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FOUNDER UNBOUND: STATUS, POWER, AND ENTREPRENEURIAL AUTONOMY

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Abstract
Entrepreneurship literature has long recognized the autonomous decision-making style of entrepreneurs as a primary driver of their ventures’ success. There is however little evidence on factors that may limit or augment entrepreneurs’ decisional autonomy. In this study, we draw on status characteristics theory to develop a framework that can help explain entrepreneurs’ autonomous decision-making. We first propose that the social status that entrepreneurs hold provides an important explanation for their ability to be autonomous. We next suggest that due to society’s gender stereotypes female entrepreneurs are less likely to exercise autonomy in decision-making compared with their male counterparts. On the other hand, positional power may have a similar effect as social status, facilitating autonomy. Finally, we argue that superior social status can be particularly salient for female entrepreneurs who tend to experience stereotype-based prejudices, while social status can be less salient for entrepreneurs who hold superior positional power in their organizations. Econometric analysis carried out on a sample of small and medium-sized Chinese enterprises operating in a diverse set of industries support these conjectures.

Jelcodes: M13, M1
Abstract
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INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurs have traditionally been associated with a certain capability to quickly identify and seize opportunities in an uncertain environment (Schumpeter 1934; Hartmann 1959). Crucial to entrepreneurs’ perusal of opportunities, it is further suggested, is their exercise of decision-making autonomy (Lumpkin and Dess 1996; Ireland et al. 2003; Chandler and Jansen 1992; Van Gelderen 2016). The need for entrepreneurial autonomy derives from the peculiar way entrepreneurs perceive opportunities, drawing primarily on intuitions and heuristics rather than overly technical analysis, making it hard for other organizational stakeholders to ex ante understand and appreciate the rationales underpinning entrepreneurs’ decisions (Miller 1983; Ireland, Hitt and Sirmon 2003; Busenitz and Barney 1997; Alvarez & Busenitz 2001). Exercising autonomy furthermore provides entrepreneurs with a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction because after all it is a key motivation that drove many of them to pursue entrepreneurship in the first place (Benz and Frey 2008).

Despite its importance, autonomy of entrepreneurs is generally taken as something of a given in the entrepreneurship literature (Hisrich 1985; Shane, Locke, & Collins 2003; Lumpkin et al. 2009). However, recent research (e.g. Benz and Frey 2008), as well as anecdotal evidence, alerts us that entrepreneurial autonomy is not always guaranteed.¹ For one, entrepreneurs encounter pressures from stakeholders in their organizations due to a certain extent the very nature of entrepreneurship that calls for decisions that conforms less with or even challenges existing business practices—practices that guide the thinking of non-entrepreneurial individuals (e.g. Hartmann 1959; Van Gelderen 2016). Even in the absence of these pressures, entrepreneurs may have concerns that the decisions they take can have potentially negative consequences for others in their organizations (Van Gelderen and Jansen 2006). These suggest that exercising entrepreneurial autonomy has its challenges that, aside from slowing down entrepreneurial acts in firms, may dampen individuals’ motivations in pursuing entrepreneurial endeavors. Understanding the forces that enhance, or, more importantly, constrain entrepreneurs’ ability to make strategic decisions autonomously therefore assume much significance.

While there is beginning to be some recognition that entrepreneurial autonomy cannot be taken for granted (Benz and Frey 2008; Van Gelderen 2016), we still lack a proper understanding of the factors

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¹ Steve Job’s ignominious exit from Apple in 1985 is a well-known, perhaps not altogether extreme, illustration of how constraints on autonomy bring forth disillusionment to founders.
that facilitate or constrain entrepreneurial autonomy. This calls for developing a theoretical prism that can illuminate our understanding of entrepreneurial behavior with regard to decision making. Towards this, we draw on insights from the status-characteristics theory of leadership (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt 2001, Eagly and Johnson 1990, Eagly and Karau 2002) and develop a status-based explanation of entrepreneurial autonomy. This theory builds on the social-psychology scholarship that attributes differences in behaviors in groups to the presence of status hierarchies built around differences in status characteristics, such as gender, race, and education, among group members (Anderson, John, Keltner, & Kring, 2001; Bales, Strödtbeck, Mills, & Roseborough, 1951; Berger et al., 1980; Ridgeway & Bourg 2004). Status hierarchies are known to affect group behavior and, in particular, determine who get to influence group decisions and outcomes (Bunderson et al 2014; Berger et al 1972).

In this paper, we seek to extend these insights to the context of small entrepreneurial firms in China and analyze the importance of entrepreneurs’ social status in influencing the degree of their decisional autonomy. Social status is a salient personal characteristic in that it captures the extent to which entrepreneurs are respected and admired for their accomplishments and therefore can be a basis for forming organizational hierarchies (e.g. Magee & Galinsky 2008; Fiske et al 1987). As an example, an entrepreneur in China with a degree from an Ivy League institution in the United States could be accorded a higher social status than another entrepreneur educated in China who may even have higher capabilities to carry out his/her entrepreneurial functions.

The effect of social status may however be contingent on other important personal characteristics. One such characteristic is gender, which is a readily noticeable and a widely used characteristic in most societies for forming expectations about individuals’ behaviors (Ridgeway & Bourg 2004). Gender-biased behavioral expectations, from the point of view of status characteristic theory, differ across tasks to which society attaches varying degrees of masculine or feminine attributes. Thus, masculine attributes like assertiveness and independence are considered essential for a leadership role and for this reason women are perceived to be less competent to perform that role. It may therefore be valuable to investigate whether and to what extent the importance of social status is different for male and female entrepreneurs for autonomous behavior. Finally, differences in positional power too can contribute to a hierarchical rank ordering (Sauer 2011; Magee & Galinsky 2008). Positional power stems from the resources one controls such as ownership of one’s company (e.g. Chandler & Hanks 1998) that may grant one an elevated position in the social hierarchy (Magee & Galinsky 2008). It would hence be insightful to explore the extent to which positional power makes social status more or less salient.

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2 Research has explored factors driving individuals’ motivation, such as the supporting environment and self-perception of competence, but this has been carried out mainly in relation to employees rather than entrepreneurs (e.g. Deci & Ryan 2000).
Our work contributes to the entrepreneurship literature by developing a theoretical framework that sheds light on the causes of entrepreneurial autonomy, and identifying some salient factors underpinning it, in particular, entrepreneurs’ social status. Specifically, using status characteristics theory we explore potential contingency effects arising from the interplay between social status and other relevant characteristics such as gender and ownership. Although female leaders are known to possess a socially-oriented leadership style (e.g. Rosener 1990) that can diminish the relevance of social status for them, we suggest that gender stereotypes may still render social status particularly important for female entrepreneurs. We further argue that though founders’ ownership control may not be sufficient to guarantee autonomy with respect to external stakeholders such as investors it may still grant them a degree of autonomy, particularly within their organizations, and therefore make social status less important.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Autonomous behavior is generally understood to mean exercising the freedom to act according to one’s volition, based on one’s “self-endorsed values, needs and intentions” (Deci & Ryan 2000; Van Gelderen 2016). This definition implies that autonomy is not necessarily about acting independently or acting alone. In fact, given the constraints under which they operate, entrepreneurs may even concede decision making rights to key stakeholders, such as major customers or important partners (Van Gelderen 2016). However, in this instance entrepreneurs sacrifice decisional freedom voluntarily, rather than as a response to external pressure, in the expectation that their business will significantly benefit from doing so.

We know little from extant research about the factors affecting the exercise of autonomy by entrepreneurs. However, some important clues on this can be gleaned from the social-psychology research tradition on decision-making processes in task-oriented groups. Particularly relevant in this context is status-characteristics theory that highlights that differences in the status characteristics of group members influence social interactions in such a way that individuals who occupy elevated positions in status hierarchy are able to command others’ respect and hence influence them. We draw on this literature to predict how entrepreneurs’ status and power characteristics influence their ability to exercise autonomy.

Status characteristics theory is built on the idea that a certain characteristic (e.g. experience in a specific task, education, sex, or age) acquires status value because differences in its states (e.g. low experience vs high experience) across individuals can form a basis for developing differential expectations about their abilities to perform particular tasks (Berger et al 1972; Berger et al 1980; Ridgeway & Berger 1986). These performance expectations are socially determined and consensual and those with superior states (e.g. more experience in a task) of a status characteristics are considered to have superior capabilities. Status characteristics thus help individuals within a group form expectations about the
contributions of themselves versus those of others and these self-other expectations rank order individuals in a status hierarchy (Ridgeway 1991). Such a hierarchy allows high-status individuals to command the respect of others and instills in them an elevated level of self-confidence. As a result, they exert more influence and authority, attracting more attention towards them, receiving more opportunities, and garnering more support for their decisions and actions (Sauer 2011; Magee & Galinsky 2008; Berger et al 1980). Drawing on these insights we discuss below how entrepreneurs’ superior social status can elevate their position in the social hierarchy and enhance their capacity for autonomous behavior. We further contribute to the entrepreneurship literature and to the status-characteristics theory by analyzing how other relevant personal characteristics of entrepreneurs can increase or diminish the relevance of their social status.

**Social Status and Entrepreneurial Autonomy**

“[Tesla’s major investors] are buying into his [Elon Musk’s] genius, his …vision…”, Bloomberg news commentary following Tesla’s successful acquisition of SolarCity.  

For entrepreneurs, we suggest, social status is a fundamental characteristic that can determine their position in the status hierarchy. It represents the admiration that society holds towards an actor (e.g. Ridgeway & Walker, 1995; Magee & Galinsky 2008). It can be viewed as a category label that subsumes several inter-linked attributes (e.g. accomplishments, experiences, and personal network) associated with individuals, thereby facilitating a differentiation between them along status and prestige lines (e.g. Fiske et al 1987). Despite its potential importance, there is a surprisingly glaring lack of research on the relevance of social status in the creation of social hierarchies in general and for entrepreneurial autonomy in particular. There are however real world examples that suggest that entrepreneurs with a strong track record of accomplishments tend to be highly influential, with their ideas—even those that may otherwise be considered fanciful—taken seriously. A well-known example in this respect is Elon Musk whose idea of Hyperloop as a new form of fast and efficient public transport system is already being experimented with, while his proposal to use Mars as a potential future habitat for humans continues to make the rounds on news media. Musk’s case illustrates that reputation built in a certain context (e.g. as founder of SpaceX) is transferrable to other contexts (e.g. recognition and acceptance of the Hyperloop concept). Specific to the theme of this paper, Musk’s elevated social status could be argued to have been instrumental in his proposal to acquire SolarCity gaining the approval of major Tesla shareholders, in spite

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3 This process ensures that higher performance expectations attached to high-status individuals becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy as it creates conditions that allow these individuals to generate superior performance outcomes compared with their low status counterparts.  
of apprehensions about SolarCity’s high debt levels and corporate governance concerns as Musk is a major shareholder in both companies.\(^5\)

The illustrative example of Elon Musk can be understood through the prism of status-characteristics theory. It suggests that pre-existing status characteristics act as cues to differentiate individuals even when these characteristics were created in the context of an altogether different task (Berger et al 1980; Bales 1950; Caudill 1958). Moreover, a status characteristic can be salient even when it is not linked to a specific task, as long as it discriminates between interacting individuals and it is not explicitly dissociated from the task. In this situation, the theory argues, individuals behave as though the status characteristic is salient, and the burden of proof is on anyone to prove it is not (Berger et al 1980). As a result, externally-created status differences help create internal status hierarchies, even before individuals actually start interacting. Social status of entrepreneurs appear to fit well with this description of a relevant status characteristic, as illustrated, in particular, by our example of Elon Musk above. Specifically, we may argue that entrepreneurs’ loftier social status can act as a useful marker for their superior vision and abilities that may accord them substantial autonomy in regard to the strategic choices they have in mind for their companies.

We thus propose:

**Hypothesis 1.** Entrepreneurs with a higher social status are more likely to make strategic decisions autonomously than those with a lower social status

### The Contingent Effect of Gender

From the perspective of status characteristics theory, female leaders’ ability to exercise autonomy can be impaired due to a lack of congruence between characteristics that are typically associated with females and those with leaders. This incongruence can be explained using the concepts of gender role and leader role. Gender roles are socially shared expectations about the attributes of men and women, with women being associated with communal attributes such as concern and sympathy for others, and men with agentic qualities such as independence and assertiveness. Leader role, on the other hand, is the belief that successful leaders possess stereotypically masculine characteristics like assertiveness and self-confidence. Due to these different expectations about male, female, and leader behaviors, females in leadership positions are likely less positively evaluated for similar performance as their male counterparts, perpetuating the stereotype that men have superior competence in leadership roles (Eagly & Karau 2002). This suggests that female leaders are likely to face much more constraints than their male counterparts in exercising autonomy. For female leaders, exhibiting agentic qualities such as assertiveness, considered appropriate in leadership roles, may not be a panacea because it conflicts with female gender role and

\(^5\) See footnote 4.
hence might invite negative reaction (Eagly & Karau 2002; Heilman 1983; Sauer 2011; Ridgeway and Bourg 2004). It is therefore observed that female leaders tend to integrate gender role with leader role, combining agentic qualities with more female-typical communal behaviors (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt 2001). While this type of behavior may improve their legitimacy as leaders and grant them greater social acceptance, it only goes on to underscore the compromises and accommodations that female leaders need to make.

The constraints that their gender status impose on female leaders, we suggest, could be mitigated when female leaders possess certain exceptional attributes that can change performance expectations about them (Ridgeway 2001). From the point of view of status characteristic theory, although leaders’ gender may be instrumental in forming performance expectations about them, people also consider its consistency with other relevant status characteristics (Asch & Zukier 1984). Specifically, when a female leader possess an attribute that transmit information inconsistent with those cued by her gender status, the perceiver may go beyond relying on gender status, paying close attention to that attribute and carefully analyzing its implications (Fiske et al 1987). This implies that a female leader can prove her superior worth if she holds a status characteristic that overshadows conventional gender stereotypes (Blair & Banaji 1996; Eagly and Karau 2002). In fact, we may contend that a high social status can trigger counter-stereotype performance expectations that may not just mute prejudices about female entrepreneurs but may even lead to their superior evaluation compared with similar men (Eagly & Karau 2002). In all, superior social status confers a certain degree of legitimacy that female leaders otherwise lack due to the traditional beliefs about female gender status and leadership role. For male leaders, on the other hand, superior social status conveys information that is consistent with their gender status. Therefore, although it can help boost their capacity to exercise autonomy, it is potentially less valuable to them than to female leaders in the exercise of autonomy. While little empirical evidence exists on these propositions, anecdotal evidence does seem to suggest that women with a higher social status enjoy much more prestige and respect, in some cases even compared with men in similar positions, in as varied professions as business and politics—occupations not perceived as particularly suitable for women to succeed. We therefore formulate the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a. Female entrepreneurs are less likely to make strategic decisions autonomously compared with their male counterparts

Hypothesis 2b. The importance of social status for decisional autonomy is higher for female entrepreneurs than for male entrepreneurs
The Contingent Effect of Positional Power

In addition to status hierarchies, power hierarchies that stem from the positional power that individuals hold, in particular through a higher shareholding in the company, can also influence entrepreneurial autonomy. Underlying the power and status hierarchies are different social asymmetries. While status hierarchies stem from the asymmetries in the perceived abilities of individuals, power hierarchies derive from asymmetries in the control of socially-valued resources (Magee & Galinsky 2008). These resources can be either positively valued or negatively valued. An example of a positively-valued resource is a promotion, while that of a negatively-valued resource is an undesirable task. Individuals acquire power when they are in a position to release or withhold valued resources. Due to their control over such resources, the powerful are less likely to face resistance. Even when they face resistance, power holders act as though such inhibiting forces did not exist (Galinsky et al 2008). These arguments appear to suggest that the positional power of entrepreneurs in their organizations can grant them authority and legitimacy (Sauer 2011). It keeps them at the top of power/influence hierarchy, manifesting in a superior ability to impose own ideas on the organization (e.g. Chandler & Hanks 1998). In all, we may conclude that the effect of positional power is quite similar to that of social status in that it helps create a social rank ordering, just as the latter, determining the level of autonomy entrepreneurs can exercise. Status and power hierarchies can thus be considered substitutive, with higher power not adding much value to higher social status and vice versa in granting decisional freedom to entrepreneurs. We thus posit the final two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3a. Entrepreneurs with a higher ownership share in the company are more likely to make strategic decisions autonomously compared with those with a lower ownership share

Hypothesis 3b. The importance of social status for decisional autonomy is lower for entrepreneurs with a higher ownership share in the company than for those with a lower ownership share

DATA AND METHOD

To answer the research questions posted above, this paper exploits a nationwide survey data of Chinese private firms. Since 1993, a series of survey of Chinese private firms have been conducted by the Privately Owned Enterprises Research Project Team (thereafter “the Team”), as part of an ongoing national project that collects information from representatives of the Chinese private sector to facilitate the central government’s policymaking processes. Using multi-stage stratified sampling across administrative regions and industries, the research team generated a nationwide random sample of Chinese private firms. The survey involves an intensive interview of the owners, with questions covering the firm (e.g., basic financial information and business development plan) as well as the owner (e.g., educational background and occupational history). By far, the dataset is the most comprehensive one for studying entrepreneurs in
China and has been used in several recent studies (Ang & Jia, 2014; Jia; 2014; Li et al., 2006; Li et al., 2008).

The 2006 survey was drawn for the current study. Implemented from March to July 2006, the Team sampled 4720 firms, or 0.1% of the total population nationwide. With careful preparation and support from government, the Team received 3837 returned questionnaires, a response rate of 81.29%. Given our research interest, we restricted our sample to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), defined by OECD as firms with fewer than 250 employees and an annual turnover of euro 50 million or less. This limitation leads us to exclude 1469 large enterprises. To control for the quality of the data, the Team assured the owner that there were no right or wrong answers, and that “don’t know” was a legitimate option. The final sample consists of 1043 firms. An average firm in the sample is 7 years old and hires 39 employees.

**Dependent Variable**

We operationalize the concept of entrepreneurial autonomy using the variable independent strategic decision-making. This is our dependent variable and is obtained by asking the business owner “who is in charge of strategic decision-making at your firm?” The business owner can choose among a few options including 1) yourself; 2) board of shareholders; 3) board of directors; 4) you and key managers; 5) you and Chinese Communist Party branch; 6) you and labor union; 7) others. We create a dummy variable for independent strategic decision-making. It takes the value 1 if the business owner reported that strategic decisions at his/her firm are made by himself/herself, and 0 if otherwise.

**Explanatory Variables**

We have three explanatory variables. First of these is social status, which is obtained by asking the business owner to “compared with other social actors, how would you rate your social status on a scale from 1 to 10?” The questionnaire corresponds to 1 for the highest social status and 10 for the lowest social status. We reverse coded it so that the higher the value the higher the social status. Our second explanatory variable is gender of the business owner. It is a dummy variable that takes the value of 1 for female founder and 0 for male founder. Our third explanatory variable is ownership share, which is captured by founder’s equity share in the compare.
Control Variables

To insulate our findings from alternative explanations, we controlled for a number of firm- and individual-level characteristics. At the firm level, we controlled for R&D intensity, firm size, firm age, and number of corporate investors. At the individual level, we controlled for founder’s age, founder’s government experience, founder’s political capital, and founder’s educational level.

FINDINGS

Table 1 reports descriptive statistics and correlations. The data suggests that business owners make independent strategic decision-making among 47.9% of our sample firms. An average business owner reports 5.83 on his/her social status, on a scale from 1 (low) to 10 (high). Only 14% of our sample firms have female founders, while an average business owner controls 72% of the equity at his/her firm. The table suggests no major threat of correlation between variables.

We carry out our analysis using STATA 13. As our dependent variable, independent strategic decision-making, is a dummy variable, we employ logit regression. Our estimation strategy involves three steps. In step one we estimate a baseline model including only the control variables. In step two, we add all explanatory variables to the baseline model. Finally, we add the interaction terms separately and also run a complete model with the two interaction terms together.

The results are reported in Table 2. In general, the results show that our model is robust to different specifications. Among control variables, we notice a negative association of R&D intensity, firm size, and number of corporate investors and a positive association of firm age with independent strategic decision-making. The results for the explanatory variables reveal positive and significant coefficients for social status (b=0.134, p<0.05) and ownership share (b=0.03, p<0.00), while a negative coefficient for female founder (b=-.084, p<0.10). These findings support respectively hypotheses 1, 3a, and 2a. Overall, these empirical evidences suggest that while social status and ownership-stake increase the likelihood of independent strategic decision-making, being a female founder reduces it.

Coming to the results for interaction variables, we find a positive interaction effect between social status and female founder (b=0.12, p<0.00). In line with hypothesis 2b, this suggests that a higher social status is more pertinent for female founders than for their male counterparts in taking independent strategic decisions. Figure 1 shows the marginal effects of social status for female and male founders. A steeper positive slope for female founders suggests that improvements in social status have a higher effect for this category of founders. The figure further reveals that at very high levels of social status (values

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52.1% of firms report that strategic decisions are made in consultation with board/management: 11.8% by board of shareholders, 20.7% by board of directors, 18.5% by business owner and key managers, and 0.4% by business owner and CCP branch, 0.6% by business owner and labor union, and 0.1% by others.
above or equal to about 7) female founders enjoy a higher autonomy than male founders. Finally, the coefficient of the interaction between social status and ownership share is negative and significant ($b=-0.004$, $p<0.00$). This suggests that the positive association between social status and independent strategic decision-making is weaker for founders with higher ownership share, supporting H3b. The marginal effects of social status at different ranges of ownership share are presented in Figure 2. It reveals that increases in ownership share weaken the positive relationship between social status and independent decision making, with improvements in the former having little effect when the founder has 100% ownership of the company.
### Table 1
#### Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

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<td>2 Social status</td>
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<td>3 Share of founder</td>
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<td>4 Female founder</td>
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<td>5 Founder's gov't experience</td>
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<td>8 Firm age</td>
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<td>9 Number of corporate investor</td>
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<td>10 Founder age</td>
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*a* n=1043. Correlation coefficients above 0.08 are significant at 5%.
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<td>Social status</td>
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<td>Share of founder</td>
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<td>Social status*Share of founder</td>
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<td>R&amp;D intensity</td>
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<td>-0.233***</td>
<td>-0.231***</td>
<td>-0.230***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Firm size</td>
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<td>(0.0652)</td>
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<td>Firm age</td>
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<td>(0.007)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of corporate investors</td>
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<td>-0.171+</td>
<td>-0.175+</td>
<td>-0.174+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Founder age</td>
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<td>PCC = county level</td>
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<td>PCC = above county level</td>
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<td>Education=postgraduate</td>
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<td>(0.54)</td>
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<td>Constance</td>
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<td>Pseudo R-square</td>
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<td>Log pseudolikelihood</td>
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<td>-548.33</td>
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Robust standard errors in parentheses (clustering at level of business type: 5 clusters)

+ p < 0.10, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.00
Figure 1
Contingent Effect of Gender
CONCLUSIONS

Entrepreneurship scholars have long been interested in how entrepreneurs think differently from non-entrepreneurs (e.g., Busenitz & Barney, 1997; Mitchell et al, 2002; Shepherd et al., 2014). A particularly important attribute usually associated with entrepreneurs is a certain ability to identify and optimistically pursue opportunities that non-entrepreneurs may not notice or are afraid to pursue (e.g. Dushnitsky 2010). Despite its importance, entrepreneurship literature has long treated entrepreneurial autonomy as a given. However, recent research and anecdotal evidence suggest that entrepreneurs face considerable constraints in pursuing opportunities that they deem desirable and attractive. There is however a lack of understanding about the factors that influence entrepreneurial autonomy. In this paper we aimed to contribute to the entrepreneurship literature by developing and testing a theoretical framework that identifies factors that constrain or enhance entrepreneur’s capacity to act autonomously.

Drawing on status characteristics theory, we proposed that social status of entrepreneurs may be an important factor that shape entrepreneurial autonomy. We further argued that exercising autonomy would be particularly challenging for female leaders due to social stereotypes that associate masculine attributes to successful leaders. We then suggested the contingent effect of gender on social status, arguing
that while social status can be important for any entrepreneur in exercising decisional autonomy, it may be particularly salient for female entrepreneurs because of the constraints they experience due to their gender status. We proposed another contingent effect: that social status may be less important for entrepreneurs with ownership control because both social status and positional power help create social hierarchies that shape behaviors in similar way.

The results of an analysis of entrepreneurial firms, spanning a variety of industries, in China provide broad support to these predictions. Our study enriches the entrepreneurship literature by developing and validating a theoretical framework that predicts the degree of entrepreneurial autonomy for entrepreneurs with different status characteristics and positional power. It furthermore contributes to the literature, including to the status characteristics theory, by identifying how decisional autonomy is conditioned by the interplay among multiple factors related to status and power.

REFERENCES
Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders.


