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The Multi-Destination Context of Migration and Settlement Experiences of Chinese Women – A Scoping Review

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Abstract

Chinese women from the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong constitute a key population within the Chinese diasporas globally. While many undergo multi-destination experiences, their experiences are seldom reported in the literature, resulting in a lack of understanding of their journeys and social contexts. To address this gap, a scoping review of the literature was conducted on Chinese women who migrated more than once and lived in two or more countries in their lifetime. Frameworks recommended by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and Levac et al. (2010) guided this review. In total, 17 articles that met the inclusion criteria were reviewed. Four major themes were identified: socio-political influences; subject formations; social, economic, political and health constraints; and strategies and resources for resilience. In conclusion, binary conceptualizations of gender, geopolitics, and origin-destination shed a need to make visible oppressions, integrate siloed perspectives, in pursuit of social justice.

Keywords: Chinese diaspora; multi-destination experiences; scoping review; Chinese women; migration; settlement; complex migration

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Acknoledgement

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Thank you to my supervisor, Dr. Josephine Pui-Hing Wong, for your unwavering, holistic guidance over the past three years. Thanks to my second reader, Dr. Janet Yamada, for your kind and sharp feedback.

This work also wouldn't be possible without my family, friends, mentors, classmates, TMU supports, and community organizations.

Dedication

I dedicate this working paper to my parents, my late grandparents, and Shivani Patel, for inspiring this work with your multi-destination experiences.

1. Introduction

1.1 Introductory Overview

In recent years, within the limited literature on the multiple journeys that immigrants make from one country to another for two or more times in their lifetime, many authors use differentiating terminology such as, 'onward migration', 'multi-sited transnationalism', 'serial migration', 'stepwise', 'non-linear', 'multiple mobilities' (Ahrens & King, 2023); and 'multi-migration' (Paul & Yeoh, 2020; Paul & Yeoh, 2021). These perspectives explore how social identity formation associated with gender, race, class, age, citizenship status and other social determinants intersect to shape women's migration experiences beyond the binary conception of experiences predicated on the origin and destination country version (Paul & Yeoh, 2021).

With the 'vari-gated effects of onward migration' (Ahrens & King, 2023), Chinese women are implicated in the life course; families remaining geographically separate to remain tied together; and widening and re-routed migration patterns. Many are marriage immigrants, caregivers, care workers, students, and asylum seekers (Yeoh & Lin, 2017). Chinese women are a significant group within the global Chinese diaspora, forming some of the fastest-growing immigrant groups compared to Chinese men. Women outnumber men in major recipient countries like the US, Australia, and Canada. (Huang, 2020). Despite this, existing literature mainly focuses on single-destination migration, offering a limited understanding of their complex experiences (Leung, 2016).

In presenting what is known about the experiences and contexts of ethnic-Chinese women from a structural perspective, I apply the following insights drawn from existing literature. Firstly, in this paper, the term 'Chinese' refers to what is commonly reported as 'ethnic Chinese' emanating from the three localities of China, Hong Kong (HK), and Taiwan (Sun, 2021), With reporting on sub-ethnicities is an emerging research area (Jijiao, 2016), especially with the intra-national migration matters of ethnic minorities in China, this informs a close attention to the ethnic identities reported in this scoping review. Secondly, to resist focusing on the nation-state as a conventional unit of analysis (Leung, 2016), I use the term, 'multi-destination' to complicate the binary conceptions of migratory patterns reminiscent of hegemonic conceptualizations of linearity and hierarchies of place (Paul & Yeoh, 2021).

1.2 Purpose and Research Question

This scoping review aims to explore the experiences and contexts of Chinese women who migrate to and settle in two or more countries. The key questions are:
1. What were the experiences of Chinese women from mainland China, HK, and Taiwan who migrated to and settled in multiple countries?
2. What contexts influenced these multi-destination migrations and settlements?

The review identifies key themes from these experiences and highlights research gaps specific to the multiple migration and settlement contexts of Chinese women.

1.3 Positionality

My social positionality as a first-generation graduate student with a trauma-related disability and a gender-fluid identity influences this review. Born in Canada to Han Chinese immigrant parents from the Global South, I understand the complexities of multi-destination journeys and their impact on social identities. Facing systemic sexism, racism, ableism, and classism, I question, "where

do I feel at home?" while reflecting themes of constraints, agency, and resilience. As a gender-fluid person, I navigate expectations and invisibility within predominantly White contexts, paralleling the experiences of Chinese immigrant women negotiating respect, opportunities, and recognition. My parents' multi-destination journeys shape my understanding of our shared social histories (Nhat Hanh, 2015). In my diverse academic program, I connect with classmates from the Global South, appreciating mutual aid and relationship-centered sensibilities, resonating with the literature on Chinese women's multi-destination experiences.

2. Methodology

2.1 Theoretical Perspectives

In this paper, I draw from two theoretical perspectives to guide the development of the questions and analysis of the findings: intersectionality and feminist standpoint theory. Intersectionality, coined by Black feminist Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), identifies how racism and sexism interact to create inequities for Black women. Crenshaw challenged the 'single-axis' oppression framework in the American legal system, which forced Black women to choose between race or gender in discrimination claims. Intersectionality views socially constructed differences and oppressions as multiple and interlocking, a key perspective in studying gender and migrations (Mora & Piper, 2021). Although debates continue on whether intersectionality is a lens, framework, concept, or theory (Kaushik & Walsh, 2018), critiques by White feminists, claiming intersectionality hinders solidarity across differences, are rejected by scholars who argue that identities are not static (Kong, 2023).

Feminist standpoint theory, developed by second-wave feminist scholars (Harding, 2004), centers the experiences and contributions of marginalized women, asserting that knowledge is socially situated. Marginalized women are seen as better positioned to understand how power relations impact their lives, facilitating critical discussions about political struggles and power structures (Harding, 2012). Both theories highlight the complex social and political struggles of women, which I will apply to this scoping review.

Both theories are highly relevant to understanding the experiences of Chinese women on multi-destination journeys, the related underlying contexts, as well as assessment of existing knowledge gaps. With intersectionality focusing on overlapping and interdependent systems of oppression, Bastia (2014) proposes that intersectionality can be used to disaggregate analytical categories to reveal significant intra-group differences, which in this case is related to understanding how Chinese immigrant women's experiences are diverse and can vary from each other's. This possibility offers further opportunities to understand locations of privilege comparatively through experiences that reflect the consequences of institutional practices; for example, restrictive immigration policies with sexist assumptions, compounding caregiver expectations, and precarious work options–on various sub-communities within the Chinese women community. What complements the analytical strengths of intersectionality is the rich contextual focus that can enable action offered by feminist standpoint theory. Feminist standpoint theory offers strategies to examine how everyday lived experiences are reflections of systemic stratification and power relations that produce limited choices for immigrant women (Harding, 2012). By recognizing how inequities are normalized, women are better able to secure some degree of agency to resist marginalization and work toward a collective social commitment for emancipation.

The integrative use of these two theoretical approaches enables the analytical exploration of multi-destination experiences of Chinese women and the underlying contexts that influence these journeys. Intersectionality allows me to examine Chinese immigrant women's access to

opportunities, resources, challenges, and constraints, and feminist standpoint theory's impetus to centre the marginalities of Chinese women's experiences. Regardless of social locations, intersectionality helps to make visible how oppressive systems work together to shape these women's experiences. Altogether, both perspectives help me to describe and make sense of a range of diverse and complex lived experiences of Chinese immigrant women while reflexively acknowledging how my own social location influences the interpretation of the results of this scoping review.

2.2. Methods

In conducting this scoping review of the literature, I engaged with Dr. Josephine Pui-Hing Wong, my supervisor, in all steps of the scoping review. I drew on the framework developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) to map out the fields of study, as well as identifying research gaps in the extant literature. Specifically, I followed the following steps: 1) identifying the research questions in consultation with my supervisor; 2) identifying studies relevant to addressing the research questions; 3) selecting studies for the final review; 4) charting overview information of the selected studies; and 5) collating, synthesizing, and reporting the findings. In addition, I also aligned with the approach proposed by Levac et al. (2010) who emphasized the importance of: 1) explicating the meaning of findings back to the overall study purpose and objectives, and 2) elucidating the implications of the study findings for future research, policy, and practice.

I employed the following strategies to align the review with the research purpose, questions, and objectives. I focused solely on peer-reviewed articles that reported on primary sources of evidence. I also conducted a pre-search by searching citations and reference lists on recent and seminal articles on multi-destination migration experiences. With the flexibility afforded by the scoping review approach to adapt the research question once a grasp of the general scope of the field was gained (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005), I broadened the target demographic focus from Chinese women, often Han Chinese (the dominant ethnic group in China), to include multiple ethnicities residing and migrating from or to China, Taiwan, and HK.

I conducted the literature search using five databases: Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL); GeoBase; Social Service Abstracts; Social Work Abstracts; and Sociological Abstracts. The Population/Concept/Context (PCC) model was used to formulate key words based on the research questions (Dermody et al., 2023). I also used boolean operators 'OR' for concepts within each sub-categories (i.e. Population, Concept, Context) and 'AND' in between each of these same categories. Specific to each database's proximity operators, truncation and wildcard search tips, search terms pertaining to the geographic location; feminized roles; and multi-destination synonyms were used. In addition, reinforcing the migration and settlement contexts was necessary to meet the intended focus.

In order to screen for relevant articles, inclusion and exclusion criteria were established. The inclusion criteria were: multiple ethnicities of Chinese women who resided in China, Taiwan, and HK and who settled in two or more countries; peer reviewed articles; book chapters; academic reports; published in English; and with no date restrictions. Exclusion criteria were: grey literature; non-English publications; and secondary or tertiary accounts such as reviews, editorials, and historiographies.

The initial search generated 856 unique articles. After deduplication and screening titles and abstract for relevance, 39 full-text articles were reviewed (see Figure 1). Based on bi-weekly review meetings and discussions with my research supervisor, a total of 17 articles were included in this scoping review. During these meetings, we excluded articles that reported on: participants making brief visits to a third country without establishing a home for settlement; multi-destination experiences based on aggregated reports without detailing the actual experiences in a third or more countries; experiences that prospected immigration to a third country without actually

migrating to a third country; and individuals who completed an educational degree in a third country without specifying whether the degree prompted an actual migration move or whether the degree took place virtually.

Figure 1: Article Selection Processes
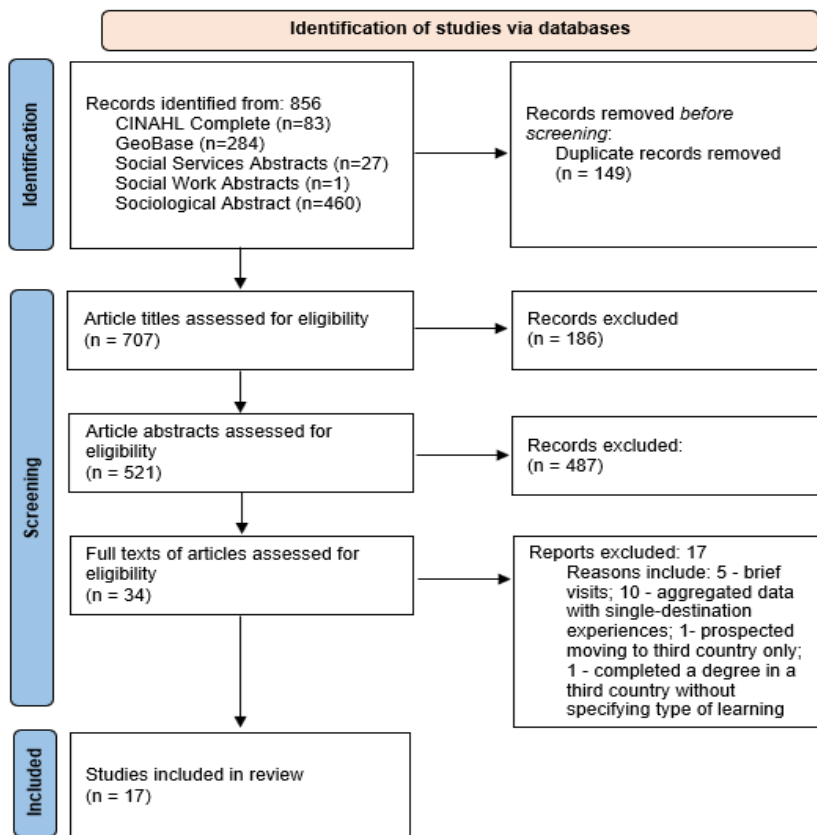
A total of 17 articles met all the inclusion criteria and none of the exclusion criteria. The publications ranged over the course of a period of 21 years from 2003 to 2023. Table 1 presents the summary of findings of the 17 articles. For visual representations that illustrate these women's multi-destination journeys, see Annex 1 Figures 2-4 (some destination points may be missing due to lack of data available). The names of women used in this paper are names reported in the published articles included in this review.

Table 1: Summary of Findings

Citation	Study Location(s), Method, & Participant(s)	Multi-destination Contexts
Calás et al. (2013)	- USA and China - Qualitative: multi-sited ethnography - Amy Sun, a businesswoman, between 30-40 years old (N=1)	Amy Sun, born in China, educated in London, UK, moved to the northeastern USA, where she owns a transnational US college test preparation business
Chan & Seet (2003)	- Singapore - Qualitative: face to face, in-depth, one on one and family group interviews - Mainland Chinese immigrant families in Singapore (N=27); Principal respondents: Adults (# of primary respondents unknown); Secondary respondents (related to the principal respondents, depending on permission to gain contact): children (n=7) and grandparents (n=15)	Two people in this study have multi-destination experiences: 1) Lydia, a daughter and granddaughter, lived in Australia (birthplace unmentioned) with her parents, was looked after by maternal grandparents in China before rejoining her parents in Singapore and 2) Min, a 35 year old single women, preferred to speak Chinese in Singapore; spoke in English to the researchers; lived in English-speaking communities in Norway for 5 years, 10 years in Canada as a Canadian citizen
Chang (2017)	- Ban Mae Aw, Thailand - Qualitative: case study, life story, oral history - A immigrant woman (N=1)	Auntie Duan, a Han Chinese, was born in a landlord class in Yunnan province in 1938, then due to the threat of Chinese Communism, her family fled to Shan State, Burma (now Myanmar) then eventually to northern Thailand
Chow (2011)	- HK; Taipei, Taiwan; Shanghai, China - Qualitative: interviews and non-fiction essay - An emerging pop singer, teens (N=1)	Diana Zhu is diasporic Chinese - she was born and grew up in the Netherlands; won a Chinese singing contest in Amsterdam in 2006; and secured a contract with Warner Music Group, an entertainment company based in HK, Taiwan, and Shanghai
Deng & Lyttleton (2013)	- Yunnan, China; Hat Yai, Thailand; Dan Nork, Malaysia - Mixed - Qualitative: ethnographic fieldwork - in-depth interviews, participant observation and focus-group discussions - Quantitative: data on HIV/AIDS epidemiology in D-county over the past 20 years, provided by the local Center for Disease Control (CDC) - Immigrant Dai women who are mostly married (N=45)	Of the 45, only one met the criteria of being multi-destination: an unnamed 30 year old married immigrant woman, worked in Bangkok and Malaysia in addition to origin place in Yunnan, China
Ellingsen (2017)	- Kathmandu, Nepal - Qualitative: interviews - First and second generation Khachchara, descendants of Newarian traders and Tibetan mothers (N=11; 10 male, 1 female)	Most of the interviewees identified with Tibetan heritage than Newarian including an unnamed elderly women who went to school in India before settling in Kathmandu, Nepal

Friedman (2016)	• Taiwan • Qualitative: in-depth interviews • Mainland Chinese wives married to a Taiwanese citizen (N=3), part of a bigger study with total participants unspecified	• Two women have a multi-destination background: 1) Ma Yanjie - worked in mainland China and overseas before arriving in Taiwan and 2) Liao Yimei - Chinese, educated in the USA, moved to live in Taiwan
Leung (2015)	• Netherlands • Qualitative • The author, (N=1)	• The author self-reflected on her own changing social positionalities that intersect with researcher-researched relationship: as a doctoral candidate, foreign student, yet to be a mother, Han Chinese, from a working class family, born in HK and moved to Europe, USA, Germany, and Netherlands; woman; late 20s
Lyttleton et al. (2011)	• Yunnan, China and Thailand • Qualitative: ethnographic research in 6 Dai villages • Participant # not specified: Ethnic Dai women working in Thailand	• Two Dai women working in Thailand also lived in a third country: 1) Y who lived in Singapore with an extramarital partner and 2) F who was trafficked into Thailand, fled to Burma (now Myanmar) to earn enough money to return back to China
Martin (2023)	• Melbourne, Australia • Qualitative: longitudinal ethnographic fieldwork - group interviews and unstructured conversations; case study • Female higher education students from the People's Republic of China (N=56)	• Niuniu was born in a small town in central Henan province, completed middle school in the provincial capital of Zhengzhou, completed high school in Tianjin, and Chengdu for her bachelors where she did a short exchange program in the US before moving to Melbourne for her master's degree
Patterson (2023)	• Vancouver, Canada • Qualitative - a collaborative memoriam • Y-Dang Troeung (張依蘭) (ត្រឿងអ៊ីដាង) (1980–2022) - a late wife, partner, soulmate, editor, collaborator, and co-parent of the author (N=1)	• Y-Dang's name is also the name of the refugee camp in Cambodia where she was born; lived in HK as an Assistant Professor in Asian Studies; visited Phnom Penh, Cambodia for her research; and moved to Vancouver with her husband
Shan et al. (2016).	• Vancouver, Canada and Beijing, China • Qualitative: a) life-history style interviews with Chinese migrant women b) gathering policy- and practice-related data from event observations, textual analysis, and interviews with immigrant women • Chinese immigrant women between China and Canada - who 1) were trained in applied sciences and engineering and 2) moved twice or more between China and Canada for settlement purposes (N=15)	• Seven participants had experiences living / working in a third country before Canada with experiences of three participants mentioned: 1) Irene trained and worked in mainland China and Singapore in architecture and structural engineers; 2) Anna trained in interior architecture in the United Kingdom; and 3) Linda opened a daycare center in New Zealand
Shi (2008)	• San Francisco Bay, California, USA • Qualitative: ethnographic fieldwork; in-depth, unstructured, individual or group interviews; and extensive observation	• 1) Sally and 2) her mom, Amy, both immigrated from Indonesia, then settled into the Fujian Changshan Sojourners'

	● Chinese immigrant working-class women, diverse ages between 40s and 70s (N=9)	Farm in China, before arriving to San Francisco
Statz (2016)	● Multiple locations, USA ● Qualitative: in-depth interviews, participant observation, document analysis, fieldwork ● 100 Immigration lawyers in gateway cities and in new immigrant destinations and 20 unaccompanied Chinese youth released from detention centers and with either ongoing or concluded proceedings (N=120)	● Hua, a young woman, who migrated to the US-Mexico border when she was 17, placed into a detention center in Chicago, released, now working at a Chinese buffet in Arkansas
Wang (2016)	● China ● Qualitative: ethnographic fieldwork - interviews, observation, field notes from memory ● Participant # not specified: - Foster Children with disabilities / illness; - Western volunteers for Tomorrow's Children; and - Chinese ayis (caregivers/nannies) from working class population	● Emma, a four year old child from Beijing, flew to HK for extensive surgery and chemotherapy for a year and a half, before being matched with a foreign family
Yu et al. (2022)	● United Kingdom (UK) and HK ● Qualitative: focus groups in Cantonese ● Chinese older people at least 60 years old with British citizenship who had migrated to and lived in the United Kingdom for at least 10 years (N=69, 21 male and 48 females)	● One older women reported their multi-destination background: Ms. Chan's home town is Shenzhen, lived in HK, before moving the UK
Zhan et al. (2017)	● Metro Atlanta area of Georgia, USA ● Mixed: interviews and survey ● 21 intensive interviews and 107 surveys with elderly immigrants of Chinese descent over 60 years old; in the US for over two years; mostly from Mainland China, some from Taiwan, rest from all over the world	● Ms. Mo, an elderly woman, was born in Macao, raised in Taiwan, lived in California and New Orleans, and after Hurricane Katrina, moved to Atlanta

3. Results

From the 17 articles reviewed, four main themes emerged: 1) socio-political influences; 2) subject formations; 3) strategies and resources for resilience; and 4) constraints. Chinese women, despite differing contexts, share common experiences.

3.1 Socio-Political Influences

Socio-political influences significantly impact Chinese women, linking regions in China, the Himalayas, Southeast Asia, and the USA. These multi-destination journeys are concomitantly presented alongside geopolitical contours: near-border places, shifting family structures in China post-1949, the USA as an imperial power and settler colonial state, and binary and pluralistic interpretations of China's relations with the USA, Taiwan, and HK. These influences are rooted in socio-historical contexts and geopolitical dynamics.

3.1.1 Border Towns and Cities South East and South West of China.

For border towns and cities, three articles discussed the sociological journeys of Yunnanese women from China to Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore. The Kuomintang Army escorted Han women, including Auntie Duan, from Burma to Thailand, where they supervised Yunnanese villages until the 1980s (Chang, 2017). Dai women trafficked to brothels in Thailand in the 1980s created pathways to Malaysia and Singapore (Deng & Lyttleton, 2013; Lyttleton et al., 2011). The latter case also cited geographical and socio-historical factors. Ellingsen (2017) explained how a 17th century treaty between Nepal and Tibet, which designated patrilineal descendants as Nepalese and matrilineal descendants as Tibetan, kept Newar traders' families separate and prevented their integration into Nepali society. This influenced an elderly Khachchara woman's journey to pursue schooling in Dharamsala, India, before settling in Kathmandu, Nepal (Ellingsen, 2017). Together with the rise of the Chinese communist regime in the mid-20th century, both the emigration of the Khachchara women from Tibet and the emigration of other Chinese women from China were impacted.

3.1.2 Shifting Family Structures in China and USA as an Imperial Power.

Various authors attributed emigrations from China due to the country's changing family structures and political decentralization to economic privatization. Irene and Anna from China, moved away to places like Canada, to pursue their family goals in having more than one child due to the restrictive one-child policy from 1980 to 2016 (Shan et al., 2016). Others, like Niuniu, benefited from being the youngest of two children, ostensibly experienced less pressure from parents to pursue conventional pathways of corporate success (Martin, 2023). Wang (2016) noted that China's cultural and economic preference for sons, reinforced by policy, created political-economic incentives for international adoption of girls like Emma. This preference enabled a gendered 'supply' for adoption, influenced by the growth of US evangelical Christian adoption movements since the 1990s and American military presence in Asia. Western parental desires for parenthood and China's economic benefits from political decentralization highlight the USA's imperial legacy (Wang, 2016).

3.1.3 USA as a Settler Colonial State.

The USA is also portrayed as a settler colonial state with a strong socio-historical context drawn to both migration and unsettling experiences. Statz (2016) considered a fire in San Francisco that destroyed birth records of immigrants as influential to shaping clandestine immigrants' claims to citizenship in the 21st century. According to Statz (2016), these policies assumed that the Chinese were 'strange and unassimilable' (p. 1630), alluding to xenophobia and exclusionary assumptions

that continue to remain relevant to asylum seekers, such as in Hua's case. Socio-political circumstances, like the Post-1949 socialist context in China that emphasizes putting family first, becomes arguably reinforced yet also reconfigured within the racial, gendered, and class expectations of the USA (Shi, 2008). Sally's ability to help her family to immigrate is tied based on American coverture laws that tie women's citizenship status to their marital status. In addition, Sally and her mom Amy, are expected to protect the family from racist and classist aggressions without turning their abusive husband over to American authorities while also financially and socially taking care of their family. Here, the politics between the US and China is framed as imbricated within patriarchal structures that transcend borders and adapt to the social circumstances of the people experiencing them.

3.1.4 Binary and Pluralistic Perspectives of International Relations.

Other papers framed relations between countries as either binary or more pluralistic. Between the USA and China, Wang (2016) depicted that US citizens often politicize China as an unworthy economic competitor. Further to portraying antagonistic bilateral relations, Friedman (2016) highlighted the contested relationship between China and Taiwan as reflected in bifurcated immigration regimes in Taiwan that pigeonholed educated professionals like Ma Yanjie who arrived in Taiwan as marital spouses, assumed to lack professional work credentials These socio-political tensions between China and Taiwan, and in addition, HK, are also shown in the political expectations placed on Diana Zhu. Chow (2011) centered the conflicting regional expectations by the same entertainment labels based in Taiwan, HK and China alike towards the formation of Diana's language, music style, and body.

In response to what was perceived as a time of political upheaval characterized by binary portrayals of 'Chineseness' in China or America, Patterson (2023) and his late wife, Y-Dang, both mixed Chinese, organized workshops and conferences outside of the dominant discourses in the USA or China. From their purviews in HK and Canada, they observed that many scholarly voices stood on the outskirts of Asian American studies at conferences in South Korea, Philippines, Taiwan, and mainland China. Thus, Patterson (2023) and Y-Dang both perceived themselves as a foundation to envision their roles in organizing a 'transpacific sensibility' to promote solidarities outside of dominant discourses called the 'Minor Transpacific'.

3.1.5 Epistemic Injustice.

Other authors reflected on the sociopolitical influences on their research process and outcomes, particularly the epistemological dominance of quantitative approaches that impact gendered and qualitative dynamics. For example, Shan et al. (2016) focused on how gendered power dynamics imbricated within a male-dominated field, such as the applied sciences and engineering, constrained Chinese women trained in this field of training to find employment inside of it, like Irene. Martin (2023) presented a more direct impact of the social dominance of quantitative approaches on their research and intentionally used their study to highlight the human aspects of migration by explicitly reporting the experiences of their participants. These examples highlighted the pervasiveness of epistemic injustice on various aspects of the research process and outcomes.

3.2 Subject Formations

One of the key forces that shapes Chinese women's experiences in multi-destination is global neoliberal capitalism. A few authors in this review highlighted how neoliberalism shapes the subjectivities of Chinese women depending on the contexts of their migration journeys and settlement experiences. Each of these experiences reflected various aspects of the impacts of global neoliberal capitalism as reflected in numerous regimes within media, adoption, business, and citizenship.

3.2.1 Media as Social Space.

Drawn to Asia for its economic opportunities, Chow (2011) depicted Diana Zhu, an aspiring singer, as a diasporic subject whose aspirations were very much intertwined with both the capitalist and political expectations from the entertainment company, Warner Music, based in three localities: HK, Taiwan, and China (Chow, 2011). On the one hand, all three localities are portrayed as concordantly desiring Diana's diasporic background as a Dutch-born singer of Chinese descent, her emotional intelligence, and persistence. However, these same qualities are also politicized further with conflicting demands on her language profile, music style, and body size by entertainment labels in these localities. For example, Diana was asked to learn Cantonese in HK and unlearn her mainland Chinese accent in Taiwan. She was also asked to preserve her Black-influenced musical style in HK while urged to de-westernize in Taiwan. Her body is hypervisibilised when compared to male counterparts. While Chow (2011) highlighted the theoretical possibility of resisting these conflicting and compounding demands, she observed that Diana has succumbed to them.

3.2.2 Power Relations in Adoption.

Adoption of young girls, born in China undergoing medical treatment in one place before being picked up in Beijing by their adopting parents, has been explored in the literature as a practice implicated in global capitalism. Wang (2016) introduced transnational adoption as a case study of commodification as a process, arguing that colonizers expand their field of objects, using young children as the market supply for adoption demands, production of desirable children as commodities for exports, while preserving domination over the working class. As the availability of healthy girls declined, the changing supply of adoptable youth in the origin country shifted to the appreciated, socially constructed value of special needs children in China (Wang, 2016). Emma is an example of an adoptee who underwent the transformation of " [a] locally marginalized special needs youth into [an] internationally desirable [daughter]" (Wang, 2016, p. 133). The care of adoptees involves costly medical care and operational upkeep while employing nannies at lower than local rates for highly attentive care (Wang, 2016). These local Chinese women working for low wages converged with an observation made by Shi (2008) in the American context–that working-class structures assumed that women can afford to precariously work for less while being stereotypically conceived as being suited for meticulous and routine work. All in all, according to Wang (2016), the enterprise of international adoption reproduced an emotionally and financially intensive and logically sophisticated 'export' by Chinese labour in service to the moral superiority of the West (p. 150), and in the process, these female children become multi-destination immigrants.

3.2.3 Entrepreneurship.

In some articles, Chinese women with multi-destination experiences were portrayed as enterprising in multiple social spaces including college preparatory programs in the USA and China; an inn business that served long-distance mule caravan trade between northern Thailand and Western Burma (now Myanmar); and long-term intimate services in Thailand and Malaysia. In the education sector, Calás et al. (2013) offered the conception of "mobile subjectivities" to describe a mobile, precarious, and transitory accomplishment of selfhood provisionally set by the neoliberal rhetoric of "choice" and "self-empowerment" using a case study that studied the lived experiences of Amy Sun. Calás et al. (2013) emphasized the multi-destination background of Amy Sun to understand how a woman from China, educated in Europe, and lived with family in the US, adapted to multiple frames of reference etched by socio-political contours, including class, gender, and race.

In the field of hospitality, Auntie Duan, a Han Chinese woman, started multiple businesses before starting her most profitable business, an inn in Ban Mae Aw that served people of long-distance mule caravan trade between Thailand and Burma (now Myanmar). Her success, attributed to her entrepreneurial spirit and support from Kuomintang armies, contrasts with other Yunnanese women engaged in petty trades and farming. (Chang, 2017).

Also from Yunnan, China, Dai women provided intimate services to men from across the Southeast Asia region. Two Dai women elected to work in massage parlours in Thailand to establish long-term relations with Malaysian or Singaporean clients in return for emotional and material gain (Deng & Lyttleton, 2013; Lyttleton et al., 2011). Lyttleton et al. (2011) heralded these Dai immigrant women as a case study of dual neoliberal forms of risk management, as both autonomous, entrepreneurial and risk aware citizens, and vulnerable citizens incapable of self-monitoring their HIV status. All in all, gendered, classed, and race-based expectations of these Chinese women shaped the experiences of these women and success of their endeavours in education, hospitality, and intimate services within expansiveness and ongoing scopes of global neoliberal capitalism.

3.2.4 Citizenship as Power Regime.

Articles in this review also examined the impact of nation states' citizenship regimes. The first two articles explored the complex devaluation systems of Chinese women who are marriage immigrants and educated professionals in the Taiwanese context and conversely, economic immigrants, who are also wives and mothers, in the Canadian context. The third article illustrated the complex valuation and devaluation systems in the USA experienced by unaccompanied youth from Fujian China.

Two sets of articles examined the rigid pathways distinguishing economic and marriage immigrants, ignoring those whose backgrounds blur these categories. In Taiwan, the immigration system prioritizes "value-adding" immigrants essential to the economy while relegating marriage immigrants to reproductive care roles, aligning them with gendered skill sets (Friedman, 2016). Friedman (2016) highlighted the case of Ma Yanjie, an educated professional and former high-ranking civil servant in China, who faced significant challenges in securing work due to delayed work rights for mainland Chinese citizens. When employed, Ma was burdened with housework and childcare by her husband, reflecting feminized assumptions about marital immigrants. Despite her overseas experience and skills, Ma's quality of life was diminished by gendered and geopolitical biases that undervalued her economic contributions (Friedman, 2016).

In Canada, according to Shan et al. (2016), immigration policies similarly set its preferential immigration policies for skilled workers. However, what sets a different immigratory context between Canada and China, is that Chinese women who immigrated to Canada often return to China for its booming economy and policy incentives to appeal to its diaspora population (Shan et al., 2016). In Canada, immigration policies prioritize skilled workers, but Chinese women often

return to China for its booming economy and diaspora incentives (Shan et al., 2016). Chinese economic immigrants in Canada, like Irene, faced barriers due to limited recognition of non-Canadian credentials. Irene had to network in Canada while her family remained in China, highlighting the gendered assumption that economic immigrants do not have caretaking responsibilities. Ma's and Irene's experiences were ultimately shaped by the gendered assumptions behind rigid immigration pathway structures that assumed one identity (i.e. economic provider or caretaker) without the other.

Unaccompanied Fujian young women, like Hua, often compromise their true narratives of loving parental relationships, instead presenting distorted stories that fit stereotypes based on race, age, and citizenship status to secure legal status in the USA (Statz, 2016). Hua's case illustrates how these women bear emotional and financial costs to navigate rigid citizenship regimes, reflecting the personal sacrifices made by Chinese immigrant women. Within these rigidly designed citizenship regimes, Chinese immigrant women aligned themselves subordinately to these inflexible structures of citizenship with great personal cost to themselves and their families.

3.3 Social, Economic, Political and Health Constraints

Within the theme of constraints, there were four sub themes experienced by the Chinese immigrant women with multi-destination backgrounds: limited choices and constraints in the contexts of family, workplace, both family and workplace, limited social recognition and inclusion, and overall well-being.

3.3.1 Limited Choices in both the Family and Career Context.

Many Chinese immigrant women in the reviewed articles were found to be burdened with caregiver expectations. Some women became the primary caregivers physically and financially due to circumstances existing within their immediate families. Auntie Duan, widowed twice, cared for her children after her Kuomintang husbands passed away (Chang, 2017). In the USA, Sally and Amy Sun dealt with husbands who refused financial support, leading to exacerbated intimate partner violence in Sally's case (Shi, 2008; Calás & Smircich, 2013). Ma Yanjie's husband expected her to be a sole homemaker in Taiwan (Friedman, 2016). These were common constraints experienced by women, across the socioeconomic spectrum, living with their immediate families in Thailand, USA, and Taiwan.

Many women, in their roles as mothers, sisters, and/or daughters, worked to support their family from afar. Both the women and their families experienced arduous circumstances in their respective contexts. Dai mothers worked in massage parlours and had long-term relationships in Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia to provide for their families in Yunnan, despite the risk of contracting HIV (Lyttleton et al., 2011; Deng & Lyttleton, 2013). Amy Sun supported her siblings in China from the USA, paying for their home, children's education, and parents' medical bills (Calás et al., 2013). Irene and Anna worked in Canada to rebuild their careers while their families stayed in China (Shan et al., 2016). Hua, an asylum seeker, worked in Arkansas to send money to her family in Fujian, claiming family reunification was impossible to secure residency (Statz, 2016). What is noteworthy is that none of the authors reported that these women of various age and socioeconomic backgrounds preferred to support their families while separated from them.

In male-dominated workspaces, researchers speculated that women experience sexism in the workplace or in their field. Y-Dang, a researcher and mother, was scolded for being inactive during maternity leave (Patterson, 2023). Few women in applied sciences and engineering found careers in their fields, attributed to their roles as caregivers and the male-dominated labor market

(Shan et al., 2016). These examples highlight how gendered hierarchies intersect with other identities, influencing women's multi-destination migration and career paths.

3.3.2 Systemic Exclusion and Structural Constraints.

Chinese immigrant women face varying degrees of ethnic-based privileges and discrimination. In Singapore, Chinese women often experience privileges (Chan & Seet, 2003), whereas in Nepal, Khachchara women, like one unnamed first-generation woman, face ethnic and caste-based discrimination, feeling "like an untouchable person" (Ellingsen, 2017). Han Chinese in Yunnan used 'social purity' to justify discrimination against Dai women, stereotyping them as promiscuous and HIV positive (Deng & Lyttleton, 2013). F, a trafficked Dai woman, had to journey through Burma to Thailand to earn enough to return home (Lyttleton et al., 2011). Here, ethnic-based discrimination intersects with caste-based and class-based status to produce and reinforce social domination.

Class status and citizenship status are also intertwined. Class and citizenship status also intersect. In Taiwan, marital spouses from mainland China, like Ma Yanjie, faced legal dependence and marginalization due to geopolitical tensions (Friedman, 2016). In the USA, Hua had to arrive unaccompanied to qualify as a refugee, portraying herself through racist stereotypes of American supremacy and Chinese inferiority that appealed to the US immigration officers to avoid deportation (Statz, 2016).

The reviewed articles also identified systemic racism that restricted career opportunities for Chinese immigrant women in media, social service, and publishing sectors. Diana's father noted under-representation in Dutch singing contests, leading to the creation of the European Chinese New Talent Singing Contest, which launched Diana's international career (Chow, 2011). Y-Dang, a partly Chinese author, faced rejection from publishing her book on Cambodian refugees due to perceived intellectual myopia and lack of expertise on her own history (Patterson, 2023). These barriers for Chinese women also presented in tandem with the absence of accountability structures that enabled these manifestations of White supremacy ideologies.

3.3.3 Health and Well-Being.

Health and wellbeing also stood out as a recurring theme. Dai women working in massage parlours in Thailand often contracted HIV from husbands' extramarital affairs, not just through their work (Lyttleton et al., 2011; Deng & Lyttleton, 2013). Exposure to multiple sites increased their risk (Lyttleton et al., 2011; Deng & Lyttleton, 2013).

Many women also experienced difficult emotions about their social positions. Auntie Duan wished not to be a woman or mother in her next life due to societal expectations and family responsibilities, resenting the subordination to men and the heavy military influence in Northern Thailand (Chang, 2017). Hua felt exhausted from working hard to send money home (Statz, 2016), while Diana experienced stress from meeting her parents' expectations as first-generation immigrants in the Netherlands (Chow, 2011). Niuniu faced pressure from friends in China emphasizing traditional life trajectories over her pursuit of happiness and comfort (Martin, 2023). Shame and exhaustion in these cases highlight the emotional and physical challenges faced by multi-destination Chinese immigrant women.

3.4 Strategies and Resources for Resilience

In addition to facing adversity with hopelessness, many women demonstrated resilience by seeking family support, strategically mobilizing resources, and resisting discrimination. They achieved survival and financial independence for themselves and their families by leveraging resources, skills, outlooks to resisting and conditions that facilitated access to necessary resources and supports.

3.4.1 Family Support.

In the review articles, there existed many examples of Chinese women expanding their support networks to include older and lateral generations as sources of resilience. Diana's parents moved from China to Amsterdam for better opportunities, such as socioeconomic advancement and a strong education system (Chow, 2011). Similarly, Auntie Duan used life skills taught by her parents to start an inn business in Thailand, creatively surviving by trading opium when no other job opportunities existed (Chang, 2017). Ms Chan, an immigrant woman of a middle-class background, relied on her uncle in Shenzhen to manage her properties, saving money by avoiding commercial agents (Yu et al., 2022). Amy Sun's financial success depended on her parents taking care of her children in the USA (Calás et al., 2013). Lydia's grandparents cared for her in China while her parents settled in Singapore (Chan & Seet, 2003).

Secondly, support from Chinese women's immediate families were also pivotal to their career success. Linda's family tested her educational materials, helping her develop a successful science pedagogy business and allowing her family to stay together in New Zealand (Shan et al., 2016). Y-Dang received unwavering support from her husband during her terminal cancer, enabling her to publish her book and feel valued as a scholar (Patterson, 2023).

3.4.2 Strategically Mobilizing Resources.

Chinese women in this review demonstrated resilience by applying insights from past migrations to new contexts. For instance, Niuniu expanded her social networks in Australia, inspired by positive experiences in the USA (Martin, 2023). Auntie Duan used her knowledge of migration routes to successfully run her business in Thailand (Chang, 2017). Sally and her mother left China for a less materialistic society after disliking life in Indonesia (Shi, 2008). Ms. Mo moved to avoid natural disaster-prone areas (Zhan et al., 2017). Here, all these women demonstrated their abilities to apply insights of their earlier migrations to enhance their living conditions in a third country.

In the legal and immigration realm, immigrant women from diametrically opposite ends of the socioeconomic spectrum are reported to have negotiated their options to secure permanent residency status. In the legal realm, women negotiated immigration options for permanent residency. Hua, from Fujian, tailored her asylum case to meet US expectations (Statz, 2016). Liao Yimei leveraged her and her husband's status to exploit a policy gap for extended residency in Taiwan (Friedman, 2016). Both cases highlight how social status and strategic negotiation improved their situations.

In the career realm, women mobilized resources for optimal success. Diana participated in a Chinese singing competition in the Netherlands, advised by her parents (Chow, 2011). Auntie Duan started a successful inn after previous business failures (Chang, 2017). Irene diversified her social networks in Canada to enhance job prospects (Shan et al., 2016). All these examples illustrated how Chinese women, with support of their family or insights from past experiences, pursued strategies that could broaden their chances of success and/or survival.

Other Chinese women with multi-destination experiences mobilized resources across borders. Irene returned to China for career prospects, eventually returning to Canada with her

husband (Shan et al., 2016). Anna balanced work and family by finding a niche job in Canada after gaining experience in the UK and China (Shan et al., 2016). With the existing capital that these women, trained in the applied sciences and engineering fields, had access to, they pursued options that were within their means to balance both work and family.

In addition, when it comes to Chinese women demonstrating their ability to mobilize resources with their language proficiency, there are two examples. Chan & Seet (2003), in their footnotes, highlight how Min chose to speak English during interviews, setting herself apart from locals in Singapore, due to her years in English-speaking countries like Canada and Norway, speaking English. Ma Yanjie's fluency in English and Chinese underscored her professional experience, challenging gendered assumptions about mainland Chinese spouses lacking a vocation outside of the home (Friedman, 2016). Both these examples pointed to how capable Chinese women can be in communicating in multiple languages.

3.4.3 Resisting Discrimination and Social Domination.

Some women in multi-destination immigration actively resisted social domination and discrimination though: protest, living unconventional lifestyles, and protecting family from societal oppression. Firstly, Friedman (2016) described protests in Taipei on September 9, 2007, where marital immigrants, including Ma Yanjie, challenged Taiwan's "financial requirement" policy for mainland Chinese and other foreign spouses. Ma, a former high-level Chinese government employee fluent in Chinese and English, refused Taiwanese citizenship to resist exclusionary policies, maintaining her precarious legal residency that left her vulnerable to losing custody of her children and potential deportation (Friedman, 2016).

In contrast to resisting ideologies in settlement during post-migration, some women resisted neoliberal capitalism through multi-destination migration. Martin (2023) explored, in a case study of middle-class Chinese women who moved from China to Australia for postsecondary education, and how their experiences of mobility mediated their subjectivities. Martin (2023) contrasted Yinning and Niuniu, two middle-class Chinese women who moved to Australia. Yinning followed a conventional path of professional self-improvement, while Niuniu, from a less affluent background, embraced an unconventional life filled with meaning and multiple pathways, distancing herself from traditional expectations (Martin, 2023).

Shi (2008) explored how Sally and her mother, Amy, resisted patriarchal oppression and racism in the USA. They endured abusive marriages due to restrictive immigration laws that forced dependence of their legal status with a martial relationship with their husbands. Sally never reported her abusive husband, valuing his role in bringing her to the USA, while her mother, Amy resisted calling the police on her husband, despite abuse, to protect him from racial and classist vulnerabilities. Their decisions were influenced by the perceived costs of leaving their marriages, including exposure to racism, sexism, and classism (Shi, 2008). These women, including Ma Yanjie, Niuniu, Sally, and Amy, resisted oppressive dynamics in their respective situations, despite their precarious backgrounds.

4. Discussion

4.1 Analysis

4.1.1 Analytical Overview.

This section draws on a modest body of literature to provide insights into the multi-destination experiences of Chinese women, addressing how their migration and settlement trajectories intersect with broader social, political, and economic forces. The findings illustrate patterns across macro, meso, and micro levels, revealing diverse motivations and strategies employed by women in these journeys. These patterns help respond to the research questions:

- What are the lived experiences of Chinese women who migrated to and settled in two or more countries?
- What political, social, and economic contexts influenced these women to pursue multi-destination migrations?

By focusing on women's migration from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan to multiple destinations, the analysis reveals experiences shaped by structural inequalities, gender roles, and geopolitical histories. The key contribution of multi-destination migration research, however, lies not only in illuminating the unique experiences of individuals who move across multiple countries but also in enhancing our broader understanding of migration as a complex and multifaceted process. As Paul and Yeoh (2021) argue, "the key contribution of the study of multinational migrations is not perhaps what it teaches us about the ins and outs of multiple international movements within a single migratory life course, but rather what it reminds us about the complexities of migration as a whole" (p. 14).

In this regard, it is crucial to study both single-destination and multi-destination migration research comparatively. Doing so allows for a deeper understanding of how themes such as resilience, intersectionality, structural constraints, and political-economic contexts manifest and differ across these migration pathways. This interdisciplinary and multi-scalar approach offers a more comprehensive picture of women's migration experiences, revealing both commonalities and unique challenges.

4.1.2 Understanding Women's Multi-Destination Experiences.

Chinese women's multi-destination migration journeys are shaped by their roles, responsibilities, and the resilience they develop in response to multiple forms of structural oppression. The literature highlights three key themes related to their lived experiences:

4.1.2.1 Gendered Expectations and Structural Constraints

Women faced structural sexism, often navigating patriarchal systems that framed them as caregivers and secondary earners. These gendered expectations were reinforced across domains such as citizenship (Friedman, 2016), education (Patterson, 2023), and the working class (Shi, 2008). This limited their autonomy while forcing them to develop strategies to balance family, career, and legal requirements.

4.1.2.2 Intersectionality and Identity Negotiation

The reviewed articles illustrate how Chinese women's experiences are shaped by intersecting identities of ethnicity, gender, class, and citizenship. As they migrated across countries, they often renegotiated these identities, juggling roles as daughters, mothers, workers, and community members while adapting to new cultural expectations (Shan et al., 2016). Privilege in

some contexts—such as educational background or language skills—could facilitate smoother transitions, while others faced compounded discrimination.

4.1.2.3 Balancing Caregiving and Economic Responsibilities

Women frequently maintained caregiving roles in their origin countries while pursuing economic opportunities abroad. This dual responsibility created a transnational existence, with women sending remittances to support older generations while building stability in their new homes (Chan & Seet, 2003; Shi, 2008). For many, financial independence became a form of resistance against traditional gender norms.

4.1.3 Contextualizing Multi-Destination Migrations.

The contexts that influenced Chinese women to pursue multi-destination migrations are deeply rooted in political-economic histories and legal structures that shaped their mobility.

4.1.3.1 Political-Economic Drivers

The rise of the People's Republic of China post-1949 and the USA's imperial presence in Asia were key historical contexts that influenced migration decisions. Nationalist Kuomintang women, ethnic minorities, and other politically marginalized groups often sought refuge abroad due to persecution or exclusion in China (Chang, 2017). Coverture laws and restrictive immigration policies in destination countries also shaped women's migration pathways (Chan & Seet, 2003; Shi, 2008).

4.1.3.2 Global Labour Markets and Career Aspirations

Economic globalization expanded opportunities for Chinese women, particularly in sectors like academia (Patterson, 2023) and business (Calás et al., 2013). Migration decisions were often driven by aspirations for career advancement and better living conditions. However, these opportunities were not evenly distributed, with working-class women facing significant barriers compared to those with higher educational qualifications.

4.1.3.3 Geopolitical and Social Assumptions

Migration experiences were further complicated by geopolitical assumptions and policies that often framed Chinese women as a homogenous group. This ignored the distinct experiences of ethnic minorities like the Dai women or Tibetan women and perpetuated stereotypes about Chinese immigrants (Deng & Lyttleton, 2013; Lyttleton et al., 2011).

4.1.4 Resilience and Resistance Strategies

Women's experiences were not solely defined by structural constraints. They actively resisted and adapted to these challenges, developing strategies to achieve personal and professional goals. Some women directly confronted legal and social discrimination, such as mothers advocating for citizenship rights for their children (Friedman, 2016). Others adapted by

navigating legal loopholes, forming support networks, and leveraging their skills and education to secure better opportunities (Shan et al., 2016).

4.2 Implications

Future research should address gaps in the literature on Chinese women with multi-destination backgrounds and strengthen theoretical frameworks to advance social justice from the ground up.

4.2.1 Broadening and Integrating Foci.

Firstly, future research should focus on both the macro and meso politics of destination and origin countries to better understand multi-destination contexts. Holistic studies are needed to examine how support from family, community organizations, government, and non-human animals can integrate to foster interdependence, countering self-reliance cultures. Longitudinal studies tracking women's trajectories over many years should expand on retrospective reflections and temporal dimensions (Paul & Yeoh, 2021).

4.2.2 Heeding to Underserved Voices.

Secondly, studies should pay more attention to systematically underserved voices. Most articles are published in English, focusing on English-speaking researchers. Research should include non-Anglophone contexts and highlight experiences of Chinese communities in Africa and Latin America (Huynh, 2021; Chan, 2021). Marginalized groups like the LGBTQ community and sex workers remain understudied. For example, the rise of gay parenthood through ART and surrogacy could be explored (Wei, 2021). Including optional questions about migration pathways can prioritize confidentiality and safety for sex workers (Jeffreys & Perkins, 2011). These efforts will help include underserved voices in multi-destination research, intersecting with Chinese women's experiences.

4.2.3 Embodying Reflexive Theoretical Perspectives.

Thirdly, research with Chinese and other racialized immigrant women should use theoretical perspectives acknowledging that knowledge is never apolitical (Ryan, 2006). Reflexive approaches can help mitigate oppression during research. Future research should disaggregate gender data and move beyond binary gender understandings to reflect gender fluidity (Boyd, 2021; Sert & Turkmen, 2022). This will more accurately depict the complexities of Chinese women's multi-destination experiences.

4.3 Conclusions

In sum, understanding Chinese immigrant women's experiences requires attention to the complex realities of multi-destination migration. Their lived experiences are deeply shaped by the negotiation of intersectional identities under structural sexism, as well as by their simultaneous roles within familial and economic domains. These experiences are not only contemporary but also historically situated—rooted in China's shifting familial structures, the rise of the U.S. as an

imperial power, and evolving immigration policies. Today, these forces manifest in the global opening of labor markets and political narratives that too often essentialize Chinese women as a homogeneous group. This scoping review, by its methodology, mapped and summarized themes that overlap with those found in single destination journeys (Paul & Yeoh, 2021). Further research can both clarify and explain these experiences. For example, longitudinal studies comparing these two trajectories can help disentangle shared patterns while illuminating dynamics unique to multi-destination paths. Furthermore, systematic reviews can critically assess the research landscape, reveal gaps, elevate marginalized voices, and encourage more reflexive and intersectional theoretical approaches. Ultimately, aligning migration research with the nuanced realities of Chinese women's lives not only disrupts simplified binaries of 'origin' and 'destination' but also advances a more inclusive and critical understanding of migration itself.

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Appendix
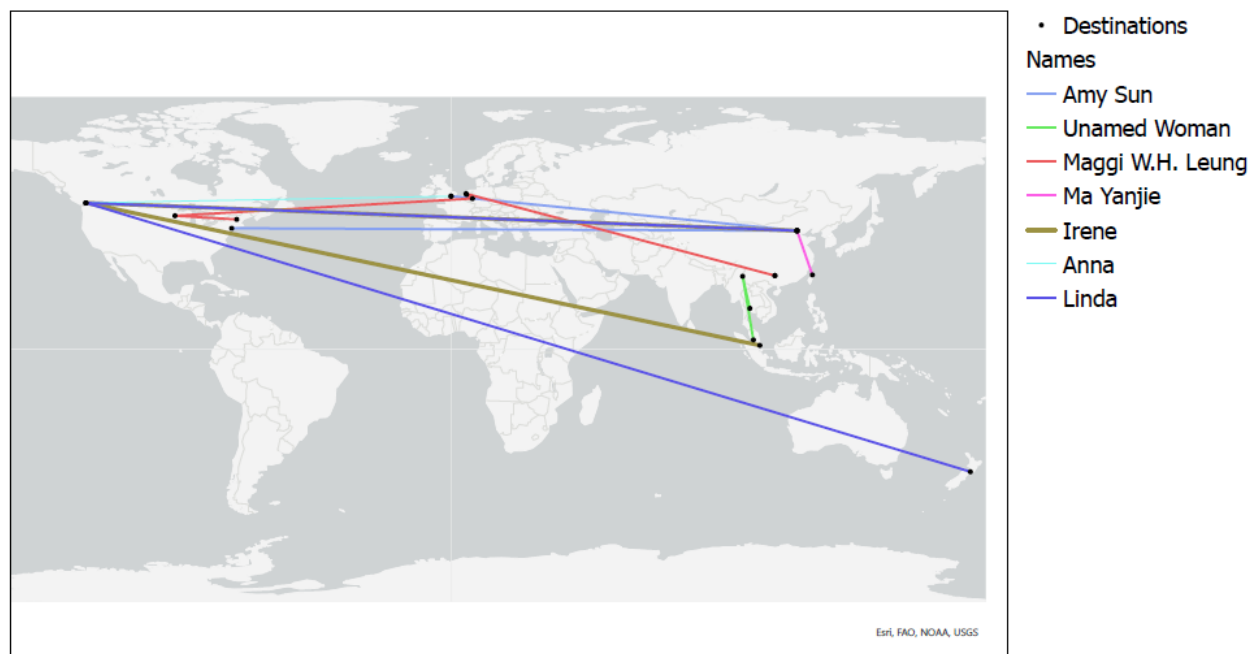
Figures 2-4: Chinese Women's Multi-Destination Journeys

These women were sequenced based on the year of publication (from earliest to most recent; alphabetical order of the authors; and alphabetical order of the women's names. Note that some capital cities of countries were used as placeholders for names of localities that were not given in the study.

Figure 2: Chinese Women's Multi-Destination Journeys (2003-2011)
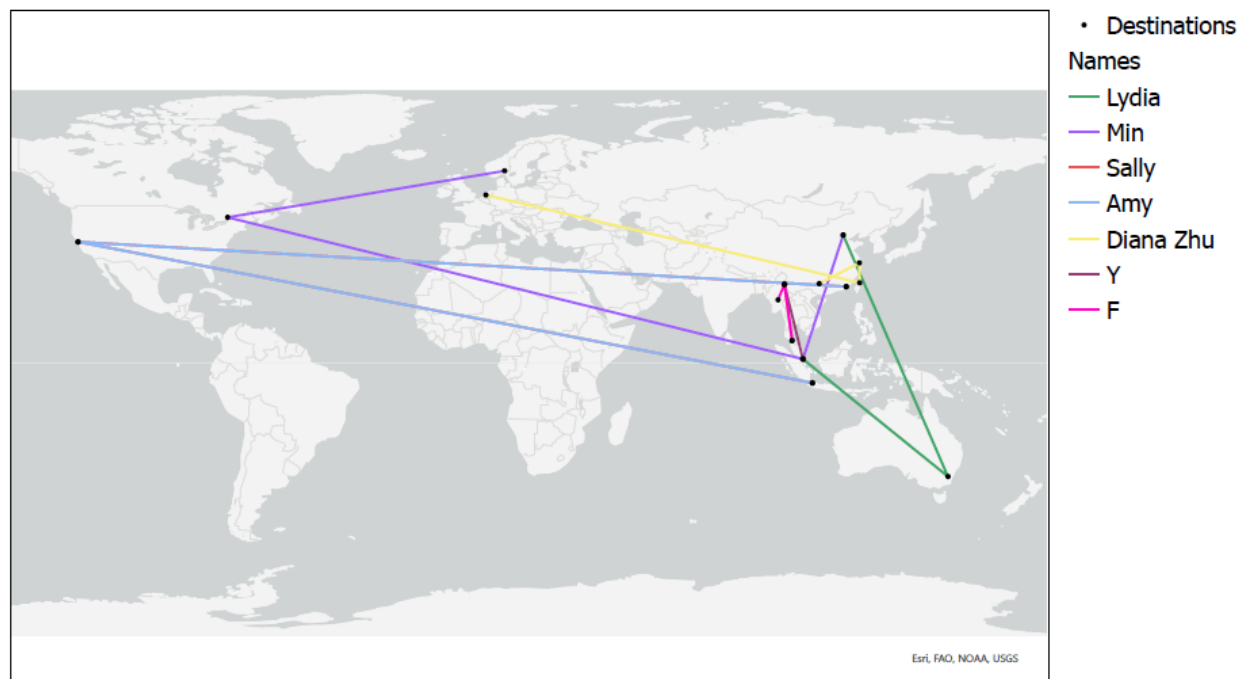
Figure 3: Chinese Women's Multi-Destination Journeys (2013-2016)

Figure 4: Chinese Women's Multi-Destination Journeys (2016-2023)