UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF FEMALE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF FOUR FEMALE PRINCIPALS IN A METROPOLITAN CITY IN CHINA

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

(Educational Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

February 2014

Abstract

Women's school leadership has been discussed for decades in regard to the influence of gender on educational leadership. Discourse on women's school leadership focuses on unique leadership styles of female school leaders compared with their male counterparts. Literature on women's leadership is, in most cases, located in an Anglo-American culture, rather than in a broader cultural context. Research on women's school leadership in developing countries is marginalized. There is a need for researchers to adopt a cross-cultural framework to analyze the intersecting issue of gender, school leadership and cultural experience.

This study focuses on the intersection between educational leadership and societal culture as well as organizational culture within which women school principals act in China. The objectives of this study were to: (1) examine how women school principals exert their leadership and their leadership styles in both public schools and private schools; (2) explore the lived experiences of women school principals in China to examine the conflicts and challenges between social goals and practices that seek to promote gender equity and culturally-based and institutionally-based patriarchal forms of domination within schools; (3) provide suggestions for future school leadership education in China for aspiring women school leaders.

This research is an exploratory case study of four women school principals in a metropolitan area (Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province) in China. Case study makes it possible to explore the role of gender in female principals' negotiation within contexts of personal life history, societal and institutional cultural expectations. This study adopted hybrid strategies for collecting data in the pursuit of triangulation. In addition to four semi-structured

interviews with four female principals, data were collected by two additional techniques: document analysis and participant observation. Rich meanings were found with regard to how female principals construct and explain their leadership differently based on various experiences. The findings in this study suggest that women's leadership in China is a dynamic process that varies with social, institutional and cultural contexts. They also suggest that understanding the role of gender in educational leadership without a cross-cultural approach fails to clarify the experiences of female principals in China.

Preface

This thesis is an original product of the author Bingbing Li. The fieldwork reported in

Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 was covered by UBC Ethics Certificate (H11-02734).

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List of Abbreviations

Chinese Communist Party (CCP)

English as a Second Language (ESL)

International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

Master of Arts (M.A.)

People's Republic of China (PRC)

The Zhejiang Association of Science and Technology (ZAST)

University of British Columbia (UBC)

VIP (Very Important Person)

Glossary

Nei (literally: inside) domestic sphere

Wai (literally: outside) official sphere

Zhi Xing Fu XiaoZhang 执行副校长 (Vice Executive School Head)

Ben Dan 笨蛋 (Stupid or foolish)

Bu Cong Ming 不聪明 (not smart)

Bitch is a figurative term spelled in Mandarin as "死三八" (*Si San Ba*) or "恶毒的女人" (*Er Du De Nv Ren*). This term is used to refer to a woman who is evil or disgusting. It is considered a very offensive and indecent word in China

The Great Leap Forward was an economic and social campaign of the Communist Party of China (1958-1960). It is known as "大跃进" (*Dàyuèjìn*) in Mandarin Chinese.

The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) is known as "文化大革命" (*Wénhuà Dàgémìng*) in Mandarin Chinese.

Serve the People (Mandarin Chinese: 为人民服务; pinyin: *wèi rénmín fúwù)* as a political slogan first used in the Era of Mao in China.

Unrestrained (Mandarin Chinese 豁得开; pinyin: *huōdékāi*)

Secretary of General Branch (Mandarin Chinese: 党总之书记 pinyin: *dǎng zǒng zhīshūjì*)

Harmonious Society (Mandarin Chinese:和谐社会; pinyin: *héxié shèhuì*)

National College Entrance Exam (Mandarin Chinese: 高考；pinyin: *gāo kǎo*)

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I feel lucky to have found an extraordinary supervisor. Thank you to Dr. André Elias Mazawi for acting first as my pro-term advisor and then as my thesis supervisor. Your energy and dedication towards learning and educational research are an inspiration. Thank you to Dr. Marilynne Waithman and Dr. Susan Gerofsky for acting as supervisory committee members. Your experiences, suggestions and discussions are both extremely valuable. My thanks to all of you for making this time such a positive learning and research experience for me. Without you I would not have achieved my goals for this thesis.

In addition, I would like to thank my wonderful friends: Romy Freidman and Stella Chow. Thank you for your help and support in my studies, and all the good time we had together.

Finally, I would like to express appreciation to my family, my parents (Changshun Li and Hanguang Ma), my husband (Andy Pang). Thank you for your financial and emotional supports. With love to my daughter, Clara Pang was born on July 5th, 2013. Her presence gives me a deeper understanding of a woman's role as a mother.

Dedication

To my grandmother,Wanhua Zhang, who passed away in 2013 at the age of 84. She took care of me when I was young, and I didn't appreciate what she gave me and how much she loved me until after she passed away. Thank you for educating me to be a confident, responsible and independent woman.

Chapter One: Positioning

Introduction

This research examines the various leadership styles of women school principals working in a metropolitan region in China. It focuses on the different strategies Chinese women school leaders resort to in order to render their roles sustainable in a societal and organizational patriarchal environment. The study also unpacks how these women school leaders grew into the role of leaders, in terms of their motivation and the hardships they encountered. Hopefully, this study will provide insights for current and future women school leaders in China to better understand their experiential realities and the contexts and factors that shape their educational leadership practices.

Eurocentric conceptions of the intersection of gender and school leadership dominate the discourse on educational leadership. This study sheds light on the educational leadership experiences of women educational leaders in China, highlighting the challenges they face as they increasingly make their entry into school leadership positions in urban metropolitan areas. The study sheds light on the intersection of women's knowledge and forms of social capital, and their access to leadership positions within schools. It also contributes to a better understanding of the role of culture – societal and organizational – in mediating the intersection between gender and educational leadership in an important contemporary context.

Given my background as a professional female educational leader in China, I feel that I am well positioned to undertake the present study. As a Chinese graduate student at the University of British Columbia (UBC), I have been learning about Canadian culture, thus learning to observe and comment on the similarities and differences between educational

practices in Canada and China. My knowledge of the China's official language (Mandarin Chinese) and life experiences in China (where I was born, raised, and educated) provides me with a unique access to the local context in which the study is situated. My location provides me with the needed tools to be sensitive to the various positions within an educational setting in China, and to the power relationships that operate within that setting. Further, having devoted my educational and professional life to the study of English as a Second Language (ESL), I also feel competent to translate the interviews and data collected in Mandarin into English for the purposes of this study, while being aware of the potential methodological issues that could arise during their analysis.

Personal Experience as a Female School Principal

I am writing the story of my previous work experience to set the backdrop over which my great passion towards this study can be understood. I do not claim that my experience is generalizable to all women school principals in China. Rather, I am telling my own story to capture the difficulties, conflicts, and dilemmas I have encountered in my previous career experience and clarify how they have come to inform my vision of the issues that stand at the centre of the present study.

My past experience as a female school principal in a private foreign language school in China has motivated and encouraged me to pursue my Master of Arts (M.A.) in Educational Leadership and Administration at the University of British Columbia. It has also crystallized my interest in the intersection of gender and educational leadership, approached from within a cross-cultural perspective. Although I was successful in creating and running my own school, it was not my success that led me to apply for further studies. Rather, the difficulties I experienced as a female school principal account for my course of action. During my tenure

as a school leader I felt both a bias against my gender, and awareness of the cultural influences that disadvantaged me as a woman school principal. I felt I had to work harder and invest more efforts to achieve the same status and authority as my male counterparts of the same rank.

As I examine my motivations to undertake this study, I look back on the circumstances that first led me to take on a leadership position in a school. I started my teaching career in 2003 as an ordinary full-time English teacher in Zhejiang Key Foreign Language School in Hangzhou, China. Based on my demonstrated passion and experience in teaching, I was promoted to a head teacher the following year. Within three years I was promoted again, this time to the position of vice-executive school head.[1] In 2008, I took steps to become an independent leader by renting the license for a two-year school contract.[2] As the local government had stopped funding my previous school, I took the initiative to run the school myself. At that time, if I had not taken over the school, it would have been shut down until someone would assume its leadership. My strong confidence in myself, as a female school leader, encouraged me to assume this role.

My school is a private foreign language school, owned by the Zhejiang Association of Science and Technology (ZAST), a non-profit organization funded by the government of Hangzhou. Students in our school planned to take foreign language tests in order to pursue degrees abroad. In addition, my school had a multicultural teacher body, with 60% of the teachers originating from North American, Europe and Australia and about 40% from China.

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[1] Vice Executive School Head is spelled as 执行副校长 (*Zhi Xing Fu XiaoZhang)* in Mandarin Chinese.

[2] At that time, I was not entitled to apply for a school license; in China, it is very difficult for an individual to get a school license. So in order to start my own school, I decided to rent the license from the ZAST (owner of the school).

In terms of budget, my school is quite different from other public schools. In the latter, principals do not have to worry about school funding. Normally, the public schools are directly funded by the local government. Their main concerns are about how to allocate various resources towards enhancing their school rankings and help their students realize their academic potential. As a private school head, I was in a position of higher pressure compared to principals in public schools because of the lack of government funding. I had to pay for school-building rental, marketing, staff salary, and to attend other daily administrative costs with my own budget. The more students our school had, the more budget I could have. Therefore, I was functioning in a dual and very challenging role of both a business woman and a school head. This required me to make the right marketing decisions in order to recruit enough students, supervise the quality of teaching, guarantee students' achievement on tests, and establish the school's reputation.

It was not as easy as I had expected to run this school as a young and female leader. I experienced many unexpected difficulties due to gender bias and traditional Chinese cultural influences. Despite my difficulties, my school finally survived in the competitive male-dominated market in Hangzhou. It was listed among the top 10 schools for foreign language training programs in that city. In particular, our VIP (Very Important Person) one-to-one International English Language Testing System (IELTS) preparation course ranked in the top 3 in Hangzhou city in 2009.

In China, I regularly encountered gender related social expectations and stereotypes. In my role as a young female head of school, gender biases were strong contributors to my anxiety and resulted in additional pressure. First, I grew into the role of school head from a teacher head, so people would consider me merely as a teacher, devoid of marketing abilities. In China, teachers are perceived as well disciplined, but not prepared for business. Second, in

the male dominated language-training business market, females are more likely to be identified in the facilitative roles of supervising the teaching quality instead of leading the whole school. People are accustomed to women being teachers, assistants and receptionists. When I first started to run the school by myself, there was a rumor that I was not able to sustain the school for the long-term because I was a young woman who was supposed to be an expert in the teaching area and not in marketing and school administration. If I could save my school, the only plausible explanation was that I must capitalize on my female 'unique character' to achieve the school's sustainability.

Due to the pressure exerted by the gender bias in Chinese society, and within my institution, I chose to exercise my power carefully, in a more 'facilitative' way. I had to be quite cautious when using power. In China, Confucianism sets a strict boundary between the *Nei* (literally inside and referred to domestic sphere) and the *Wai* (literally outside and referred to official sphere) by gender difference (Granrose, 2005). Thus, if a woman acts like a man, she is not likely to be socially accepted. Often, I lacked courage and confidence to be as tough and authoritative a leader as a man.

I still clearly remember how, in August 2008, a man who was in charge of classroom remodeling in our school called me "a bitch",[3] a label he would not have entertained had the school principal been a man. He was quite upset because I refused to pay for the extra cost that exceeded the original budget by nearly 20%. He warned me that if I did not pay for the extra cost, he would not wrap up the remaining remodeling well. I insisted that it was his fault for not controlling the budget well. I insisted that I would not pay any extra sum beyond

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[3] "Bitch" is a figurative term spelled in Mandarin as "死三八" (*Si San Ba*) or "恶毒的女人" (*Er Du De Nv Ren*). This term is used to refer to a woman who is evil or disgusting. It is considered a very offensive and indecent word in China.

what the budget provided for, as signed in the contract. I presented myself as much tougher than he expected. Finally, he thought I was not a 'woman', but a 'man'. I felt frustrated at being given this "nickname" and began to comprehend the dilemma of being a good woman and a tough leader. After that, I realized that I would need to run my school in a more 'nurturing feminine' style, which emphasized a 'caring, facilitative and intuitive' way of being (Coleman, 1996). I adopted the role of a big mother, who would take care of the whole school in a more elegant way. For example, besides the daily administrative duties, I spent much time talking with my staff about their personal worries that negatively influenced their work performance. Moreover, I tried to avoid any conflicts when I had disagreements with staff members. I was reluctant to exercise my leadership in a "masculine" way by being aggressive, defensive and competitive. For instance, I once spent a whole day persuading the marketing manager to accept my proposal for the next season promotion plan, despite the fact that within the first ten minutes of our conversation I already knew his plan would not work in a new market. Admittedly, if I had been a male leader, I would have presented my decision in a more formal and aggressive way. However, I could not take the risk of losing my good image of being a woman instead of being a "man" and have the legitimacy of my role jeopardized.

I needed nearly half a year to establish my own administrative team and put my school business on a stable track. After that, my role as school head changed as new challenges appeared in my school due to the conflicts between Chinese and foreign teachers. I do not intend to describe how serious the problem was, and instead focus on the relations between teachers from different cultural backgrounds. For example, Chinese teachers tend to dominate the classroom much more than their Western counterparts. The latter encourage more student involvement and participation. Western teachers encourage students to express

dissenting opinions in the classroom, behaviour deemed disrespectful by Chinese teachers. Chinese teachers blamed Western teachers for not being exam-oriented, while Western teachers thought that the 'stupid'[4] Chinese teachers were obliterating the creativity of students. Cultural differences among teachers led to many conflicts over the proper teaching pedagogy the school should adopt. Within that context, I was in a dilemma. I could not side with any one party. I had to encourage teachers to cooperate for the general good of the school. I did not mean to regulate teachers' behaviours by some rigid rules, so I used much of my private time to bridge cultural differences. Teachers also complained to me after school time. All I could do was to take all the complaints and mediate between parties with great tolerance and patience.

I felt exhausted from being the big mother and coordinator and for caring almost for everyone in an expected feminine way. Actually, it was hard to care for everyone and get things done. I started to question myself: "Am I wrong in terms of being an effective and efficient leader?" I realized I was so much influenced by gender constructions prevalent in Chinese society that I was fearful of being perceived as a "masculine" and "powerful" leader. I was reluctant to be labeled by the offensive and indecent words I had heard before. In Chinese culture, women should not be as powerful as men. Instead, women are expected to be submissive, caring and tolerant. To break this vicious circle, I thought it was time to exercise my power and leadership in a more masculine way as "highly regulated, objective, formal, aggressive and competitive" (Morriss et al., 1999). I would have to act with these attributes traditionally seen as masculine.

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[4] "Stupid" in Mandarin Chinese means foolish ("笨蛋" *Ben Dan*) or not smart ("不聪明"*Bu Cong Ming*).

I took as my role models some successful male CEOs (Chief Executive Officers) working in business settings. I began to lead and manage the school by strict rules and regulations that could not be violated without consequences. I adopted a top-down management style. For example, I cancelled the bonus of the marketing manager in my school because he did not achieve the marketing target I set up. Later, I heard from others that the marketing manager thought I was a crazy, tough, and irrational woman.

Reflecting on my personal experiences, I do believe that both gender and culture matter in understanding how female educational leadership is constructed, and how it plays out in various educational settings. Dominant cultural constructions in Chinese culture affected the attitudes and the strategies I utilized in my role of a school head. These differed very much from other female leaders in similar positions. During my transition from teacher to school head, I suffered a lot due to these intertwined influences, as if caught in a double-bind: to be taken seriously as a school head, I would need to act like a man. Yet, if I acted like a man, I would be challenged and treated with distrust by others, both inside and outside of the school. The reason I continuously adjusted my leadership style was that I did not clearly know how to gain, exercise, and maintain my power as a female head in the school. If I had a role model of a successful woman school leader to reference, I would have been much more comfortable and less frustrated in my role as school head. For this reason, I was very much interested in undertaking my research in a Chinese cultural setting where women face challenges when accessing positions of authority.

Over the backdrop of my experience, the present study focuses on the experiences of women school principals in a major metropolitan city (Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province) in China. Three research questions stand at the centre of my study. They focus on three

domains that intersect with educational leadership: gender, societal culture, and organizational culture:

●How do women school principals in China maintain their authoritative positions and exercise power as school leaders? What strategies do they enact in order to maintain their roles as school principals?

●How do women school principals navigate the tensions between Chinese government policies that promote gender equity on the one hand, and deeply entrenched and culturally-established societal forms of patriarchal dominance on the other hand?

●How do women school principals in public versus private schools understand and react to the intersection of gender and culture on their roles as educational leaders? How do they view and experience their leadership styles within public versus private schools?

Chapter Two: Conceptual Framework

Women, Educational Leadership, and Cultural Context

The intersection of gender and educational leadership in school administration and policy represents an area that has long drawn the attention of educational researchers (Chisholm, 2001, p. 387). Men and women have been found to enact their roles as school principals differently (Coleman, 1996; Morriss, Tin & Coleman, 1999; Shakeshaft, Nowell & Pretty, 1991). For instance, Coleman (1996) pointed out that gender affects the leadership styles of female principals in relation to 'masculine' and 'feminine' approaches to the principalship. Coleman (2000) cited Gray's (1993) gender (masculine and feminine) paradigms and argued that gender stereotypes apply to both men and women principals. As shown in Table 1, male and female head teachers chose different adjectives to identify their qualities with regard to educational leadership (Gray, 1993, p. 19).

Table 2. 1: Qualities identified by headteachers from masculine and feminine paradigms*

Feminine paradigm		Masculine paradigm	
Aware of individual differences	86.0	Evaluative	61.1
Caring	79.4	Disciplined	60.4
Intuitive	76.2	Competitive	50.6
Tolerant	68.7	Objective	50.6
Creative	63.0	Formal	14.9
Informal	59.4	Highly regulated	13.2
Non-competitive	21.5	Conformist	10.9
Subjective	13.8	Normative	4.0

* Refers to the percentage of respondents who felt they exhibited the quality.

Source: Gray (1993)

According to Strachan (1999), women exercise their power in a more 'facilitative' way rather than in a 'dominant way'. Coleman (1996) interviewed head teachers and found that women head teachers identified themselves as caring, creative and aware of individual difference. All women agreed that their leadership was about caring for others rather than leading others. Male principals, on the other hand, saw themselves as more defensive and aggressive. They thought their work was about leading, testing, and evaluating others rather than about caring for others as a big parent.

Both Coleman (1996) and Morriss (1999) reported that women tended to be more 'caring', 'tolerant' and 'informal' compared to men. The latter tended to be more 'competitive', 'aggressive' and 'formal'. Female principals are more concerned about harmonious staff relationships and created a friendlier atmosphere. They preferred to engage 'power through/with' their staff in a feminine way, while men principals are more likely to exercise 'power over others' (Brunner, 2002).

In a later study, Coleman (2000) found that males and females also share some similarities in their leadership styles in some situations. Some women school leaders linked their success to qualities that might be aligned with traditional male leaders: strict-disciplined, self-determined and tough in order to maintain their authority. Oplatka (2006) discussed that a male-dominated culture in some countries drove some women principals to present some typical masculine characters in order to maintain their authority, for example, by creating an "authoritative atmosphere by being strict and harsh" (p. 615). Interestingly, when Oplatka discussed the leadership styles of women school leaders in developing countries, he also found that women adopted an 'androgenic' style, i.e. "a combination of 'masculine' and 'feminine' leadership styles that derive, by and large, from the strong male-dominant values in developing nations, coupled with women's own tendencies and needs" (p. 614).

These findings drive me to further explore how gender influences educational leadership practice and women's exercise of power within schools. Yet, here, I am reminded of Shakeshaft's (1991) observation that "these gender stereotypes have most often been hurtful to women, especially in the workplace" (p. 134). Moreover, the findings reviewed above also suggest that there is a close relation between the gender stereotype and educational leadership. I am wondering if, by adopting an "androgenic" posture to leadership, women school principals seek to meet the social expectations associated with their status as women.

Culture and Educational Leadership

In many developing countries, economic, social and political processes reinforce women's access to leadership positions in schools (Oplatka, 2006). However, having reviewed past and current research on gender and educational leadership, I found that most of the literature is based on studies undertaken in England, Europe and North America. There are relatively fewer studies on women's leadership styles in developing countries. Studies conducted in educational systems within developing countries have usually been marginalized in the discourse of the field (Dimmock & Walker, 1998, 2006). It is urgent to situate and understand educational leadership within its cultural context because, "Leadership is a culturally-bounded process- for men and women" (Dimmock & Walker, 2006, p. 34). Further, it is important that researchers interested in educational leadership develop frameworks which are sensitive to cross-cultural dynamics. Mitchell & Willower (1992) approach culture as the way of life of a given collectivity (or organization) particularly as reflected in shared values, norms, symbols, and traditions (p. 6). People in different cultures behave differently under the influence of various values and traditions

because of meanings they hold in relation to their actions. With regard to educational leadership, these norms and values "shape the opportunities that women and men have, respectively, to access leader position" (Dimmock & Walker, 2006, p. 34). Women are restricted in terms of access to educational leadership, while men are not restricted in many societies, "but this will depend, among other things, on cultural values with regard to gender roles" (p. 34). Men are more accepted and prepared to be in an authoritative position, exercising power over others. In particular, different cultures have differential social expectations from men and women. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to justify the extension of research findings on educational leadership from one cultural context (e.g. "Western") to another cultural setting (e.g. China), without due attention to the meanings gender roles have within their political, societal, and organizational contexts. Consequently, the need to understand women's access to educational leadership positions within a larger cross-cultural framework has become increasingly important. Dimmock and Walker (1998) developed a cross-cultural framework based on two aspects of culture - societal culture (national culture) and organizational culture (school culture).

My study focused on the intersection between educational leadership and the societal culture as well as organizational culture within which women school principals act in China. In this study, societal culture (national culture) refers to values and norms regarding the perceived location and role of women in Chinese society, and more particularly the relationship of these perceptions to male patriarchy. The organizational culture refers to the way educational institutions are organized in terms of power, roles, aims and prevalent organizational climate. Under organizational culture I also address two distinct school settings: public schools and private schools in China. Studying women's role as educational leaders within these contexts – societal and organizational – enabled me to examine how

women school principals exert their leadership in relation to patriarchy and to organizational culture, in both public schools and private schools. This approach also allowed me to enhance our knowledge of gender and educational leadership within the larger cultural context and organizational dynamics in which educational leadership is practiced. This applies particularly to understanding women's experience as school principals in a patriarchal society, where women's access to school leadership positions is more restricted compared to their male counterparts. Chisholm (2001) undertook one such study in post-apartheid South Africa. While a powerful agenda for social justice has reshaped the composition of the state and bureaucracy in South Africa after 1994, nonetheless patriarchal and deeply entrenched societal discourses and norms about women continue to undermine the position of women as school principals, raising larger questions regarding gender equity. Chisholm's (2001) study also showed how the seven women school leaders in the Gauteng Department of Education he had studied, left their positions within six years of their appointment, thus leaving all schools to be headed, once again, entirely by males. Chisholm attributed the women's departure to the deeply-rooted patriarchal practices and values that assert themselves in the daily lives of educational organizations, despite an officially-endorsed national agenda supportive of gender equity.

Chisholm's (2001) study inspired me to explore the current situation in China where the central government led by the Chinese Communist Party emphasizes "gender equity and social justice" (Granrose, 2005, p. 51), despite long held cultural perceptions of the patriarchal subordination of women in the wider society in China. In this study, I argue that there are many conflicts and contradictions between government policy goals and outcomes in terms of pursing gender equity. Existing forms of domination and control continue to be shaped by Chinese societal culture, thus affecting women's capacity to bring their views and

approaches to bear on their enactment of school administration and leadership roles. In the present study, I explored the lived experiences of women school leaders in China in order to gain insights into the conflicts and challenges between social goals and practices that seek to promote gender equity and culturally-based and institutionally-based patriarchal forms of domination within communities and schools.

Women in China: Between Government Policies and Patriarchal Culture

As China strives to modernize its educational and economic systems in the twenty-first century, it is expected that more women will assume leadership positions in education. The process is slow and gradual because of the strong emphasis on male dominance in traditional Chinese culture (Su, Adam & Miniberg., 2000, p. 474). Patriarchal values are still predominant in Chinese society. Granrose (2005) observes that:

> Although according to the Chinese Constitution, women enjoy equal rights in politics, economics, culture, society and family, the belief that men are superior, women are inferior is still deeply rooted in Chinese society, which is traditionally a male dominated culture. (p. 160)

The central message from the Confucian doctrine that permeates contemporary Chinese culture is the subservient role of women and their uselessness in important matters of government, the most important employment institution of this era. China is a country of long history where women's role in the society has kept constant changing. In feudal China, Confucian philosophy preached women's inferiority to men. Granrose (2005) quotes Confucius as saying: "It is only women and petty persons who are difficult to provide for. Drawing them close, they are immodest, and keeping them at a distance, they complain" (p. 40).

In traditional Chinese society, women were required to obey their fathers, their husbands and their sons. Women were considered the property of men. They were not allowed to work outside, but to stay at home, with family responsibilities. Women's status improved since the establishment of new China in 1949. The Chinese Constitution of the early 1950s states clearly that Chinese women enjoy equal rights with men in political, economic, social, cultural and family life. For instance, *the Land Reform Law* and the *Labour Insurance Law* protect and guarantee rural women's share of land and economic independence (Xie, 1994, p.7). In 1958-59, the Great Leap Forward[5] brought millions of women out of the home and into the labour force. On the people's communes, networks of nurseries and kindergartens were built to enable women to work in the fields and on construction projects (Xie, 1994, pp. 8-9). As women joined the workforce with the support of local Women's Associations, more women became leaders of their production teams and were recruited into the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (Xie, 1994, pp. 8-9).

During the Cultural Revolution[6] women made substantial gains in terms of their social status. Many women broke into higher-paying jobs in industry, developed as political leaders, challenged ideas of women's inferiority, and began to dig up the Confucian-patriarchal roots of women's oppression in China. During this period, women not only became active in their workplace, but also began their debut in their leadership at the political stage (Xie, 1994, p. 7).

The introduction of Deng Xiaoping's Economic Reform policy has had a dramatic impact on the labour market in China since 1978, especially for women. Women acquired

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[5] The Great Leap Forward was an economic and social campaign of the Communist Party of China (1958-1960). It is known as "大跃进" (*Dà yuèjìn*) in Mandarin Chinese.

[6] "The Cultural Revolution" (1966-1976) is known as "文化大革命" (*Wénhuà Dàgémìng*) in Mandarin Chinese.

more choices and opportunities in business. As a result, many rural women migrated to big cities in pursuit of employment opportunities (Granrose, 2005, pp. 53-56). At the same time, women have been provided "favorable conditions in the domain of laws, policies and higher education" to acquire access to educational leadership (Qiang, Han & Niu, 2009, p.93).

Despite the above changes, Chinese women are still disadvantaged in several ways: 1) women are forced to retire earlier than men; 2) women are paid less than men; 3) women are laid off from their positions more often than men; 4) women are less secure in terms of work conditions (Qiang, et al, 2009, pp. 96-97). Although women began to participate in China's political life, they have fewer opportunities to express themselves due to the rigid political structure. For example, during the Cultural Revolution, women active in politics were required to use the strict dress code. The top positions in the Chinese political system were dominated by men. At present, while gender equity is an important item on the Chinese government's agenda, deeply-held popular beliefs and attitudes that marginalize women still persist. A saying is widespread in China that a woman's M.A. (Master of Arts) is worth a man's B.A. (Bachelor of Arts), and that a woman's Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) is worth a man's M.A. In order to get equal opportunities and access to the same positions or jobs, women have to invest more efforts than men. In this study, I explored the current situation in the educational sector of the labor market and the influence of agenda of gender equity on the role of women school principals in China.

Women and China's Education System

China's school system has two main categories: basic education and higher education (colleges and universities). Basic education has three levels: pre-school education, elementary education and secondary education. Preschool education is regarded as a female

profession. In the period 1999-2005 female teachers, staff and principals in Kindergartens dominated pre-school education (with a proportion of over 92%). In contrast, "the proportion of female teachers and staff" in elementary and secondary education is "around 50%" in 2005 (Qiang, et al, 2009, p. 95).

What is the proportion of women in educational leadership? There are no publicized nation-wide data by the Chinese government regarding women's access to educational leader positions in Chinese schools. Available statistics provide only partial snapshots on women's access to principalship positions in various provinces. For instance, statistics from the city of Guangzhou, China's third largest city, reveal that women school principals represent 52.74% of all school principals in primary schools and 22.69% of all school principals in secondary schools (Qiang, et al., p. 96). What is the situation of women participation in higher education? A recent survey of ten universities and colleges in Guangxi Province shows that female university teachers account for about 40% of all faculty members while there were three women presidents (Qiang, et al., p. 95). Women's access to educational leadership positions decreases as they make their way from kindergarten to higher education institutions. Women's participation in educational leadership is low and disproportionate compared with the numbers of female teachers and staff (Qiang, et al., p. 96).

Findings reported by Qiang, Han and Niu (2009) attribute the limited participation of women in educational leadership in China to the education system. In China, the compulsory retirement age for women is five years earlier than men (p. 96). As a result, this confines women's promotion to a leadership position when they are over 45 (p. 96). Secondly, there is a lack of mentorship for women when they do access educational leadership positions. There are fewer professional non-governmental organizations that help women secure access to educational leadership. Not the least, women's lack of knowledge of constructing

educational leadership and social networking further restricts women's participation in educational leadership (p. 96).

Distinctions between public schools and private schools in China play their role too. Normally, public schools are strictly supervised and administered by the Education Bureau in terms of administration, students' recruitment, and curriculum. There is always a post of Branch Party Secretary from China's Communist Party assigned to each public school to supervise and facilitate the principal's leadership (Qiang and Bush, 2002, p. 180). The existence of the Party Secretary is to guarantee that school policy is to follow the CCP's direction and also provide political education to school faculty and students (p, 180). In most situations, school principals or vice principals are also party secretaries. Bush and Qiang also cited from Cleverly (1991) that "communism and Confucianism have much in common". The current political agenda of CCP to develop a "Harmonious Society" coincides with Confucius' philosophy of harmony. In terms of institutional culture, private schools in China are different from the public ones. As Lin explained in 1999, private schools follow the free enterprise model, which is normally sponsored by prestigious entrepreneurs. Moreover, private schools are self-administered. They are less subject to the Education Bureau and their administration is more flexible in many aspects, for instance in terms of school policy-making, student recruitment, and curriculum design (Lin, 1999).

Gender and Educational Leadership in China's City of Hangzhou

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is the world's most populous country with over 1.3 billion inhabitants (Veeck, Pannell, Smith & Huang, 2007, p. 15). It is a very diverse country and society, with significant differences between urban and rural areas, and between different provinces (Veeck et al., 2007, pp. 236-237). In this study, I focused on those urban

metropolitan areas in China where women have more access to education compared to rural areas, but where the tensions between the state's agenda of gender equity and continuing influences of patriarchy are much more intense. Since the 1980s, the dramatic social and economic changes of cities along China's east coast, following the "reform and open" policy by Xiaoping Deng, have been significant (Granrose, 2005, pp. 53-56). For example, in Shanghai, China's "City of the Future," women have greater access to education and careers. Shanghai has experienced a rapid modernization process accompanied by a growing rate of women in administrative positions in education (Granrose, 2005). The city of Hangzhou is located about 200 kilometers from Shanghai. Both cities share many similarities in terms of economic growth and gender opportunities. Hangzhou is one of the most outstanding metropolitan cities in China as the capital city of Zhejiang Province in terms of its economic development and its level of modernization. However, Hangzhou city is more traditional than Shanghai because of its geographic characteristic as the capital city of seven ancient dynasties in Chinese history (Veeck et al., 2007). Compared with Shanghai, Hangzhou is more tied to the influence of the traditional patriarchal system in China (Qian, 2012). I argue that Hangzhou is a site where we can witness tensions and contradictions between the influence of traditional patriarchal culture in China and the gender equity agenda emphasized by the Chinese government. These considerations justify my research on the role of women school principals in Hangzhou city, as an exploratory case study into the intersections of gender and educational leadership.

Chapter Three: Research Methods, Data Collection and Analysis

Methods

Case study is an ideal methodological approach for my exploratory study because a holistic, in-depth investigation of the experiential realities of women school principals is needed. Case study methodology draws on different sources of data and information. This feature of case study increases the richness and validity of my research. Stake (1978) pointed out that "case studies are useful in the study of human affairs because they are down-to-earth and attention holding". Case studies are expected to capture the complexity of single, individual cases. Yin (2009) approached a case study as an empirical inquiry that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (p. 18).

The research questions of my study are 'how' questions favored by the case study approach. These questions sought to explore and explain the experiences of women school principals in a metropolitan centre in China, and the meanings these women grant to their experiences. This research aimed to capture the complexity of the experienced realities of each woman principal to better understand the contexts and factors that shape their respective educational leadership practice. Further, it sought to ask how they negotiate their gender role under the cultural and organizational circumstance within which they work.

Case study methodology can focus on one single case or on multiple cases. A multiple-case study is designed to provide knowledge about a small number of settings. Similar or contrasting results come out from cross-case study analysis in a multiple-case study. Yin (2009) points out that, "The evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling" (p. 53). In the present study, I included four women school principals in two

different school contexts: two women each heading a public school, and two women each heading a private school.

Recruitment of Participants

I recruited and interviewed four women school principals in Hangzhou city, in China, during the winter of 2012. As I elaborated in chapter two above, public and private schools differ in terms of organizational culture. The participating women were principals in two public high schools and two private schools. I sent an introduction letter to Hangzhou Education Bureau to explain my study and my intention of recruiting female school principals as participants in Hangzhou. Hangzhou Education Bureau helped me to send initial contact letters (invitations) to female school principals via the inter-email system. I received 9 responses from different women school principals who were willing to participate in this research and selected the four interviewees by careful consideration and comparison: I was looking for participants who would be from different backgrounds, in terms of age and family and professional history. The important value of this exploratory case study therefore lies in meaningfully comparing and contrasting the experiences of women school principals in contexts which differ in the ways educational leadership was viewed, as well as in contexts which differed in terms of life history and relations to school community.

In order to protect any personal information in this study, I gave each female principal an English pseudonym: Maple, Helen, Sunny and Kristy – instead of using their real names. In terms of age, Sunny and Kristy are in their thirties, having been born around 1978 when the Economic Reform was launched in China, opening up occupational opportunities for women. Maple and Helen are in their fifties (born in the late 1950s) and have experienced the Cultural Revolution in China.

Maple and Helen are from two different public schools ranked among the top ten public high schools (grades 10-12) in Hangzhou city. Both of them used to be party secretaries at schools. Maple's school is famous for its English teaching. The remaining two participants, Sunny and Kristy, work in two private schools. The private school where Sunny is working is sponsored by a business group and focuses on language and game design training. Kristy is the vice principal of a private language school which operates several joint programs with schools and colleges in Australia and the UK.

Maple was the first person whom I decided to select as one of participants because she used to be a head English teacher and the Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in her school. As I used to be an English teacher in China, I was confident that our similar teaching backgrounds would give me a greater chance to explore with her, more deeply, during the interviews, her lived experiences as a school leader. In addition, having been a secretary of the CCP, she would be able to provide reflections on her role in a public school setting. The reason I selected Helen as another participant from the public school section is because she also used to be secretary of the CCP in her school. I felt that accounting for this aspect of her background would be meaningful for the cross case study analysis between Helen and Maple in the public school setting. I chose Sunny from a private school because she grew up in Shanghai and she worked in Hangzhou. I was interested in exploring whether her family background would shape her leadership style differently from other women principals who grew up in Hangzhou. Kristy was the last person selected from among potential participants. It was her overseas education background that made me choose to include her as part of my research. Kristy received her master's degree of Education in the UK and was also an ESL teacher. I wanted to investigate whether her overseas education

experience influenced her leadership style in a Chinese cultural context. Further, our similar backgrounds would allow me opportunities to gain her trust during the interview.

Maple and Helen both grew up in Hangzhou city; while, Sunny and Kristy both grew up in cities near Hangzhou. This geographical difference contributes to my cross case study analysis.

Data Triangulation

Good researchers should ensure that what they are seeing, hearing, and interpreting does not oversimplify or misrepresent the situation they are researching. The process is known as "triangulation" (Stake, 2006). Stake emphasizes that each research finding needs at least three confirmations supported by data gathered by different strategies. With data triangulation, the challenges of construct validity of this research would be addressed, "because multiple sources of data provide multiple accounting of the same phenomenon" (Yin, 1994, p. 92).

This study adopted hybrid strategies for collecting data in pursuit of triangulation. In addition to four semi-structured interviews with four female principals, I collected data by other two techniques: document analysis and participant observation. Evidence which is relevant from different sources was "reviewed and analyzed together, so that the case study's findings were based on the convergence of information from different sources" (Yin, 1994, p. 91). By interviewing four female principals, I could "connect their experiences and check the comments of one participant against those of others" (Seidman, 2006, p. 24), in this way, the validity of this study was enhanced. Evidence from document analysis contributed to the richness of data collection of this study. Participant observation offered me (the investigator) opportunities to respond to a series of questions relevant to the validity and reliability of

interviews. Was the interview participant telling the truth? And if I interviewed other

principal within a similar context, would answers be different?

Document Analysis

Document analyses in this case study include the analysis of school documents, such as

meeting minutes and the principal's agenda. I, as investigator, attended school meetings in

each school of the four female participants respectively. With consideration of validity, I

reviewed and analyzed different meeting minutes and principals' agenda from public school

settings and private ones to understand the different context within which each female

principal works.

Participant Observation

Observational data is mainly from school meetings and the way each principal interacts

with other school members. My personal notes were included in this observational data,

including what I wrote about the principals' tone of voice and body language, during the

interview. I also undertook thick descriptions of the interactions between the women school

principals, teachers, and other school staff in each school setting as I observed them during

my visits.

Semi-structured Interview

The design of interview questions (see Appendix I) covered the three domains of the

research questions, as discussed in chapter two: gender, societal culture (Chinese patriarchy)

and organizational culture (public versus private schools). The interviews in this study were

conducted like conversations between the researcher and each participant respectively. As I

explain in Appendix I, this approach provided an opportunity for each participant to share their respective personal stories and experiences as school principals.

In undertaking the interviews, I was extremely cautious for not asking leading questions that could shape what I was told. Rather, in the interviews I approached each domain of questions starting from the general to the specific, probing further when needed, and as applicable. My design of the interview questions used in this study followed Seidman's (2006) "three-interview series" approach. In this approach, I used open-ended questions regarding-participants' life histories, contemporary experience and reflections on meanings. Thus, at the beginning of the interview, first, I asked questions to establish the 'contexts' of the participants' experience to understand how they grew into their leadership roles in terms of various personal hardship and difficulties. To that end, I invited the four participants to talk about their family and personal backgrounds to make clear pictures of the participants' life histories. The participants' behaviors become meaningful and understandable when placed in the context of their life histories and circumstances around them. Secondly, participants were invited to reconstruct the details of their experiences within the context in which they work, by providing tangible examples or illustrations of incidents that took place as part of their work. For example, participants were asked to provide specific instances of conflicts and challenges they had encountered as school principals. Finally, interview questions encouraged the participants to reflect on the meanings of their experiences as female school principals in China. Participants were finally invited to talk about their feelings and reflect on their leadership roles by answering questions like "what does being a school principal in China mean to you?"

All interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese. Three of them were digitally recorded; one principal preferred to hold her interview without recording it, allowing me to

take written notes directly. The interview transcripts have been translated from Mandarin Chinese into English by the researcher.

Self-Reflection on Interview as a Qualitative Research Technique

I did four interviews during the whole data collection for about 40 minutes with each of four participants respectively. The interview, as a qualitative research strategy, enabled the researcher (interviewer) to get spontaneous answers. Secondly, beyond the verbal answers of the interviewees, I was able to acquire meaningful data by observing the respondents when they answered questions. Thirdly, person-to person interviews gave me, as researcher, the chance to explore stories behind the experiences of each woman principal and pursue in-depth information around the topic.

From my own interviewing experience, I found that interviews have some limitations as a qualitative research strategy. The first limitation is that I as the researcher was not sure that the respondent would give "real" answers to interview questions. For example, when interviewing Helen, I felt she answered some of the interview questions formally, as opposed to answers that reflect a personal viewpoint. Therefore, from this interview experience I conclude that it is important for the interviewer to know how to establish trust with the interviewees and get them involved in the interview process as soon as possible. The second dilemma I faced when navigating the interviews is that of establishing my role in the whole process of the interview. As an interviewer, it is not reasonable to control the interview by asking leading questions; but to some extent, the interviewer has to guarantee the full involvement of the interviewee during the interview. When interviewing Maple, I did not feel fully confident at the beginning: she was almost the same age as my mother and so experienced. I began asking questions very rigidly and was very cautious in pursuing in-

depth information. The first 10 minutes of the interview were more like a questions and answers session as opposed to a real conversation. I felt that I lost power at the beginning of the interview, although Maple was very kind and cooperative during the whole interview. I feel that a researcher with more interviewing experience would have been more capable of conducting a great interview in which more personal information would be elicited and the conversation flows smoothly.

Language Translation from Mandarin Chinese to English

The data in this study were collected in Mandarin Chinese. Data were first transcribed in Mandarin Chinese when I was in China. Interview transcripts were translated into English by me in Canada. I paid particular attention to the rendition of all data from Mandarin Chinese into English, in order to capture meaning and cultural reference, as well as the literal meanings of the statements uttered by the participants. This was done to ensure that cultural perspectives as well as linguistic perspectives were captured (Liu, 2012). Words present different meaning in different cultural backgrounds, so translating Mandarin Chinese into English involved not only rendering the actual words used but also interpreting the cultural meanings embedded in the language. Language translation in this study was not purely a linguistic rendition, but also a question of capturing "dynamic and cultural interpretation and representation" (Liu, 2012, p, 67). Therefore, footnotes included next to the translations and in-text explanation were used for the analysis of data, where necessary, to help readers understand the process by which the data is translated between two languages, with regard to the different meanings embedded in these two languages. In addition, excerpts of interview transcripts were presented in the appendix II both in the original language (Mandarin Chinese) and in the translation (English). I compiled English excerpts from the interview

transcripts with their counterparts in Mandarin Chinese in Appendix II for readers' reference. Finally, language translation experts were consulted on the translated documents, from Mandarin Chinese into English, to ensure accuracy and reliability of the data. This process guaranteed the transparency of data presentation and data analysis in this study as much as possible.

Data Analysis

Narrative analysis is adopted in the analysis of interview transcripts in order to focus on how the women school principals communicated their stories and experiences with regard to their gender and educational leadership roles. This narrative analysis helped the researcher reveal how gender values and cultural contexts shape each woman principal's leadership style. I also analyzed how each interviewee constructed and explained her approach to and experiences of educational leadership in her particular school. Content analysis is also used to code and analyze the interview transcript line by line in order to identify and generate over-arching themes.

Three themes arose during the process of data analysis: gaining the access and power to the leadership; meeting and negotiating cultural (social) expectations; defining educational leadership in different organizational (institutional) cultures.

Ethical Issues

It is of great significance that researchers respect and protect participants from potential psychological and physical harm by maintaining the confidentiality of information and identities. Personal or institutional identifications were concealed. All the interviews were undertaken under the condition of complete anonymity. Participation was voluntary and the

four women interviewed were informed that they had the right to stop their participation and withdraw their response at any time during the research. In order to increase the reliability of this study, member checking was conducted during the process of this research. The interview transcripts both in Mandarin Chinese and in English were provided to the interview participants to minimize the risk of misrepresenting participants' ideas and thoughts and ensure participants were satisfied with the content.

Limitations of the Study

The present study has three main limitations. According to China's National Bureau of Statistics, in 2011, China had over 200 million elementary and high school students studying in over 350,000 schools. Together with pre-school children, this population accounts for one sixth of the total Chinese population. In 2010, China supported 2,358 institutions of higher learning. Institutional cultures vary across school settings (such as, private and public, elementary and secondary or tertiary education). One limitation of the study is that this is an exploratory study of small scale and limited number of female principals in a metropolitan area (Hangzhou) in China. However, the findings and conclusions of this case study are not intended to be generalizable to other female principals at schools of Hangzhou and in other parts of China. This being said, hopefully, as an exploratory study, this study contribute to the articulation of more sensitive cross-cultural theoretical frameworks of educational leadership that could eventually be extended to other parts of China.

Secondly, patriarchy exerts its influence to different extents in and across various contexts in China. Rural areas are not considered in this study. The focus is on large metropolitan areas. Cities in the east and west parts of China are affected by patriarchy to different extents. Hangzhou city is located in the east part of China.

Thirdly, this study does not include male principals and teachers. Do male principals' voices differ with regard to the relationship between gender and educational leadership? What are the teachers' attitudes toward the leadership styles and roles of women school principals? How do they explain patriarchy as a societal factor that influences the leadership of women school principals in China? In conclusion, I suggest that these and other related questions could be examined in future studies, building on the initial insights that are generated in the present study. Only when researchers have sensitive conceptual frameworks, and sufficient and reliable data and evidence, they will be able to develop adequate accounts of the complex and multifaceted intersections of gender and educational leadership within the cultural contexts prevalent in China.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Findings

In this chapter, I have presented my analysis of the data collected from four interviews, participant observation and school meeting minutes and principal's agenda. My overall goal is to explore the life story, and the personal and professional experiences of the four female principals; and to clarify how ascribed gender roles, Chinese values and school institutional cultures frame and constrain their leadership roles. Based on my three research questions and data coding, three themes arose during the process of data analysis: gaining access to principalship and exerting power; negotiating social (cultural) expectations; educational leadership and organizational (institutional) cultures.

Theme One: Gaining Access to Principalship and Exerting Power

The Caring "Servant" of the School

I interviewed Maple at 10 o'clock in one morning, in her office, where I saw the Chinese Communist Party flag standing in front of a bookshelf. She entered her office while I was waiting, smiling at me. She was wearing a grey formal suit with a Chinese Communist Party Emblem. The first impression Maple gave to me was in accordance with my expectation of a 'traditional' Chinese female school principal who looked respectable, senior and experienced. She passed me a box of cookies as I was preparing to begin our interview; she told me in a humorous way that sweet cookies could make me relaxed. I was a little embarrassed at that time, because she could read my nervousness. I also appreciated the way she chose to help me be relaxed. Later on, she described herself in the interview as good at caring for others in her school community.

Like the other three women principals, Maple did not get access to her leadership

position as a result of a purposefully determined career plan. She began her education career

in her school as an English teacher. She taught English class from Grades 10-12. She had

been quite self-disciplined and excelled in teaching English as a head teacher. Consequently,

she earned respect and responsibility from her colleagues. In 1996, she was promoted as vice

principal at this school. At the same time, she was assigned as the secretary of CCP (Chinese

Communist Party) General Branch (Mandarin Chinese: 党总之书记). At first, she did not

regard her role of a vice principal as an administrative one, but as an assistant who facilitated

the principal to maintain the smooth running of the school. She had dual roles as a vice

principal as well as the secretary. On the one hand, she was responsible for curriculum

development; on the other hand, as the secretary, she needed to take care of the emotional

and psychological problems of teachers and other members of the school. Her experience as

vice principal laid a very good foundation for her subsequent promotion to the role of

principal in 2006, as she explained in the interview:

> I have a very good foundation at this school for teaching and working here
> more than 25 years. I did not plan carefully to be a school principal, and
> everything seems quite natural and I am feeling comfortable in this position.
> Although, I admit I spent large of amount of time, energy and commitment
> into my work. (Interview, 9/56/1)

She further said that she normally arrives at school at 7 o'clock in the morning. As she does

not drive to school, the journey to school normally takes her about one hour. She emphasizes

that she starts out earlier in order to avoid severe traffic in Hangzhou city in the morning, and

in order to have breakfast with students and teachers in the dining hall together. In her daily

routine, she also walks around the whole campus of the school for about 15-20 minutes. She

has maintained this routine since she was promoted to the role of vice principal. She has

gradually built up her leadership style and school atmosphere in ways that reflect her own values and goals when leading her school community.

She spent much time meeting with teachers after school to help them in order to establish a trustworthy relationship. She tried to empower others in her school and make others confidently feel like members of the school community. Maple explained that she had a quite solid foundation at her school. She gains her power gradually by focusing on the relationship with her school community. The school community here refers to a community consisting of students, teachers, parents, and other working staff. During the process of establishing this relationship, she gains trust, respect, and responsibility from other members of this school community, which empowers her to enact her leadership effectively. She is quite confident in her interpersonal relationship. When I asked her why teachers at the school still prefer to seek help from her directly when they have family or life dilemmas, she responded very confidently that *"because teachers believe that I have the power to save them from life and working struggles; they are accustomed to seek aid from me". (Interview, 17/56/1)*

Officially, Maple finishes her school day at 6:30 pm. However, she usually stays on for another hour to communicate with some teachers who have complaints about their work, families, and lives. Sometimes, after monthly parental meetings, she even talks with some parents about how to educate their children at home. It seems like she cares for everyone in the school. I think that is why others are accustomed to seek help from her. It is quite surprising to me that she does not complain about her more than 12 hours work in one school day. She enjoys caring for the school and keeps the operation of the school smooth. My question here is why she needs to work over 12 hours a day? The normal working hours in

China is 8 hours. Did her gender role make her pay more efforts to her work? If she were a male principal, would she spend the same time as she does now?

During our interview, a male teacher came into the room to seek her suggestions for a school event. The interaction between Maple and this teacher gave me a very good example of the trustworthy relationship Maple establishes with teachers. The male teacher was eating a cucumber while he asked Maple for suggestions. I did not feel it was a conversation between a school principal and a teacher but rather more like an easy conversation between an elder sister and her younger brother in one family. Maple was a good listener who first patiently asked the male teacher to share his own idea and then encouraged him to enact his own plan by emphasizing that she would help him when he really needed her help. As Maple later explained, the male teacher was quite capable of organizing the school event by himself, but maybe he got used to getting her suggestions first. She trusts him in the same way the male teacher trusts her.

She does not regard herself as a real leader, instead she considers herself as a caring "servant" of the school. *Servant* is a very interesting word which reminds me of "Serve the People" (Mandarin <u>Chinese</u>: 为人民服务; <u>pinyin</u>: *wèi rénmín fúwù*) as a political slogan first used in Era of Mao in China. Normally, in China, before entering into high school, students have a military training program for about 4 weeks. I still remember my military training in my high school and the phrase "Serve the People". Our principal always greeted us by saying "Students, you have worked hard" during the inspection every morning, and we responded by shouting loudly "Serve the People". At that time, I only considered "Serve the People" as a simple slogan without much understanding of its real meaning. It was Maple's experience that shed light on my understanding of this phrase. I think it is her personal value that has

shaped her way of leading her school; or as a member of Chinese Communist Party, she was much influenced by this political slogan. She thinks that it is her responsibility to care for her school and everyone in the school.

Superior Skills in Organization and Administration

Sunny looks quite a typical young lady grown up in Shanghai, who is confident, independent and straight-forward. Her suit is professional and stylish; her suit makes her look very professional and tough. Admittedly, I did not expect her straightforwardness. She was the only principal who initially proposed that she could answer the questions by herself instead of doing a question and answer interview with me. She told me she felt flattered to be asked to participate in this study.

When I told her that her image did not match the traditional impression of a female principal, she responded in a very confident way: *"I think my suits are kind of signs of my role as a professional principal. I mean professional. I am not really a feminine person from a traditional Chinese perspective, so I do not want others treat and judge me with gender lenses". (Interview, 15/40/2)*

She emphasized the word "professional" (Mandarin Chinese: 专业的；pinyin: zhuān yè de) twice. Being professional for Sunny means that she can effectively get things (problem-solving, decision-making and goal achieving) done to meet the expectation and demands from the central administration of her school. In my perspective, the word "professional" is used more often in a business context. She explained to me she was much influenced by her mother who used to be a department director in a state-owned company in Shanghai. In her eyes, her mother is quite strong, confident and independent. When she was young, her

mother always took Sunny to her company for overtime working. She witness how her mother solved problems and made decisions in her position. She thought her mother was professional and she was her role model since her childhood.

Sunny defines the needs of students, teachers, and parents in strict administrative terms. She is clear with the goal of school and her task as school principal. She focuses on actions necessary to ensure the efficient operation of her school. I think these are parts of her understanding of being a professional leader. Unlike Maple, who focuses on building a stable school community and relationship, Sunny prefers to limit interpersonal connections in order to focus on administration and organization. As she explained in the interview:

> The school hired me because of my strong organizational skills and my no-nonsense approach to administration. I used to work for the government, so I know the male power structures and expectation. That is why I choose an administrative and organizational approach rather than interpersonal approach. I am good at hiding and controlling my own emotions in order to be a professional principal in this private school. (Interview, 27/40/2)

Sunny emphasized her professional style here again. She is experienced in hiding her emotions, and I think this is her way to neutralize her gender. Usually, females are described as emotional. As she mentioned in the interview, she knows the male power structure and expectation. Neutralizing her femininity is one of her strategies of surviving in a male-dominated structure. She is also proud of her administrative skills and top-down management style. She is good at goal-setting, situation analysis and decision making. In addition, she has two assistants who help her deal with conflicts or complaints from students, teachers, and parents. Sunny defines her role of a school principal as decision maker, not one who deals with every issue at school that comes her way. She trusts her assistants and her team. She used to work for the government where hierarchy is more dominant. This

experience enables her to adopt more masculine styles of leadership as aggressive, direct, and formative.

Like the other three women principals in this study, Sunny did not carefully plan to be a principal. She has "a clear, unwavering perspective on what a woman principal looks like, how she should behave, and what responsibilities she should take on" (Smulyan, 2000, p, 123). She told me she had a clear idea of what difficulties she would encounter in male-dominated structures. She was confident she could keep everything under control. She enjoys the managerial aspect of her job, organizing students, teachers, and parents; carrying them out in ways that guarantee that the school is run well. She defines needs of all members at school carefully and clearly in order to facilitate them in a more professional way.

Her strengths lie in her superior skills in organization and administration which, to a large extent, ensure that teachers at school work effectively and comfortably. She is the only woman I interviewed without any teaching experience. Maybe because of this, she, unlike the other three women principals, does not focus on leadership in curriculum and instruction. Instead, she concentrates on how she can facilitate teachers to carry out classroom responsibilities, curriculum teaching and learning effectively. Compared with Maple, she has less connection with parents after school. She thinks her professional management experience will finally win parents' respect and trust. Her age, her personal needs, her background, and her readiness to accommodate other people's expectations regarding her principal role, underpin Sunny's style of a professional principal.

Being Professional with Traditional Femininity

I scheduled an appointment with Helen for the late morning. Once on site, I was asked to wait for her in the school reception area. She told me that she would be a little late,

because she was quite busy with the organization of the school's final term exam. I waited at the reception for one hour when she came to meet me. My fieldwork with her was so unexpected and special because until 10 pm that same day she could not find time to sit down for our interview. I felt like her "shadow", accompanying her silently to the two school campuses located in two different districts in Hangzhou. It took us one hour by car to get from one campus to the other, offering time for some very random and casual conversations in the car. I could not find an exact word (awkward or embarrassed) to describe my fixed feeling that day. However, I think I gained more data and information as a 'participant observant' than from the interview itself.

Helen looked like a very 'typical' Hangzhou woman: elegant, slim, and with a sweet voice. Women who were born in the east-southern part of China are known for their femininity, good looking, gentle temper, and elegant behaviour.

Helen used to be a science teacher before becoming the vice principal at the school. She thought her promotion to this later role came very naturally. Like Maple, she once occupied the dual roles of vice principal and CCP General Branch secretary. At first, she did not have a clear concept of what her responsibility entails as a vice school principal, compared with a head teacher. In retrospect, the only thing she still remembers is that her workload increased enormously. As a result, she had to work at least 12 hours a day, and it was quite normal for her to bring her work back to home. When I asked her about her strength as a school principal, she told me that it was her knowledge in psychology that helped her a lot in her job (She got her Master's Degree in Educational Psychology in 2003). She could always maintain a positive and optimistic attitude no matter how stressed she was with job-related issues. She told me that teachers and students felt that she was very affable and soft-spoken and she has a good foundation in her school thanks to the good trusting relationship she

established with teachers and students alike. She is very proud of the fact that teachers and students are willing to talk with her about their real thoughts, worries, and difficulties. She knows how to find a balance between her personal needs and professional requirements. Within a relatively short period of time, she knows what teachers and students really want when communicating with them. She knows how to exert power with/through others (field note 11).

Interestingly, her response reminds me of one administrative skill I learnt in my master courses at UBC: "image management" (field note 9). Admittedly, she looked so feminine, always elegant with a sweet smile on her face. For me, her smile, her elegance and her answers are so "formal" and "well trained" that I could not feel her sincerity and emotion. I followed her almost 10 hours a day. I was so impressed that she never lost her temper, elegance and smile under any circumstance.

I asked her bravely how she could retain her authority (power) while keeping her femininity. I thought she was flattered by the word "femininity" because I could see "real" smile on her face. She told me that femininity could be equal to authority. She thinks that her ability to control everything in a kind and elegant way is her strength. Her statement reminds me of a phrase that I once read in a book: "Killing everyone with her kindness". I could feel her power silently and quietly. I accompanied her for almost ten hours a day, across two campuses. She also kept me waiting in the reception for almost two hours while she had dinner with some important officers from the local bureau of education. Throughout, she continued to scrutinize every classroom (it is compulsory for Grade 12 students to take evening classes in order to prepare for the College Entrance Examination in most of the key high schools in Hangzhou City). She also talked with a teacher after dinner. I followed her silently, tired and embarrassed to be her "shadow". She never told me when we could begin

our interview and I never got a chance and the courage to ask her whether we still could hold the interview on that same day. She "ignored" me in a very kind and polite way.

I saw how she dealt very effectively with teacher conflicts in the hallway. Two male teachers seemed to argue over examination preparation materials for Grade 12 students when she appeared. She first smiled and listened patiently to the explanation from each teacher. She commented and responded very quickly and briefly, with a gentle voice. Notwithstanding, everyone understood that it was her final decision on the matter. Her voice was gentle, but with a tone of strength and power. In our subsequent interview I asked her how did she manage to deal with the teachers' conflicts so quickly, wondering why she hadn't explained her decision to the teachers. She stated that:

> I have been in this position for so many years; I am experienced in solving teacher conflicts, especially curriculum related issues. It is not a big deal for me. Except for teacher conflicts, there are other issues and decisions for me to encounter and deal with. Time management is vital for me. I have to give a quick decision in some situations. I know clearly what my job priorities are. (Interview, 11/30/3)

From my perspective, Helen acts like a professional as a vice school principal, able to make prompt, effective, and confident decisions. She shows little emotions in her work, thus thinking that she enacts her leadership role in a very formal and effective way.

Keeping Continuity and Challenging the System

My interview with Kristy was the most enjoyable and relaxed one, compared with the other three interviews. This can be attributed to our similar age and experience. Both Kristy and I once taught English (mainly courses for English language test preparation) in Hangzhou before we pursued our M.A. degree in education abroad. We both have a cross-

culture learning experience in two different education systems. Our interview started very naturally by sharing some similar experiences.

For Kristy, teaching is more appealing than being a school principal; and being a principal was never part of her career plan following her return from the UK. She loves teaching and feels it is in her blood (field note 29). Her passion towards teaching, curriculum design and student learning improvement "pushed" and "encouraged" her to be principal of her school. Unlike the other three principals I interviewed, Kristy always considers herself as a teacher. She was brought up in a teachers' family. Her parents used to be teachers in a high school in her hometown (Wenzhou). Her younger sister is currently teaching Chinese in the same high school. She knows that she loves teaching and is willing to help students. Before she went to the UK for her Master's degree in Education, she taught English for four years in a public college in her hometown. When she gave up her decent teaching job in a college (public college), her parents and friends thought she was crazy. She told me she could not bear the boring and restricted system in her college; the hierarchal and patriarchal system in the college confined her willingness for helping students with their real learning needs.

When she graduated from the UK, she found a part time job as a teacher of Chinese in a local secondary school in the UK. She found that UK students were studying in a very caring environment and their study experience was happier and more relaxed than students in China. In addition, the school was more student-oriented, which was more different from exam-oriented schools in China. She began to do comparative research on UK and Chinese curricula. She was determined to bring what she has learnt in the UK to China to help more students. She was first interviewed for the job as a curriculum supervisor in her current school and her overseas education background and her passion towards teaching helped her win this job. During her first year, she was very committed to improving the existing

curriculum system. She designed new curricula to help more students enjoy an active and happy learning experience. She proposed to train new teachers after her regular working hours and proposed a "teaching communication meeting" every two weeks. She did not care about sacrificing her own time to help more teachers become involved in active learning and curriculum improvements. Her dedication to teaching and curriculum innovation met with disagreement from some senior teachers who had been working in this school for more than ten years. These teachers had to spend more time than they used to spend at school. Kristy understood the disagreements, while still respecting the seniors in her school; she worked so hard to support other teachers and her work ethics and passion finally won others' recognition at her school. Finally, teachers are proud of their team and their achievement in curriculum improvement and innovation. Kristy's negotiation in this issue reflects her value of respecting the authority of elderly teachers in traditional Chinese culture. In 2009, she was promoted to be the vice principal in her school, whose job or duty is to support and manage educational and academic development of students and teachers in her school. Because she is working in a private school, she has another responsibility of helping the marketing department for students' recruitment by giving speeches for publicizing her school, its outstanding curricula and student-friendly learning environment. She is working in multi roles as a teacher, English writing expert and a vice principal.

When asked to describe her leadership style and define power, she explained that she worked really hard to support teachers and students. No one can imagine how much time and energy she spent on her job. She is feeling comfortable and confident in her position because of her expertise in curriculum design and her organizational ability. She told me that she was once challenged by senior teachers when she proposed a project of "auditing classes among teachers" as part of an exchange on pedagogical experience. This project aimed to encourage

teachers to audit classes taught by other colleagues in order to share their experience of teaching. She thought it was the most effective way to improve teaching and learning. Some senior teachers complained that classrooms were their private domains and their seniority was challenged by this project. Kristy did not stop this project, while trying several strategies to communicate with the senior teachers, showing them the future benefits of this project. At the end of the term, some senior teachers were awarded by actively participating in this project and Kristy expressed her appreciation to them in the "teaching communication meeting". Kristy actively responded when she confronted challenges. She used her own administrative strategies to retain her authority and right of decision-making. She explained:

> I have been never worried about being challenged by teachers and students. Sometimes I am very excited with different voice. I think it is a good chance to share and learn with and from others in my school. As a school principal, part of my goal is to support and being supported by teachers and students in order to achieve the comprehensive improvement of teaching and learning in my school. (Interview 8/27/4)

Here, I can understand her previous explanation regarding her love and passion toward teaching and learning, which pushed her to become a vice principal of a school and gave her confidence and satisfaction in her position. Her tolerance for different ideas helps her to develop her leadership in a collaborative and supportive way. I think her personal value and personality is fully presented and realized in her goal of being a school principal and her way of leading her school.

In conclusion, all four female principals in this study did not purposely plan their entry into their principal's roles. Except for Sunny who has no teaching experience, the other three female principals gained their first entry into a leadership role through their prominence in teaching and great passion towards supporting and empowering people they work with. In this way, they established a good trusting relationship with others in their school community.

Relational leadership and instructional leadership are reflected in their practice and experience. More importantly, their great dedication to jobs and work ethic help them gain authority within their roles. Sunny, had no reluctance to use her power at her earlier years of becoming a school principal. Her background of being brought up in Shanghai and her mother gave her much more exposure to business administration during her childhood. This made her feel more comfortable and confident in her entry into a leadership position. This also enabled her to adopt a firmer strategy of educational leadership compared the other three female principals in this study. Her leadership style represents some traits in transactional leadership.

Theme Two: Negotiating Social (Cultural) Expectations

Not Good at Balancing

In retrospect, I found I did not balance my family life and my work well. For example, I ignored my daughter during her adolescence. Now, I have more power because my daughter has already matured into adulthood and begun to work. (Interview, 10/56/1)

When asked how she balanced her leadership role and family, Maple was quite honest to confess that she did not balance her and family well. As she said, her daughter was much ignored by her because of her busy job at school. At the beginning of her work as a vice principal, she normally spent more than 12 hours at school every day, barely having time to communicate with her daughter or teach her English although she was an excellent English teacher. She tried to balance her work and caring for her daughter, but ultimately she failed. I was somewhat surprised she was so honest to make such an admission, without hesitation. I asked her why she felt more powerful because her daughter matured into her adulthood. She told me that she feels her daughter is independent enough after she graduated from university;

so she is more comfortable and confident to focus on her school administration. She is no longer feeling guilty for ignoring her daughter. I can feel her comfort and ease when she was talking about her daughter and her family responsibilities at that time. Her response also reminded me of my mother who once told me she felt that she now had more power and less pressure to focus on her business when I got admitted to university (reflective note 1). From my perspective and education, it is the priority and commitment of women to care for their children and family once they enter a marriage. Marriage and family are of first importance for women. Nurturing and educating children is one of women's obligations. Women are respected and valued when they have their own career as long as they can balance their professional needs and family duties. Women are stilled valued based on how successful they can run their marriages and families. Maple sacrificed time with her daughter for her career development. Her choice was supposed to be challenged in Chinese culture in terms of being a good mother and a good woman.

The word "gender" did not come up at the beginning of the conversation between Maple and I. When asked about her strength as a female principal, she explained that she was more caring and attentive than her male counterpart. For example, she could quickly read worries and concerns by talking with teachers during lunch break. She would seek for more explanation and clarification by talking with teachers after school. When we further talked about her perspective on the strengths of men as school principals, she used the word "unrestrained" (Mandarin Chinese "豁得开"; Pinyin: huō dé kāi) in Hangzhou dialect. When we use the word "unrestrained" to describe a person in Mandarin Chinese, we always mean this person does not have many concerns and worries when pursuing his goal. Compared with men in China, women have too much to care about like their feminine images and

family responsibilities. Maple told me that her personality was "neutral", instead of being too feminine. She thinks she is not as emotional, soft and sensitive as women described in traditional Chinese ways. For example, when she knows she cannot find a balance between her family needs and professional commitment, she made a clear and quick decision to prioritize her work. Maple did not make herself emotionally stuck when making the choice between her family and her job. She is also proud that her daughter is so independent and understanding. Her husband is also very supportive.

During the first five years of her principalship, her effectiveness in solving school issues was challenged by some teachers and parents who criticized her lack of firm leadership. On one hand, they appreciated her female characteristics of being caring, collaborative, intuitive and empowering others. On the other hand, they expected her to be firmer in terms of decision-making. However, when she tried to construct her leadership in a more authoritative stance, her right of running the school was questioned. She did struggle for her role as a female principal, although she had no clear concept of power and authority. She thought her role of a school principal just put her in a different position where she would still take more responsibility to care for her students, colleagues, and parents in her school community. Facing challenges, she used to adjust her leadership styles based on the expectations of members in her school community. Finally, she realized she could not meet all the expectations from others. Instead, she had to set her own tone of running her school. She needed to retain her roles as socially expected, meanwhile adopted some masculine ways to run her school. Along her first eight years of principalship, she finally established her own leadership role. The latter also reflected her personal value of sharing, supporting, and serving others in a school community. Her experience of striving for meeting expectations

from people she worked with sheds light on my understanding "*collectivism*" in Chinese culture.

Maple believes that gender does matter in terms of access to leadership, leadership style and effectiveness of leadership. She does think both male and female school principals have their own advantages in the way they perform their roles as school principals. She does not think one is more advantageous than the other.

Being Judged Without Gender Lenses

Unlike my conversation with Maple, my interview with Sunny engaged a gender perspective from the very start. When I appraised her for her professional outfit, she directly responded, *"I think my suits are kind of signs of my role as a professional principal. I mean professional. I am not real feminine personal from a traditional Chinese perspective, so I do not want others treat and judge me with gender lenses" (Interview, 15/40/1).* She clearly and purposefully used her suits as a role sign. This is indicative of her perspective towards a school principal. She wants others to label or value her with professional lenses, not in a gendered way. She tries to achieve gender neutrality by decreasing her femininity.

She grew up in an atypical Shanghai family. Her mother was very aggressive and ambitious in her career. Her dad took more family responsibilities of caring for the children, housekeeping and other chores. In her eyes, women are not expected to take most of family duties, although she knows her idea would definitely be challenged by holders of traditional perspectives towards the role of women in China.

She is quite straightforward when telling me that she is not ready for a marriage and the principalship gives her sense of commitment, responsibility and success. When she was asked why she has to sacrifice her future marriage in order to maintain her role of a school

principal, she directly told me I misunderstood her standpoint. She did not think she sacrificed her future marriage; the reason why she was not ready for a marriage at this time was because she thought she would not have time, energy, and responsibility that would allow her to commit herself to a marriage. She added that she worked almost six days a week and that sometimes she attended workshops focusing on administrative skills and strategies on Sunday. She loves her job and she knows clearly that she needs to work hard and devote more time to her responsibilities as principal. She could not have things done well with less time. She thought marriage would finally come to her; however it was not a good timing for her to consider it now. I think she is so brave and confident on insisting to choose a career.

Her previous experiences of working for government gave her a clear concept that men and women are treated and expected to perform differently in the position of leadership. Women leaders need to work harder to demonstrate and prove their leadership. Besides, they have to do more, far beyond their job duties, to have their role as leaders recognized. Women are socially required to maintain their unique feminine traits and guarantee their authority in a hidden way. By contrast, males are more acceptable in leadership roles and more flexible when exercising their power. In order not to be judged by a gendered lens, Sunny decided to shape and construct her role in a professional way. She expects others to perceive her as "professional" rather than otherwise. She uses her own strategies to purposely "push" others into accepting her professional images at the very beginning. For example, her formal suits, her short haircut and her way of speaking are her way to signal to others her role of a principal. She does not feel uncomfortable and embarrassed if others criticized her lack of traditional femininity. For her, being professional is the most important thing. It is her way to avoid being judged by gender.

She knows clearly that she would work longer hours; encounter more difficulties, conflicts and challenges in her role as school principal. Her strengths are her organizational and administrative skills, and her abilities of controlling and hiding her emotions. She does not allow herself to hold back when facing any difficulties. She makes students, teachers and parents in her school community aware that she tries her best to facilitate and support all teaching and learning activities in the school.

In conclusion, by her own understanding of gender's influence on her job, Sunny chooses to take initiatives in negotiating the social (cultural) expectations of her surroundings by adopting a professional leadership style in her role as a school principal.

Acting Elegantly in Her Role

Unlike the other three principals, Helen states that being a woman gives her advantages in her role as a school vice principal. She can maintain her femininity and guarantee her authoritative position. Her female traits as being caring, intuitive and open, enable her to be more persuasive and successful at bringing students, teachers and parents around to her standpoint while still making them feel understood, valued and supported. In this way, as vice principal and CCP General Branch secretary, she can reinforce the involvement and commitment of students, teachers and parents in order to help the school principal run the school smoothly and successfully.

She perceives her role as vice principal and CCP General Branch secretary in a very clear and strict way. Her job responsibility is to assist the school principal achieve goals successfully and solve conflicts and difficulties effectively. She has set up a very obvious job boundary for herself; she is not the final decision maker, instead she is a professional facilitator in relation to the school principal. She needs to be professional when enacting her

role as a vice principal. In my eyes, Helen is an exceptional case, who is elegant and feminine as a female leader. Maybe her role of a vice principal instead of a principal enables her to maintain her femininity in an authoritative position because she is not the final decision maker (field note 11). Unlike Maple, she seems not to bring her personal values into her leadership role.

When I asked her whether teachers once challenged her authority because she is a woman, she stated that it used to happen during her first three years in the role. She insisted that it is not necessary to sacrifice her feminine image to present her power and authority. Being feminine and being authoritative can co-exist if she can adopt effective strategies.

When talking about her family responsibilities, she told me that she could not have fulfilled her job responsibilities alone without help and support from her parents. Her parents share responsibility for her family, to some extent, so that she is able to find a balance between her family needs and professional involvement. She grew up in Hangzhou and her parents always took good care of her. Following her marriage, she still had very close connections with her parents. She said:

> I am never independent from parents; my parents offer great support to my teaching career; they are always helpful for sharing my family responsibilities. For example, my husband and I always have dinner in my parents' place; and my parents even prepare lunch boxes for us. After they were retired, they began to take care of my daughter. (Interview 20/30/3)

She indeed spends much time on her work. For instance, she worked until 10 o'clock on the day I accompanied her. I was curious about how she could care for her family and her daughter when she worked so late. Wasn't she worried about her family? Now, I understand that she was lucky to have her parents to be with her and her family.

Briefly, Helen is comfortable and confident in her feminine way within her leadership role. She finds ways to make her ways acceptable and functional. The support of

her parents alleviates her family responsibilities to a large extent. This allows her to have enough time to enact her role as a vice principal in her school.

Negotiations Varying over Years

Thanks to the similar background and age, Kristy and I established trust at the very beginning of our interview. I did have several casual conversations with her by phone, when I discussed with her the details of my study. These conversations helped shorten the social distance between us. She gradually opened up to me about her personal and professional matters when I shared my own working, life and study experiences with her during our interview.

Kristy has been a high-achiever both in her secondary and post-secondary education. In her parents' eyes, she is a typical obedient daughter who can always meet their expectations in her study, work and life. After she graduated from university, she found a teaching job in a public college in her hometown and married her high school classmate who is well educated and from a wealthy family. From a traditional Chinese perspective, Kristy was very successful as a Chinese woman, with a decent job and husband. However, she knew she was not happy and satisfied, because she felt she was living and working for meeting her parents' expectations, and the social expectations attached to the image of a "successful" woman. She loved teaching English and helping students to learn good English rather than "Chinese English" for exams. But, the rigid school system did not allow her full play into teaching. At the same time, her husband did not support her work because he thought her priorities should be to full her responsibilities towards the family and have a baby soon. She gradually felt tired, unsatisfied and aimless about her personal value and social recognition. She did not explain to me in a detailed way why she finally decided to divorce. After she divorced, she

quit her teaching job in the public college and went to the UK for her Master degree in Education in 2004. For her, this is the first decision she made for herself, and not by her parents.

Once back from the UK, she chose to work in Hangzhou and live an independent life away from her parents. She got her first job as a senior curriculum supervisor in charge of curriculum supervision and implementation. The private school where she was working is quite male-dominated in terms of the central administration. The school principal was male, as well as the financial officer and the marketing manager. As a senior curriculum supervisor, she was required by central administration to facilitate the school principal for the smooth implementation of curriculum and meanwhile to improve academic performance of students At the beginning of her working in the private school, she was forced to be in a subordinate, facilitative and supportive role, with a few opportunities to voice her own opinion in important decision making. Gradually, she realized that she needed to have her own voice heard by the central administration. She negotiated with the school principal on matters associated with curricular innovation, and asked the financial officer for more funds for teacher training. She finally proposed to the marketing manager to promote the school curriculum after ensuring an agreement with her. She was not confident and comfortable when she first began to negotiate with the central administration. It was her passion for the improvement of student learning that motivated her.

After being promoted to a vice principal position, she had more interactions and involvement with teachers in her school. As mentioned earlier, some senior teachers challenged her right to implement curricular innovations and be part of a pedagogical exchange program. She enacted her power from a collaborative stance to get the full involvement of teachers. To that end, she listened to complaints from senior teachers and

worries from new teachers. She found that she unconsciously met the expectation of a young

female vice principal from senior teachers. She unconsciously managed teachers in an

indirect, collaborative and facilitative way. This process of enacting her leadership was time

and energy consuming. She thought her leadership was not effective and functional in terms

of problem and conflicts solving. She needs more strategies to get things done in shorter time.

Observing men who work in the school's central administration, she found out that their

approach to management was more effective and functional than hers. She told herself that

she needed to find a balance between a male-enacted leadership and a female one. On the

one hand, she took advantage of her female characteristics by being nurturing, caring and

responsive in her interaction with teachers. On the other hand, she adopted a more

authoritative and direct way to enact her power as a vice school principal. She wanted to be a

professional and effective leader, who can improve student learning. As a woman and a

leader, she found ways to meet expectations from others in order to achieve her goal. She

stated in the interview:

> The more experienced I am, the more comfortable I am in my position. At
> present, I always forget my gender and my age when I am playing my role
> as a vice school principal; meanwhile, I can unconsciously shift between
> male and female styles of leadership when facing various coming issues.
> (Interview 17/27/4)

In retrospect, I agree with her statement that the concept of gender gradually becomes less

important than it is when women assume the role of educational leader. The more experience

women school leaders get, the more confident and comfortable they will be in their roles.

The reluctance to strong leadership will become less and less with more expertise in

educational leadership.

Kristy is an example of a negotiation across gender roles in the process of shaping her

own style of educational leadership. Her negotiation is a constant process, which varies

according to the level of experience, age and expectation from people she works with. She has gradually developed an "androgenic style" which combines feminine and masculine traits in the pursuit of more effective leadership.

Four women principals in this study adopt different ways to negotiate with Chinese culture. They also have various understandings of cultural expectations on women in China, and as a result, respond to the expectations respectively. For example, Sunny exactly knows what the society needs a woman to be, while she refuses to follow it. She has no worries that others will criticize her lack of traditional femininity. She believes that her hard work and professional administration skills will finally win recognition and respect from others. In contrast, Helen thinks her femininity puts her in an advantageous position within a leadership role. She knows how to use her power "silently" in a feminine way. Maple and Kristy have similar experiences when dealing with the concept of gender and negotiating the social expectation of a woman. Their understanding of gender makes them establish a reciprocal relationship with people they work with and they bring change to their schools.

Theme Three: Educational Leadership and Organizational (Institutional) Cultures

Unlike Theme One and Theme Two, where I presented each principal's own experiences separately, in this theme analysis, I divided my analysis into two categories: working in public schools versus in private schools. Organizational cultures vary in public schools and in private school. Two categories in this these presented a clear picture of how two different organizational cultures exert influence on practices of female principals.

Working in Public Schools

  Maple and Helen are both principals in public schools. They have similar and different experiences and struggles in terms of negotiating with public high school culture as they define their educational leadership. Findings in this study indicate three features of the public high school system that play roles in shaping school principalship.

  Firstly, the job post of the CCP secretary is a big obvious difference between public schools and private schools. Maple and Helen both used to be the party secretaries as well as vice principals. Does the CCP policy and agenda have influence on their leadership? The post of party secretary connects schools and the government to the supervising role of CCP in school administration. As for Maple and Helen, being a CCP secretary at school means that they have more responsibility. For example, they need to attend and organize meetings for CCP policy learning. Although neither Maple nor Helen pointed out any direct intervention from CCP on their administration, some influence from CCP is indicated from their interviews. Both Helen and Maple emphasize relationship building is of great importance in using their power. Building harmonious relationships within school communities is in their principal agenda. This corresponds to the political concept "developing a socialist harmonious society" proposed by former president of China, Jintao, Hu (Delury, 2008).

  Secondly, the previous themes described how, in the early years of her work, Maple was criticized for her lack of firm educational leadership. Maple attributed these negative comments to her reluctance and resistance to the hierarchical school structure. Maple prefers a horizontal structure rather than a hierarchical structure. As a result, she did not put her in an upper level of administration in the early years of her principalship. She was reluctant to use

her power over others at school. She preferred a shared leadership to work with rather than dominate or control others.

She thought the traditional hierarchy made the school system very rigid and not effective in terms of student learning. She aimed to create a school atmosphere in which students, teachers, and parents could work together to find the best way to improve students' learning. She stated that the hierarchical system and top down management isolates students, teachers, and parents.

Thirdly, China's National College Entrance Exam (Commonly known as Gao Kao) is influential in public high school systems. This in turn constructs Maple's and Helen's leadership at school.

Maple's school is one of top five schools in Hangzhou city. Parents take it for granted that the school can be relied on with regard to the education of their children. They consider that the school has a greater ability to educate and care for their children. Their concept of education is defined in a restricted sense: successful education is conflated with being a high-achiever in the college entrance exam. Maple disagrees with this exam-oriented education. Instead, she encouraged active learning and the all-round development of students. In 2008, in order to encourage active learning after school, she proposed to cancel after-school homework for students in Grade 10. Different from Canada, Chinese students since elementary school have piles of home assignments after school. She thinks learning for students in junior high schools (Grades7-9) varies from learning in senior high school (Grades 10-12). She did not explain why she thought learning was different in these two periods. According to my own experience, learning in high schools was more purposeful than that in junior high schools. Students who are more mature in senior high school should be aware of where their genuine study interest is and their academic strength is. In Chinese

high school, there is separation of Art and Science education. In the second year (Grade 11) in high school, students are classified into Art and Science classes according to their own choice. In most cases, physics and chemistry are core courses; while history and politics are minor courses in Science classes. The situation of Art classes is opposite. Students' choices into science classes or art classes are greatly related to their future entry into universities. It is important for high school students to make decision of what classes they will choose in Grade 11.

Her decision to cancel homework aimed to allow students in Grade 10 to have enough time and space to think about what they really want to learn in high school. Parents showed their disagreement and dissatisfaction when she proposed this project, because parents thought that the school found an excuse to escape from its responsibility for educating their children. As expected, the local education bureau asked her for explanations regarding this decision. Maple anticipated these complaints and challenges. She adopted several ways to comfort parents. She delegated some head teachers to talk with parents; she guided students to effectively arrange their studies after school; in addition, she held parent-student meetings at school to explain the purpose of this action and suggested ways that would help students benefit from this change. Finally, her efforts got rewarded. Students performed well academically as a result of active learning. Meanwhile students were satisfied in after school activities. They gradually made up their minds regarding choosing science classes or art classes in the next year. Now, parents in her school community are more involved in their children's learning activities and they feel more committed to the education of their children. A healthy and trustworthy relationship and interaction between students, teachers, and parents has been established and Maple was able to define and shape the emphases of her educational leadership.

Helen had a similar professional experience as well when she proposed to launch a counseling program for students and parents at her school. Helen found that students stressing about their academic performance and result of the future college entrance exam in Grade 12 had lower learning effectiveness. Helen realized the importance of helping students to ease their minds first. With a Master's degree in Educational psychology, she was confident that she was an expert and that she could help students and parents who struggle with stress and anxieties caused by the national college entrance exam. Her proposal did not get support from teachers, parents, and the central administration of the local education bureau, because they thought students have no extra time to focus on psychological guidance. Parents insisted that they would not allow their children to waste their precious time on anything except on preparing for the college entrance exam. Helen was not defeated by the negative response from others. Instead, she strived to find alternative ways to make her plan more palatable. Seeking help from a few new teachers who supported her idea, she began to provide counseling to some low achievers in her school to boost their passion and active learning involvement. Her proposal was ultimately approved and a psychological lab was established in her school.

During interviews, Maple and Helen both complained that emphasis on the results of the college entrance exam is beyond the rationale of public high schools. It seems that the whole meaning of education in high school disproportionally relies on the results of the national college entrance exam. They both thought that negotiating alternatives in relation to this exam-oriented system is part of the shaping and defining of their educational leadership.

Working in Private Schools

For Sunny and Kristy, in China, the practice of leadership in private school is affected by enterprise culture, which combines market value with education (Qiang & Bush, 2002). Sunny and Kristy strive for a balance between positive academic result and economic profit in their respective schools. Compared to public schools, Sunny and Kristy are working in more flexible settings. Their schools are more business-oriented, which closely connects their job to school profit, students' recruitment, the training of teachers, and teaching resource allocations. Sunny and Kristy both aim to be professional and effective school principals who can facilitate positive learning and teaching experiences in their respective schools. Being forced to consider school budget and profit, they sometimes need to negotiate with their school's central administrations to obtain more teaching and learning resources. On the one hand, they work hard to get things done well to meet expectations and maintain good relationships with the schools' shareholders. On the other hand, they need to make the central administration clearly aware of the need of students and teachers and, when necessary, "push" shareholders to help them meet the needs. The aim of negotiating with the central administration is to ensure the quality of teaching and learning. Prominence in teaching and learning make their schools excel in recruiting more students. This, as a result, brings more profits to their schools. Both Sunny and Kristy attend some business management workshops and courses in order to acquiring knowledge in marketing schools.

Kristy did not compare the experience of working in public school and private school purposely in the interview, but I found that some of her strategies of organizing the communication activities among teachers are very similar to those in public school. During the interview, she complained about the rigid structure of public college where she used to work. However, the system of private school is not free of problems in her eyes. In public

school, her proposal for active learning in the classroom once became a lip service due to bureaucracy in her former public college. In private school, budget for teaching resources was once cut because of economic consideration from central administration. She once negotiated with the central administration for a bonus for some excellent teachers, but the central administration denied her proposal. She insisted on her proposal for raising the salary of teachers, otherwise her school would lose its best teachers. However, the central administration refused her again by explaining that marketing is more important than teaching. Kristy adapted to the business school setting gradually through continuous negotiation.

Compared with Kristy, Sunny had better communication and interaction with the central administration. She was quite aware of her role of guaranteeing school profit first by allocating resources and managing teaching and learning activities. She is less emotional than Kristy in terms of dealing with conflicts between teachers and school.

In conclusion, due to more complicated school structure, the leadership of Maple and Helen is more affected and constructed by school culture. The existence of the party secretary politicizes their leadership role. I am wondering whether being a party secretary influences their way to interact with people in the school community. The job of party of secretary demanded them to spend more time on moral education of teachers. Building a harmonious relationship at school becomes a core of their educational leadership; this relationship is supportive for them to acquire their authority. In private school which is much affected by an enterprise culture, pursuing a balance of academic results and economic benefit is a focus of educational leadership for Sunny and Kristy.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Implications

Answering the Research Questions

In this final chapter, I briefly review the three themes reviewed in Chapter 4: gaining access to principalship and exerting power; negotiating with the social (cultural) expectations; educational leadership and organizational (institutional) cultures. Findings in this study allow us to re-read the reviewed literature on educational leadership in ways which generate new insights into the intersections of gender and educational leadership.

The first theme "gaining access to principalship and exerting power" focused on how the four female principals interviewed in this study gained their leadership positions and how they negotiated their personal backgrounds, values and expectations in their school communities. Not all four female school principals gained access to their leadership positions as a result of a purposely articulated career plan. Except for Sunny, the other three interviewees began their career with teaching which later helped them into leadership by building trust, obtaining respect and accumulating social capital from other teachers. All four female principals experienced meeting mixed expectations from teachers, students and parents within their school community. By negotiating these expectations, they built their own leadership styles. These findings answer research question one related to gaining and maintaining authority by adopting different strategies. For example, Maple uses her strong interpersonal skills to establish trusting relationship within her school. Helen utilizes her female traits as being caring, intuitive and open to become more persuasive and successful at bringing students, teachers and parents around to her standpoint while still making them feel understood, valued and supported. Kristy, gains her authority by being supportive and instructional for teaching and learning activities to prove her competence in improving

educational and academic results. These three women principals emphasized a more "collaborative" management style rather than an "aggressive" one. Sunny, as a transactional leader, is good at organizational management and administration to win trust administration first and to begin her career as a school principal. Sunny is the only female principal who accessed educational leadership due to her strong organization and management skills.

The second theme, "negotiating social (cultural) expectations" clarifies how gender and culturally-established forms of patriarchal domination influence and shape the roles of female principals. First, gender does affect leadership styles of female principals. Similar to a study from Chisholm (2001), "all participants in the study were conscious of gender issue" (p. 398) and have their own understanding of intersection between gender and educational leadership. Moreover, findings in this study are consistent with the gender paradigm (Gray, 1993) discussed by Coleman (2000). One of the five headteachers from England and Wales interviewed in the study (Coleman, 2000) revealed that being caring is central to her leadership role. Similarly, in this study, Maple considers herself as "caring", "informal" and "aware of individual difference". Kristy is "tolerant" to different ideas. Helen is more concerned about staff relationships and created a friendlier atmosphere in her school. These three principals did not exert power over others when they were first appointed to principal positions. Exercise of power from these three female principals corresponds to Brunner's (2002) observation that women prefer to exert power through/with their staff rather than exert positional power by virtue of 'being' the principal. Sunny is an exception compared with the other three female principals; she prefers to a top-down management style. Sunny purposely minimizes her femininity by embodying her body and appearance. She produces a "modality of embodiment" that neutralizes her gender (McCorkel, 2003, p. 45). She tries to create an authoritative atmosphere by being harsh and strict. Sunny's leadership style is more

like a "masculine" as being aggressive, competitive and objective. Oplatka (2006) attributed

this leadership style to a male-dominated culture that drives some women principals to

present some typical masculine characters in order to maintain their authority, for example,

by creating an "authoritative atmosphere by being strict and harsh" (p. 615). The four female

principals' perceptions of their role as school principal reflect culture values in China

described in the study of Qiang and Bush (2002) such as " respecting for authority,

patriarchy, worshipping traditions and collectivist rather than individual values" (p. 185). For

instance, pursuing harmonious relationships and establishing a better school community

revealed Maple's and Helen's recognition of "collectivism" in traditional Chinese culture. In

collectivist society, group goals are put above individual goals (Qiang and Bush, 2002).

Maple and Helen did not emphasize their individual needs when they were talking about

their leadership roles. Instead, as they described that they both sacrificed personal time to

deal with school issues in order to develop a harmonious school community. Sunny's

resistance to presenting her femininity paradoxically reflects deeply-rooted Chinese

patriarchal value that women are inferior to men. She unconsciously connected being

masculine with being a powerful leader. One interesting finding is that the four female

principals did not talk about the influence of the agenda of "gender equity" promoted by

CCP on their access to educational leadership. So I suggest here that whether this should be

understood as evidence of the lack of political sponsorship, or as evidence of the

interviewees' reluctance of accounting for this dimension of their access to the principalship,

remains an issue for future studies to elucidate.

   The third theme, "educational leadership and organizational (institutional) cultures"

shows how female principals in public schools and private schools negotiate expectations in

relation to different school contexts. The findings in this theme reveal that the public school

system is more hierarchical than the private one. It constrains the practices of female principals regardless of what strategies they adopt. Public schools have more layers in terms of management and administration. Public schools are also closely bonded with the government with regard to school funding, teaching resource and student recruitment. As principals in public schools, Maple and Helen had more negotiations within and outside the school systems. All these negotiations (see the example of GaoKao in Maple's case) constrained principals' decision making. By contrast, working in private schools, especially in those operating for profit, female principals have more flexibility in terms of implementing their ideas and decisions. Kristy was more flexible in making school policy and altering curriculum and pedagogy at her school if she could be responsible for the economic goal from the central administration.

As noted above, both Maple and Helen did not point out in their interviews how being party secretary influences their practice of school principal. However, their emphasis on building harmonious relationships with people in school communities corresponded to the recent CCP's agenda of "building a harmonious society" (Mandarin Chinese: 构建和谐社会; pinyin: Gòu jiàn hé xié shè huì). This finding connects to the role of the "party secretary" described by Qiang and Bush (2002) as to "make sure that educational policy follows the party's direction" (p, 180). So I suggest that whether ideology of the CCP wields influence on school management or not through the job post of "party secretary' at school is worth examination in future studies.

As for working in private schools, Sunny and Kristy are required to negotiate with central administration for teaching and learning resources. Enterprise culture which introduced the concept of economy into education demanded Kristy and Sunny to implement

the educational goal of their respective schools, pursuing profits for the school. They have to strive to market their schools, lowering the cost of human resources and economizing teaching and learning resources in order to maximize net profits for the central administration. Sunny has a clear picture that her focus is not on interpersonal relationship, but on getting things done efficiently and effectively. Kristy struggled and balanced demands from teachers and expectations from central administration. Leadership of Sunny and Kristy was affected by the "enterprise culture" stressing economic achievements of their schools.

Findings above reinforce those of studies that focus on an examination of school culture, "especially those that see that culture as a part of larger social systems of power and interaction, offering a conceptual framework of understanding the contexts within which a principal works" (Smulyan, 2000, p. 202).

Conclusions

In this study, four female school principals experienced challenges and dilemmas due to a combination of several factors: gender stereotypes, social and institutional culture and other personal factors.

First, gender and culture do exert effects on the female principals in different ways and the female principals respond to these influences differently based on their various backgrounds such as age, experience and family history. So do contexts like institutional culture and the status of the school. Leadership styles of the three principals in this study are consistent with feminine traits in previous connecting gender and educational leadership (Coleman 1996, 2000; Gray 1993; Strachan 1999). In contrast, one female principal in this study presented her leadership style in a less feminine way not to be judged through gendered lenses. Differences of leadership styles come from the various understandings of

gender roles in Chinese culture. As a result, women principals challenged cultural perceptions on gender and within a given range of behaviours. Different from previous studies, findings in this study suggest that culture does not stand alone; and other factors such as family backgrounds, age and working experience do affect the women principals' perspectives on gender. Without considering these factors in an integrated way, researchers are less likely to have a comprehensive explanation of relationship between gender and educational leadership.

As for the influence of patriarchal values, findings in this study present differences compared to former studies. The seven women school leaders in Chisholm's study (2001) end up with leaving their positions under the influence of patriarchy, indicating that the tension existed between government-proposed social justice policies and deeply rooted patriarchal values in South Africa. Differently, all female principals in this study have survived in their positions regardless of challenges, dilemmas and plights they have encountered. Although the process is slow and gradual because patriarchal values and beliefs are still prevalent in Chinese society (Su et al., 2000, p. 474), female principals in China are "Knowing the way, showing the way and going the way" (Carr & Fulmer, 2004). The experiences of these women principals suggest future studies should focus on how the agenda of "gender equity and social justice" emphasized by Chinese Communist Party exerts influence on access to school leadership for Chinese women.

Based on the discussion above, to explore the experience of a female principal in China, researchers should not understand principalship as static, but a "dynamic process that evolves over time within multiple contexts" (Smulyan, 2000, p. 201). Focusing on the influence of gender and culture separately, however, limits our understanding of women's negotiations in multiple contexts. The influence of gender and culture are integrated with

personal traits of female principals' practice, helping them construct different leadership styles. When contexts vary, negotiation will change consequently. Strategies effective in a public school cannot be simply copied into a private school. Female principals have different explanation of gender roles according to age. Contexts like culture, gender and personal history cannot stand alone, and they intersect powerfully, in multifaceted ways.

The findings on the intersection of gender and culture in terms of shaping the principalship of the four female principals strengthen the argument for the cross-cultural comparative education framework proposed by Dimmock and Walker (1998). Understanding the role of gender in educational leadership without a cross-cultural approach fails to explore the experience of female principals. Females principals studied in this research presented many similar traits to women leaders studied from an Anglo-America background. However, researchers, using an Anglo-American framework, cannot adequately account for the rich meanings underpinning these female principals' intentions of "establishing harmonious relationships within schools".

Implications

Theoretical and Methodological Implications

Seidman (2006) argues that there is little possibility to explore the meaning of an experience without context. Designing interviews according to his "three-interview series" can help researchers establish context of experiences of social actors.

Researchers whose research interest is in gender studies and educational leadership should therefore develop a relevant cultural framework to explore how interaction of gender and culture influence the practice of educational leadership. Researchers are also called upon

to borrow the "three-interview series" to capture specific contexts and help participants to reflect on their experience.

Implication for Leadership Education in China

Future school leadership education might be aimed at providing female principals with an in-depth understanding of contexts in regard to gender and culture and related implications for their roles as school leaders. This applies particularly to the fostering of positive, supportive and relevant mentoring relationships.

Implication for Future Research

This study does not examine how practices and experiences of the four female principals have changed under the influence of globalization. How have various exposures to aspects of Anglo-American culture affected the four female principals' perspectives on gender, traditional Chinese culture and the political ideology of Chinese Community Party. Future research should focus on whether the exposure to Anglo-American culture results in a dichotomy between Chinese approaches and Anglo-American approaches adopted by female school principals. If women principals are exposed to Anglo-American culture, will they adopt some leadership strategies which conflict with Chinese culture? Secondly, this study did not have many findings in relation to the mentoringship the women principals may have obtained. The importance of a mentoring relationship was emphasized with regard to the professional growth of female school leaders in the study of Crisp (2012). She stated that "mentoring might be more important for women than men" (p. 274). This resonates with the observation by Qiang, Han and Niu (2009) on factors such as lack of mentoringship limiting participation of women to educational leadership in China. In the future, more studies will be

needed to examine mentorship with regard to access and practice of principalship for current

women school principals in China.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Interview Questions

Interview questions cover three domains of importance to the present study: gender, societal cultural (Chinese patriarchy) and organizational culture (public schools versus private schools). In addition, the interview questions are designed to follow the three categories identified by Seidman's (2006) "three-interview series": life history, reconstruction of contemporary experience, and reflections on meanings (see interview design in Chapter Three).

Why ask casual questions instead of formal ones?

I deploy some casual and flexible questions in my interviews rather than formal and rigid ones. For example, the question that "how do you spend your spare time after your school days?" aims to explore whether or not the women principals invest their spare time in their works. If so, I will ask following questions such as "why do you need invest more time in your jobs" or "how do you balance between your family roles and your leadership roles?" I think these questions are of great value in generating more natural and authentic answers from the participants. I aim to create real conversational scenarios between the participants and I. I am, like in the role of a young female school head, asking for best advices on my career development from the senior mentors, instead of being an interviewer asking boring questions.

Why no words related to "gender", "women" or "culture" in the interview questions?

In order to get authentic responses from the future participants of interviews in this study, I try to avoid any leading questions that involve words such as "gender" and "culture" which will possibly lead participants to particulars answers. Instead, I am confident that

questions related to their family and personal backgrounds, working experience and feeling or reflection of the participants will allow me to consider how 'gender' and 'culture' operate as factors influencing their leadership roles. I hope the 'gender' and 'culture' naturally emerging from the answers of the participants rather than through formal and potential sensitive interview questions.

Some of the questions are drawn directly from the interview questions used by Carolyn M. Emmert (1998), in her doctoral dissertation entitled *The leadership of women as high school principals*. Some of her interview questions capture the three categories of life histories, contemporary experience and reflections on meanings in my interviews. I have adapted these questions, where and as necessary, for the purpose of the present study.

All in all, seventeen questions are listed both in English and in Mandarin Chinese, based on the rationale discussed above:

1. Why did you choose a career in education?

您为什么选择教育作为职业？

2. What subject did you teach before becoming a school principal?

您在当校长之前是教授什么科目的呢？

3. What led you to your current position as school principal?

什么促使您当上校长这个职位？

4. What do you believe is your strength as a school principal? Can you provide examples?

作为一名校长，您认为你有什么优势？您能给一些例子吗？

5. How does a usual school day look like for you? What are the main challenges? What are the main satisfactions?

您每天的日常工作是什么呢？主要的挑战是什么？您从工作中获得的主要满足感是

什么？

6. How often do you come across power struggles as part of your role as school principal? Can you provide some examples?

大概多久您会有使用权利的困惑？您能提供一些例子说明吗？

7. How do you describe your leadership style in the school you work in? Can you illustrate?

您是如何描述您的领导风格？您可以举例吗？

8. What does "being the school principal" mean to you? Has this meanings been always the same for you? What significant events in your life shaped your understanding of your role as a school principal?

校长对您来说意味着什么？您对这个职位的理解一直没变过吗？有什么重要事件影响您对校长这个职位的理解吗？

9. Can you provide examples/illustrations of matters that require you to make decisions in your school?

您能给出一些事件关乎您的决策力的吗？

10. As a school principal, when you make difficult decisions, do you feel that you get support you need from the local Educational Bureau or from the school board? Could you provide a few examples to illustrate what you say?

作为一名校长，当您做比较困难的决定的时候，您能感觉到有人支持吗？比如说，来自于教委或者是校董会？您能给出一些例子来说明吗？

11. When conflicts arise, such as conflict between teachers or conflicts between teachers and parents, how do you deal with these conflicts?

当有冲突出现的时候，比方说老师之间的冲突或者是老师和家长之间的冲突，您是

怎么解决这次冲突的呢？

12.   How to you deal with teachers who challenge your authority and role as principal?

当老师挑战您作为校长的权威的时候，您是如何处理的？

13.   How do you engage students as a school principal? What are the major challenges you face in this regard?

作为一名校长，您是如何与学生相处的？您所遇到最大的挑战是什么？

14.   As school principal, how do you relate to parents whose children learn in your school, and what are the major challenges you face in this regard?

作为一名校长，您是如何与贵校的学生家长联系的？在这个过程中，您所遇到最大的挑战是什么呢？

15.   Have you ever worked in a public/private school? If you did, how do you perceive the role of the principal in each one of these two school settings? Which one do you feel more comfortable with? Why?

您曾经在公立（私立）学校工作过吗？如果是，您怎么样理解校长的角色在这两种不同的学校体制中呢？您觉得您更适合哪一个体制？为什么？

16.   What do you like best about your job as a school principal? Why?

您最喜欢你工作中哪一个部分？为什么呢？

17.   How do you spend your spare time when you are not working at school?

当您不工作的时候，您怎么安排您的业余时间？

Appendix II: Excerpts of Interview Transcripts

As explained in Chapter Three, excerpts of interview transcripts are presented here both in the original language (Mandarin Chinese) and in the translation (English). I compiled English excerpts from the interview transcripts with their counterparts in Mandarin Chinese for the readers' reference as followings:

Maple:

I have a very good foundation at this school for teaching and working here more than 25 years. I did not plan carefully to be a school principal, and everything seems quite natural and I am feeling comfortable in this position. Although, I admit I spent large of amount of time, energy and commitment into my work. (Interview, 9/56/1)

我都在这学校工作超过 25 年了,所以群众基础比较好.我没计划当校长,一切就是很自然地一步步走来,我现在觉得工作很好. 我花了很多时间和精力在我的工作上. (采访: 9/56/1)

In retrospect, I found I did not balance my family life and my work well. For example, I ignored my daughter during her adolescence. Now, I have more power because my daughter has already matured into adulthood and begun to work. (Interview, 10/56/1)

回想起来我平衡的不是很好. 我女儿小时候我不怎么管她.现在我女儿工作了,不用我管了,所以我有更多精力工作. (采访:10/56/1)

Because teachers believe that I have the power to save them from life and working struggles; they are accustomed to seek aid from me. (17/56/1).

因为老师都相信我有能力帮助他们,无论生活上还是工作上.他们习惯了. (采访: 17/56/1).

Sunny:

I think my suits are kind of signs of my role as a professional principal. I mean professional. I am not really a feminine personal from a traditional Chinese perspective, so I do not want others treat and judge me with gender lenses. (Interview, 15/40/2)

我很注重着装.这是职业形象问题.我指的是给人专业的感觉. 其实我也不是很女性化,从传统中国定义上来说. 我不希望别人用性别眼光来看我. (采访:15/40/2)

The school hired me because of my strong organizational skills and my no-nonsense approach to administration. I used to work for the government, so I know the male power structures and expectation. That is why I choose an administrative and organizational approach rather than interpersonal approach. I am good at hiding and controlling my own emotions in order to be a professional principal in this private school. (Interview, 27/40/2)

这个学校找我来,就是看好我的比较客观的管理方式.我以前在政府部门工作过,所以对于男人们的工作规则比较了解.他们工作需要什么结果.这就是为什么我宁愿把时间花在管理和组织上,不会去搞什么人际关系.我的另一个特点就是情绪控制的比较好,我觉得这是一个校长专业性的体现. (采访:27/40/2)

Helen:

I am in this position for so many years; I am experienced for solving teacher conflicts, especially curriculum related issues. It is not a big deal for me. Except for teacher conflicts, there are other issues and decisions for me to encounter and deal with. Time management is vital for me. I have to give a quick decision in some situations. I know clearly what my job priorities are. (Interview, 11/30/3)

我做这份工作很多年了,习惯了怎么觉得老师之间的问题,尤其是他们对课程方面的意见不合.其实没什么特别严重的事情.除了管老师之间的沟通,还有很多事情需要我决定和处理.时间要安排好.必须快点做决定.我很清楚工作的轻重缓急. (采访:11/30/3)

I am never independent from parents; my parents offer great support to my teaching career; they are always helpful for sharing my family responsibilities. For example, my husband and I always have dinner in my parents' place; and my parents even prepare lunch boxes for us. After they were retired, they began to take care of my daughter. (Interview 20/30/3)

其实,严格说,我基本都和我父母一起生活.他们帮助我很多,帮我分担很多家庭的责任.我和丈夫基本每天在我父母家里吃饭,有的时候他们还帮我们准备第二天的午饭.现在他们退休了,我女儿基本都是他们在管. (采访: 20/30/3)

Kristy:

I am never worried about being challenged by teachers and students. Sometimes I am very excited for a different voice. I think it is a good chance to share and learn with and from others in my school. As a school principal, part of my goal is to support and being supported by teachers and students in order to achieve the comprehensive improvement of teaching and learning in my school. (Interview 8/27/4)

我基本不担心有老师或者学生给我提出建议,或者反对我.有时候我还蛮喜欢听到不同的建议.这样可以让我多了解大家的想法,同时也能学到新的东西.作为学校校长,我和老师们就是相互支持的关系.和学生们也一样.大家都是为了教好书,学生成绩好,就这么简单. (采访:8/27/4)

The more experienced I am, the more comfortable I am in my position. At present, I always forget my gender and my age when I am playing my role as a vice school principal; meanwhile, I can unconsciously shift between male and female styles of leadership when facing various coming issues. (Interview 17/27/4)

工作时间越久,我就越可以做到游刃有余. 现在我很多时候都忘记性别这回事,我能很自然的转换自己的风格, 面对不同的人,不同的事情,我的处理方法也不一样.

(采访: 17/27/4)