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How to cite

CHEN, Yali. Becoming subject: chinese female migrants in Switzerland within a transnational family–individual dichotomy. In: Translocal Chinese: East Asian Perspectives, 2019, vol. 13, n° 1, p. 5–34. doi: 10.1163/24522015-01301002

This publication URL: https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:144810
Publication DOI: 10.1163/24522015-01301002

BRILL

TRANSLOCAL CHINESE: EAST ASIAN PERSPECTIVES
13 (2019) 5-34

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Becoming Subject: Chinese Female Migrants in Switzerland within a Transnational Family–Individual Dichotomy

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Abstract

This article argues that Chinese female migrants in Switzerland exert their agency to become the subject responsible for the care practices for their families in both Switzerland and China during their post-migratory lives. Based on fieldwork comprising 52 semi-structured interviews conducted with Chinese female migrants in Switzerland during 2016 and 2017, this article analyses the strategies Chinese female migrants develop to ensure their social role as woman, migrant, wife, mother, and daughter. Their self-development is also realized through the adjustment of their opinions about their roles and lives within household activities in Switzerland, and their strategies for making sense of the transnational parental care practice by overcoming difficulties induced by different social power relations during their post-migratory life from a gendered perspective.

Keywords

Chinese female migrants in Switzerland – subject – care practice – transnational family – gender

1 Introduction

Chinese idioms such as "When one's parents are still living, don't go far abroad (*fu mu zai, bu yuan you* 父母在, 不远游)"[1] or "Rear children for your old age

1 This idiom is from the *Analects of Confucius*; Confucius remarked: "While his parents are living, a son should not go far abroad; if he does, he should let them know where he goes"

 | DOI:10.1163/24522015-01301002

(*yang er fang lao* 养儿防老)" often underline that throughout Chinese history adult children have the responsibility for taking care of their parents in their old age. In Chinese families, the basic notion of filial piety requires children to be respectful, feel obligated to fulfil parents' practical and financial needs, and look after their emotions and well-being in their old age.[2] This ideology persists in many ways in contemporary China, especially considering its imperfect system of welfare for the aged. However, with economic development, the mobility of Chinese people has increased; it is no longer limited only to intercity or inter-provincial migration but has extended more and more to transnational migration. It is becoming more difficult for adult children to fulfil filial piety with regard to aged parents, especially so for Chinese living abroad. However, the diverse difficulties that overseas Chinese encounter in fulfilling filial piety do not lead to an erosion of filial piety. Instead, these Chinese migrants transform transnational caring practices towards their elderly parents in different ways.[3]

Research on transnational migration has traditionally examined transnational kinship issues among different ethnic migrant groups worldwide, including behavior and measures used to maintain family ties, family culture, and filial obligations, transnational care practices, and other family strategies.[4] Recently, an increasing number of migration studies have focused on Chinese

(*fu mu zai, bu yuan you, you bi you fang* 父母在, 不远游,游必有方). In ancient Chinese culture, Chinese people adopted the first part of the statement to remind adult children of the obligation to provide care for elderly parents.

2 Heying Jenny Zhan and Rhonda J. V. Montgomery, "Gender and Elder Care in China: The Influence of Filial Piety and Structural Constraints," *Gender and Society* 17, 2 (2003): 209–229; Jacquelyn S. Litt and Mary K. Zimmerman, "Global Perspectives on Gender and Carework: An Introduction," *Gender and Society* 17, 2 (2003): 156–165; Mengwei Tu, "Chinese One-child Families in the Age of Migration: Middle-class Transnational Mobility, Ageing Parents, and the Changing Role of Filial Piety," *The Journal of Chinese Sociology* 3, 15 (2016): 1–17.

3 Man Guo, Jinyu Lin, Ling Xu and Weiyu Mao, "Intergenerational Relationships in Chinese Transnational Families: A Typology Study," *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work* 27, 4 (2018): 366–381; Tu, "Chinese One-child Families in the Age of Migration," 1–17; Elsie Sechyee Ho and Lan-hung Nora Chiang, "Long-distance Filial Piety: Chinese Families in Australasia Caring for Elderly Parents across Borders," *Translocal Chinese: East Asian Perspectives* 11 (2017): 278–311.

4 Loretta Baldassar, Cora V. Boldock and Raelene Wilding, *Families Caring Across Borders: Migration, Ageing and Transnational Caregiving* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Loretta Baldassar, "Debating Culture across Distance: Transnational Families and the Obligation to Care," in *The Family in Question: Immigrant and Ethnic Minorities in Multicultural Europe*, ed. Ralph Grilli (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press), 269–291; Louise Ryan, Rosemary

migration at the international level, for instance, on migrants' economic and professional development, and gender,[5] ethnic identity issues,[6] diaspora,[7] or host society integration.[8] Rarely has Chinese transnational parent-care been studied,[9] even though it seems obviously of significance to study transnational Chinese migrants and the families they leave behind. Moreover, due to the feminization of international migration, gender in migration and gender care are receiving a greater emphasis in research into transnational mothering studies.[10] However, research on transnational migrant families tends to

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Sales, Mary Tilki and Bernadetta Siara, "Family Strategies and Transnational Migration: Recent Polish Migrants in London," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35, 1 (2009): 61–77; Ralph Grillo, ed., *The Family in Question: Immigrant and Ethnic Minorities in Multicultural Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008); Elisabetta Zontini, *Transnational Families, Migration and Gender: Moroccan and Filipino Women in Bologna and Barcelona* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010); Trace Reynolds, "Transnational Family Relationships, Social Networks and Return Migration among British-Caribbean Young People," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33, 5 (2010): 797–815; Albert Kraler, Eleonore Kofman, Martin Kohi and Camille Schmoll, eds., *Gender, Generations and the Family in International Migration* (Amsterdam: IMISCOE/Amsterdam University Press, 2011); Laura Merla, "Salvadoran Migrants in Australia: An Analysis of Transnational Families' Capacity to Care across Borders," *International Migration* 53, 6 (2012): 153–165.

5 Guochu Zhang, "Migration of Highly Skilled Chinese to Europe: Trends and Perspective," *International Migration* 41, 3 (2003): 73–97; Guida Man, "Gender, Work and Migration: Deskilling Chinese Immigrant Women in Canada," *Women's Studies International Forum* 27 (2004): 135–148.

6 Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

7 Ien Ang, "Together-in-Difference: Beyond Diaspora, into Hybridity," *Asia Studies Review* 27, 2 (2003): 141–154; Emanuel Ma Mung, *La diaspora chinoise: géographie d'une migration* (Paris: Orphys, 2002); Laurence J. C. Ma and Carolyn Cartier, *The Chinese Diaspora: Space, Place, Mobility and Identity* (Boston: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Alexandra Wong, "Transnational Real Estate in Australia: New Chinese Diaspora, Media Representation and Urban Transformation in Sydney's Chinatown," *International Journal of Housing Policy* 17, 1 (2017): 97–119.

8 Ward Colleen and En-Yi Lin, "There are Homes at the Four Corners of the Seas: Acculturation and Adaptation of Overseas Chinese," in *The Oxford Handbook of Chinese Psychology*, ed. Michael Harris Bond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 657–678.

9 Pei-Chia Lan, "Subcontracting Filial Piety: Elderly Care in Ethnic Chinese Immigrant Families in California," *Journal of Family Issues* 23, 7 (2002): 812–835; Ho and Chiang, "Long-distance Filial Piety," 278–311.

10 Rhacel Parreñas, "Long Distance Intimacy: Class, Gender and Intergenerational Relations between Mothers and Children in Filipino Transnational Families," *Global Networks* 5, 4

focus on distant parenting care from a gender perspective, considering female migrants as actors who are capable of negotiating relationships and exerting agency with regard to caring practices from a transnational perspective.

This article is part of my PhD research in which I analyse Chinese female migrants' different social power relations of gender, nationality, and culture in Switzerland by exploring their primary migration motivations and their pre- and post-migratory lives, in order to examine how they rebuild themselves as "female subject and migrant subject" during the migratory process. I consider the female migrants' transnational kinship maintenance process through an analysis of strategies which Chinese female migrants develop in order to take care of their families, especially aged parents whom they have left behind in China. I explore how they balance their caring practice "there" (in China) and "here" (in Switzerland), when one takes into account that most of them are married and have their own nuclear families in Switzerland. The article endeavours to understand how Chinese migrant women in Switzerland navigate their subjectivity to position themselves as individuals and members of families between "here" and "there."

2 Gender, Individual, and Family in Transnational Migration

In the literature on transnational female migration, the research has emphasized the individualization of female migrants by analyzing their agency within the decision-making process[11] and the achievement of economic development within labor migration or the search for a better life.[12] However, the

(2005): 317–336; Rhacel Parreñas, "The Gender Paradox in the Transnational Families of Filipino Migrant Women," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 14, 3 (2005): 243–268; Elisabetta Zontini, "Women in Barcelona: Coping with the Consequences of Transnational Lives," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30, 6 (2004): 1113–1144; Elisabetta Zontini, "Italian Families and Social Capital: Care Provision in a Transnational World," *Community, Work and Family* 9, 3 (2006): 325–345.

11 Lan Anh Hoang, "Gender Identity and Agency in Migration Decision-Making: Evidence from Vietnam," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37, 9 (2011): 1441–1457. See also the analysis on agency in migration theory by Olivier Bakewell, "Some Reflections on Structure and Agency in Migration Theory," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36, 10 (2010): 1689–1708.

12 Zontini, *Transnational Families, Migration and Gender*; Gláucia de Oliveira Assis, "Gender and Migration from Invisibility to Agency: The Routes of Brazilian Women from Transnational Towns to the United States," *Women's Studies International Forum* 46 (2014): 33–44.

perspective of female migrants as mothers or caregivers dominates in the literature on female migration.[13] Even though female migrants are developing more and more as powerful individuals, they are never detached from their left-behind family life. As pointed out in most studies on Filipino and Latino-American female migrant domestic workers, the individual subjectivity of mothering and responsible femininity influences their individuality throughout the migration process and positions them as powerful individuals, who overcome different social power relations by developing strategies of resistance; however, these female migrants still maintain their position as filial members of their families, which have remained in the homeland.[14] Therefore, it is only with difficulty that we can talk about individualization of women within migration without the role of the family, which dominates before and after the migration. Nevertheless, most of the research argues that the individualization of female migrants is realized due to self-development during the migratory process related to the search for a better life or the shift away from the patriarchal domination of the spouse or the father. Furthermore, in feminist studies, the family has often been considered as a space that restricts women's development, due to the inequality of the sexual division of work in the household and the stereotyping of gender roles.[15] Although the situation is also recognizable to female migrant women, the family also plays an important

13 Guri Tyldum, "Motherhood, Agency and Sacrifice in Narratives on Female Migration for Care Work," *Sociology* 49, 1 (2015): 57.

14 See different research studies by Rhacel Parreñas about the case of Filipino female migrants' transnational mothering, such as Rhacel Parreñas, "Mothering from a Distance: Emotions, Gender, and Inter-Relations in Filipino Transnational Families," *Feminist Studies* 27, 2 (2001): 560–580; and Parreñas, "Long Distance Intimacy," 317–336; Asuncion Freznoza-Flot, *Mères migrantes sans frontières. La dimension invisible de l'immigration philippine en France* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013). For the transnational mothering of Latino-American female migrants, see Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Emestine Avila, "'I'm Here, but I'm There': The Meanings of Latino Transnational Motherhood," *Gender and Society* 11, 5 (1997): 548–571; and Joanna Derby, "Children and Power in Mexican Transnational Families," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 69, 4 (2007): 1050–1046.

15 Christine Delphy, *L'ennemi principal. Partisans*: numéro spécial de *Partisans*: Libération des Femmes année 0 (1970); Danièle Kergoat, "Division sexuelle du travail et rapports sociaux de sexe," in *Genre et Économie: Un Premier Éclairage*, eds. Jeanne Bisilliat and Christine Verschuur (Genève: Graduate Institute Publications, L'Harmattan, Cahiers Genre et Développement, 2017), 78–88; Marc Bessin, "Focus – la division sexuée du travail," *Informations Sociales* 152 (2009): 156; Arlie Russell Hochschild and Anne Machung, *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2012).

and positive role in the subjectivation of female migrants during the migration process. Family is not only a place that limits women's self-development, but also a space where women are subjectivized and individualized.

When we use the gendered perspective to talk about transnational family activities of migrant women, these are not limited to the long-distance care of left-behind children, but involve kinship maintenance in a general sense, especially with regard to aged-parenting care. If migrant mothers can rebuild themselves as subjects through the distance care of children, migrant women can also seek to self-individualize through the maintenance of family relationships in a more general way. Research on transnational gendered activities has focused on transnational motherhood by emphasising the circuits of affection, caring, and financial support.[16] In the context of transnational motherhood, women's gendered role has been redefined by rejecting their traditional reproductive roles through physical presence and caring responsibilities; women's power has also grown by economically supporting their family through labor migration. Therefore, both individual improvement and family development have been achieved for migrant women. As for the care of elderly parents, female migrants' gender roles are manifested. Nevertheless, they may also commodify their love to their parents, as transnational mothers do for their children, by providing economic goods or by transferring money, yet they do so in ways that satisfy their own emotional needs. They also need to assume their roles within their nuclear family—meaning that female migrants struggle to distribute resources in optimal ways to care both for their parents' family in the homeland and their nuclear family in the society of settlement. Their gendered roles are reshaped within the migratory process by assuming their responsibility in two places and by behaving differently than before the migration. Insofar as the experience of female migrants within family activities presented here from a transnational perspective is intended to demonstrate how females develop a strategy for self-individualization through family care both "here" and "there," this strategy does not exclude their social position at a distance within the family with regard to their subjectivation through social power relations.

16 See the research of Rhacel Parreñas and also of Nancy Foner, "Gender and Migration: West Indians in Comparative Perspective," *International Migration* 47, 1 (2008): 3–29; and Asuncion Fresnoza-Flot, "Migration Status and Transnational Mothering: The Case of Filipino Migrants in France," *Global Networks* 9, 2 (2009): 252–270.

3 Conceptualizing Subject

Foucault examines two meanings of the word "subject": the first is to be subjected to others by control and dependence; the second one is to be attached to his/her own identity by consciousness or self-knowledge.[17] Foucault's idea underlines that, to be subject is to be the author and the master/mistress of his/her actions, but also subject to and subordinated to forces, such as social determinants, political contexts, social norms, cultural influences, or customs that transcend him/her. Thus, if we apply Foucault's idea to understand female migrants' subjective level, we realize that it is not just a matter of their emotional or mental self-perception of their post-migratory lives, but also their self-development as subjects and the transformation of their self-consciousness through their reactions and social norms or obligations, because they are also actors who are responsible for respecting certain rituals and guidelines from both the host society and homeland. Adult children's caregiving for elderly parents is recognized as an integral part of China's traditional culture, and it influences human thinking and behavior. According to Foucault, the culture and social norms pre-exist the subject and will be appropriated to him/her by learning the "good" ways in order to assume his/her role in such a situation and group. For many Chinese people, the consciousness with which they care for parents in their late age not only represents their moral responsibility but also their subjectivity—the way they control their actions and reactions. Foucault also argued that people's recognition of their moral duties through the self-training of reflexive activities shapes people's subjectivity and further encourages them to be subjects within that special context.[18]

Yang Shen's research on the internal migration of Chinese women[19] has emphasized the subjectivation of international Chinese female migrants through the maintenance of kinship, especially by the sentiment of the ethical responsibility of filial piety. According to Shen, agency and subjectivity are fluid and related to the social norms in specific contexts; women's subjectivity is internalized by moral codes of family obligations in the Chinese context, and she argues that there is an interaction between subjectivity and filial piety in the case of migrant women within China. This argument is not intended to

17 Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, Tome IV (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 227.

18 Michel Foucault, *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954–1984. Vol. 1. Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (London: Penguin, 2000).

19 Yang Shen, "Filial Daughters? Agency and Subjectivity of Rural Migrant Women in Shanghai," *The China Quarterly* 226 (2016): 519–537.

demonstrate that filial piety as a family obligation for internal Chinese female migrants oppresses their liberty or restrains their individualization; on the contrary, it (and other social norms, as discussed in Shen's article) is produced and reproduced in a reflexive way by individuals themselves, as demonstrated by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim.[20] In this sense, individualization is accompanied by a real imperative of reflexivity of social norms. Social norms urge the individual to behave in certain ways and not in others, and the individual's actions and self-perceptions through social validation and recognition allow him/her to ensure his/her different roles and to become a subject.

This article, based on Foucault's idea of subject, argues that Chinese women are active subjects in the migratory process who undertake left-behind family care,[21] as per the social norm of the family, through the individual subjectivation process.

4 Research Methods

The empirical data used in this study derive from my fieldwork of 52 in-depth interviews (see Appendix 1) conducted with Chinese female migrants in Switzerland during 2016 and 2017. The interviewees were recruited both by using an online method of sending recruitment announcements through different discussion groups of Chinese migrants in Switzerland on the WeChat platform and by using the "snowball" technique. All interviewees were married women who have a nuclear family in Switzerland, and whose extended family, including parents, remain in China, with the exception of three women who had managed to bring their parents to live in Switzerland.

The women whom I interviewed varied in age between 28 and 56 years old; this enriched my analysis, especially with regard to the transnational caring practice for different generations. I analyzed their migratory life stories, and I defend the ideas of Evergeti and Ryan, who state that ethnographic interviews can provide an invaluable account of the processual nature of

20 Ulrich Beck, *World Risk Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998); Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences* (London: Sage Publications, 2002).

21 The purpose of this article is an analyze different methods used by Chinese female migrants in Switzerland to take care of their original families, especially their parents, in China, and to demonstrate how they fulfill their role as filial daughter. Transnational care of parents-in-law will not be mentioned in this article, and it will be better to compare transnational family caring practices within their original families and families-in-law living in China in a separate article.

migrant-lived experiences.[22] From the post-migratory life stories collected from my interviewees, I distinguished different transnational parenting care strategies between women who were from families with siblings (older generation) and those who grew up in a one-child family (normally the generation born post-1980 under the one-child policy). Furthermore, considering that the duration of their stay varied from 2 to 36 years, their respective levels of integration in Switzerland certainly differed from one another. However, my fieldwork does not demonstrate that the level of integration has a direct impact on the level of their transnational family caring practice.

Most of the women in this research study[23] were from middle-class backgrounds and held a university diploma at a minimum. Some of them came to Switzerland either with their Chinese spouses, or to marry a Swiss citizen or a European man resident in Switzerland. A few came for work or came first to study and then to find a job; however, they all eventually married a Chinese or European man. Most of them had been confronted with disqualification from the workforce in Switzerland. Even if they are highly qualified, it is not always easy for them to find a job in Switzerland, as Riaño has underlined in articles on the disqualification of and discrimination against Third World migrant women in the Swiss job market; migrant women are usually in the unemployed or underemployed categories in Switzerland.[24] Moreover, the traditional Swiss gender culture persists and influences the development of the extra-familial childcare system,[25] and many women in Switzerland must devote the majority

22 Venetia Evergeti and Louise Ryan, "Negotiating Transnational Caring Practices among Migrant Families," in *Gender, Generations and the Family in International Migration,* eds. Albert Kraler, Eleonore Kofman, Martin Kohi and Camille Schmoll (Amsterdam: IMISCOE/Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 369.

23 All of the Chinese female migrants interviewed in my research have permanent resident status in Switzerland. Chinese female students in Switzerland are not included in my research because their legal situation is different, and that is outside the scope of this study.

24 Yvonne Riaño, "Drawing New Boundaries of Participation: Experiences and Strategies of Economic Citizenship among Skilled Migrant Women in Switzerland," *Environment and Planning A* 43 (2011): 1530–1546; Yvonne Riaño and Nadia Baghdadi, "Understanding the Labour Market Participation of Skilled Immigrant Women in Switzerland: The Role of Class, Ethnicity and Gender," *International Migration & Integration* 8 (2007): 163–183.

25 Yuri Ballestri and Giuliano Bonoli, "L'état social Suisse face aux nouveaux risques sociaux: Genèse et déterminants de l'adoption du programme d'impulsion pour les structures de garde pour enfants bas âge," *Swiss Political Science Review* 9, 3 (2003), 35–58; Fabio Bertozzi, Giuliano Bonoli and Benoît Gay-Des-Combes, *La réforme de l'état social en Suisse: vieillissement, emploi, conflit travail-famille* 2e éd. mise à jour. ed., Le Savoir Suisse 27 (Lausanne: Presses Polytechniques et Universitaires Romandes, 2008).

of their time to family care.[26] Indeed, even though the rate of women's participation in the labor market in Switzerland has been constantly increasing, reaching 63% in 2017,[27] still only 41.3% held full-time positions.[28] Meanwhile, the active labor rate of Swiss mothers has increased to 84.0%, which is 15% higher than that of foreign mothers (68.6%).[29] The participation rate of foreign mothers remained more volatile due to many factors concerning the gender regime, labor market policy, and the extra-family system. Chinese female migrants in Switzerland are therefore mainly responsible for taking care of the household work within their families. No matter what their reasons were for immigrating to Switzerland, or whether they have a job or not, they try their best to fulfil their responsibilities of care towards their parents staying in China. They shoulder a double burden of caring work within families both "here" and "there," but at the same time, they are constantly seeking self-development by confronting diverse power relationships at different levels of private, professional, social, and cultural life. In this article, I shall analyze not only the family caring practices of Chinese female migrants in Switzerland in a local–transnational perspective, but also their strategies of self-realization related to different social power relations within family life and personal life. By considering the diverse backgrounds of the interviewees in my research related to their economic status, generation, and age, I will demonstrate how they practice their transnational caring towards their parents in different ways and how the common value and feeling of transnational filial piety are developed among Chinese women in Switzerland.

5 The Individual's Position Between Families "Here" and "There": an Overview of Chinese Female Migrants' Post-Migratory Life in Switzerland

Research on female migration is concerned with more than simply analyzing migrant women as economic actors in the transnational labor market, which

26 Jean-Marie Le Goff and Abdoul-Wahab Dieng, "Prise en charge des enfants en bas âge en Suisse et participation des femmes au marché du travail," *Cahiers Québécois de Démographie* 35, 2 (2006): 141–160.

27 https://donnees.banquemondiale.org/indicateur/sl.tlf.cact.fe.zs.

28 Département fédéral de l'intérieur DFI, Office fédéral de la statistique OFS, "Résultats commentés pour la période 2011–2017 – Extrait de la publication intégrale « Indicateurs du marché du travail 2017 »."

29 Département fédéral de l'intérieur DFI, Office fédéral de la statistique OFS, "Enquête Suisse sur la population active – Les mères sur le marché du travail."

was the focus of pioneer feminist researchers on migration during the 1980s and 1990s.[30] Today, the field is also properly and more broadly including households, families, and networks as analytical units in order to explain the phenomena better from a more gendered perspective.[31] In their post-migration life, migrant women are not only confronted with difficulties in the labor market, but also with other problems in their daily lives. All aspects of the post-migratory life of migrant women, including their family lives, should be considered in the analysis of their self-sustaining nature.

As mentioned previously, due to the strict Swiss migration policy, Chinese female migrants usually find themselves unemployed. In fact, employment could be considered to be virtually unattainable within their post-migration lives, but that is not the most immediate problem that most of them feel they must resolve after arriving in Switzerland. Instead, the most pressing issue is the emotional impact which occurs right away after their settlement and persists throughout their migratory life. As one of my interviewees explained:

> When I arrived in Switzerland, everything changed for me, completely. I used to be single, and I was quite free. I worked during the week and travelled to different parts of China during the weekends. [...] After arriving here, I went to live with my husband and mother-in-law; since my mother-in-law was already 90 years old, my husband preferred to live with her for the last years of her life. In the beginning, all was new to me and I was curious to explore the new country. But I also felt that I couldn't understand anything, especially with the language. I speak English with

30 Mirjana Morokvasic, "Women in Migration: Beyond the Reductions Outlook," in *One Way Ticket: Migration and Female Labour*, ed. Annie Phizacklea (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), 13–31; Mirjana Morkvasic, "Birds of Passage Are Also Women," *International Migration Review* 18, 4 (1984): 886–907; Annie Phizacklea, "Migration and Globalization: A Feminist Perspective," in *The New Migration in Europe: Social Construction and Social Realities*, eds. Khalid Koser and Helma Lutz (London: Macmillan, 1998), 21–38; Gina Buijs, *Migration Women: Crossing Boundaries and Changing Identities* (Oxford: Berg, 1993).

31 Caroline B. Brettell, "Theorising Migration in Anthropology: The Social Construction of Networks, Identities, Communities and Globalscapes," in *Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines*, eds. Caroline Brettell and James Frank Hollifield (London: Routledge, 2000): 97–135; Caroline Wright, "Gender Awareness in Migration Theory: Synthesizing Actor and Structure in Southern Africa," *Development and Change* 26, 4 (1995): 771–791; Elisabetta Zontini, "Family Formation in Gendered Migration in Southern Europe Moroccan and Filipino Women in Bologna," in *The Mediterranean Passage: Migration and New Cultural Encounters in Southern Europe*, ed. Russell King (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001), 231–257.

> my husband; it's really impossible to communicate in Swiss German with my mother-in-law. I spent my days watching TV, but there was no Chinese channel and I understood nothing. I was totally disconnected, and the frequency of German speaking on the TV seemed nonstop and that upset me totally. Suddenly, I felt like I had closed myself off. I couldn't live in such a situation. Then, I multiplied my activities. I went shopping, but I could only guess half the meanings of the products. I felt very powerless in my daily activities because before I had always been an independent person with lots of ideas. I had almost no direct cultural contact with Swiss society. For two years, I felt bored, just lost. After two years, I reached a saturation stage. I wanted to go back [to China]. In fact, the first year was fresh, the beautiful scenery was pleasing. The snow, the mountains, and the lake were all wonderful. But in the second year, it was the same thing, I repeated my first year—there wasn't much sunshine the whole year; winter and autumn were very long. Due to the lack of communication with the outside world and because the weather was often bad, my mood was very bad, just like the weather, and I felt isolated.
>
> WANJUN, 38 years old, who married a Swiss man in 2010 and lives in Zürich

Language barriers and culture shock are often the most problematic issues for migrants as they try to integrate into the host society and define their identity.[32] Wanjun's case, like other Chinese female migrants' stories, demonstrates that the beginning of migrant life for Chinese women in Switzerland is never easy because of cultural shock or loneliness in the new country, and their level of English or lack of knowledge of the local language cannot really allow them to express their feelings well and communicate with local people; the idea of having lost themselves is very common and negatively influences their emotions. They are more or less in a situation of being negative subjects because they are powerless and short of autonomy. However, they look for means to escape from the uncomfortable situation by learning the local language or by engaging in a course of local cultural integration.

In fact, even though most migrant women are in a negative emotional state during their early post-migratory life, they are at least aware of their role in the family as a wife and a mother. Moreover, because of their awareness of their family roles, they are able to re-identify themselves. Wanjun said that she

32 Zhijing Zhang, Thomas de Graaff and Peter Nijkamp, "Barriers of Culture, Networks, and Language in International Migration: A Review," *Region* 5, 1 (2018): 73–89; Caroline B. Brettell, *Anthropology and Migration: Essays on Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and Identity* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira, 2003).

became pregnant late in the second year of her settlement in Switzerland and, with the birth of her son and her sense of responsibility for housework, she hesitated for a long time to choose whether she would look for a job or stay at home to take care of the household. She emphasized that without a profession, she would lose her self-esteem because she always had an interesting job. However, due to the Swiss gender system and labor market discrimination, Wanjun finally gave up her goal of finding a job and decided to stay at home; she also tried to adjust her mind-set with regard to her social role in the labor market and in her family. She concluded that her life's value could also be realized by the wellness of her son and her husband, and by family harmony. By considering the very low probability of finding a proper job in the Swiss labor market and her responsibility for the household, Wanjun preferred to promote her husband's career and remain at home. As Fang Lee Cooke underlined in her study of migrant Chinese academic couples in Britain,[33] Chinese migrant women, especially those who are married and have dependent children, tend to support their husband's career first and prioritize their family over their career.[34]

Even if certain Chinese female migrants insist on working, they have to balance their work and family commitments and make adjustments to work only part-time in order to have time to take charge of the housework. Xiang was also without employment when her two daughters were young and dependent. She began to work part-time when her children began kindergarten. She said:

> Since I do not do much (paid) work every day, basically I take the initiative to do the housework. I think my husband has a hard and long work day; I don't want him to clean up the house or to cook after he comes back. But generally, when he returns home, if he sees that I have not cooked yet he won't get angry. He'll take the initiative to help me to cook or set the table. After eating, it's always him who washes the dishes. I think we have a quite equal relationship.
>
> XIANG, 43 years old, who arrived in Switzerland in 1995 for study, then married a Swiss man and now lives in Geneva

33 Fang Lee Cooke, "'Husband's Career First': Renegotiating Career and Family Commitment among Migrant Chinese Academic Couples in Britain," *Work, Employment and Society* 21, 1 (2007): 47–65.

34 Thomas J. Cooke, "'Trailing Wife' or 'Trailing Mother'? The Effect of Parental Status on the Relationship between Family Migration and the Labor-Market Participation of Married Women," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 33, 3 (2001): 419–430; Parvati Raghuram, "The Differences that Skills Make: Gender, Family Migration Strategies and Regulated Labour Market," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30, 2 (2004): 891–904.

Taking into account the importance of the husband's career and compromising by giving up one's own job in order to take better care of the family strengthens the gendered role of migrant women in the household. However, migrant women are quite conscious of their responsibility to the family, as Xiang mentioned, and they are actors who do the housework to support their husband, even if this removes some of their individual autonomy and economic power, and often positions them in an isolated situation for self-development with regard to society. They voluntarily adjust to their new life in Switzerland and renegotiate their new social identity, advancing their role of wife and mother. It is thus in the process of self-adjustment that they have become subjects of their post-migratory life in Switzerland within household activities. Simultaneously, homesickness also affects Chinese migrant women's subjectivity, especially their inner conflict with regard to responsibility for their parents who stayed in China.

> As my parents are getting old, I always feel compunctious because I am not around for them; I can't take care of them directly and fulfill my filial duty to them. I am very sad and sorry about that. Especially since I have children, I have this kind of feeling. If my mother is ill, I won't be able to go back to China and take care of her during her rehabilitation. I feel ashamed. But my husband and my sons are here. I can't leave them here and go back alone to China to take care of my mother. [...] Every time I encounter such a situation, I feel that I am not filial, but I cannot do anything else. The only thing I can do to feel relieved is that I can give a little money to my parents for the traditional festivals. I think it might make me feel better in the bottom of my heart. In fact, my parents do not need money from me; they're in quite a good economic situation. In fact, they'll give me money every time I go back. But I need to give them money to compensate for my absence. [...] My husband understands my anxiety; he supports me and does the same thing.
>
> MINGMIN, 34 years old, who arrived in Switzerland in 2010 to reunite with her Chinese husband, who had settled in Switzerland more than 10 years previously for work

Remorse at not being able to fulfil their responsibility to care for parents, as discussed by Mingmin, is a recurrent motif in Chinese female migrants' stories. Keenly aware of their filial obligations, they must balance their roles between their families "here" and "there." Due to diverse social power relations and barriers encountered in the host society and to their responsibilities to their

families in Switzerland, Chinese female migrants feel a moral and emotional pressure to overcome the spatial and temporal barriers that hinder their practice of filiality to parents. Given the long-distance nature of that practice, migrant women need to develop strategies and readjust their gender roles in order to fulfill their roles as daughter. Between families "here" and "there," Chinese female migrants also try to exert their agency as actors to negotiate their gender roles and identity within their post-migratory lives and clarify their transnational family strategies.

6 Parental Care with Subjectivity: Transnational Family Strategies and Gender

In her book *Family Obligations and Social Change*, Janet Finch discusses the nature of family life, especially concepts of duty, responsibility, and individual obligations to the family, and how these operate in family and kin relationships.[35] We can note that these concepts, when acted upon in transnational caregiving, can also be manifested in five different types of caregiving, as described by Baldassar et al.: economic, accommodation, personal, practical and childcare, and emotional and moral.[36] For transnational migrants, personal presence and accommodation-sharing seem impossible to realize due to the distance barrier. Within transnational parental care practice, economic support, regular visiting, and emotional care are the ways most often used by migrants for exercising their responsibilities towards parents. Like Mingmin above, most Chinese women in Switzerland also acknowledge that their parents in China do not really need economic support from them because most of them come from quite wealthy families; however, the act of giving money to parents could help them to compensate for their absence. This seems easy for Chinese to understand, but it is not always easy to realize for Chinese female migrants in Switzerland, even if the Swiss economy seems better than that in China, because it depends largely on other social and family elements. Mingmin could do this because her husband is Chinese; he understands the culture of filial piety and supports her. Moreover, Mingmin has a salary, albeit a low one, that gives her some freedom in determining how to use her own money.

35 Janet Finch, *Family Obligations and Social Change* (Polity Press: 1989).

36 Baldassar, Boldock, and Wilding, *Families Caring Across Borders*, 15.

However, for someone married to a European man and without a job, this is often difficult to do.

> In fact, I always wanted to be financially independent, not because I want to earn much money, but my traditional idea is that if I have my own money, I can help my family. I can give to my parents. My husband has a very good salary, but I cannot use his money to give to my parents. He may agree to help my family members in China in case they're in big economic trouble, but he will never agree that I give money to my parents without an urgent reason. It is unfair to him if I do so, because he is different from us; he doesn't understand why I give money to my parents just because of filial piety, especially when my parents have a good pension and they don't need money from me. But for me, I just want them to use my money to buy something they like or to travel.
>
> When my children were still young, I couldn't work. I suffered so much just because I could not give money to my parents when I wanted. Now that my children are adolescents, I have less responsibility for housework and more time of my own. I've found a part-time job just to have a little money that I can control at will.
>
> XIANG, 43 years old, who arrived in Switzerland in 1995 for study, then married a Swiss man and now lives in Geneva

Xiang has underlined the different mentality of Swiss men concerning the traditional value of filial piety and how providing money to parents at a distance by Chinese female migrants in Switzerland remains problematic for certain bi-national couples. If the women do not work, they must negotiate with their husbands for the arrangement.

Yuqing explained that her husband had always accepted providing economic support to her parents. When they decided that it would be better for Yuqing to stay at home to do the childcare and let her husband work full time, she clarified that, at the moment of the discussion with her husband, she would accept the decision only if her husband agreed to send money to her parents.

> I was negotiating with my husband at that time. I asked him to send them (my parents) 200 Swiss francs [SFr] every month. I said that 200 SFr wasn't much for him, but with it my parents could lead a much better life. I said that I didn't want to feel that I lived so well here and see my parents still working hard to earn money for a better life in their old age. Moreover, I'm too far away. I couldn't take care of them from a long distance. I persuaded my brothers, who lived next to them, to take care of

> them when necessary. I had sent money. My husband heard that; then he did not complain and remained silent. He had no reason not to accept. Since then, I sent money to my parents every month by automatic bank transfer. Later, my husband counted it and found that I had to pay for the bank handling fee every month. He said that it's better to send it once per year and send more than 2000 SFr a year than sending 200 per month. Then he totally undertook the money transfer without me having to ask.
>
> YUQING, 46 years old, who arrived in Switzerland with her Swiss husband in 2007, lives in Aargau

The compromise that Yuqing made with her husband let her negotiate duties to her parents with her siblings and thereby manage to share parenting care with them. Every member of her parents' family accepts that those with money can give money and those with time can give physical care to their parents. Therefore, she is ensured of care for her parents' health when she is far away, and at the same time she can stay at home to fulfill her role of mother and wife. Yuqing has siblings who stayed in China and can take care of her parents without distance problems; however, for most Chinese female migrants who were born under the Chinese one-child policy, it is unlikely that they can share parenting care with others. Perhaps for all Chinese female migrants in Switzerland, the most feasible approach is that they invite their parents to Switzerland, but they can only stay for up to three months. That seems very limited for certain people, especially for families with only one child. For only daughters, it seems to be more difficult for them to endure the fact that their parents live in China without the care of any adult children. They adopt the traditional basic strategy by sending money to parents, as many others do, but the most pressing problem is that if their parents have any emergency, they cannot immediately cope with it because no siblings are on the scene,[37] so they look for other, more favorable ways for fulfilling their filial duties. Recently, some have found new strategies for taking care of their parents, despite the distance.

Sifu came to Switzerland to join her Chinese husband, who had arrived earlier to work in a Chinese restaurant. She said that when she arrived in Switzerland, she worried about her mother, who had been widowed a few years before and was not in good health. Moreover, Sifu does not have brothers or sisters. In the beginning, she invited her mother to Switzerland twice a year, but each time her mother could only stay for two or three months, and they had to apply for a visa each time. Later, she heard about a Chinese female friend who

37 Tu, "Chinese One-child Families in the Age of Migration," 1–17.

had succeeded in inviting her mother to settle in Switzerland long-term; Sifu tried doing the same thing and succeeded. She explained:

> It's very easy to bring your children with you for family reunification, but I never heard of bringing elderly people (parents) with you to settle in Switzerland. I am the only child in my family; I want my mother to live with us in Switzerland. But I knew that Swiss immigration policy is very strict and this kind of family reunification was impossible. When I heard my friend talking about her experience, I decided to consult a lawyer about it, and he advised me to manage a retirement project in Switzerland for my mother… First, she needed to have reached retirement age in China; secondly, she needed to have relatives in Switzerland—since we had stable resident status here, there was no problem with that; and, lastly, she had to prove that she had a considerable guaranteed income and would have no economic problems living in Switzerland.
>
> Thus, I prepared a letter in the name of my mother to state her motivation for settling in Switzerland and to explain her current physical condition, her living situation in China, and her desire to stay in the same country as me because I am her only daughter. In the letter, I emphasized that she would not add an economic burden to the Swiss government during her stay, that she has enough money, and she has a considerable retirement pension. She would have her own room in my apartment, etc. Then we prepared the application with all the proof documents. Finally, my mother got the authorization to settle in Switzerland for a long term.
>
> SIFU, 38 years old, who arrived in Switzerland in 2015, and lives in Delémont

To take better care of her mother, Sifu chose to challenge the Swiss immigration policy with regard to the settlement of her mother in Switzerland, even though Switzerland has strict policies on immigrants from developing countries like China;[38] she tried her best to find the right strategies for implementing her plan successfully. Two other interviewees in my fieldwork also mentioned that they had succeeded in bringing their parents to settle in Switzerland for the long term, but they had also encountered many difficulties in the procedure. Even though this is a very good method, this does not mean it can be used by all Chinese female migrants in Switzerland. The majority of them, who do not think of this method or who felt that the method itself can not apply to their

38 Magalie Gafner and Irène Schmidlin, "Le genre et la législation Suisse en matière de migration," *Nouvelles Questions Féministes* 26, 1 (2007): 16–37.

family in Switzerland or to their parents' family in China, prefer to return to China regularly to visit their transnational parents.

Xiang emphasized during her interview that she often returned to China to visit her parents when her daughters were young and had not started school. Sometimes, she stayed as long as two or three months in China. However, when her children went to school, she could only bring her children back to China during the summer holidays. Even so, she tried to go back at least once a year. Xuebing does the same thing as Xiang; she tries to visit her parents every summer during her son's school holidays. Every time she visits her parents, she tries to organize trips with her parents to optimize their time together. She said that when they stay at home, she also tries to have activities together with her parents:

> I'm not usually there, so I just want to spend more time with my parents when I go back to China. Cooking with them, shopping, or going for a walk together can make me very happy. They also enjoy the time together with me . . .
>
> My parents are getting older and older, and they will need me more and more. When they need me, for example, when they are sick, I can't be around them, I will feel very helpless. I have not yet thought of changing my passport even if it is easier to travel with the Swiss passport, but I prefer to keep my Chinese passport so that I can return to China easily if they need me urgently. I will just need to buy a ticket immediately without needing to apply for a visa for the trip, which will help me save time.
>
> XUEBING, 43 years old, who arrived in Switzerland in 2009 and lives in St-Gallen

Regular visits are important in the transnational parental care practice of Chinese female migrants in Switzerland, so they control and maintain options of legal travel. Many Chinese female migrants in Switzerland, like Xuebing, who can change to a Swiss passport still decide to keep their Chinese passports, which allow easy travel to China, especially when their parents reach old age. Chinese migrants who retain their Chinese passports must renew their Swiss resident permits every year or every two years and ask for a visa to travel to the UK and the US, and they also do not have the right to vote or receive certain services; however, they know very well what kind of legal rights or privileges they forego in Switzerland in order to ensure that they can get to their parents quickly when necessary.

In fact, regardless of their reasons for immigrating to Switzerland and whether or not they have independent economic sources, Chinese female migrants

have the same understanding and feeling of their responsibilities and filial duties to their parents in China. Despite their wide disparities of economic background in Switzerland, and despite the differences among their husbands' social and ethnic backgrounds, as we have seen with Xiang, Mingmin, Yuqing, Xuebing and Sifu, there are different options they can choose from in caring for their parents. All of them first think of the most basic and feasible ways of fulfilling their filial piety by sending money or by visiting regularly. Those of the one-child generation, like Sifu, may need to develop additional strategies for overcoming the problem of leaving parents alone without siblings in China. No matter what kind of parental care they practice, these overseas Chinese women must always face some kind of challenge. In spite of many constraints, they still slowly set up their own strategies by exploring options in practice. If they were to attempt traditional means of filial piety and care for elderly parents, they would be so constrained that they would be unable to fulfil all of their obligations, but their emotional concern for their families, especially for their parents in China, is never interrupted or reduced. The different forms in which they express care to their transnational parents demonstrate that they are taking corresponding measures under the conditions of feasibility, and that they play a subject role throughout the process, so that they can optimize their role as a filial daughter.

7 Emotion Online: Expanded Care and Presence

While Chinese female migrants in Switzerland can scarcely achieve the goals of proximate residence and physical presence in parental care, they can mobilize new skills to maintain and nurture their relationships with their families in China with the Chinese digital communication platform WeChat.[39] Recent studies on media and migration have emphasized that digital communication technology plays a role as a medium for maintaining relationships with the homeland for transnational migrants.[40] In her research, Mihaela Nedelcu describes the e-strategies of Romanian migrants in Toronto who use

39 WeChat is a Chinese smartphone platform which enables sending hold-to-talk voice messages, video sharing and video conferencing, group discussion, the transmission of photographs, text messages, and online polls to contacts, and provides the function of sharing life moments equally with friends who participate in WeChat services.

40 Dana Diminescu, "Les migrations à l'âge des nouvelles technologies," *Hommes & Migrations* 1240 (2002): 6–9.

communication technologies to maintain family relationships in their homeland;[41] this serves as a reminder to researchers on migration to take into account new communication technologies that seem to provide new lifestyle options for transnational migrants. As Mihaela Nedelcu and Malika Wyss stress in their article, new modes of transnational communication make the practice of "being together" possible and shapes different ways of "doing family" at a distance.[42] More and more research on media usage in the post-migratory lives of transnational migrants tends to focus on the maintenance of kinship.[43] Physical absence is compensated for by presence and emotional care in cyberspace.

In this connection, Huiyan said:

> Before, I made some international calls, but the price of an international call was too expensive. I couldn't call my parents often—maybe just once per week. Since the appearance of WeChat, the international connection became much more flexible and easier. I can send them a text message or voice message whenever I want. I also contact them by video when I am not busy so that we can see each other. That makes us feel very warm.
>
> HUIYAN, 44 years old, who arrived in Switzerland in 2000 and lives in Baden

In Huiyan's experience, WeChat cuts through time and space; it lets overseas Chinese communicate with their parents in the homeland cheaply and instantaneously. Through this messaging forum, both sender and receiver can control when to send or receive messages, and the problem of time difference between the two countries can be optimally solved. Furthermore, people are no longer limited to communicating with language and text—they can also send pictures, videos, and links. This has surely shortened the distance between Chinese women in Switzerland and their parents in China. Moreover, the expression of emotions has also been diversified:

41 Mihaela Nedelcu, "E-stratégies migratoires et communautaires: le cas des Roumains à Toronto," *Hommes & Migration* 1240 (2002): 42–52.

42 Mihaela Nedelcu and Malika Wyss, "'Doing Family' through ICT-Mediated Ordinary Co-Presence: Transnational Communication Practices of Romanian Migrants in Switzerland," *Global Networks* 16, 2 (2016): 202–218.

43 Ellen Helsper, "Migration and New Media: Transnational Families and Polymedia," *Journal of Children and Media* 7, 2 (2013): 273–277; Mihaela Nedelcu and Nihil Olivera, "E-migrant Women in Catalonia: Mobile Phone Use and Maintenance of Family Relationships," *Gender, Technology and Development* 17, 2 (2013): 179–203; Baldassar, Boldock, and Wilding, *Families Caring Across Borders*, 109–136.

> In our WeChat discussion, I ask them [my parents] about their daily lives and their health. I tell them about my life in Switzerland, what special things I did today, or about my Swiss husband or my son [...] During traditional Chinese festivals or on my parents' birthdays, I can send them my best wishes. I also send "red envelopes" to my family and my friends during the Chinese New Year through WeChat. This way, I also feel the New Year atmosphere indirectly from here [Switzerland]. You know, I don't express my emotions to my parents, nor will I say to them, "I love you." I think it's too difficult for Chinese people of our generation to express intimacy openly and, if I do that, my parents will also feel it's bizarre. But I can send them emojis for love, like hearts, hugs, or kisses. That's very funny, and we won't feel very awkward.
>
> MEILING, 36 years old, who arrived in Switzerland in 2008 and lives in Bern

As Meiling pointed out, Chinese female migrants use WeChat not only to keep in touch with their parents but also to maintain intimacy; this kind of communication can be especially important because they can also be informed right away in case of an urgent situation. Moreover, they do not need to confront social power relations at the familial (i.e., with husband), economic, or political level; they are totally powerful online to be "together" with their parents. As Liesbet Van Zoonen has stressed, digital media can serve as a medium for migrant women to empower themselves,[44] and in Switzerland, the Chinese women's experience with WeChat also proves that they are actors who negotiate their transnational kinship through digital media. Through WeChat, they finally succeed in realising an emotional presence in the life of their parents in China, and this kind of presence is rarely limited by time, place, or other social power relations.

The Chinese female migrants' use of WeChat to express their concern across national borders for their parents fully demonstrates that they exercise agency in redefining and reinterpreting their traditional family responsibilities and their expression of filial piety during their post-migratory lives in Switzerland. They transform WeChat into a space where they express their emotions, thoughts, and actions. This online practice of care for parents may be considered a new form of agency and power for Chinese female migrants, even when they often suffer from subjection related to their culture, social class, gender, and ethnicity, as well as Swiss social policies.

44 Liesbet Van Zoonen, "Feminist Internet Studies," *Feminist Media Studies* 1, 1 (2001): 67–72.

8 Conclusion

Based on an analysis of post-migratory life experiences of Chinese female migrants in Switzerland, this article has revealed the family lives of these women through a transnational lens and how they exercise their agency and subjectivity with regard to fulfilling their responsibilities to their family in Switzerland and to their parents in China via different ways of caring practice. Taking into account the intersection of different financial constraints, cultural barriers, and gender and policy restrictions, it has been shown that Chinese female migrants in Switzerland play different roles as wife, mother, daughter, and also woman and migrant, by developing strategies to overcome difficulties. No matter which role they play, they are all subjects in their actions. As individuals, Chinese female migrants not only care about their own personal development; they also consider the development of their husbands and children, and even sacrifice their careers to support the family when necessary. They often position their self-development within the family's well-being and make compromises. In the case of their absence for the provision of parental care, they feel ashamed and try to do their best to be a filial daughter and to make their parents' lives in their old age as happy as possible. Perhaps this has strengthened their traditional gender role at a certain level, but, even so, they are still in the process of subjectivation, caught in the contradictions of obedience and resistance within the confines of social norms. They are subjects who adopt strategies to adjust their roles and lives within their household activities in Switzerland by advancing their husbands' careers and families' social position; however, they also negotiate with their husbands and challenge Swiss migratory policy to fit with their practice of parental care. Whether the type of caregiving is in the form of economic contributions, regular visits, or personal care when it is possible to bring parents to live in Switzerland, or even emotional and moral care via WeChat, Chinese female migrants are active with regard to redefining their family responsibilities and expressions of filial piety in the transnational context by considering all possibilities and impossibilities. They also realize their self-values and empower themselves by overcoming geographical and temporal constraints in their practice of parental care.

This article argues that as actors in different aspects of family life within their post-migratory lives in Switzerland, Chinese female migrants reconstitute themselves as subjects. The analysis of their subjectivity and agency in this article is not entangled with their efforts to overcome gender roles, but rather focuses on their adjustment in terms of self-awareness and reconciliation in different social power relations regarding gender and nationality, and in the development of strategies to overcome their powerlessness, positioning themselves as subjects of their post-migratory lives.

Appendix 1

Interviewees' basic information

Name (Anonym)	Age	Residence in Switzerland (Canton)	Arriving year in Switzerland	Education[45]
Xiaozhao	28	Aargau	2013	BA
Feiyan	28	Zürich	2010	BA
Shuisheng	29	Genève	2016	MA
Shuanghua	29	Zürich	2014	BA
Jianning	32	Basel	2011	PhD
Lingsu	32	Bern	2015	BA
Rongrong	32	Zürich	2014	MA
Nianci	33	Vaud	2008	MA
Yuanzhi	34	Fribourg	2010	MA
Yaojia	34	Zürich	2009	MBA
Yilin	34	Luzern	2011	MA
Mingmin	34	Bern	2010	BA
Wanqing	35	Vaud	2012	MBA
Zhongling	35	Aargau	2002	BA
Xiruo	35	Zürich	2006	MA
Ranxiang	35	Jura	2014	MA
Meiling	36	Bern	2009	MA
Chaoying	36	Basel	2013	MA
Fuyao	36	Genève	2011	MA
Lingshan	37	Genève	2010	MA
Qingying	37	St. Gallen	2010	BA
Qiushui	38	Genève	2013	MA
Yuyan	38	Zürich	2010	MA
Fenghuang	38	Zürich	2004	PhD
Lingguang	38	Jura	2011	BA
Susu	38	Genève	2006	MA
Xingzhu	38	Genève	2010	MA
Sifu	39	Jura	2014	BA
Mochou	39	Aargau	2014	MA
Qiqi	39	Bern	2011	BA
Wanjun	39	Zürich	2010	MA
Ruolan	40	Thurgau	2013	BA
Fangyi	40	Thurgau	2010	MA

Name (Anonym)	Age	Residence in Switzerland (Canton)	Arriving year in Switzerland	Education[45]
Yunmeng	40	Jura	2009	BA
Meifang	40	St. Gallen	2008	BA
Xinzhu	41	Zürich	2000	MA
Jingwen	43	Genève	1995	MA
Xuebing	43	St. Gallen	2009	MA
Baiqian	43	Genève	2005	MA
Huiyan	44	Aargau	2000	PhD
Yinli	44	Zürich	2006	BA
Qisi	46	Aargau	2000	BA
Huazheng	46	Zürich	1999	MA
Zizhu	46	Bern	2015	BA
Wushuang	46	Aargau	1998	MBA
Yuqing	46	Basel	1994	BA
Qifang	49	Grison	2010	BA
Hongmian	51	Vaud	2014	MA
Luobing	51	Vaud	2008	BA
Feiyan	55	Bern	2003	BA
Ziyi	56	Zürich	1991	PhD
Peijia	56	St. Gallen	1982	BA

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45 PhD: Doctoral degree; MA: Master degree; MBA: Master of Business Administration; BA: Bachelor degree.

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