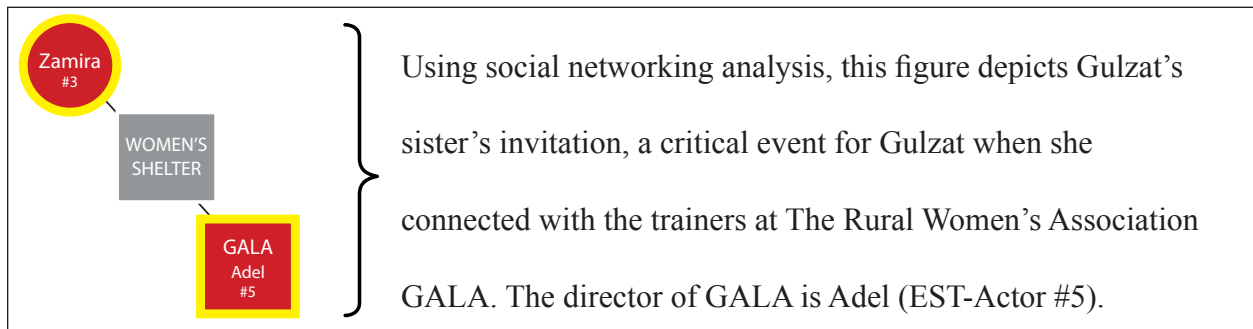
⁵ EST-Actor #1 in Figure 5.1 Positionality of Case Study Actors (page 183)

Since very few jobs were available in her new village, Gulzat reluctantly accepted jobs that required hard, laborious work on the nearby fields, working 14-hour days for large Chinese-owned farms for less than six U.S. dollars a day. Accepting agricultural work to work on a farm is often viewed as “an employer of last resort” because the work was arduous, low pay, and seasonal (International Labour Organization, 2020, p. 12). Over time, she grew accustomed to living without many comforts; as a low-income family, they could only afford to heat one room in her rented house during the winter months. Living in a rural village and struggling to pay rent, with no stable source of income nor lands for farming, categorizes them as landless, low-income, vulnerable recipients of social benefits from the state budget, although social assistance was insufficient.

Ten years ago, Gulzat’s sister invited her to attend a training event hosted by the Rural Women’s Association GALA, an association supporting vulnerable (e.g., ex-refugees, migrants, widowed/divorced) rural women (Figure 5.6). Receiving the invitation to attend a GALA event was a critical event for Gulzat, who realized in retrospect that this invitation changed the course of her life, opening the door to learning opportunities that continue to this day. Around the time of the invitation, through conversations with her sister and neighbors, Gulzat heard more about GALA’s Farmer’s School, a training program for rural women, and she decided to attend where she met many of the trainers at GALA. As discussed earlier in answering research question one, Gulzat stressed that after accepting her sister’s invitation, it turned into an opportunity to work with a group, “I have an older sister, Diana [pseudonym]. She participated in group work there. So, she, we all together now participate” [Coda (2/12) 20:20:35]

Figure 5.6

Gulzat Connects with Trainers at GALA



At first, although Gulzat agreed to attend several workshops, she found it difficult to understand the usefulness of the meetings because she was unfamiliar with civic engagement and how she could participate in her broader community. Reflecting on this time in her life, Gulzat referred to herself as having been more passive, with no long-term vision or goals for her future. Like most rural women in her neighborhood, she recalled placing her hopes on her husband to provide for her. Like all her peers, she believed women were to stay home to do housework and not bother attending training seminars.

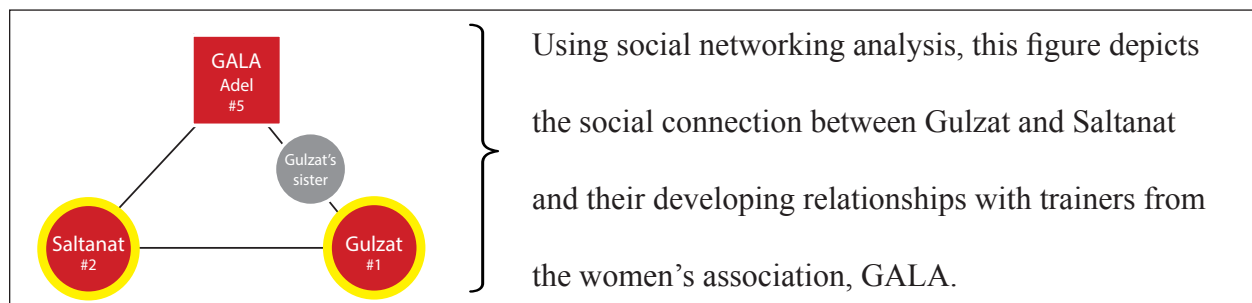
Her response to my questions corresponded with the literature in Chapter One and my needs assessment in Chapter Two about challenges facing rural Kyrgyzstani women; nearby jobs were absent (FC2), and their level of family support (SC3) affected their social capital, as indicated in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1). Being invited by her sister also aligns with the intervention literature of the critical role of *embedded relationships* (Int.Fe.+11⁶). This role of close-knit, embedded relationships within her community continued to expand as Gulzat spread the word.

⁶ Int.Fe.+11: Events or relationships that are embedded within its local community (page 130)

After some time, Gulzat invited her nearby neighbor, Saltanat (EST-Actor #2⁷), to attend the meetings. Gulzat explained that after she invited Saltanat to join her, the three women (including Gulzat’s sister) attended the Rural Women’s Association GALA’s workshops and training seminars together. Here is an example of what Stephenson (2013) described as a relationship that generated a pathway for knowledge exchange. As the three women felt that it was easier to attend as a group, they supported each other’s opportunity to learn. During the interview, Gulzat and Saltanat reminisced about attending some of the training seminars that lasted 5-days at Lake Issyk Kul (see map Figure 5.4), about a 4-hour drive from her home. At the lake, they were introduced to topics about unity and collaboration among women.

Figure 5.7

Gulzat Invites Saltanat to Attend Training at GALA



Like the intervention literature, NGO involvement (Int.Fe.+NGO) played a vital role in supporting this group of rural women. Moreover, during my interviews, they mentioned many times how GALA workshops “strengthened” them and “helped [them] get ahead” [Coda (2/12) 20:29:51]. However, their stories also emphasized that they only discovered the women’s association through existing trusted relationships. Trust is critical within social relationships for information and knowledge to be freely shared (Stephenson, 2011). As an example, because I

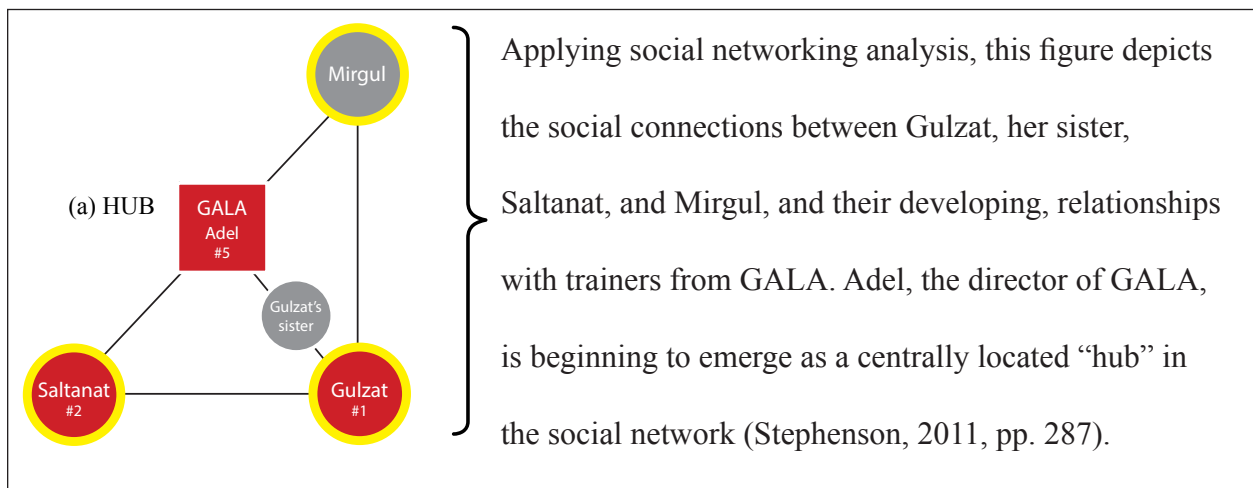
⁷ EST-Actor #2 in Figure 5.1 Positionality of Case Study Actors (page 183)

was introduced to the actors through Adel, my executive sponsor, I reaped the benefit of being quickly accepted as a trusted insider, and as a result, the interviewees spoke openly to me and even made me promise I would visit them in person after the pandemic. Their openness and ease allowed us to talk about sensitive family struggles and past failures as if speaking with longtime friends.

When Gulzat realized she was benefitting from attending GALA events, she invited Mirgul, her sister-in-law. The social network began to grow as the women attended seminars together. Mirgul, Gulzat, Saltanat, and Zamira are the four women who will eventually group together to start the community-based farm. When Mirgul first joined Gulzat to attend the seminars, they began to learn about opportunities for developing side income. These ad-hoc invitations grew out of casual conversations within their *social network*, as the women casually met up to catch up “to find out what is going on” (Stephenson, 2013, p. 251).

Figure 5.8

Gulzat Invites Mirgul, her Sister-in-Law, to Attend Training at GALA



Critical Event # 3: Gulzat Brings Resources Home

Gulzat reflected that learning about side income opportunities was what made the workshops more attractive to her. After one set of training workshops, where they learned how to make soap, each of the women took home a package of flower seeds and a *smorodina* plant (a small currant plant). Being able to take something home with them from the training had a substantial impact on Gulzat because she not only learned and gained knowledge about soap making, but she also took material resources home with her: a package of flower seeds and a fruit plant. From these gifts, the group of women grew flowers, dried them, and prepared soap. She felt happy to be able to create something useful for her home or sell something of value to others.

In hearing Gulzat recount the incident of taking resources home with her, this event emerged as a critical event; she retrospectively realized its significance in changing the climate at home. Taking small plants home changed the attitudes of all the participants and the men as well. Her husband and mother-in-law saw that the seminar was not wasted time but valuable in improving their household. Having a resource to care for after the workshops accelerated their learning as the group began to seek ways on their own to make the best of what they received, becoming caretakers of the plants and seeds. They sought ways to think innovatively, stewarding the gifted resources. Working with others to think innovatively is an investment in developing their “Innovative Network”—people with whom you test ideas and collaborate (Stephenson, 2013, p. 251).

Furthermore, within each household, the women gained the support of their husbands and mothers-in-law as they also saw how the women benefitted from attending training workshops. Gulzat’s story supports the research that *events and relationships connecting people with shared common entrepreneurial goals* (Int.Fe.+10) and *teaching simple concepts that are immediately*

applicable (Int.Fe.+7) likely leads to positive outcomes. Furthermore, as highlighted in Chapter One, a positive attitude affects entrepreneurial intentions because the task of starting a business will seem more doable (Naktiyok et al., 2010).

As time passed, Gulzat began to understand “how things worked [and] ... tried to get other struggling women involved” [Coda 2/12) 20:52:56]. She activated and developed her *social network* by spreading the word to other women in her village, telling them, “You’ll get ahead, just like us” [Coda 2/12) 20:52:56]. Gulzat and her group of friends found support through attending and participating in GALA events. The Rural Women’s Association GALA offered rural women opportunities to learn about various topics, including sustainability, legal rights, legal literacy, and advocacy, and she gained confidence in her abilities.

Critical Event # 4: Gulzat has an Aha! Moment About Equity

Another critical learning event was when Gulzat became cognizant of why the Rural Women’s Association GALA emphasized legal literacy and equity. Her aha! moment came when she began to internalize that the first way to overcome poverty is to ensure that they all have an equal chance to improve their livelihood. In her reflection, she paused briefly to emphasize this critical learning moment, that this was the first idea she had to accept in order to overcome poverty because she did not have land, a house, or a job; and only had a low level of education and low literacy.

The emphasis placed on social benefits like promoting equity—interventions focused beyond teaching entrepreneurial and business skills—rose to prominence in the literature and fit well with the women’s eventual establishment of a community-based farm. With the advantage of retrospectively understanding Gulzat’s learning experience, the critical event of aligning her values to the importance of equity reminded me of several intervention features highlighted in

the literature. For example, the literature emphasized *events and relationships that (a) included the marginalized (Int.Fe.+1⁸), (b) offered training to the broader community (Int.Fe.+6⁹), (c) targeted the most acute levels of poverty (Int.Fe.+9¹⁰), (d) were embedded in the community (Int.Fe.+11), and (e) events and relationships that prioritized social benefits (Int.Fe.+12).*

Related to having equal opportunities, Gulzat shared about learning the importance of sharing any resources of support and benefits with others. Gulzat, Saltanat, and Mirgul also began to realize they could start small, think entrepreneurially, and try out small ventures together, such as planting cucumbers in their small yards on the property of their rented homes and selling the cucumbers at the nearby market. Next, they began growing mushrooms at home and selling their harvest for profit.

Critical Event # 5: Saltanat and Others Gain the Support of Their Husbands

Four years after attending GALA seminars, Saltanat (EST-Actor #2¹¹) built a small greenhouse with the help and support of her husband. She used the greenhouse for planting mushrooms and started testing a small mushroom business at home. Initially, when Saltanat began attending the workshops, her husband said he believed the workshops were not helpful and that women should focus on housework and not attend seminars because there was always so much work to be done in their own homes. As mentioned in Chapter One, in a patriarchal society with very well-defined gender roles and responsibilities, most rural women require

⁸ Int.Fe.+1 is the positive extracted intervention feature from the failed intervention feature Int. Fe.-1, whereby Int.Fe.-1 represented events or relationships that showed a bias or preferential treatment of excluding target participants (page 107)

⁹ Int.Fe.+6 is the positive extracted intervention feature from the failed intervention feature Int.Fe.-6, where Int.Fe.-6 represented events or relationships that offered only to pre-existing clients or those with already established businesses (page 117)

¹⁰ Intervention Features Int.Fe.+9 to Int.Fe.+12 are listed under Social Capital Interventions Table 3.3 (page 135)

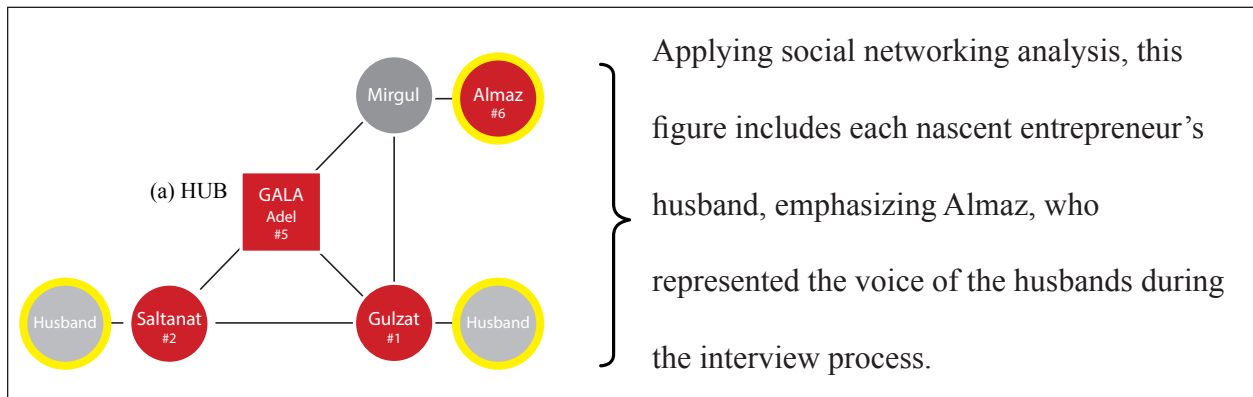
¹¹ EST-Actor #2 in Figure 5.1 Positionality of Case Study Actors (page 183)

the support of their husbands if a woman desires to attend training or pursue work outside of domestic household chores (Ismailbekova, 2014, 2016; Werner, 2009). For women to have the opportunity to be included to attend training, they must have the consent and support of the men (husband or father).

Over time, however, Saltanat's husband agreed with Almaz, Mirgul's husband (#6 in Figure 5.9 below), who said that "It was not a bad thing for women to attend these seminars if the training helped give [their wives] some extension [Russian word meant for improvement] in knowledge and helped build their confidence and acquire information" [Coda (2/12) 20:55:34]. Interviewing Almaz provided me with insight into how the husbands of the nascent owners also changed over time as Almaz compared himself with other typical husbands, "But the other men don't think as [me] ... they [other men] think it's not good, and that they [women] should stay at home" [Coda (2/12) 20:55:34]. While traditional relationships, depicted in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1) indicated that marital status and family obligations (SC2) and family support and functional state (SC3) contributed to isolation and the lack of support, having the men change their views on training attendance altered the nascent owners' opportunities to develop and invest in social capital (SC6). Having the proactive support from her husband meant accelerating learning opportunities for Saltanat.

Figure 5.9

Three Women Nascent Entrepreneurs Gain Their Husbands' Support to Connect with GALA

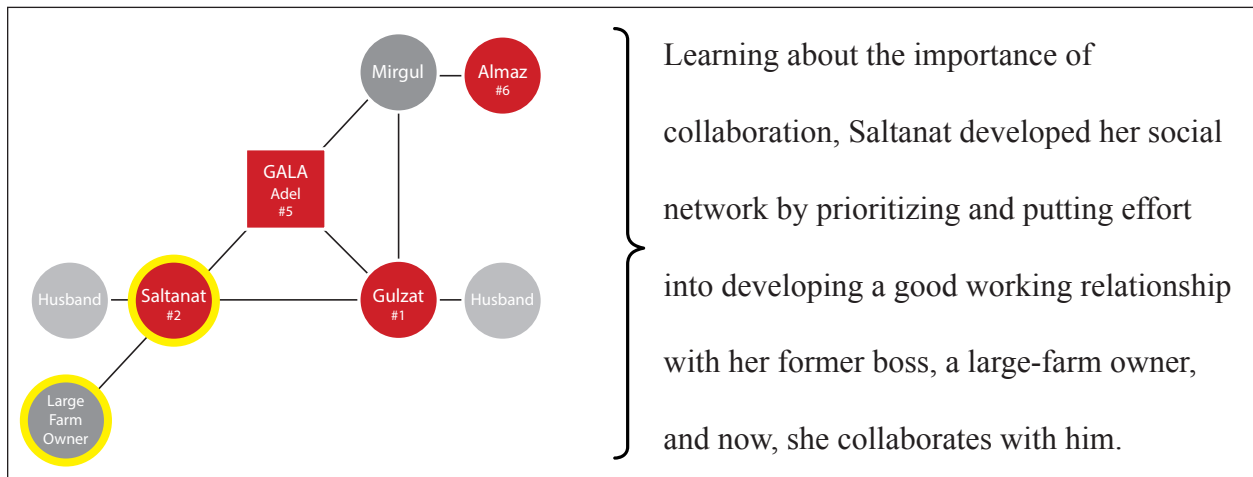


Critical Event # 6: Saltanat Learns the Importance of Collaboration and Getting Help

Another critical event leading to accelerating learning outcomes was when Saltanat learned the importance of collaboration and seeking help. Contrary to the rural women I met during my needs assessment who indicated their fears of speaking up when they needed help or advice, Saltanat shared that she learned how to and where to ask for advice and help. She gladly shared that for advice on growing, she can approach a land expert or agronomist, experts she met through attending workshops hosted by GALA. GALA helped her have the opportunity to develop connections to an “Expert Knowledge Network,” connecting her to expertise and advice (Stephenson, 2013, p. 251). Saltanat also received support and advice from her Chinese ex-boss. In the following diagram, the social network continues to expand, now with the added connection to large-farm owners.

Figure 5.10

Saltanat Collaborates with her Ex-Boss, a Large Farm Owner

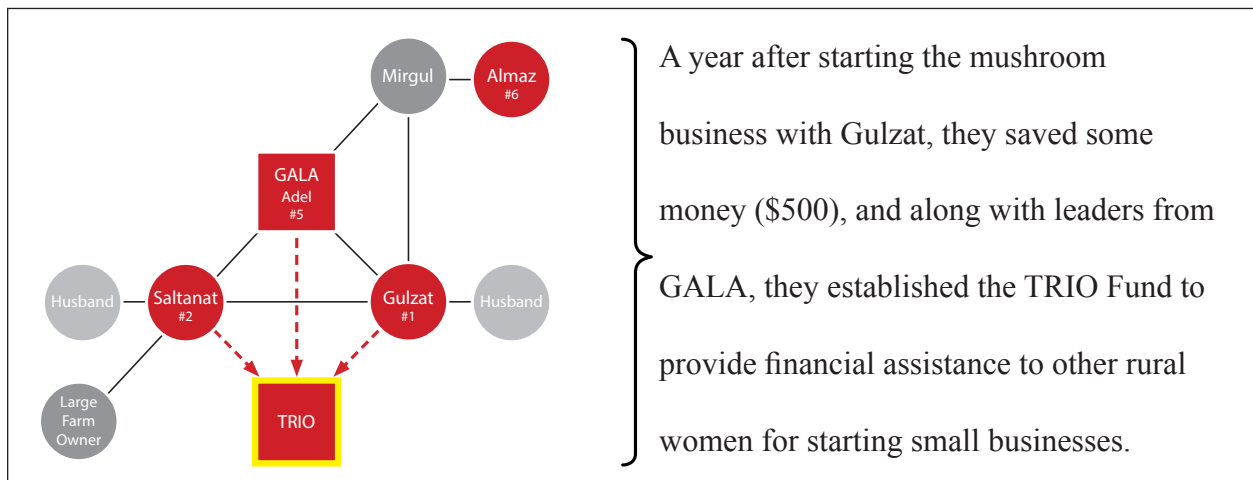


Saltanat’s ex-boss buys pink tomato seeds (unique to Kyrgyzstan) from her, and he helps her with her nascent business endeavors, giving her advice on how to grow vegetables. They now mutually support each other in their businesses. During the interview, I was surprised at Saltanat’s story about her continued relationship and collaboration with her former boss; I expected she would no longer associate with him when Saltanat stopped working on the large farms. I was also pleasantly surprised when Saltanat spoke about the support of her husband in helping her build the small greenhouse; Saltanat learned how to grow seeds in the greenhouse and replant the seedlings when they were more fully developed. I expected that so long as the men in the families did not object to the women to pursue their entrepreneurial work, that would be sufficient. However, within this group of nascent owners, it appeared the men not only came around to allow their wives to attend training, but they proactively supported them. As Saltanat spoke of her network of support, the level of mutual trust she developed within the network was

evident—both her ex-boss and her husband trusted her in carrying out business transactions. A high level of trust is needed for growing the social network (Stephenson, 2013).

Figure 5.11

A Group of Migrant Women, With Support from GALA, Start the TRIO Fund

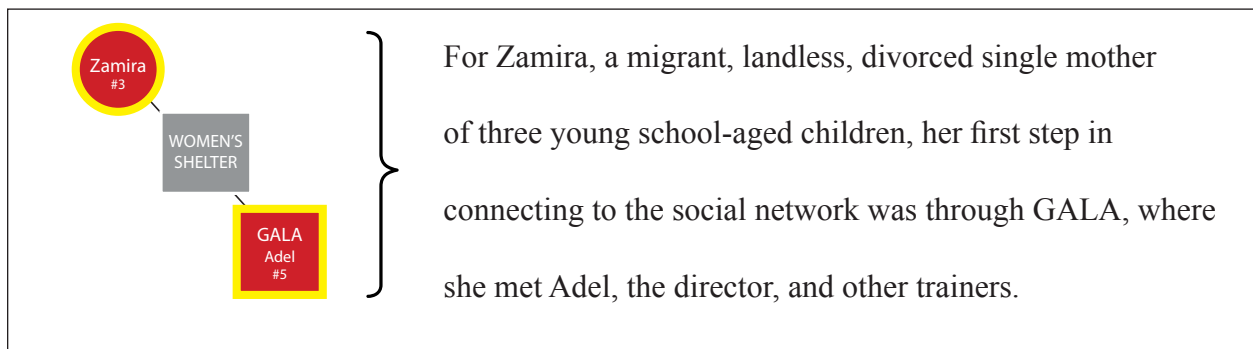


Critical Event # 7: Zamira Joins the Social Network

With the support and encouragement of the staff at the women’s shelter, Zamira began attending “rehabilitation courses” and “personal development” training [Coda (7/21) 21:47:53; 21:55:06]. Many of these seminars were hosted and offered by GALA.

Figure 5.12

Zamira Connects to GALA



In the beginning, when GALA training sessions introduced Zamira to topics about women's rights and economic development, she thought that the training sessions were not helpful to her because she believed that seeking employment and making money would be time better spent. However, as she developed deeper relationships by participating in the workshops, she found herself surrounded by like-minded migrant women who shared similar life struggles and mutual interests.

Offering support for this group of women who shared similar struggles and life goals corresponds to the intervention literature about the importance of *events or relationships that overlooked traditional bias and preferential treatment by including a marginalized group* (Int.Fe.+1¹²). Supporting this likeminded group also matches with the idea of *emphasizing group identity in goal setting and goal attainment* (Int.Fe.+3), *offering an opportunity for women inclusivity* (Int.Fe.+5), *targeting the most acute levels of poverty* (Int.Fe.+9), and *connecting people who shared common entrepreneurial or employment goals* (Int.Fe.+10). During this time, Zamira began to break from the traditional teachings she was brought up with and realized, "Women are not capable of doing anything" was just a "patriarchal myth." [Coda (7/21) 21:45:21]. Joining the social network became a critical event because the event led to her change in worldview, opening the door for her professional growth (Mertova & Webster, 2019).

Critical Event # 8: Zamira Obtains a Social Passport

Aside from expanding her worldview, another door that opened up for Zamira was learning to organize her documents. One of the barriers for many is knowing how to organize the needed documents to obtain their social passport. The process of applying for and obtaining a

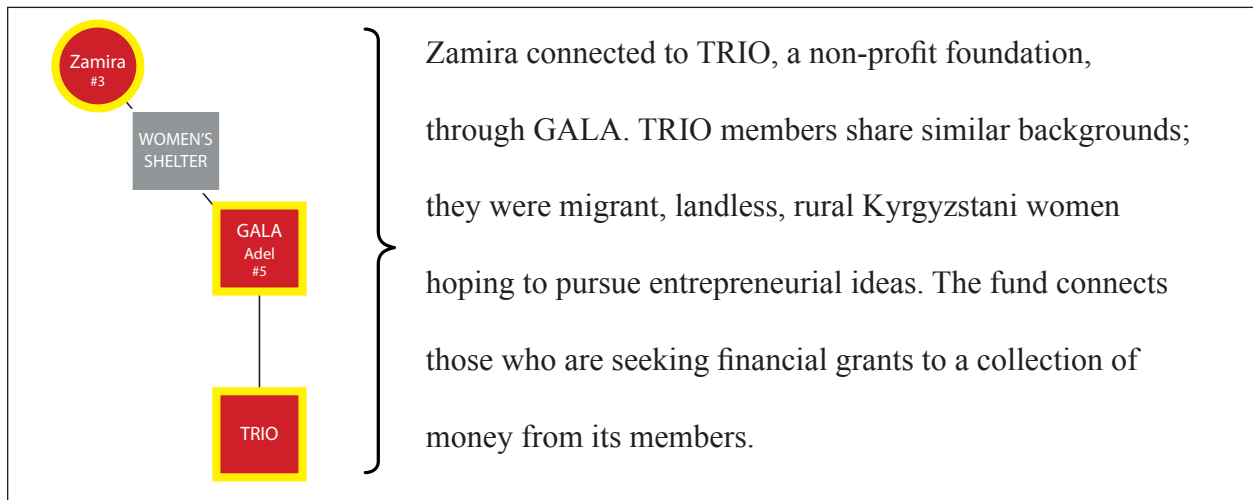
¹² A full table listing all intervention features are in Appendix D: Extracted Features from Intervention Literature

social passport can be long and challenging. A social passport is a document given by the local, provincial government that testifies to low socio-economic status, qualifying them to receive government assistance and social benefits. Before qualifying for the certificate, one must prove eligibility by submitting many documents, and then a committee follows up to verify the claims on the documents. The process includes a visit from the committee to the applicant's home to verify and inspect the applicant's living conditions and often interviews their neighbors to gather evidence of poverty. They look to verify that the applicant does not own a house nor land but lives in a rented home, they consider the condition of the house and the types of utilities (gas, electric, running water) available, they verify whether they or their dependents have disabilities, and they confirm whether the family earns less than US\$10 per person (dependent) per month. Often, families are rejected for not "being poor enough ... they say, 'Oh, you have a fridge, or you have a cow, you are not poor.'" (Adel, personal communication, September 6, 2021). If approved, the applicant is added to a social passport list and qualifies for benefits from programs such as the SLRRF, welfare payments, priority access to government benefits (e.g., seeds for farming from the government fund, access to food aid when available). Since the process can be long and complex, with many rejections, many rural communities are skeptical of the process and feel that the government prefers to reject applicants because it reduces government expenses.

Overcoming the barrier to obtaining a social passport can be the first step towards ending social marginalization. For Zamira, being able to obtain her social passport led to accelerated learning outcomes. First, she was able to win a grant from the TRIO Fund. With the money she received from TRIO, she purchased a serger (sewing) machine. Having the sewing machine opened up the door for Zamira to begin rebuilding her life with some financial independence and stability for herself and her three children.

Figure 5.13

Zamira Connects to TRIO Fund by Entering a Grant Competition



Second, Zamira reflected on how having accomplished this feat, her confidence in herself (her self-efficacy, HC3¹³) increased. As a result, Zamira believed she could help others. Over time, Zamira understood that training was “an investment in [her] own potential” (Ismoilova et al., 2019, p. 35). In her past, she had accepted that it was the norm for boys to have the privilege and the priority in education, which afforded them more opportunities. She also accepted that although girls/women felt oppressed and discriminated, it was the norm to lack self-confidence, not speak up for themselves, not protect their rights, and remain uninformed, having grown up in a patriarchal society. Zamira shared two examples of how women remained silent and how she never gave it much thought before. The first example was their failure to speak up for themselves in family budgeting and finances. She shared about how she had accepted the status quo for women not to have confidence, not to have decision-making purchasing powers, and defer to

¹³ In Figure 3.1, Conceptual Framework: Factors Contributing to Persistent Unemployment Among Rural Kyrgyzstani Women and Traditional Interventions (page 103)

men to dictate all household spending decisions, even to the detriment of their children and families. Her second example was about how women were not strong in protecting their rights and, in the face of discrimination, would instead “every time, go with her head down” (a Kyrgyz phrase) [Coda (7/21) 21:45:21].

As she gained financial independence from temporary work through fulfilling seasonal sewing orders, she continued attending GALA meetings. There, she learned that she could be strong and independent and could be a catalyst for change for other women by

teach[ing] other women that living under patriarchy is not the one way of life, that women can live with their heads held high and protect their rights. That there are different kinds of options for women [other] than just living under the authority of men. [Coda (7/21) 21:45:21]

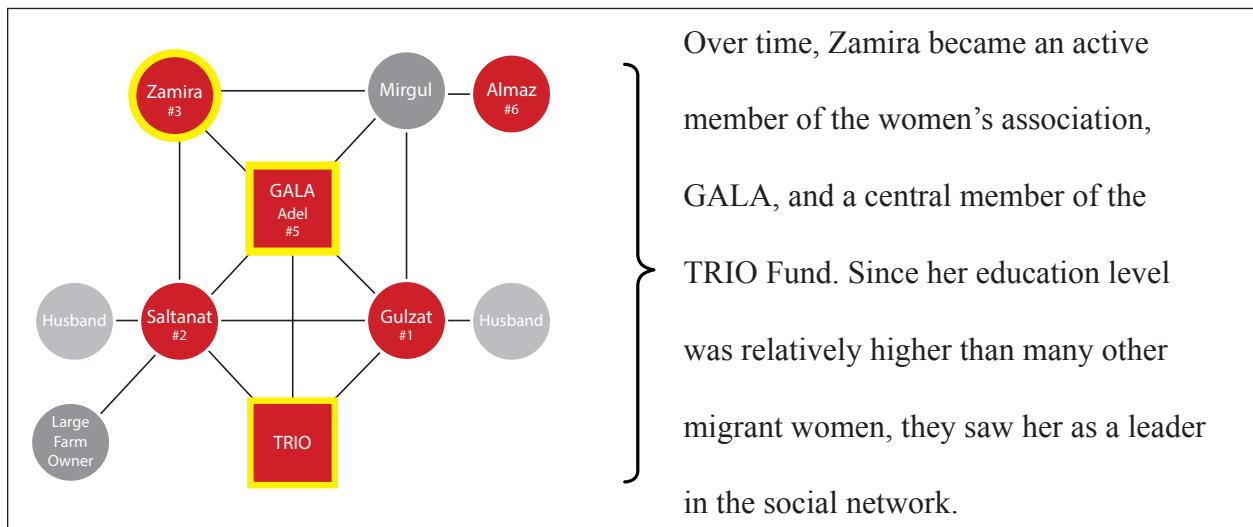
Overcoming challenges, such as leaving a violent husband and starting over, provided Zamira the opportunity to develop resilience and recognize her increased strength, having come out on the other side. The value of overcoming challenges resulted in building her confidence, her self-efficacy (HC3). As her confidence increased and she recognized learning opportunities existed in unexpected places, she further continued to learn. The conceptual framework highlights how knowledge (HC2) contributes to self-efficacy (SC3). However, after learning from Zamira’s experience, I discovered that the relationship between knowledge and self-efficacy is bi-directional; that is, for Zamira, an increase in self-efficacy also contributed to increasing knowledge.

A year after receiving the grant money from TRIO, as a member of TRIO Fund’s self-help groups, Zamira started volunteering because she had developed a strong sense of

self-confidence. She discovered she had “a new vision” [Coda (7/21) 21:49:30]. Zamira credited her confidence to overcoming past challenges and starting a new life for herself and her children.

Figure 5.14

Zamira Branches out to the Wider Social Network



When the Rural Women’s Association GALA provided sewing lessons for women to improve their skills and literacy, Zamira participated as a leader-in-training because she wanted to help improve the lives of rural women economically. She began leading others to seek self-employment opportunities as seamstresses and encouraged other women to socialize and share their ideas on protecting their rights and advocating for themselves. Zamira believed others should learn how to build their capacity and become “doers” to proactively break the mold of patriarchal and gender stereotypes and discrimination [Coda (7/21) 21:41:36]. To improve women’s economic conditions at home, she helped them learn how to have a family budget and make household budgeting decisions. After training several younger women in sewing skills, they collaborated on larger sewing orders from bigger shops. As a small group of rural women,

they began to earn money, which was especially needed during the winter months when farm work was not available.

Figure 5.15

NGOs Reinforce the Social Network

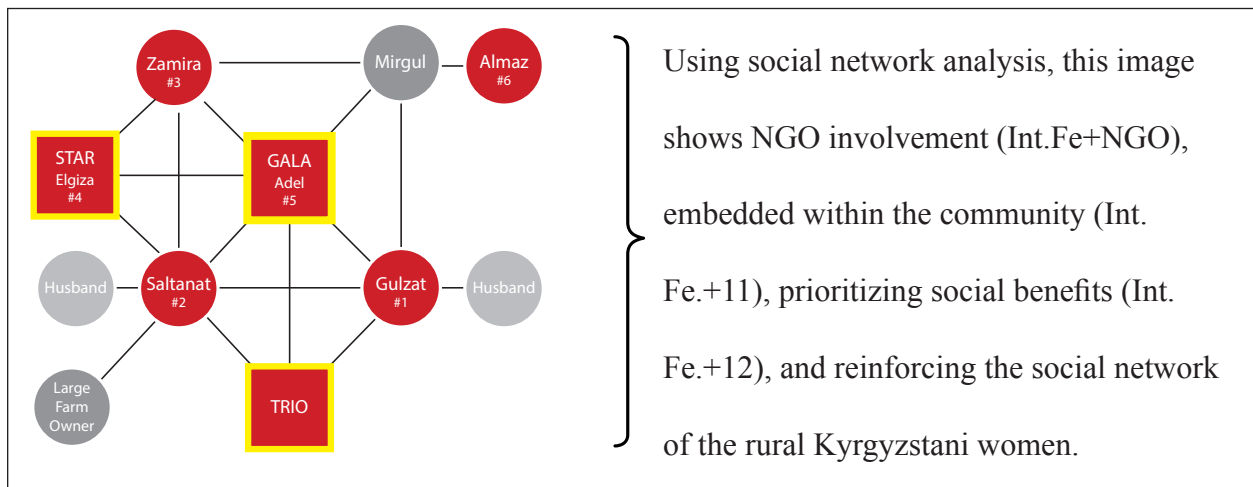


Figure 5.15 above depicts the role of NGOs in reinforcing the social network. Different layers of trust networks began to emerge in alignment with Stephenson’s (2013) research on trust networks. Zamira’s sewing projects and her budding relationships with other rural women she hired (not included in the image) served as “The Work Network,”¹⁴ representing those she exchanged routine information with daily (p. 251). Also, Zamira’s connections with the NGOs served as part of her *expert knowledge network* (depicted in more detail later in Figure 5.17). Both the NGOs and the other rural women actors served as part of her “Innovative Network” and “Learning Network,” those with whom she iterated and tested new ideas as part of their innovative and learning process (pp. 250–252). Stephenson’s *expert knowledge, innovation, and*

¹⁴ See Appendix M for a list of Stephenson’s (2013) Seven Networks (and Seven Core Layers of Knowledge)

learning networks bear striking similarities with sociocultural theory of learning, emphasizing the learning process occurring through social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978) and learners gaining independence over time (Gee, 2008). Here, Zamira begins her journey to independence by developing her networks of trust.

The Rural Women's Association GALA continued supporting women with advocacy training to learn about their rights and advocate for themselves (Int.Fe.+12). With STAR, the youth organization, rural women learned to research what social programs were available to them and what types of services to expect from various government agencies and departments. STAR trainers taught them the importance of knowing one's rights and how to spread their new knowledge with other rural women. For example, in one project, STAR trained rural women to print large banners and post them outside several local government buildings. These banners announced what services the ministries offered within particular government office buildings. The rural women learned the importance of developing legal literacy and knowing what rights were granted by national legislation. Having legal literacy allowed them to know what and how to advocate for themselves and their families. As a nascent leader and volunteer in her community, and through additional support from GALA, Zamira became even more active in supporting other vulnerable women and began learning how to conduct proper research about women's rights and ways of supporting rural women in Kyrgyzstan. The TRIO Fund continued to support its members with seed money to pursue and test entrepreneurial ideas.

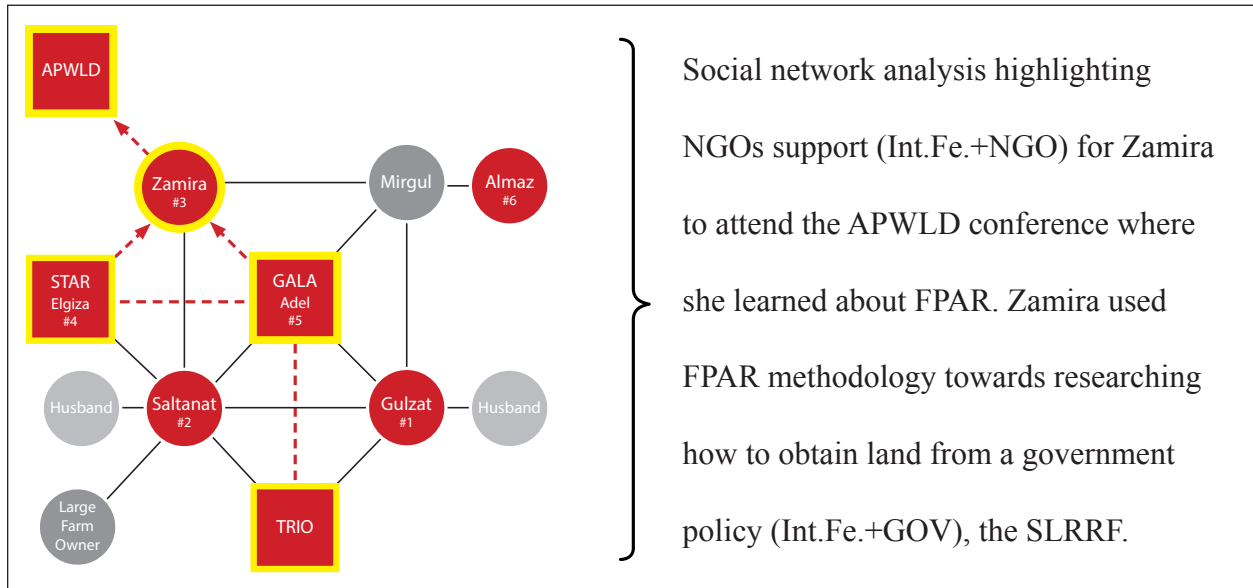
Critical Event # 9: Zamira Attends the APWLD Conference

In early 2019, Zamira conducted preliminary research by surveying rural women about their problems and needs before taking a trip to Nepal to learn about a research process known as FPAR, Feminist Participatory Action Research, at the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law,

and Development (APWLD) conference. The TRIO Fund, a self-help fund started by and for marginalized rural women, financially supported the activities of the FPAR program and Zamira’s trip to Nepal. The social network continues to expand in the diagram below.

Figure 5.16

The Social Network Support Zamira’s FPAR Training



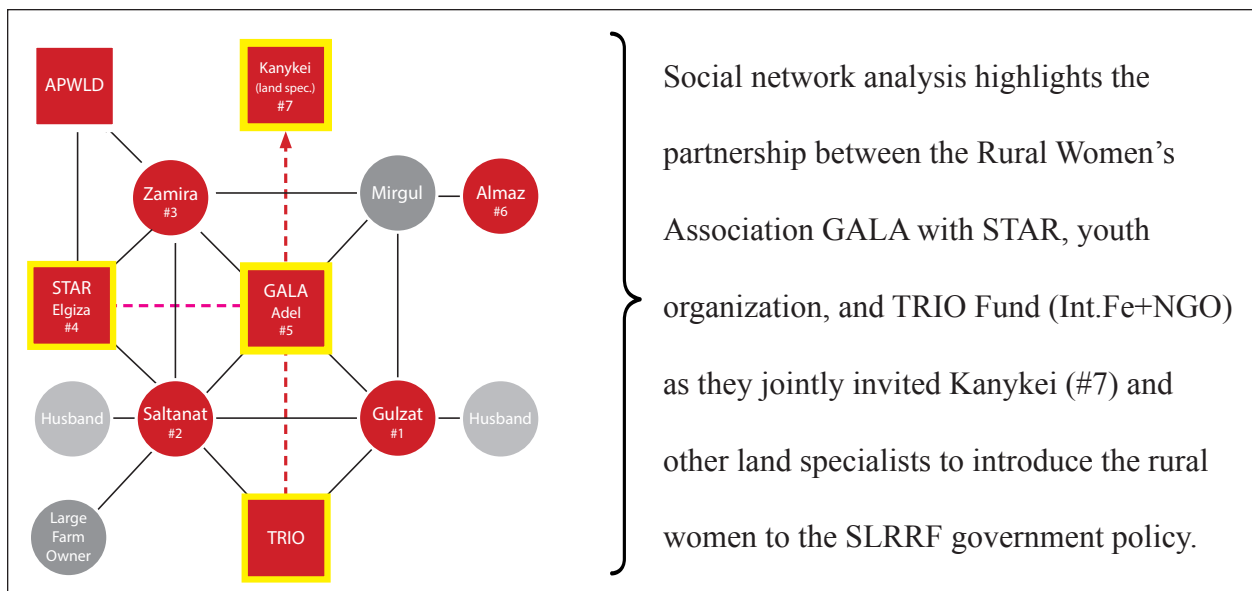
At the heart of FPAR is the process of using research to seek ways to amplify women’s voices within one’s community to make collaborative decisions on how to overcome challenges. FPAR promoted fostering collective action, building capacity for all involved, and shifting traditional power imbalances for positive structural change for women (Ismoilova et al., 2019). Zamira’s trip to Nepal was part of the community action research project supported by GALA, the women’s rural association, and assisted financially by the TRIO Fund. Connecting with APWLD developed Zamira’s *learning network*, the network that opens the door to “improving existing processes or methods” (Stephenson, 2013, p. 252). By applying the research methods she learned from APWLD, she confirmed the most commonly shared problems many rural

women faced within her community. She discovered that most of the women in her community came from patriarchal families with insufficient literacy levels. Some of them could not even write or count. They could not socialize well or solve problems on their own. Zamira, herself, had the advantage of attending a technical school when she was younger, and her level of education surpassed many of her peers. Directly related to interests in land lease and ownership, she found out that there were many landless women—landlessness subjects families to the economic vulnerability that landowners do not face.

Later in 2019, when Saltanat, Gulzat, Zamira, Mirgul, and other rural women attended a GALA seminar and learned about the SLRRF program. There, local land specialists told them about the state land fund—specialists with previous work experience on the Agricultural Council or the local government.

Figure 5.17

The Social Network Connects the Nascent Owners to Hear about SLRRF



At GALA's land ownership seminar, in partnership with TRIO Fund and the youth organization STAR, the women learned about qualifying for the government lands. One auctioneer explained that when the government wants to auction off the land, they hired him to conduct the auctions, and 80% of the land can be sold, but 20% should go to vulnerable, poor communities. Since most people do not know about this rule, TRIO and ALGA collaborated and invited the land specialists to speak about this rule and opportunity. At the seminar, the women discovered that the government program offered land lease schemes to marginalized groups at 1000 Kyrgyz *soms* per hectare per season (less than US\$12), compared to 30,000 *soms* a hectare (about US\$360) if one were to rent from a private owner or farmer.

When the group of four women learned about the SLRRF, they felt confident they could cultivate the land because they had experienced small successes from starting their small home gardens and already had good skills for planting and growing cucumber, mushrooms, and potatoes. They were confident they could work with larger hectares of land because of their previous work on larger farms. Their connection to the larger farms served as their *expert knowledge network*—key members who are keepers of established procedures (Stephenson, 2013). So, from their small home gardens to the large Chinese-owned farms, they had accumulated skills and knowledge and the TRIO Fund money to pay for the lease if they could win the bid. Their ultimate goal is to save enough money to buy land and truly become landowners one day. Farmland in the area costs between US\$1500–2000 per hectare for average farmland or up to \$3000/hectare for good, irrigated land.

Saltanat recounts her first thoughts of when she first heard about this land lease opportunity. She quickly began thinking about what steps to take to achieve this goal. “Many ideas came. To buy land, to sow seeds, to have a rich harvest, to help women” [Coda (2/12)

20:37:54]. Saltanat even began to consider that during the harvest time, in her mind, she counted that she would need about 12 additional people, and if they were to get land, they could pay other women to help her during harvest time. In her mind, she considered how she could manage the cultivating with Gulzat, Mirgul, and Zamira, but the harvest would bring job opportunities for others.

After the workshop's conclusion, Saltanat, Mirgul, Gulzat, and Zamira met to plan and discuss their ideas for submitting a bid for the next farming season. Saltanat, Gulzat, and Mirgul's husbands also attended this meeting. At the meeting, Mirgul's husband, Almaz (EST-Actor #6), encouraged his wife to apply for the land lease, urging the women to apply quickly. Almaz said they should apply for 5 hectares, urging them to get in an application promptly. This sharing of ideas is a development of Stephenson's (2013) *innovation network* whereby this network "collaborates to kick around new ideas" (p. 251).

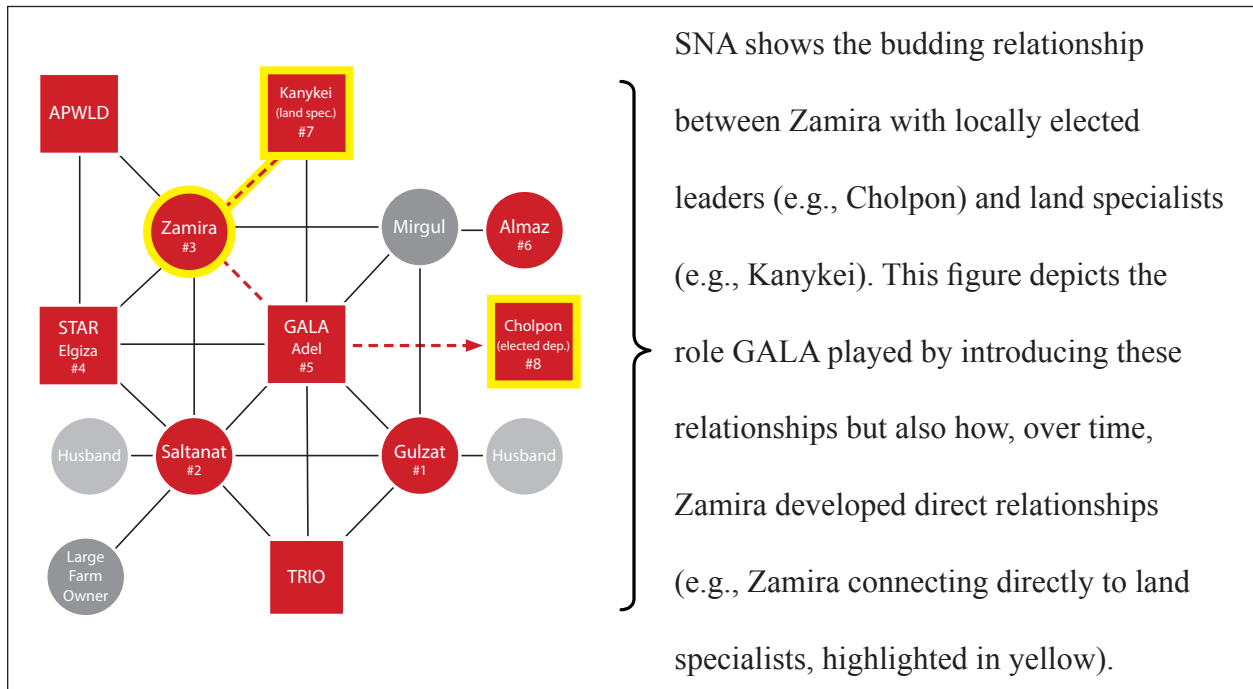
Zamira recalls that when she first learned about the SLRRF, she felt there was so much she did not understand. Using the methods she learned about FPAR at the APWLD conference, Zamira began delving deeper to find out the step-by-step process required to obtain land from the SLRRF policy and led Gulzat, Mirgul, and Saltanat through the process. During this process, her relationship with supporters of rural women at the municipal level deepened. Through the Rural Women's Association GALA, Zamira met government officials like Cholpon, an elected deputy on the Women's Council (EST-Actor #8¹⁵), and Zamira began gathering information on the SLRRF policy. As mentioned earlier, the relationships with experts in their fields served as

¹⁵ EST-Actor #8 in Figure 5.1 Positionality of Case Study Actors (page 183)

part of their *expert knowledge* (Stephenson, 2013) and Zamira’s zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) expanded.

Figure 5.18

Zamira Connects with the Local Community Leaders and the Local Government



Zamira learned that to obtain this land, residents needed to go to the local area (municipal) government and apply, requesting the subsidized land leases from the fund. Zamira judiciously understood that if the information on land rights remained “hidden,” since most qualified families rarely knew about their rights, there would be no/few applications from these marginalized groups [Coda 7/21) 21:29:03]. She also realized that information on land rights would continue to remain hidden because it was “not profitable for them to give land for poor people” [Coda (7/21) 21:37:58]. The local government did not officially break any laws “if they have no applications from vulnerable women and families. It’s okay; they can sell this land.

[They can] have an auction for rich farmers” [Coda (7/21) 21:38:22]. In this way, the local government acted lawfully while fulfilling their interests by earning money through land auctions for their municipal budgets.

Moreover, when Zamira began to understand the program’s requirements and how the fund functioned, she was surprised that, by using land, many women could overcome the problems of poverty. When she began to understand that land can be a valuable resource for getting additional profit, it was a wonder that there was so little information about this law. “It was hidden information, from the side of local government” [Coda (7/21) 21:29:03]. She knew she had to help spread this information about land rights and train others about writing an application and submitting a bid. In spreading this information, Zamira developed the group of rural women’s *innovative network* by “talk[ing] openly about ideas, perceptions, and experiments” (Stephenson, 2013, p. 251).

Zamira believed that since she had developed her self-confidence through her prior life struggles and being a single mother of three, she could play a pivotal role in supporting other women in applying for land, developing public speaking skills in others, and providing informational campaigns to inform others of the SLRRF opportunity. With the support of ALGA and the TRIO Fund, Zamira used FPAR research principles to find out more about the SLRRF process and continued to research more about the details on how to apply for the subsidized land leases. After meeting with the local area government officials and meeting with the head of the land department, she provided others with detailed instructions on how to get registered as “socially vulnerable people” to qualify for the program [Coda (7/21) 21:59:09]. Zamira learned that she had to advocate for herself and press for access to legal consultancy for her group of vulnerable women on the land availability from the SLRRF. As part of the process of

applying for the land lease, she found herself pushing for “justice and transparency of the land redistribution process” [Coda (2/26) 10:16]. Having obtained all the documents, the nascent owners began to prepare the application document with the support of Cholpon (EST-Actor #8), a prominent leader in the community and member of the Women’s Council.

Critical Event #10: Saltanat, Zamira, Gulzat, and Mirgul Submit Their Bid for Land

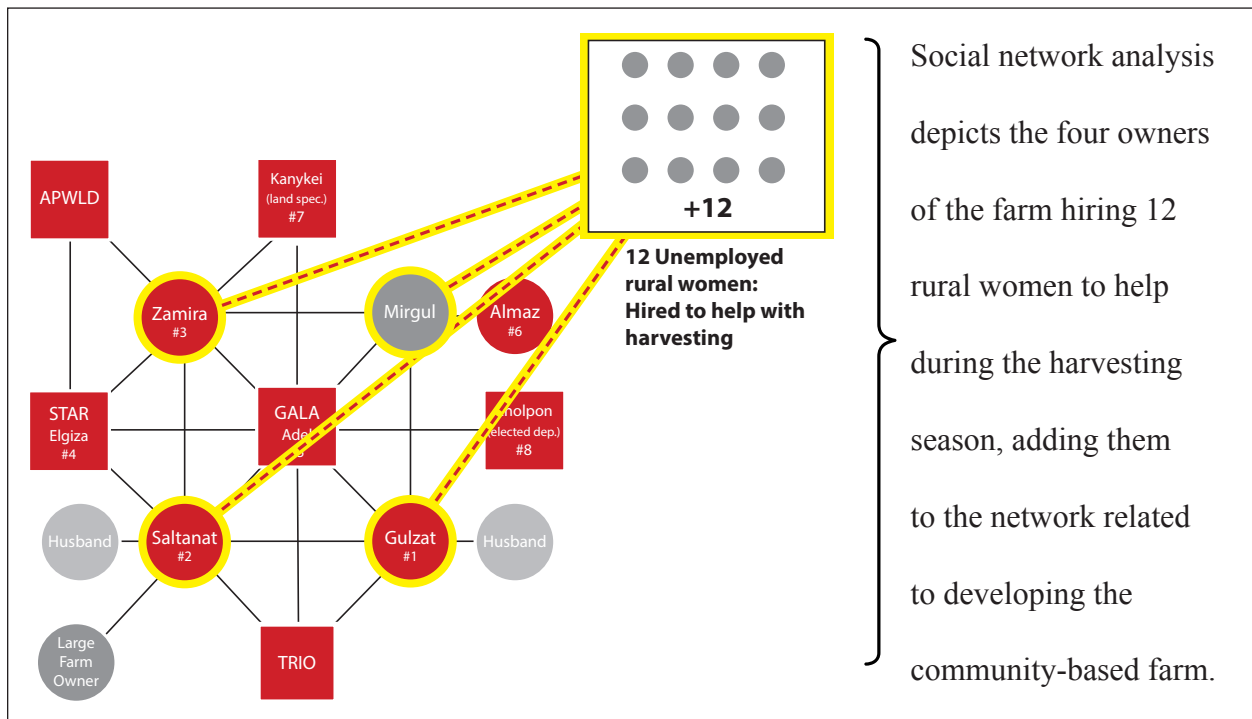
In the end, since the application form only required one person’s social passport information, Saltanat applied for the land under her name, and the others were listed as group members, indicating their plan to work and use the land as a group. Saltanat, accompanied by Zamira, submitted her application to the secretary of the Land Commission of the Municipal Parliament. While they waited for the Secretariat and the officials on the committee on land distribution to discuss their case, the group of four women continued to brainstorm, learn, and make plans on how they would establish a shared community farm together, committing to remaining united in working together to seek advice and cultivate the land as a group. As they waited for the decision, the nascent owners planned what vegetables to plant, how to get the land to work for them, and when to hire others during harvest. The group of four felt confident that if they received the land lease, they could cultivate the land and successfully grow vegetables because of all their previous farming experience and knowledge. After the land distribution committee conferred, they agreed to give Saltanat a special legislative document, approved her application, and signed an agreement with the Saltanat. Zamira campaigned for the group of women at all stages throughout this process and served as the spokesperson, interacting with the officials because the others could not speak as confidently with the government officials.

In the spring of 2020, the four owners received three hectares of land for subsidized leasing; receiving land led to many more learning opportunities. In their first season of

establishing a community-based farm, the owners decided to use one hectare for potatoes and two for other vegetables, eggplants, bell peppers, chili peppers, tomatoes, and cucumbers. In the late summer and fall of 2020, the nascent owners followed through on their plan and hired 12 additional unemployed rural Kyrgyzstani women to help with the harvesting.

Figure 5.19

The Nascent Owners of the CBE Hire 12 Unemployed Rural Women

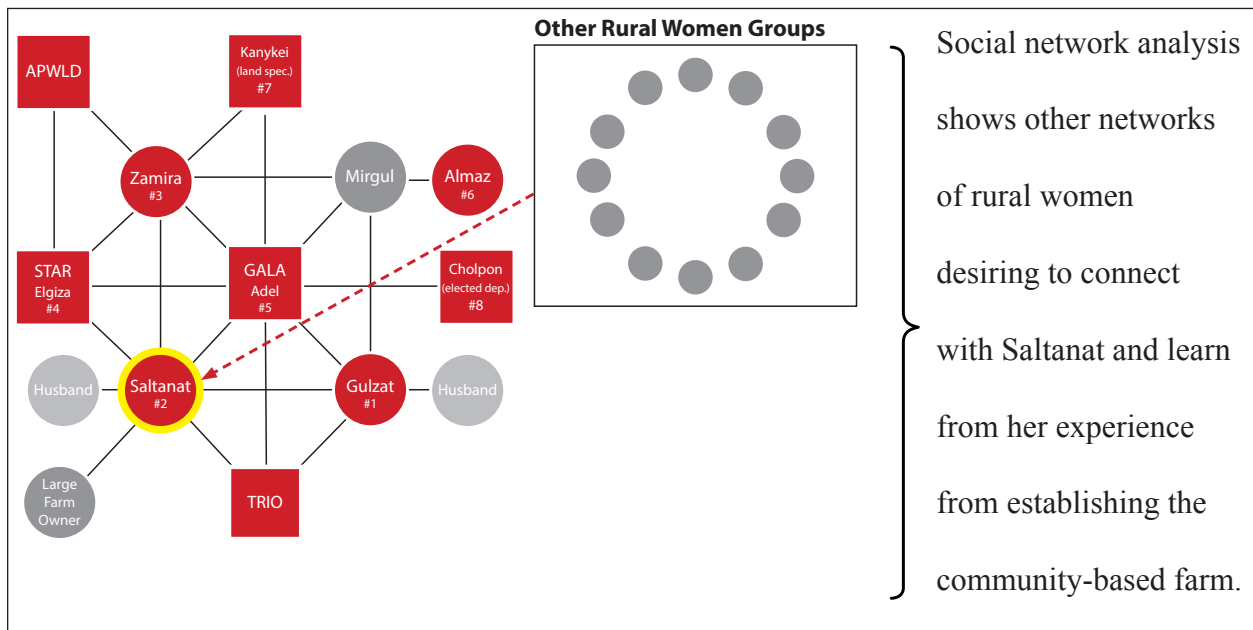


Saltanat shared that she feels it is important to share her learning with other women, show them what is possible, and inspire them. Sometimes when other women visit her at the community-based farm, she likes to show her plants and what she has learned, encouraging the visitors to video her as she shares so that those videos, hopefully, can be used to inspire and teach others. With her head held high, Saltanat shared how she is happy to hear the visitors say that

they too want to apply for land leases under the SLRRF program to start their community small for-profit farms, catalyzing other rural women to accelerate their learning.

Figure 5.20

Saltanat Serves as a Catalyst to Learning for Other Groups of Rural Women



The owners of the CBE knew that they must learn quickly to profit from their farm. After the 4–5-year lease, they must return the land ownership to the government because land belonging to the SLRRF is never for permanent sale and needs to be returned to the government to be leased to another marginalized or vulnerable group. Often, families return the land with reluctance because they invested a lot of work and money, losing all their investment and hard work to improve the soil.

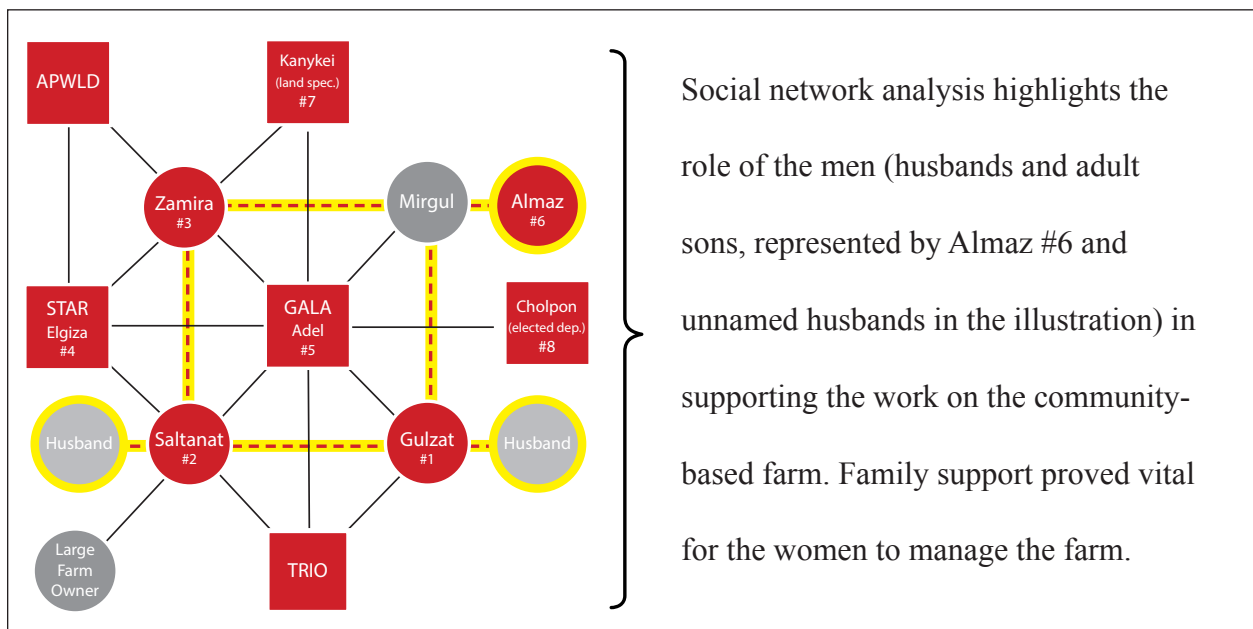
The owners also need to prudently save their profits to buy land. Owning land means giving it as an inheritance to their children and improving their generational wealth. Their ultimate goal is not to rely on government fund leases, which do not provide long-term stability

since the agreements are limited in years. However, each year the cost of land increases. The owners of the CBE plan to apply again at the end of 2021 and try to lease (rent) more land, five or six hectares, in addition to the three they received last year. A few men urged the women to apply for more, like 10 hectares, if possible. With the men’s support, such as their participation in helping the women build small greenhouses so that their planting season can be extended and seedlings can be started earlier in the season, the four women owners continue to set goals for their futures.

One of the learning outcomes for the nascent owners involved collaborating with their husbands and including them as part of their work network, needing their help in everyday operations of the farm, especially in watering their leased land and (Stephenson, 2013).

Figure 5.21

Husbands Reinforce the Work Network



Contrary to the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1), as the husbands and sons in these families act in unison to make the best use of the SLRRF policy, family dynamics (SC1), marital status (SC2), and family support and functional state (SC3) contribute to improving social capital. Since the land does not belong to them, they are reluctant to dig wells and build an irrigation system that allows for drip, on-demand watering. Instead, they resort to the traditional watering method where they take turns to use the community water supply from the *Bolshoi Chui Canal*. This watering system relies on a Soviet canal system and requires the land users to open the gateways at specified times (taking turns between farmers) to water (flood) their fields. Relying on the canal system poses two problems for women farmers. One, the watering schedule is not optimal for when the plants need watering. Their land gets access to the canal water once every ten days, but at the beginning of the season, their tomato plants needed watering every day. However, they needed to wait their turn. Not having optimal access to watering diminishes their profits and increases their work. Second, the canal system requires the opening and closing of the *shlyooz*, very heavy iron gateways. This heavy lifting is only possible if they appeal to the men to help them open and close the gates. Third, since the timing is often to receive the water at night, when it may be less safe for women to be on their own outdoors, they need the support of the men to help them. As Almaz, Gulzat's brother-in-law, said, "It is hard for them, for women, to close the small gateways in water channels, to [physically] manipulate this system. If there is no man, it is really hard for women to work on the field" [Coda (2/12) 21:18:57] and that is why women farmers continue to rely on adult sons, brothers, or husbands to support them because watering is not possible for women to do on their own.

Short and Medium Outcomes of the Ten Critical Events

The outcome of receiving the state land lease for such a low rental price has meant that Gulzat, Zamira, Saltanat, and Mirgul could profit from their CBE. After watering good seeds, the owners were able to hire people to work, rent machinery, sell their vegetables, and they look forward to applying for another new term for more land in the coming year. The ten critical events of the nascent owners led to financial, human, and social capital rewards.

Financially, from their profits, Saltanat paid for her son's wedding ceremony last summer. Wedding ceremonies are significant life events in Kyrgyzstan, regardless of socioeconomic status. There is so much social pressure for families to host large events that the government had to set legal limits on how much to spend on celebratory events not to impoverish families after the celebrations. Saltanat proudly shares about how their group endured 2020.

This year, we planted vegetables on three hectares of land, we got a good harvest.

We have tomatoes, and also, we grow peppers, eggplants. The whole country was in quarantine this year; people lost jobs, did not have any income. But we worked on the land; we had income from our harvest. [Coda (2/25) 08:38]

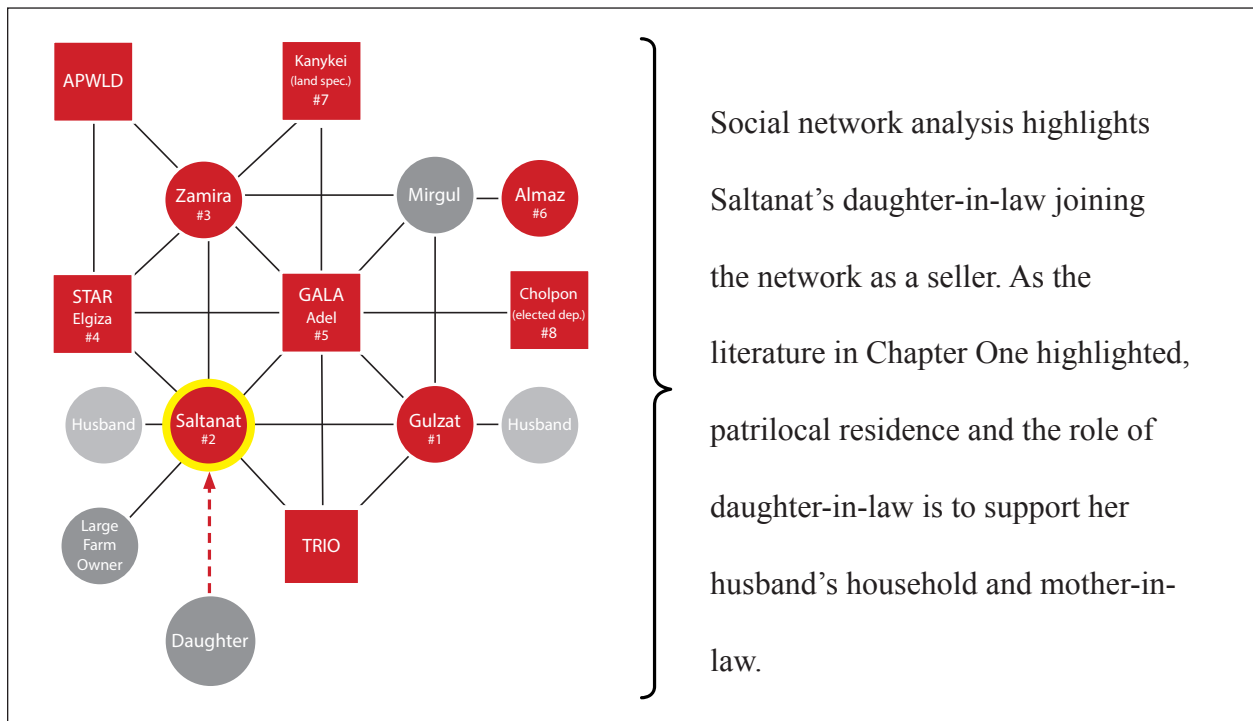
Gulzat has also seen the benefits to her family from the profits made from last year's farm. She spoke about how she used some of her profits to buy clothes for her grandchildren and pay their school fees, adding that "Also, we used [the] money for our house—we purchased a fridge from the money of that good harvest!" [Coda (2/12) 21:37:16]. As for financially helping her family during the pandemic, Gulzat elaborated on how, because of the profits from the community-based farm, she could buy mobile phones for her school-aged grandchildren to connect to learning online when the government closed all in-person classrooms. The women

shared about how they were able to make these purchasing decisions for their families because they were the ones who brought home the income.

In terms of growing their businesses and investing in human capital, the owners of the CBE learned how to rent a small stall at the local bazaar in the larger nearby town and employed Saltanat’s daughter-in-law to sell their harvest at the market. Owning their stall meant they could sell at market rates and not sell at bulk rates to other sellers, thus increasing their profit margins. The four women were able to sell potatoes, pink tomatoes, cabbages, peppers, onions, and eggplants and then split the profit of close to \$6000 among themselves, including paying those they hired to help them with the harvest.

Figure 5.22

Saltanat’s Daughter Joins the Network



Continuing to invest in social capital, Gulzat plans to branch out by working with a new group of women in the coming year to duplicate her past success with the CBE. Almaz, representing the husbands among the group of nascent owners, encouraged the women to keep in mind that,

It's much more preferable ... to buy land from private owners ... [because] after finishing the term of [the] agreement for renting, you should return this land to the fund And that's why ... it's very important to have more earnings, and to have more profits and work from this period of time. [Coda (2/12) 20:50:08]

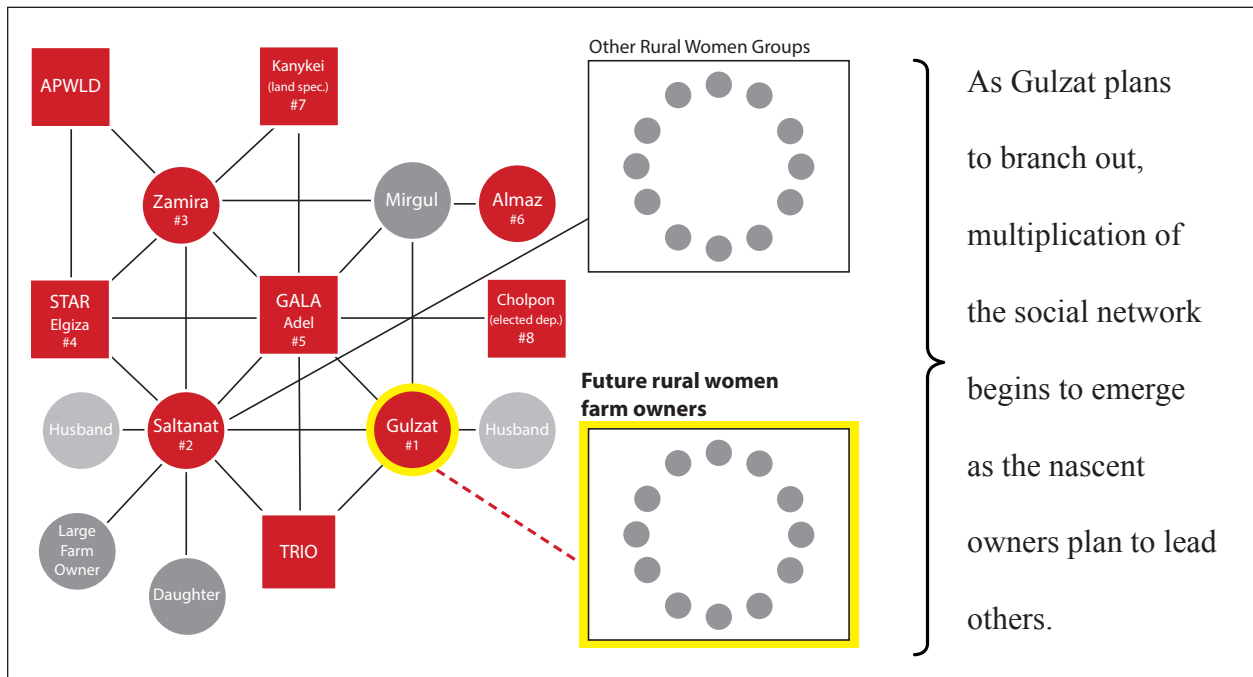
Planning strategically for their future together indicates the continued development of their *strategic network*, which indicates that they have a high level of trust within their network (Stephenson, 2013).

From 2020's success, Gulzat believes she has changed, between what she was like before and now, realizing what kind of money she could make if she worked hard towards her goal.

That is why she and the others will try to branch out with more women and start larger farms separately. At the end of 2020, Gulzat offered master classes to encourage other women to learn how to work towards their goals and start collaborative small for-profit businesses and farms.

Figure 5.23

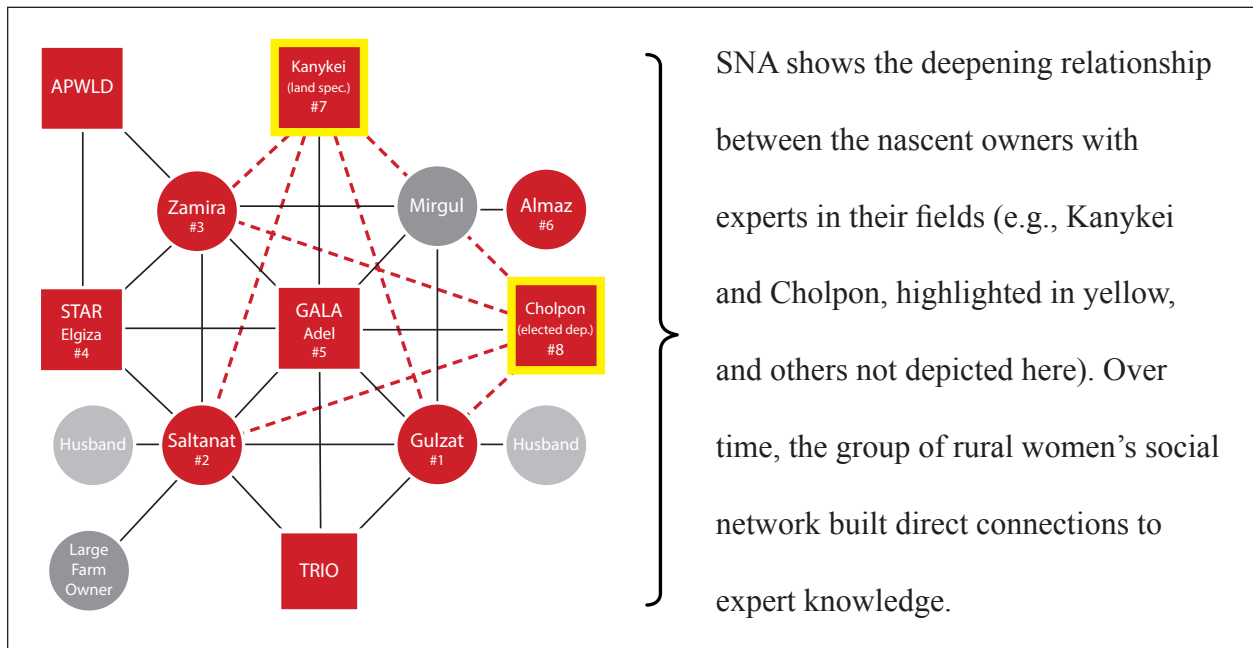
Gulzat Branches Out



Reflecting on lessons learned, Zamira learned how to develop social capital, specifically, her *expert knowledge network*. Learning that since in every sphere, there are experts in their fields, she can ask for advice or answers. She believes this is one of her main achievements, how and where to ask for help. If she needs a lawyer in a juridical consultation, she can find a law expert. If she needs an expert on social issues, she knows how to find an expert in that sphere. The ability to ask for help, to find a specialist on particular issues, is how she feels empowered. She believes it is an essential skill to know how to search for experts who can help her.

Figure 5.24

The Nascent Owners Connect Directly with their Expert Knowledge Network



Similarly, Saltanat also shares that she learned to build and develop relationships to seek support and learning. Although the NGOs, GALA, TRIO, and STAR, continued to support the group of nascent owners, Zamira, Gulzat, Saltanat, and Mirgul learned to directly connect with their *expert knowledge network*, represented by the land specialist, Kanykei, and an elected deputy of the Women’s Council, Cholpon (Stephenson, 2013).

Zamira believes that all the owners of the CBE changed after their experience of bidding for land, receiving it, and starting the farm together. “In the past, we were not confident. After this process, we can tell that we are more confident now. We believe we can do anything. We can solve our own problems” [Coda (7/21) 22.07.04]. The nascent owners of the farm in this case study do not see the establishment of the farm as the completed end goal but as a new chapter

in their learning and development, as they each look forward to planning new goals and scaling their success towards helping more marginalized rural women in Kyrgyzstan.

Conclusions:

Connecting Back to Theory and Long-Term Learning Outcomes

This case study of how social capital emerged and how a group of rural Kyrgyzstani women reached their goal in establishing a community-based farm is a story about learning. The story began with a group of marginalized rural women who expanded their social network when given the opportunity to connect to the wider community. Supporting the conceptual framework, introduced in Chapter Three, and aligned with andragogy and sociocultural theory of learning, the women's stories strongly indicated that investing in social capital increased learning opportunities, developed active learners, and activated entrepreneurial intentions.

Social Capital Increased Learning Opportunities

As the literature confirmed, many rural Kyrgyzstani women experienced limited opportunities, including the opportunity to pursue higher education. Given the results from the needs assessment, one of the factors unemployed rural women struggled with were isolation issues, how they feared sharing ideas with others, and how they kept their goals a secret out of fear (SC4¹⁶). The needs assessment participants exhibited low self-efficacy levels (HC3) and were unsure about how to seek support (SC5). However, all the key actors in the case study, the nascent farm owners, indicated that their catalyst to learning as adults began with receiving and accepting an invitation to attend training, giving them *the opportunity to connect with the wider*

¹⁶ See Figure 3.1 Conceptual Framework: Factors Contributing to Persistent Unemployment Among Rural Kyrgyzstani Women and Traditional Interventions (page 103)

community (Int.Fe.+6¹⁷). Accepting an invitation, admitting their need for support, became a critical event for the nascent actors.

Connecting with the wider community was also the first theme from the a priori coding. Each of the invitations came *from within their community, through a close, trusted relationship* (Int.Fe.+11¹⁸). Encouraging the practice of relying on relational social capital (SC:Re), personal relationships developed over time (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), offered an opportunity to bring about positive changes in the community, unlike the initial assessment that relational social capital can obligate one to behave within the bounds of cultural expectations and identity.

Connecting with the wider community was the first theme from the a priori coding. It provided the opportunity to access the collective resources from belonging to a social network, aligning with social capital theories (Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 1998), leading to each woman overcoming the environmental influences depicted in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1) of experiencing limited learning opportunities. *Inclusivity for the marginalized women* (Int.Fe.+1¹⁹ and Int.Fe.+5²⁰) opened the opportunity for them to *connect with others like them* (Int.Fe.+3²¹ and Int.Fe.+10²²). Investing in developing the social network also opened up opportunities to develop human and financial capital, as their connections led them to learn skills and bring home resources with financial worth (e.g., seeds and plants).

¹⁷ See Table 5.2 Ranking of Top Ten A Priori Intervention Features and Codes (page 182)

¹⁸ Int.Fe.+11: Events or relationships that are embedded within its local community (page 130)

¹⁹ Int.Fe.+1: Events or relationships that overlooked bias and preferential treatment by including a marginalized group (page 138)

²⁰ Int.Fe.+5: Events and relationships that offered an opportunity for women inclusivity, as unlikely candidates became business owners or leaders (page 116)

²¹ Int.Fe.+3: Events or relationships that emphasized the essentiality of group identity in goal setting and goal attainment (page 110)

²² Int.Fe.+10: Events or relationships connecting people who shared common entrepreneurial or employment goals (page 128)

Over time, the nascent owners learned that training was a way to invest in themselves. Initially, the nascent owners were drawn to attend training, thinking they would learn skills related to finding better employment, such as sewing skills or farming techniques. However, they acknowledged that they learned more important social lessons (Int.Fe.+12²³) about legal literacy, advocacy, and the importance of equal opportunities in overcoming poverty together (Int.Fe.+9²⁴). Highlighting the importance of investing in themselves while stressing the importance of social capital, Zamira concluded that to get ahead, rural women need to join with others and be part of a group that mutually supports each other to have results (Int.Fe.+3²⁵). Her remarks align with sociocultural learning theory (Gee, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978), and for these women, they gained the capacity of knowing how to seek out more knowledgeable others to help them.

Investing in social capital allowed the participants to learn from more knowledgeable others and build connections to support their adult learning opportunities. The critical component of the study included asking where and how they learned from more knowledgeable others. In a community with low social capital, the Rural Women's Association GALA likely played a catalytic role in supporting the group to become aware of available support services (Int.Fe.+NGO and Int.Fe.+GOV), a key theme from the a priori coding process, and to expand their social networks. Over time, NGO support, through organizations like GALA, TRIO, and STAR, helped them to develop a plan to start their own CBE and to invest, develop, and grow in all three dimensions of social capital: structural, relational, and cognitive (Jones, 2005) as

²³ Int.Fe.+12: Events or relationships that prioritize social benefits (e.g., preserving culture and the environment) (page 130)

²⁴ Int.Fe.+9: Events or relationships that targeted the most acute levels of poverty (page 127)

²⁵ Int.Fe.+3: Events or relationships that emphasized the essentiality of group identity in goal setting and goal attainment (page 110)

depicted in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1). While the lessons learned by the nascent owners are many, the remarkable outcome of increasing learning opportunities due to investing in social capital was improved self-confidence and self-efficacy, which led them to take ownership of their learning to become active learners.

Social Capital Developed Active Learners

Active learners take on “a participative role rather than a passive role” (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 246). When learners participate, practice, or act on what they learn, learning and retention improve (Knowles et al., 2005). Active learning and autonomy to make self-driving decisions are central for adult learners (Knowles et al., 2005). In the beginning, the nascent owners acknowledged their passivity, expecting their husbands to make all the household decisions and plans for their future. However, over time, the nascent owners became more active in their learning. An example of learning autonomy was when the nascent owners began questioning and demanding more transparency in government programs and services, revealing an “internal change of consciousness,” a shift in mindset, as they “freely question[ed] what is learned” (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 186). This shift in practice can be a way of investing in structural social capital (SC:St) by reinforcing new patterns of connections between individuals (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Another example of a change in consciousness was Gulzat’s aha! moment, a critical event where she connected the importance of equity to alleviating poverty. This case study showed how investing in one’s social network produced opportunities for making self-driving decisions, building confidence, and developing the key case study actors into active learners. As the women developed into active learners, they seized opportunities to advocate and share with others their experiences.

When the nascent owners reflected on their past experiences, they recalled *events or relationships that gave them key decision-making power rather than governing bodies* (Int.Fe.+8) or *events or relationships that emphasized group identity in goal setting and goal attainment* (Int.Fe.+3). The nascent owners benefitted from attending *NGO-supported training* (Int.Fe.+NGO) and began to develop the confidence to take ownership of their learning. Through the critical event of gaining the support of their husbands and the support of specialists and leaders *from their community* (Int.Fe.+11), active learning was reinforced.

As active learners, the nascent owners' learning aligns with the theory of andragogy, adult learning. Adult learners take ownership of their learning, developing confidence from lessons learned from past experiences (Knowles et al., 2005). The nascent owners realized that they carried a wealth of pre-existing knowledge and skills as active adult learners. Also, in alignment with andragogy, knowing what and why they need to learn a subject matter motivated the rural women. In this case, the nascent owners learned about legal literacy and advocacy, which helped them drive key decision-making (Int.Fe.+8²⁶) to advocate for themselves and to conduct their own research. Zamira's research led her to overcome the challenge of obtaining a social passport, a critical event in her journey towards supporting the ownership of the community-based farm. The conceptual framework, emphasizing how self-efficacy influences motivation and intentions (Bandura, 1982; Schunk, 1990), supports the case study findings. As the nascent owners' level of self-efficacy increased, indicated by their actions and discussion about seeing a change in themselves, including an increase in self-confidence, their motivation and intention to pursue the needed actions to apply for land and establish the community-based farm also increased.

²⁶ Int.Fe.+8: Events or relationships that gave participants key decision-making power rather than governing bodies (page "Appendix D:" on page 305)

As active learners, the nascent owners also began to participate in peer teaching opportunities, they spoke of developing a desire to help others, of wanting to share their ideas and experiences with other groups of rural women, and of plans to branch out and work amongst other unemployed, marginalized women. Over time, as they learned and gained capacity, they began to serve as the more knowledgeable other for the rest of the wider community of unemployed rural women. Zamira acknowledged that “Women should believe in themselves. They should never give up We can do anything if we try. We should help each other. As a group, we should support each other” [Coda (7/21) 22:19.07]. From the confidence they gained, and by developing a positive can-do attitude, their intention to start a business felt more feasible (Naktiyok et al., 2010), leading this group of nascent owners to follow through in carrying out their plans and goals of starting the community-based farm.

Social Capital Activated Entrepreneurial Intentions

Related to active learning, the nascent owners augmented their learning process through emphasizing collaboration and the PDSA learning cycle. As the nascent owners prioritized collaboration with others (Int.Fe.+4²⁷), they invested in expanding their social networks. Their heightened attentiveness to the importance of collaboration led to the critical event of the ongoing relationship between Saltanat and her former boss, the owner of a large farm. Although in the past, her former boss only offered Saltanat and others very low pay in exchange for laborious farm work, I was surprised that the two continued to develop and nurture an ongoing collaborative relationship as peers. Another example of collaboration was when I learned about how the husbands, who used to be skeptical of training opportunities, encouraged and supported

²⁷ Int.Fe.+4: Events or relationships where participants openly and frequently shared about their business intentions or activities (page 112)

the nascent owners, their wives, to apply for SLRRF land and helped them manage the heavy work of watering and managing the canal system.

Furthermore, as part of pursuing entrepreneurial intentions, the nascent owners progressed through each stage of the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle, driving their entrepreneurial learning cycles:

1. When they initially learned about SLRRF lands, they made plans about how to find out more information—what types of vegetables to cultivate, and whom they could hire to help with the harvest.
2. Once they received the land grant, they started small and tested ideas from using a small greenhouse to grow seeds to seedlings to testing selling ideas and pricing options for their produce at the local market.
3. They analyzed their accomplishments by evaluating what they learned and invited other rural women to visit and see their community-based farm to see and celebrate what they had accomplished.
4. The nascent owners made bolder plans to scale and expand their social networks, investing in social capital by looking for others whom they could help.

The nascent owners planned to help others and work alongside them in applying for additional SLRRF land to start more farms among the community of rural marginalized Kyrgyzstani women.

This expansion of the social network based on their shared interest in entrepreneurial activities deepened the cognitive dimension of social capital (SC:Co) as they developed a new set of shared meaning among those in the network. Having invested in social capital meant they now had a shared understanding of supporting each other and a purpose of encouraging more

entrepreneurial activities among unemployed rural Kyrgyzstani women. As a result, they knew how to advocate for themselves, seek expert support, and start small and test out their ideas before making bolder goals. W. Zhao et al. (2011) demonstrated how crucial having role models were in encouraging entrepreneurship. The nascent owners believe that without awareness of NGO support (Int.Fe.+NGO²⁸) and the help of GALA, TRIO, STAR, and others who make up the network of mutually supportive communities of rural women (Int.Fe.+10²⁹), they would have had very different outcomes.

Revisiting the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1), social capital offered the nascent owners a way to counter the effects of family dynamics (SC1), marital status and family obligations (SC2), and family obligations (SC3), all three of which typically contributed to isolation and silence (SC4) and not having access to help/support (SC5). Instead, becoming aware of support services, one of the key a priori themes (Appendix K), played the crucial role in expanding their social network, contributing to knowledge (HC2), overcoming low education levels (HC1); increasing self-efficacy and access to valuable resources, including financial resources (FC1). As the nascent owners increased in knowledge and self-efficacy, their motivation (HC4) to act contributed to activating entrepreneurial intention (HC5). After the nascent owners established the community-based farm and successfully harvested and sold their produce, their level of self-efficacy (HC3) continued to increase because they realized their ability to make more money than they ever expected. Without the support from the social network, Zamira said she would have had to leave her children behind to grandparents and work as a migrant laborer abroad, like so many other rural families sharing,

²⁸ Int.Fe.+NGO: NGO(s) association involvement/support (page 124)

²⁹ Int.Fe.+10: Events or relationships connecting people who shared common entrepreneurial or employment goals (page 128)

I am glad that I joined [the] women's group and did not go abroad for work. I am with my children. I am happy that I can care for them, see them every day. I see them growing up, and even though I am a single mom, my children should be happy. I share everything I learn with my children, and their views are wider. They study well. Everything is good now. [Coda (2/25) 10:26]

Limitations of the Study

At the start of my research, I intended to conduct an in-person investigation about unemployment among rural Kyrgyzstani women. The COVID-19 pandemic made these plans impossible, and I switched to conducting my research entirely online. The extent that the pandemic affected my research is difficult to assess because COVID-19 became a permanent part of every interaction with my participants. Kyrgyzstan suffered deep losses during each surge, with the country listed among the highest per capita deaths globally (Bollyky et al., 2021; Pašović et al., 2021).

First, although I know some of the actors' personal stories, I cannot measure or fully know to what extent COVID-19 changed their situation or affected my research. When the number of illnesses and deaths surged in Kyrgyzstan, I paused my research and interviews. Second, the limitation to conducting an online-only study was that I relied more on my executive sponsor to suggest possible interviewees, thus possibly affecting the sample population. For one, I had limited access to inviting interviewees. For example, I would have wanted to interview Mirgul, the fourth owner of the farm. However, without direct access to inviting Mirgul, I do not know why she did not volunteer to participate. Second, relying on my executive sponsor, the current director of GALA, may have also led to a selection bias towards NGO experiences and their supportive role in helping the actors reach their goals.

Third, since the stories captured over 16 years of history based on personal memories, there were aspects of the narrative I was not able to fully explore. For example, as roles and relationships shifted over time, in my analysis of the social network, I could not single out who served as the “hub,” “gatekeeper,” or “pulsotaker” (Stephenson, 2011, p. 288). Sometimes, Adel was at the center of an event and was the hub, and other times, she was the pulsotaker. At other times, Saltanat was the hub as the flurry of activities surrounding collaboration or disseminating information took place.

Fourth, using narrative inquiry as a research method examines “individual interpretations and worldviews” involving “complex and human-centered events” (Mertova & Webster, 2019, p. 89). Unlike other established quantitative or mixed methods approaches, narrative studies retell respondent stories based on their truths, worldviews, and memories. This study offers a verisimilitude of the truth for readers to make their own comparisons and conclusions. The stories I sought, heard, and retold are set in a context of my choosing. Moreover, the retelling of the stories is from a perspective of a cross-cultural researcher, educator/trainer, and entrepreneur. Thus, the stories are bound by my context and my understanding of Kyrgyz culture. The stories are also bound by my bicultural heritage, an Asian who grew up with strong western influences. In light of my background, upbringing, education, and work experiences, another researcher conducting a similar study may find different events and relationships than the ones I highlighted.

Implications for Future Research

I interviewed the case study actors using reflective questions about their close-knit relationships, with whom and how they seek advice, and memories of how they overcame particular challenges to answer the study’s four research questions. Serendipitously, the process

of gathering data and interviewing created a natural reflective process that led to “perspective transformation” (Mezirow, 1981, p. 6), whereby the nascent owners had the opportunity to be “consciously critical or critically reflective in effecting [their] relationships” with “significant others” (Mezirow, 1981, pp. 8–9). This reflective process led them to recognize that they possessed supportive social connections instead of the needs assessment participants who expressed feelings of isolation. Furthermore, through the deliberate expansion of their social network, the nascent owners came to recognize their growing capacity to overcome challenges.

Transformative learning theory focuses on how adult learning differs from how children learn, the key difference being the use of reflection to reinterpret experiences (Taylor, 2017). Transformative learning theory helps explain how, by employing the reflection process, adults are able to shift deeply held assumptions or beliefs (Taylor, 2017). Future research through the lens of transformative learning theory, linking the role of social capital, can shed insight on how marginalized adult learners can learn from a “disorienting dilemma” that grows out of developing social connections with their broader community (Mezirow, 1981, p. 7). Exploring how expanding one’s social network challenged preconceived assumptions can increase learning opportunities for adult learners. Through critical events analysis, I touched on the concept of disorienting dilemma without explicitly identifying what part of their journey was especially disorienting and how they assessed, internalized, recognized, or explored their “move toward new perspectives” (Mezirow, 1981, p. 7). Further research matching their journey to Mezirow’s ten elements on the “dynamics of perspective transformation” and exploring which of the two paths of transformation developed (sudden awareness vs. a sequence of transitions) can provide further understanding of adult learning theory and enhance practice in supporting marginalized rural communities (Mezirow, 1981, p. 7).

Implications for Future Practice

Taking the research into practice means needing to build reflection into learning processes. The interviews offered an opportunity to close a learning loop for the nascent owners because they had not taken the time to reflect on what they learned and how much they had changed before meeting me. In their survival mode of overcoming unemployment or leaving behind subsistence farming lifestyles, the nascent owners had not taken the time to conduct a meta-analysis on their own learning. They knew what they had accomplished, and they even applied aspects of the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle into their farming practices. However, they had not yet applied improvement science into their learning, not having reflected on what they learned about themselves or what they learned about learning itself.

Upon answering my prompts, they realized they had changed in confidence, self-efficacy, learning protocols, and critical evaluative skills in problem-solving. Several times, the interviewees surprised themselves when they realized how much they had changed. At times, their transformative learning even surprised Adel, my executive sponsor, who heard the interviewees retell their stories for the first time. Since they had not practiced reflective learning before meeting me, when they met with me to tell me their stories, the interviews inadvertently added to their PDSA cycle in learning about learning. At the end of each interview, the interviewees discovered they had gotten something out of the conversation with me.

As I close this manuscript, I am reminded of improvement science, a topic revisited many times during my first year of the Ed.D. program. My meetings with the nascent owners provided me with learning about their entrepreneurial journeys, but the interviews also allowed me to observe how the practice of reflection enhanced learning cycles, which unfolded because of their willingness to meet with me. My meetings with them had no hidden didactic agenda, but

my “profound knowledge” of the system and social structures of Kyrgyzstani society allowed me to recognize the moment my interviews shifted to become learning opportunities for the interviewees (Perla et al., 2013, p. 170). Their knowledge gained from participating in the interviews went beyond learning about the subject matter (e.g., how to apply for SLRRF land, how to establish a community-based farm); what they learned can be applied to any situation. Practitioners should institutionalize reflection into development programs for active learners to learn about their learning.

Additionally, this case encourages practitioners to employ and invest in developing communities of practice that encourage self-learning. Unbeknownst to the case study actors, the owners continued following principles of improvement science when they started to share their learning with other marginalized rural women; they instinctively developed their version of “networked improvement communities” (Bryk et al., 2016, p. 142). First, their story showed the nascent owners engaging in “Level-A learning” by acquiring knowledge and experiences through practice (Bryk et al., 2016, p. 142). Then, as the learners also became teachers, they developed “Level-B learning,” when learning and knowledge were “augmented” by “systematically pool[ing] collective capabilities” (Bryk et al., 2016, p. 143). Developing social connections and networked improvement communities between learners with the more experienced can open the door to more teaching, mentoring, and coaching opportunities that expand the learning environment into developing both the learner and nascent teachers.

Intervention programs addressing poverty, unemployment, and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals are an active part of rural communities in Kyrgyzstan. As a practitioner-scholar, my conclusion from evaluating, participating, and observing existing programs is that many tend to address the problem from an outsider perspective that focuses on human or

financial capital deficits. Supporting interventions that consider structures of social interactions, inclusivity of the marginalized, and active learning emphasizes the features of a system that are present but need to be activated. By encouraging insider participation, improving agency, capacity building, and reflection, intervention participants will focus not on deficits, but their “concept of self-directedness” (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 214), moving from dependent recipients of intervention programs to “independent learners” who are motivated and oriented to learning and improving (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 183).

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Appendix A:

Needs Assessment Quantitative Survey Questionnaire (in English)

<p>Demographic Questions</p> <p>Education list adapted and localized for the post-Soviet school system. Original list was from (Sequeira et al., 2007).</p>	<p>Age: _____</p> <p>Ethnicity: _____</p> <p>Incomplete high school (up to grade 9) Graduated high school (completed grade 11) Incomplete technical school Graduated Technical/vocational school Bachelor's degree Incomplete Master's degree Master's degree or higher</p> <p>Marital Status: (select one): Single Married Divorced Widowed</p>																											
<p>Demographic Questions, if married or previously married</p>	<p>If married, divorced or widowed:</p> <p>How old were you when you got married? _____</p> <p>How many brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law do you have?</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 5%;"></th> <th style="width: 30%;">Brother or Sister-in-Law? (select one)</th> <th style="width: 65%;">Older or younger than your husband?</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>1</td><td>Brother / Sister</td><td>Older / Younger</td></tr> <tr><td>2</td><td>Brother / Sister</td><td>Older / Younger</td></tr> <tr><td>3</td><td>Brother / Sister</td><td>Older / Younger</td></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td>Brother / Sister</td><td>Older / Younger</td></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td>Brother / Sister</td><td>Older / Younger</td></tr> <tr><td>6</td><td>Brother / Sister</td><td>Older / Younger</td></tr> <tr><td>7</td><td>Brother / Sister</td><td>Older / Younger</td></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td>Brother / Sister</td><td>Older / Younger</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Is your husband the youngest son in the family? Y / N</p>		Brother or Sister-in-Law? (select one)	Older or younger than your husband?	1	Brother / Sister	Older / Younger	2	Brother / Sister	Older / Younger	3	Brother / Sister	Older / Younger	4	Brother / Sister	Older / Younger	5	Brother / Sister	Older / Younger	6	Brother / Sister	Older / Younger	7	Brother / Sister	Older / Younger	8	Brother / Sister	Older / Younger
	Brother or Sister-in-Law? (select one)	Older or younger than your husband?																										
1	Brother / Sister	Older / Younger																										
2	Brother / Sister	Older / Younger																										
3	Brother / Sister	Older / Younger																										
4	Brother / Sister	Older / Younger																										
5	Brother / Sister	Older / Younger																										
6	Brother / Sister	Older / Younger																										
7	Brother / Sister	Older / Younger																										
8	Brother / Sister	Older / Younger																										

Number of children, their gender, and ages:

Number of children	Gender (select one)	Age
1	M or F	
2	M or F	
3	M or F	
4	M or F	
5	M or F	
6	M or F	
7	M or F	
8	M or F	

My marriage was (select all the apply):

- Consensual
- Forced
- Bride-kidnapped
- Arranged (decided) by others

C3. Family Dynamics

Family APGAR Questionnaire (Smilkstein, 1978). Original questionnaire allows for replacing “family” with spouse, significant other, parents, or children.

	Almost Always	Some of the Time	Hardly Ever
I am satisfied with the help that I receive from my family* when something is troubling me.			
I am satisfied with the way my family* discusses items of common interest and shares problem solving with me.			

	I find that my family* accepts my wishes to take on new activities or make changes in my lifestyle.				
	I am satisfied with the way my family* expresses affection and responds to my feelings such as anger, sorrow, and love.				
	I am satisfied with the amount of time my family* and I spend together				
	I have control over how the money is spent in my family				
C3. Family Dynamics / Support (Sequeira et al., 2007)	<p>How do your parents feel about you starting a business? (5) Extremely Positive (4) Slightly Positive (3) Neutral (2) Slightly Negative (1) Extremely Negative</p> <p>How do your parents-in-law feel about you starting a business? (5) Extremely Positive (4) Slightly Positive (3) Neutral (2) Slightly Negative (1) Extremely Negative</p> <p>How does your husband feel about you starting a business? (5) Extremely Positive (4) Slightly Positive (3) Neutral (2) Slightly Negative (1) Extremely Negative</p> <p>How do your siblings feel about you starting a business? (5) Extremely Positive (4) Slightly Positive (3) Neutral (2) Slightly Negative (1) Extremely Negative</p>				

Appendix B:

Needs Assessment Instrumentation Guiding Qualitative Questions for Focus Group

Guiding Questions:

- What is motivating you to attend this class? (Why are you here?) (C5. + C6.)
- Why do you want to be self-employed? (C5. + C6.)

C1 Barriers

- What did you have to overcome to attend classes at this center? (+C3.)
- What challenges do you face in seeking (self) employment?

C2. Support services

- You are attending this class to seek help/support to get a job. If you wanted to get help in your job search, where could you go for help? (could you seek out neighbors, friends?)

C3. Family dynamics

- Describe your relationship with your family (where you are living).
- The Family APGAR, adapted from (Smilkstein, 1978):

Adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How have family members aided each other in time of need?• In what way have family members received help or assistance from friends and community agencies?
Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do family members communicate with each other about such matters as finances, medical care, large purchases, and personal problems?

Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have family members changed during the past years? • How has this change been accepted by family members? • In what ways have family members aided each other in growing or developing independent lifestyles? • How have family members reacted to your desires for change?
Affection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have members of your family responded to emotional expressions such as affection, love, sorrow, or anger?
Resolve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do members of your family share time, space, and money?

C4. Family social capital

- Who might your parents and family connect you with to help you create your own business? (Any types of connection to potential partners, customers, capital?) Adapted from Edelman et al. (2016).

C5 and C6. External and Internal Motivation

- What is motivating you to attend classes at this center? (Why are you here?)
- Why do you want to be self-employed

Appendix C:

Needs Assessment Study Consent Form

JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

HOMEWOOD INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (HIRB)

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Investigation to Confirm Factors Associated with Rural Unemployment Among Kyrgyzstani Women

Application No.:

Principal Investigator: Elizabeth T. Brown Visiting Professor JHU SOE [REDACTED]

You are being asked to join a research study. Participation in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to join now, you can change your mind later. This study is being conducted as part of the researcher's doctoral studies at Johns Hopkins University.

1. Research Summary (Key Information):

- The information in this section is intended to be an introduction to the study only. Complete details of the study are listed in the sections below. If you are considering participation in the study, the entire document should be discussed with you before you make your final decision. You can ask questions about the study now and at any time in the future.
- The purpose of this research study is to examine the problem of unemployment among rural women in Kyrgyzstan. The use of the data gathered will become part of a student's future dissertation research study.
- Participants: rural women from the Ysyk-Ata region of Kyrgyzstan will be attending a job skills training seminar. They will be asked if they would like to volunteer to participate in a focus group and respond to a survey.
- Participants will be asked to take a 20-minute survey and take part in a one-hour focus group to identify barriers, if any, that rural Kyrgyzstan women face in seeking employment.
- The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life.
- There is no direct benefit to you from being in this study.

2. Why is this research being done?

- This research is being done to identify barriers, if any, that rural Kyrgyzstan women face in seeking employment. Women attending a job skills training seminar for rural women from the Ysyk-Ata region of Kyrgyzstan will be asked to join the study.

3. What will happen if you join this study?

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

- Attend a brief information meeting about the research study at the Rural Women's Association "GALA" at [REDACTED] village in Kyrgyzstan, on a weekday. This will take no longer 10 minutes. You will be required to provide your own transportation to the sessions.
- Complete an on-line survey or a paper pencil version with facilitated assistance at the Rural Women's Association "GALA" at [REDACTED] village in Kyrgyzstan, on a weekday. This will take no longer than 20 minutes. You will be required to provide your own transportation to the sessions.
- You will be asked to share demographic information, experiences with social service support, and family support.
- Attend a focus group discussion which will take up to 1 hour and will be held at the Rural Women's Association "GALA" at [REDACTED] in Kyrgyzstan, on a weekday. You will be required to provide your own transportation to the sessions.
- During the focus group discussion, you will be expected to actively participate with your answers and comments. A bilingual interpreter will be there. You will be asked to share information on your job seeking process, experiences with social service support, and family support. The discussion will be audiotaped.

Photographs/Video recordings

- As part of this research, we are requesting your permission to create and use audio recordings. Any recordings will not be used for advertising or non-study related purposes.

You should know that:

- You may request that the audio taping be stopped at any time.
- If you agree to allow the audio recording and then change your mind, you may ask us to destroy that portion of the recording. If the recording has had all identifiers removed, we may not be able to do this.
- We will only use the focus group audio recording for the purposes of this research.

How long will you be in the study?

- You will be in this study for approximately 90 minutes, which will include a brief introduction, the survey and focus group.

4. What are the risks or discomforts of the study?

- You may get tired or bored when you are completing questionnaires. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to answer.
- The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life.
- Participation in the study will have no impact on your relationship or participation at the Rural Women's Association "GALA."
- All data collected is solely for the purpose of the research study and will not be used to evaluate or otherwise affect you or your participation in the training center program.
- We are asking all the participants to agree to the importance of keeping information discussed in the focus group confidential. In addition, we are asking each of you to verbally agree to keep everything discussed in the room confidential, and I will be reminding at the end of the group not to discuss the material outside.

5. Are there benefits to being in the study?
 - There is no direct benefit to you from being in this study.
 - This study may benefit society if the results lead to a better understanding of what is contributing to the problem of unemployment among rural women in Kyrgyzstan. This knowledge will help to develop solutions for addressing unemployment among rural women in Kyrgyzstan.

6. What are your options if you do not want to be in the study?
 - Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You choose whether to participate. An alternative is to not take part in the study. If you decide not to participate, there are no penalties, and you will not lose any benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled. If you do not join, your training at Rural Women’s Association “GALA” will not be affected.

7. Will it cost you anything to be in this study?
 - The participants will have to provide their own transportation to the Rural Women’s Association “GALA”.

8. Will you be paid if you join this study?
 - No

9. Can you leave the study early?
 - You can agree to be in the study now and change your mind later, without any penalty or loss of benefits.
 - If you wish to stop, please tell us right away.
 - If you want to withdraw from the study, please email Elaine Young, researcher XXXXXXXXXX to inform her of your withdrawal.

10. Why might we take you out of the study early?
 - You may be taken out of the study if:
 - You already have a job
 - You are not seeking employment

11. How will the confidentiality of your data be protected?
 - Any study records that identify you will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of the Johns Hopkins University Homewood Institutional Review Board and officials from government agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and the Office for Human Research Protections. (All of these people are required to keep your identity confidential.) Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.
 - To protect confidential information, all study records will be created and maintained by the student investigator and stored in a locked file cabinet. In addition, participant names on data sheets (classroom observations and survey responses) will be replaced with

code numbers to maintain participant confidentiality. All electronic data will be stored and secured in a password-protected computer file. Only the student investigator and PI will have access to the computer files, which will be backed-up regularly to ensure their protection.

12. What other things should you know about this research study?

What is the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and how does it protect you?

- This study has been reviewed by an Institutional Review Board (IRB), a group of people that reviews human research studies. The IRB can help you if you have questions about your rights as a research participant or if you have other questions, concerns, or complaints about this research study. You may contact the IRB at 410-516-6580 or hirb@jhu.edu.

What should you do if you have questions about the study?

- Call the principal investigator, Elizabeth T. Brown at [REDACTED]. If you wish, you may contact the principal investigator by letter. The address is on page one of this consent form. If you cannot reach the principal investigator or wish to talk to someone else, call the IRB office at 410-516-5680.
- You can ask questions about this research study now or at any time during the study, by talking to the researcher(s) working with you or by calling Elaine Young at [REDACTED] (reachable internationally through WhatsApp).
- If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or feel that you have not been treated fairly, please call the Homewood Institutional Review Board at Johns Hopkins University at (410) 516-6580.

13. What does this consent form mean?

- This form means that: You understand the information given to you in this form, you accept the provisions in the form, and you agree to join the study. You will not give up any legal rights by agreeing to a part of this study.

WE WILL GIVE YOU A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM

NOTE: A COPY OF THE CONSENT FORM MUST BE KEPT BY THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR; A COPY MUST BE GIVEN TO THE PARTICIPANT.

Appendix D:

Extracted Features from Intervention Literature (Summary of Tables 3.1–3.3)

Assigned label	Intervention features	Discussed on Pages
Financial Capital		
Int.Fe.-1	Events or relationships that showed bias and preferential treatment by excluding participants (contributed to a negative outcome)	107, 125, 114, 135, 136, 138
Int.Fe.+1	<i>Reversed to reflect positive case</i> → Events or relationships that overlooked traditional bias and preferential treatment by including a marginalized group	138, 186, 228, 257
Int.Fe.-2	Events or relationships that misdirected earmarked financial resources (contributed to no long-term outcome)	108, 114
Int.Fe.+2	<i>Reversed to reflect positive case</i> → Events or relationships that reinvested earmarked financial resources appropriately (e.g., into business endeavors)	
Int.Fe.+3	Events or relationships that emphasized the essentiality of group identity in goal setting and goal attainment	110, 114, 186, 233, 257, 258, 260
Int.Fe.+4	Events or relationships where participants openly and frequently shared about their business intentions or activities	112, 114, 261
Human Capital		
Int.Fe.+5	Events or relationships that offered an opportunity for women inclusivity, promoting unlikely candidates to become business owners or leaders	116, 117, 121, 128, 186, 233, 257
Int.Fe.-6	Events or relationships that offered only opportunities to pre-existing clients or those with already established businesses (contributed to not long-term outcome)	117, 118, 121, 228

Assigned label	Intervention features	Discussed on Pages
Int.Fe.+6	Reversed to reflect positive case → Events or relationships that offered training to the wider community, not only to pre-existing clients or those with already established businesses	228, 257
Int.Fe.+7	Events or relationships that offered an opportunity to learn simple (business) concepts that are immediately applicable for the participants	119, 121, 136, 227
Social Capital		
Int.Fe.-8	Events or relationships where governing bodies held key decision-making power rather than participants (contributed to a negative outcome)	123, 125, 126, 135
Int.Fe.+8	<i>Reversed to reflect positive case</i> → Events or relationships that gave participants key decision-making power rather than governing bodies	187, 260
Int.Fe.+9	Events or relationships that targeted the most acute levels of poverty	127, 135, 186, 128, 233, 258
Int.Fe.+10	Events or relationships connecting people who shared common entrepreneurial or employment goals	128, 129, 133, 134, 135, 186, 194, 226, 233, 257, 263
Int.Fe.+11	Events or relationships that are embedded within its local community	130, 131, 135, 186, 187, 223, 228, 257, 260
Int.Fe.+12	Events or relationships that prioritize social benefits (e.g., preserving culture and the environment)	130, 134, 135, 186, 190, 228, 239, 258
Int.Fe.+GOV	A government affordance/policy	124, 135, 186, 258
Int.Fe.+NGO	NGO(s) association involvement/support	124, 135, 186, 193, 224, 258, 260, 263

Appendix E:

Case Study Research Summary Matrix

Research Question	Construct	Data Source(s)	Data Collection Tool	Frequency	Data Analysis
RQ1: What contributed to the emergence of social capital for the main actors in this case?	Social capital Human capital Financial capital Self-efficacy Motivation Entrepreneurial Intention	Informants	Semi-structured 1:1 interview (see protocol in Appendix F Case Study Interview Protocol and Script)	At least once: once at the beginning of the data collection process and then again for member checking, as needed.	Analysis of narrative based on literature reviews, theories, and conceptual framework (Polkinghorne, 1995) See Figure 4.2, steps 1-3a, 4, 5 and 7
	Attitude (on developing social networks)	Archival records	SLRRF application documents, meeting agenda/notes, training notes from GALA Center, and others	Documents and records to be iteratively reviewed as they come up	In vivo coding; “causation coding” if/when appropriate (Miles et al., 2014, p. 126) Compare and contrast findings with extant literature
RQ2: What events, factors, or relationships do the participants identify as contributing to the success/struggles of reaching their goal, starting the CBE?	Critical events Lived experiences Key relationships	Informants	Semi-structured 1:1 interview	At least twice: once at the beginning of the data collection process and then again for member checking.	Narrative analysis to develop chronology, context, setting, actions, events, plot of the story, etc. (Josselson, 2011; Polkinghorne, 1995; Saldaña, 2013)
	Pertinent lessons, skills, or knowledge acquired	Archive records	Written correspondence, meeting agenda/notes,	Documents and records to be iteratively reviewed as they come up	See Figure 4.2, steps 1-2, 3b, 6 and 7

training notes
from GALA
Center, and others

		Researcher	Researcher journal and observations	On-going throughout the data collection phase	
RQ3: How do the participants explain for how they learned to overcome the traditional challenges of limited resources, restricted opportunities, marginalization, and discrimination, to start the community-based enterprise?	As related to teaching and learning: Critical events Lived experiences Key relationships	Informants	Semi-structured 1:1 interview	At least twice: once at the beginning of the data collection process and then again for member checking.	Blended analysis using both narrative of analysis and narrative analysis See Figure 4.2, steps 1-7
		Researcher	Researcher journal and observations	On-going throughout the data collection phase	
RQ4: How do the participants describe what they learned from starting their own community-based enterprise	Critical events Lived experiences Key relationships Pertinent lessons, skills, or knowledge acquired	Informants	Semi-structured 1:1 interview	At least twice: once at the beginning of the data collection process and then again for member checking.	Blended analysis using both narrative of analysis and narrative analysis See Figure 4.2, steps 1-7
		Archived records	Written documents about any training or seminars they attended, secondary sources created by the participants	Documents and records to be iteratively reviewed as they come up	

Appendix F:

Case Study Interview Protocol and Script

Since this study is to discover the yet to be identified critical events and relationships that led to the establishment of the community-based farm, the following research protocol will emphasize their participation in process that began with learning about the SLRRF opportunity to winning the bid and establishing the community-based farm. Anchoring the questions on overcoming the challenge and accomplishing or attempting to achieve a goal will help informants recall their experiences and journey towards establishing the community-based farm. Asking about events or opportunities that pushed them will highlight situations that may include emergencies, threats, unexpected needs, plans towards goal attainment, or overcoming challenges and barriers, etc. The interview protocol in the subsequent section employs Mertova and Webster's (2019) narrative inquiry questions (p. 70) while allowing for flexibility to bring Stephenson's (2013) Social Network Analysis questions when appropriate.

Interview Script

During this interview, I will ask you some questions about your experience of how you established the community-based farm after being granted the land lease through SLRRF. Most of the questions will ask you to provide a description or explanation for your answer. Please provide detailed descriptions so that I can understand your story well. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Think of one memory you have of [when you first participated in the process of bidding and receiving land from the SLRRF]. Tell me about it.
2. Thinking back to [the first time you became aware of the SLRRF], what do you remember or recall?
3. If there was one main memory of [how you overcame a challenge during the bidding process and/or the time you started the CBE], what would it be?
4. Within the [time you established the CBE], do you remember an incredibly stressful period?
5. How would you say it has influenced you?
6. What role did others play in this event [critical others]?
7. If there was one thing you would say about that event, it would be ...
8. How would you describe or tell of the changing influence and long-lasting effects?

(Mertova & Webster, 2019, p. 72)

Social Network Analysis question to be inserted whenever fitting, depending on the answers given by informants:

1. With whom do you work directly?
2. To whom do you turn for advice?
3. To whom do you look for new ideas and new information?
4. With whom do you collaborate and socialize?

(Stephenson, 2013, p. 245)

Appendix G:

Case Study Observation Protocol

Time	
Place	
Date	
Portrait or image (screenshot) of participant	
Description of their physical setting	
Reflective notes (researcher's personal thoughts such as "speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 121 as cited in Creswell, 2014, p. 190)	

Appendix H:

Case Study Participant Recruitment Material

Study Title: The Role of Social Capital in Activating Entrepreneurial Intention and Learning

Application No.:

Principal Investigator: Elizabeth T. Brown Visiting Professor JHU SOE [REDACTED]

Researcher: Elaine Young

“Adel” will make the following announcements among the owners of a community-based enterprise in Kyrgyzstan, a group of farm rural women farm owners who received land from a bid submitted to Kyrgyzstan’s State Land Redistribution Reserve Fund (SLRRF):

A doctoral researcher at Johns Hopkins University, from the United States, will be conducting research about how social relationships and critical events help rural women overcome unemployment.

Her name is Elaine Young and many of you may have met her in 2019 when she conducted focus groups among us. Elaine lived in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan for nine years, where she and her husband raised their three children. During those years, she started and managed a computer programming company with her husband.

Elaine is asking for volunteers to meet with her for one-on-one interviews during February and March 2021. The interviews will take place at a time that is convenient for you and will take place online for approximately 60 minutes.

Your participation will help further research to better understand how a group of rural women received land from Kyrgyzstan’s State Land Redistribution Reserve Fund (SLRRF) to establish a community-based farm. This knowledge will help to further research about social

connections, learning, and critical events that led to overcoming unemployment among rural women in Kyrgyzstan.

If you would like more information or if you are interested in participating, please contact me (“Adel”).

Appendix I:

Case Study Electronic Informed Consent

JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

HOMEWOOD INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (HIRB)

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Study Title: The Role of Social Capital in Activating Entrepreneurial Intention and Learning

Application No.:

Principal Investigator: Elizabeth T. Brown Visiting Professor JHU SOE [REDACTED]

You are being asked to join a research study. Participation in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to join now, you can change your mind later. This study is being conducted as part of the researcher's doctoral studies at Johns Hopkins University.

1. Research Summary (Key Information):

The information in this section is intended to be an introduction to the study only. Complete details of the study are listed in the sections below. If you are considering participation in the study, the entire document should be discussed with you before you make your final decision. You can ask questions about the study now and at any time in the future.

- The purpose of this research study is to examine the problem of unemployment among rural women in Kyrgyzstan and how a group of women overcame the problem to become owners of a community-based farm after receiving land from Kyrgyzstan's State Land Redistribution Reserve Fund (SLRRF). The use of the data gathered will become part of a student's future dissertation research study.
- Participants: rural women owners of a community owned farm in the Ysyk-Ata region of Kyrgyzstan. They will be asked if they would like to volunteer to participate in a one-on-one interview.
- Participants will be asked to take part in a one-hour interview and asked questions about how they received land after making a bid with the SLRRF and subsequently, became owners of the farm.
- The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life.
- There is no direct benefit to you from being in this study.

2. Why is this research being done?

- This research is being done to identify whether/how learning and support occurred among a group of rural women in Kyrgyzstan during their process to receiving land from the SLRRF.

- Owners of the community-based farm involved in the case study will be asked to join the study.

3. What will happen if you join this study?

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

- Set aside a 75-minute window of time that is convenient to you and the interviewer. The time difference between Kyrgyzstan the interview is 14 hours, so the best times are in the early morning or late evening.
- You will be required to provide your own Internet connection or receive help from Adel access the Internet to attend the online interview.
- You will be asked to share demographic information, experiences with making the bid for land, social relationships that supported you, and critical events that occurred that may have helped you become an owner of the farm.
- Attend an interview which will take up to 1 hour and will be held at home or at the Rural Women’s Association “GALA”, so long as local COVID-19 social distancing rules are followed. If the interview occurs at GALA, you will be required to provide your own transportation.
- During the interview, you will be expected to actively participate with your answers and comments. A trilingual interpreter will be there. You will be asked to share information on your land bid application process, experiences with meeting others who helped you, social relationships that were meaningful in supporting the process of becoming a farm owner, and how and what you learned in the process. The discussion will be audio and videotaped.

Photographs/Video recordings

- As part of this research, we are requesting your permission to create and use audio and video recordings. Any recordings will not be used for advertising or non-study related purposes.

You should know that:

- You may request that the audio taping be stopped at any time.
- If you agree to allow the recording and then change your mind, you may ask us to destroy that portion of the recording. If the recording has had all identifiers removed, we may not be able to do this.
- We will only use the interview recording for the purposes of this research.

4. How long will you be in the study?

- You will be in this study for approximately 75 minutes, which will include a brief introduction, and the interview.

5. What are the risks or discomforts of the study?

- You may get tired or bored when you are answering the questions. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to answer.
- The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life.
- Participation in the study will have no impact on your relationship or participation at the Rural Women’s Association “GALA.”

- All data collected is solely for the purpose of the research study and will not be used to evaluate or otherwise affect you or your participation in the training center program.
 - We are asking all the participants to agree to the importance of keeping information discussed in the interview confidential.
6. Are there benefits to being in the study?
- There is no direct benefit to you from being in this study.
 - This study may benefit society if the results lead to a better understanding of what is contributing to the problem of unemployment among rural women in Kyrgyzstan. This knowledge will help to develop solutions for addressing unemployment among rural women in Kyrgyzstan.
7. What are your options if you do not want to be in the study?
- Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You choose whether to participate. An alternative is to not take part in the study. If you decide not to participate, there are no penalties, and you will not lose any benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled. If you do not join, your training at Rural Women’s Association “GALA” will not be affected.
8. Will it cost you anything to be in this study?
- The participants will have to provide their own transportation to the Rural Women’s Association “GALA”.
9. Will you be paid if you join this study?
- No
10. Can you leave the study early?
- You can agree to be in the study now and change your mind later, without any penalty or loss of benefits.
 - If you wish to stop, please tell us right away.
 - If you want to withdraw from the study, please email Elaine Young, researcher [REDACTED] at to inform her of your withdrawal.
11. Why might we take you out of the study early?
- You may be taken out of the study if you are not as involved in the ownership of the farm or the bidding process for receiving land from the SLRRF.
12. How will the confidentiality of your data be protected?
- Any study records that identify you will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of the Johns Hopkins University Homewood Institutional Review Board and officials from government agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and the Office for Human Research Protections. (All of these people are required to keep your identity confidential.) Otherwise, records

that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

- To protect confidential information, all study records will be created and maintained by the student investigator and stored in a locked file cabinet. In addition, participant names on data sheets (interview observations and researcher journal notes) will be replaced with code numbers to maintain participant confidentiality. All electronic data will be stored and secured in a password-protected computer file. Only the student investigator and PI will have access to the computer files, which will be backed-up regularly to ensure their protection.

13. What other things should you know about this research study?

What is the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and how does it protect you?

- This study has been reviewed by an Institutional Review Board (IRB), a group of people that reviews human research studies. The IRB can help you if you have questions about your rights as a research participant or if you have other questions, concerns, or complaints about this research study. You may contact the IRB at 410-516-6580 or hirb@jhu.edu.

What should you do if you have questions about the study?

- Call the principal investigator, Elizabeth T. Brown [REDACTED]. If you wish, you may contact the principal investigator by letter. The address is on page one of this consent form. If you cannot reach the principal investigator or wish to talk to someone else, call the IRB office at 410-516-5680.
- You can ask questions about this research study now or at any time during the study, by talking to the researcher(s) working with you or by calling Elaine Young at [REDACTED] (reachable internationally through WhatsApp).
- If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or feel that you have not been treated fairly, please call the Homewood Institutional Review Board at Johns Hopkins University at (410) 516-6580.

14. What does this consent form mean?

- This form means that: You understand the information given to you in this form, you accept the provisions in the form, and you agree to join the study. You will not give up any legal rights by agreeing to a part of this study.

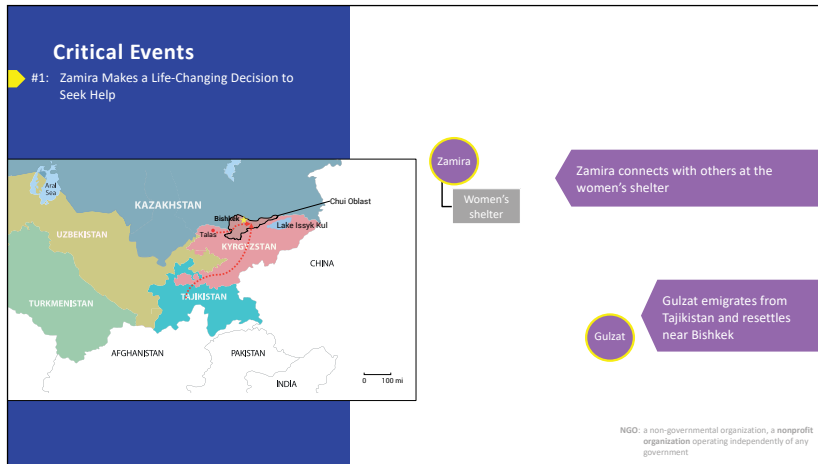
WE WILL GIVE YOU A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM

NOTE: A COPY OF THE CONSENT FORM MUST BE KEPT BY THE PRINCIPAL

INVESTIGATOR; A COPY MUST BE GIVEN TO THE PARTICIPANT.

Appendix J:

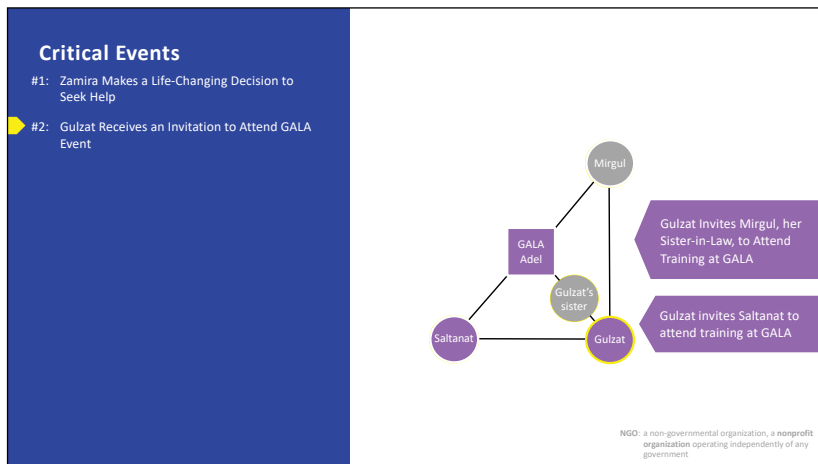
Social Network Analysis Digraphs of Key Actors



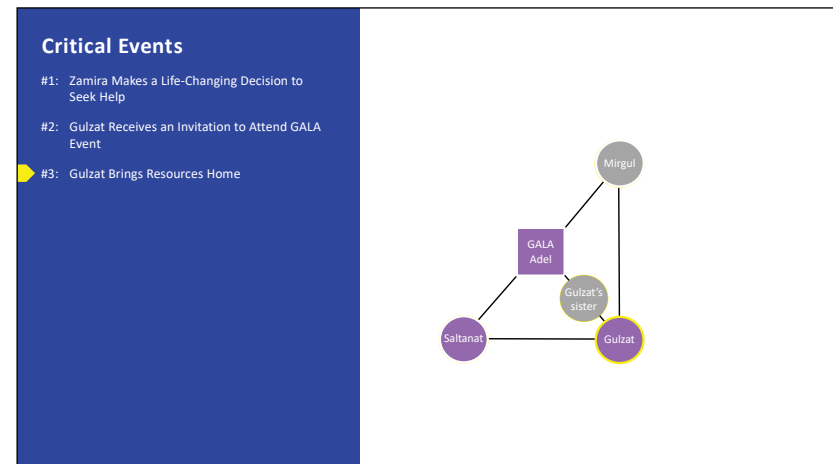
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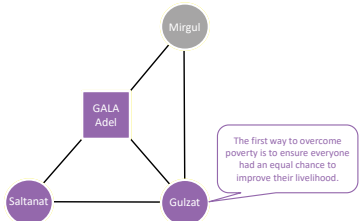
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4.

Critical Events

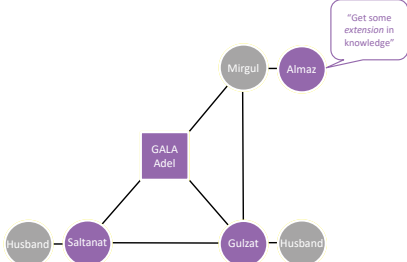
- #1: Zamira Makes a Life-Changing Decision to Seek Help
- #2: Gulzat Receives an Invitation to Attend GALA Event
- #3: Gulzat Brings Resources Home
- #4: Gulzat has an Aha! Moment About Equity



5.

Critical Events

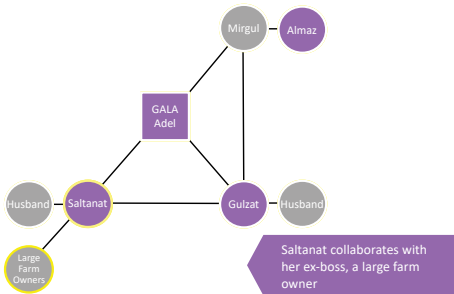
- #1: Zamira Makes a Life-Changing Decision to Seek Help
- #2: Gulzat Receives an Invitation to Attend GALA Event
- #3: Gulzat Brings Resources Home
- #4: Gulzat has an Aha! Moment About Equity
- #5: Saltanat and Others Gain the Support of Their Husbands



6.

Critical Events

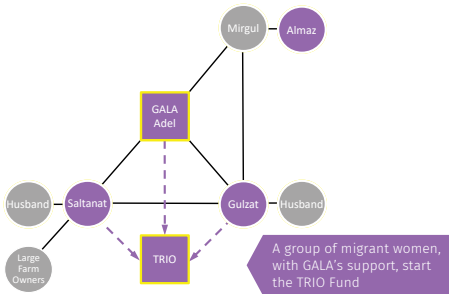
- #1: Zamira Makes a Life-Changing Decision to Seek Help
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- #3: Gulzat Brings Resources Home
- #4: Gulzat has an Aha! Moment About Equity
- #5: Saltanat and Others Gain the Support of Their Husbands
- #6: Saltanat Learns the Importance of Collaboration and Getting Help



7.

Critical Events

- #1: Zamira Makes a Life-Changing Decision to Seek Help
- #2: Gulzat Receives an Invitation to Attend GALA Event
- #3: Gulzat Brings Resources Home
- #4: Gulzat has an Aha! Moment About Equity
- #5: Saltanat and Others Gain the Support of Their Husbands
- #6: Saltanat Learns the Importance of Collaboration and Getting Help



8.

Critical Events

- #1: Zamira Makes a Life-Changing Decision to Seek Help
- #2: Gulzat Receives an Invitation to Attend GALA Event
- #3: Gulzat Brings Resources Home
- #4: Gulzat has an Aha! Moment About Equity
- #5: Saltanat and Others Gain the Support of Their Husbands
- #6: Saltanat Learns the Importance of Collaboration and Getting Help
- #7: Zamira Joins the Social Network
- #8: Zamira Obtains a Social Passport

9.

Critical Events

- #1: Zamira Makes a Life-Changing Decision to Seek Help
- #2: Gulzat Receives an Invitation to Attend GALA Event
- #3: Gulzat Brings Resources Home
- #4: Gulzat has an Aha! Moment About Equity
- #5: Saltanat and Others Gain the Support of Their Husbands
- #6: Saltanat Learns the Importance of Collaboration and Getting Help
- #7: Zamira Joins the Social Network
- #8: Zamira Obtains a Social Passport
- #9: Zamira Attends the APWLD Conference

APWLD: Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law, and Development
 FPAR: Feminist Participatory Action Research

10.

Critical Events

- #1: Zamira Makes a Life-Changing Decision to Seek Help
- #2: Gulzat Receives an Invitation to Attend GALA Event
- #3: Gulzat Brings Resources Home
- #4: Gulzat has an Aha! Moment About Equity
- #5: Saltanat and Others Gain the Support of Their Husbands
- #6: Saltanat Learns the Importance of Collaboration and Getting Help
- #7: Zamira Joins the Social Network
- #8: Zamira Obtains a Social Passport
- #9: Zamira Attends the APWLD Conference

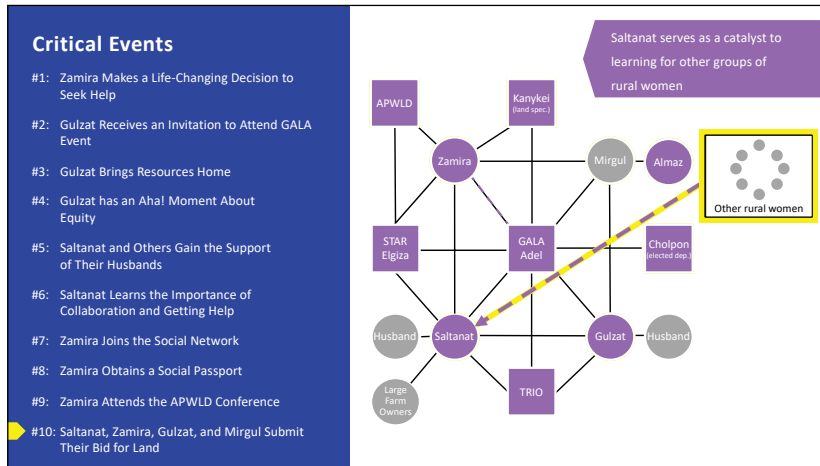
SLRRF: State Land Redistribution Reserve Fund

11.

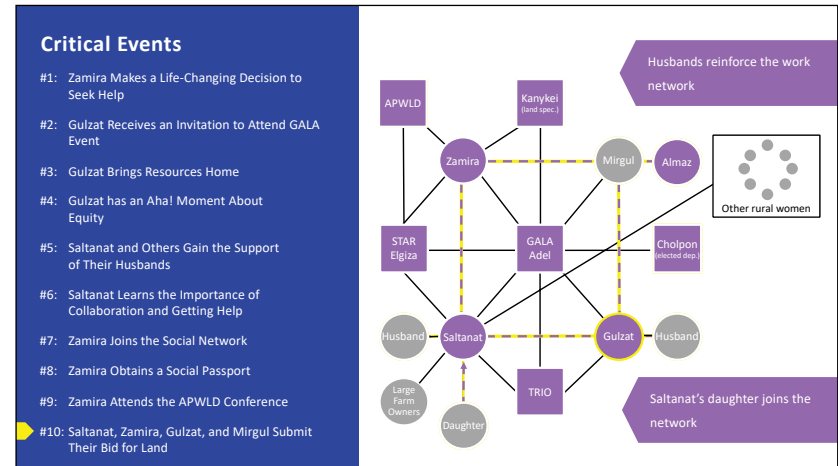
Critical Events

- #1: Zamira Makes a Life-Changing Decision to Seek Help
- #2: Gulzat Receives an Invitation to Attend GALA Event
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- #5: Saltanat and Others Gain the Support of Their Husbands
- #6: Saltanat Learns the Importance of Collaboration and Getting Help
- #7: Zamira Joins the Social Network
- #8: Zamira Obtains a Social Passport
- #9: Zamira Attends the APWLD Conference
- #10: Saltanat, Zamira, Gulzat, and Mirgul Submit Their Bid for Land

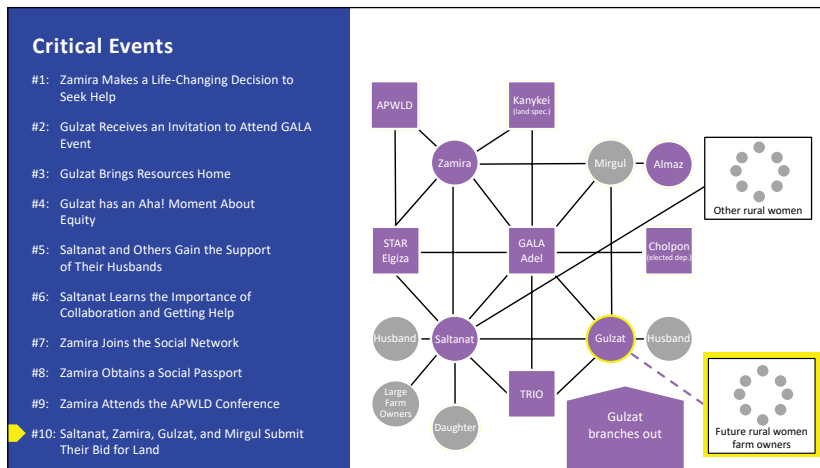
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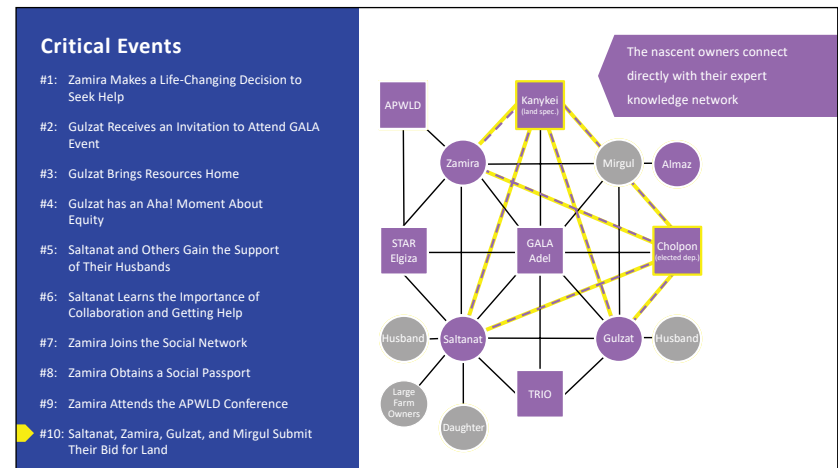
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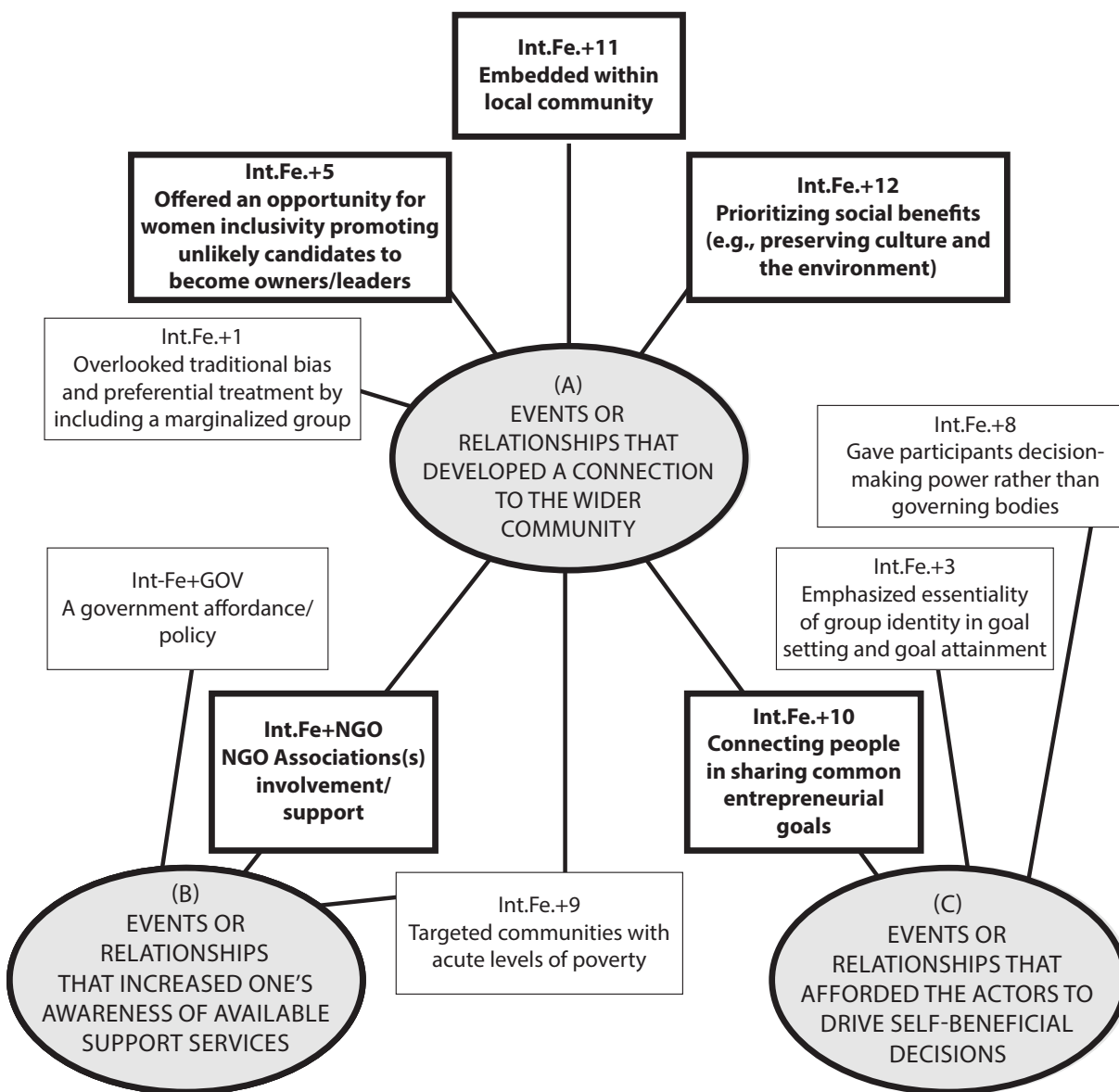


16.

Appendix K:

Thematic Map: Respondent's Ten Most Frequently Mentioned

A Priori Codes Extracted from the Literature



Note: Bolded codes indicate top five most frequently mentioned intervention features codes by respondents

Appendix L:

Narrative Analysis and Analysis of the Narrative

There are two types of cognition distinguished by Bruner, “paradigmatic and narrative mode of thought” (Polkinghorne, 1995). Paradigmatic cognition, classifying our understanding using paradigms, is how humans make sense of experiences (Polkinghorne, 1995). Both deductive and inductive analysis are paradigmatic since deductive analysis applies one’s understanding of existing patterns and theories to the data; and inductive analysis, more common in qualitative research, applies understanding derived from the research data (Polkinghorne, 1995). On the other hand, “narrative cognition” consists of collecting data about actions, events, and happenings and “whose analysis produces stories” (Polkinghorne, 1995). Polkinghorne named analysis that relies on paradigmatic cognition, “analysis of narratives,” and analysis that uses narrative cognition as “narrative analysis” (p. 12).

Appendix M:

Stephenson's (2013) "Seven Networks" and "Seven Core Layers of Knowledge" (p. 250)

Types of Social Networks	Definitions	Discussed on Pages
The Social Network	The people with whom you "check in to find out what is going on" (Stephenson, 2013, p. 251). .	238, 249
The Social Network	The people with whom you "check in to find out what is going on" (Stephenson, 2013, p. 251). This network requires a high level of trust; when undeveloped, trust is just beginning to form or has been betrayed. The Discussion section beginning on page 205 is guided by social network analysis but pages mentioned in the next column are sections that explicitly discuss the layer of "The Social Network" (Stephenson, 2013, p. 251).	221, 243, and 227\ explicitly mention social network as a type of network
The Innovative Network	The people with whom your "collaborate to kick around new ideas" (Stephenson, 2013, p. 251). This network tests ideas and does not hold strictly to tradition.	226, 238, 245
The Expert Knowledge Network	The people to whom you go to for expertise or advice, those who hold traditional information and are familiar with established procedures. This group may remain closed and closed off to innovation.	230, 238, 242, 244, 254, 255
The Career Guidance or Strategic Network	The people to whom you go to for advice about your future. A developed network indicates high levels of trust.	221, 253
The Learning Network	The people with whom you work with "to improve existing processes or methods" (Stephenson, 2013, p. 251). Key individuals in this network may be the connection with the innovative and/or expert knowledge networks.	238, 240
The Decision-Making Network	The people whom you go to for expedited decision-making. A "dense" decision-making network "indicative[s] that existing procedures are in all likelihood broken, irrelevant, or never existed" (Stephenson, 2013, p. 252).	Was not explored in this study

Curriculum Vitae

ELAINE P. YOUNG

✉ elaineyoung@jhu.edu

EDUCATION

Ed.D. ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION 2021 | Johns Hopkins University | Baltimore, USA

Johns Hopkins University Education Doctorate Merit Scholarship 2019-2021

Area of research: The role of social capital in activating entrepreneurial intentions and learning

M.B.A. INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT 2015 | University of London | London, United Kingdom

Award for Academic Achievement 2014-2015

RUSSIAN LANGUAGE CERTIFICATE 2007 | Kyrgyz State National University | Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

B.A. BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION & ECONOMICS 1995 | University of Toronto | Toronto, Canada

WORK EXPERIENCE

INKUBASIA | BISHKEK, KYRGYZSTAN

2007 – PRESENT

Co-Founder & Program Director

- Established incubator/accelerator and software development firm serving clients worldwide.
- Managed cross-functional team of engineers, UX designers, marketing, and sales.
- Launched **InkubasiaLAB** training/accelerator for Kyrgyzstani-based start-ups, in partnership with Uncharted; led tech professionals from Silicon Valley to train students; oversaw marketing, logistics & finance, local partnerships, and curriculum localization.

BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS NETWORK | BISHKEK, KYRGYZSTAN

2010–2014

Speaker & Trainer

- Created and taught the highly recommended Marketing and Online Strategies course open to all ~600 entrepreneurs belonging to the BPN network in Kyrgyzstan (<http://bpn.ch>).
- Taught best practices for online marketing and using brand awareness, sales, lead generation, customer retention and user engagement data.
- Promoted and furthered entrepreneurship in emerging market.

SONOON JER FOUNDATION | BISHKEK, KYRGYZSTAN

2007–2015

CEO & Lead Designer

- Directed book publications related to business, education, literacy, and maternity healthcare.
- Oversaw translation team, print layout design, editing, and marketing.
- Raised funds for non-profit book projects; worked in partnership with local NGO to distribute thousands of books to villages by UN, doctors, NGO workers, and Peace Corps.

COGNIQUEST | LOS ALTOS, CA

1999–2003

Market Research Consultant

- Started a market research and design firm providing client-focused consultation on web-based market research surveys for companies such as PointCast and Amazon.com.
- Spearheaded and launched websites for clients including Good Technology (acquired by Motorola, then Google)

POINTCAST | SUNNYVALE, CA

1996–1999

Research Manager, Market Intelligence

- Designed and implemented web-based user research; Managed website with web development team.
- Synthesized competitive and market research results in key marketing and sales presentations for executives.
- Directed cross-functional team (engineering, sales & marketing).

TECHNICAL SKILLS: Intermediate Russian, Fluent spoken Cantonese, SPSS, NVivo, Adobe Creative Cloud, JIRA, AirTable, Coda, HTML/CSS