

The Right to Work Across Borders: Disparities of Women's Labor Force Participation Following Migration Between China and the U.S.

1. Introduction

There are over 23 million female foreign-born workers in the United States of America and they account for 16% of women currently in the U.S. labor force out of the 331.9 million U.S. population (American Immigration Council 2021). Honing these subgroups, immigrant women from specifically China—originating from mass migrations to diasporas—face cultural, social, and, most importantly, economic adjustments to the U.S. workforce during the post-Mao era (1976-present). In 2021, Chinese-born women accounted for 5.1% of foreign-born women living in the United States, and 57.0% had a share in the labor force compared to 65.8% of Chinese immigrant men in the U.S. market (U.S. Department of Labor 2022). Women's involvement in economic activities in China stands among the highest in Asia, with a labor force participation rate (LFPR) reaching 63.9% in 2013. This notable participation is partly a consequence of the enduring influence of the Communist Party in China since 1949. The foundational principles of the Communist Party, enshrined in its constitution, advocate for the equality of women and men across all spheres of life. Mao Zedong, in 1968, envisioned a China where “women hold up half the sky.” The basic law implemented when the People's Republic of China was first established in 1949 stated: “The People's Republic of China shall abolish the feudal system which holds women in bondage. Women shall enjoy equal rights with men in political, economic, cultural, educational, and social life. Freedom of marriage for men and women shall be enacted (Li 2000).” Under the law, the CCP enacted two crucial legislative

documents in 1950: the Marriage and Land Law. The Marriage Law prohibited practices such as prostitution, arranged marriage, child betrothal, and concubinage. Marriage was envisioned to be founded on love and mutual consent, embracing concepts such as free marriage, divorce, and economic independence.

In alignment with this agenda, the Chinese government has also implemented targeted measures to facilitate women's engagement in labor. Many men and women were enlisted for various job opportunities requiring additional labor. The commitment to fostering women's participation has been particularly pronounced since the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution in 1978. The ordained Marxist doctrine campaigned for gender equality in China by promoting women's participation in socialist and communist production, often at the expense of women's domestic roles. The socio-political environment under the CCP fostered a narrative of gender equality within the domestic context, where women were recognized and incentivized to participate in the labor force during this period. However, when these Chinese individuals, particularly women with substantial work experience under this paradigm, migrate to the U.S., the situation becomes different. A huge wave of Chinese population migration hit America after the Immigration Reform of 1965— with citizens leaving Mao's communist rule—with the removal of barriers for non-European immigrants to the United States increasing immigration. China also relaxed emigration controls in 1978. The number of Chinese immigrants residing in the United States nearly doubled from 1980 to 1990 and again by 2000 (Migration Policy Institute, 2023). Despite their robust backgrounds and professional skills, they often grapple with challenges in adapting to the U.S. labor market. The transition involves cultural adjustments and navigating through the nuances of a different economic system and employment landscape.

The disparities in FLFP among Chinese immigrant women in the U.S. compared to U.S. women citizens are not solely attributed to cultural differences. Still, they [these disparities] are deeply intertwined with the structural variations between the socialist framework of China and the capitalist system in the United States. The ideological shift from a collective-oriented production under the CCP to a more individualistic and competitive market environment in the U.S. presents hurdles for these immigrants to integrate into the workforce seamlessly. Iverson & Rosenbluth's theory on state-supported economic systems showcases how the discrepancies extend beyond cultural distinctions and encompass variations in political government structures. The theory argues that different countries' economic production systems are structured by government policies, which are inherently determined by traditionalist, or lack of, family and gender roles affecting women's investment in general or specific skills. Cross-country differences in norms vary, whether that is affected by national affluence or marriage/divorce rates, and it impacts women's tendency to seek labor force participation entrance. They conclude that "In rich democracies, working women rely on government services... (Iverson & Rosenbluth 2010)" as a way to find economic opportunities. Comparing this to the U.S.— a developed country with a democracy— Chinese immigrant women who come from a vastly different state-supported economy, driven by the CCP's gender norms, may encounter barriers that hinder their ability to break into the U.S. labor force and secure employment opportunities despite their extensive work experience. Compared to U.S. women citizens who are already adjusted to the gender norms and dynamics of the state-supported economic system, Chinese immigrants face a battle of adapting to a new cultural and societal context and grappling with the intricacies of a foreign economic structure. Discrimination and stereotyping based on ethnicity

and gender can exacerbate the challenges faced by Chinese immigrant women in their pursuit of economic engagement in the United States.

Against this backdrop, this paper uses comparative statistics and evidence to examine the nature and causes of the observed trends in women's FLFP of migrants from China to the United States. According to Antecol (2000), immigrant women from countries with low female LFP are less likely to work after immigration than immigrant women from countries with higher female LFP. It probes the factors that contribute to the disparity in Chinese women's labor force engagement following migration from the United States compared to their counterparts who remained in China through the post-Mao era and U.S. non-immigrant women. I aim to explore how migration, by exposing Chinese female immigrants to new gendered cultural norms and state structures, which themselves can encourage or restrict gender-specific labor force participation, influences labor force patterns of Chinese women immigrants in the United States.

2. Literature & Hypotheses

The overarching theory behind my study is examining the cross-cultural differences in values regarding the appropriate role of women in society, which state policies and institutions play a part in, and that navigating varying patriarchal structures across cultures and historical periods can impact women's labor force patterns. These theories will provide background to the mechanism of my hypothesis, underlining Chinese immigrant women's norm-induced beliefs of seeking labor force entrance in their host country and the patriarchal trends of power of the State and formal institutions in providing public welfare to immigrant women that pursue such engagement.

According to Alesina, Giuliano, and Nunn's (2011) study of how European plough practices are culturally transmitted throughout history and children of immigrants, current

differences in gender attitudes and female behavior are shaped by differences in traditional agricultural practices. Though the question of gender inequality is understudied in the Chinese context, this project aims to fill this gap in the literature by exploring the impact of gender and cultural norms or structures following migration – in particular, its impact on LFP in a new host society. Given Alesina's (2011) theory, the research provides strong evidence of how when Chinese immigrant women, who were under the CCP's regime of collectivism and a focus on equal LFP, migrate to America, they bring with them cultural and historical legacies that intersect with the distinct gender ideologies and policies in the new host country. Antecol (2000) uses gender differences in LFP in the countries of origin as an indicator of historical experiences that influence current behavior in the destination country. The interplay between legacies and the contemporary gender dynamics in the host country may further contribute to the observed disparities in LFP, leading to my first hypothesis:

H1: Upon arrival, first-generation Chinese immigrant women seek to integrate into the labor force at much higher rates than women who are U.S. female citizens not of Chinese descent due to divergence in gendered norms.

To apply this theory of cross-cultural disparities to China, it is vital to understand what culturally induced state policies and initiatives were implemented among the Chinese population during the period. It is key to note that there is variation among the CCP's promotion of full labor force participation across genders as seen as a gender ideology or a strategically-motivated state policy to foster economic growth— or a combination of both. After the agricultural collectivization and the start of the Great Leap Forward Movement in 1958, China launched another massive campaign to speed up economic development, especially the development of industry and technology. Women were persuaded to join the labor force, particularly in the fields vacated by

men who had been transferred to male-oriented industrial occupations. Moreover, due to thorough agricultural collectivization, domestic duties that used to be performed within the family units also required collectivization and the subsequent establishment of service centers for these duties (Li 2000). CCP propaganda posters, including women's participation in production, were seen as one of the basic keys to showcasing gender equality. During the Cultural Revolution, depicting women engaging in roles typically associated with men persisted. Female team members, known as "imitation boys" or "iron women," were strong and dynamic figures working under the leadership of commune leaders (Croll 1995). They played a highly influential role as models for women, inspiring them to undertake the most challenging and strenuous tasks. China transformed from a society where it was deemed inappropriate for respectable women to venture outside their homes to a society where women's employment became nearly universal. Due to the rooted patriarchal values within Chinese society, the new environment of the U.S. poses a significant challenge to the survival of the communist vision of gender equality, which is only precariously upheld in China through the influence of a powerful party agenda. Chinese immigrant women in the U.S. from this period may carry with them these cultural values and expectations, affecting their perceptions of gender roles and LFP. Therefore, the labor market outcomes of immigrant women can be influenced by the work-related gender norms prevalent in both their countries of origin and their countries of destination.

In the United States, there isn't as rigid a framework dictating women's roles in the workforce as in China. In her examination of the most widely read women's magazines in America, Keller (1994) tracked shifts in perspectives on women's employment. She noted a growing acceptance but also a lingering uncertainty regarding women in the workforce. Keller argued that, up until very recently, the fundamental ideology or discourse in women's magazines,

catering to both employed and non-employed women, predominantly revolves around the concept of the “mother” (Keller 1994). Compared to Chinese women who regard working as the prime and only indicator of gender equality—while accepting other forms of subordination—the observation of U.S. ideologies shows how Chinese migrant women’s desires and expectations clash with a very different reality following their journey to America. The present generation of Chinese women was raised with the conviction that pursuing employment outside the home is the sole way of life. Their engagement in the labor force is influenced by contradicting factors, in turn reformulating their gender ideologies and dynamics within the household in the United States. Iverson & Rosenbluth (2010) affirm the factor of motherhood in workforce participation and cite the sexual division of labor. The gender division of labor makes it so women specialize in household skills and constrains them from seeking out jobs. This applies to H1, where I aim to understand if Chinese migrant workers have a strong desire to find jobs after migration, even under the gendered norms of economic participation of the CCP. Their findings show that the general skills nature of the U.S. economy allows women to balance family and career success. The rise in U.S. female participation rate is largely attributed to its fluid labor market, pushed by the country-specific cultural norms that weaken employers’ incentives to discriminate against women. The case for China varies, given its socialist structure. The implications of this are vital to understanding what factors can drive divergent gendered norms, which in turn creates gaps upon migration. As an attestation to China’s dynamic gender norms, China’s post-Mao era, which introduced agricultural reforms in rural China and changes in sex-specific agricultural incomes, showed that aspects that increase the economic value of women are also likely to increase the survival rates of girls and increase education investment in all children. The discernible impact on the relative outcomes for girls and boys, signaling a departure from

traditional CCP policy, was brought about by the evolving trend in gender norms in China and the economic transformations during this period (Qian 2008). Under this umbrella of contrasting gendered norms that affect political institutions between China and America, there is potential to explore how this gap will influence female migrant workers' LFP.

In addition to the previous theory, Deniz Kandiyoti's (1988) research suggests that various forms of patriarchy, created by state-supported norms, create specific expectations and constraints for women, akin to distinct "rules of the game." In terms of my hypothesis, Kandiyoti's perspective supports the idea that the cultural and state-level norms in both countries contribute to unique sets of expectations for women. The experiences of Chinese female migrants may be influenced by the set of polarizing patriarchal structures they encounter in the U.S., which differ from those in China. In response to these different forms of patriarchy, women may employ diverse strategies to enhance their security and maximize life choices—and welfare systems may play a part in facilitating these efforts. Kandiyoti's idea reinforces the notion that understanding these varied forms of patriarchy is crucial for comprehending how women navigate and respond to different societal expectations, impacting their decisions regarding labor force participation. This bolsters the argument of the paper that the challenges faced by Chinese immigrant women may be shaped not only by individual experiences but also by broader cultural and state-level norms, made tangible by state support, that dictate their roles and opportunities in both origin and host countries (Wei and Yu 1995).

Iverson and Rosenbluth's (2010) gendered welfare state establishes that states and policies are meant to provide economic opportunity for women, but different welfare states among diverging economies leave women out of the game. These economies are determined by patriarchy, which dictates women's productivity. The role of the welfare state extends to

alleviating the gendered burdens that patriarchy places on women. Under Chinese patriarchy and Mao's collectivization, Chinese women not only had to work outside but also take care of the children, feed the pigs, wash, starch, sew, and mend. Similarly, American patriarchy centers around females' role in motherhood and the sexual division of labor, as stated by Iverson & Rosenbluth. Though the normative value of motherhood is equally salient in both countries, the norm is less constraining in China, given more extensive state support for education and childcare stemming from the CCP's legacy and policies. The socialist economy was meant to unshackle women by transferring childcare and housework out of the home and into the public sector (Harsch 2014). The Chinese Women's Federation, founded alongside the CCP, was authorized to be in charge of women's affairs in the nation, including education. The Federation issued several documents to emphasize the significance of women's education. Access to education for women in China has seen continuity as women's representation in higher educational institutions was also higher during the Cultural Revolution. The Party's control over Chinese society shaped admission criteria into higher institutions based on political ideology, family background, and work experience, which seemingly benefited women (Lu and Du 2023). Increasing levels of education have altered the perception of how Chinese women approach child-rearing, emphasizing a preference for fewer but more effective parenting strategies (Li 2000), which introduces a transitioning perspective of motherhood. After the reform and opening up, the number of girls receiving high-level education has taken a substantive leap and has surpassed the number of men. The jump mirrors Chinese society's acknowledgment and inclusivity, signifying that Chinese women have entered an era of attaining quality education. Educational attainment is vital to women's ability and motivation to work. The education of females increases productivity by raising output in economic activities, and a literacy rate will

have more access to getting a better position in the labor market (Ince 2010). The number of female urban employment in China grew rapidly after 2000, which further substantiates that the improvement of female education increases female employment opportunities (Lu, Du 2023). With such work experience and flexibility in education for Chinese women deployed by Chinese government intervention and state support, Chinese female migrants experience a separate welfare system in America where such opportunities are either limited or inaccessible to immigrants. It is clear the effect that these CCP norms and education policies had on women during the Mao era, but the educated Chinese women who left this state structure for America weren't able to mobilize the resources and benefits they would have reaped in China. In the United States, these women faced barriers to accessing comparable opportunities and support systems, highlighting the disparities in welfare provisions between the two countries. According to data from the 2015 American Community Survey, over one-third of immigrant women workers have a bachelor's degree or more, and two-fifths of low-wage immigrant women workers lack a high-school diploma, highlighting a clear barrier to educational entry for women in the immigrant system. Reimers (1985) found that the LFP rate differences between native-born white wives and foreign-born white wives are completely due to human capital and demographic variables, including education and English proficiency. With this discussion of varying state support systems and how gender impacts them, I will introduce how the welfare state, defined by its opportunities for education and other access points, has an impact on Chinese immigrant FLFP:

H2: The gendered welfare state in the U.S. contributes to decreased labor force participation rates for Chinese immigrant women relative to their female counterparts back in China, as the state provides minimal social assistance to migrants.

From systemic barriers in America's welfare state as well as limited access to fundamental services like education and healthcare, the convergence of these systemic barriers and cultural norms often intersect to limit migrant women's opportunities for economic and social advancement in America. This paper will use educational attainment as the main measure of public welfare and state services, as several studies have found a positive effect of education on the labor market experience among foreign-born women in the U.S. (Read & Cohen 2007). Migration permanently eliminates the party apparatus and social control that play a central role in the lives of mainland Chinese citizens. Chinese immigrants, as a result, undergo diverse alternative lifestyles. However, this newfound freedom is accompanied by the absence of crucial social support and services that are essential for women's independence in China.

H2 Alternative: Considering the diversity in low-skill and high-skill experience among women and accounting for individual backgrounds, Chinese immigrant women with differing education levels will exhibit divergent experiences. Variations in educational qualifications will contribute to the heterogeneity in labor force participation rates observed among these female migrant workers in the U.S.

The widespread employment of two generations of Chinese women leaves a small minority of nonworking women marginalized. In the 1% Population Survey (Bauer, Wang, Riley, and Zhao 1990), the main reason that 10% of women did not work was low educational attainment. 70% of these women had a primary school education or less, in contrast to the 39% of those who worked. From this, we can detect that there is a variation in educational attainment and its connection to low-skill or high-skill labor force options for immigrant women. Women with lower skill levels often contend with limited opportunities, potentially leading to constrained choices in employment sectors characterized by lower wages and increased vulnerability to

economic fluctuations. Conversely, women possessing higher skill levels enjoy expanded job prospects, increased earning potential, and opportunities for professional advancement. In India, gender-egalitarian proliferation allows for professionally educated middle-class women to reap the rewards of social mobility. Ballakrishnen (2021) studies this in the case of Indian women who are in the legal profession. Women from the middle class and of high status can easily access the resources of education, which allows for advantageous gender outcomes—receiving degrees and securing elite jobs— while leaving others to experience their gendered environments much more explicitly. This stratification is a simple case of access to resources. With few domestic education institutions to train students, many higher education institutions were reserved for the elites, underscoring the prominent role class and education have in enabling some Indian women to participate in high-skill jobs, whereas others cannot if absent of social resources (Ballakrishnen 2021). Variations in social and educational backgrounds contribute to intricate patterns of change in the gender ideology and relationships of immigrants and their labor force opportunities. However, a substantial number of women migrate to address labor demands in low-wage industries, pushing a precedent of job stability in such professions for low-skilled women.

3. Methodology

To explore the cross-cultural gender ideologies and the contrast between U.S. and Chinese female migrant workers in economic motivation, I leverage interviews and focus group discussions from the Chinese immigrant community in the New York City region from Zhou's study (2000) and the New Immigrant Survey 2003 Public Use Data (Omori 2016). To test my second hypothesis about the impact of the American gendered welfare state, emphasizing its assistance for immigrants, I use data from the U.S. Bureau of Census Public Use Microdata

Sample (5%), which shows the educational attainment of mainland-born Chinese populations in New York City coupled with qualitative data from Zhou's study (2000). I then compare it to data from Lu and Du's study (2023) about the proportion of female students of Chinese descent in Chinese universities and colleges to understand the differing welfare systems between both regions.

In the New York metropolitan area, 56.8% of Chinese-born immigrants, as per the 1990 U.S. Census, arrived after 1980. This group, raised during the Maoist regime and China's post-Mao reform era, is significantly influenced by the gender ideologies of those times when reconstructing their lives in the United States. In 1996 and 1998, interviews (34) and focus group discussions (4) were conducted with individual female immigrants and social workers of social agencies working with the Chinese community in New York. The group discussions highlighted concerns among Chinese immigrant women and families. Individual interviews investigate the changing gender roles at the household level between working-class and middle-class women, as well as how paid employment influences the perception of gender equality among Chinese women. These interviews also mention the common vulnerabilities of Chinese migrant women in obtaining individual education in America. The NIS constitutes a nationally representative sample of individuals who were legally admitted to the U.S. from May to November 2003 from the Asia region. It encompasses the labor market history of immigrants before their arrival, allowing examination of their engagement in the workforce both before and after. It incorporates social indicators such as their educational attainment and language proficiency. Although this data is sampled from a population after the surge of Chinese immigrants, my hypothesis and developing theory argue about the long-term effects of the CCP's gendered norms that can be applied to the study at hand. The variable the study focuses on is employment status and whether

migrant wives from different parts of Asia identify as homemakers or non-homemakers. The data used to test hypothesis two is centered around studying Chinese female immigrants' education level in the New York City representative sample. This is compared to China's change in the proportion of female students in universities and colleges. A challenge of this comparison is that we are comparing a micro-level group of Chinese females in New York and China's entire female population as a whole. Additionally, Zhou's interviews include Chinese female immigrant experiences and thoughts on receiving an education or navigating the welfare system.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Immigrant Women by Country of Birth (N=832)

	China	Korea	Philippines	Vietnam	India	E. & S. Asia Unspecified
Employment Status (%)						
Homemaker	23.02	32.92	12.27	30.77	32.92	43.2
Non Homemaker	76.98	67.08	87.73	69.23	67.08	56.8
Education (%)						
Less Than HS	38.13	35.85	22.09	69.23	24.28	28.99
High School	17.27	3.77	6.75	15.38	13.17	17.16
College	22.3	43.4	66.26	13.85	40.33	31.36
Graduate	22.3	16.98	4.91	1.54	22.22	22.49
U.S. Degree	20.86	7.55	2.45	1.54	5.35	16.57
Mean English Proficiency (1 --not at all; 7-- very well)	3.467 (2.191)	3.83 (1.411)	5.822 (1.251)	2.425 (1.390)	5.058 (1.893)	4.577 (1.865)
Previous Occupation (%)						
Prof/Managerial	17.99	12.31	9.2	10.77	11.93	5.92
Non-Prof/Managerial	48.22	60.38	58.9	46.15	33.74	46.15
Not Employed	33.79	27.31	31.9	43.08	54.33	47.93
Immigration status obtained through spouse (%)	28.06	33.96	26.99	33.85	11.51	37.87

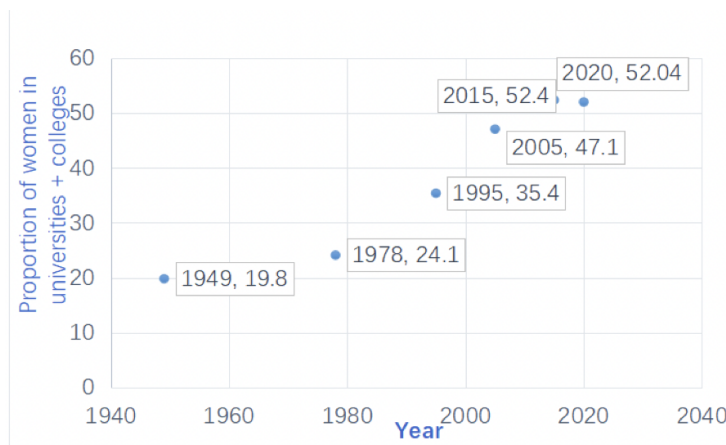
Source: *New Immigrant Survey (NIC), 2003*

Table 2: Educational Attainment of Mainland-born Chinese 16 Years and Above in New York City

Education Attainment	Chinese-Born Men (%)	Chinese-Born Women (%)	White Women (%)
College and above	31.9	22.7	45.6
High school graduates	18.5	17.7	30.4
Less than high school education	49.6	59.6	24.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, 1990, Public Use Microdata Sample (5%)

Table 3: Proportion of female students in Chinese universities and colleges (unit: %)



Source: Yujing Lu and Wei Du, *Women's Education in China: Past and Present*

4. Results

The descriptive statistics are represented in Table 1. The data variable of employment status reflects Chinese migrant women's eagerness and preparedness to engage in paid work. Those who designate themselves as homemakers typically exhibit minimal inclination to join the workforce. In the table, Chinese wives show the second lowest likelihood of becoming homemakers (23.02%). They also show the highest professional or managerial occupation (18%). This suggests that Chinese women have the potential to reach high positions because of their motivation for education attainment from their origin country's encouragement of gender-affirming policies. Analyzing these rates, Chinese women were more economically

motivated than most other Asian countries. In Zhou's interviews, numerous Chinese women were surprised to learn that some of their American friends were willing to leave school or employment upon having children. Almost all interview participants indicated they found themselves in their current situation due to a lack of viable childcare options or difficulties securing employment. From the perspective of Chinese women, being unemployed implies being deemed "useless" and having no value. A more significant issue arises as Chinese women believe their husbands may not view them seriously if they do not contribute to the family's income. In a society where women traditionally have full employment, Chinese men also inherit unfavorable perceptions about homemakers.

Educational attainment in New York City in 1990 (Table 2), which is used as an indicator of the American welfare system in this study, for Chinese immigrant women shows that on one end of the spectrum, nearly 60% of Chinese immigrant women aged 16 and above lacked a high school diploma. This indicates that the majority of Chinese female migrants in the region have a lower ability to enter the U.S. labor force. Conversely, approximately 23% of Chinese immigrant women hold at least an undergraduate degree, suggesting that this group is likely to have achieved such education under CCP policy pre-migration. Table 3 shows that around 1990, 25-35%, with exponential growth, of women in China were going to college or university. The data projects that the proportion will be over 52% in 2040. The accelerated growth of the educational attainment rates in China proposes that it would surpass the level of education Chinese immigrant women would have in America. This underscores evidence of state structure shifts in China that have pushed young women to pursue education. Zhou's case interviews describe that Chinese immigrant women with a high level of education in China find themselves seeking jobs in the garment industry and restaurants because they do not require good written or

spoken English due to the need for immediate income. For example, Ms. W, aged 30, married her husband in China while he was a graduate student, and she worked in the University's administration. He pursued his Ph.D. in the United States, and she joined him three years later. Despite working temporary jobs to support him, he wanted her to be a housewife, as he earned enough for the family. Ms. W insisted on pursuing her education to secure a decent job. Despite her husband's refusal and lack of independent legal status and social support, she fought the battle alone. However, the birth of her first child forced her to temporarily suspend her educational aspirations due to the absence of childcare options. Barriers to education attainment include language literacy and migrant-specific gendered state structures, extending to the broader picture of female migrants having access to the U.S. workforce.

5. Limitations & Discussion

Immigrant women often encounter various challenges in the labor markets of destination countries, with a diminished probability of securing employment. The study examined the Chinese immigrant women's LFP patterns in America. The results support the first hypothesis. The study found that Chinese female immigrants have a higher economic drive to find jobs versus non-immigrant female Americans, which is driven by cross-variations in gender ideologies of the role of women. In using qualitative data, Chinese female immigrants find that Americans' attitudes toward women are liberal in many ways, as the prevailing family norm is more conservative than that in China. Coming from a post-Mao and socialist society, these women have been ingrained with the expectation of active participation in the workforce. The societal conditioning they received in their home country encourages women to be part of the labor force. However, despite this inclination, they find themselves facing challenges in the U.S. due to the existence of indifferent or less supportive gender ideologies. The clash between their

conditioned expectations and ideologies of workforce participation and the more liberal but potentially less supportive gender norms in the U.S. creates a unique tension for Chinese female immigrants. The results also support the second hypothesis. The study found that Chinese female immigrants tend to have lower LFP rates in the U.S. market compared to their Chinese counterparts in China because of the restrictive, gendered welfare system for immigrants in America. Data showed that education levels for Chinese citizens were higher than those of Chinese immigrants in America. The higher education levels among Chinese citizens in China, compared to their counterparts among Chinese female immigrants in the U.S., underscore a disparity in LFP rates. This reveals that Chinese female immigrants' challenges in the U.S. labor market extend beyond individual capabilities or qualifications, pointing to systemic barriers. Notably, the gendered nature of the welfare system, especially in providing educational opportunities to migrants, plays a significant role in shaping these challenges. Iverson & Rosenbluth repeatedly address that as we move from general to specific skill countries, we expect women, not men, to be increasingly disadvantaged in the labor markets— except if the state provides jobs and services through the public sector. The more gendered the welfare state support is, the less LFP. There are several policy implications of having diverging economic and political institutions, especially for migrant women who are in a gray area. Tibajev and Nygård (2023) highlight that compared to immigrant men; immigrant women may face a double disadvantage in the labor market of being both migrants and women. The theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989) makes it so immigrant women have to navigate challenges associated with gender disparities inherent in broader societal norms. Simultaneously, they grapple with the hurdles linked to immigrant status, such as language barriers and cultural adjustments. The intersection of these identities compounds the challenges, intensifying gender

biases and obstacles faced by immigrants in the labor market. The theory of intersectionality emphasizes the need for nuanced approaches to address the unique and interconnected issues experienced by immigrant women. First, there should be more state-supported social resources and services for Chinese immigrant women as they are thrust into an entirely new gendered system. The U.S. could provide more family support programs for immigrant women to alleviate heavier household burdens, opening up the opportunity for Chinese women to thrive in the workplace. The goal of such policies is so that immigrant women gradually become accustomed to the democratic, American ideal of gender equality, as opposed to socialist gender norms that were precariously maintained in China by its powerful party machine. Second, the U.S. government could improve its immigration support system, focusing on women, by implementing skill development programs and language resources to enhance female immigrants' integration into the workforce. Yamanaka and McClelland (1994) emphasize that education is one of the strongest predictors of women's employment. Policymakers can also collaborate with educational institutions to facilitate the recognition of foreign credentials, provide targeted vocational training, and offer resources that enhance the employability of female immigrants. Strengthening these ties can help migrant women in America catch up to the workforce rates of Chinese women and bridge the gap between education and workforce integration.

A limitation of this research is that since my hypothesis focused on gender ideologies and practices during the Mao and Post-Mao era, it was difficult to find exact, empirical data to support the impacts of females during the period. Though the paper pulls from an extensive timeline from the 1950s to the 2010s, there is insufficient evidence that can deeply test whether my hypothesis is true and if such effects of the Mao ideology are still relevant today— more

specifically, applying it to female migrants. Another factor worth exploring more, if given more resources, is the U.S. immigration public welfare system applied to female immigrants. There is research available reviewing the concept of transnationalism and having a “gender-sensitive” lens concerning international migration. In the study, I used educational attainment as my main unit of analysis, but other variables, such as healthcare, child support, and financial help, would be valuable to understand as well.

6. Conclusion

My research on migrant women has established that women suffer from more disadvantages than their counterparts in mainland China and non-immigrant women. Immigrant women who aspire to embrace more egalitarian gender norms, those with a strong motivation to work, and those compelled to work for family support —Chinese migrant women— represent specific subsets where the relationship between origin-country gender norms and post-migration outcomes may deviate from the overall trend (He and Gerber, 2020). This is attributed to the fact that securing employment is influenced by visible factors such as skills and education and less apparent elements like motivation, effort, cognitive abilities, and non-meritocratic advantages. There is a need to explore how immigration policies and societal structures may influence the evolving patterns observed among women in the labor market. This insight provides a foundation for delving into the intricate relationships between immigration barriers, changing demographics, and the participation of foreign-born women in the U.S. labor force. As shown in this study, gender inequality persists at the institutional level and is even more exacerbated across international borders, and is very likely prominent at the individual and micro levels as well.

Bibliography

- Alesina, Alberto, Paola Giuliano, and Nathan Nunn. "On the origins of gender roles: Women and the plough." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 128, no. 2 (2013): 469-530.
- American Immigration Council. "A Snapshot of Immigrant Women in the United States." 2020. https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/immigrant_women_in_the_united_states_0.pdf
- American Immigration Council. 2017. "The Impact of Immigrant Women on America's Labor Force." *American Immigration Council*. June 15. <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/impact-immigrant-women-america-labor-force>.
- Antecol, Heather. "An examination of cross-country differences in the gender gap in labor force participation rates." *Labour Economics* 7, no. 4 (2000): 409-426.
- Ballakrishnen, Swethaa S. *Accidental Feminism: Gender Parity and Selective Mobility among India's Professional Elite*. Princeton University Press, 2021.
- Bauer, John, Wang Feng, Nancy E. Riley, and Zhao Xiaohua. "Gender inequality in urban China: Education and employment." *Modern China* 18, no. 3 (1992): 333-370.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics." *In Feminist legal theories*, pp. 23-51. Routledge, 2013.
- Croll, Elisabeth J. "Changing identities of Chinese women: Rhetoric, experience, and self-perception in twentieth-century China." (*No Title*), 1995
- Deniz Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy." 2016. *Feminist Theory Reader*, 115–23. doi:10.4324/9781315680675-24.
- Donna Harsch, "Communism and Women," *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism*, (2014): 488-504.
- He, Qian, and Theodore P. Gerber. "Origin-country culture, migration sequencing, and female employment: Variations among immigrant women in the United States." *International Migration Review* 54, no. 1 (2020): 233-261.
- Ince, Meltem. "How the education affects female labor force? Empirical evidence from Turkey." *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 2, no. 2 (2010): 634-639.

- Iversen, Torben, and Frances McCall Rosenbluth. 2011. *Women, Work, and Politics: The Political Economy of Gender Inequality*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Jeanne Batalova Raquel Rosenbloom and Jeanne Batalova. 2023. "Chinese Immigrants in the United States." *Migrationpolicy.Org*. July 17. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/chinese-immigrants-united-states>.
- Keller, Kathryn. "Mothers and work in popular American magazines." (*No Title*) (1994).
- Li, Yuhui. 2000. "Women's Movement and Change of Women's Status in China" *Journal of International Women's Studies*. January. <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol1/iss1/3>
- Lu, Yujing, and Wei Du. "Women's Education in China: Past and Present." In *SHS Web of Conferences*, vol. 152, p. 02001. EDP Sciences, 2023.
- Omori, Megumi. "Educated and staying at home: Asian immigrant wives' labor force participation in the US." *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 47, no. 4 (2016): 463-481.
- Read, Jen'nan Ghazal, and Philip N. Cohen. "One size fits all? Explaining US-born and immigrant women's employment across 12 ethnic groups." *Social Forces* 85, no. 4 (2007): 1713-1734.
- Reimers, Cordelia W. "Cultural differences in labor force participation among married women." *The American Economic Review* 75, no. 2 (1985): 251-255.
- Tibajev, Andrey, and Olav Nygård. "Origin-country gender norms, individual work experience, and employment among immigrant women in Sweden." *Frontiers in Human Dynamics* 5 (2023): 1071800.
- U.S. Department of Labor. n.d. "Foreign-Born Workers: Labor Force Characteristics — 2022." *Bureau of Labor Statistics*. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/forbrn.pdf>.
- Wei, Yu, and Hao, Keming. "Women's Education in China: Present and Future." *Suzhou University Press*, (1995): 156-98
- Yamanaka, Keiko, and Kent McClelland. "Earning the model-minority image: Diverse strategies of economic adaptation by Asian-American women." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17, no. 1 (1994): 79-114.
- Zhou, Yu. 2000. "The Fall of 'the Other Half of the Sky'? Chinese Immigrant Women in the New York Area." *Women's Studies International Forum* 23 (4): 445-59. doi:10.1016/s0277-5395(00)00106-0.