A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN

CHINA

by

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Abstract

Leadership and administrative roles have long been associated with the male gender. Despite the fact that the number of female leaders has increased more than before, women are still underrepresented in higher leadership positions. The topic of women leadership has brought about the concerns of gender equality and social justice, women and the feminist movement, and women leadership styles. Burns's (1978) research on leadership argued that "leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth" (p.236). Research on women in leadership roles in many countries, especially in China, raised more questions than answers as to how these women lead and what influences culture and society may have on their leadership styles.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationships between culture, gender, and women's leadership styles in Mainland, China. This may provide insight on the influence of societal culture and gender stereotypes on women's leadership and leadership styles of Chinese women leaders. It also sheds light on the educational leadership experiences of Chinese women leaders, highlighting the barriers, challenges and possibilities they have met on their journey to leadership positions.

The key findings of this study is threefold. Firstly, obvious stereotypical or non-stereotypical differences of Chinese male and female leaders reflect that they could combine leadership styles of both genders according to different institutional needs and conditions. This suggests that although school leaders' leadership styles and strategies are influenced by early socializations, they could choose to re-socialize into values and norms according to their schools' expect. Secondly, the role of culture works as an extra-gender force in shaping women leadership practices and preferences. In these male-

dominated societies, cultures work as two contrasting roles in shaping the relationship between gender and leadership. On the one hand, culture could maintain the traditionally perceived gender differences between men and women. On the other hand, culture exerts stronger influences on certain leadership practices than gender-stereotypical ones. Thirdly, when it comes to the effects of gender factors on leadership, despite the efforts of nationwide ideological and political movements, and the legal means to advocate gender equality since the 1980s, two traditional gender stereotypes including males' superiority over females, and the separation of male and female social roles have still persisted in contemporary Chinese culture.

Preface

This thesis is an original, unpublished, independent work by the author, JIANG Shuying.

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Dedication

        To my grandfather, Wang Shuzhong, who passed away in 2013 at the age of 92. He took care of me when I was young, and I did not appreciate what he gave me and how much he loved me until after he passed away. Thank you for educating me to be a confident, independent, responsible and brave woman.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background Information

Looking at the leadership practice of women in the world, today with the constant development of the feminist movement and the feminist consciousness, an increasing number of women participate in competitive election and make decisions in administrative areas like their male counterparts. They are in charge of administrative affairs and share leadership tasks with men. The women leadership is emerging gradually. However, during the efforts under the background from social gender stereotypes, in the process of their growth and development Chinese female leaders have their special difficulties, which shall be solved and improved, in order to inspire the advantages of women in leadership area and allow them to lead the society in a more effective way.

China's ancient history has been steeped in legacy by Confucius, one of the most famous Chinese philosophers whose teaching philosophy was associated with hierarchy, age and the absolute respect for people of authority. Chinese leadership structure is heavily influenced by Chinese cultural traditions. This is captured in Ng's 1998 quote that the "paternalistic style of leadership will remain the dominated mode of leadership in Chinese business" (cited by Pun, Chin and Lau, 2000). Most Chinese employees are more likely to prefer a paternalistic authoritarian leadership style, through which a qualified and respected leader is not only considerate of his/her employees, but also takes decisive actions (Wright, 1994; Redding, 1990; Silin, 1976; WhiUey, 1992).

China has experienced a very tough period with women's movements in the

early 20th century, during which the All-China Women's Federation was organized. This organization worked as a catalyst to change Chinese women's destinies (Lee, 2004). Chinese women have begun to receive more educational opportunities and they became a major part of the workforce. However, Ng and Chakarabarty (2003) argued that a group of Chinese women leaders, in the case studies conducted in 2003, felt they were treated unequally because society viewed women as inferior and incapable leaders compared to their male counterparts. Women in China are thought to be more maternal and better suited for positions like teaching and health care.

The purpose of this critical analysis is to explore the relationships between culture, gender, and women's leadership styles in China. This may provide insight on the influence of societal culture and gender stereotypes on women's leadership and leadership styles of Chinese women leaders. This critical analysis also sheds light on the educational leadership experiences of Chinese women leaders, highlighting the barriers, challenges and possibilities they have met on their journey to leadership positions.

Personal Experiences as a Female School Leader

My interest for this critical analysis is based on my personal experience as a researcher. I started my teaching career in 2010 as an ordinary full-time language tutor in New Oriental in Suzhou, China. Due to my demonstrated passion and outstanding teaching outcomes, I was promoted to be a head teacher the following year. Within the next years, I was promoted to the position of project manager, mainly being responsible for course design, teacher administration, market expansion as well as online language course explorations. In my six years of school leader experience, I encountered numerous

unexpected difficulties due to the gender bias and traditional Chinese cultural stereotypes. As a young female leader, gender bias brought me depression and anxiety. In the male-dominated educational institution markets, female leaders are always labeled as the facilitator supervising the teaching quality instead of making important marketing strategies and administrative decisions.

Indeed, the leadership practice in private schools in China is mainly influenced by organizational and enterprise culture, which combine market profits and values in education (Qiang & Bush, 2002). The working environment in private schools like New Oriental is relatively flexible compared with those in public schools. Private schools or tutoring institutions are more business-oriented, and closely link to school profits, the recruitment of students, the training of teaching staff, along with the allocation of teaching resources. In order to optimize positive learning and teaching experiences, I worked very hard to get things accomplished to meet financial expectations set by upper administrative teams. Besides that, I would ensure the quality of teaching and learning in order to recruit more students, and bring greater profits to schools.

In order to maintain the stable progress of my program, I explored different kinds of leadership styles, including being interactive, caring and facilitative since a harmonized working environment was important for me. This relationship was supportive and beneficial personally because it helped me to acquire my power and authority. In Chinese culture, women should not act as strong or powerful as men. Instead, women's image should be caring, understandable as well as tolerant. However, I consistently met challenges, doubts and distrust from my colleagues. For example, some of my colleagues thought I was not able to lead a department because I was a young administrator who was

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viewed as an expert in the teaching area and not in marketing and department administration. Under this circumstance, I began to lead and manage my team by conducting strict and rigid rules and regulations that could not be violated. It could be understood as a more 'masculine way', that is "highly regulated, objective, formal, aggressive and competitive" (Morriss et al., 1999). Some of my team teachers started to think I was a tough, ambitious, and irrational woman. At this moment, I started to question myself: "am I wrong in terms of being a powerful and strict leader?" "If I was a male-leader, will things be easier?" "What kind of leadership strategies should I adopt in order to manage these employees successfully?" The root problem is about how to operate, practice and maintain my power as a female leader in an organization.

With regard to my personal experience, the critical analysis focuses on the experience of women school leaders in China. Three research questions are in the center of my critical analysis.

1. What factors have influenced Chinese school women leaders' practice?
2. In what ways and to what extent is culture influencing Chinese school women leaders' leadership preferences and practices?
3. In what ways and to what extent is gender related to Chinese school women leaders' leadership preferences and practices, as well as the political influences on their choices?

Significance of the Critical Analysis

Educational leadership is best understood and studied within a particular context rather than a specific activity that is prescribed in a leadership textbook (Davis,

2005; Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Gronn, 1999, 2003; Northouse, 2004; Sugrue, 2005; Walker & Dimmock, 2002). This is the main position that has been adopted in this study. A study that analyzed women leadership behaviors and practices within their specific cultural and organizational context has important implications.

This critical analysis is significant in three main ways. Firstly, this analysis compensates for a gap in the research literature. Literature on women leadership has usually focused on Anglo-American cultures, rather than in a broader cultural context. As a result, research on women leadership in developing countries is often overlooked, giving the impression that it is less significant. Secondly, this critical analysis focuses on different strategies women school leaders in China resort to in order to maintain their leadership roles in a societal and organizational patriarchal environment. This analysis unpacks how these women grow to become leaders in terms of the motivation, barriers and challenges they have encountered. Thirdly, this critical analysis may provide some insight into women's experiences and their access to leadership positions in schools. It may contribute to a better understanding of the role of culture including organizational and societal cultures in mediating the intersection between gender and leadership in China.

Chapter 2: Gender, Women Leadership, and Culture

As Coleman (2007) argued, although there are huge numbers of women working in education areas, the lack of women in leadership positions as principals, directors, and deans is apparent in most parts of the world. Despite publically recognized laws and policies that advocate and reinforce equal opportunities in the workplace, deeply entrenched stereotypes and beliefs have all hindered women's access to higher authority in the field of education. Among these challenges and barriers, the true challenge lies in uprooting the deeply held views about the appropriateness of women in leadership roles and their abilities to carry out leadership responsibilities in the same capabilities as their male counterparts. It is the cultural, societal, and organizational structures that have excluded women from more opportunities.

Gender and Women Leadership

The intersection between gender and leadership has long drawn the interest of researchers in the area of educational administration and leadership (Chisholm, 2001; Coleman, 2002; Hall, 1996; Fletcher, 2004). Men and women are found to demonstrate roles of school leaders in different ways (Coleman, 1996; Morriss, Tin & Coleman, 1999; Shakeshaft, Nowell & Pretty, 1991). Based on the masculine-feminine paradigm, in most Anglo-American studies, male and female leaders in education have different qualities and leadership traits and thus different leadership styles. For example, Coleman's (1996) study found that male principals tend to implement more task-oriented leadership practice while female principals are more likely to conduct interpersonally oriented leadership

roles. Task-oriented leadership practice refers to the requirement of high-level

performance, and a clear distinction between leaders and subordinates, while

interpersonally-oriented leadership include leadership behaviors that help subordinates,

look out for subordinates' welfare, and optimize a harmonious relationship.

For Strachan (1999), women tend to lead in a more facilitative way rather than

in a dominant way. Women leaders are much more concerned about the friendliness of

the working environment and harmonious staff relationships. The women head teachers

in Coleman's study (1996) regarded their leadership style as a way of caring about their

employees rather than leading people. By contrast, male principals normally viewed their

leadership style as defensive, ambitious, and aggressive (Coleman, 1996). In these male

leaders' minds, their management styles emphasize leading, managing, testing, and

evaluating others instead of caring for others.

Both Coleman (1996) and Morris (1999) found women leaders are more

caring, informal, and compassionate than men. The latter demonstrate their stronger

competitive, aggressive and formal leadership practice. Female principals tend to create a

harmonious working atmosphere and build up friendlier relationship with their staff.

They prefer to engage power through or with their staff in a feminine way, while male

principals are more likely to practice powers over others (Brunner, 2002). Women leaders

are witnessed to behave in accordance with their gender stereotypes as dependent,

sensitive, emotional, careful, and intuitive (Neville, 1988; Ouston, 1993; Qiang, Han, &

Niu, 2009), while male leaders are perceived as being objective, rational, analytical,

formal, competitive and aggressive (Coleman, 2003; Gray, 1987; Kruger, 2008).

In a later study, Coleman (2000) found that there are some similarities in male

and female leadership styles in some situations. Females in some male-dominated societies are more likely to adopt a more masculine leading styles because strictly disciplined, self-determined and tough characteristics can help them maintain their authority and power (Oplatka, 2006). When Oplatka analyzed women leadership in developing countries, he said that women are likely to adopt an "androgenic" style, that is a combination of masculine and feminine leadership ways oriented from the strong male-dominated values (Oplatka, 2006). Coleman (2003) noted that male leaders tend to apply in a "cross-gender" leadership that is collaborative, caring, interactive and people-oriented as men are influenced by certain popular leadership paradigms like transformational and participative leadership. Therefore, when males and females are in the same positions, they will behave similarly in order to fulfill their roles. Even if gender roles have some effect on leadership behaviors, it could be adjusted by leadership roles, contributing to minimal differences in leadership styles.

The literature of gender and educational leadership could shed light on patterns of similarities and differences between male and female school leaders in leadership preferences and practices. Educational leadership was dominated by males, and related knowledge was based on the experience of male leaders, where ideal leaders should display masculine qualities. However, due to larger driving forces including the feminist movement, a greater number of women educational leaders has increased throughout the world and the importance of female educational leaders has been recognized. According to Boone (2004), there has been a shift from a hierarchal pyramid of a male model of educational leadership to an interwoven of school administration has been related to a style of women leadership. It seems that feminine attributes might be

associated with the behaviors of effective principals, and thus women leaders are more suited in the 21st century (Boone, 2004). In order to understand women leadership, it is necessary to explore leadership from the practices of female school principals.

Women's Leadership Styles

As women began to move into leadership positions, research started to emerge that examined women's approach to leadership styles. However, unlike many studies on women leadership styles, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2007) abandoned the way of looking at women's leadership in terms of their similarities and differences from male leadership approaches. Instead, they merely focused on how women lead. For Grogan and Shakeshaft (2007), a collective leadership approach in which power is shared and decision-making is jointly made, is a hallmark of women's leadership. They also maintained that women leadership is more likely to create positive change through a participatory process characterized through working with, instead of powering over others. Researchers identified five themes that are more likely to be components of women leadership: social justice; relational; instructional focus; decision making and androgyny leadership.

Firstly, commitment to social justice is one essential factor that motivates numerous women to enter administrative fields and keep them moving up (Sanders-Lawson, 2001; Shapiro, 2004; Smith-Campbel, 2002; Strachan, 1999, 2002). Women always discuss their goals to make things better, correct social injustice, and provide more support to underserved groups. Many researchers describe women leadership styles as servant leadership (Alston, 1999; Brunner, 1999), in which women are more willing to

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serve other staff through working as facilitators of the organization, bringing groups together, motivating their staff, and building close relationships with outside groups. For instance, the ten women superintendents of African descent in Collin's (2002) study regarded their job as a mission. Although there is no specifically designed target for achieving a social justice mission, Hines (1999) categorized women administrators as transformative leaders who focus on the construction of interpersonal relationships and shared power and information.

Secondly, a lot of researchers highlighted the importance of relationships for women leaders who connect with communication, work in a team, collaboration, and community connections. All these above interactive words emphasize relationships. Several studies noted women's propensity to listen to others' viewpoints and enhance other people's self-worth (Bynum, 2000; Boone, 2004; Fennell, 1999; Helgesen, 1990), whether in teamwork or in a one-to-one basis. Researchers explore the themes of nurture, emotional connections, and interpersonal relationships among women administrators. Among others, Formisano (1987), Carnivale (1994) and Smith (1996) noted women's discomfort with being described as powerful. In order for women to be comfortable with the notion of controlling power, power needs to be shared with others instead of possessing power over other people. The importance of relationships and the connection of shared powers are important for women leaders.

Thirdly, according to Beck and Murphy (1996), the instructional leadership is central to female educational leaders. Through leading in this way, women leaders are likely to introduce and support programs in staff development, encourage innovation and experiment with instructional strategies. When supervising and evaluating teachers,

females are more concerned with a teacher's technical skills, the academic outcomes of students, the teacher's teaching productivity and their commitment to the school (Shakeshaft, 1987). One way to evaluate female leaders' working efficiency is the higher standard they have to achieve in order to access their leadership positions and the perceptions that they have to maintain their working performance and to solidify their roles (Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt, 2001). Cioci, Lee and Smith (1991) found that female principals devoted most of their work to activities like classroom observation, communication with teachers and students, discussing teaching content with teachers, caring about lives of teachers and students than their male counterparts.

Fourthly, women are viewed as being more democratic and participatory than men in their leadership styles, in planning groups, and in decision making. Growe (2001) maintained that the qualities of females, such as "nurturing", "being sensitive", "empathetic", "caring", "accommodating" and "cooperating" that are associated with effective administration (p.46). Shakeshaft (1987) summarized the work of related research that found that women adopt more cooperative planning strategies, and utilized less of the formal hierarchy. Women are also more likely to submerge the personal power in order to engage more people into the decision-making process. For Shakeshaft (1987), women tend to adopt strategies like long-range planning and data evaluation in making decisions. For women leaders, their decision-making processes focus more on factual and emotional data, consider from different angles, and seek for alternatives if the decision is not what they believe it should be.

The study of female leadership styles is further explained by the concept of androgynous leadership that is a combination of masculine and feminine leadership.

According to researchers (Coleman, 2000; Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Davis & Johansson, 2005; Hall, 1996; Morris et al., 1999; Oplatka, 2006), a good leader features both masculine and feminine characteristics, and can choose the most appropriate characteristics for different situations. Androgyny promises to get rid of all the gender stuff that gets in the way. Reviewing the list of administrative tasks clearly shows that there are no specific tasks designed for women or for men. There is nothing inherent in the tasks themselves that demonstrate them to be masculine or feminine.

In the study of androgynous leadership, Oplatka (2006) reviewed fourteen major journal materials in developing countries and found that women in these countries tend to adopt the androgynous leadership style. The androgynous leadership style is not necessarily associated with feminine or masculine styles, even though some research has demonstrated more women leaders assume female leadership, whereas males tend to exhibit masculine leadership. When adopting an androgynous leadership, women leaders are seen to be more psychologically flexible and better prepared to encounter more complex demands of society (Powell, 1988).

From the above literature review, insights could be gained that leaders may display different leadership styles according to their gender, race and class, and leadership practices could be constructed in a specific organizational, societal and cultural context (Davis, 2005; Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Pacis, 2005; Peters, 2003; Reynolds, 2002; Walker & Dimmock, 2002). Dimmock and Walker (2005) noted it is necessary to explore educational leadership practices within the specific culture in which educational leaders originate. Similar to Dimmock and Walker (2005), Gronn (2003) argues that leadership is a career in which cultural factors; individual biography and

organizational context will contribute to the formation of an individual leadership style. In the next chapter, the relationship between culture and women leadership will be studied.

Culture and Women Leadership

Leadership research in education and business have been criticized for being dominated by Anglo-American countries like England and others in Europe and North America, and the effects of culture on leadership are under explored (Dimmock & Walker, 2000). In response, many studies on leadership in non-western countries focus on the importance of its societal culture shaping and directing leadership in different societies, and the differences between leadership practices in Western and non-Western societies. This means women leadership does not exist in vacuum; instead it plays out in particular cultures: its growth, development and effectiveness are located in its surrounding cultures that penetrate it. For example, in many countries, the function of patriarchal culture is viewed as a main barrier that affects women's access to leadership (Acker & Fueverger, 1996; Akao, 2008; Coleman, Qiang & LI, 1998; Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995; Eggins, 1997; Norris & Inglehart, 2000; Rutherford, 2001; Shakeshaft, 1987; White, 2003). Thus it is important to understand and analyze leadership within its cultural context since "leadership is a culturally-bounded process for men and women" (Dimmock & Walker, 2006, p.34).

Mitchell and Willower (1992) defined culture as a way of life of a given collectivity, particularly as reflected in shared values, norms, symbols and traditions (p.6). People in different cultures will demonstrate different behaviors under the

influence of values and traditions they have. In relation to school leadership studies, Walker and Dimmock (2002) defines culture as "the enduring sets of beliefs, values, and ideologies underpinning structures, processes, and practices that distinguish one group of people from another group" (p.16). They state that leaders who grow up in different societal cultures may construct different standards and expectations for leadership which would regulate leaders' practice of leadership. For example, in the study of Morris et al. (1999), the "masculine" leadership selected by female principals in Singapore is the reflection of the culture of Singapore in which order, achievements and respect are critically important. In the Solomon Islands, women have difficulties in leading what they want since their societal culture largely restricts the freedom and efficiency of women's leadership (Akao, 2008). So on one hand, women leaders tend to adhere to their own values and beliefs that are affected by their specific culture; on the other hand, they also recognize the external societal norms on leadership that are imposed by cultures.

In the study of Chisholm (2001), he found that in post-apartheid South Africa, the deeply entrenched patriarchal social norms about women's roles in society have persistently constrained women's access to leadership. This inspires me to think about gender equality and social justice problems in male-dominated societies. Chisholm also showed how these women leaders in his research had left their job positions after six years of leading work, and thus the school was occupied by male leaders completely. Chisholm (2001), in his study, attributed these women's departure to the patriarchal and deeply rooted societal discourse and values that influence and enforce people's lives and behaviors, despite the prevalence of officially endorsed national policy advocating gender equity.

Chisholm's (2001) study has inspired me to explore the current situation in modern Chinese society in which the Chinese Communist Party highlights the gender equity and social justice universally, although the rooted cultural norms and values of the patriarchal subordination of women in the whole society (Granrose, 2005). In my study, I argue that there exists many conflicts and contradictions between the government polices and its actual practice in the society. These stereotypical values and ideas have been persisted under Chinese societal culture, thereby affecting women's participation and engagement in leading processes. Therefore, in my study, I examined these women school leaders' leading practices and experiences in order to analyze the conflicts between societal values and government goals that largely promote gender equity and culturally-dominated and organizational-based patriarchal forms of control within schools and the whole society.

Chapter 3: Women Educational Leadership in Patriarchy Chinese Society

Current knowledge about leadership, particular women leadership, has most derived from studies located in the Western society and dominated by Anglo-American paradigms (Law, 2013). It is necessary to expand leadership studies into these non-Western contexts, especially countries like China, Singapore, and India (Chan, Huang, Snape, & Lam, 2013; Peus, Braun & Knipfer, 2015). In this research, China is selected since its long history, rich cultural heritage, fast-growing economic reforms, the dominant communist policy along with other emerging values have made China a very complex and dynamic environment to study women leadership practices (Peus et al., 2015; Tsang, Chan, & Zhang, 2011).

The People's Republic of China has experienced dramatic changes in social, economic and technological aspects since its founding in 1949. The social, economic and technological changes have stimulated different ways of looking at the world, and has allowed China to learn new approaches to life that encourages the optimistic exploration of one's own ability and large creation of material wealth (Chen & Farh, 2010; Hubacek & Sun, 2007). These new ideologies have challenged the solid role of core Chinese philosophy and the values that have directed leadership in Chinese society (Faure, 2002; Yin, 2003).

Chinese History and its Influence on Leadership

As China has greatly modernized its societal, economic and educational system, it is assumed that women's access to leadership will be brighter. However, this

process is still slow and difficult since Chinese society has been deeply controlled by its strong emphasis on male dominance (Su, Adam & Miniberg, 2000). Granrose (2005) stated that although according to the Chinese Constitution, women enjoy equal rights in politics, economics, culture, society and family, the belief that women are inferior is still rooted in Chinese society.

The whole Chinese society has followed the doctrines of Confucianism that put more emphasis on males than females. Confucianism was initially created by Confucius who drew together many features of traditional Chinese beliefs known as the "Confucian Analects" (Spence, 1990, p.59). For Cleverley (1991), "Confucianism became the ruling ideology of Chinese society" (p.7). Throughout the Chinese history, the Confucianism has established its influence in terms of a system of moral, political, and social principles guiding Chinese society.

In specific, Confucianism has defined its roles and mutual obligations between men and women. Women in families have to obey their father, husband and son. They are forced to own four virtues: being responsible, being mindful in speech, taking care of the family, and maintaining a beautiful physical appearance (Wang & Mao, 1996; Cleverley, 1991). The above doctrine has implied two key cultural ideologies: for one, men enjoy higher social roles than women (*nan zun nu bei*); for another, men are more valuable than women (*zhong nan qing nu*; Law, 2013). Women are regarded as property of men. Women have been inferior to men in all aspects of life, especially in the leadership areas. Particularly, the strive for gender balance between *yin* and *yang* separates women and men into two different spheres, within men in the exterior world and women in the domestic world (*nan zhu wai nu zhu nei*; Granrose, 2007; Law, 2013). Women are not

encouraged to work outside or receive formal schooling since the old Chinese society values that "it is a virtue for women to have no talent" (Cleverley, 1991). Women in China are stereotypically defined as submissive, oppressed and illiterate (Rosenlee, 2006). Thus, there is no doubt that these entrenched societal norms and ideologies have formed gender segregation, gender subordination and deep discrimination in the whole society (Cooke, 2003). Not only does it seriously define men and women's social roles and responsibilities, it also legitimizes males' superior rights over females (Bu & Roy, 2008).

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Chinese authorities have frequently trumpeted the CCP's careful attention to women's issues. They tried to borrow Western democracy and science to change China from its weak situation culturally and economically. Feminism was first introduced into China during the movement and earnestly embraced by intellectuals who were dominantly male. Between 1958 and 1959, millions of women entered into the labor force during the Great Leap Forward. Jobs at nurseries and kindergartens were offered to women (Xie, 1994). As more women received support from local women associations, they were given more chances to become leaders in different workplaces (Xie, 1994). One significant societal change was the promotion of Deng Xiaoping's Economic Reform Policy through which women had started to work in business areas, and numerous women from rural areas migrated into big cities in pursuit of their career development (Granrose, 2005). Meanwhile, they enjoyed equal rights in laws, policies, and higher education, and owned some opportunities in leadership areas (Qiang, Han, & Niu, 2009).

Liberating women and erasing gender have been widely advocated in China,

which aimed to promote equal opportunities and protect women's rights and interests in their family, work and social life. In order to protect women's rights in the workplace, the Chinese legal system has included the following laws in the People's Republic of China constitution: labor insurance regulation of the People's Republic of China (1953); announcement of female workers' production leave by the State Council (1995); female employees labor protection regulations (1988), regulations of prohibited types of occupational posts for female employees (1990), the PRC law on protecting women's rights and interests (1992), and the labor law of China (1994) (p.252).

A great change improving women's social roles was the founding of the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) that aimed to "represent and safeguard women's rights and interests and promote equality between men and women" ("ALL-CHINA WOMEN'S FEDERATION" n.d.). One of the most important tasks and top goals for the ACWF was to "educate and offer guidance to women to strengthen their spirit of self-esteem, self-confidence, self-reliance and self-improvement, to improve their technical and professional skills and to enhance their overall competence" ("ALL-CHINA WOMEN'S FEDERATION" n.d.). The federation struggled to ensure a long-term change in perceptions and paradigms that have affected women leadership.

In order to improve women's confidence, the All-China Women's Federation has promoted a driving focus on women development. In 1995, there was a turning point for the All-China Women's Federation - the organization of Fourth International Conference on Women in Beijing. An outcome of the forum was "an energetic and creative wave of organization around women and gender, stimulating fresh analyses of women's needs, new initiatives and the recognition of gender issues" (Howell, 2003,

p.195). Since 2001, the All-China Women's Federation has grown to above 80,000 and their setting goals to make changes on behalf of Chinese women has been accomplished. The all-China Women's Federation established by the national government ensured and protected the interest and right of women to some extent. Women's liberation like the legal equity with men has been regarded as a landmark for the liberation of the whole China. We can say the socialist movement has greatly influenced the lives of Chinese women and their recognition of gender identity in the society.

Despite the above changes, Chinese women still encounter different kinds of discrimination in their job progression: women are forced to retire earlier than men; women are paid less than men, women are laid off from their job positions more often than men; and women are less secure in their work conditions (Qiang, et al, 2009, pp.96-97). Although more and more Chinese women are allowed to participate in China's political life, they have very few opportunities to express their ideas due to the rigid political structure. Female representation in the political leadership has generally remained negligible. The top positions, for example, in the Chinese political system are still occupied by men. While gender equality is an important political act on the Chinese government's agenda, deeply entrenched beliefs and attitudes that marginalize women still persist. Women's jobs are still regarded as inferior to men's, and their working responsibilities are in the category of pastoral affairs and caring issues (Court, 1997, Acker & Feuerverger). In order to get equal opportunities and access to senior job positions, women have to make more efforts than their male counterparts. In the next chapter, I will explore the current education system and its influence of gender equality on the roles and practices of women school leaders in China.

Educational Leadership in China

China's education has been led by the Communist Party of China (CPC) since the founding of China in 1949. The development of China's education has been designed, provided and used by the CPC to ensure the dominance of different aspects of social life. In other words, education is regarded as critically important to be controlled by the government to ensure the politics stability. The central Chinese government offers policy directives, curriculum guidelines and materials to all schools, but these years the central government has begun to shift part of the power to the provincial levels (Shanghai-China: Systems and School Organization, n.d.). China's school leadership, in particular, is embedded in a highly centralized and organized Work Unit, that is a type of national public institution adopted by the CPC as a means of leading the whole nation and of collecting and distributing national resources centrally (Xu, 2016). The Work Unit allows the CPC-led state to direct and control school's leadership, and ensure schools respond to the state's social and economic needs (J. Wang, 2012). Those school leaders who work as heads of School Work Units play dual agent roles. On the one hand, they represent CPC in implementing the national policies, advocating its ideology and uniting with other members within the jurisdictional organization (H. Wang, 2012). On the other hand, they have to work with higher authorities to gain more political, social and economic resources for their Work Units (H. Wang, 2012). Basically, the role of a principal in China is similar to that of a government agent who should abide by the government policies and directives completely, and also have to take care of the interests of parents, students, and educational officials.

Walker et al (2012) noted that school principals have to control three areas of concerns, that is, financial responsibility and the acquisition of resources; academic outcomes and university admission; and *guanxi* and upward connection (*guanxi* here refers to an important concept in China which is a wide social network of individuals that one could call upon when something needs to be done.). Specifically, in terms of financial responsibility and resource acquisition, acquiring enough resources to sustain their school development is necessary to a successful principalship at school. School principals are forced to apply for resources and financial funds from the local government, local enterprises and parents (Zhang & Gu, 2005). In this case, principals spend much time working with local education bureau for more supports, and increase quotas of students' tuition fee. They also have to participate in entrepreneurial activities like renting classrooms to society groups or producing goods for profits. These activities consume lots of time so that principals are always distracted from their educative roles (Lin, 2000; Zhang & Gu, 2005).

With regards to academic outcomes and university admission, it is closely related to a principal's authority, and their ability to attract financial supports (Guo, 2006; Li & Ma, 2006; Wang, 2005). As a result, principals put lots of energy on students' academic outcomes. It was common for school principals to acknowledge, "what is to be examined is what is to be taught for schools" even if it has contradicted with the new curriculum guidelines (Dong, 2006, p.33). In order to resolve this conflict, some schools prepare two sets of timetables and syllabi. One timetable targets the improvement of students' exam performance while the other aims for the accordance of external assessment to prove the school is implementing the national curriculum reform (Zhang &

Gu, 2005).

In terms of *Guanxi*, there is a recognized consensus in the literature about the importance of principals constructing wider and closer social networks with important school stakeholders, and some other important relationships. As one school principal said, "if you have *guanxi* with those influential people, then nothing matters; if you don't, then everything matters" (Zhang & Gu, 2005, p.32). For example, it is important to construct a close and friendlier relationship with local government and educational bureaus that could provide schools sufficient financial resources. Principals, therefore, spend considerable time and effort strengthening relationships with these appropriate officials (Li, 2005; Lin, 2000; Yan, 2006).

Based on these research findings, my study summarized major features of the school leadership role in China. Firstly, societal norms play an important part in shaping the role of principals in China. This is evident in various demonstrations of principals' work lives, such as their widespread use of external powers, and their obedience towards hierarchal systems. As a result, principals in China are restricted by external powers and pressures. Governmental departments and education bureaus enforce different restrictions and demands on school principals. Although they could negotiate certain issues, they should not challenge the authority from upper levels. Secondly, there are close relationships between principals and teachers. This means teachers are valuable resources that could produce high levels of student outcomes and boost principals' reputations. So principals in China consciously foster relationships with teachers in a harmonious working environment. By obtaining more financial funds and resources to satisfy teachers with extra monetary rewards, principals expect their teachers to work harmoniously with

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others and achieve better teaching outcomes for schools. Thirdly, a successful school leader in China should know how to cultivate and nurture *guanxi* with influential people who could help solidify principals' positions and ensure their promotion opportunities. So principals in China are acute policy readers who find chances to make incremental changes in certain negotiable areas, and are careful not to challenge the system.

Women Educational Leadership in China

As a result of the organization of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, there have been numerous research studies on Chinese women, especially women leaders (Wang, 2006). However, most of the studies focus on women's leadership practices in business and political areas; very limited studies are about female leadership in educational areas.

In education fields, the percentage of women participating in leadership positions reflects the issues of social injustice and gender equity in China. According to previous literature, there are no official data on women school leaders in Chinese educational institutions. The available statistics merely provide a few parts of women's participation in school administration and leadership areas in various provinces. For example, the data on elementary and secondary school principals in Guangzhou city shows that women principals occupy 52.74% of all school leaders in primary school and 22.69% of all school principals in secondary schools respectively (Qiang, et al., p.96). For example, about the percentage of women leaders in higher education, a recent survey of ten universities and colleges in Guangxi Province illustrates that there are only 3 female presidents and nearly 40% staff are women (Qiang, et al., p.95). Overall, the

percentage of women school leaders from kindergarten to university has decreased and women's participation in educational leadership is lower and disproportionate, compared to the huge number of women teachers at schools (Qiang, et al., p.96).

Findings reported in Qiang, Han and Niu's study (2009) also gave information about the limited participation of women in educational leadership in China education system. Firstly, in terms of the retirement age, women retire five years earlier than men. Women retirement age in China is 55 years old, and men retirement age is 65 years old. Under this circumstance, it is difficult for women over 45 to be promoted to senior leadership positions. So a large number of women are deprived of opportunities for senior posts in educational leadership, despite the rich working and living experiences they have. Secondly, there is a lack of mentorship support for women when they do have access to leadership roles in different social organizations. There are fewer women's nongovernment organizations that help women gain access to educational leadership. In this case, the deficiency of professional guidance, communication, and funds restrict women's access to leadership roles to a certain extent.

The British Council and the Chinese Ministry of Education conducted a study (1995) that analyzed female leaders in primary, secondary schools and kindergarten in England, Wales and Shanxi province in China. These participants included principals, vice principals, deans and ordinary teachers. They were interviewed about their viewpoints about gender issues, especially the barriers women encountered in their work. The research results from the three districts in the Shangxi province showed that most of the school leaders in secondary and vocational schools were men except for one vocational school in which dance, beauty, and therapy courses were provided, and most

teachers and students were females. Coleman et al. (1998) found this situation was similar to those in the UK and other Western countries. Furthermore, data from Shangxi revealed that female respondents showed less interest in the leadership roles than their counterparts in Western nations (Coleman et al., 1998). Women leaders still encounter tension between the qualities that the society expects them to demonstrate (e.g., caring, kindness, concern for others, gentleness and considerate), and masculine qualities linked to being a good leader (e.g., aggressiveness, ambition, strength, self-direction) (Woo et al., 2001; Zhong & Ehrich, 2010). This reflects that even though there were tremendous changes in women positions legally and socially in China, common values and attitudes towards female leaders were negative, and the increase in female school leaders was difficult to achieve without eliminating the entrenched patriarchy values.

The above researches about Chinese female school leadership provide some reflections of the professional lives of female school principals in China. Firstly, women are underrepresented in educational leadership, and stereotypical prejudices are the invisible barriers against women's participation of educational leadership positions in Mainland China although the gender equity has advocated by the Chinese government. It suggests that more studies on female principals are required to investigate female school leadership. Secondly, Chinese women school leaders experienced challenges and dilemmas to combat the gender stereotypes, social and organizational cultures as well as some personal factors. It reveals that gender and culture influence women's leadership pathway in different ways and female principals respond differently to these influences based on their various backgrounds like their age, experience and family history. Societal culture does not exist alone, and other factors like their age, education, family

backgrounds, and working experience may influence their recognitions of gender issues. Under the current ongoing educational reform, female principals in China know the way, show the way and go the way (Carr & Fulmer, 2004). These female leadership experiences suggest the future studies should focus on how the gender equity policy act highlighted by the CCP exerts influences on the access to school leadership for Chinese females.

Chapter 4: Advantages and Barriers in Women Leadership

Holtkamp (2002) stated that all females experience different challenges in their efforts to become leaders. For many female leaders, their path to attaining an administrative position has been paved with sacrifice in terms of challenges and barriers they faced. These include cultural barriers, gender stereotypes, the lack of guidance for women's career pathways, female leadership styles, lack of career mobility, and socialization (Shakeshaft, 1989; Pounder, 1990; Wyatt, 1992; Pigford & Tonnsen, 1993; Nogay & Bebeem 1997, Eagly, Karau & Johnson, 1992). However, their own strengths, skills, support, expectation and influences from others, and preparatory and training programs helped these females to reduce difficulties towards their goals of obtaining leader positions.

In the situation of extremely scarce original research on the theme of women and educational leadership in the Chinese context, referring to the knowledge that has been generated mainly from the Western societies will help to provide useful theoretical interpretation and analysis to understand Chinese women's leadership practices in education. This chapter will study the barriers and challenges encountered by female leaders, gender-based advantages that help them access leadership roles, along with coping strategies that could assist women leaders in mitigating barriers and challenges in their leadership access.

Barriers to Women Becoming Administrators

Much research has examined the barriers that keep women out of educational

administration. Some of these obstacles have to do with women's choices while others are well beyond women's control. These barriers include gender-based assumptions, role conflict, discrimination, unequal recruitment practices, the lack of aspiration, and the political nature of the job and socialization (Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Dotzler, 1996; Gupton, 1996; Mahoney, 1993; Shakeshaft, 1989).

Gender-based Assumptions and Stereotypical Judgment

Gender stereotyping acts as a main barrier when it is used as a standard to guide and restrict women's behaviors, shape women's perceptions and evaluate social expectations of women (Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996). Perhaps the most substantial and subtle barrier women face steam from the conventional gender-based judgments and assumptions, which have caused cultural and social stereotypes about what roles are and are not proper for women, Due to sex role stereotyping, women have been regarded as not well-equipped physically and mentally as men to function in the public sphere of the society in which men have dominated (Harding, 2004). This stereotype is directly connected to a commonly held assumption that an autocratic, command control and male-defined leadership is the correct and sole leadership style.

Many researchers claimed that gender stereotyping could result in discriminatory behaviors and the exclusion of women who seek administrative roles (Dickenson, 2000; McDowell, 1997). In the survey conducted by Coleman (2005), both subtle and widespread discriminatory attitudes towards women have been found. Despite the fact that gender discrimination has been recognized as illegal, half of the female head teachers who responded to the 2004 survey stated that they experienced different forms

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of sex discrimination related to their career progress and appointments. Comments also related to how their husbands might feel, with the implicit assumption that men's careers go first and women's primary responsibility is to fully support their husbands. Even unmarried women are not immune from discriminatory stereotypes like being accused of not knowing how to take care of children of others, as they do not have the experiences of motherhood (Coleman, 2007).

Eagly and Carli (2003) argue that there is an incongruity between expectations about women who own the characteristics related to femininity such as being caring, emotional and supportive, and expectations about leaders who could demonstrate masculinity traits such as being ambitious, forceful and competitive, underlie prejudice against female leaders. Women leaders are likely to be judged through a lens of femininity and described as less assertive, less competitive, less achievement-oriented, and others. Due to the gender-based stereotypical judgement, women are not considered as competent enough to be considered for promotion to higher job positions. Women who take the leadership positions would confront pre-conceptions of how their work should be done or what kind qualities are necessary for leadership roles. For me, the above situation could put women in a double bind. On the one hand, women leaders are expected to be competitive and tough-minded, but not too competitive or tough-minded. On the other hand, women leaders are expected to feature obvious feminine characteristics to be seen as caring and attractive, but not too feminine.

Role conflict

Role conflict for women who seek leadership is an obstacle. In other words,

both family and professional roles bring heavy pressure for women leaders. Liu (2000) and Home (1998) defined role conflict origins from incompatible and simultaneous demands; role overload is caused by insufficient time to meet all the demands, which causes a heavy load in daily life and work. Patriarchy is mentioned as a cause of role conflicts. Gender expectations require women to fulfill the roles of being a mother and a wife in addition to their roles outside the domestic area, while men are not expected to take these multifaceted roles. As a result, women are not motivated to pursue leadership.

Modern women have to deal with different life components including school, family, and social and personal lives. During this time, role conflicts are easily generated due to different demands of roles. For example, Chinese women's pursuit of being independent career women, and the sacrificing traditional women makes it difficult to resolve family and work conflicts (Wang, 2002). When Chinese women put their priority to their careers, they have to sacrifice their own careers for their husbands. It seems that most Chinese women have to make the decision to choose their families over their careers, although they make efforts to become good workers.

According to some scholars, although most Chinese husbands play active roles in housework than these husbands in other societies (Stockman et al., 1995), women are still viewed primarily responsible for housework, children care and education, supports for parents, and inter-family relationship management (Tao et al., 2004). As a result, social progress and high demands on women's professional and family responsibilities make the conflicts among multiple roles more intensive (Liu, 2000). These conflicts along with the prejudice of gender roles have formed through thousands of years, which have also lead to women feeling great mental pressures.

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Unwillingness to Recruit Women

The male-centered leadership selection process has been regarded as a main barrier to women's rise in leadership, although people often deny the unequal treatment of men and women in career advancement and other workplace (Yang, 1999). Gender discrimination in job recruitment and job promotion is not rare in China (Tan et al., 2006). Employers who are reluctant to recruit women or promote women often justify their practice by using the excuse based on the fixed social attitude on women's family and work responsibility. They think women could not contribute the same in work as men do. They worry that when women workers get married, housework and family business will distract their attention from work, so as to make them less productive than men. Also married women will get pregnant, which will cost their employers. Finally, women with children have to take care of their children, which is another distraction from their commitment to work.

These employers make it seem justifiable and legitimate not to recruit women or not to provide the equal career progression opportunities for males and females, and therefore negatively influence the career advancement for those women who devote more in their career (Wang, 2002; Tan et al., 2006). It is obvious that employers view these family duties as a burden to their organization, which they have no responsibility or willingness to bear. So this attitude together with the perception that women have lower career aspiration, make women seem incompetent and disadvantageous when compared with men.

Lack of Aspiration

      Lack of aspiration for leadership positions is a barrier for women. Lower aspiration could be related to lower self-esteem. Some research shows that women's low aspiration is affected by women's internalization of their inferior gender role ascribed by society (Gupton & Slick, 1996; Wilkinson, 1991). Wang (2002) argued that for women with high professional roles, the conflict between self-respect and feelings of inferiority has become more acute. Modern society demands women in professional careers should have strong self-confidence, self-respect, and engage in self-improvement. However, due to traditional cultural images, some women feel inferior and unmotivated. Therefore, women are likely to doubt their capability and stop advancing in their careers (Wang, 2002).

      In terms of school administration, researchers (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Granrose, 2005) find that women are easily disoriented compared to men. In the research study of Riehl and Byrd (1997), of the 4812 public school teachers, 99 had become school administrators including 60 men and 39 women. The research findings show that women teachers had degree credentials in educational administration at the same rates as men's, and women were interested in administrative work. However, these female teachers were less likely to leave teaching and unwilling to apply for administrative work. Therefore, we could find that women teachers are less oriented toward school administration. Carr and Fulmer (2004) also found that the stress within administrative work might be one key factor as to why fewer women are interested in becoming administrators.

      Based on these research findings, it shows that high motivational levels are

vital. Crisp (2012) studied the resiliency of women administrators in the educational

leadership field and found that "resiliency rests on one's ability to transcend and persist

despite adversity… Seemingly, these women leaders would have to adapt in the face of

adversity and so resiliently transform their identities as leaders" (p.275). This means

these women leaders persisted despite adversity, and they would continue to do so.

Lack of Mentoring Support

There are insufficient mentoring programs and long-term recruitment plans to

help women prepare for their future leadership practices. The issue of lacking mentoring

for females is more problematic than finding role models (Wang, 2002). In Zhang'

research, respondents who were female principals indicated that despite extensive

teaching and learning backgrounds, they often felt inadequate and unprepared as leaders

since they need professional and specific mentoring beyond what they are getting

currently. Thus, women have to rely on their own limited resources to practice leadership

styles and gain competence on their jobs after they have been promoted.

Pacis (2005) added that females learning from male mentors always end up

adopting masculine leading styles and practices. On the one hand, they regard themselves

from an authority perspective, demonstrating the aggressive, powerful and competitive

behaviors in male leaders (Trujillo-Ball, 2003). On the other hand, these behaviors

contradict the behaviors to which women have been socialized (Trujillo-Ball, 2003).

Under this circumstance, Sanchez and Thornton (2010) suggest that effective women

leaders should make great efforts to support new and aspiring leaders like sharing their

successful experiences in professional and family aspects. Such support could help

challenge negative perceptions and stereotypes, develop a wide pool of successful women leaders, and encourage more potential women leaders to move forward. It is important to provide women leaders mentoring support, and continue the cycle, so that more female leaders could be successfully formed.

In sum, gender stereotyping in leadership is indeed a very complex system involving various personal, organizational and social elements. The undermining of women in leadership area is difficult to change as it stems from a complicated interaction of men's beliefs and behaviors, women's beliefs and behaviors, the structures and procedures set by organizations, and the ways in which people organize and run their families (Nichols, 1994).

Valuing Women's Experiences: Turning Disadvantages to Advantages

Research findings strongly suggest that good school leadership is more attuned to women leadership practices rather than masculine types. As Porat (1991: p.413) stated, "feminine values and behaviors are exactly what is needed to nurture this new era in human history". Women have many lots of leadership strengths. When given opportunity to use their talents, they could create remarkable innovations that make extraordinary contributions to their organizations and the world around them. Despite women having certain disadvantages, they should acknowledge particular female competence advantages and use their personal characteristics, transformational leadership skills and competence to shoulder their leadership practices.

Personal Characteristics Advantages

When asking about the possibilities of being a female leader, their gender roles help women become more effective and affective leaders since they have advantageous feminine characteristics. For example, the following terms are often used to describe women: nurturing, giving, caring, communicative, collaborative, flexible, friendlier, empathic, responsive to staff demands, active and patient listeners. Although the above traits and qualities are what women leaders are being discriminated for, these discriminatory disadvantages can sometimes produce the appearance of a female competence advantages.

This increment competence, drive at least in part of a double standard, is also one factor underlying social scientific evidence and journalistic claims of female advantages. For example, in the study of Crisp (2012), actual experiences of being a mother, a daughter, a wife, and a woman have a significant impact on their leadership styles. They believe that motherhood could be excellent training for an administrative position. When demonstrating their leadership behaviors, women may bring their empathy, peace-making qualities, care, understanding, support, patience, and compassion into their work. In the study of Chisholm (2001), she found that most women administrators possess the abilities to see both the apparent and the hidden; acknowledge both reason and emotions; understand the need for both affect and intellect; legitimize personal experience as an appropriate source of decision making; honor care, concern, and connection; and practice compassion, empathy, gentleness, and collaboration.

Skills Advantages

Women have high levels of skills in listening, communicating, problem solving,

team building, instructing and planning (Wang, 2002). Women are active and engaged when they are listening. They are very attentive, and synthesize the information in preparation of meeting the needs of those speaking. For McGrath, women are good at a technique called "blending", which means women could accurately understand the other people's view and match their own motives to other people's.

According to some recent research, women score higher than men in many contributes regarded as crucial to being a successful school leader. Wang (2012) and Zhang (2003) concluded a list of advantages of women in school administration. Firstly, female principals are knowledgeable in instruction supervision; secondly, teachers and other school staff prefer female principals over men; thirdly, students' academic outcomes and teaching performances are scored higher under the administration of female principals; fourthly, women tend to be more effective school leaders; fifthly, teachers and staff recognize women principals' ways of decision making and problem solving strategies; sixthly, women principals are more concerned with helping their students' learning; and lastly, women principals pay more attention to technical skills and organizational responsibilities of teachers.

The findings in Zhang (2003) showed female school leaders are better at adopting instructional leadership styles than men. Female leaders take their leadership as a shared process in which all team members collaborate together for a common purpose. They view their community as a family, treating people with patience, and respect without forcing them what needs to be done (Zhang, 2003). In a 1988 study by Hein which looked at the measurement of women leaders' performance in administration, women scored higher in different leadership practices like flexibility, ability to give

constructive criticism, ability to enforce strong educational administration, assuming responsibility, tactfulness and communication. According to the findings of a nationwide study conducted by the Executive Development Centers and the American Association of School Administrators and the University of Texas, administrative women leaders controlled more expert information than men in the communication aspect, the implementation of new curriculum, curriculum development and teacher evaluation (McGrath, 1992, p. 65).

Power Advantages

In traditional ideology, power represents masculinity. Women were viewed as weaker in utilizing power, and managing personal relationships. By contrast, modern corporate or organizational power is derived not from masculine physical strength, but from skills that women control like power sharing, collaboration and participation. All these skills have been demonstrated to be particular strengths of women.

Now new ways of administrating and leading organizations do not rely on power over, but rather, power with, which is a power mode compatible with women leadership styles. Women leaders feel uncomfortable with strong-arm tactics and strive to use techniques that do not need a loser or a winner. Women are more likely to demonstrate transformational leadership styles. Women who adopt transformational leadership focus on getting their employees to transfer their personal interest to the interest of the whole group through concern for a broader goal. Women leaders credit their power to their personal characteristics like interpersonal skills, hard work, social relationships, and charisma, instead of organizational status (Zhang, 2003). More

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specifically, female leaders actively build up a positive interactive platform for everyone involved. Women encourage participation, sharing power and information, and enhancing the demonstration of other people's self-worth.

Women's Contributions to Leadership

The selection and appointment of female leaders is significant for society, organization, and women themselves since selecting female leaders at school is needed for social equity and balanced development. In 1995, the United Nation's 4th World Conference on Women's Issues declared that improving women's social status and actualizing gender equality is the fundamental condition of human rights and social justice. Women's participation into leadership is an important part to building a harmonious and equal society. The selection and training of women leaders have significant effects on the implementations of the national policy of gender equality, the improvement of women's political status and the advance of women's career progression (Qiang, Han, Niu, 2009).

Researchers claimed that the inclusion of women into administrative roles could enhance their growth as a group in an organization, and create a model for women's career development (Qiang, Han & Niu, 2009). Holmgren, the former vice provost of Princeton University and former president of Mills College, asserts that female leaders themselves shoulder the responsibility of empowering women's status in society. For Holmgren (2000), a university presidency is an ideal position through which women could work for the creation of gender equality in their university, and contribute to women's pursuit of gender equality and social justice in a large higher education area. As

a result, the selection and training of women leaders at such institutions could promote women leadership across the field of education, and encourage professional females to break these barriers and spread the influence of female leaders.

Inspiration of Potential of Chinese Women Leaders

Based on women's experiences, gender bias and gender stereotype still affect women leadership practices to a large degree. However, the gender bias and stereotypes have evolved and changed. The barriers that women encounter in modern society are subtle, and difficult for female leaders to perceive directly. Moreover, gender roles in women leadership are largely socially defined as many of them feel outside pressure and self-pressure from the socially constructed and cultural obligations that have been added to them.

It is obvious that many of the barriers that women meet have changed from being obvious to subtle. Researchers like Acker (2004); Arlton, Lewellen and Brissett (1999); Kimmel (2004); Mandel (2003) and Tennen (1990) found it is hard to change deeply rooted gender stereotypes and biases toward societal gender expectations on what women and men should act like. These expectations are obstacles for women leaders. Under this circumstance, women still face numerous limitations and these limitations are subtle and subliminal. It is difficult to identify barriers and obstacles for female leaders, but there is no doubt they exist.

In order to overcome different challenges and difficulties in their career paths, these professional women leaders are willing to work hard, and have to work much harder than their male counterparts to prove their potentials and worth (Liu, 2013, Luke,

1998). It is clear that these women leaders feel pressure to outperform. These women principals in Li's (2014) study are committed to working longer hours, even at the expense of their personal and family time. According to Morris, Tin and Coleman (1999), due to these social biases and historical perceptions about women's inferior capabilities, women often have to pass "a higher competence threshold" (p.194) to prove their worth as leaders. Therefore, this consistent pressure to prove their abilities can be a subtle challenge that plagues women on a subconscious level.

For their development, women leaders are encouraged to make full use of their favorable political environment including policies, regulations and legal protection. Women leaders have advantageous resources in policy areas, such as political participation opportunities in the rational rules of the political system in the general election system. For example, according to *the Opinions on Doing a Good Job in Cultivating and Selecting Female Cadres and Developing Female Party Member*, the leading group of provincial party committee, National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, and the country-level party committee and government shall have one female cadre each. For the central government, state organs, ministries and commissions, provinces, municipalities directly under the central government and the municipal party committees and government departments, the leading group should have more than half of female leaders (Tao, Zheng &Mow, 2005). And then since 2002, the central Chinese government held the working conference for cultivating and selecting women cadres again, so that Chinese women's political status have improved dramatically (Tao, Zheng, & Mow, 2005).

Moreover, it is important for Chinese women leaders to make full use of their

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gender resources in the growth and development of leadership practices. Women could understand other's empathy psychologically and behaviorally, help them to motivate and encourage, or make them have the cohesion based on emotional community (Bian, 1994). Meanwhile, women have the experience of thinking reflecting and summarizing of their experience, which could help women leaders draw inferences about other cases from one instance in the process of problem analysis and solving ability (Bian, 1994). So women have the additional resources in the process of leadership participation, thus improving their administrative ability and execution level, and accumulating enough leading knowledge, experience and qualifications, so that in the operation and administration subordinates tend to be more convincing with authority and complying with the task. Thus women leaders are suggested to optimize their advantages to analyze the available resources, cultivate innovative thinking ability, and enhance the political sensitivity in work, improve their self-cultivation and quality in life, and demonstrate the beauty of women leadership with hardness and softness.

For the growth and development of women leaders, a favorable economic and political environment should be created. Joining a political party organization, building a power maintenance system, and establishing effective social capital is the necessary premise of enhancing women's political participation and promoting the development of women leadership (Bian, 1994). An important feature of contemporary Chinese politics is party politics. This means any personal power depend on the party's political power to growth, develop and maintain the stable leadership rights and interests. Through attending a party or political organizations, women leaders and cadres practice and improve in the organization, strive for the leader status in male-dominated areas, and

construct the prestige and reputation in the process, so as to consolidate and strengthen their leading foundation.

At the same time, when encountering cultural, professional, political, and personal issues, they rely on support from their families, mentors, allies, and colleagues to work through these difficulties. Similarly, these networks also help them on a personal level as they have someone to turn to for help when it comes to family issues. Granrose (2005) explained that successful women leaders need support networks, and these networks are critically important for women who work in male-dominated societies. Thus, it is necessary for female leaders to have mentors and multilayered support systems both at home and in their professional settings. The effective capital and resources inside and outside the organization is an indispensable element for the growth and development of female leaders.

As for future leadership education, it should focus on offering female school leaders with a multifaceted understanding of contexts in relation to gender, culture, and related implications for their roles as school principals. This could also help foster supportive and relevant mentoring relationships for women school leaders since mentoring resources are emphasized with regard to the professional growth of female school leaders. For women school leaders in Chinese societies, the lack of mentoring limits the participation of women in educational administration platforms in China (Qiang, Han & Niu, 2009). In addition, women must become confident in discussing the gender biases, stereotypes and discrimination they face in their career progressions in China. Without awareness and discussion, these barriers and challenges will not be resolved in the future.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Implication for Further Study

As laid out clearly in the introduction of the critical analysis, the primary goal is to analyze women educational leadership in China, which was virtually invisible in research area. This critical analysis examined the relationships between culture, gender, and women leadership in China. Firstly, obvious stereotypical or non-stereotypical differences of Chinese male and female leaders reflect that they could combine leadership styles of both genders according to different institutional needs and conditions. This suggests that although school leaders' leadership styles and strategies are influenced by early socializations, they could choose to re-socialize into values and norms according to their schools' expect. Secondly, the role of culture works as an extra-gender force in shaping women leadership practices and preferences. In these male-dominated societies, cultures work as two contrasting roles in shaping the relationship between gender and leadership. On the one hand, culture could maintain the traditionally perceived gender differences between men and women. On the other hand, culture exerts stronger influences on certain leadership practices than gender-stereotypical ones. Thirdly, when it comes to the effects of gender factors on leadership, despite the efforts of nationwide ideological and political movements, and the legal means to advocate gender equality since the 1980s, two traditional gender stereotypes including males' superiority over females, and the separation of male and female social roles have still persisted in contemporary Chinese culture.

However, the patterns of gender differences in China are different from that in Western societies. Such differences show that different cultural values, norms and

expectations towards gender roles and leadership could produce different leadership preferences, behaviors and practices. In China, there is a more acceptance and adoption of cross-gender leadership styles in male and female leadership practices, which represents a gradual shift from the traditional masculine-feminine paradigm. Women leaders in China have encountered more gender-related challenges in this shifting process compared to male leaders. The fight for long-term rooted cultural preferences for male leaders and gender discrimination has not finished. More effort from major stakeholders including the government, school leaders, teachers, students and the public is needed to break the ceiling for women in the future.

Recommendation for Further Study of Women Leadership in China

In conclusion, these findings from current literature discussed and identified the leadership practice of women school leaders in Mainland China. This critical analysis could contribute to further understandings of the leadership practice of women school principals in the contemporary Chinese society. Meanwhile, this critical analysis provides some recommendations for further study in women leadership in China.

There are empirical studies focusing on the influence of particular Chinese cultures on women's leadership. At first, culture is a complex word that includes values, rituals, heroes and symbols. Here I analyze the idea of societal culture, organizational culture and then school culture. Organizational culture and school culture have been embedded in its societal or national culture. Cultures can frame and shape the formation, implementation and demonstration of the leadership, school leadership and then women leadership. For example, social network or *guanxi* largely determining women's career

success is frequently mentioned in the literature. However, there is a lack of rich data in this area, particularly on women leaders in China. Thus, some questions are proposed for further research studies: what is the impact of *guanxi* in Chinese women's leadership road? What kind cultural values have significant impact on women leaders in China? What is the perception of *guanxi* among Chinese women leaders? These questions could help us expand advanced insights into women's career experiences, and the advanced societal and cultural effects on women leadership.

Much research also focusses on the factors influencing women's career progress and pathways to higher roles in China. However, few studies analyze the outcomes of women leadership. This research topic will be valuable as it can clarify specific needs for more women leaders in China. Thus, the following questions are offered: "how do women leaders contribute to organizational outcomes in China? What kind of contributions do women leaders offer to organizations compared with male leaders in China? What are the motivations driving them to senior leadership roles? What are their aspirations, challenges and values? How could they change the women leadership statue in China?

According to the research studies on women leaders, researchers should understand and explain women leadership within dynamic contexts over different time periods, instead of understanding it as a static concept (Granrose, 2005). More emphasis on the intersection of gender and culture on women leadership will deepen the understanding of female leadership styles and practices in multiple contexts. It is essential to integrate the influence of gender and culture with other elements like the race, class, family background and personal experience in order to gain a richer understanding

of women leadership practice.

Female school leaders in Chinese societies present lots of similar characteristics to women leaders in Western society. However, using the Anglo-American framework cannot sufficiently explain the rich meaning of women school leaders in Chinese societies where the primary target is to establish harmonious school communities and friendlier relationships within schools. It is recommended that further study could be conducted about the use of the theoretical framework in other cultural contexts to further understanding of women educational leadership from a different cultural perspective.

Anyhow this critical analysis has attempted to study school leadership and women school leadership practices in China and answer three questions, like what kind factors influence women leadership, to what extent culture influences women leadership in China, and the relationship between gender and women leadership. This study is based on a review of literature and a critical analysis of women leadership, culture and gender are also theorized and discussed. Under the influence of globalization and national development, the global and the national culture of school leadership and women school leadership are studied respectively. Thus based on this work and certain reflections on the above mentioned questions, further study might be conducted to reach a deeper understanding of women school leadership in China.

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