

Life Stories of Chinese Women in Taiwan's Military Enclaves

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Abstract

This thesis examines the life stories of Chinese women who live in military dependents' villages life stories in Taiwan. Reviewing their narratives that span the era of China's revolution from the early twentieth century to wartime (World War II and civil wars) through to post-war society of Taiwan, this study seeks to illustrate how these Chinese women comprehend and fulfill their social gender roles in accordance with their own ideologies, family disciplines, the newly established rules during wartime and in their journey of exile. Using standpoint theory and the concept of intersectionality to analyze fieldwork and oral history data, I examine gender issues and analyse women's distinct personal experiences which constitute their agency in particular socio-political formations. In addition, I suggest adopting the notion of diaspora to perceive Chinese women's traumatic experiences as the displaced minority group in Taiwan. Diaspora—as a life situation characterized by uncertainty and the need to adapt to changes—may be embraced and practiced by some refugee groups and forced migrants as a way to comprehend their sudden disconnection from their homeland and their temporary (or long-term) liminal status in the host society (Brubaker 2005:12-13). This understanding may also further assist them in better preparing for the challenges of their new lives.

Specifically, I conducted in-depth interviews with 44 Chinese women between the ages of 74 and 103 across 28 military enclaves in Taiwan. Research participants were Chinese migrants and refugees who witnessed China's civil war and came to Taiwan with the defeated Nationalist government in the 1949 great retreat. Living under severe military controls and residing in the isolated and enclosed environments have been both perceived by these Chinese-born women as the crucial factors that changed their attitudes towards living and their future paths in the society of Taiwan. Moreover, as war-affected girls and women who often experienced power and

resource deprivation due to gendered and migratory inequities and inequalities, the participants of this research were frequently compelled to remain silent and confined within military communities.

To conclude, this research finds that during times of political oppression and social upheaval, the women's insecure social gender roles as females in the military system and as diasporas lacking of local connections often forced them to bear the brunt of masculine violence and domestic abuse that came from the demands of political authorities (e.g., village heads and superiors) as well as from household heads (e.g., fathers, husbands, and even sons). In addition, whereas boys and men were more likely to be recruited into the power systems and hence held solid positions in public sphere, girls' and women's status were often regarded as less important, inferior ones; or, even worse, to be seen as the polluted and unproductive members that hindered the development of the country. As a result, Chinese diasporic women's lives and voices were marginalized, which profoundly affected their sense-of-self and social participation at both personal and political levels.

Keywords: Migration and diaspora studies; Military enclaves; Taiwan Studies; Chinese exodus; Feminist standpoint theory; Life stories.

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With immense gratitude and sincere respect,
this research is dedicated to the research participants who sought refuge in Taiwan after the
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Chapter 1 Introduction

[T]he ethnological book has all the powers of the beloved book: it is an encyclopedia, noting and classifying all of the reality, even the most trivial, the most sensual aspects; this encyclopedia does not adulterate the Other by reducing it to the Same...Finally, of all learned discourse, the ethnological seems to come closest to a fiction.

Roland Barthes (1977:84-85)

I. 1949 and the Chinese Diasporic Population in Taiwan

1949 was a year of trauma for many people who were involved in the Chinese civil war, especially for those whose families were violently disrupted, dislocated, and irreparably destroyed. Demographers estimated that approximately twelve to fifteen percent of the total Chinese population died in the early to mid-twentieth century due to direct war violence and/or the war-induced breakdown of public health (Tsai 2007). A number of Chinese proverbs, such as "the family is destroyed, the people lost (家破人亡)" and "[people were] forced to leave home and wander[ing] aimlessly (流離失所)", have been used by intellectuals and historians at the time to depict the misery of ordinary people caught up in the repercussions of China's revolution and wars (Lary 2002 in Yang 2012:80). Yet, it was also the year of 1949 that after more than a century of nationwide bloody battles—in which a variety of militias and regime forces co-existed and were all vying for the legitimate right to control over the land's profits—China finally got a temporary reprieve from its treacherous party struggles. People's Republic of China (PRC) was established in October 1949, which subsequently marked the finish of this country's internal military conflicts. The former

authority, the Republic of China (ROC), however, did not vanish. The defeated nationalist leader Chiang Kai-Shek had brought his administration and army forces to Taiwan, represented Taiwan's sovereign right as the "Free China," and continuously held its legitimate position for another twenty-odd years in the Security Council of the United Nations and in other international bodies.

One of the most important lessons we have learned from history is that truth is not merely defined by the result, but also reveals itself through the process. Whereas the official knowledge we have acquired about the outcome of China's civil war primarily recounts the country's history from a top-down perspective and focuses on the emergence of the newly-born Chinese nation-state(s), we often fail to fully comprehend the impact that the wars and their related catastrophes have had on individuals and communities. This is where the significance of oral history and life stories becomes evident. Through the sharing and reflection of personal experiences of local people, we may develop a more comprehensive and nuanced comprehension of the particular historical events and/or the broader era.

In accordance with the aim of portraying history from the perspective of local people, Mckeown's (1999) research on China's mass migration and population change from the late 19th century to 1949, he suggests taking the concept of diaspora as a new approach to complement, and expand, the traditionally limited "nation-based perspective" on the studies of Chinese-ness and/or the ethnic Chinese groups (Mckeown 1999:307). He emphasizes the

importance of using localized anchors of knowledge as reference points, and suggests that rather than relying solely on homogenous official databases, scholars should incorporate ordinary people's accounts into our understanding of contemporary China's political conflicts and war history (e.g., to study the changing household types of sojourners and residents, and the changes of relationships between individuals and communities), as these knowledge resources are more useful in reflecting the process of socio-political transformations at specific times and locations.

In line with this emphasis on aiming to avoid the hegemonic (and often masculine) official tone when describing Chinese people's experiences of war and of the large-scale displacement, the main themes of this dissertation underscore the standpoints of, and from, Chinese women. By placing women's narratives of diaspora and migration on the centre stage, this research can potentially reflect a fundamental knowledge production problem of current references—that is, the serious lack of perspectives from Chinese women in this context.

The experience of diaspora is always gendered; however, most of the work undertaken on men's experiences as the normal subjects of the account (Clifford 1994:313). This bias may lead to ignorance of diasporic women's intersectional disadvantaged status—particularly, when they are treated as objectified outsiders in unfamiliar, unstable, and hostile new environment, and/or when they face “the interlocking nature of oppression” among multiple systems as a result of their relegated roles associated with multiple (more than one)

marginalized identities and positions (Collins 1986:21). In the case of my research on the Chinese women who followed Nationalist military troops to Taiwan, social exclusion and discrimination affected their chance to be better understood by their (more powerful) male counterparts and by other local communities outside the military systems they reside. For example, from a historian's memoir, we learned that Chinese military dependents and refugee women were regarded as "nicely protected" by the male soldiers along their journey to Taiwan (Chang 2009:164). As described:

It was men who carried out the heavier tasks, such as contacting outside and moving rice and coal back to the retreating team. Women in our team, on the other hand, were nicely protected. They did not have to take the risk of going out; instead, they could have stayed in the base shelter, spending their time mending clothes for us (Chang 2009:164).

The validity of this perspective, however, has been seriously questioned by the women interviewed in this research. The Chinese women who came to Taiwan with the armed military officers were not well-protected but subjected to harassing surveillance by officials in a particularly oppressive way—through the interplays between Chinese patriarchal culture (i.e., men go outside to work and women stay at home) and the government's patriotic ideology (Nagel 1998). It is common for these women to report being restricted in their social practices, isolated in shelters, and unable to obtain basic necessities (such as food, coal, and medicine) without permission from the authorities. Nevertheless, as reported, the Chinese diasporic women in Taiwan were "protected" or provided with survival materials only to the extent that their gender role practices coincided with the ideal womanhood that the

Nationalist government expected a “good Chinese woman” should perform, such as sewing clothes or delivering children in the enclaves.

Due to the varied circumstances Chinese women faced while displaced and forcibly resettled, their experiences were significantly different from those of their male counterparts. Furthermore, since gendered power imbalances and power hierarchies continue to be major issues in Chinese society, adopting a method based on women's "ways of knowing" and "practice of knowing" to re-examine China's controversial history issues and other issues associated with the past conflicts will be a promising and necessary research approach (Hershatter 2002 2011). As feminist theorists have argued, the absence of women's perspective in research reflects gender blindness, or worse, gender chauvinism among male-centric scholarship (Nagel 1998). Therefore, I suggest that deploying Chinese women's narratives of diaspora may potentially offer fresh vocabularies to the studies of contemporary China's war history and Taiwan's Mainlander Studies.

a) As a diasporic group

According to Taiwan's national population census in 1956 and the border/airport records, demographers estimated that there were approximately 960,000 Chinese migrants (740,000 males and 215,000 females) who accompanied Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalist government (Kuomintang, 國民黨, KMT) to Taiwan after the Chinese Communist Party controlled the

entire mainland. In comparison, Taiwan's local population (including the ethnic Hokkien, Hakka, and indigenous groups) numbered approximately 8,380,000 (4,175,000 males and 4,205,000 females). Thus, it is worthwhile noting that the mainland migrants (commonly known as *Mainlanders*) constituted about 11% to 13% of the whole population in the postwar society of Taiwan (see Li 1969:47-55,248; Li 2002:106-109; Simon 2006:87; Wang 2013:103). Furthermore, based on the subsequent sex ratio datasets (see Fan 2011; Yap 2021), first-generation female Mainlanders — identified as *Chinese diasporic women* in this research—composed less than two percent of Taiwan's whole population; while within the group of Mainlanders, males greatly outnumbered females by approximately a factor of four to one (Yap 2021:224).

No doubt that the “great exodus” of the nationalist government-in-exile and the civil war migrants had attracted considerable attention to the nuances of the sojourning diasporic group's collective traumas at the individual level and/or to Taiwan's and China's post/cold war politics at interregional levels, especially when confronted with the cross-strait ideological or cultural disputes (see Fan 2011; Han 2019; Yang 2021). In comparison with the native Taiwanese and indigenous peoples who had lived through the Japanese colonization (1895-1945), mainland refugees, diasporas, and (forced) migrants had their own unique memories that resulted from their experiences of China's revolution and wars, the displacement and banishment, and after the retreat, the myth of returning/retaking home.

Nevertheless, their strong feeling of nostalgia and “exilic mentality” (Hsiau 2010) often compelled them to firmly keep to the distinctive, military-dictated “ghetto” neighbourhood¹ by the means of collectively committing to the home myth of restoring/recovery a great united China on the one hand, and eschewing the chance to integrate deeper into the local societies on the other.

b) *As an ethnic diasporic group*

Since the 1980s onward, a number of scholars started to categorize Chinese diasporas and their patrilineal descent into an ethnic group Waishengren² in order to respond to Taiwan’s booming indigenization movements and growing ethnic antagonism, as well as to pinpoint Mainlander community’s distinctive characteristics—which, in many cases, were related to their “diaspora consciousness” and constituted negatively through the experiences

¹ The term “ghetto” was originally used to describe Jewish diaspora’s restricted and segregated living neighbourhoods. Professor Chang Mau-Kuei (2010) adopts this term in Waishengren Studies to demonstrate the specific characteristics of the military dependents' villages (眷村 Jyuancun) where the exiled Chinese civil servants, military personnel, and refugees found their first accommodations in Taiwan. As Prof. Chang notes, those segregated, enclosed military villages were established and supported—but also dominated and dictated—by KMT’s social control systems. Nonetheless, in addition to military dependents' villages, he further defines five types of Mainlanders’ ethnic enclaves, which refer to: 1) legal or illegal military dependent’s villages, 2) single veteran abbeys, 3) diasporic teachers and students’ dormitories, 4) government-run boarding houses or guest hostels, and 5) officer-personnel's accommodation compounds.

² The connotation of the Chinese term Waishengren is quite different from its English translation *Mainlanders*. *Mainlanders* simply means “the people from or were born in the mainland China”; whereas the Chinese rhetoric Waishengren literally means *outsiders*, referring to “the people from the places outside the [Taiwan] province.” Because the term Waishengren only makes sense when it is used to contrast, or to compare to “the insiders” (the native Taiwanese), for some people this terminology also signifies a form of social cleavage in Taiwan. And, the continued usage of this term to interpret Taiwan’s ethnic politics is, therefore, “outgrown by the consequences of social change” (Li 1997:9).

of discrimination and exclusion (Clifford 1994:311). This approach was as an alteration, a new means to avoid continuously identifying the people of Taiwan by their ancestor's provincial origins (e.g., Li 2002; Wu 2002; Gorcuff 2004; Wang 2005; Wu 2005; Simon 2006; Yang and Chang 2010). Meanwhile, scholars also paid more attention to the formation and transformation of Taiwan's politics of national and local identities, and highlighted the considerable division along ethnic lines between the native Taiwanese (the Benshengren) and the sojourning "outsiders" (the Waishengren) whose group identity was notably "constructed by both the diasporic imagination and the Chinese nationalism" (Simon 2006:88).

The definition of Taiwan's "Waishengren population" was/is, however, obscure and very much constrained to a relatively narrow range. For example, the Chinese veterans of the Korean War, refugees from the Vietnam War, Thai-Myanmar borderline's stateless persons, and other overseas Chinese who came to Taiwan to avoid confronting totalitarian forces were not perceived as part of this ethnicity, mostly because their departure from their homelands was considered as voluntary. Additionally, it also excludes those who emigrated from the mainland to Taiwan after the opening of Taiwan to mainland spouses since 1992, for the reason that those new immigrants of Chinese origin have experienced a more liberal political climate with relatively relaxed border regulations, resulting in fewer obstacles for them when it comes to returning to their homelands in mainland China (Chao 2006). In other words, the ethnic "Chinese diaspora" in Taiwan, when strictly defined, represents only a very narrow

segment of the population constituting a small subset of Taiwan's ethnic minorities and also a minor subset of Chinese overseas migrant groups.

In light of Fredrick Barth's (1969:30-31) remarks on the formation and persistence of ethnic identities and boundaries, we learned that “[especially] when situations [of ethnic conflict] have come about as a result of external historical events,” there are groups actively rejected and excluded by the host population because their habitual behaviours or characteristics contrasted to and/or were rejected by the majority and the "pre-existing" social orders. This insight suggests that to establish and sustain a newfound (imagined) ethnic community through boundary-maintenance is, essentially, “not so much oriented to the roots in a specific place” (Brubaker 2005:6) but more closely related to the group's common characteristics. The Chinese diasporic group in Taiwan also reflected this phenomenon: They were distinguished from and differentiated themselves from the local groups as a result of consistently having difficulties adapting to Taiwan's culture, and therefore, they often “stubborn[ly] maintain[ed]” the traditions from their hidebound past (McKeown 1999:309; also see Hsiao 2010). That is to say, the Chinese diasporas in Taiwan became identified as an “outsider” ethnic group mostly because their dispositions, behaviours, and (embodied) ways of social practice significantly differed from those of other groups, not simply because they were not born (or even born) in the land of Taiwan.

c) *As a “privileged” ethnic diasporic group*

The large numbers of Chinese communities in the military enclaves were highly isolated from the general population. This is a result of the strict ethnic policies implemented by the KMT government, which, from the mindset of the political leaders at the time, might “serve the varied political ends of both ethnic groups and of the government” (Gates1981:260). The long-lasting barriers to ethnic interaction and integration drove those displaced Mainlanders to create their own sense of (not-) belonging and develop a stronger sense of group identity. Much of the work on Diaspora Studies, too, argues that the diasporic groups with stronger ties to the place "there" are more likely to be excluded or marginalized from the public political sphere "here" (Easthope 2009:73), thereby risking a greater chance of experiencing downward socioeconomic mobility. This is partly because the displaced individuals may suffer from prejudice, language barriers, and lack of kinship connections; and additionally, because living in diaspora often entails a precarious situation wherein lives are situated in an insecure state of "nations unbound" (Brah 1996:8).

The Chinese diasporic group in Taiwan, however, presents an unusual circumstance in that their migrant/exile trajectory from the mainland to Taiwan was collectively planned and directed by the power of authorities—additionally, the authorities not only tried to blur the boundary line between Taiwan (here) and China (there), but also deliberately intended to make Taiwan a place more Chinese than the mainland China. As such, the existence of a Chinese diasporic group in Taiwan also tells a different story in Diaspora Studies, for that

their social positions were not culturally and politically “unbound” but closely tied up with the mainstream culture and the Nationalist government’s political legitimacy. Meanwhile, although the Chinese diasporas (the Mainlanders) in Taiwan belonged to an identified ethnic group, the members of this group have commonly been seen as the dominant ones who “regardless of their previous relationship with the KMT on the mainland,” have generated an interdependent relationship with the exiled, yet still powerful, KMT regime for earning their livelihood and gaining a higher social standing (Yang 2012:169; also see Wu 2002; Corcuff 2004; Wu 2005).

As the anthropologist Hill Gates (1981) alleged, as long as the Chinese elites were in charge of the government and the military, their political power would guarantee other non-elite members of this group to be assured of staying in the higher class above other groups. In this regard, the Chinese diasporic group in Taiwan have appeared as a "privileged" ethnicity that possessed greater power owing to their ethnic affinity with the KMT government, much like the Afrikaners in democratized South Africa (Wu 2001: 202 in Simon 2006:10).

For most of those first-generation Chinese diasporas, however, the process of adapting to the new environment of Taiwan was still not going smoothly, in spite that they and the local people had inherited similar Chinese traditions, beliefs, customs, and moral etiquette. Like other migrant and exile groups around the world, the Chinese diasporas in Taiwan also faced

the challenges of adaptation and the stress of behaviour shifts (Berry 1992). While it is true that some of them with a higher socioeconomic status have exploited local communities by exercising their administrative power and using the power to control over the public/financial resources, this research also presents, and tries to highlight, another scenario that for the ordinary Chinese who fled to Taiwan without a position to attach to and being empty-handed, they did not gain, let alone abuse, political power to affect the lives of others. Nevertheless, although they were widely seen as the “privileged” members in the realm of postwar Taiwan’s domestic politics, they and their descendants were also the “outsiders” who faced long-term effects of language barriers, workplace isolation (mostly confined to military, civil service, and teaching jobs), and having been dismissed or rejected by the local communities in a significant way.

II. Objectives and Research Questions:

Despite mainstream discourses that often portray the Chinese diaspora in Taiwan as a dominant group, members within this identified group did/do not share power equally. In particular, gendered differences in experiences of power and privilege are insufficiently discussed in the public domain. To rectify this omission, one of the main purposes in this research is to argue that rather than viewing the diasporic population in Taiwan as a homogenous ethnic unit that shared similar cultural traits and/or cultivated common characteristics, it is important to nuance, and to question gender differences and the ways how

they fundamentally affect people's senses of selves and practices of life.

Feminist research acknowledges the vast disparities amongst women and, more significantly, challenges the patriarchal hierarchy concealed within the category women (Olson and Shopes 1991:191). As such, the study of Chinese diasporic women is also a study about hierarchical social gender structures, which in turn are inextricably linked to other dimensions such as China's patriarchal culture, the prevailing male/superordinate and female/subordinate division of labour market, the settings of Chinese ethics and family roles, the inequalities in the education system, and so on. Importantly, this research utilizes feminist standpoint theory to provide a more accurate record of women's narratives in diversity, as well as to draw attention to research participants' first-person accounts out of their own meaning-making process in the conversation (Sudbury 1998). By adopting standpoint theory, I am able to gain a deeper understanding of Chinese diasporic women's "complex and flexible positioning" (Ang 1999:558); and nonetheless, to examine how women's interpretations of historical events may differ (and/or, are similar) to those of the dominant discourses recorded in formal knowledge.

To recapitulate, in this research I chiefly focus on the discussion of Chinese diasporic women's gender roles and gender-role practices. I assert that living-in-exile influences Chinese women's experiences and ideas of womanhood profoundly, and the influence is perceptible through a deeper study into their self-reflective (self-exposure) life stories. Thus,

it is of both theoretical and empirical importance to adopt women's narratives as the primary data source for the analysis of Chinese migrant/exile group's existence and collective memory during the war in China and in the postwar society of Taiwan. The main research objectives are to:

1) Explore the differences between Chinese women's ideal gender roles and their common role practices in reality, and to interpret the meanings of these women's role and role models in the context of China's traditional patriarchal culture as well as in the context of "New China's" modern society (i.e., how women acknowledge, learn, and to fulfill or resist the tasks and standards of Chinese girlhood, wifehood, motherhood and/or other role requirements).

2) Examine Chinese diasporic women's social relationships and social involvements in/across culture, ethnic, military, and border boundaries. In particular, to see how these Chinese-born women—who usually do not have family or kinship connections and supports in Taiwan—established and maintained their new gender and social relationships with the ruling systems and with other people for the sake of continuing their lives with some degree of normalcy and social engagement in the receiving society.

3) Obtain first-person accounts of the war from Chinese women. Specifically, to investigate how ordinary women perceive and respond to sex- and gender-related trauma and violence that they witnessed or experienced during wartime and/or in the military-run

environments. Additionally, to further inquire how those traumatic memories and experiences might affect Chinese diasporic women's well-being, social life, and civil-public activities over the long course.

III. Chapter Outlines

To provide readers with a better understanding of the Chinese population that relocated to Taiwan after the civil war and how they were perceived by the Taiwanese locals, the first chapter begins with an overview of Taiwan's ethnic politics through the lens of demographic data and public discourses. I use the notion of diaspora to explore those wartime migrant's situations in Taiwan. Specifically, I examine the ethnic conflicts and disputes over the KMT's dictatorship. Throughout Taiwan's democracy (and localization) process, there were intense ethnic conflicts. It was also a reason explains how the term "Waishengren" had been adopted, and further commonly used by the local communities to identify Chinese wartime refugees and migrants as a group of "outsiders."

In the second chapter, I divide the relevant literatures into two parts: the history review and the literature review. In the first section, I review China's revolutionary past and specify how Chinese women's images and womanhood were negative constructed in the process of China's revolution and modernization. During periods of significant social upheaval, misogynistic statements were made and widely spread by intellectuals and government officials. Even among the reformist leaders, they contended that women and their perceived

unproductive lives were detrimental for China's economic progress and impeded China's development as a modern nation-state. These views greatly exacerbated the disadvantaged status of women. Although some Chinese women at the time were attracted to the "Modern Women" icons, and encouraged (and inspired) by the Western political thought pertaining to equal human rights, independence, and free-spiritedness (Barlow 1996; Edwards 2000), it was still difficult for ordinary people, especially ordinary women, to adopt these values themselves and/or to be independent from China's hierarchical social and familial structures.

In the second part (the theoretical review), China's cultural image of womanhood and the Confucian-based gender ideologies are examined to discuss how an individual's positions and sense-of-self were constructed by their sociocultural backgrounds and family upbringing. For those women who took part in public affairs, the conventional notions about the subordination of female roles negatively impacted their social and professional opportunities. Especially for those who suffered from displacement, banishment, and lived a diasporic life, they "[had] to negotiate their own multiple subject positions on a daily basis as they straddle different cultures, and move in and out of more than one language, culture, and location" (Hellwig and Thoban 2006:20). Focusing solely on one dimension (such as race, class, and gender), therefore, is inadequate for us to fully comprehend, and represent, the complexities and variations of women's lived experiences. As Hopkins (2018) suggests, mutually constructed systems of power and social locations shape our experiences of oppression and

privilege, and hence, compose our (often fluid and shifting) subjectivities. In general, the concept of intersectionality is applied as an analytical tool in this research, which helps me demonstrate the contextual dynamics and individual's shifting agency and positionings across the axes of gender, culture, migration, and social/ethnic exclusion (Crenshaw 1989; Carbado et al. 2013; Yuval-Davis 2016; Hopkins 2018; Spitzer 2022).

With regard to *Methodology* in the third chapter, the primary methodological goal of this thesis has been to collect and preserve Chinese diasporic women's narratives and life histories. Time has been of the essence in this research. The cohort that lived through China's revolution and civil wars is growing old and dwindling in number. Due to their advanced age and the possibility of health deterioration, I understood that it would be more difficult to reach them and hear their stories. Nevertheless, to avoid the problems that women's voices might be ignored and silenced in the masculine knowledge/language systems, feminist standpoint theory is utilized. From this approach, this research may be able to gain hybrid and alternative perspectives not only for the purpose to examine women's experiences from/for their viewpoint, but also to pinpoint other current issues pertaining to women's rights and human rights.

The main body of this thesis consists of four chapters. Throughout *Chapter 4 Girls Away from Home*, I discuss how China's long-lasting revolution created a vast number of refugees, resulting in many of China's women and girls becoming displaced, homeless, and depending

on their own survival strategies to cope with the hardships and challenges they faced in the unpredictable and precarious environments during the war. In *Chapter 5 Military Violence and the Reluctant Marriages*, I examine how the war-related violence and the hostile environment affected young women's long-term life plans; in particular, I consider how China's masculine culture and its military violence have negatively affected young women's choices and chances of education, career, and marriage arrangements. *Chapter 6 Diasporic Mothers in the Military Enclaves* provides a brief review of the notion of motherhood in both Chinese cultural context and in feminist research. This chapter thematically analyzes how women's mothering practice in diaspora and in military communes was conducted differently from that of the local mothers due to their different household patterns and support systems. Finally, in *Chapter 7 Suddenly Look Back, Waking from a Dream*, an overview of Taiwan's ethnic politics is discussed, focusing on the changing inter-ethnic relationship between Mainlanders and the local Taiwanese, and the reconnection between the Mainlanders in Taiwan and their kin-family members on the mainland. Their relationships were shifted frequently, along with the changing political wings and very often resulted in great intra-familial tension. Later, the stories in this chapter also reveal the new challenges that Mainlanders faced when they finally accomplished their dream of returning home. As the research participants reported, family-reunion was not as good as how the mainstream discourses portrayed it. Instead, to manage both sides of the families often led to intense

financial and emotional disputes and stresses.

The four body chapters are organized chronologically along with the discussion of Chinese women's childhood, adolescent and young adult states (mainly focusing on education and marriage arrangements); their motherhood practice in middle age (addressing the difficulty of raising children in the enclosed and unsupportive military enclaves); and lastly, older women's life and livelihood management after they finally relieved from their childcare and housekeeping burdens. Chinese diasporic women's lives and feelings about displacement and exile in Taiwan are/were rarely heard and have been placed at the margins of the knowledge map. In the conclusion of this thesis, therefore, I look back at Chinese diasporic women's memories of war, violence, and exile. I argue that what we have learned from history is usually gender blind or gender biased and that "human experiences" are often confined to unmarked male's experiences (Hershatter 2007). Despite coming to Taiwan for different reasons and with different backgrounds, the research participants all have traumatic memories associated with war violence and being displaced (banished) from their homes, and faced the huge challenges of living under the control of military and patriarchal power. Some of them, in the present society of Taiwan, still suffer from those unspoken yet ever-present traumatized memory.

Chapter 2 Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

People in different social positions have different ‘interests,’ and they act accordingly. This does not in itself imply either conflict or struggle, nor does it imply that people with different interests hold radically different views of the world. It does imply, however, that they will seek to enhance their respective positions when opportunities arise, although they will do so by means traditionally available to people in their positions

~ Sherry B. Ortner (1984:155)

I. The History Context

a) *Background: China since the Revolution*

Most of the Chinese diasporic women who participated in this research were growing up in the early twentieth century—a period of contemporary history that has been marked as the beginning of China’s modernization and revolution. According to Skocpol’s research in *States and Social Revolutions*, we learned that China’s social revolution was accomplished by the breakdown of old monarchic regime’s imperial leadership (at the end of the Qing dynasty 1644-1911), and came along with the dissolution of the predominant Confucian bureaucracy system (Skocpol 1979:71-72). Such a revolution was, in Skocpol’s words, a “successful” social transformation because: 1) it actual changed state and class structures in China, and hence relieved this country’s internal tensions between the ex-dominant elites (e.g., noble governors, gentry landlords, and intellectuals) and the lower-class groups (e.g., peasants and proto-wage urban workers); 2) the idea (and the ideal) of revolution was effectuated through the “class upheavals from below,” and strengthened by a collective “revolutionary consciousness” that was shared from Communist Party leaders to the populace at large

(Skocpol 1979:164). 3) The outcome of China's revolution was also striking: cadres and vanguards in those popular (especially peasant) revolts had eventually stepped into a legislative process of state-building and "achieved considerable success in consolidating new regime's state power" (Skocpol 1979:242). In addition to providing an overview on the causes and consequences of China's revolutionary political revolts and social movements in the first half of the twentieth century, Skocpol's structural theory also highlights the connections between changes of the outer environment (i.e., the fall of China's imperial system) and populace's inner lives (i.e., the rise and shift of people's consciousness in response to the external social changes).

Skocpol's comparative historical analysis about the systematic repression and resistance in the process of China's revolution continues to provide valuable insights into the current research on the discussions of China's internal and external ideological conflicts and identity issues in the pan-Chinese societies. Yet, as Skocpol focuses primarily on the roles of the state and/or the relationships between nation-states on the international level, she tends to look at the big picture of history (from a Western mindset). Therefore, her approach may not best reflect ordinary people's experiences and agency, especially with regard to their real-life changes and personal attitudes regarding to a (or more than one) new regime's revolutionary "success" in the given social and political contexts.

If we seek to understand China's revolution in the Chinese sociocultural context, we

may start off by inquiring how the term ‘revolution’(*Gé Ming*革命) is defined in Chinese. The word *Gé* refers to the action of expelling; and the word *Ming* refers to people’s life. So, this rhetoric literally means “to expel [people] from [their] life” in the Sinophone literature context; from the Chairman Mao Tse-tung’s quotation in 1949, the term “revolution” can be straightforwardly interpreted as a motive force that will “eliminate” some people’s lives in order to gain some other people’s triumph. A more nuanced review on China’s revolutionary state-building manifesto may also help us acknowledge that the “successes” of China’s patriotic movements were usually—if not always—accompanied by a series of massacres and banishments. For example, in the wake of the 1911 uprisings, Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s nationalist propaganda was ‘To expel the northern barbarians (the Manchu people);’ likewise, his successor, Chiang Kai-shek and his National Revolutionary Army, also fought the first and second Chinese Civil War (in 1927-1937 and 1945-1949) under the political slogan ‘To purge the traitors and to sterilize the communists.’ The Chinese Red Army also launched a Maoist-style purge: to eliminate every-and-all anti-communist forces, including the counter-revolutionaries, the capitalists, the Nationalist/Rightists, and the disgraced (liberal) intellectuals (Goodman 1994; see also Mckeown 1999, Amrith 2011, Musgrove 2013, Spence 2013). Those ubiquitous slogans in the society of wartime China provide us a hint as to how to understand how Chinese Party leaders cultivated a sense of otherness among its people, with patriotic education instilling adolescents and students alike with hatred of the rivals and

the “Others” who consciously or unconsciously stood in the opposite position.

Compounding the domestic political challenges was the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), which increased distrust between the central armed forces and the regional warlords, and added a new factor—the foreign military assistance—to the already complicated situation. Foreign military alliances and journalists (like history observers at the time) found it was difficult to define “who made the key decisions on the Chinese side and who should receive credit [or take responsibility] for the defense” (Mackinnon and Capa 2008:36). The lack of a clear direction in China’s military engagements eventually resulted in the masses of refugees and homeless people aimlessly wandering back-and-forth across the country, and/or being displaced again and again by “different kinds of troops who march[ed] and countermarch[ed] around their former homes” (Amrith 2011:27). Mackinnon and Capa (2008:48) estimated that during the 1940s, around 95 million Chinese, accounting for over 26 percent of the entire population, were displaced or homeless due to either domestic conflicts or invasion wars in China. Those who had difficulty adapting to the revolutionary social economic changes faced even greater social unrest. It is highly likely that they were unable to report their precarious situation and receive prompt aid from international organizations or government-run social welfare agencies (e.g., China Red Cross; American Bureau for Medical Advancement in China ABMAC; National Defense Medical Center NDMC, etc.). In a large number of cases, reported by historians,

those who were displaced in the end may have just disappeared or died without being noticed (see Chang 2011; Liu and Kuo 2012).

b) Diaspora and Women: A General Review

The socio-historical context of China's nationwide revolutionary wars is much broader than the gender and diaspora dimensions examined in this research. Yet, this context provides us with a holistic conception of what the Chinese wartime generation's living situation was like during the period when the new social norms and the old social orders were contested and intertwined. While certain privileged social members (i.e., the newfound cadre of military personnel or warlords; the newly empowered social activists, intellectuals, and reformist leaders) were celebrating the achievement of China's revolutionary transformation and took the chances of upward social mobility, the opportunities and possibilities of social mobility need to be more carefully calculated and examined, as Tölölyan (2007:654) points out, "those who pay the costs [for the social mobility] are often not those who enjoy its advantages." This insight is particularly important when I come to look at the entangled relationships between Chinese women and diaspora.

In Chinese culture, women's position in society is usually restricted to the rigid gender norms shaped by patriarchal familial hierarchy (see Wolf, Witkee, & Martin 1975; Baker 1979; Freedman 1979; Greenhalgh 1985; Lu 1991; Lin 2005), which is notorious as "without doubt one of the most brutally patriarchal in the world" (Greenhalgh 1985:267). In

comparison, people's adaptive or maladaptive coping role-practices in diaspora and the "changing characters" of diasporic population across world cultures have widely been recognized as "not purity, not essence," but formed through "a necessary heterogeneity and diversity" (Hall 1990 in Dufoix 2008:25). This is to say, (being in) diaspora provides a newfound, "re-negotiable" social position for some migrant or displaced people to create and reshape their new positions and relations in the relocated social world, mostly for the purpose "to overcome their precarious and isolated existence in exile" (Clifford 1997:166; see also Hall 1992; Spitzer 2007; Easthope 2009). In line with this insight, diaspora does not determine a specific group of people who are destined to suffer from banishment and exclusion. Instead, it could be a practice, a tentative stance adopted by certain displaced individuals or individual groups, to think and seek an alternative way of living at different life moments.

As a means of improving survival chances and quality of life, the practice of diaspora provides Chinese women a basis to engage with the world outside their households. By connecting to various social and institutional locations (such as taking part in schools and military units), diasporic women may create new social positions that allow them to connect with the social world outside of their previously situated patrilocal and patrilineal structures, which in traditional Chinese society were typically reserved for men. Therefore, while certainly there are some (privileged) people who might perceive their experience of exile as

“one of the saddest fates” of life (Said 1993:113; see also Hsiau 2010; Yang 2012) there would also be some others who have been forced to live away from their home/land but do not think this experience should appear on the list of their “saddest things” in the lifetime. For example, in comparison with other tragedies that they have experienced or witnessed: being slaughtered, being violently raped, and literally starving or dehydrating to death would constitute even greater tragedies.

Could social conventions and gender hierarchy be negotiated and re-formed by diasporic women to meet their needs and demands for living? This debatable question has been answered differently, owing to varied sorts of evidence that lead to disparate messages sent by those who employ this equivocal concept from diverse research paradigms. For example, Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989) point out gender roles can become more rigid in diaspora, especially for women, because diaspora comes up against traditional expectations of women’s symbolic roles in (hegemonic) ethnic revival projects and (patriarchal) family units as national, biological, and cultural reproducers of the particular community’s collective future. This perspective is especially promising when talking about how the military system may systematically disempower women through isolation and/or exclude them from the public affairs. This is because the idea of "protecting and leaving women at the rear" can be used to justify men's aggressive intentions of fighting and killing on the frontline (Yuval-Davis 1997:196). In comparison, some scholars—such as the anthropologists and

ethnographers who obtain first-person narratives from their fieldworks—have a different conviction, proposing that there are some diasporic women may redefine their gender and social roles in mobility for the reason that the sociocultural norms of a new settlement could be more flexible and liberating. Meanwhile, even if the new environment is still hostile, women in diaspora may still find ways to overcome gender constraints at the interstices of differing sets of norms, where “their discrepancies can be turned into their favours” (Tona 2004:319).

Scholars here present diverse potential scenarios to examine the strategic social practices of diasporic women and their own autonomous agencies through investigating their intention (and action) of reconstructing their lives on the foreign soil—as they might dwell or straddle in-between the old and the new ideal icons of womanhood from time to time, working out their life crisis by adopting relatively more self-interested gender role models that better meet their needs. Approaching this scenario is provocative in its heterogeneity and hybridity. In particular, to the extent that women’s livelihood in diaspora has been addressed not only in regards to the difficulties and challenges women encountered, but also to a rather complicated aspect about how diaspora is perceived and experienced differently by the women situated in different contexts, and how women bargain with systemic inequalities and downward social mobility in their situated social contexts (Spitzer 2007, 2016).

The ambivalent interrelationship between women and diaspora is the main theme

addressed in this thesis. Given the complicated background of China's long-lasting political and history conflicts, and their significant impacts on ordinary Chinese people's lives across borders and decades, the study of the Chinese diasporas pertaining to those "Mainlanders in Taiwan" has generated extensive discussions with regard to how they have developed their sense of normality and increased resilience in the new environment. The related studies, however, suggest that Mainlander's idea-of-self was spilt up and attached to a "limbo" state (Turner and Abrahams 1969, Turner 1988) between two types of ideologies and life patterns: The essentialized and idealized Chinese and Taiwanese ones (Corcuff 2011:36); and, since "ordinary life in a social structure is itself a ritual performance" (Turner 1988:101), the Chinese diaspora's quotidian practice in Taiwan was also placed, and caught-up in a liminal ideological status between the habitual practices that the Chinese ancestors did and the social norms that the Taiwanese majority do.

Compared to the fruitful research outcomes on Mainlander men's (published) memoirs or tracing their social participations in the documented, male-centered history, Mainlander women's experiences have been far less studied and are generally invisible in history. There are only two academic works I could locate in the social science scholarship that focus on Mainlander women's livelihood and experiences of exile in the process of exile in Taiwan. The first, published by Chao Yen-Ning (2001), inquired into Chinese women's "diasporic narratives" (流亡敘事) in light of the themes about Mainlander women's bodies, fertility,

reproductive roles, intimate relationships, and the pain and suffering that were caused by masculine violence and nationalistic forces. The second article, written by Chao Kang and Hou Nien-Tsu (1995), represented a case study of the women in military dependent's villages. Authors of this article used the metaphor of "scapegoat" to represent the images of suffering of Chinese diasporic women; particularly, they stressed that Chinese women's roles were often elaborated under patriarchal dominance in cooperation with military and masculine power.

These two studies both highlighted the dominant vision of seeing Chinese diasporic women collectively as vulnerable, miserable, and sacrificial objects for men's identity politics. However, as I would like to argue, this research also overlooked women's hybrid subjectivities and diversity. As demonstrated above, China's revolutionary process and its radical social movements underpinned the shifting structures of the local communities and family units. Women's roles in diaspora at the time might sometimes generate a hybrid space, in which the traditional patriarchal system was no longer able to expand its power through constraining women's bodies inside the household. From this approach, diaspora is regarded as a social practice (Brubaker 2005) and/or a social condition (Anthias 1998), which served wartime Chinese women's demand of new position-taking for survival purposes—although, as some ethnographic research also revealed (Chao 2001; Chou 2021), the majority of Chinese women in wars were still forced to suffer from masculine-based violence, and were

subjected to nationalistic exploitations, including sexual abuse, forced marriages, and forced labour for the sake of survival.

II. The Theoretical Context

In the second half of this chapter, I examine Chinese traditional concepts of womanhood and women's ideal roles; and further, discuss how these concepts and ideologies were influenced by the structures of Confucianism-based society. Next, I employ the lens of intersectionality to explain and nuance how China's social inequalities and power hierarchies may differentially affect individual's sense of self and social role practices, as the experiences of women interviewed in this research were often heavily influenced by these multifaceted inequalities. Yet, before I move further to the specifics of these theoretical conceptions, I would like to first depict the meaning of the term "exile" in a Chinese literary sense in order to demonstrate how Chinese women perceive themselves and their life-in-exile in the Sinophone language context.

a) *Living in Exile: The floating-and-sinking condition of life*

In Sinological usage, *exile* is translated into the Chinese term *liú-wáng* (流亡), a term with a profound historical and cultural meaning, referring to a Chinese life ethic of “flowing with the river (liú) until the death of life (wáng).” Elieen Chang (張愛玲), a well-known contemporary Chinese writer, gave this word a poetic definition in *Written on Water*, in which she thought the flowing water was an emblem of exile, and the life in exile represents a

floating-and-sinking condition because “all of us must live within a certain historical era, but this era sinks away from us like a shadow, and we feel we have been abandoned...” (Chang 1945 in Jones 2005:18). Since “exile” in Sinophone context engages with the idea of water as an intersection between the life/flowing and the death/sinking, exiled people’s position was insecure, precarious, and full of indirection in the ungrounded space, where the uncertain world was “producing a solemn but subtle agitation, an intense but as yet indefinable struggle” (Chang 1945 in Jones 2005:18). In the field of Chinese literature, female writers, especially for those who lived under diasporic conditions, dwell upon the symbolic meaning of exile as a condition that everything flows away from their life by an unstoppable force at one point. Such a metaphor, commonly seen in Chinese writer’s personal memoirs and literature representations (e.g., Feng 2003; Lung 2009; Chi 2018),³ expressed a considerable vulnerability to the outer environment, and reflected Chinese diasporic community’s worry over not-positioning and the fear of losing their originally confirmed socio-spatial networks.

Chinese female writer’s self-reflections made me turn to a more multiple-layered lens to see woman’s social gender roles and their perceived attendant value in family, community, and in workforce, which are in line with their self-fulfilling expectations and/or their assigned

³ Many of the great literary works were related to the image of “flowing-river” to Chinese people’s life in exile. For example, Feng-feng (2003) *Sailing in the Fog* (霧航); Lung Ying-tai (2009) *1949: Big River, Big Sea* (1949 大江大海); Chi Pang-yuan (2018) *The Great Flowing River: A Memoir of China, from Manchuria to Taiwan* (巨流河). Yet, from my perspective, Elieen Chang and her followers (the Elieen School) have the most profound impact on the contemporary Chinese literature, especially regarding the topics of exile, secular struggles, and the patriarchal oppression from the Chinese parents.

duties that the society expected women to bear. Those life-expectations and duties were all pertaining to women's intimate roles (e.g., daughter, wife, and mother) and their officially-recognized member positions (e.g., the nationalist or the communist, military dependent, refugee, student, etc.). Yet, while women's positions and social status, as well as the relationships they involve, may offer them a certain degree of security and benefits, their involvement and status within these structures do not reflect their own agencies, and cannot ensure equality or fair treatment among group members.

The Chinese diasporic women, who participated in this research, luckily and unluckily, met the 'very historical moment' of China's revolution. It is therefore especially worthwhile to illuminate their experiences and agencies to explore women's significant (but less mentioned) social positions in-between the old and the new systems. In the following discussion, I am drawn to two parallel lines of knowledge in the conceptual review stage, the first is derived from ordinary women's situated knowledge (often shaped and reproduced by Chinese family disciplines), and the second is based on the concepts of intersectionality within a feminist research framework.

We may start off by thinking about why, in comparison with China's peasant revolts and urban worker movements, Chinese women at large did not cultivate a desire to change the systematic oppression for their rights and freedom, or, to overcome the limitations put upon their lives by male dominance in households (since most of the men were on the frontlines

and absent from home)—especially at the time when huge social transformation had widely occurred in China’s revolution period. The short answer I learned from diasporic women’s life story narratives was, they were mentally and physically too tired, too stressed, and too poor to think about other survival options more than attaching to or relying on men. This short answer, in fact, already clearly explained Chinese women’s social and economic dependency on men for their daily necessities and security; and likewise, pointed out Chinese women’s second-class status in both family and society.

My point here is not to argue over China’s misogynistic patriarchy and sexism, but to work on another level of analysis for the conceptual discussion about how (and to what extent) Chinese socio-structural factors (i.e., culture, government bureaucracy, school, military, etc.) may constitute a prevailing gendered principle that assigns women inferior status among, and across, various domains of power relations. Furthermore, I examine how Chinese people, whether women or men, perceived and adapted to those structural discriminations and oppressions (also, for some people at different times, privileges and superiorities) to account for their distinguished selves along with the dominant power.

b) Chinese women’s agency and relations with Li and Lineage

Prior to the launch of China’s revolutionary movement, the ideology of Chinese family system and the ideology of the imperial state were both based on, and tied to, a Confucian morality “*Li*”(禮)—the most recognized authoritative social manners (so-called the *Written*

Law, or the *Codes*) that defined a set of rites and mutual obligations, binding together individuals and their family kinships, kinship and its associated communities, community and the structured society, societies and the governing state, and utterly, the monarch's authority and the will of heaven (Freedman 1961; also see Siu 1982; Schwartz 1985; Stafford 2010 2013). From China's orthodox discourses, individuals in Chinese society—across social and asset classes, including those of royal families, noble elites, landlords, intellectuals, and the vast majority of ordinary people—conformed to this set of legitimate (and customary) social norms for orientating their social behaviours and fulfilling their duties in the associated lineage system. Chinese lineage systems were also strong enough to control family and community units in the local territory for activating, and controlling in-group dependency and hierarchy (Wolf 1972 1984; also see Wolf and Ahern 1978; Freedman 1979; Thakur 1997).

Because Chinese people's agency is initially characterized by their familial role(s) in the relevant lineage systems, they often perceive their "selves" primarily in terms of their in-group relations rather than as independent, unique individuals (Brewer 1991). This probably is the main reason why a number of Chinese Studies scholars have taken Confucianism-based social orders (*Li*) as the core concept to understand China's gender and social relations; and further, asserted that Chinese women's self-ideology is "situation-oriented," in contrast with the Western concept of "ego-centered" ideology of self (Hsu 1985; also see Thakur 1997; Edwards and Roces 2000; Cohen 2008). This is clear then,

as Barlow (1989:325) notes, there is no essential ‘Woman’ in the Chinese family. The female person Han familism constructs is not a *being*; rather, Chinese women’s social selves were in the past and continue to be constructed and negotiated in multiple ways under specific given conditions and normalized practices in the traditional and modern society. This Chinese logic of “self” explicitly mandates that one has to be oneself by *having* a relationship based on other people’s recognitions and interactions, mostly through their positions and practices in the structured systems of reciprocal and hierarchical exchanges.

From a Chinese woman’s point of view, self-being is perceived through the efforts of ordering and mediating her subjective and embodied experiences in the serially concatenated system that incorporated individual’s agency and subjectivity within the coherent family, community, society, and nation-state hierarchal authority system. This system was structured and functioned with a gender-based inequality on the grounds that Chinese men could one day head the kin-family and/or derive other forms of agency from his performance in the society and the state; whereas Chinese women did not usually have enduring roles in the public sphere⁴ and would thus have little chance to crosscut the lineage system to reach out to other alternative sources of social identities beyond the family-kin ties (Greenhalgh

⁴ There were, still, a few female-specific professions that had been wide recognized—though, often in a stigmatized and disgraced way—in the traditional Chinese society. For example: midwife, herbal pharmacist, marriage matchmaker, psychic/fortune teller, maid trafficker, and sex worker. The women who conducted these careers, often called “the six-kinds,” had usually been banished from their natal and martial families; and as a punishment for betraying women’s “natural” role at home, they often could not pay tribute to ancestors and could not be buried in the family graveyard after they died (see Lin 2003; Yi 2008).

1994:759).⁵

As this gendered sociocultural ideology was firmly entrenched in Chinese people's collective mindset and livelihood/ritual activities, it has become a social convention that individual woman would have all the reasons to adopt female moral code of being docile and obedient—as it was the immediate way for them to coordinate with other people around them and to get recognized. Such an upbringing, focusing on women's virtue of yielding and obedience since their childhood, was meant to make Chinese women “more self-conscious than men of power relations” (Simon 2003:8) and more cautious about making (and maintaining) their relations with others because, over thousands of years in China's history, women's position in household relations was often the only source of economic survival available to them.

To effectively draw on the agency of Chinese women, it is important to examine how their social gender roles are shaped by their embedded social structures and family relationships; and in addition, to explore how women perceive, practice, and adapt to these roles as a means of justifying their existence within larger social systems (i.e., the patrilineal

⁵ Although it has long been argued that the linkages between women and the “inside” (the domestic sphere) is an imperfect one (e.g., Gates 1989; Greenhalgh 1994) since women also undertake productive activities in the workplaces (the public sphere) as free labours or for wages. It is, still, fair to say that for many women who suffered from systemic exclusions in the public arena, their gender role inside the household has been continually considered as their primary position in the modern society, as Yuval-Davis (1997:403) puts, the construction by the state of gender relationships in the private domain (namely, marriage and the family) is primarily what has determined women's rights and status in the nation-state.

lineage system, the marital household, the gendered division of labour and school systems, etc.). This is to say, Chinese women are acquainted with their sense of self-being (agency) through “having” a cognitive positions and relationship that work with, or attach to, their “selves” in the structured everyday lives. en

c) *Intersectionality, practice, and women’s sense-of-self*

Based on an attempt to better acknowledge the roles of Chinese women and their situated social positions, the lens of intersectionality is employed to foreground the complexities of women’s experiences, particularly with regard to the various social practices and power relations in which they engage. An individual’s social practice is complex and multifaceted as it is shaped by multiple social structures and power dynamics that bring both oppressions and privileges to people’s social lives, thereby linking an individual’s shared suffering or experiences of privilege to one another (Carbado et al. 2013:306). Through the process of situating themselves in those entangled social structures and power hierarchies, individuals gradually recognize and construct their sense-of-selves, as well as negotiate their social roles and relationships in the broader society (Collins 1986; Hopkins 2018).

In the Chinese cultural context, people need to recognize their roles in the social-familial systems and to fulfilling the associated responsibilities to be able to develop their sense-of-self. That is to say, Chinese culture views selfhood as something that must be acquired through the practices of social gender norms in the hierarchal authority structures

(i.e., family-kinship structure; community structure; workforce structure, etc.). Individuals in Chinese society are usually not trained to develop their social well-being and agency with independence or individuality; instead, they subsume and fulfill themselves by “simply slipping into their traditional roles” within the genealogical structures (Niehoff 1987 in Greenhalgh 1994:749). People are disciplined to cultivate proper behaviours in compliance with numerous sets of social norms and with the combined and intertwined power forces that constitute their experiences and positions (Crenshaw 1989:151). However, integrating those multiple rules into people’s bodies and daily routines is very often not based on individual’s autonomy (Collins et al. 2021) but is a compelling process. As Butler (1993) suggests, the norms we learned are not a product of choosing; rather, people’s subjectivities are formed in accordance with those social gender norms they have previously operated under. For example, it is necessary for a girl to be aware of her embedded power relations and switch to different sets of social rules to qualify her subjectivity as a “one,” and to become viable as a “one” (Butler 1993:23).

Learning and adapting to different sets of rules is a compelling and complicated process for all individuals and communities, as this formation deals with multiple interactive axes of power structures and with (often controversial) social relations at different levels and times. However, it is common for researchers to concentrate only on the most prominent single-axis power factors—often the one that has been widely characterized as the oppressive origin

causing suffering or granting privilege to a person or group, such as race, gender, class, etc.—but not analyze its intersection with other dimensions (Collins et al. 2021:708).

Addressing single-axis on a category is insufficient to comprehend the complexity of social actor's subjectivities within, and across, interconnected social power frameworks (Hopkins 2018). A study published by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) illustrates this point. As demonstrated in her article "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," the emphasis of intersectionality focuses on revealing and recognizing individuals' experiences (as well as the praxis of those experiences) *as a whole*. A person's lived experiences, especially those of suffering and discrimination, are relevant to more than just singular issues; therefore, the analysis on their experiences should not be reduced to "certain identifiable causes" (Crenshaw 1989:166). For example, one of the key issues discussed in my research is that Chinese woman's experiences of diaspora in Taiwan's military enclaves. Those women's lived experiences were implicated by multiple challenges, including gender subordination, ethnic marginalization, and the stereotypical antipathy towards their Chinese- and military-related backgrounds. All of those factors were intertwined and had varying interconnected impacts on women's living situations *as a whole*.

Individuals' social gender roles and role practices would differ greatly based on the multiple dimensions of marginalization, discrimination, and privilege experienced by each of them. It is crucial to acknowledge how various positions and forms of power structures can

interdependently influence an individual's and individual groups' thoughts and behaviours, so that there is no "pure" dimension of discrimination or privilege that can be attributed solely to one aspect of power (Crenshaw 1989). In light of intersectionality, I argue that current research on China's civil war and its relationship with Taiwan primarily still highly relies on the narratives presented by Chinese politicians, military personnel, intellectuals, or wealthy families. Those approaches overlook the more complicated experiences of those individuals who came to Taiwan for different and multiple reasons and/or from different social classes (e.g., the diasporic students, refugees, and asylum seekers). The utilization of intersectionality therefore enables me to argue that while focusing on Chinese people' life situations during the war and in the postwar Taiwan, placing a single factor on the center stage often overshadows other struggles individuals faced within the communities over time. An instance of this would be how prevailing political narratives tend to erroneously perceive all Chinese migrants and diasporas in Taiwan as having political privilege, or as being satisfied with aligning themselves with the Nationalist military authority.

To be more specific, the dominant view of some political and ethnic privileges held by male Mainlander elites may obscure our understanding of other Mainlander women's struggles in diaspora and/or under KMT's authoritarian military rule; and, additionally, make it difficult for the majority of Taiwanese people to imagine that KMT's political and military activists, who wielded their power to exploit the local population, could also brutally engage

in domestic violence against their female dependents within their “privileged” circles in the military camps.

The praxis of women’s social roles and the ways how they perceived their lived should be considered and respected for all of their unique life chances and life situations; otherwise, they might be harmed by “being treated the same” (Crenshaw 1989:149). Chinese diasporic women’s social roles and liminal status, which were shaped by diverse social structures in which they were situated in Taiwan and/or by individual’s unique life chances, require a further discussion from an intersectional perspective. Through this approach, I am able to argue against male-centricity and normative assumptions about women's disadvantaged roles that are shaped by gender discrimination, while also taking other manifestations of multiple intersecting systems of oppression into consideration (e.g., military discrimination, political xenophobia, racism, and poverty). As Crenshaw (1989:148-149) highlights Black women's situations to illustrate structural and systemic problems—Black women's interests are often neglected because public’s view does not distinguish Black women’s unique struggles from those of white women; and by the same token, their claims are frequently dismissed because the public also does not see Black women as separate from those of other ethnic minorities or politically oppressed groups. The failure to recognize the specific challenges and barriers faced by Black women can lead to continued neglect of their interests and further perpetuate systemic inequalities. Black women’s compounded experiences of discrimination have been

therefore obscured by either white women or black men, and neither of these approaches could accurately represent their situation, as they suffer from each of both and/or more than the sum of both.

By understanding intersectionality, we gain insight into the dynamics of how different axes of differentiation interact to place individuals in social power hierarchies where they are subjected to different oppressions and are afforded different privileges. In this study, Chinese women demonstrated how they had redefined and shaped their roles and interpersonal relations in order to cope with the various challenges and discrimination they encountered, particularly at the time when their social status was ambiguous and when they were situated in a liminal, transitional state of diaspora. When we examine their experiences through the lens of intersectionality, we can thus acknowledge that their experiences of privilege, discrimination and suffering were all intertwined with their gender, ethnicity, social class, economic status, education, and military background.

III. Summary

The history review in this chapter leads to the argument that China's revolution did not effectively liberate women from patriarchal norms and ideals through policy reform. This is primarily due to the unwillingness of both the previous monarchical autocratic system and the "revolutionary" anti-imperialist advocates. They did not want to give up the power they derived from the traditional Chinese system of kinship and lineage. The traditional Chinese

kin-lineage system—often incorporating Confucian cultural ethic and educational systems through their shared moral codes and disciplines—was a complex network of power relations, encompassing political, cultural, military, and intellectual power, among others.

Under this specific historical context, I attempt to address the power dynamics that shape individuals' social positions and their available personal power, and seek to show how those interlocking structures of forces may operate intertwined to contribute to the multifaceted discrimination, oppression and privilege experienced by Chinese women. The re/presentation of Chinese women's thinking and practices of their social gender roles in this thesis is an attempt to find out how Chinese women see themselves, their positions and status within (and across) these interconnected social systems and power structures, especially during the period of transformation when old and new ideas, conventional or modern ways of living were all competing. The diverse perspectives, experiences, and actions of individuals or individual groups can therefore greatly impact our understanding of Chinese women's social positions and daily lives.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Research is conducted for a purpose. The field is entered with the purpose of telling participants' stories with respect to the specificity of their lives, of making their experiences visible, and of giving them a voice in the groves of academe and in the community. Consciously or not, the interviewees entrusted their words to the researcher for that purpose. Their words were taken, analyzed, and interpreted, and a story written.

~~ Limerick, Burgess-Limerick & Grace (1996:457)

When my husband and I escaped to Taiwan, I just gave birth to my first son. My husband walked a long distance to find nutritious food for me. After he came back, he brought me a bag of eggs. I was really happy because egg was precious back then. [However,] when I ate the egg, I was crying at the same time. [Because] I suddenly realized that he must have asked a local family for these eggs, and ordinary people could not reject his request since he was a soldier. They could not reject my husband to take eggs away, just like my parents could not reject him to take me away.

~~ Zhang Gen (interview on Nov.16-17 2017)⁶

I. Epistemological concerns of Chinese diasporas in Taiwan

Although the history of China's 1949 civil war and the subsequent exodus of Chinese to Taiwan have been widely documented, there are different perspectives on how to view these wartime migrants in Taiwan's society. Scholars from Taiwan, mainland China, and other societies have identified this group and its history differently, based on their different epistemologies and how they learned and perceived this highly contested history and political

⁶ The narrator Zhang Gen was born in 1931 in Fujian province. She was the first and the only child in an ordinary family. At the age around 14 to 15 years old, she coincidentally met a stranger soldier on the street, and then this 30-something-year-old man followed her back home. On the very next day, this soldier went back to her house again and proposed to marry her. According to Zhang Gen's words, it was because her parents—like other ordinary people caught up in the fear of military fighting—did not dare to refuse the demand from “a man in uniform,” they agreed to this marriage arrangement.

issue. To address this complexity, in the methodology chapter I first review and demonstrate the construction of the Chinese population in Taiwan as an identified group Waishengren, and further show how different approaches have been developed and used in Taiwan's scholarship to study this group from different perspectives.

The existence of a Waishengren (外省人) population in Taiwan, which literally means "the people from outside the province of Taiwan," shared similar experiences of the Chinese Civil War(s) and World War II, and very often can trace their escape routes back to mainland China. The shared war memories of Waishengren help create an imaginary connection between their individual and collective pasts. However, outside their communities, they continually lacked the opportunities to integrate into local communities because throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Taiwan's military personnel and their dependents were directly governed by the Ministry of National Defense. For example, those Waishengren who resided in the military communes, they did not have to report their property, marital status, or residence to Taiwan's regional governments, nor were they required to file a census or household registration (Yap 2021). During the period of Martial Law, in particular, the Waishengren in Taiwan were often perceived as having a strong connection to the Chinese Nationalist military due to their limited interactions with local Taiwanese society, which was also seen as a way for them to demonstrate their desire to return to China, and to show their loyalty to the Nationalist party.

In this regard, we may acknowledge that although Taiwan's society have faced long years of political issues that related to the blackout of military numbers, those problems were not solved until 1970 when the mandatory household registration policy was put into effect, and the two distinct population management systems were finally merged together (Lin 2003; Yap 2021). Yet, even today, when addressing Taiwan's ethnic issues, it is still uncertain how many mainlanders fled or migrated to Taiwan with the Nationalist military during the civil wars, what proportion brought dependents with them, and how their socio-economic conditions varied among members.

Scholars agree that ethnic categorization has been crucial in shaping group membership and belonging in post-war Taiwan (Wang 2005). As a minority group with military and political power, Mainlanders' existence in Taiwanese society has been discussed using two primary approaches: 1) regarding them and their descendants in Taiwan as privileged colonizers who dominated political power and exploited the native population, and/or 2) seeing Mainlanders as political refugees and diasporas with an exilic mentality, suffering from the pain of displacement and generally experiencing downward social-economic mobility. The former analyzes why and how those Chinese wartime immigrants became known as the privileged ruling "ethnic group" in Taiwan with a shared identity that "looked forward to recovering China or re-unification" (Shih and Jones 2014:9); the latter has focused on the Chinese diaspora's changing social positions and collective traumas, exploring how

their perspectives on the past are influenced by contemporary historical knowledge. These two approaches have been adopted distinctively to address the Chinese diaspora's existence in Taiwan at different levels and in different ways; however, they both give too much weight to political discourses at the expense of interpersonal conversations, and to public events at the expense of private matters. In other words, when we talk about diasporic Chinese' lived experiences, we are very often only aware of the 'realities' written by certain epistemic authorities and give little thought to the possibility that those authoritative knowledge contexts might be *not* always compatible with each and every participant's ideologies or life courses.

The prevailing discourses capture images of the past events (or, myths of past events) in authoritative tones and perpetuate dominant voices (very often, stereotypes) as the convincing realities. Regardless of how the dominant voices are introduced or perceived by the public as "real" social phenomenon—such like viewing Chinese diasporas as a homogeneous ethnic group wherein Mainlanders (Waishengren) are delineated on the basis of the deep-rooted cultural prejudice about their strong Chinese consciousness (Liu 2010; Hsiao 2010; Corcuff 2011)—phenomena do not become truths. They are always imbued with certain dominant ideas that have been shaped by elite or powerful informant's definitions or representations. Therefore, for those ordinary women who were not taking (or inheriting) positions of strength in their migrant/exile journeys and thus were unable to speak of what "being a diaspora"

means to them, their experiences in the journey of migration and in Taiwan are least likely to be seen, let alone to further inquiry into the details about their subjective feelings, thoughts, perceptions, and dreams. Consequently, while studies of the Chinese diasporic population in Taiwan have already received notable attention from a wide range of academics working on the issues such as nationalistic politics, the rise of ethnic group's consciousness and so on, the discussions at the individual level about gender (in)equality and gender differences remain largely absent from the from the current statistics and research.

The literature reviewed above shows the abysmal lack of accurate research on Chinese women's cross-border movements (and settlements) and the unequal representation of women-in-exile in the Chinese society and across the world. This limitation of our knowledge reflects unequal representation of women across the world and world cultures. As Linda McDowell (1999:216) once asserted, "[w]hereas the history of the movements of men is well known, the impact on women's lives has been less well explored." Such a problem of knowledge production seems to be, unfortunately, fundamental and unavoidable for two reasons: first, it comes from the essential "epistemological error" that arises when (universal) male dominance from the outset weaves its way between and underneath all themes of knowledge (Oakley 2000:50); and second, male-centered value system has taken place, politically and culturally, in the process of knowledge production as "the unintended consequence of certain functional arrangements and other paths of least resistance" (Ortner

1996:176). Therefore, conducting research from women's words/worlds is still challenging not only because women's narrative and wisdom have been treated in many ways as intellectually inferior to men's existing modes of thought (Stanley 1997), but also because the images of women's existences and positions in society are used more often to degrade the men of the 'other' side in the research process (Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler 2002).

Before considering the ways in which specific research methods can be used to explore gendered social life without reproducing Chinese diasporic women in a similarly subordinated or, worse, invisible position, I will firstly analyze the methodological and epistemological concerns of my research project in the following sections. There are two areas of the methodological challenges that I will discuss in detail. The first involves an attempt to uncover the meaning of women's local, partial, and embodied knowledge from their own narratives. The second refers to the process of ethnographic writing, especially with regard to how we, as authors, put reflexivity into our works.

II. Standpoint Theory:

a) *To recognize women's word(s) & world(s)*

People from different positions have different ideas as to what constitutes a social reality in our conceptual world, and how the existence of this reality may relate or value a broader knowledge context. Whereas some scholars believe that scientific research models can help academics to set out value-neutral questions or standards, and hence making rational and

objective truth claims about certain human nature (or, the very general relations between human and nature), those manifestos (and beliefs) of science and/or scientific research methods are always caught up with the relationship between knowledge and power, or more specifically, between author's foregrounded knowledge and informant's power of representation. In this sense, the paradox of knowledge re/production can be traced back to the epistemic disparity between native consultant's first-told knowledge and author's second-order theoretical accounts (Bruner 1986:9). Importantly, both of these accounts are politically engaged with the writer's institutional, academic disciplines, as well as with their personal interests at the outset of knowledge production (Harding 2006:82-85; also see Belenky 1986; Haraway 1988; Stacey 1991; Ortner 1996; Smith 1997; Oakley 2016).

Therefore, rather than following and then reproducing predominant theoretical accounts, some researchers—especially for those who think the ruling-relations in institutions are/were not helpful to academics but more likely to stand in the way of knowledge freedom and development—expect themselves to create new inquiry paradigms and research models from their own voice, their own situated positions, and/or based on the real-world problems they encountered in the everyday lives. Feminist researchers, as outsiders to the traditionally masculine academic systems, are more likely to recognize and against the hegemonic knowledge hierarchy, and to articulate our needs for launching an effective, counter-hegemonic methodological ground. Instead of compromising with the traditional

(and controversial) scientific “objective” knowledge models—which are, again, very much limited to a small portion of our perceived documentation and studied themes (Tilly 1981:10-11) and/or author’s personal interpretation and interest (Oakley 2000:14), some feminist scholars propose “Standpoint Theory” as a way of knowing from people’s actual experience, a knowledge production that is grounded in women’s everyday experiential lives and their own accounts of the truth(s) in opposition to the patriarchal and hegemonic discourses.

Sandra Harding (1987) introduces standpoint theory as the “best claim” in its superior ability to get closer to the research objects. She criticizes traditional impartial [male] observers on the ground that they are distanced from their research objects through the process of objectification, and suggests that feminist researchers across all disciplines should start off manuscript writings from women’s actual lives, from what they say, what they think, and what they see as important in their life courses. As a more specific methodological approach intended to produce a research *for* women rather than *of* women (Smith 1979), standpoint theory has been developed and applied in a number of academic fields for mapping out women’s experiences (including their emotions and embodiment) and naming the differences of intersecting oppressions among women’s lived realities (Ramazanoğlu and Holland 2002). Meanwhile, standpoint theory traces the complex power interplays between narrator/writer, orality/literacy, theory/practice, authorized knowledge frameworks/

“unintelligible or illegitimate forms of knowledge” (Harding 2006:87), and particularly important for Dorothy Smith (1997), father tongues/women’s voices. Feminist standpoint theorist's power-sensitive research practices stand a chance of producing new (and less false) accounts of the “reality” since, as both Smith and Harding assert, when we social science researchers are critical and self-reflexive enough to draw our attention to the *actual lives* of the researched groups but not rooted in the constituted conceptual plays, we also change how research is done, how research is analyzed, and its political ends that research serves.

To address the omission of the lack of attention given to Chinese diasporic women in current studies, this research aims to adopt feminist research methodologies to explore the inseparability of ruling-relations (the politics) and epistemology (the ongoing ways of knowing). Feminist Standpoint Theory is therefore deployed to provide us an epistemological device for using empirical evidence to start out research thoughts from women’s voices and from the place where we (feminist researchers) begin to inquire (Smith 1992). In other words, deploying a feminist standpoint theory in this research can help me argue against the current epistemic violence among Waishengren, and to comprehend women’s “local knowledge” (Haraway 1988) as a means to show that although the term Waishengre (and the meaning it implies) has *been taken* by most of the people in Taiwan as a common knowledge, Waishengren women within this group may not agree with this category.

By decontextualizing ‘dominant truth’ from its male-supremacy gaze (Haraway 1988),

standpoint theorists have stopped believing in a research of value neutrality, and assert that knowledge is always socially situated and politically power engaged (Harding 2006:83-85,96; Haraway1988:581). At the same time, because women's relationships to the world is so different from that of men, some feminist researchers aim to avoid claiming a generalized knowledge model, which has been often argued as gender-biased and androcentric; and further, inquiry into the varying connections (and also ruptures) of the experiences between our learned textbook knowledge and our experienced social realities (Smith 1990:11). For example, in a frequently cited article "Situated Knowledge: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," Donna Haraway (1988:579) claims, standpoint theory is a hope and an achievement if we scholars can use this method to fix "our problems" of using our own semiotic technologies for making meanings. And, academies do need this approach to connect and translate knowledge among very different—especially power-differentiated—communities (Haraway 1988: 580,584). Haraway (1990:191) relates women's experience directly to feminist standpoint theory, and believes it is women's experience in plural—as the 'other' stories, 'better' accounts of the fact—that grounds "truer" visions to the world (in comparison with male elite's accounts) and sheds light on the resistance to the scientifically stereotypical paradigms. Implicit in her assertion is the assumption that women (and less powerful groups) may reveal unexpected empirical evidences that challenge expert's fallacious appeal to the authority of knowledge, and liberate

our consciousness from the previous “privileged” definition of the reality—that was, according to Haraway (1988 1991), the illusion of objective knowledge, the illusion of the “God trick.”

b) *Women’s situated knowledge and partial truth(s)*

In the case of my research on Chinese diasporic women, for instance, the “knowledge” of their living conditions in Taiwan usually do not appear as subjects for themselves as “social actors” but in relation to men’s and/or majority group’s political conclusions about the settings of their lives. Their gender/social roles and practices are controlled by political and patriarchal forces; their ideas and narrated life experiences are concealed in the masculine “ruling relations” (Smith 1989 1997); in addition, even in the few references that contain diasporic Chinese women’ life story discourses (see Chao and Huo 1995; Chao 2001), their voices have been used, more often than not, as supplementary data files refer to men’s existences in the social world. Knowledge production, in this case, is clearly already predisposed by male-dominated disciplines and patriarchal social orders. Simultaneously, those hegemonic discourses, social orders, and institutional disciplines have been employed together as a defense system that excludes women’s subjective well beings on the one hand, and silences their voices on the other side.

On this account, the absence of diasporic Chinese women’s subjectivity in the current studies is *not* a special research field that we have failed to recognise, but the knowledge that

we “know as not knowing,” the knowledge out of place (Ahmed 2000:55). If hegemonic knowledge framework refers to that which subject is (important enough to be) acknowledged and which is unknown in the principal research areas then the resistance must depend at some point in thinking the unthinkable, thinking about the possibility of “recognizing multiple valid explanations even of the same phenomena” (1991: ix).

I see what is significant about this women-oriented methodology is that standpoint theorist attempts to minimize author’s power in the knowledge production and at the same time maximizes ordinary women’s power of interpreting stories from their own partial perspectives. I understand that there are many other solutions that have been advocated by a wide range of disciplines and innovations that researchers use to deal with the issues relating to (biased) epistemological assumptions and/or author’s predicament in their works on interpretive conflicts. For example, poststructuralist Roland Barthes (1967) argued that a writer does not have a special genius expressed in the story/text. Instead, writer’s role in the story is defined by the placed signs and codes in linguistic structures, not by his intentions or specific traits—author’s power, from this point, has been diminished since the real origin of narrative is not from the author, but from language, words, and text’s own destiny. In comparison, postmodern ethnographer James Clifford (1986) uses the concept “Partial Truth” to reinforce writer’s authority of reproducing an ethnographic truth, or more accurate to say, an ethnographic “art”—author’s power of writing, from this point, has been enlarged and

“liberated.” Yet, this approach does not try to redress the power asymmetry between writers and narrators; which means, for those ordinary people and less powerful groups who provide first-hand information in an ethnographic work, they may not receive enough chances to gain a position in the studies (I will discuss the details of this concept in the next section). Other than that, post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha (1994:4) posited an ideological “third place” to break out of the boundaries of authoritative/colonial discourses, and proposed “cultural hybridity” as a notion that “entertains difference [especially, culturally differentiated discourses] without an assumed or imposed hierarchy.” And, from a slightly different perspective, philosopher James Bohman (1991: vii) facilitates a “new logic” for methodological pluralism that enable investigators to avoid committing to the error of essentializing a single general truth. Nevertheless, he orients researcher’s attention to the “indeterminacy” and “open-ended” characteristics of social phenomena, which may allow for multiple authorships to be displayed. Those theoreticians provide us with appealing thoughts on some of the biggest epistemological and ethical issues associated with power and authority of representing “the Others” (non-Western, non-white, women, im/migrants, LGBTQ, the disabled, ethnic minorities, cultural strangers, etc.). However, most of these theorists still place a fundamental barrier between the researcher and the researched, and the latter one seems to be lacking of the control over their own words in the project.

While I do not have a perfect solution to the question of who has the final power to

decide and select the written artifact, I am less convinced by the idea of “liberating author’s power” or “generalized authorship” (Clifford 1983:132) of knowledge production since this idealist intention benefits intellectuals (writers and readers) more than the original informants and gives little reflective thought to the possibility that author’s rights of publication and representation might be one day directly challenged by those whom they provided their first-hand data (Borland 1991). Nevertheless, according to my understanding, the discussion of Mainlander’s issues in Taiwan is already theoretically or empirically over-dominated (or, misguided) by intelligent expert’s abstract conclusions of Mainlander’s “characteristics.” For example, Gates (1981) alleged, “Mainlanders are often unwilling to learn local Taiwanese language;” Corcuff (2011:40,45) also states: “Mainlanders have a psychological disposition to support KMT government’s discourse and policies” and “fears of a possible de-sinicization policy in Taiwan.” Summarizing Mainlander’s disposition is clearly an author’s “take” on narrators’ words. Those portraits could be understood as certain “truths” from some writer or reader’s eyes; but, for the original narrators—if they have a chance to hear those abstract discourses—they might be not satisfied with the interpretations of the selected information, but have fewer chances to offer an alternative approach (or explain more) about the hidden meanings behind their spoken words.

c) *The researcher-researched relationship*

Based on the aforementioned discussion, it becomes clear that to recognize (and to name)

people's actual lives is fundamental to situated knowledge as it gives our shared experiences a political presence (Smith 2005). Some feminist researchers make a special effort to recognize and acknowledge power imbalances among the participants in their studies and works, including the power hierarchy concealed within the researcher-and-researched relationship. For Dorothy Smith that is exactly the reason why feminist standpoint method should begin with people's personal experiences and their interactions, but not assumed their lives from the constituted general concepts of the 'reality' (1997:113-115). What we know and represent as reality does not exist independently of people's consciousness of it, but entangles with what is thought, what is imagined, and what is told by the dominant others (Turner 1982). For instance, some women's narratives have been represented more often than that of the others because they know how to choose 'better' topics out of politically correct thinking. Therefore, people's choice of 'what (not) to say' and/or 'what (not) to remember' is determined by their own power relations to the outside world, the norms they acknowledged, and the rapport they have with the listeners in the conversation/interview process.

My aim is not to criticize the dominant relationships in knowledge or dispute the ethical dilemmas faced by researchers, as exploitation is always a possibility in research. Yet, it is important to acknowledge that the process of "making meaning" (of the truth) is a successive perceptual process that links our position(s) to a happened/happening social phenomenon (which may or may not be related to our actual experiences). Therefore, the authorship of

meaning-making should be ascribed to “the linkages” between the public/written discourses and informant’s personal experiences but not a totalizing knowledge framework. In Dorothy Smith’s studies (1997:131), seeking connection(s) between the text and the experience is what scholars can begin to explore “how things are being put together,” and thus help us to “discovery” and illustrate people’s standpoints (Smith 1992:88). Furthermore, by adopting women’s multiple standpoints (tracing the various links), researcher can go beyond our limited research themes and imaginations, orient our attention to the differences of intersecting oppressions and struggles in women’s lived reality (Murphy 2017), and hence extend our vision to see how individual person connects social phenomena with their self-perceived life conditions, coherently and contextually.

It is no doubt that theoretically or methodologically informed knowledge paradigms can be essential to provide researchers with explicit logics to analyze first-hand narratives, ordering and structuring narrator’s perspectives, and/or as sociologist Paul Willis (2002:398) states, “making social actors become more agents of their own will but within some sociological frame[s].” However, as many feminist scholars often argued, turning people’s lives into an expertise-oriented knowledge framework may also result in a deception, a “fraud”, or even “the feelings of betrayal” between the researchers and the researched (Patai 1991:144). Even with good intentions and a keen desire for full collaboration (with the knowledge informants), it is still challenging for most of the feminist researchers to avoid the

potential exploitation and/or to develop an egalitarian research process (Stacey 1991:116).

Although the researcher and the researched both have the power to involve or terminate their participation in the beginning and middle of the research process—it is the researchers, the authors, hold the final power to “hearing some things and ignoring or excluding others; to constituting ‘Others’ as particular sorts of research subjects; or to ruling some issues as extraneous to ‘proper’ knowledge.” (Ramazanoğlu and Holland 2002:123). Therefore, we should admit that even for feminist scholars, their power relations with the women they study remain inevitably asymmetrical and are often involved with a complex interplay of power, positions, and social manners (see Oakley 1984; Stacey 1991; Limerick et al., 2006).

III. Life history and/as an reflexive ethnography

In order to move toward a more sensitive research methodology and method, this chapter tries not only reflecting author’s power and limitations of knowledge re/production (as I have discussed in the previous section), but rather addressing the varying concerns and dis/connections between women’s told life-narratives and experienced life-realities. Ideally, women’s narrative materials—oral history, personal-experience story, auto/biography, telling tales—could be used as “a source for understanding the subjective aspects of individual experience articulated through the presentation of a subjective world” (Watson and Watson-Franke 1985:65); however, a cogent life narrative might be not accountable for mirroring the actual life that the woman experienced. Because a life as told, a life history, is

still a “story,” a representation of subject’s telling of life; it is not a life as lived or experienced (Bruner1986:7). Female narrators from oppressed and marginalized social positions may not intend to bear the risk of fighting against the hierarchical structures of discourses and social relations, but choose to stay in silence or hold information back in order to make their daily practices (and existences) more likely to coexist with the dominant values and political settings.

Meanwhile, as a mainstream discourse is influenced by its context, so are female narrators’ life narratives characterized and manipulated by the hegemonic structures plus/minus patriarchal orders. In general, people’s experience consists of his/her (embodied) memories, feelings, sentiments, desires, thoughts, and the sociocultural meanings known to the person whose life it is (Bruner 1986:7). As Sherry Ortner (2006:130-131) has indicated, social actor’s acknowledged experiences and social life(s) are “quite emphatically cultural formations rather than [affected by] analysts’ models.” This is to say, even if the researcher takes a reflexive account on gendered power structures of meaning-making and explicitly rejects the privileging of the “father tongue,” woman narrator’s self-reflections and story-telling acts may still be governed and structured by their embedded cultural norms, by their relationships to the hegemonic power, and by their embodied language conventions of telling. Therefore, although gaining the “native’s point of view” used to be the supreme goal for cultural studies and ethnographic writings, more and more social science scholars

(especially anthropologists) start to cast a skeptical eye on the notion that relying on narrator's self-reference is a valid way to recognize life conditions and local knowledge of the researched (see Geertz 1973; Bourdieu 1977; Clifford 1986; Reed-Danahay 2005).

Exploring empirical evidences directly from narrator's voice(s), on this account, could cause ambiguity and inconsistency because researchers need to deal with multiple epistemological biases on the one hand, and be sensitive to the unspoken presuppositions that implicitly affect narrator's spoken words, on the other side. In order to avoid the frequent confusion with what narrator's viewpoint really means, and/or whether the "native view" is truly from the narrator or simply a replicated voice from the supreme cultural representation, James Clifford suggests a new possibility for writing a "true fiction" in which poetic and allegory could be both featured in author's cultural description and ethnographic writing. Instead of trying to motivate a "truer" account of knowledge production, Clifford (1986:7) believes "all constructed truths are made possible by powerful 'lies' of exclusion and rhetoric." From his perspective, there is no true ethnography for it varies according to author's literal interpretation, which is embedded in many sorts of "reciprocal contexts." Those complex contexts co-construct and oblige writers to find diverse ways of rendering negotiated realities as "multi-subjective, power-laden, and incongruent" (Clifford 1983:15). Since culture representation itself is inherently partial and limited, Clifford suggests that ethnographers should not indulge in both narrative and conceptual representation of the texts or of the

discursive situations; but rather, adopt a new, innovative writing mode that allows first-told knowledge to be fictionally (re)located in favor of author's "hybrid textual activity" (Clifford 1983:132).

Although Clifford himself did not see (or give credit to) feminist scholar's efforts on ethnographic textual practices (1986 pp.20-21)⁷ and validated his intermediate approach between ethnographic texts and literary devices in *Writing Culture* as truly innovative, a number of female anthropologists, in fact, have already been working on textual innovation on feminist grounds for long years earlier than Clifford's works. Nevertheless, unlike Clifford and his colleagues who may care more about the "literary qualities" in ethnographic writings (1986:4), the primary reason why feminist anthropologists often deploy multiple texts or mediums in their research outcomes is quite obvious, as they have all mentioned in the post-interview reflection: the original informants naturally do, and urge the interlocutors to do so in the face-to-face conversations and interaction processes. For example, Margery Wolf (1972 1992) used Taiwanese slang words and religious fables to express rural women's

⁷ Clifford used his "partial truth" to justify the exclusion of feminist ethnography from the book *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*; as he explained in the introduction: "Planning the seminar, we were confronted by what seemed to us an obvious—important and regrettable—fact. Feminism had not contributed much to the theoretical analysis of ethnographies as texts. [...] Feminist ethnography has focused either on setting the record straight about women or revising anthropological categories...It has not produced either unconventional forms of writing or a developed reflection on ethnographic textuality as such" (Clifford and Marcus 1986:20-21). This section has received several criticisms for its male bias (see Gordon 1988:14-15; Caplan 1989:15; Mascia-Lees et al. 1989:13-14; and Wolf 1992:7). As Margaret Wolf's (1992:7) has put her comments on Clifford's works: "If there is any page James Clifford has written that he may wish he hadn't, I suspect it is the section where he lamely explains the absence of a feminist paper in the collection."

anxiety about their married lives and their life after death; Ann Oakley (1981; 1985) rejected the ‘textbook model’ of research methods, and tried to include more dialogues and monologues about how she and her interviewees exchanged ideas and developed friendships together through a reciprocal process of self-disclosure. Margaret Lock (1993) looks into the differentiated meanings of Japanese words and Haiku poetry (俳句)—such as “happiness” \ (in Japanese) 幸せ being blessed, or mindfulness; “menopause” \ (in Japanese) 更年期 midlife transforming, or the “turning point” of life—and hence explores how Japanese women reconfigure and translate Western medical conceptions into their local biological contexts. These aforementioned research outcomes contribute greatly to ethnography and feminist studies, and give us a clear idea about how to conduct a more reflexive and responsible ethnographic project on women and women’s inner life—the key is, as Lock (1993:387) has suggested, “to listen to the narrative and poetry of women, understand the reality of their lives and how these fit into the worlds that women shape and orchestrate as best they may.”

From feminist researcher’s eyes, ethnography serves a “strong reflexivity” in knowledge production (Harding 1993:69). This reflexive approach is based on a belief in women’s “situated” knowledge and a political pursuit of hearing the silence, writing from the margins, and seeing women’s “partial truths” with some shared-experiences in common. Meanwhile, women’s shared experiences sometimes could be illustrated differently because of narrators’ diverse position-takings, socioeconomic statuses, and local contexts (Hellwig and Thobani,

2006:18); whereas, in other times, intersecting oppressions are similar grounded on what Sara Ahmed (2017:43) called “silencing structures,” in which women are usually silent and less willing to straightforwardly speak out for the truth that links to their actual experience and inner life (in Murphy 2017:4). It is precisely because women are more conscious of the structural nature of intersectional oppressions—as it is manifested through oblique violence of institutional discrimination, physical and sexual harassment, ignorance or unwanted male gaze (Ahmed 2017:21-22; also see Spivak 1988)—they usually appear keen to reserve their real concerns and seek for harmony rather than confrontation in the public conversation.

While I analyze the correspondence between diasporic Chinese women’s told lives and their experienced lives, I also recognize that these two lines are very often *not* congruent. Particularly, for those Chinese diasporic women who stay in the silencing structures (namely, living under Martial Law, being governed by the military systems, being banished and displaced from home/homeland, being separated and excluded from the local communities, and facing the Chinese patriarchal family structure), they usually have an insecure relationship with the hegemonic groups or the people with power. Those inherent tensions compel them to stay in silence and/or adopt an indirect medium—such like a legend, a proverb, an old saying, or other people’s perspective—to reflect and even detail their own stories. Borrowing a literary device, in this regard, gives female narrators (and also interlocutors) more freedom to negotiate with the intersectional power conflicts between

self-expressions (as the told life) and life situations (as the experienced life).

From an ethics perspective, no process of knowing is fully reflexive until it is explicitly turned to the knower. Since we understand that ascription by others is neither more authoritative nor truer than self-ascription in defining what “actual life” means, ethnographic researchers should avoid using didactic guidelines or structured questionnaires, and be prepared to re-construct (or totally change) research topics and questions throughout the interactive process with their research participants. Drawing attention to the gap (and the link) between women’s told lives and experienced lives reflects some ordinary people’s fear and desire of speaking, and throws a countervailing light on the analysis of the oppressed groups and their embedded silencing culture. Nevertheless, since narrators all have their own comfortable ways (self-preferred narrative forms) to talk about their life courses, a careful consideration must also be given to their shifting narrative forms which frame narrator’s acts of telling (or not-telling). All this is to say, writing an ethnographic work on women’s lives is not simply putting women’s narrated data into author’s predetermined knowledge framework, but a learning process of acknowledging the inconsistency among women’s stories and the differences of women’s rhetorical modes—as I would like to address, how narrators characterize their story is as important as the empirical data which the story contain.

IV. Method and Reflection

Being a diasporic individual is an embodied experience not only at the level of personal

displacement, sojourning, and living with nostalgia; it is also a matter involving “generational acts of story-telling about prior histories of movement and dislocation” (Ahmed 2000:90). As an example, I remember hearing about my family’s experiences of forced relocation to Taiwan in 1949. My grandfather tried to settle close to the Taipei airport so that if something happened, he could quickly return to the airport and ask for protection from the air force or security officers. My mother’s side of the family also lived in a relatively safe (yet, enclosed) neighbourhood: they were accommodated in a “temporary” shelter, a compound housing nearby the naval port in which they shared toilets, kitchens, and showers with other soldier families. Despite their "temporary" houses were made of bamboo and marine sand and were in poor condition, they lived there for almost forty years

There are always stories that have never been told. I am already lucky enough to learn many of those stories from my neighbours, family members, and the fieldwork in this ethnographic research. Yet, I understand that there would be more untold stories inside all first-generation Mainlander’s heart, which were likely to be about travel, retreat, and banishment, about sojourning, moving from one asylum shelter to others (as initially, they did not know where they could go, where they could stay safely, and for how long they could leave), and about sex, gender and power: especially, since Chinese women were culturally and traditionally forbidden to travel alone (Chao 2001) their existences in the exile journey outside their homes were often perceived by men as the projected objects of abuse and

harassment due to their gender and sex.

Each of the stories acknowledged by first-hand history participants has its own unique meaning for the narrators. This is say, all the told life stories have been specifically mediated through the narrator's motivated actions of remembering, memory-selecting, knowledge-transferring, and eventually, speaking out. The use of women's life histories, or "remembered lives," has long been a feminist approach available in ethnographic research (Davies 2008:206). This method refers to the process of conducting and recording interviews with people from diverse backgrounds; in particular, this approach has come to be seen as a successful medium for collecting women's words, that is, "for reaching a marginalized social group that does not often speak on the social stage" (Chanfrault-Duchet 1991:77). Interviews about women's life stories can be a practical way for researchers to access to women's inner-self, and can be used as a medium for exploring how women express their thoughts and feelings within (and across) their differential positionings in different timings (Yuval Davis and Stoetzler 2002).

In this thesis, to represent a woman's life story literally means to open up the narrator's past to the present, and to encounter a new meaning of their old life from the eyes in the present. As Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame (1981:258) addressed, "[to] tell one's life story is not only to tell or to remember; it is an act, an encounter with [a new] reality." In this sense, researchers should not simply refer to the past event as 'it was,' or as 'it was experienced,' but

rather foster a deeper insight on how the original narrator gives meaning (as the new reality) to the past events in the present time.

I would like to provide a fieldwork reflection to illustrate how a *past* event may affect women's intention of storytelling, and further, influence the outcomes of their stories differently at the *present* time, as well as in the *future*: When I was conducting my fieldwork, many of my interviewees told me that I had just met them at the "right moment." They were very happy to participate in my research because their husband had "finally died" a few years/months before my visit (quoted from the narrator's original words). And, at the time when I conducted my fieldwork, it was also the time that these research participants could (finally) escape household stresses from their husbands and children; and started to talk (and think) about whatever they wanted to say about their lives in the conversation with others. Furthermore, I also found that for the interviewees who were still living with their husbands, by contrast, their attitude could be very reluctant while referring to their personal emotions, family lives, and/or their un/happy intimate relations in the past. For them, it was clear that looking back to the traumatized experiences of exile and displacement in the past is still somehow related directly to their present life. And, it made them feel even more difficulty to stand at a distanced position to express their thoughts, feelings, and stories.

In women's life stories, the narrators not only capture the temporal and causal arrangements of past events that are significant to them, but also reveal their own agency and

judgments through the action of explaining why they had chosen to disclose this specific experience (out of other numerous ones) to connect to their lives in the memories. As such, the employing of women's life histories as the master analysis data in this ethnographic study allows me to avoid immersing myself in the pre-prepared research topics/questions from my own perspective, discipline, or preference; while at the same time, paying my attention to the chronological order in which the original informants arrange their own stories from the start to the end.

a) Insider privilege and researcher's ethical concerns

It was my projected social role as the younger generation from the military dependents village that brought me to the fieldwork; and moreover, made the interviewees approach me with a friendly mindset even before we got to know each other. From my accent and my embodied behaviours, it is obvious to tell my background as a member of the Chinese military commune. It is true that I spent a large part of my childhood and adolescent life in a relatively enclosed military village nearby a Marine base in southern Taiwan. Listening to village women's casual talks and their past histories was once an important part in my daily social/leisure life. Nevertheless, their told stories and shared insights had developed my initial understanding about the outside world, as well as greatly expanded my imagination of it.

As I grew older, I began to understand that the dialogues and stories I heard from them were usually told for reasons. For instance, older members in the village would like to recall

their hardship of food shortage in the past as a means to teach younger people to appreciate food. Other times, (grand-) mothers often expressed their remorse at not being able to attend school in order to motivate village girls to appreciate the chance to study.

For almost twenty long years after I had moved out from my village, conducting this research gave me a second chance to listening to these women's stories. Yet, the difference this time was that my research objectives were with me as I returned back to the military communes. Nevertheless, the position of mine was also changed: I was not merely a story listener but a researcher, an interviewer who tried to access the interviewees for a specific purpose. What would these village women think of me? How could we interact and negotiate with our diverse agendas? I returned to the village with those worries in my mind. Yet, as soon as I came back to the field, those concerns disappeared. In many ways, my relationship with my research participants remained the same as the one I had in my childhood—they treated me as if I were (grand-)daughter.

Regardless of my research agenda and my role in the fields as an interviewer, most of the research participants chose to tell me what they considered I, as a younger village woman, should know from them. Hence, I gained valuable insights into topics that had not been mentioned in my initial research proposal but were important to study. For example, they gave me advice about how to deal with the prevalent sexual violence and harassment in the military villages, how to discipline children in order to be recognized as a good mother;

furthermore, since they used to suffer from domestic violence and lacking of their own social position, they chose to share their experiences with me to let me know why women ought to be educated and to work, so that they do not have to rely on men for support.

The lesson I gained through conversations and interviews with research participants is a gift they entrusted to me and this research. As Limerick (1996) noted, the knowledge we (interviewers) learned during the interview is “the gift of time, of text, and of understanding” that is provided by the interviewed. The notion of “receiving/giving gift” is not unidirectional nor compulsory. Interviewees have their power to speak (to give) or to keep silence (not to give). Therefore, for all the life stories I learned in my fieldwork, they were all the gifts I got from the generous research participants. These lessons were given to me to help me become a better person, and just like how I learned from their stories in my childhood, Chinese women used this method to pass on their knowledge to the next generation.

Narratives and topics that emerged in the interviews and conversations were often not aligned with my original research proposal, but were developed and supplied by the participants themselves. Although I had proposed certain themes, such as attempting to underscore the significance of ethnic minority women’s experiences (e.g., the Hui women), exploring Mainlander families’ unique experience of developing nuclear households in Taiwan's postwar society, and trying to analyze how first-generation Mainlander women may have more freedom in their mothering practices by not living with their in-laws, those themes

were not mentioned or addressed in the interviews. To account for these differences, it is essential to recognize the limitations of my original ideas and research designs and, more importantly, to be open to the diverse perspectives and "gifts" that given by the research participants.

Apart from my relationship with the military village women, I also enjoy other "insider" privileges while conducting this research related to my understanding of them, to the village environment, and to the social conventions I learned from, including my understanding of the village environment and the social conventions I learned there. For example, I was exposed to so many diverse life histories surrounding the theme of "Chinese exodus in 1949" since my childhood. This experience has further made me much more conscious of the stereotypes about seeing Chinese diasporic population as a classified ethnic group "Mainlanders" in Taiwan. In addition, I am familiar with the environment, the atmosphere, and daily living routines in Mainlander's communities and military dependent's enclaves, which made it easier for me to locate, and visit, the potential fieldwork areas. Finally, the background of my ethnicity, gender role, and (grand) daughter-like position were also helpful: Most of the first-generation Chinese diasporic women (the potential research participants) I encountered in the fields felt less intimidated to start a conversation with me, and found it easier to build a relationship with me. Subsequently, they showed a greater interest to participate in this research for a common reason that they would like encourage the younger generation [me] to

study hard and to work better.

As I was familiar with some first-generation Chinese diasporic women before starting this research, I was also in a privileged position to be aware that bringing up certain topics associated with women's experiences of diaspora may cause emotional discomfort for some participants. A strong sense of ethics protection has thus been carefully considered. For example, before the enrolled participants agreed to join this research, the objective of my research proposal had been introduced to each of them in detail, along with an explanation for the verbal consent procedure. A reassurance of participant's right to anonymity and confidentiality was informed and maintained throughout the study.

Because not many participants could write and read, the consent forms were assessed orally in this research. This means that all the interviewed participants have given their consent orally (recorded) to be enrolled in this study. Yet, even after they completed their consent form, they would still have the freedom to stop the interview, or to withdraw their narrated data after the interview finished (but before the submission of the final publication).

Pseudonyms have been used not only for the protection of informant's privacy, but also for all the referring names in the interviews—including the names of the associated people, villages, and troops that were mentioned in the conversation. I did not ask or record participant's private information (i.e., ID number, national status, contact information, home

address). Nevertheless, the participants were assured and confirmed that I would be the one who can listen the recorded data, make audio transcriptions, and translate their narrated texts from Chinese to English.⁸

All the electronic files (including scanned documents, audio files, transcriptions, my field notes, and the geographic information) were locked after the fieldwork completed, so that the access to the first-hand data is restricted. Last but not least, the ethical approval for this research was granted by the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board (file number: #06-17-33).

b) Data Collection and Interviews

This research is based on an attempt to learn from diasporic Chinese women's experiences and thoughts, rather than conducting a survey on them. It also means that naturally occurring conversations and new emerging topics were expected and welcome during the fieldwork and interviews. As Yow (1994:186) has suggested, "give the narrator leeway to discuss topics you have not thought of: if they are important to the narrator, they will be important in some way to you." The interviews in this research are thus largely unstructured (except for the basic demography questions), allowing my research participants to talk about their life and important memories around a range of topics related to their

⁸ In order to enhance the reliability of the interview data, my interviewees also agreed to share their original data (the recorded soundtrack) to my supervisor and committee members. In this case, other researchers may also be able to review and double-check that subtleties of linguistic and cultural interpretations in this research are appropriately rendered.

thoughts and experiences as a woman in diaspora.

I did, however, also prepare a back-up plan: a semi-structured questionnaire. This questionnaire was used only for making sure that I had kept myself remember the research objectives in mind; and/or, sometimes I used those prepared questions to break the ice in the beginning of the conversation with my research participants. In order to ensure that all research participants have been interviewed without facing the constraints or controls imposed by the researcher, I did not follow the strict, classical sociological interview guidelines (for example, indicating that interviewers should stand in an impersonal, neutral position) or impose too much structures (as the outlined questionnaire) in the process of the interview.

As for the fieldwork locations, I understand that when the Chinese diasporas had escaped to Taiwan during the wartime, most of them were accommodated by the KMT government in different types of military-related villages; whereas, in other cases, some Chinese sojourners might need to find their own ways to settle down in the new environment (for example, living in the self-supported communes in the shanty town). Therefore, I intentionally recruited my research participants from different types of the Chinese enclaves or military dependent's villages in order to see how different living environments influence women's personal lives and social relations. Moreover, I also tried to find interviewees in different neighbourhoods rather than find more interviewees in the same neighbourhoods in

order to obtain the broadest range of information.

c) Recruitment

By applying a strategic selection to get as many diverse opinions and experiences as possible, I purposively tried to maximize the differences among the participants in the group of “Mainlander women”—the strategic manners of the selection are clear: I did not interview more than two people in the same village and I sought a priori to recruit research participants from different education backgrounds, different racialized/ethnic backgrounds, and living in different household arrangements. Additionally, I tried to recruit participants in the older age groups for getting more information about their remembering life in the wartime China around seventy years ago. The other requirements of eligibility were: 1) the participants need to have some memories of their old life in the wartime China. They went through the war (Anti-Japanese war and/or the Chinese civil war) and consequently chose or were forced to come to Taiwan. This is to say, they are the so-called “first-generation” Mainlanders in Taiwan. 2) They needed to have the experience of living in the military-related villages or Chinese enclaves; which means, after they had escaped to Taiwan, their living arrangements and neighbourhoods were once governed under the Nationalist army and/or the KMT government.

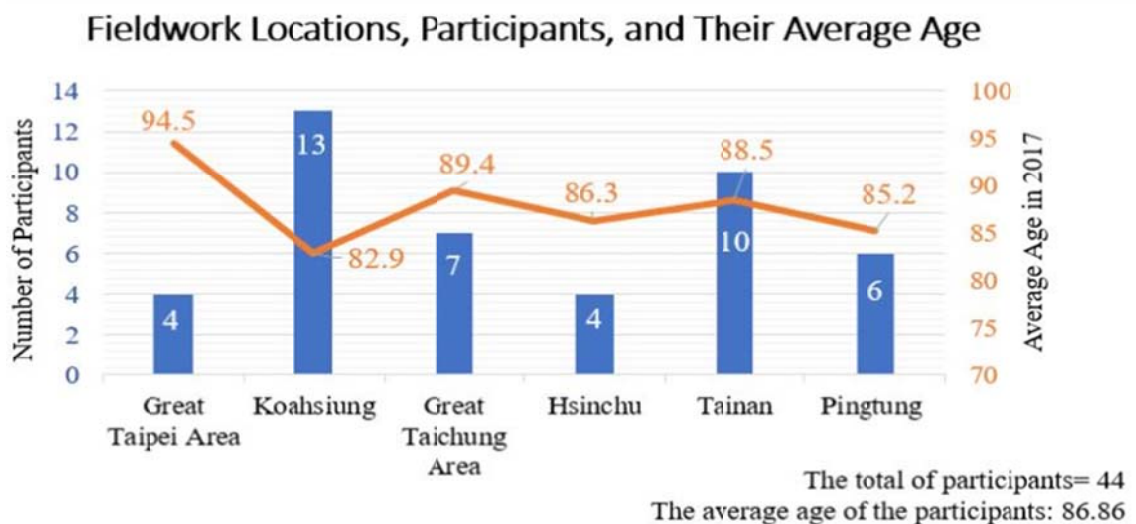
Most of the Chinese enclaves and military dependent’s villages are very open now in Taiwan. Therefore, I could just walk into the villages, stop the potential participants (the elder

women), and ask them if they were interested in chatting with me. After a while of our conversation, if both of us felt comfortable, I might be able to ask for their consent to participate in my research.

d) Fieldwork Results

As for the result of my fieldwork, I have conducted a five-month-long fieldwork in Taiwan from July to December in 2017. I interviewed a total of 44 first-generation Chinese diasporic women in more than 24 neighbourhoods (including military dependent’s villages, non-registered military dependent’s villages, government staff dormitories, and Chinese shantytowns.) The fieldwork was conducted across seven cities/counties in Taiwan: Taipei (n=4), Hsinchu (n=4), Great Taichung area (including Taichung city n=6 and Changhua county n=1), Tainan (n=10), Kaohsiung (n=13), and Pingtung (n=6).

Figure 1 Fieldwork Locations, Participants, and their Average Age



The interviewees were between 74 years old and 104 years old. Their average age was

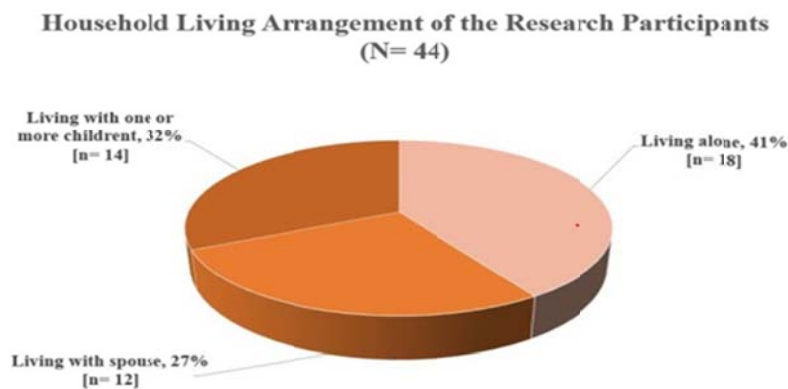
86.86 in the years of 2017 and 2018. Considering their age and health, I usually divided my interview into two sessions, and visited my research participants two or three times to complete one participant's life story. The average duration of the interview was 1.5 hours. In addition, some naturally occurring conversations and interactions were also conducted and documented informally in my field notes. I kept writing my field notes throughout the interviewing process, including writing brief biographies for each of the participants; giving descriptions of the fieldwork environments and interview timings; reporting research participant's attitudes and facial expressions, and collecting interviewee's feedbacks and comments. I usually spent more than six hours with each individual participant, and met them at least once before the day I conducted the interview.

The time and the place of the interviews were chosen based on the research participant's preferences. The interviews were mostly conducted in private spaces (i.e., in the interviewee's houses); or, occasionally I used the local community centre's conference room to conduct interviews with the participants who did not have their own private spaces at home. I did this as a precaution to avoid interviewees being disturbed by others, and to prevent my interviewees from being bothered by unwanted attention (for example, the attention from their husbands, children, or local community leaders). I only invited the first-generation Chinese diasporic women to participate in the interviews; except for one participant who was aged about 104 and was bedridden, I had to ask her daughter for assistance to make sure that

I did not misunderstand her words.

As for the living arrangement, when I was conducting my fieldwork in 2017-2018, eighteen (out of 44) participants were living alone; fourteen of them were living with their children (mostly with their sons), and twelve of them lived with their husbands.

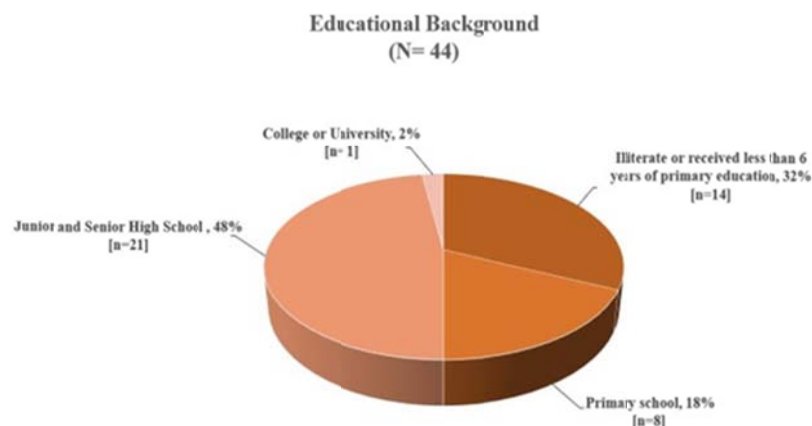
Figure 2 Research Participants' Household Living Arrangements



As for the research participants' education background, I could not accurately identify their educational levels; the mean years of the schooling also did not reflect their study stages. It is because when my research participants were girls growing up in the wartime, their schooling was severely disrupted by the frequent moves (running away from the battles and frontlines). At the same time, the nationwide military conflicts also destroyed most of the education systems. Therefore, although there were thirty participants in the interviews reporting that they have received at least six years of education (eight of them had finished elementary school; twenty-one of them had attended junior or senior high schools; and there was one participant had registered in an engineering college but eventually did not complete

her study). As a result, I found out that there were a good number of the research participants —regardless of their educational background—faced difficulty reading and writing in their daily lives.

Figure 3 The Difference of Research Participants' Educational Backgrounds



With respect to their ethnic backgrounds, two of my interviewees were the overseas Chinese coming from Vietnam; one was an “Hong Kong Islander” coming from a Chinese refugee enclave (Tiu-Keng Leng 調景嶺) in Hong Kong. In addition, I also have recruited one Hui woman (the Chinese Muslim) and two Manchu women.⁹ Additionally, the wide range of ethnicities and nationalities of my participants also shows that there were, in fact, many different ethnic groups mixed together under the labelled "Mainlanders" in Taiwan; and, the so-called "Mainlanders" were not necessarily coming from the mainland China.

V. Discussion and Brief Summary

⁹ Manchukuo was a puppet state that Japan colonized in northeast China from 1932 to 1945. Japan occupied this territory in 1931 and appointed the last Qing emperor Pu-Yi as the puppet ruler of this state controlled by the Japanese. According to my interviewees, the official language in Manchuria was Japanese, and they adapted Japanese culture in their childhood just like their Taiwanese counterparts did.

In this ethnographic study, I employed diasporic women's life-experience narratives as the method, which, on the one hand, reveals a woman's sense of her multi-layered "self", showing which role was primary to her at different times of her life. On the other hand, this approach also reflects how women relate to one another in their daily lives since women's life stories often containing "parts of the lives" of others (Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame 1981: 256-257). Nevertheless, as I would like to argue, although life stories could be represented in fiction style, the narratives from these women's memories are still "real" in emotional meaning for the narrators and the associated "others", and sometimes even more "true" than many of the dominant knowledge we learned from the public discourses.

This chapter demonstrates the ways in which Chinese diasporic women express, reflect, and transform their experiences into life stories. By using feminist standpoint theory as a framework for this research, it aims at providing space for ordinary women to reconstruct their roles and social relations in the past (i.e., to re/define who they are and who their "significant others" are through the process of story-telling), and to reconfigure those experiences from the vantage point of the present, as well as to express their own reflective perspectives from their diverse situated contexts at different stage of life.

As such, by recognizing and locating Chinese diasporic women's experiences of life from the history "below," this research has the potential to challenge and deconstruct male-centered political discourses, and hence leading to new findings and evidences that may

reach to a more complete understanding of either the nature of diaspora or the complicated socio-political situation of these migrant/exiled population in the contemporary societies of China and Taiwan.

Chapter 4 Girls Life Away from Home

In the summer of 1941, I was seventeen years old and just got accepted by a top business college. By the time before I left home, my mother had already cried three whole days. I thought she was such a feudal-thinking woman; she was afraid and overreacting to all the things she did not know...Back then I was too young and immature, so I just got fed up with my mother's nagging and tears. But, it was the last time I saw my mother alive [...]. Nowadays, when I reflect on the past, I am filled with regret for my arrogance, for not listening to my mother's words when we parted ways. I only remember her tears. It was, actually, quite uncommon for my mom to cry that much just because I had to leave home months for study... [I guess,] she must have known something that I was not aware of; she must have had some instincts that made her grieve so much for our separation.

~~ Li Jing (interview on Nov.24 2017)¹⁰

I. Introduction:

This chapter highlights Chinese women's childhoods and memories of youth during the early Republic period. It was the key transitional moment when hundreds of thousands of Chinese civilians who lost their homes, jobs, and properties became more and more aware of their futility of turning back to a settled life. The consequences and effects faced by Chinese people in the turbulent process of new China's "structural revolution" have not yet been properly defined and understood (e.g., Skocpol 1979; Li 2010; Shue 2018), but the damage to ethical, physical, and spiritual aspects of Chinese people's self and livelihood was already

¹⁰ Born in 1924 in a scholarly gentry family, Li Jing was a diasporic student and a Nationalist Youth Army cadre during the wartime period. In the autumn of 1941, just few weeks after she left home, her hometown Changsha had been demolished by both Japan's invading air-force attacks and China's defending 'scorched earth' policy. Bombardments and the subsequent fires burned down the whole city and Li-Jing's home was thus levelled overnight. As was common for many diasporic students, Li-Jing lost her family and forced to join a military troop to get the basic needs of living. In the next few years, she helped the Nationalist government to defend against Japanese invasion by transporting military supplies through the China-Burma road. She went to Taiwan with the Nationalist government in 1949 and came back to the Mainland in 1988; that was, forty-seven years after the day she left home.

rendered irreversible (e.g., Chow 1990; Ko 2005; Hershatter 2007). All were born in a society wracked by long-lasting wars and party conflicts, so the elderly Chinese women in this research very often tied their early life experiences to the political catastrophes they witnessed in their youth. They represented a broad range of traumatic memories, yet, mostly, considered those unpleasant experiences as a result of their personal karma¹¹ and/or as Chinese people's collective fate that was determined by "the mandate of heaven."

The official and intellectual voices in the written materials, however, had recounted another approach: the vanishing of China's (old) glory and power could be, from this predominant perspective, attributed to some people's feudal thinking, with an even worse slavish mentality. Nevertheless, as the historian Liu (1994) notices, while most of the men were recruited into the revolutionary systems (as democracy advocates, construction workers, social movement activists, military personnel, etc.) and held a position of honour at the centre of the state-building process, women's roles and efforts in the society were neglected, or worse, were regarded as the weaker and inferior ones that "hindered the development of China" (Hughes 2017:148).

¹¹ Deeply influenced by the Chinese cosmological account of the "complementary balance" of life (see Chu 2010), Chinese women—especially for those elderly diasporic women who have already gone through so many unpredictable things—were inclined to dwell upon the "cause-and-effect cycle" (karma) that leads people's life to suffering or happiness at different times for different reasons, including the reasons related to a person's previous life and/or next life.

With regard to the interactions between New China's development and the notion of Chinese womanhood, both the Republican nationalists and revolutionary intellectuals were very critical of women and women's living styles. As the leading reformist scholar Liang Qi-chao (梁啟超) declared several times in public, China was being decimated by foreign invasions because half of the citizens—the Chinese women, specifically—were “crippled,” were “nothing more than the consumers of men's productivity,” (in Hughes 2017:148) and were the “parasites on men and sap the strength of the nation” (in Yang 1999:40; also see Hershatter 2007:79). For almost one century—from Qing Empire's Westernizing reforms in late nineteenth century, to the 1911 nationalist revolution of Republic China, followed by the May Fourth (New Youth) movement, and continuing through Mao Zedong's peasant revolts and Cultural Revolution¹² in the Communist China—the state of Chinese women's social role was closely tied to the (re)development of the nation-state. Chinese women were being targeted not only because traditionally female's roles and role practices had been portrayed in accordance with the feudal-Confucian ethics (such as foot-binding, chastity ideology, ancestor cult, etc.), but also because focusing on ordinary women's conservative (later,

¹² The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leader Mao Zedong gained the greatest esteem in speaking for women and leading women's patriotic associations—as he once famously proclaimed “Women hold up half the sky”—this announcement helped CCP and Mao Zedong himself to promote its/his name and reputation on the world stage. However, like other Chinese reformers in different campaigns, the ultimate goal of the CCP was not for the sake of sex/gender liberation but to develop a strong Party-state by means of setting different targets for different people to meet the state goals. The requirements of the goal for men and women were different; therefore the status and rewards were also allocated differently (unequally) to men and women.

“unproductive”) thinking and behaviours might help the politicians to divert public attention away from the chaotic political situation. In other words, women and women’s ways of living could be the easiest scapegoats for the leading politicians, particularly for those reformists who saw no other positive changes in the facets of China’s social movements.

Despite knowing that many of the great reformists had actually possessed a mindset of devaluing Chinese women’s worth in public sectors as well as denying the labour women conducted in agriculture and households, the anti-imperialist activities still got huge support from women’s organizations and feminist pioneers (Siu 1982). Likewise, the new ideals to which the reformists adhered—to modernizing and liberating the women of China—had also been largely accepted from cities to villages, alongside with a series of legislative practices that were implemented by the government to “emancipate women” at the national level (see Lee 1995; Thakur 1997; Lan and Fong 1999; Barlow et al., 2008; Li 2010; Liu et al., 2013)¹³. Hence, it should not be surprising to imagine that the compelling atmosphere and political moods at this momentous time was quite special, spurring people—especially younger

¹³ For example, prohibiting the antiquated tradition of foot-binding in 1912, which was a custom said “to have started since the Tang dynasty (618-906 AD)” (Thakur 1997:36); setting up girl’s school and encouraging them to get a basic education for the sake of “the nation’s civilization” and “the quality of the nation’s offspring” (Lee 1995:355); and abolishing polygamy (the rights of husbands to purchase concubines or maids)—This reform was especially related to Republic China’s census and population policy. Mainly because except for wife’s children, concubine’s and maid’s children could not get a legitimate identity in the old kinship-headed society; thus, these labours would not be utilized (drafted) by the government. The loss of this part of the labour force was a serious problem at the time when this country immediately needed fresh blood to preparing the war (Watson 1991).

people—into the action of challenging and breaking away from traditional societal norms and customs, even though those customs were often highly valued and inherited through their family lineages and were transmitted by their parents' disciplines at home.

II. Modern women and their role conflicts

Chinese women during the early Republican era were expecting themselves to do something different from what their mothers did in China's traditional society¹⁴. For some young adult women, even more, they hope they could directly contribute to the process of state-building by "leaving behind their boudoirs" (Lee 1995:356) and walking into public spaces in which they could interact with other young social reformists (Dong 2008:195). Leaving home, for various reasons, has been recognized as a significant and memorable event in the lives of many Chinese women.

Li Jing, the narrator in the life story that began this chapter, also revealed her desire of leaving home for the pursuit of education and career. Her self-fulfilling expectation of moving away from her parent's protection (before being married) was too conflicted with the traditional Chinese common value in terms of a girl's role and virtue "at home"; therefore, as a result of this dilemma, she was sanctioned by her mother's tears. The latter on tragedy, the

¹⁴ The narrators in the study frequently referred to the women of the prior generation as "old-brain" or "feudal-thinker," primarily due to their birth cohort being born near the end of the Qing dynasty. In contrast, they considered themselves as the "New Youths" and "Modern women," having been born during the Republic period. Additionally, during the interviews, some participants used terms such as "the traditional society," "the empire's society," and "the pre-modern society" to describe the social environment of any historical period prior to the 1911 uprising (the Xin-hai Revolution 辛亥革命).

Changsha Fire that burned out her home and hometown, imposed an even heavier sanction on her non-compliance. As Li Jing narrated, it was an immature decision at a young age that made her mind and her life “insane and ill,” made her feel terribly sorry for “not listening to [her] mother’s words” and bitterly regretted for “not being able to say a proper apology, or, at least, a proper goodbye to [her] family members.”

Li Jing was not an uncommon case of a young adult woman who showed her desire for independence during the early stages of the revolutionary war, but ended up feeling dissatisfaction or regret. It is worthwhile here to acknowledge the background that the time of China’s revolution was also the beginning of China’s rapid modernization. The trend towards urbanization and commercial growth—allied with the emergence of the liberal consciousness and the spirits of independence and human rights—had empowered a great number of young adults “to refuse to live in the old way” (Slocpol 1979:47), while at the same time encouraging the youth to develop new social roles and new “Modern” life styles in this revolutionary process (see Slocpol 1979; Edwards 2000; Barlow et al. 2008).

The availability of more urban jobs, more schools open to both male and female students, and the influence of new fashion icons through widespread magazine and newspaper advertisements further fueled the desires of Chinese youth to embrace the trend of modernization and Westernization (see Gilmartin 1994; Clark 2000; Dong 2008).

Figure 4 Images of modern women in newspapers



Sources: *The Central Daily News* (中央日報), published on October 23rd, 1931

The figure showcases three women's icons in advertisements, arranged from left to right: (1) an advertisement promoting silk socks, which portrays a woman's beauty with high heels and a short skirt, (2) the movie "Pink Soldier" presenting a female soldier icon, and (3) a picture titled "Virtue Wife" depicting a woman with short hairdo and pants, applying "Butterfly Lotion" (the product being promoted) to take care of her husband's skin.

In this particular moment, Chinese women often referred themselves in the 1930s and 1940s as the "New Women" in Modern China and/or as the pioneer "Modern Girls" who wanted to "liberate their own will" to fit the trend of new thinking (Lu 2004:83). The "New Thinking" was prevailed alongside with China's May Fourth movement (also called the New Cultural movement). Some feminist intellectuals who had joined this movement viewed this period as a groundbreaking moment that signaled the emergence of Chinese women's activism and marked a transformative change towards the emancipation and empowerment (Hershatter 2007:79-80; also see Johnson 1980; Lee 1995; Li 2010).

For those young women who were inspired by modern and Western female icons and driven by the revolutionary spirit to fight against gender discrimination, they sought to use their abilities in the workforce or on the frontlines to serve their country and secure their own futures. However, in reality, their micro-level inter-subjective experiences were influenced by Chinese women's inferior social status and/or the lack of public recognition in meso-level asymmetrical intergroup power relationship. Furthermore, especially for the ethnic-minority women (e.g., Muslim, Tibetans, Hmong people, etc.) or the women from rural or war-torn regions, their disadvantaged position also resulted in limited access to equal work, education, or other social opportunities due to “the macro level connections linking systems of oppressions” (Carastathis 2014:310). As a result, these complex and multifaceted power struggles, combined with China's patriarchal culture and wartime context, frustrated their efforts and hindered their ability to exercise as much agency as their male counterparts.

One research participant Yong Xing, a former member of the Young Women's General Squad Headquarters (also known as “the Intellectual Youth Army”), offered her own reflections on this social phenomenon, and how she experienced gender inequality during her military training:

It [the disadvantaged position of women in the military] was so obvious that a simple mathematical question could tell us: how many young men and young women were recruited into the army in the beginning to support Chiang Kai-shek's slogan: "One hundred thousand Chinese youths; one hundred thousand participants in the Army." How many women's corps did we actually see after that? Very few, right? Why was that?

I could tell you—because after marriage, military men would still keep their positions, but married women would be kicked right out to the dependents' retreating group. The KMT authorities allowed married men to serve continuously in the Youth Army, but women had to be single.

(interviewed on Aug. 22nd, 2017.)

Born in 1929, Yong Xing came from an upper-class family in Hebei Province (the province where Beijing is located). Her father was a prominent member of the KMT government's Ministry of Economic Affairs, and the family was wealthy due to their ownership of a coal mining business during the war. She was initially attracted by the icon of military nurse, so she decided to join the “Chinese Intellectual Female Youth Army Volunteering (中國女知識青年志願軍)”. What she really wanted to do in the army was to be trained as a military nurse, as she wished, "to save people's lives, like Nightingale".

Yong Xing felt that she could have received proper training in the military system, given that nursing was a crucial aspect of their mission. However, she soon learned that the Female Youth Army was nothing more than a political propaganda tool for nationalist intellectuals to play out, and present the strict idea of what the ideal behaviour of a patriotic woman should be. (i.e., sacrificing women's own interests, but always caring for China's national welfare). Under the male-dominated standard, she was taught a set of guidelines to play the "New Woman" role model, including how to wear the proper attire (monochromatic clothing) and how to preform proper behaviours, with a key emphasis on keeping their virginity, which would be checked by doctors through seasonal health examinations.

As a result of several months of the training, Yong Xing was unable to continue participating in this oppressive environment, so she left. The high social status and reputation of her family were of great help at that time. Otherwise, in several other cases, as Yong Xing noted, a military personnel was not supposed to quit his or her job. In the worst situation, a defector would face severe punishment, including the death penalty.

Both Li Jing's and Yong Xing's life stories show that young Chinese women of the time were looking for alternative gender role models, motivated by a desire to break away from the traditional roles portrayed by their previous generations. Their desire to pursue a life outside the family (i.e., to get an education and go out to work) was understandable in the context that women's traditional roles in Chinese society were often considered conservative and "weak." In addition, the breaking of these stereotypes was seen as a sign of progress and modernization for women. However, during the chaotic wartime period, the breaking of gender role paradigms and social hierarchy (i.e., 'walking away' from the control of their situated family and community systems) caused severe tensions and conflicts in their family and social relationships. For example, Li Jing and Yong Xing both went through severe family conflicts before making the decision to leave home in pursuit of their ideal new lives.

III. A Girl in Exile

Unlike Li Jing's and Young Xing's experience of leaving home for their own pursuits, Chen Guang was a victim and was forced to leave home because of the Nanjing Massacre.

She was born in 1934 in a small town nearby Nanjing. As early as three or four years old, when the Japanese army entered Nanjing in the winter of 1937 and destroyed everything in/surrounding this city, she and her mother became homeless. It was the ending year of the decade-long first Chinese Civil War (1927-1937), yet was also the beginning of another eight years of Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). Having suffered under such a chaotic environment rife with violence, illness, and hunger for so long made it difficult for people to spare food or financial resources for less important members of their families. As a result, while Chen Guang's elder brother had been sent to live together with her grandparents in the safer countryside under the kin-family protection, she and her mother became homeless refugees.

Chen Guang's mother was always sick, and her eyes were damaged by the flash of the exploding bombs. She feared that if she became too ill or starved to death, her little daughter would not survive. So she decided to walk to Changsha, with her half-bound feet, counting on her elder sister in Changsha to help out. It took them four years to walk from Nanjing to Changsha (approximately 950 kilometers), but unfortunately (or fortunately), just before the day they tried to enter the city, the fire started and expanded over the whole city exponentially:

I still remember the scene. It was autumn and my mother and I hid behind a tangerine orchard to escape the bombing. The Japanese were also here, we knew, we heard the sounds of their jets flying overhead. My mother brought me to a pier, and we tried to take a boat, to be faster to get into the city. Yet, bombs were already impacting on the other side of the river; it was [where] Changsha [located]. Just a river away, I saw the

whole city was in the fire: Buildings and blocks were all broken down—the bleeding, the wailing, the screams of the dying people, the terrified cries from the babies. I was there, watching the red sky. The city was being burned for three days and three nights. [Afterward,] my mother still wanted to enter Changsha to find her sister, but I already knew there would be no hope for us to rely on her sister's family...I was just eight or nine, less than ten years old, but suddenly I felt that I was an adult.

Sometime after the battles of Changsha, while Chen Guang's mother was still wandering around the nearby areas to seek out her relatives, there was a day Chen Guang saw a small contingent of a women's weaving team. The women in the weaving team were mostly the military dependents from Sichuan (in the south-west China). Under the command of a local warlord, Yang Sen (楊森), this team mobilized around the battlefields to assist Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist army and to response to the first lady Soong May-Ling's patriotic call for women's labour. Although Chen Guang was still far too young to be registered in the military and she could not report anything about her father's information or affiliation,¹⁵ she still got accepted by this women's team.

Spinning, weaving, and doing needlework, Chen Guang produced clothes and socks for the soldiers on the frontlines, and it was the first time that she relied on her own hands to earn a living for her mother and herself. There was no wages paid, but she felt satisfied with the shelter and food. Chen Guang's mother, however, was not as grateful that her daughter was in the weaving team, mostly because she did not feel comfortable being under the male

¹⁵ Chen Guang's father had been drafted into a military troop (she did not know which one) years before the Sino-Japanese War began, and thus he had been absent from home for most of that time.

gaze and living among strangers. Their life in the military was often punctuated by the threat of unfamiliar male soldier's sneaking around. Women in the team could not openly fight or argue against those "soldiers" or whoever the men might be, because the status of men was culturally and officially above women. As it was difficult to distinguish regular forces from local security guards, bandits, or any other men with weapons, women living with the army had to be more cautious about their social positions and lives. As Chen Guang said, "If you could not know who you were dealing with, the right way to react was to follow their orders"; She continued, "but then [you] opened your eyes to see what they were doing, to observe what kind of products they carried with, in particular, what kinds of the medicine they took."

Chen Guang's observation was significant. The medicine she mentioned was *Jintan* (仁丹), a healthcare pill that was popular prescribed to use in the Japanese military and had been widely traded in East Asia alongside with Japan's military expansion. This medicinal product politically symbolized Japan's great achievement of modern technology in medicine that even "exceeding the West," as well as to show its anti-colonist attitude by encouraging Asian people to buy Asian (Japanese) goods.

Unaware of the unique role *Jintan* played as a propaganda tool in Japan's military history, Chen Guang was nevertheless acutely aware of the small messages she observed in the camp of the groups to which she belonged. In other words, she was extremely cautious and very sensitive about the external environment—she was an experienced, skilled and

shrewd survivor, even at such a young age. In her eyes, the consumption of Japanese drugs by a foreign soldier was a clear signal of his involvement in espionage matters, a trail of clues that enabled her to distinguish the dangerous "traitors" from the regular soldiers and normal residents.

Figure 5 Pictures of Jintan じんたん森下仁丹



“Japan used Jintan as a propaganda tool, concurrent with its rapid expansion into East Asia”

Source: History Museum of Morishita Jintan (じんたん森下仁丹)

<https://www.jintan.co.jp/special/museum/ads/>

Like her mother, Chen Guang also understood that working, and transiting from place to place in unfamiliar environments would put women at risk of assault, harassment, and even rape. She was well aware of how dangerous it could be to approach male strangers, especially since her mother and she did not have the seniority of those who were already accustomed to the rules of the campaign. However, what more important to her, at the time, was the potential harm that might lead her to lose her affiliation with the military working team—as a suspicious enemy or traitor could threaten her co-workers and, further, cause severe damage to the group that she relied on for survival and belonging. This concern even

outweighed the worries she had for her own physical safety.

IV. A recognized position in military

Narratives, as well as life stories, should not only be interpreted and analyzed for the sake of accuracy, but rather for how they were described in context and how the narrators viewed them. In her story, Chen Guang might have realized that taking a foreign product or having a foreign drug did not necessarily correlate with one's nationality and political intentions. Yet, in order to achieve membership in this military group, it was necessary for her to point a finger at others and to view her report (even without proof) as patriotic. On the other hand, she also had to tolerate others pointing fingers at her, ignoring the messages sent by some of her team members regarding her position. It was obvious that her position was questionable, since all other members in the team were married women from Sichuan, identified as military soldiers' wives.

Despite those concerns, Chen Guang made an effort to master weaving techniques and displayed a strong sense of patriotism. When she recounted her suspicion about a stranger's loyalty to the Nationalist army, her sense-of-self was also revealed. Her agency was closely tied to her role within the well-structured military system and its culture, which she sought to be a part of it. Even though for a little girl to be visible and to stay in the workforce could be both stigmatized and dangerous, Chen Guang was still eager to live within the (in)secure community where her agency, position, and collective relations were in some ways

recognized and economically supported.

As Chen Guang embraced her new role and adopted the social norms within the military team (such as always being alert, observing strangers, etc.), the social connections outside her family slowly formed and reinforced her recognition of the new praxis of her multiple selves (as a worker, as a team member, but also as an outsider, as an informal labour). Her employment position during the young adult period was deemed to surpass her native communities and kin-family roles she played in other relationships, including the relationship between her and her mother.

“It was a natural process of growing-up,” she said, as an explanation for her increasing involvement in the military team over time. Therefore, there was a day when Chen Guang’s mother prepared a bag of fried beans and a boiled egg on the table, she knew it was time for separation. The next day, her mother would not make dinner and wait for her to get home:

We did not say any words for it [the separation]. I understood my mom. She had no choice but leaving me. She needed to come back to my father’s old family, even though she knew they [her father’s parents and relatives] did not want her. The [Sino-Japanese] war was almost finished, so there would be a chance for my mom to get accepted. After all, she was the mother of the grandson. And it would be too selfish if I asked her to stay with me [...]. I knew she could not make it; she already tried many years but still could not get used to a social life. My mother had been secluded at home for half of her life. I could not ask her to change it. It was not possible to change a person's characteristics. I also could not change mine.

Chen Guang, like Li Jing, also had a traumatic memory regarding her relationship with her mother. This traumatic memory was related to their feeling of not being emotionally

intimate enough with their mothers: “We did not hug each other, never,” as Chen Guang said, “I did not have a memory for kissing my mom, or being kissed by her.”

The traditional Chinese society cultivated women's virtues by using Confucian concepts. There were strict rules of male's and female's ethical and behavioural conduct within households, among social communities, and in the public arena, particularly for the members of gentry families. Hiding affections and emotions was an essential to make a woman's behaviours “proper” (Thakur 1997). And, because Chen Guang's mother was disciplined by China's hierarchical traditions and embodied those gender norms since childhood, it was difficult for her to exercise agency beyond the norms she embodied—and kissing her daughter, unfortunately, was not one of those moral manners.

A couple of years after Chen Guang came to Taiwan and became a mother, she reflected on her military years and admitted that she regretted entering her military life “too young and too early,” as she recounted:

I thought most of the people and I had no other choices under the war situation: I left home at a young age; I followed a refugee group to get a bowl of rice, and latter, joined a military working group due to the threat of war. And suddenly, I fled to Taiwan and got married soon after [...] I felt like I was being pushed by a trend to those life changes in a hurry [...]. But now when I look back, there were still many things I could have done better. [For example,] although I could not stop the separation between my mother and I, I could have made her happier while she was still together with me. [That means,] I should not have relied on the military for the living when she lived with me; or, at least, before I left her to join the retreating team, I should have told her that I loved her.

While the Chinese youth wanted to develop their own ideal life outside the family for the spirit of independence and freedom, their expectation may have differed from what their parents expected, and this was where the tension initially was found. Tension and conflicts between teenage children and parents is common in most families across cultural boundaries. Even for the Chinese families in which the notions of filial piety and harmony have been valued as the highest virtue, such an inter-generational stress is/was still not uncommon. This common family issue, however, became a trauma for some Chinese youth who left home to pursue their ideal life paths, but ended up trapped in diaspora and not being able to return home due to the severe nationwide armed conflicts.

Young adults, especially single women, suffered from the moral discipline and prejudice in China's patriarchal society. The precarious position of the unmarried women in China's society cannot only be attributed to their inferior status at home, but also in public culture where their desire for independence and/or for deeper participating in the society (e.g., to get education, living alone, and to join the labour market, etc.) had exposed them to harassment and/or to be stigmatized as dissolute, dangerous women (Liu 1993). Young women, especially those who were displaced, banished, or just happened to be "away from home" had experienced those intersectional oppressions (also, opportunities) from the new emerging authorities and hierarchical systems. However, it is also important to note that both men and women's roles, and their behaviours of resistance and obedience, were rooted in the

same interlocking systems of oppression that can have both positive and negative effects (Crenshaw 1989). In other words, they saw the chance, and they paid the price.

V. Summary

As the stories in this chapter show, China's revolution and nationalist campaigns grew alongside with ideological conflicts between communities and inside the families. Those conflicts might have granted Chinese youth the opportunity to abandon their old (and ancient) ways of living; yet, the chance was not granted by a de-gendered liberal trend or social movement. Men and women paid different prices for the decision of leaving home, and their backward journeys also came with different degrees of risk and difficulty. As Ruth Behar (1996:144-6) has addressed the similar case of Cuban diasporas in *The Vulnerable Observer*, it was not leaving but "the obstacles to return" that made people vulnerable, made them feel displaced; and, particularly for the narrators in this research, made them lose the chance to reconcile with their families and their past.

The profound impacts of contemporary China's revolution and revolutionary movements on ordinary people's livelihood have rarely been discussed, or at least not often recounted by female story lines. One of the most serious impacts on those people was that the long-lasting political reforms had caused an irreconcilable breakdown in family relationships. Those relationships were irreconcilable because the nationwide confrontation between the armed campaigns had severe and long lasting effects. The younger generation,

who had once been supporters of the nationalist reformers and had actively pursued their new "modern" way of life, ended up with a certain degree of regret over the loss of their family members and/or their long-term absence from their hometowns.

As the feeling of regret was often mentioned when the interviewed women recalled their memories of childhood or adolescence from the perspective of their older years, they often combined the first-person description and the third-person judgment in the same spoken stories. They all have unspoken words that they wanted to say, just like Li Jing felt regretful for not being able to make a proper good-bye, Yong Xing felt regret joining the Youth Army, and Chen Guang had not yet expressed her love to her mother before they parted ways. Those unspoken words have been brought up again during the interviews and recalled in their stories about "leaving home". To represent those story implies an autonomous action taken, a subjective social practice, which made these women put themselves in the centre of the narratives and reflect on their own agency and subjective beings in these larger historical contexts. And, for all its power of storytelling, we may start to shift our attention from the question "how we can know women's perspective and experiences in a socio-historical event" to "how those events may serve women's stories."

Chapter 5: Military Violence and the Reluctant Marriage

There was a day in the retreating team my friend and I, two girls, went up to a hill to pick up wood for cooking. When we walked back, a soldier boy suddenly came to us and said: “Give you [my] money; Give you [my] money.” We were scared to death, yet [we] immediately knew what he wanted to get from us with the money (i.e., to get/buy the sex). So, we yelled at him loudly and tried to threaten him: “We know your face; we are in the same [military] team. If you dare to come closer, we will hit you with wood and report you!” [...] At that time, we two were already close to the front gate, so we were lucky. But the soldier boy still stood over and groped our breasts a few seconds before running away...I tell you, soldier boys were the especially bad ones. My friend and I were both young so we dared to fight back. We did not yet realize how dangerous our seemingly brave reaction really was. Now I can tell you, it was stupid... [Do] you know what happened afterward? A girl was killed! Her body had been found on the hill; the same hill where I picked up the wood. It must be a soldier boy in our camp who killed the girl [because] local people could not enter the camping area. I tell you, the soldier who insulted [raped] the girl did not want to cause a trouble, so he simply killed her. And he knew no officials would care about a missing girl because in the retreating team we [girls/women] had no names and no seats [positions] to prove our existence.

~~ Shaw Mei¹⁶ (interviewed on Aug. 10, 2017)

I. Introduction: Military, Women, and Violence

Chinese political leaders and state-owned media have recognized the need to preserve the collective past of the country in order to bolster their political legitimacy; therefore, they have embraced the idea that “the rise of today's great nation”¹⁷ is directly derived (and

¹⁶ Born in 1933, Shaw Mei came from a long line of a Chinese medical family in a small country town in Shandong province. Her father, grandfather, uncles and two brothers were all Chinese traditional medicine practitioners who used acupuncture and herbs to treat patients. Yet, when a guerrilla organization occupied her hometown, the new authority banned the Chinese medicine/herb-drug clinics—as an anti-imperialist action to “eliminate the superstition”—and forced local medics to either change their career or adapt to Western medical practice. After seeing two relatives had been arrested and died in the jail due to their continued access to patients, Shaw Mei’s father decided to buy a position in Chiang Kai-shek’s army to ally with a power greater than the local guerrilla force. Through this position, he also successfully fled from the gang controlled areas and further arranged to have his whole family (including Shaw Mei) retreat to Taiwan.

¹⁷ Originally called “The Rise of Great Nations” and latter, “The Rise of the Great China,” this idea was introduced and promoted by CCP’s previous chairman Hu Jin-tao (he was also the president of China from 2003

benefitted) from yesterday's revolution and fighters. This approach has been widely acknowledged and accepted by Chinese people at large. It is still very common nowadays to hear older Chinese people recalling the Revolutionary period as the "Golden Age" of contemporary China, and continuing to praise the heroism and warriors/veterans for their sacrifice and glory on the battlefields.

In this chapter, however, I argue that current discussions about China's armed rebellions and its highly praised rebel culture do not accurately reflect the experiences of ordinary people during prolonged periods of military conflict. Particularly, we rarely learn how masculinist culture was found and institutionalized in Chinese warrior values and intertwined with other power systems, and thereby, threatened women's safety in their everyday lives. Shaw Mei's life story, as an example presented at the start of this chapter, highlights the issue of sexual harassment (and violence) against the members with less power (such as female members, dependents, exiles, refugees) or against those who came from specific classes, ethnicities, or nationalities (such as the Muslims, the Japanese-born women). The power dynamic between genders, as a factor in power relationships, is always intertwined with other hierarchical structures and societal class. However, most of the time, the perspectives and experiences of those with more power and higher status can mask the unique forms of

to 2013). It emphasizes the "historical lessons" for the development of China's future prosperity and its position as a global power with regard to both military and economic aspects.

discrimination faced by the individuals living at the bottom of the group (Mckinnon 2013). As a historian Yu Chien-ming (2014:24) utilizes similar life stories in her book *Home is Nowhere, Home is Everywhere* to illustrate that when girls and young women in exile were subjected to abuse or harassment by soldiers, other military and police personnel would usually choose to cover up their "brother's crime", while at the same time demanding that the victim remain silent about it. This conventional practice, particularly among military-affiliated groups, aligned with China's strict cultural norms that expected female virtue of silence and with the intertwined masculine hierarchy where the bond of brotherhood is highly prized.

Throughout the years of brutal conflicts, the Chinese women in this research suffered from war-related violence, harassment, and physical assaults—not merely on the frontlines but, chiefly, in domestic spaces where the dominating military men displayed a variety of violent and misogynist performances associated with patriarchy and masculinity in their communities and homes. This pervading phenomenon, as it was highlighted and frequently recounted by the narrators during the interviews, however, has often been ignored in public discussion, or worse, been justified as the manifestations of men's power and patriotic ethos.

Not all Chinese diasporic women worldwide needed to deal with the threat of military power, or at least, not all of them suffered from it for long periods. In this research, however,

the participants who fled to Taiwan via KMT's military or administrative systems,¹⁸ to a certain degree, had all been involved in KMT's military-associated groups during their retreat from the mainland to Taiwan. In order to study the changes in Chinese women's social gender roles and relationships as they moved from a family-oriented lifestyle to a collective military lifestyle, we may first examine their situational constraints and ambiguous positions in the military system, which can further help us to examine women's social acts of not-taking, such as their avoidance behaviours, resistance, and refusal to take on certain responsibilities or engage with certain people. Focusing on diasporic women's "not-taking" behaviours, is very likely the starting point where the Chinese women became aware of their "situational-constraints" that related to, or were caused by, female's inferior roles and precarious status in the Chinese patriarchal context.

As many of the participants noted, it was the obstacle to returning home that forced them into the situation of diaspora, of displacement and of family separation, and that placed them

¹⁸ Based on research participants' memories, I learned that it cost at least five taels of gold (around 187.5 grams) to buy a private/business boat ticket from Shanghai to Taiwan during 1948-49, while the average monthly salary in the job market—according to a narrator's memories in urban areas—was huge different between \$15-\$45 (e.g., factory worker, kitchen helper, sailor, nurse, corporal and private soldier) and \$300-\$400 (e.g., university faculty, trade accountant, train engineer, air force pilot). Additionally, from the narrative data in historian Hsu's published oral history series "Life Experiences of Taiwanese in Manchuria during Japanese Colonial Era," we also learn that one tael of gold was worth \$6000 to \$8000 dollars in China in 1948-1949, whereas five taels of gold could "easily buy a big single house" at the time (Hsu 2014:264-340). Therefore, we may roughly estimate that it would cost an average family two to ten years of their income to buy only one person's boat ticket from the Mainland to Taiwan. In other words, for the average person/family attempting to escape to Taiwan at the time, joining the Nationalist military or aligning with the KMT party may have been their only means of escape.

in a powerless position. Yet, although their experience of diaspora was widely shared, the participants still perceived it differently. Some of the women felt that joining the KMT partisan system and relying on it for shelter and financial support was a better (or the only) option for them to survive in this harsh wartime situation. Other participants, however, were of the opinion that they had to endure the severe consequences of displacement and exile from their hometowns because of their association with (or capture by) the Nationalist military forces.

In the first scenario, in general, the women held a rather neutral, and in a few cases, positive, opinion about their lives and their free-labour services in the military enclaves. Their bonds with the KMT party-state prevented them from standing in a distanced-role, and hence it would be harder for them to adopt an objective viewpoint to practice “the most profitable strategies of distinction” in response to changing circumstances and the new settings of the environment (Bourdieu 1984:282). That is to say, they internalized the demanding orders of the military, embodying their loyalty and close relationship to the authority through the regularity of practicing these orders in the course of their everyday life. Meanwhile, because their social practices were formulated and manipulated by those orders in the enclaves, their social positions were thus also tied to, and structured by the rules of their situated social structures.

In contrast, in the second scenario, for the women who blamed the Nationalists for

launching the domestic wars, they were more likely to view their position from an objective, and sometimes critical perspectives. Hence, they were also more often to explicitly describe themselves as the “war victims” engulfed in nostalgia and grievance. During the interviews, these women also showed a different attitude from the interviewees in the first scenario: they were either lacking of interest to discuss this part of their past memories, or expressed an intense tension between the oppressive military environment and their imposed gender roles (i.e., as female soldiers, recruited students or medical crews, soldier’s undocumented wives or girlfriends, arrested suspects, cooks and maids, comfort ladies or sex workers, and so on.). Additionally, for the narrators who attempted to conceal, hide, or reject remembering their past involvements with the military systems, they were also more aware of the conventional power-relations between men and women, especially between “the men in uniform” and the women as the dependents.

From the narrator’s perspectives, we learned that women in the military were living and working together with their male counterparts, but their memberships and positions did not get recognized for decades. Therefore, they were not being protected, but rather were living at risk if they had not followed orders from the men in authority. Due to this, many of the women who were forced to be part of the military groups tended to show a passive or indifference attitude toward their lives and relationships with their male counterparts. They might also keep themselves in silence for the sake of keeping a distance from the men in

authorities, and expressing their own reluctance to assume the roles and the role duties being forced upon them.

II. A Classmate was Killed

With deep-water ports and active marine industry, Qingdao (also spelled Tsingtao) and the nearby Jiaozhou Bay Area has a strategic location for China's economic and international trade. But also because of its prominent location, this territory was almost always occupied by foreign powers: It was initially held by Imperial Germany Navy as its colony since the late nineteenth century. And subsequently, after the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, this territory had been lease-transferred to Japan for another decades-long occupation (So 2019). As part of Qingdao's foreign colonial history under the German, the Japanese, and their overlapped periods, Chinese residents in this region also actively aided foreign campaigns to run this slightly ungovernable city and worked for them as interpreters, trade assistants, construction and factory workers, entertainment and service provider, etc.

The occupied areas, such like Tianjin, Qingdao, Shanghai, Canton, at the time were actually the more peaceful and prosperous regions. For the common Chinese populace during the wartime, having a chance to live in these cities also meant getting an opportunity for upward social mobility—for example, to obtain higher-pay jobs off the farm, to acquire formal education (normally, via the church systems), and, as the narrators in this research addressed, to make the escape easier because of its convenient transportation.

Fung Ping: A Student's Forced Marriage

The research participant Fung Ping and her great family members all lived in a small village nearby Qingdao. Like other villagers, her family relatives were also eager to integrate themselves into this prosperous, fast-growing city whenever they could. In particular, Fung Ping's grandmother strongly wanted her to marry to Qingdao and make a living from/by a man in the city. Because people from the rural areas needed to possess a “permanent urban residency certificate” to be able to work, get an education, and buy property in the city, it was a frequent practice for country families to marry one of their daughters to a city man in order to obtain their family’s first urban residency certificate; and later, the married daughter would sponsor other family members to move to the city. As she noted:

My grandmother...she was just not a kind person. Because my parents only had one child and my father died early. She thought marrying me to Qingdao would be a good idea. Because, if I left home to live in the city, my father’s inherited land would have been reallocated to her two other sons in the household division....She was so crafty that she did not tell me this information. Instead, she just said if I wanted to continue my study, I had to marry a man in Qingdao and go there to get a higher education.

It was/is a perpetuated cultural norm that taking a daughter’s marriage to serve as a resource for her family. For the purposes of exchanging capitals and creating connections between different clans and communities, a marriage arrangement was/is usually processed through a series of careful calculation by the eldest family members (i.e., the grandparents), and sometimes even the parents of the groom or bride would not have a power to lead the

process. For example, out of forty-four women who have been interviewed in this research, only two women reported that their marriages were based on “freedom and love” (they knew, and were familiar with their spouses before the wedding), which could not be taken as representative in contemporary China’s marriage arrangement. For the rest of the participants, they followed the tradition and understood that the availability of a husband to a woman was determined largely by the attributes of her family backgrounds, her parent’s socio-economic standing, and the household head’s preference.

At the age of around thirteen to fourteen, Fung Ping was sensitive to her grandmother’s intention to marrying her off, but the political wind was not on her side: some anti-Japanese guerrillas came to her village school and recruited all the students into their team. A local school suddenly became a militia school and the campus had been turned into a military hiding site:

The Japanese could not catch the real guerillas so they turned to us, the innocent countryside students for revenge. We were not involved in any of their battles; we were just unlucky that our school had been occupied. And one of my classmates was especially the unlucky one that, because he was taller and older than other classmates, he was targeted and caught. I watched the whole process in person. A Japanese soldier plunged a bayonet into his body, tied his feet together and hung him in the closet. That was not even enough; after torturing him, they set fire to burn out the entire classroom. My classmate was, literally, burned to death...I knew him well; we studies together every day. I can guarantee that he was a nice person and his family’s background was also clean. We were all farmers. He was not like what they [the Japanese soldiers] called him, you know, a criminal, a thug.

The unprecedented massacre on campus increased students’ sense of precariousness, and

they all feared that additional bloodsheds and rampage incidents could happen again. This means that after the classmate was killed, Fung Ping and her classmates' lives could no longer be put back in the previous harmony, as she remembered: “the Japanese officials had a bad image of us because our school had been infiltrated by rebels. Chinese militias were also suspicious of us because their secret hiding spot was probably reported by one of us.” Fung Ping, therefore, lived under those pressures and harassments for a lengthy period of time, as she remembered, “whenever the armed men came to my house, no matter from which campaigns, my mother had to hide me under the sorghum-sacks in the backyard. For many times, these armed men even raided our house in search of me.”

Fung Ping’s mother, along with other members of her extended family, knew what could have happened if a young adolescent girl had been taken away by soldier men. Therefore, it became urgent and necessary to finalize a marriage arrangement to send her to the safer place—the big urban city Qingdao, according to Fung Ping’s grandmother, was ideally suited.

In Fung Ping’s village, most women married within a short distance from their natal homes. A new bride could therefore come back to her mother’s house for a visit of few days if she did not adjust well to her husband’s family. It was also common practice that married daughters would come back to their natal families to help with farm work in busy seasons. Those visits and helps create the possibilities of a transfer of resources from the husband’s communities to that of the wife. And, more importantly, the living quality of a young bride’s

marriage life would be checked frequently by her natal relatives (usually, by her older kin-brothers) through those inter-family visits. Fung Ping's marriage arrangement, however, did not follow this convention. Her grandparents wished she did not return to the village to inherit her father's land. Meanwhile, as her previous (suspect) "militia" status already created controversy and rumours in the village, she did not have the advantage of choosing a husband in the surrounding areas.

In the end, Fung Ping was sent to Qingdao to live together with her future husband, a man who had been her father's old colleague and was sixteen years older than her, whom she used to call "uncle." This arrangement did not conform to the usual ceremony for an engaged couple. To be specific, her husband's family did not hire a matchmaker to introduce the family members of their respective sides; her parents-in-law did not prepare a new wedding dress and rouge veil for the bride; and even the wedding ceremony was skipped.

For those specific life-changing moments that have been remembered and recounted even after the difficult moment was passed for decades, to recall and speak out about those traumatic memories is an important subjective act to the narrators on the level that their "desire to explain" grants them the possibility of resembling the knowing (and not-knowing) "real matters" about their selves and their subjected world (Spivak 2007:103-4). Nevertheless, every explanation has secured and assured a subjective "being-in-the-world," as demonstrated by Spivak (2007:143-4), it shows the narrator's willingness "to have a self;" it

serves individual's role of expression; and it reflects how the realities "can be expressed *as*" from the narrator's position.

Expression alone is a very subjective activity, encompassing many complex procedures and considerations, which require the story-teller/interpreter to bridge the gap between his/her thinking context and the object s/he is interpreting: in this case, his/her own life history texts. To speak of a problem and to provide certain kinds of situational explanation about the problem would be, from this reflective perspective, both personal and political—it is personal and political for the narrators who insist on talking about certain problems, and it is also personal and political for those people who show a state of indifference (non-preference) toward the problems of life.

Speaking—and linking—a personal memory to a public (con)text thus is a complicated operation that carries a person's presupposition of the explainable objective fact (the memory remembered as a fact) and his/her own explaining subjective account (the memory that can be managed through the subjective acts of expressing). As such, aside from sharing her family and marriage stories, Fung Ping also provided her insight and personal reflection about how she analyzed her own past during the interview. In contrary to what mainstream ideas usually assert about marriage as a Chinese woman's top priority, Fung Ping underscored the meaning of studying, and prioritized the weight of education in her life. As she concluded her life history: "Even so, I did not regret attending that school. Although what happened over there

may seem tragic in retrospect, I still think being able to read is worth everything.”

III. But soldiers could not stop us from Singing

In aforementioned Fung Ping's story, we learned women were vulnerable to Chinese patrilineal hierarchy and army violence wielded by the power of politics and masculinity. And, as I would like to reiterate, the power of masculinity in Chinese civilization is deeply rooted in the spirit of China's state-fatherhood and functioned through the perpetuated Confucian ethics. That is to say, masculine power in the (pan-) Chinese society was/is dominant in both cultural and political meaning (see Yang 1999; Hershatter 2007). Fung Ping's story was not a rare case. Similar stories regarding to the abrupt change of contemporary China's political climate, and how the changing political climate had significantly affected ordinary people's life paths, were often acknowledged by several other narratives in this research.

For those who were susceptible to the crisis environment, especially the women who remained trapped in Chinese patriarchal gender role and its related oppressive gender social norms, it would be more challenging for them to adapt to the negative consequences of the revolution-driven social changes. Sometimes, because lacking of social resources and status, they appeared to accept the daily bruises as just a matter of course; whereas, in other situations, they might be more inclined to change their daily routines or to take positive actions for a potential change, *if* the circumstances and environment allowed.

One of the strategies that young adult women might adopt to improve their daily living

was to participate in the public sectors of the government or of the military, and hence to seek out jobs for their own livelihoods. While the private business market at the time still held a relatively conservative attitude regarding to the employment of women in the labour market; China's political elites were more open to recruiting females into their campaigns "for the greater cause of nationalism and patriotism" and as part of the concerted effort to restore this nation's power (Chow 1990:88). For example, the president Chang Kai-shek has recruited female students into the Nationalist Youth Arm throughout the nation for many times; and his fellow, General Sun Li-jen, also established "Mulan Corp" in his troop to enhance Nationalist government's reputation and to rally young adult women into the military labour forces.

Figure 6 "The Reminiscences of Women's Corps"



Source: Chen San-ching, Chu Hong-yuan, and We Mei-hui. (1995). *The Reminiscences of Women's Corps* (女青年工作大隊訪問紀錄). Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica. ISBN: 957-671-363-3

Sun Ru: The Nurse Forced to Stay in the Military

Although the changes in the socio-political environment often occurred overnight,

people's corresponding adjustments, reactions, and changes in behaviour—as the countermeasures that individuals would take to reconcile and overcome their situational constraints (Berry 1992)—usually required some extra effort and time to process. The narrator Sun Ru (born in 1927 in Manchuria) was an example of someone who had been drafted (and captured) into both the Nationalist Youth Army and the Communist Red Army for frontline emergency medical services. Prior to that, she had already studied in nursing program for three years and worked as an intern in a local hospital in Manchuria (now, it is the Liaoning province, located in the Northeast region of China). Because she was one of the few who could read and use German medical equipment, her role and reputation in the military medical aid team was crucial and high. Her rare talent was famous in her school and community. However, her fame also caused many of the military campaigns and local forces of the time to seek her out and recruit her. As a result, she was often caught and captured by various campaigns and asked to work for them.

While Sun Ru enjoyed working for both the local hospital and the front lines, she was also well aware that her military service was compelled upon her. For example, in her life story, her experiences as a drafted person have been framed particularly in terms of the failure of China's self-governing hospital policy.

By critiquing the fragility and shortcomings of China's hospital system, Sun Ru's life story narrative points out her own vulnerable position within the system in a specific way:

She drew parallels between the lack of independence in the Chinese medical system and her own lack of freedom as a female worker in the military, highlighting the intersectional nature of these inequalities, as she argued:

At least three times I had been drafted into different campaigns, and I had fled and been caught even more times. It was because our hospital could not take a neutral stance, we medical personnel could not do our jobs to save other people's lives. We nurses were trained to help people yet we even could not protect ourselves. [...] unidentified forces just occupied our hospital and claimed that we were all under their control. Those declarations, conflicts, and occupations just happened to me again and again like a cycle, like a routine. Our works were constantly controlled by different armed forces, and those soldiers all claimed that their charge was with the authority.

According to Sun Ru, there were young women being drafted into the armed campaigns as military personnel yet without knowing why they were taking part in the battles or for whom they were fighting (and serving). As with those young people, Sun Ru was also unsure of why she kept working with soldiers; and meanwhile, she was also filled with doubts while fleeing long distances with the Nationalists. Her previous experience as a specialist nurse did not bring her any advantage in the troop. According to her narratives, the commander treated her and other female nurses "like a maid, like a servant" (quoted from her words). In addition to this, the other male officers in the team also treated her and her female comrades in a disrespectful manner

In reality, the appeal of women's involvement in army campaigns actually led to only one thing: they were forced to conform to the "military standard," which was a standard

based on and privileged for the male gender. Nevertheless, the masculine hierarchy also privileged military men in the system by encouraging, or at least not sanctioning, their aggressive and violent behaviours. These interlocking structures of military and masculine oppression place women at risk of sex and gender hostile environments; and this situation was compounded by the fact that female members of the system did not have the same rights as their male counterparts (Yang 1999:45). As Sun Ru revealed, she felt that living with those fellow men in the same environment was a "very painful" experience. However, perhaps due to the fact that it was the "government" that she was employed and working for, Sun Ru never tried to run away but simply learned to endure her uncomfortable feeling.

Sun Ru's entrenched aversion to military guys around her was intense. Her discomfort toward those male soldiers and officers was stark and embodied. At one point, she even vomited uncontrollably after having a common conversation with the men. During the long process of retreating with the Nationalist campaign, the only thing that could comfort Sun Ru's feelings of loneliness and homesickness was singing; it was also the only leisure that she had. As she remembered:

In the beginning I was just crying under a tree; then, that was what happened naturally—I started to sing. Other female comrades heard the song and then they came closer to me; their voices joined along with mine. Very soon, we started to sing together and cried together. Our sounds and our moods echoed each other, and every girl was out there to sing through the night. I guess we were just all scared, too scared.

Although Sun Ru herself did not try to run away from the military, she had a goal to stop her male colleagues from recruiting (or very likely, capturing or kidnapping) more women and girls into the army groups. Her intention was simple, and so was her plan to accomplish it: She gathered her “singing group” at the night before their military troop was about to enter a new village. And, during the night, she and her female fellows would particularly sing military songs or marching songs in a louder volume and for a longer period of the time.¹⁹ As a girl who grew out in a village often looted by thugs, bandits and armed soldiers, Sun Ru was well acquainted with the routine of predatory: whenever the villagers heard the strange sound outside the village, they would prepare themselves to run away. What she needed to do was simply to warn those local people a little bit earlier, to let them have the time to evacuate before the plundering.

Sun Ru's plan was that whenever the sound of their singing began to rise during the night (before the day when the troop would officially enter the village), the singing would alert the local villagers to either flee or to prepare for the coming of the armed outsiders. And, as she sincerely believed, this strategy had already averted many of those unnecessary tragedies:

¹⁹ This was the second part of a popular Chinese patriotic anthem *The Trilogy of Exile* (流亡三部曲) to which Sun Ru referred in here. Based on her memory, some of the lyrics of the song are: “There is no difference between yours and mine; there is no difference between the rich and the poor. When the enemy starts to kill, eventually everyone will die in the same way.” Other than that, other patriotic songs, such as *A River of Red* (滿江紅), have also been commonly mentioned in those life stories.

Our arrival would be a catastrophe for the villagers. I knew, because I used to be one of them. So every time before entering into a new village, I [We] sang patriotic songs loudly. I [We] wanted to warn those local villagers about our arrival. My hope was that the villagers would hear our songs and would be better prepared for the retreat. By singing the military songs, I also hope the villagers got my warning message that we were not travellers; we were armies.

In Sun Ru's life story, she made it clear that she did not like the violent, oppressive military environment and the atmosphere attached to the environment, and especially expressed her resentment for living a life with those armed soldiers around her. Yet, probably because having stayed in such an enclosed environment also limited her social connection and marriage choices, eventually Sun Ru still married to a civilian official who worked together with her in the same regiment. And, soon after they got married, she was asked to quit her nursing job and permanently left the Youth Army.

From the beginning until the end, Sun Ru's service and relations with the military were defined by her gender role, not personal preferences or work duties. Although she had the professional skill that should have qualified her position in the system, her role as a woman still put her in a disadvantage status. Thus, we learned that despite Sun Ru's knowledge and medical profession was scarce in military campaigns, she was still requested to resign after the marriage. Unsurprisingly, her leaving and sacrifice was regarded as an opportunity that provided to her, and also to other married women, to resume Chinese woman's essential role as a wife and to fulfill women's the highest duty: reproduction (Chow 1990).

IV. Brief Summary

China's rapid social changes and chaotic political environment pushed people to change their old routines of lives. Yet those changes were still related to the deeper logic of Chinese culture, particularly, the masculine culture. Gender relationship also reflect this logic. For example, Chinese women would have more chances to work in the public sphere and to earn a livelihood for themselves during the wartime, but those social reforms did not reverse the gendered power relations and masculine hegemony that were grounded in Chinese civilization. Thus, those new options and opportunities for women, still, could not empower them on the level that to get an equal status and/or to share the power from their male counterparts.

By collecting and reflecting Chinese diasporic women's first-person accounts, to a greater extent on the socio-political reforms, in this chapter we learned that social agent's practices could not be isolated from the constrained environments in which they embedded and inhabited. And, more importantly, it was the social constraints associated with the the social re/actions that gave the actor a "self," a social role to confront and negotiate with the forces and stresses from the outer environment.

Marriage arrangement, as an example in this chapter, was perceived in Chinese culture as the most important social practice, despite it was often not a practice that made by the actors themselves. It is not deniable that marriage arrangement profoundly affected young adult

women's early career and life choices, including those of whom worked and live in the military troop.

With all the concerns that entails women's reflection and thinking, in this chapter we see Chinese women addressed the abiding connections between violence and marriage in their life courses; although the connection had been sometimes understood as a personal matter whereas at other times it had been defined as a matter of political reality, those connections and relations were always intertwined with the power relations that the narrators learned and inhabited. We should thus acknowledge that the narrator's attempts to put their agency in the process of telling/representing those "links" between personal matters to the greater socio-political contexts were, fundamentally, an "action" at stake for the story-tellers to resist, and respond to, the (perceived) social constraints by all means.

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Chapter 6. Diasporic Mothers in the Military Enclaves

Dealing with kids was no doubt the most arduous task for me when came to Taiwan. It [being a mother] was totally not the same thing as you tended to think in your generation. Young mothers today could easily access to childcare information from internet, TV news, and clinic doctors. But when I delivered and raised my children at the time, I knew nothing about how to look after them. [As an example,] I did not have breast milk and did not know what could substitute for infant food, so I had to try many experiments on my own children: Sweet water, salty soup, rice powder, fried flour, [etc.], in the morning I mixed ingredients with different amounts of water at different temperatures; and at night I prayed, wondering and hoping the food I made could be appropriate for babies to digest. My two sons, poor kids, still very often suffered from either diarrhea or vomit... It was not until I watched my daughter-in-law prepare food for my grandchild that I finally knew—It was [probably] not because of the food but the unsterilized bottles that made my sons often sick in their childhood. Yet, back then, where could I learn the hygiene information? How could I know baby's bottles should be boiled before use? I did not even know [what] bacterium [was].

—Liu Ying (interviewed on Aug. 8, 2017)

I. Introduction:

This chapter is concerned with the challenging aspects of motherhood and diasporic women's frustrated feelings that emerged from raising children alone and/or from taking up their mothering tasks in unsupportive military enclaves.²⁰ Most of the Chinese women in this research retreated to Taiwan in their young adulthood (around the ages of eighteen to twenty) and hence often felt that they were not mature enough to handle parenting tasks in the highly

²⁰ The state-constructed Chinese wartime migrant enclaves in Taiwan (so-called *Juancun* 眷村), can be widely referred to military dependent's villages, unregistered personnel or lower-status soldier's slum settlements (the Chinese inner cities), state-owned enterprise/factory dormitories, police quarters, and public faculty houses. These unique Chinese refugee/diaspora settlements—often surrounded with defensible iron or bamboo fences around and security checkpoint in front—were established by the Kumintang (KMT) government to settle the families of deployed Chinese soldiers and civil service personnel. The development and maintenance of these enclaves indicates KMT's intension of executing an ethnic separation policy in Taiwan; whereas, it also revealed KMT regime's lack of trust in the Taiwanese people and its closer political control over the mainland fleeing population (Wang 2005:109).

mobile, de-territorialised, and trans-ethnic “diaspora condition” (Anthias 1998). The specific pattern of living in insecure public housing (lacking the rights of property ownership) and being deprived of access to local public information (particularly regarding healthcare and childcare) considerably increased younger diasporic women’s vulnerability to the drudgery of motherhood. Nevertheless, under the agony/painful shadow of just losing—and being banished from—the Mainland/homeland, the Chinese diasporic population in Taiwan often professed a bleak way of thinking. As an intellectual Wang Hong-ju recounted how he perceived diasporic Chinese’s mental process in early postwar years in Taiwan: “[T]he most serious problem is that the youth are divorced from the reality of our age and from their duty. [...] if young people do not have high aspirations and great capabilities, or worst: that they are not willing to take the responsibility [...] who can we count on, and do we still have any future?” (Wang 1961:7 in Hsiau 2010:13).

Being inactive and melancholic, living under the suppression of the authoritarian state, and often feeling confused about their oscillating positions as “both internal and external” diasporas/refugees in Taiwan (Gronewold 2004:59), the uncertain yet threatening political climate compelled those quasi-refugee diasporas to safeguard the “orthodox Chinese” ideology within the ethnic boundary/ghetto (Chang 2005; Simon 2006; Yang and Chang 2010). Scholars believe the first-generation diasporic Chinese often inhabited a “psychological disposition” that tied their experience of 1949 trauma to the support of

Kumontang (KMT) state's Chinese Recovery discourses and policies (Corcuff 2011:41; also see Martin & Gate 1981; Li 1997). Similar to other war-caused diaspora situations around the world, Mainlanders' mentality and social practices were performed in a way that collectively committed to the real, ideal, or imagined "home culture" on the one hand; and simultaneously eschewed the chances to integrate deeper into the host society on the other side (Safran 1991:83-84; Brubaker 2005:5-7). In stark contrast to most of the other diasporic communities, however, Mainlanders' desire of returning-home was not only their own sentiment, but firmly attached to the officially disseminated Chinese-nation proclamations in the receiving society of Taiwan.

What is at stake here is the Martial Law, lasting from 1949 to 1987, in which the bond with a fixed origin—the orthodox China—was subjected, constructed, and strengthened. Mainland China was therefore the only cultural place to which both local Taiwanese and Chinese civil war diasporas shall ultimately belong, including those Mainlander men's wives who came to Taiwan for an international marriage and/or those women of Chinese ancestry but were actually born and grew up in other countries/regions outside the Mainland (e.g. Manchuria, Korea, Thai-Burma-Yunnan border, Vietnam, Hainan, Hong Kong). Oppositional ideologies and heterodox cultural practices—such as wearing kimono (as the Manchurians and Taiwanese women did), learning or speaking Taiwan's local dialects, or seeking medical treatments from Japanese-trained clinicians and midwives in Taiwan's local communities—

were intrinsically forbidden, or at least needed to occur behind the scenes.

As aforementioned, nation-state ideology played an important role in structuring Mainlander's passive feeling of (not-)belonging in the postwar society of Taiwan. Additionally, this nationhood-centered ideology limited Mainlander's livelihood choices and their potential economic opportunities in the new land because for many decades, Taiwan's ruling leaders (namely, the KMT elites) did not extend their political awareness to the notion that Taiwan could be developed as Mainlander's new home. Ordinary Mainlander women—especially for those dependents who lived under KMT's strict ideological control over communities and thus suffered from its accompanying political surveillance and propaganda apparatus—could hardly be totally naive about their compelling gender-roles and gender-role ideologies under those politically and culturally codified positioning principles (Lu 2004:238). Life for those women in diasporic situations was, therefore, “doubly painful;” as Clifford (1994:314) acknowledged, they were “struggling with the material and spiritual insecurities of exile, with the demands of family and [ideological] work, and with the claims of old and new patriarchies.”

II. The Scapegoat

Like their male counterparts in the game of politics, diasporic women clearly knew that their positions and social relations had been systematically targeted in order to ensure the power of the nation-state (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989; Yuval-Davis 1997). In the special

case of the postwar Taiwan particularly, the KMT regime made the greatest effort to maintain its Chinese orthodoxy's position, representative, and legitimacy on the global stage. The authority and the dominant voices therefore appeared to show a strong appetite to resort back to the Confucianism-based definition of womanhood, in a way that kept emphasizing Chinese women's traditional virtues as the family servers with the spirit of dedication and loyalty to their husbands and to their country (Lieberman 1998:33; Wang 2012:62-63). Old Chinese proverbs—such like the Confucian terminology definition of “Good Wife, Wise Mother” or folk street slangs: “Marry to a cock, Follow the cock; Marry to a dog, Follow a dog;” and “Woman should be beaten [by household heads] to become a good wife [just like] the plain flour need to be kneaded [by the cook] to become a good dough”—had been therefore widely adopted again in the society (despite the fact that those antiquated moral codes were once dismissed by the same KMT elites in the “Free China” movements during the revolution period) for the sake of promoting and re/presenting the “authentic” Chinese culture in Taiwan and in the eyes of the international communities.

Here motherhood lies at the very heart in the exhortation. The picture of “being an orthodox Chinese” painted by public-opinion leaders and government defenders, though had been widely employed and legitimated, entailed “discursive and symbolic discrimination against their female counterpart” (Chao and Hou 1995:125). To a considerable degree, the appeal of the traditional Chinese womanhood reinforced, and over-homogenized, women's

reproductive role and its extended ethical responsibilities. All other social values and life pursuits (i.e. to have a career, to earn income, to be independent, to get educated) were perceived as less important than the traditional cultural constructions of women's innate obligation—that was, childbearing and child rearing (Edward & Roces 2000:8). Motherhood in the institutional contexts had been therefore demonstrated as women's highest "sacred duty," which continued the patrilineal-line of the families, strengthened the power of the nation-state, and more importantly, reproduced the future generations for orthodox "ideal" Chinese culture's transmission and inheritance (Lindenmeyer 2001:431; Lu 2004:83; Liamputtong & Spitzer 2007:225).

To criticize those prevalently represented patriarchal discourses, Chao and Hou (1995) asserted women's feminine innocence had been used as the "scapegoat" to camouflage Nationalist authority's troublesome identity politics, along with its ambiguous "Orthodox Chinese" ideology. But women were not really naive or indifferent to their burden and inferior position in the ruling relations. They complied with those requests because they had also seen a self-interest that motivated them to endorse government's (obviously problematic) gender ideology. More accurately to say, from the standpoint of the diasporic women leading lives in the environment where the masculine (and military-supported) hierarchy made women dependent on men for shelter and food, motherhood was not perceived by them as a "sacred calling," but more like a tactical exchange in the "patriarchal bargaining;" (to borrow

Kandiyoti's (1988:281) term); or, like a strategy for women to better survive in the game of patriarchy.

Thus, the institutional importance of motherhood could not be underestimated, especially with regard to how it values or devalues women's rights as citizens, and how it trivializes or empowers women's self-respect as child bearers and family caregivers in different spatial and socio-cultural contexts (McDowell 1999:171). It is also important here to detail the research participants' domestic positions in the context of a diasporic situation: without Marriage Law or natal family's support to anchoring a young bride's marriage status, a wife's relationship with her spouse in diaspora was often very fragile. Some of the interviewed women, for example, learned the profound lesson that a wife's marriage status could be easily denied or be replaced by other women just because her husband changed his mind or preference.

Nevertheless, it would be difficult for a diasporic woman to remain sheltered in her dependent's community if she lost her dependent status (such as being a wife or mother). It was then clear, in comparison with diasporic women's unstable relationship with her often absent husband, being a mother was actually a more solid position and could bring these women concrete benefits as transforming their status from the nameless dependents to the "new found status as national subjects," provided that they could at least stay within certain bounds in the communities in Taiwan (Runyan 2012:203).

Mok-yah: A Muslim Mother's journey

One such reflective life story is that of Mok-yah, an ethnic Hui woman who grew up in the Chinese Muslim community in Lanzhou (the capital of Gansu in the northwest China). Hui communities in that area usually kept a safe distance from the Han people because the differences of their cultures, languages, and religions—also, because for long years these two groups had a strong argument/conflict over the issue of opium cultivation and trade. Mok-yah, the daughter of an opium businessman, however, decided to marry a Han air-force soldier, a stranger who came from Henan (the province located in the central part of China). There were several reasons to support her decision. First, although she was not familiar with the Han culture, she thought Han people did not have a strong religious tendency. A good example, as she noted, was that of the President Chiang's marriage—Chiang Kai-shek had converted to Christianity in order to marry and be accepted by the First Lady Soong Mei-ling's family. At the age of seventeen, Mok-yah also believed she could have converted her husband to Islam, and eventually their marriage would get the blessing from her community. Second, Mok-yah's mother died early when she was just six. As the oldest daughter, she took up the heavy burden of domestic work. Her father, however, did not appreciate her efforts and had often threatened her to stay home with ugly curses, such as: “Girls who go outside two, three times; [will] deliver a dead baby on the bedside.”

Like many other young women, Mok-yah wanted to use her free-choice marriage to break out of cultural and familial constraints. An independent, better standard living was

expected and actually came to her in the early years of the marriage. The experience of “becoming a mother,” further validated her self-perceptions and identities significantly (Liamputtong & Spitzer 2007:225)—she was not merely a mother, but an empowered woman who could reconfigure her other social/ethnic roles in-across different communes (in comparison with her other family relatives who “forever stayed in the Hui autonomous region”); and she was able to renegotiate her domestic works in her own nuclear family.

Yet, Mok-yah’s activities of daily living, before and after the marriage, remained mostly confined to her home and thus she was unable to access to the information in the outer world. Lacking public information made Mok-yah unaware of what was happening, even during the wartime. Just as she did not know much about her husband’s background, she also did not know her soldier husband was only drafted in Lanzhou to help patrol the city temporarily. (Un)surprisingly, Mok-yah’s husband did not stay long, did not become a Muslim; and even worse, he left Mok-yah while she was pregnant with their second son. Without leaving a message, Mok-yah’s husband firstly went to Chengdu (in Sichuan province, the southeast region of China, almost a thousand kilometers away); and after Mok-yah finally found him in Chengdu’s air-force base, he directly told her he did not want her or their children. Very soon Mok-yah’s husband applied for another mission to Hainan, a far-off southern island. Mok-yah’s situation in the military dependent’s group became very hard and gossip always surrounded her. In addition, without her husband’s authorization, other soldiers also treated

her disrespectfully, often extorted money from her, ignored her minor basic requests, and physically or verbally abused her and her children.

As she recounted, the reason why she kept following her husband and insisted to stay in the retreating troop in such an adverse situation was mostly because she “did not know what to do:”

I did not know what to do. I had no money, with two little kids, illiterate, and could not return home—I had no other way to go, just relying on the seven-dollars allowance for the living. I knew, at the time everyone needed to eat bitterness; but my bitterness was still different to that of others: Other wives could sleep inside the military trucks at nights; I could only sleep on the mud beside the trucks. When we arrived in Taiwan, arrangements were made for other air-force dependents to live inside the warehouses, where at least you had a roof; my children and I [however] were still left behind and lived in the train station for months.

(interviewed on Sep.26th, 2017)

If motherhood had once or sometimes made Mok-yah feel like she was fulfilled and empowered, the intensive work of single-parenting in the foreign soil of Taiwan conversely threw her into the endless challenges of “not enough food to eat; no warm clothing to wear; kids [were] always sick; pocket [was] always empty.” In this research, generally, challenging motherhood practices resulted from long-term poverty, deterioration of women’s health, and inadequate accommodations (namely, but not limited to, old military bases, abandoned factories, public graveyards, dilapidated Japanese shrines, train stations and airports, school classrooms, warehouses, air-raid shelters, and huts/tents in the wastelands), which intensified many informants’ negative feelings toward their daily-routine burden of nurturing their

children and undertaking household care.

Such was the case for Mok-yah when she was a young mother. Sometimes, Mok-yah would employ an “escapism” strategy, such like laying on the bed for half of a month, or playing board-game (i.e, mahjong 麻將) with other dependents overnight(s). Although she tried hard to balance the tension between selfhood and motherhood, and tried to forget about her mother role for a while, most of the time, however, she still immersed herself in the frustrated and apologetic feelings of not being able to overcome her own cultural inadequacy (by the narrator’s own account, it meant not being able to speak Mandarin fluently) and her own knowledge incompetence (by the narrator’s own definition, it referred to her education level: having no textbook knowledge to help her children study) while conducting her mothering tasks.

In the 1960s, while the KMT government’s mythology of defending “Orthodox Chinese Culture” had acted to enlist Chinese/Mainlander women (especially, the military dependents) into performing tradition-appropriate roles for promoting the “correct” nationalist ideology, the political wing of the Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement—ironically—turned to Mok-yah’s side. She was selected for the best “good mother model” election, which was supported by the Women’s Work Association under the First Lady’s charge (Liu and Regehr 2006). Since then, other wives and their soldier husbands in the neighbourhood started to praise Mok-yah’s great spirit of motherly love. Although it was not comfortable for Mok-yah

to learn to be a public figure in the beginning, she was still delighted about being selected. A direct benefit was that she received much more help, financially and emotionally, from the community. Meanwhile, the gossip over her “being abandoned history” was suddenly silenced. It was, once again, motherhood that saved her from the abyss of self-doubt, depression, and isolation.

The effort of single parenting or raising-up children in poverty was not enough to make a Hui woman an orthodox Chinese model-mother. Her story of “bringing two sons to search for their father across thousand mountains and ten thousands rivers,” however, valued that much. In other words, Mok-yah’s new, government-endorsing status probably would not be granted if her husband was not a Han, or if her children were not sons. “To reunite father and son together” is a powerful image in Chinese civilization, which has penetrated widely in the history, myths, ancient literature, Confucianism-based ethics, and can be at least tracing back to the West Chou Dynasty (1100 to 770 B.C.E.) (Riencourt 1958). The relation between father-and-son takes priority over any other relations in the Chinese patrilineal units. Hence, along with this concept, the highest virtue a Chinese woman may achieve is to support her son to be authorized, and to succeed to his father’s positionality in the household, clan, lineage, community, then, the broad country. Therefore, the evaluation of the Chinese “ideal” model-mother was/is not really associated with women’s efforts or performances. It is the institutional patriarchal value behind the system that decided what is good or bad for

women's motherhood practice.

III. The Tiger Mothers

Although not every woman wants to be an ideal model-mother, it is undoubtedly that women also do not want to be targeted—by the culture or by society—as a bad mother. Some feminist researchers, likewise, revealed their uncomfortable feeling to cope with the “being/doing-good versus being/doing-bad” motherhood discourses, which often openly point the finger at women's daily mothering conducts in the private sphere. In the academic field, these feminists (e.g., Oakley 1980; Rich 1981; Smith 1999) use their own experiences of mothering to demonstrate how the idealized “good mother” images/discourses/texts are embedded in the “ruling relations” that force the majority of women to sacrifice their self-needs for the pursuit of an *unachievable* perfect, angelic, patient, or wise ideal-mother image (Smith 1987, 1999). Nevertheless, other feminist researchers also joined those debates, and reclaimed the fact that the practices of mothering consist of a set of ritualized meanings; it is not a personal (gender) performance but a legitimately established “performativity,” which achieved its effects through the acts of repetition and reproduction of social-gender norms (Butler 2009:10-11). Mothering, in this sense, is not a single act but a social structure “in the process of being made” (Butler 1990:xiv in Haratyan 2012/2013:40).

As such, the made/structured and being made/structuring meaning of mother's social role practices reflect their situated precarious power relations. Motherhood, along with all its

moral and skill requirements, is therefore not a predetermined position that naturally comes to a woman in the life course, but a mode of acting and thinking that predisposed and assigned to the woman who becomes a mother.

Chen Xian: a Chinese tiger mom

In this research, some participants who self-defined themselves as the successful mothers often shared their motherhood strategies in the overall reflection of their life stories. Instead of working hard on trivial household chores, many of them pointed out that the practice to urge their children to be hard-working or hard-studying was what exactly mattered for a mother's success (as a good player). And, as those mothers consciously knew the highest virtue of motherhood in the Chinese society was not really about women, they also have been well aware that from other people's eyes, children's behaviours or achievements would be more directly and closely linked to their accomplishment of mother's role-duty in the families and in the society. Effective mothering strategies were manifested by the interviewed women from the vantage point of the present. Yet, it was mostly because of their suffering/frustrating experiences at the younger age that allowed them to be able to wisely "conclude" the functional, successful mothering practices when they were in their older age.

One such a comparison was made by Chen Xian:

My husband beat me. As soon as we got married, my husband beat me up twice every three days. Whenever he drank, or whenever he lost money from gambling, I got beaten-up badly. Now I am in my nineties, remembering those family ugly

things only made me laugh. But it was hard at the time. I myself did not have a capability to improve the lives. I prayed a lot; I kept silenced in front of my husband; I worked hard and harder: [as for examples,] I swept the ground outside and inside every day; I cooked every meals; I sent my children to school every morning, and encouraged them to read textbook aloud on the road; I kept my children's score at the highest level; After my children went to school, I even worked in a grocery shop to help the family make ends meet [...] I spent all my efforts in the household like a cattle, like a plow horse. Yet, my husband still treated me like a dog's fart. [Afterward,] it was because of my children's great ability at work that made my husband change his attitude toward me. My children were all filial; they all learned from the way I raised them: They studied hard, worked hard, self-disciplined; treated people with good manners, and grew up capable. Since after my children had proved their promising future, no matter whether my husband looked down on me as a women or not, he respected me as a mother.

(interviewed on Nov 16th, 2017.)

Chen Xian was typical of Chinese “tiger” mothers that bringing up their children in a demanding, if not authoritarian, way (Bell 2013). The narratives of her daily life routine give us a glimpse of how a woman may enhance her power and status at home through her children's achievement in the society—especially, when her own efforts could not be seen in the private and public spaces.

In those women's narratives, strict school-and-family disciplines (including scolding and corporal punishment) were supposed to enhance their child's ability to cope with difficulties in the future. In this sense, discipline equals strength, which is the crucial element to enable a child from a diasporic family to a more secure life. Meanwhile, we should not forget that diasporic women's children would also grow-up under unfavourable environmental conditions. They were still the ethnic minority: to be born in Taiwan did not naturally make

them Taiwanese. In addition, they might need to face an unfriendly work market, since the majority of the local Taiwanese people could (though, not necessary would) use their stronger economic power and strengthen social network to exclude young Mainlander's participation in the society for the sake of ethnic-political revenge. Lacking kin-family support is not very important now in Taiwan for youth when selecting their career trajectory; yet it was a crucial problem in the 1970s when Taiwan's manufacturing industry was still in the initial phase.

Lin: the fighter pilot's wife

Another approach was described by Mrs. Lin, a fighter pilot's wife. Her opinion—as recounted by her and by many other wives whose husbands in the Air Force were still authorized to execute dangerous missions *after* 1949—requires a more careful consideration of how we respond to some women's stoic “Tiger” parenting conducts:

[Some people said] it was important to care about children's feeling; [other people said] parents needed to allow the children to grow at their own pace... It was not the case for my children—I asked them to remember their position in Taiwan, and they also needed to know Taiwan's position in the world. My husband served in the air-force army as a fighter pilot for ** years. It broke the record for the longest serving. In the first ** years, in order to serve ** Enterprise's order in the North Korea, ***, and Vietnam, in average every month there would be a craft crashed; and every crash cost thirteen air-men's lives on the same night. It was low-altitude flying; no one could survive the crash.²¹

You could [not] imagine how much pressure on me in those years—just counting the numbers of our losses. We [air force personnel's wives] did not even

²¹ The year of mentioned military service and some of the mission locations have been anonymized with the use of asterisks in order to protect both the identity of the participant and the identification of her associated military team.

dare to count up how many funerals we had participated in. And, who could know whose husband would be the next one to die? We military dependents all clearly understand that we could not spoil our kids: Today s/he had the father, tomorrow maybe s/he did not. Our children needed to be disciplined strictly to overcome the difficulties. They were all by themselves.

(interviewed on Aug.19th, 2017)

Death is the ultimate fear that hidden inside my research participant's heart. I have interviewed forty-four women, and all of them had at least one unpleasant memory about their loved one's unnecessary death. The fear of death, if we consider it as an embodied performance, an instinct "second nature" that shaped Chinese diasporic women's "perception and appreciation" (Hoy 1999:13); then, we may better understand why those interviewed mothers preferred to adopt a Tiger way to practice their motherhood. The fear of death—either the death of their husbands or their own deaths—had unconsciously influenced and shaped the ideology of those Chinese women, causing them to play certain roles in a certain way (such as the tiger mother and the hardworking worker) in order to fulfill the social norms and responsibilities they embodied.

IV. Brief Summary

Women's roles and bodies have often been served as the reproduction of the family and the country. In this chapter, we learned after the civil war, Chiang Kai-shek's regime had implemented a series of ethnic-segregation policies in Taiwan and expected Chinese women to be the devoted mothers, staying in the dependents' villages, bearing and raising their children, and to continue the authentic Chinese patrilineal line to boost the country's combat

power in the future. Neither the political-instigated practice of boundary maintenance nor the orientation to maintain an orthodox Chinese ideology of motherhood could actually help women to deal with their everyday problems (e.g., childcare difficulties, passive mindset, marital discord, financial shortage). That it is to say, these Chinese diasporic women had to rely on themselves to find some ways to fulfill their role duties—motherhood, as the most important role for the majority of the Chinese women, have thus been discussed extensively in their life-story narratives.

It was undeniable that mothers in the Chinese household could (and often) use their expertise in child-raising to gain a greater share of power from the patriarchal society to women's own "uterine families" (Wolf 1972:35-37; also see Kandiyoti 1988; Lu 1991; Stafford 2013). It was the motherhood and the bond with the children granted Chinese women the reliable source of power, which could help them to balance the relationship with their husbands in the families, as well as to get material and economic supports. However, it is also clear that not every woman could afford the luxury of fulfilling the expected accomplishments of mother's sacred duty. Sometimes, according the narrators in this research, even the least requirement—such like ensuring their children alive and grow up—was difficult to meet. Thereby, since being a (good) mother is an achievement that not every woman has the capability to reach, we may understand there would be many first-time mothers, especially for those young migrant/exiled women who were departed from their

martial families, are tended to feel helpless and lack of knowledge to conduct their motherhood.

As a result, mothers who lived in a diasporic situation usually have to manage the tension/dilemma between sticking with their home culture to continue the heritage and soliciting support in the local networks to be more resilient to the new environment (Spitzer 2007:60). At a personal level, with regard to diasporic Chinese women's status as the "dependents" and their daily-life practice as the "quasi-single parent," we learned the specific pattern of living under the combined patriarchal-military-violent repressions had seriously affected Chinese diasporic women's selfhood and their childcare ideologies, especially in terms of how they worked out their (strict) family discipline and how they thought of their children's future adaptability and achievement in the host society of Taiwan.

Chapter 7 Suddenly Look Back, Waking from a Dream²²

When the travel ban was lifted [in 1987], I thought my husband would book a ticket very soon. But he was hesitating...Wasn't it weird? For decades he kept clamoring for the right to visit the Mainland for family reunion, yet while the dream was about to come true, he stepped back instead. I knew immediately that he had concealed something important from me, so I kept pushing him to explain his apprehension. Eventually, he confessed, telling me that he had another wife and a daughter in the homeland. They still lived with his parents and waited for him to come back home, back to "their own" home... He was such a wimpy man, did not dare to mention his first marriage in front of me for such a long time... But, he was also an affectionate and grateful person. For those years he kept a small photo picture of his first wife and daughter, hidden in a secret pocket stitched inside his military belt. I knew the belt, for sure, as my husband had greatly cherished it all his military life. Yet, it was only after his confession that I finally realized why the belt was so important to him....Of course I was still pissed off, because it hurt so much to think that he lied to my mother before bringing me to Taiwan, lied to me in our forty year marriage, and lied to our five sons about their father's past....In spite of my hurt feelings, however, when I saw him standing there, tremblingly and gingerly holding the crumpled old picture—with yellow mud and dark-red blood staining on both sides—Truly, I also felt great pity for him.

—Chang Fei (interviewed on Oct. 5th, 2017)

I. Introduction:

The year of 1987 marked a historical turning point on the island of Taiwan. In July of that year, the KMT regime's highest leader, the president Chiang Ching-kuo (the eldest son of the previous party leader Chiang Kai-shek and the last strongman of the Republic of China), made the crucial decision to rescind Taiwan's 38-years-long martial law. The following November, just three months before his death in 1988, he largely approved the first-generation Mainlanders' applications for home visits, which allowed them to finally accomplish the long-awaited dreams of seeing their still-living relatives again and of

²² To pay homage to the highly-influential Chinese writer Pai Hsien-yung 白先勇, the title of this chapter is derived from Pai Hsien-yung's two famous books: *Suddenly Look Back* 驀然回首(1978) and *Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream* 遊園驚夢(1982).

personally praying at the ancestors' graves in China. Shortly after the approval of Mainlander's homebound requests, the tight communication restrictions, press and post censorships, and the ban on travel across Taiwan Strait were also lifted, which conditionally activated both sides of the people to conduct commerce, make phone calls, send remittances, and plan for business or tourist travel (Li 1997; Chang 2004; Fan 2010; Yang 2020).

All of this socio-political reform legislation was assembled and implemented within less than a year. The significant and drastic policy changes—which have been generally viewed as Taiwan's crucial transition from dictatorial leadership to the new stage of liberalization and democratization (Wang 2013a)—arrived at the reality unexpectedly. It seemed like all of a sudden, the KMT regime's one-party dominance, military rule, and strict ideological control came to an end.

There is no definitive answer to explain why KMT's authorities made such a prompt re/action to relax the Party's decades-long grip on power. Yet, there is one thing that both politicians of the time and current historians were/are convinced of: After long years of life lived with caution and self-censoring, not only ordinary people, intellectuals or social advocates, but military personnel and political elites in Taiwan felt fed up with endlessly reiterating the unrealistic pledges—such as “to retake China”, “to defeat the Chinese communists”, “to sacrifice for the Nationalist irredentism”, and “to watch out for the spies around you” (Hisau 2018:98-99). Correspondingly, KMT regime's interpretation of Taiwan's

historical mission, the propaganda associated with China's war(s) and the communists, and the once canonized "orthodox" Chinese ideologies were no longer compelling, if not outright denied. It was the moment when the structured orders in the field of Taiwan needed to be re-structuring. In consequence, from the 1980s and onward, a new common consensus that the populace of Taiwan shared (whether Mainlander Taiwanese or local Taiwanese) was "to awaken" from the nostalgia, back to the reality on the soil of Taiwan (Hsiau 2013:180), and return to the "normal" life (Chang 2000:64).

In comparison with Taiwanese people's living standard in the postwar period, as Wolf (1985:49) noted: "all it took to regard a family rich was sufficient food to eat and sufficient clothes to wear", Professor Chang Mau-kuei (2004:151) thought it was Taiwan's burgeoning economic in the 1970s that provided a strong social base for the political realignment in the 1980s. Increased prosperity and greater financial freedom lifted people out of poverty; and hence, many of them were being able to "return" (or more accurately to say, to "achieve") a normal civilian life with long-term prospects for public affairs and personal plans. From the first-generation Mainlander women's retrospective accounts in this research, it was also in the late 1980s that they started to have some personal savings, leisure time, and positive future outlook—that it is to say, they finally did not have to live under the sinking-and-floating conditions of diaspora, and began to plan for a settled life in the land where they brought-up their children.

In my fieldwork, I have particularly recruited research participants from different townships and with diverse economic and education backgrounds. Yet, when they reached retirement age in their sixties until the time when we met in their eighties or nineties, these respondents shared a common lifestyle preference, in anticipation of having a few peaceful years to enjoy (and wisely execute) their retirement/elderly-respect perquisites: They were willing to spend more time and money for their own healthcare and well-being (instead of caring for others, or being cared by others); in general, their self-care took precedence over all other concerns. Those who had some spare resources could have chosen to assist their children for marriage preparation (i.e., to buy a wedding house) and/or to keep budgeting for their future grandchildren's education (i.e., to set-up a fund).

In the aftermath of the martial law, Mainlander Taiwanese' memories of "returning home" were marked by gender differences, often because their positions and relations at home (or between homes) and their reasons for leaving home were also gendered. By the time when the interviewed women were about sixty years old or older, their future anticipation also reflected their attitudes toward KMT's shifting Mainland policy. Unlike the Mainlander men who strongly supported and put their "blood and tears" into the launch of the "Veterans' Homebound Movement" to publicly urge the president Chiang Ching-kuo to release KMT's border policy (see Yang 2020), Mainlander women usually held a rather neutral attitude toward CCP's and KMT's diplomatic relations, and paid more attention to their

Taiwan-rooted family histories and genealogies.

Although the Mainlander women I interviewed did not necessarily insist on returning to their natal places or their in-law families—at least, their desire to return to their “ancestral land” was much weaker than their male counterparts. The lifting of Taiwan’s and Mainland’s travel restrictions, however, still caused a new push that compelled them to face new challenges and additional stresses for the “ought to do” home-visits; particularly, with regard to the extra travel expenses, and the emotional and financial strains between their uterine families²³ (Wolf 1972) in Taiwan and their kin/in-law families in China.

II. Home visits across the Strait

In Chinese traditional ethics, individual’s social positionality is often viewed as being embedded in a (fated) order of complementarity (Lu 2004:239). Just like husband and wife represent a pair of marriage complementarity, children and parents, young and aging, giving birth and senior’s death, these binaries represent different kinds of life-circle and life complementarity. Meanwhile, these pairs have been regarded as interdependent and constituting the essential “social connections” (*Guan-xi* 關係 in Mandarin) of “the totality” (Riencourt 1958), in which the cause-and-effect basis of ordinary human relationships (that

²³ Through giving birth to sons, as Margery Wolf (1972) noted, Chinese women may develop their own “uterine families,” and based on her son’s inherited position in the kin-family, she could also share some interests and power from the male household heads in the Chinese patrilineal system. Nonetheless, when married women reach advanced ages, their mother-in-law position can even enable them to wield more power in the family, sometimes even overpowering their aging husband. The idea of motherhood thus formed a central focus for Chinese women's subjectivities.

founded and mandated by the totality) would bring individuals together, separation, and reunion, following by the same philosophical logic of complementary order and continuing with “an endless series of reincarnations” (Simon 2003:7).

When this “order of complementarity” manifested in a long-term trajectory of people’s lifetime, such as the older Mainlanders’ lifetimes, the logic of this order also unconsciously influenced on their decisions to return home and/or not return home. The changes of the external environment in Taiwan in the late 1980s (i.e., the death of the president Chiang Ching-Kuo; the re-opening of the border across Taiwan Strait) were viewed as a sign of the new life/political transition (especially, for those who thought it was the moment for change). Those external or personal changes of life, ultimately, were out of individual person’s control. As many of the older Mainlander women believed, it was “the order of the heaven” that decided when they and their families would be separated along different routes [leaving home], as well as when they should flow back to the same root [returning home].

Chang Fei: mending her husband’s first marital relationship

For the Chinese people who embodied this logic, to have happiness in life was to be aware of one’s demanding position(s); and further, to fulfill the relationship-based orders that attached to their positions in the complementary relationships—with the start and with the end. This logic basically explains why some of the interviewed women in this research felt “ought to” (or were compromised to) undertake a home visit before their deaths. As the

interviewed woman, Chang Fei, who shared her story in the beginning of this chapter similarly narrated:

Although I blamed my husband for [not telling me about] his first marriage, I still polished the old picture and prepared good money to bring back to his hometown. He hesitated, but I did not. He had to go back to her. It was our duty to help that pitiful woman, and I had to do the right thing to help him repair that relationship. If this was not done, he would have remained in unrest after we all died, and my life after death would have been harm by the karma as well.

One of the most essential “relation-oriented orders” that a person should fulfill in Chinese society is filial piety, which is associated with one’s birth-given body, the primary physical site to which each individual is born situated within the lineage of their family. The scholars who study Chinese families have already given striking attention/arguments with regards to this lineage paradigm (which refers to the male-centered patrilineal household and the patriarchal system)²⁴ and/or how this paradigm has strong impacts on gendered role duties and family functioning (e.g., Wolf 1972; Gallin 1984; Greenhalgh 1985; Watson 1986; Yang 1999; Thang and Yu 2004). Nonetheless, the stories from the research participants have shown us the other side of the coin: Because in Chinese patrilineal values daughters are “born looking out, belong to others” and because daughters-in-laws are also seen as the “suspect” outsiders (Watson 1986:620), females tends to have less firmly attached genealogical links in both her natal and her husband's families, and because of this, women also take on less

²⁴ See chapter 3 for the review for a basic introduction of the Chinese patrilineal culture and the lineage system.

spiritual responsibility. As Wolf (1972) pointed out, a Chinese woman will never appear in anyone's genealogy; she is essential to it, but her husband and father-in-law do not see her as a member of it (p35). It was "a son's major obligations in life to see that his parents have as comfortable and happy an old age as he can provide. (p215)."

The dismay of homecoming

For the research participants who married primarily as a result of the decisions of their fathers or brothers and were then "naturally" cut off from their original families, their subordinate status and powerless gender position also somehow relieved them of the anxiety of feeling indebted to their families for failing to fulfill their filial roles (namely, taking on the burden of caring for elderly family members). "Daughters married off were [alike] the water poured off", this old saying explains the most common reason that has been mentioned by Chinese people to explain the disconnection between a married woman and her birth family. Other than this, one narrator, Xi-hua from Zhejiang province, also uncovered another implicit, yet essential, rationale for Mainlander women's seemingly indifferent attitude toward their home-visits:

I could say that my family members did not treat me well. Since my childhood my mother blamed all the problems on me. She said I was a *Jinx*...probably it was because she had several boys before having me, but they had all died of smallpox. I was her only surviving child. My father and my uncles in the family also disliked me. They only preferred boys—my father's other wife gave him two sons, and my uncle's wife also gave birth to boys. So I could say my childhood life was really not good. Then I got married to a KMT's Youth Army soldier. It was my cousin who

made this arrangement: My cousin and my husband were school classmates, and he wanted to further strengthen their “brotherhood” relationship. As he said, it [the marriage] was good for making a close relation even more closely.

After my husband and I left [to Taiwan] and returned again [to the hometown], my family members’ face-to-face attitudes towards me were all different: They greeted me with enthusiasm... [A long pause]... but it was just for the money... [another long pause followed]. I went back two times, and every time my relatives made different excuses to ask for something: theirs and their children’s groceries, their grandchildren’s toys, colour television sets, lots of feasts [where guests] were invited by them but paid for by me. My uncle and his wife, especially, were scornful of the red-envelopes I prepared for them (with one or two hundred yuan). They asked for more. They wanted American dollars. They said their son helped me to get married out, but in turn his career was ruined due to my marriage [for the association with the KMT]. Now their son had no money but needed to renovate the old house, so it was my duty to pay for it.

(interviewed on Oct. 15th, 2017)

Having been abused as a child and blackmailed as an adult, it is not hard to understand Xi-hua's dismay at her home visits. It is worth noting that her experience was not unique. Many of the research participants told similar stories: when they were little girls, they were mistreated or sacrificed for the sake of their brothers. After they had all grown old and gone through the wartime upheavals of displacement and family separation, some of their older brothers (or other male household members) still claimed that they had the power to interfere in their (kin) sister's life plans or financial decisions—simply because of her gender and the gender hierarchy rooted in Chinese society.

Another narrator, a widow who traveled back to her hometown (Jiangsu Province) with her only daughter from Taiwan, also spoke at length about how her initial expectations for her homecoming ended with a sense of disappointment:

When I was six, in my hometown there was a serious bout of measles and smallpox. A lot of children died out there. Three of my siblings were also dead. I was blessed so I survived [because] many people, strangers, helped me so that I could survive. After that, I left my home; and I waited to come back until I was almost eighty years old. I came back so that I could do something to help. Because at that time [the quality of life] over there was still not very good, people in my hometown were very poor. But my brother disliked what I decided to do. He was against using my money to help other people. [...]. What he wanted was to get all of my money in his hands and under his control. [He said:] "What you did was wrong. Women just do not know....*you* just do not know how to make a good use of the money. You should give it all to me [because] I am the head who is in charge of our family expenses." After that, during the whole trip, he kept pushing me: "How much money did you bring from Taiwan? How much money do you have?" Because he asked me these questions, I had a big fight with him. We still made up, but I did not go back.

(interviewed on Aug. 22, 2017)

Family disputes over money were almost always presented in Mainlander women's life stories as the examples to show the ethics in which they believed, and why they had to insist on the "ethical right" to practice their beliefs, whereas their husbands or other family members, according to their narratives, were simply doing what they wanted. Their stories usually started from family acrimony, yet ended with a moral lesson. For example, a research participant, who worked full-time as a tofu vendor at the age of 88, earned family groceries through intense daily manual work. Yet, her husband diverted her savings, which were earmarked for the emergency medical costs, into the purchases of luxury gifts (e.g., videocassette recorders, Walkman players, Nintendo games) for his junior relatives in the mainland. Another old woman could not afford a flight to check-up with her own family and

friends because her husband and the eldest son (both of whom were prioritized as the two most important kin-family members) already spent most of the travel budget on the renovation of their ancestor's tombs.

Those narratives (and other largely unarticulated voices and practices) often revolved around diverse interactions and different types of the relationships with this or that person, place, and thing. Yet, after those stories were told, a conclusive and comprehensive ethical statement was often being made, which referred to Chinese women's worldview of complementary cosmological orders, and their commitment to fulfill their responsibilities for those orders in the course of life. In both of the aforementioned stories the narrators made similar accusations against their husbands' "rule breaking" behaviours referred to as embezzlement of funds (i.e. to buy the expensive gifts) and misappropriation of the budgets (i.e., to decorate ancestor's tombs), which were portrayed as harmful to the balance of the family and the balance of people's lives.

III. Preserving Family Ties Across Borders

Over the course of time, it was difficult to manage an easy interaction with long-separated family members. Although Mainlander Taiwanese and their family relatives in China belonged to the same genealogical group and were all growing up in the same "culture-bearing unit", as Barth (1969:12) defined them. It may still be challenging for many of the separated family members to persist and sustain the same traits of the living culture

because of the differences of ecology, and because the boundaries caused by immobility and socio-political processes generated a discrepancy between the imagined family-ethnic identity and the real family-ethnic experiences (Barth 1969). For the Mainlander women who arranged and went on home visits, these discrepancies, and disputes between their Chinese relatives and themselves, constituted the main part of their narrated memories. Unpleasant memories further undermined their motivation to make more cross-strait contacts or plan for the next trip. Most of the research participants, therefore, only returned to their hometowns once or twice.

The loss (and the absence) of warm familial relations in their earlier periods of life was a pivotal event in their older years. Mainlander women's rich exile-and-emigrant experiences helped them to be able to more easily and much earlier recognize how they needed to shift their behaviours and deal with the mental stress in order "to make a successful move" (Berry 1992:77). These skills enabled them to potentially awaken from the nostalgic dream of family reunion—in order to avoid the possible distress or depression that an unpleasant relationship might bring them in reality.

Conversely, Mainlander men (i.e., the participants' husbands) had a greater sense of loss when they were marginalized in their natal families due to their long-term absence from China. Probably because a Chinese man is predisposed, with a patriarchal focus, to have unassailable positions and inalienable rights "at home" (inherited from their ancestors since

birth), it thus became more difficult for Mainlander men to accept the reality that their long desired home visits only resulted in mutual alienation, misunderstanding, and detached relationships (Lin 2011:58; also see Fan 2010, Yang 2020). For those older Mainlander men who did not want to accept that their “original” power and family status was fading away, they might employ an extreme strategy to recoup their loss—and extraordinary monetary contributions, in this case, became the most effective tactic.

In Hsu Hsueh-chi’s research on the Red Cross Society (the organization that offered assistance with Mainlander’s return trips), we learned that within four years (from November 1987 to June 1991), more than 50 million round trips between Taiwan and China were conducted, and nearly 40 million U.S. dollars had been sent from Taiwan to China (Hsu 2004 in Yang 2012:203). Behind those numbers were some Mainlander men’s risky decision of spending their entire retirement savings in China over a short period of time, as well as their wives’ fear and trepidation about having poorer quality of living in their old age in Taiwan.

Therefore, serious arguments and frictions over money issues were often mentioned and overheard between couples during the interviews, especially in the neighbourhoods where residents still lived in public housing without the legal right to keep their homes. These residents had to save a larger amount of money or help their uterine family children (usually sons) to keep more money for the private family estates. Otherwise, the fear of “returning” to an ungrounded and homeless life would combine with the vulnerabilities of aging to threaten

their sense of security and peaceful mindset.

In general, the confidence and status to earn and manage money was essential for the older woman to keep maintaining the household or community affairs in balance for herself and her relations. Her efforts also provided emotional and material support and counselling to those associated with her (see Spitzer 2016:257), as Wolf (1972:222) noted, “As long as an older woman retains her health and a fair degree of strength, she is an asset to a busy family.” In this research, managing and sometimes compromising over monetary contributions and/or controlling household budgets were by no means both meaningful signs that marked a fundamental shift of a woman's position in her lifetime: The woman finally "arrived" in a rewarded position where she could comment on (or fight against) other family members' behaviours. Nevertheless, she finally had the power to distinguish and judge the morally good things/people from the wrong ones—at least the research participants all did so with the power of expression in their own narrated life stories.

IV. Brief Summary

In this chapter, we see how the rapidly changing political winds of the late 1980s and 1990s in Taiwan created new opportunities and challenges for the group of Mainlanders. From the research participants' perspective, the reopening of Taiwan's borderline was a turning point that tested their ability and wisdom to reconnect and interact with long-separated family members. They had to deal with complicated family issues across the

Taiwan Strait and faced the reality that their relationships with their natal and marital families had already changed. The feeling of loss and alienation were shared by both sides of the family members. However, the extent to which unfulfilled filial duties should be defined and how much compensation should be demanded differs greatly depending on the diverse perspectives and individual's ethical judgments of each. Therefore, in some cases, the interviewed women had to use their savings to reimburse their kin-relatives for the long-term absence from home and the failure to abide by filial duty; whereas, in other cases, some interviewed women sought to repay their kinsmen and hometown communities for the aid they received in their youth, as a crucial aspect of their personal karma and the completion of the cause-and-effect cycle of their responsibilities in life.

By focusing on elderly Mainlander women's family responsibilities, which often revolved around their efforts to balance the financial and emotional conflicts between their families in Taiwan and relatives in China, this chapter offers some insight into these women's concerns and inner feelings. Moreover, because much of our knowledge about Mainlander Taiwanese's home visits after the lifting of Martial Law comes from published literature and media reports, our understanding is therefore greatly restricted to the viewpoints and behaviours of Mainland male who frequently participated in public discussions, such as the "Missing Home" movement of former war veterans. Comparatively, this study found that the first-generation Mainlander women, especially those who had experienced banishment or

abandonment, were generally more open-minded about their home-visits and even hold an ambivalent attitude about the traditions of "family reunions" or "returning to one's roots [to die]". Thus, their acceptance of never returning to their homeland was generally greater than that of their male counterparts.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

However, those who witnessed the past didn't enjoy remembering what had come before, and now it becomes clear why. It is because survival in such circumstances required, above all, a compromise with oneself, with one's conscience. [...] People don't want to remember these things, and, to be specific, people also don't want to confess to these things.

~~ Dmitry Glukhovsky

But even after all these years, when I hear the sound of aircraft flying across the sky, I still feel so livid and frightened. The desire to hide and escape remains overwhelmingly strong in my instincts... I have seen aircraft drop bombs many times on many occasions. You won't overcome the fear once you have witnessed it... The explosion of bombs makes no sound. When a bomb is dropped, the process would be completely silent. You do not hear anything but you can see all the stuff around where the bomb dropped suddenly jumped into the air and crashed back to the ground within one second. People die in that one second. [...] The only way to protect ourselves from a bomb blast is to be aware of the noise made by the aircraft before [the bombing]...I have already survived the most difficult [situation] and I know here [in Taiwan] those flying planes are no longer being used for killing people. [However,] my ear is still very sensitive...I remain very cautious about the noise in the sky because it [being cautious] is already attached to my body.

~~ narrated by Kim Sang (interviewed on Oct. 25th, 2017)²⁵

I. Summary of Research Findings

This chapter, as a conclusion, seeks to demonstrate how we use gender as an approach to “read” history and the current phenomenon. As I would like to argue, the current conversation

²⁵ Kim Sang was born in 1933 to an overseas Chinese family in North Vietnam. During World War II, her father and older brothers returned to Guangdong (a province in southern China) to defend the country against the Japanese invasion. Her mother, on the other hand, decided to bring the other children to Hong Kong for the higher-paying job market. Kim Sang's family and many of her friends were attacked by bombers during the wars. As she mentioned, her second brother's unit was targeted and wiped out by the Japanese Air Force; her old neighbors in Vietnam were attacked by the KMT Nationalist Army and Vietnamese Communist soldiers. Her mother-in-law was also seriously injured (and later died) when the U.S. Navy bombed residential areas in Hong Kong. According to her, the indiscriminate coalition air strikes were widely seen (by local Hong Kongers) as a "misleading" punishment: It was supposed to be an American revenge mission against the Japanese Navy after the Pearl Harbor incident; however, local Hong Kongers were also affected.

around China's revolutionary revolts (along with its culture that shaped the revolts) does not adequately reflect the reality of what Chinese people went through during the long-term armed conflicts. Particularly, we rarely learn from women's perspective and experiences—although it is obvious that warfare may put women in an even more precarious situation since masculine violence was/is found and institutionalized in China's warrior culture as well as in the war systems, and hence, threaten ordinary women's safety in their everyday lives.

By chronologically reviewing Chinese women's life-story narratives that span the era of China's revolution from the early twentieth century to wartime (World War II and civil wars) through to the post-war society of Taiwan—this research attempts to rethink and redefine the notion of diaspora in the Chinese social cultural contexts from a feminist standpoint perspective. I suggest that the notion of diaspora can be perceived as an “alternative way of living,” a temporary common practice that allowed some of the displaced, exiled groups or refugees to take up and maintain a “stance,” that helped them to continue their life in uncertain situations and/or adapt themselves more effectively to the situation of “liminality” (Brubaker 2005:12-13).

Chinese women's shared experiences of suffering from displacement, nostalgia, living under military control and violence, had connected them to each other as an identified group. And, to some extent, those interconnected experiences also helped them better understand

their relationships to the outside world. In this regard, the notion of intersectionality, as a theory that describes how the multiple interactive axes of social power and social relations interconnect and affect the experiences of individuals, is therefore employed to help this research explore women's suffering and privilege experiences of war, military, violence, diaspora, displacement, migration, and other factors that cause power inequalities. To acknowledge that the structures of oppression are interconnected, and people's experiences of struggles are often linked (Carbado et al. 2013:306), this research seeks to move beyond predetermined notions based on identity or other single social domains, but to explore beneath common perceptions of discrimination, oppression, advantage, disadvantage, privilege, and subordination (Cho et al. 2013:787). Following this line, in this research we learned those who left home at a young age and voluntarily joined the military had a different understanding of their social status in Taiwan, especially compared to those who were forced to join the army or who married Nationalist soldiers and came to Taiwan without any acknowledgment of their reasons for fleeing. Moreover, the Mainlanders who desired to terminate their poor military lives (especially the families of lower-status soldiers and veterans) but could not integrate into local economic activities often faced a greater challenge of living in diaspora, experiencing more severe economic difficulties and tended to parent their children in a stricter manner. As a result, as some of the women interviewed in this study also noted that being a military wife can be more challenging than being either a military or a

wife alone, the understanding of the interconnected nature of oppressive structures is therefore the key to comprehending the power dynamics and oppressions at interplay in women's life stories (Carbado et al. 2013:306).

This research shows that even though today the first-generation Mainlanders are rapidly disappearing, the older cohorts still take efforts on telling their stories to the next generation, and use these stories to remind the society of Taiwan about their past and the suffering experiences they encountered due to the political conflicts and its violent result. What we learned from the participant's experiences in China's civil war, no doubt, cannot be treated as a general example to explain human being's violent behaviours in other contexts. Yet, incontestably, it always makes sense to gather data from ordinary people's (the victims') first-hand conversations, private feelings to debate with propaganda and official says.

a) Women to remain in diaspora

In this thesis, I suggested that Chinese women's bodies and their sense-of-self were being manipulated by the nationalist government's state power to serve its policy and diplomatic interests of preserving and reproducing the orthodox Chinese-ness ideology in Taiwan. Therefore, Chinese diasporic women had situated in more complicated social positions because their memberships were related to the dictatorial KMT regime and its state violence. On the one hand, they were required to adhere to Chinese moral traditions, especially those pertaining to feminine moral orders (i.e., as noted in Chapter Four, girls and

young adult women often felt guilty about traveling/leaving home and thus not being able to fulfill their filial duties); on the other hand, women were also encouraged to contribute to the country by participating “outside” in patriotic activities (e.g., as noted in Chapter Five, female military personnel might feel obligated to follow, serve, and be loyal to the authoritarian regime, including the male officers and military men who served the regime and thus somehow “represented” the authority).

Chinese women who participated in this study were forced to leave homes due to political, financial reasons or other personal circumstances and thus came to Taiwan as a historical accident. Their understanding of being in diaspora helped them reduce the stress of life's unpredictability and provided an explanation for the unexpected trauma they experienced. Diaspora is therefore applied not only as a condition of life but a subsidiary agency for some of the marginalized, uprooted people to seek for a newfound position in the new environment.

b) The praxis and ideal of gender roles

Next, I inquired into the research questions around Chinese women’s ideal gender roles and role practices, and focused on how they learned, conserved, and transformed the iconic Chinese “virtuous” womanhood (namely, good wife and wise mother) into a more realistic way of practicing. In this part of the content, I have first briefly summarized the traditional Chinese feminine ideology in the chapter of literature review. Through the analysis of China’s

lineage system and the Confucian ethics (*Li*), we saw a relatively detailed picture of China's highly structured bureaucracy, which organised and controlled people's private and collective life. With the strict disciplines and strongly codified *Rites*, the authoritarian power in China functioned through the patrilineal system (Riencourt 1958). Even during the wartime and the revolutionary periods, this system still maintained its power through the repetitions of its hierarchal orders.

The ethics of Chinese womanhood works to ensure a gendered "common sense" through which individuals relate their behaviours, gestures, and social practices to a series of perceptions learning and shifting process in the given context. Gender- and sex- differences "~~naturally~~" define how the narrators perceived themselves and their relations to others. This encompassing and comprehensive system was a context, a field, in which the gendered power relations justified the objective social norms and the interlocutors' subjective self-disciplines.

c) *Women and Violence*

When studying Chinese women's narratives about their gender roles practices and how they recognized and valued (or disvalued) the meanings of those practices, we have to recognize that their perspectives and standpoints might be very different from the knowledge heralded by Western feminists, or even very different from the standards we've come to learn in contemporary society nowadays (Ong 1988). Therefore, Before I proceed further, one thing I would like to clarify: When I refer to Chinese women in this thesis as 'victims' or

'suffering people', I am neither trying to represent women as oppressed or exploited, nor do I intend to ignore the profound cultural meanings for which Chinese women were valued and received praise from their familial enculturation (for example, the value of being a mother of sons). They have been characterized as victims for a few times in this thesis (primarily by the women themselves), chiefly because they were involved in the wars, and it was also because of the war that their lives were confined to the military systems and in addition, segregated from the local communities.

Tracking the long-term course of the wartime survivor's life is how, and where, I started this research. Given the common stereotype of Chinese women as subordinate and sacrificial victims in the strict patriarchal environment, it is easier to put the focus on women's suffering experiences but harder to make a reasoned situational analysis that provide deeper descriptions of women's life-course changes and their subsequent living adjustments. Researching Chinese women's life story in the context of war and war-caused violence, also, may assumingly put female roles in a powerless situation in a way that overly address the trauma and/or the theoretical grounds of the trauma (such as the toxic masculinity, the brutal Chinese patriarchal system, the state/male violence, etc.) but neglect to notice the women's shifting behaviours and their survival strategies.

The aforementioned literature review showed that the Chinese logic of "self" explicitly demands that one has to be oneself through the recognitions and interactions of others,

usually through their positions and relationships within structured systems of reciprocal and hierarchical exchanges. On this account, military men's position was without a doubt privileged by the power of their associated campaigns, factions, and the nation-state; in comparison, Chinese women's ambivalent roles in the military—as the dependents, supplementary helpers/workers, asylum seekers, and the objects to be protected—would have put themselves at risk for sexual threats, including the ever-present threats of abduction, harassment, rape, and gender-based degrading punishments (Hershatter 2011). Nevertheless, while military institutes also used masculine power to encourage male soldiers to fight or to exercise aggressive agency in political conflicts—in order to enlist more young adults (and adolescents) into performing political-appropriate roles in service to nationalism, patriotism, and primarily, state violence—women who were already embroiled in the armed conflict would see little, if any, chance to crosscut the boundaries for reaching out to other alternative sources of social identities beyond the subordinate roles that restricted their lives in the dominant masculine system. As Runyan (2012:203) argues, “[w]hen women transgress the boundaries of feminine innocence to engage in political violence themselves, they are constructed as either monsters, whores, or mothers gone mad.”

While being aware of their lives associated with the army would be permanently living with uncertainty, which means to be situated in a combination of ignorance and impotence, the Chinese diasporic women in this research were drawn to finding new positions and

outbound connections that may have made themselves more available and adjustable to meeting new standards, new positions, and new fields of the game. Just like the story in the chapter four, the homeless little girl would try to learn new skills (sewing and knitting) to be able to get a role in the military factory, and thus, being able to survive.

Our understanding of the crimes of war and military violence depends on varying levels of individual self-awareness and their willingness to reflect on those issues. In the final part of this research, we find that it is the intertwined power relations on the basis of Chinese patriarchal hierarchies and masculine culture that impede our ability to speak out the negative and suffering experiences. From diasporic women's first-person accounts, we see that to participate and to stay in the military-related systems was, very often, a reluctant strategy for the women who were away (displaced, exiled, or banished) from home but needed shelter to survive. And, because the majority of people usually feel more comfortable to listen to inspiring stories, to offer tribute to wartime heroes and heroic gestures, the dark side of those "military matters" has been rarely mentioned, or to be considered as taboo in the public discussion.

II. Implication and Reflection

During the period when I am completing this thesis, the massive military operations between Ukraine and Russia shocked the world again by showing us bloody lessons of war crimes. Armed conflicts directly lead to the break-up of families and local communities in

war-torn areas, fraught with the growing exodus of refugees who were/are either aimlessly wandering or escaping from basement to basement in the city, or paying outrageous prices to move across borderlines for a possibility of asylum in the neighbouring countries.

It is not surprisingly to see history rhyme itself; likewise, it is not surprisingly to witness violence being used, repeatedly, as a method to deal with power conflicts (Francis 2004). To date, as we continue to see the outbreak and damage of war, many of those who suffered from the threats of coerced expulsion and violence have shared their daily living conditions through social media platforms (i.e., Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc.). Cyber space and electronic technology allows them to reach out to the outside world and makes their voices heard (Ong 1988). Their suffering experiences and feelings, published together with their accusations, have caught the public's attention and are widely spread out. To a high degree, these victim's first-person accounts have again reminded the world about the necessary to cooperate fully in the prosecution of war crimes and to reduce its consequences. Meanwhile, the voices from a much broader class of victims—via self-report and social media—also echo (and refresh) our memories of other man-made catastrophes that happened (not) long ago and/or are still happening but in the (non-Western) regimes where we, in effect, paid less attention to.

Not every group in armed conflicts would be able to catch the attention of the global community, let alone to afford the luxury of speaking up for their own needs and rights in

public. For the most part, as many studies indicated, those who were embroiled in the violent conflicts are mostly and largely forced to be silent, if not worse, being vilified as ignorant, immoral, feudal, or wrong-headed that needed to be purged (e.g., Hershatter 2011; Barlow 2008; Runyan 2012). The case of the Chinese diasporic community (the Mainlanders) in Taiwan reflected this situation. And, as I put the most of the focus into the dynamic relation between women's gender role, violence, and the forced displacement, the female members in this community were, typically, suffered even more because of their unfavourable position as women in the socioeconomic systems that functioned through state and masculine power.

The lesson we learned from the present crisis in Europe and the wartime women's narratives in this research cannot be treated as a general model to explain the circumstances of other social/political conflicts in different contexts. Yet, it always makes sense to throw new light on the data gathered from the accounts of ordinary people and ordinary lives under threaten and/or in change by force. Ordinary people's responses to what happened to them might be personal and marginal, yet these voices also belonged to our history in plural; and, as Skocpol (1984:364) underlined, whether or not the approaches narrated by individuals or group actors are plausible, to perceive these approaches are necessary for both theorists and social advocates—it is necessary not only because the accounts outside official systems (the propaganda) help us reflect local narrator's "inner logic" of their actions and practices, but also because, from the process of gathering and reading these diverse data, perhaps the

theorists, specialists, policy planners, and other people with the power could be care more about the suffering people's situations, and to be more aware of how one abstract concept (i.e., justice, fair or unfair, legitimate right, etc.) could be propositioned very differently from different models of thinking (Chomsky 2022).

III. Conclusion and Considerations for Future Research

In recent years, im/migrant, diaspora, refugee, and war-related issues have received considerable attention with regards to human and minority rights, local politics, and international relations. This research, also, tries to use Chinese diasporic women's migration and resettlement experiences to cast new light on studies of human movement and political environmental change. Chinese diasporic women's role practices, survival strategies, and networking across geographic-and-ethnic boundaries may provide us with a new perspective to see how ordinary women from diverse sociocultural backgrounds may cooperate with each other to share their common fears and fight for the same goals (for example, to fight against sexual and gender-based harassment; to support abandoned/homeless girls working in the military team). As with all women throughout the world who suffered from unequal access to power and resources, it appears that Chinese diasporic women in this research often had to remain silent and tolerate injustices in order to serve the greater causes of nationalism, social order, and family/community harmony.

The uncertain membership and unrecognized status of those dependents in the retreating

refugee groups often forced female members to bear the brunt of violent and abusive acts from the men in authority (i.e., the higher-ranking soldiers/officers in the teams; the community heads; the husbands). To my mind, it is sexuality and gender, and the intertwined power-relations on the basis of hegemonic masculinist culture that hindered our understanding of women's situations. This women-centered research, therefore, expects to contribute to feminist research, migration and diaspora studies, and Chinese scholarship by:

1) Exploring the diversity of ordinary women's wartime experiences and traumatic memories, to be able to potentially redefine and reconfigure the complex social relations between migrants/exiled people and local majority groups—the causes and effects of relationships that have often been shaped in different ways by varying environments, time, power relations, and cultural contexts, yet mostly they were not constructed by individual's preferences or actions.

2) Using women's first-person accounts to re-examine gender dimension of China's and Taiwan's official discourses, history writing and pedagogies (i.e., the textbook knowledge), and their associated public policies. While revolution and social conflicts are not something new in human history, to evaluate and address the gendered dimensions of masculinist and patriarchal hierarchy is still a challenging task that has been more or less absent in current documents.

3) Adopting feminist methodology to emphasize ordinary women's perspectives and to

nance their varying standpoints and situated knowledges. It differs significantly from the predominant approach in the studies of Chinese civil wars and history, which often take an idealistic view to glorify the war and the state violence through the voices of politicians and heroic figures.

4) Foregrounding migrant families' financial dilemmas, as well as diasporic women's concerns over family reunions and home visits across borders. This approach provides us with a different view to see the internal variation among the Chinese diasporic groups, especially with regards to their social familial roles, responsibilities, and the different rights and powers of men and women within the lineages of Chinese kin-family.

To conclude, the category of Chinese diasporic population in Taiwan is comprised of those who have memories (or myths) of their natal homes/homelands and are conscious of being displaced from them. Therefore, not only the first-generation Mainlanders but the second, and even the third generations should be discussed to uncover the studies of diasporic Chinese groups' changing ideologies and self-identifications (Li 1997). The difficulty of returning home, whether or not the individuals had actually lived there, caused Mainlanders (as a collective group) to suffer from the feelings of not-belonging and alienation in the place they resided in Taiwan. Due to this, many of former Mainlanders have attempted to create a connection with their relatives in China after the border control was lifted.

This dissertation research focuses on first generation Chinese diasporic women in

Taiwan. Future studies can further examine intergenerational and cross-border issues to advance our understanding of how changing relationships between China and Taiwan affect gendered cross-border intra-familial interactions. This work will assuredly contribute different perspectives and understandings to migration and diaspora studies, and deserve to be areas for future research activities.

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