UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE OF ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN

PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

by

JIA LIANG

(Under the Direction of April Peters-Hawkins)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to understand the leadership experiences of Asian American women administrators in public schools. Three research questions guided this study. First, as school administrators, how do Asian American women interpret and make sense of their professional experiences? Second, how do Asian American women view their roles and purposes as school administrators? Third, what are the challenges and issues that these women face as Asian American women in school leadership? Eleven Asian American female principals and assistant principals from two states were purposefully selected for this study. Qualitative case study methods were used, and data collection primarily relied on face-to-face interviews, informal observations, and reflective memos. The constant comparative method was used to make within-case and cross-case analysis.

Three major findings were generated from this study. First, the women to a large degree lacked of career positioning; however, with encouragement and mentorship, they were able to gain access and learn to maneuver the educational systems to assume their leadership roles. Second, the women viewed their roles as school administrators as managing the school and leading people in the school. Through those practical roles, the women believed that they were

on a lifetime mission to make a difference on their students' lives and to uplift the social groups embodied in their identities. And third, the women continued confronting racial and sex discrimination in their professional lives as well as their own uncertainties toward racialized sexism, gendered racism, and women's leadership. Implications for future research, practice, and policy are discussed in the light of the findings.

INDEX WORDS: Asian American Women School Administrator, Gender and Race-Ethnicity, Intersectionality, Women Leadership

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all women of color and all marginalized groups. You are fighters. In your unique way, you come to self-realization. In quest for equity, you make the world a better place for humanity.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The passages of Title IX of the Educational Amendments of Public Law 92-318 by Congress in 1972 and the Equal Educational Opportunity Act in 1974 became high points in removing gender discrimination and advocating for women's rights in education and the workplace (Randour, Strasburg, & Lipman-Blumen, 1982). From the late 1970s, researchers started casting their attention to women and people of color (Bass, 1981). "The lack of research on women and people of color was not perceived as problematic because gender and race were not considered differences of consequence" (Banks, 2007, p. 300; also see Bass, 1981). Several decades have witnessed the growing awareness of and sensitivity to issues affecting women. Leadership theory and practice are advancing, and the traditional leadership paradigm is being challenged. However, in the United States women remain disproportionately underrepresented in administrative positions such as the principalship in high schools and the superintendency of school districts (Adler, Laney, & Packer, 1993; Bell & Chase, 1993; Biklen, 1980; Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Glass, 1992, 2000; Gupton, 2009; Hansot & Tyack, 1981; Lovelady-Dawson, 1980; Saks, 1992; Shakeshaft, 1987; Wrushen & Sherman, 2008). Hackney (1998) pointed out that "policy makers have not adequately altered the organizational structures to incorporate the feminine leadership disposition; the hierarchy is continually reinforced, and the structures which keep women in lower level administrative and staff positions are preserved" (p. 2).

The United States continues to grow more ethnically diverse. Concerns are increasing regarding effectively leading U.S. schools with ethnically diverse student populations. Researchers believe that female and minority leaders play an important role in accomplishing schools' goals (Benham & Cooper, 1998; Cox, 1994; Marshall, 1993), and the nation calls for leaders who embody substantive depth and a global knowledge and viewpoint (Treverton & Bikson, 2003). Despite this, women and minorities continue to be underrepresented in educational leadership positions.

National data provide comprehensive information on principals and, to a lesser extent, superintendents. National-level information on other administrative positions (including assistant principals, assistant superintendents, district administrators, regional office staff, deans, and other central office staff such as business managers) is, however, not available (Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Chung, & Ross, 2003). Based on the Schools and Staffing Survey's (SASS) 2008 results, in 2007-2008, 50.3% of all public school principals were women, up from 44% in 1999-2000 and from 35% in 1993-1994. At 58.4%, women were well represented among charter school principals in 2007-2008, but men still make up a majority of the secondary school principals in both the public and private sectors. In 2007-2008, women made up 58.9% of public elementary school principals, but just 28.5% of public secondary school principals (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2008b).

Compared to changes in the gender composition of school principals, changes in the racial-ethnic mix have been limited. Moreover, national data by gender *and* race on school administrators are not available, leaving the representation of racial-ethnic minority *women* in school administration invisible. In 2007-2008, only 17.6% of principals were racial-ethnic minorities (that is, 5.9% Hispanic, 9.6% Black, and 2.1% for the rest of minority groups) (NCES,

2008a), down from 17.8% in 1999-2000 (Gates et al., 2003). This small portion is particularly troubling considering the fast increasing proportion of minorities in the student population. In 2007-2008, 42.2% of the student population were racial-ethnic minorities (with 20.4% Hispanic, 16% Black, 4.4% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1.4% American Indian/Alaska Native) (NCES, 2008c). Not knowing the proportion of Asian American females in school administration means that the society in general and the educational leadership scholarship in particular pay much less or no attention to Asian American women and they have limited representation in school leadership which could be a result of this structural negligence of the society.

Background of the Problem

Per a 1997 Office of Management and Budget directive, the Asian or Pacific Islander racial category in the U.S. Census was separated into two categories: one being Asian and the other Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The term "Asian" refers to people having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, such as Cambodia, China, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam (Barnes & Bennett, 2002).

The past four decades have witnessed a substantial increase in the Asian American population in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In the 2010 census, Asian Americans constituted 4.8% of the total United States population (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). Although Latinos are currently estimated to be the largest non-White group in the United States, Asian Americans experienced the fastest growth rate in the 1990s. The Asian alone population (referring to those who identified themselves with only one race – Asian) increased by 43% between 2000 and 2010, more than any other major race group, growing from 10.2 million to 14.7 million (Humes et al., 2011). Asian Americans are predicted to continue to be

the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States, driven by immigration (Gudykunst, 2001; Wu, 2002). Nevertheless, Asian Americans make up less than 1.7% of community college presidents and 1.6% of full-time administrators in higher education (Foote, 1996). The percentage of the nation's public school principals who were Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders in 1994 was 0.8% (ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, 2000). And the total percentage of Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders, American Indians/Alaska Natives, and multi-racial groups in 2008 was 2.1% (NCES, 2008a). In spite of the recent influx of Asians into the United States, they have been an invisible minority and have been understudied by social scientists (Fong, 1997). And because of their limited numbers, Asian American women administrators are seen as strangers in the educational systems (Hune, 1998; Pacis, 2005), and scholars have very little understanding of these women's leadership experiences in their professional roles.

Racial discrimination is still perceived as predominantly a Black-and-White issue in the United States (Carter, 2005; Kitano & Sue, 1973; Lee, 1996). Asian American women (and men) are rendered invisible in the research literature where they are tucked into the crack of non-concerns for they are an educationally successful "model minority," who have somehow overcome prejudice and discrimination, a claim most Asian Americans themselves dispute (Alvarez, Juang, & Liang, 2006; Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008). Embedded in the model minority stereotype is the implicit and explicit message that the failures of African American and other minorities is due to a lack of personal determination, motivation, and hard work and not due to the United States being a fundamentally racist society (Ngo & Lee, 2007; also see Osajima, 1987). The model minority stereotype "is used to silence and contain Asian Americans even as it silences other racial groups" (Ngo & Lee, 2007, p. 416). Fewer than 4% of Asians in

colleges select education as their major and even fewer have chosen educational administration as a field (Edson, 1987; Lee, 1993; Suzuki, 1989). The pattern feeds a myth that Asian Americans' absence in educational leadership discourse is voluntary and due to a low investment return as Asian Americans seek advanced degrees in fields such as engineering, computer science, and physical science and land themselves in "higher" managerial and professional occupations after graduation (Cho, 1997). Other researchers have suggested that the small number of Asian American administrators may point to weak or indifferent recruitment practices, lack of commitment to diversity, lack of training programs, the existence of institutional racism, location of institutions in predominantly white suburban and rural areas, and Asian Americans' lack of educational qualifications to become administrators (Foote, 1996; Matsuura, 1996; Sue, Mak, & Sue, 1998).

In addition to the sociocultural factors that contribute to the limited representation of Asian American women in educational leadership, conventional theory and methodology in educational leadership research also fall short on properly examining and interpreting the experience of women of color. Research on women and minorities is often problematic in treating gender and race-ethnicity as two discrete sets of experiences (Crenshaw, 1989). Studies on minorities frequently subsume gender under racial categories treating women and men alike and minimizing the distinct experiences of women of color (Cho, 1997). Similarly, gender research may neglect important racial-ethnic differences among women (Banks, 2007). These studies do not do women of color justice (Banks, 2007). The socially constructed categories of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality interact with each other, producing unique life experiences of interlocking systems of oppression *and* privilege, greater than the simple sum of each (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1995). Asian American women share issues faced by Asian

American men, but also confront difficulties encountered by other women of color, especially African American, Hispanic, and American Indian women. As women of color, they are double and triple outsiders in educational systems that remain culturally Eurocentric and androcentric and governed by middle class, and sometimes upper class, norms and values. Nevertheless, Asian American women deal with issues differently from other minority women because of the different cultures they received of their immigrant precursors. The most complete picture of the experiences of individuals requires not only an analysis of race and gender, but also ethnicity and other distinctions, such as class. However, the intersectionality literature concentrates mainly on Black women (Alston, 2005; Bass, 2009; Horsford, 2012; Irvine, 1978; Reed, 2012) and, to a less extent, on Latinas (Anzaldua, 1987; Hurtado, 1997); intersectionality research has not been conducted on the experiences of Asian American women in educational administration whether in higher education or K-12 settings.

Statement of the Problem

Asian American women negotiate a public education architecture not designed to prepare, to support, or to address their specific needs and positions. Public education's diverse demographics derive from a heterogeneous population with differentiated needs and demands for a responsive and reflexive system. Asian American women's uniqueness promotes diversity and deserves support for its leadership potential. Nevertheless, little is known of the complexities faced by Asian American women in K-12 education, especially with respect to the intersection of gender, race-ethnicity, and leadership. The absence of these women's stories supports the exotic/erotic image of Asian women accepted by U.S. popular culture (Marchetti, 1993; Tajima, 1989) and perpetuates a system that refuses to acknowledge genuine needs and legitimate

concerns of Asian American women and fails to provide access and equity to those who aspire to leadership.

Research Purpose

The overarching purpose of the study is to understand the leadership experiences of Asian American women administrators in public schools. The three subobjectives are (1) to explore the meanings Asian American women administrators have constructed from their leadership experiences; (2) to examine the intersection of gender, race-ethnicity, and leadership; and (3) to investigate the support and barriers Asian American women administrators have encountered in their leadership experiences.

Research Questions

Research questions in qualitative studies generally develop during and following data collection; themes or domains from the literature are used to guide the initial research process and "focus data collection" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 25). Recognizing that specific research questions may change as data are collected, I started with the following questions:

- As school administrators, how do Asian American women interpret and make sense of their professional experiences?

- How do Asian American women view their roles and purposes as school administrators given their race-ethnicity and gender?

- What are the challenges and issues that are unique for these women as Asian American women in educational leadership (particularly related to race-ethnicity and gender)?

During the research and as data were collected, it became clear to me that not all participants in my study considered the challenges and issues they had encountered as distinctive from those

experienced by other women school administrators or administrators in general, nor did all of them understand, vision, and report their roles as school administrators from a lenses of gender and race-ethnicity. As a result, my research questions were modified as follows:

- As school administrators, how do Asian American women interpret and make sense of their professional experiences?

- How do Asian American women view their roles and purposes as school administrators?

- What are the challenges and issues that these women face as Asian American women in school leadership?

Significance of the Study

This study has the potential to contribute to the established knowledge of women of color in leadership positions. Interviewing and observing Asian American female school administrators in K-12 systems may help us to understand more about how women of color learn and make sense of their experiences, about how they negotiate their racial-ethnic, gender, and professional roles within the educational systems, and about how they lead and navigate the landscape of school administration.

This study helps bridge the gap for understanding Asian American women. Limited literature is available on these women's leadership experiences in non-education settings. Even fewer has examined the professional experiences of Asian American school administrators, taking into consideration of the intersectionality of gender, race-ethnicity, and leadership. As women of color, Asian American women share issues faced by Asian American men and also confront challenges encountered by other women of color. The model minority stereotypes and other culturally related discrimination and injustice, intertwined with sexism present challenges

that are unique to Asian American women, compared to other minority women. By focusing on the "participants' perspectives" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998), this study adds the voices of 11 Asian American women administrators and underscore their significance in and of themselves.

Moreover, the literature notes the underrepresentation and inconsistent development of Asian American women leaders in public education. The findings from this study may inform policy and practice by providing information on genuine needs and legitimate concerns of Asian American women leaders, and it may suggest access and equity to those who aspire to leadership. University-based educational leadership preparation programs may benefit from the information as they reconsider their recruitment processes, curricula, and collaboration with school districts in attracting and preparing Asian American women for educational leadership roles. School district personnel may learn from the study to better develop, support, and sustain a healthy pipeline of Asian American women school leaders. Asian American women aspiring to become administrators may find the information helpful because it is important for them to understand the complexities of the path before them. Non-Asian Americans need to hear about the perseverance of Asian American women to help them understand the personal and cultural struggles of these women, given their intersected social identities.

Limitations

The study is limited by a number of factors. First, the study focuses on only the two dimensions of race and gender. Many other dimensions of individuals such as socioeconomic class, religion, age, sexual orientation, disabilities, and motherhood status may influence these female administrators and their leadership practice. The complexities and intricacies involved in these dimensions could provide additional information not addressed in this study.

The second limitation of the study comes from participant selection. The inclusion of diverse Asian ethnic women in the study, though addressing the heterogeneity of the category, limits specificity necessary to understanding individual subethnic groups such as Korean-American or Japanese-American women administrators. Also, the study excludes Asian female administrators at the school district level because of the significant differences between those positions and others at the building level for leadership focus, functions, and scope.

Researcher bias is a limitation to this study. Being a "relative insider" (Harry, Sturges, & Klingner, 2005) in the field of education and studying a topic in which I have considerable investments, my preconceived beliefs and perspectives may be brought to bear on the data. Nonetheless, I seek to use my reflexivity to bring preconceived beliefs into the dialogue rather than to omit or ignore them (See Appendix D). As an Asian female who studies and lives in the U.S. society, I share with these Asian American female school administrators similar experiences of being both a model minority and a stranger alienated in the educational systems. A shared racial identity between Asian American female participants and me, on one hand, may grant me relatively easy acceptance by these women administrators; on the other hand, it also has its disadvantages. The participants' assumptions of my institutional and cultural knowledge required me to take extra cautions on these tacit "agreements" and probe for explicit explanations from the participants throughout interviews.

Organization of the Dissertation

In Chapter 1, the introduction of the study is outlined. In addition, the background of the problem, statement of the problem, the research purpose, research questions, the significance of the study, limitations, and the definitions of the terms used in the study are introduced. Chapter 2 reviews the literature pertinent to the problem that has been investigated in this study. Chapter

3 describes the settings and the research methodology, including the instrumentation, selection of

participants, data collection methods, trustworthiness of the study, ethical considerations, and

data analysis. Chapter 4 contains individual profiles of Asian American female school

administrators. Chapter 5 presents the themes that emerged from the data across all the

participants. Chapter 6 concludes the study with a summary of the findings, recommendations

for future research, and implications for practice and policy.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

To provide a framework for this study, the literature review is divided into five major

parts. The first part introduces the history of women in educational administration in the United

States. The second part examines the relation between gender and educational leadership

through three important lenses, namely, gender stereotyping and discrimination, gender and

leadership styles, and leadership theory. These lenses explain the structural barriers preventing

women from gaining access to and advancing in leadership. The third part reviews the literature

on research on women of color in educational administration in the United States, introducing

the notion of intersectionality addressed in detail in the fourth part, and examining challenges

and strengths of women of color in educational administration. The literature of women of color

serves as a canvas upon which the lack of understanding of Asian American women in

educational leadership is problematized. The fourth part looks at intersectionality theory, the

guiding theory for this study, through a detailed discussion of its three key tenets, its

operationalization in research in general, and its application in educational leadership research on

women of color. The review of the theory and its application provides a foundation for

extending the theory to research on Asian American women. The last part[1] discusses Asian

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[1] I searched the electronically indexed literature published in English from 1972 to 2014. Using derivative search term combinations of "Asian American*", "Asian American women", "leadership*", and "educational administration" in either the title or abstract, a multi-search of over ninety GALILEO databases plus the GIL@UGA Libraries Catalog yielded 418 articles after removal of duplicates. After further examination of the titles and abstracts, I discovered only 92 articles to be relevant to our general topic of Asian American women in education profession. Of the remaining 326 articles, most reported results from educational and socio-psychological studies of Asian American students. I have cited 43 of 92 references generated from the original literature search. The 43

American women in educational administration by focusing on the term Asian American women, the model minority myth, and what this study can contribute to the limited knowledge on leadership experiences of these women using intersectionality theory.

History of Women in Educational Administration in the United States

Although teaching has always been identified in the 21st century as a female profession, teachers have not always been women. All teaching was done by men before the late 18th century. The feminization of teaching, according to Rury (1989), was largely due to the movement of men out of the profession. The urbanization and industrialization as well as the formalization of schooling in the 19th century made teaching a much less attractive career alternative for educated men who were finding expanding professional employment opportunities. In other words, women were sought when men were not available. Women were viewed as natural teachers where they use "their nurturing 'maternal' abilities in a natural extension from home to schoolroom and back again" (Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 26). From the beginning, female teachers were placed in positions inferior to male teachers, whether in pay or status (Shakeshaft, 1987). For instance, in high schools, males were called "Professor," and females were addressed as "Miss." Women were identified by their sex; whereas men were acknowledged for the roles they played (Shakeshaft, 1987).

As schooling became more complex and "bureaucratization was imposed upon schools, the functions of administrator and teacher became more distinct" (Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 30). By 1918, teaching and administration were two separate professions (Callahan, 1962). Bureaucratization, then, "helped keep women out of administrative roles because of the belief in

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references fell into these general categories: 14 articles describing racism toward Asian Americans; 10 articles describing Asian Americans' experiences in education professions; 15 articles describing the experiences of Asian American women, of which 8 articles focusing leadership (including higher education and K-12 contexts); and 4 articles centering on the experiences of one Asian ethnic group.

male dominance that made it easier for both males and females to view women as natural followers and men as their leaders" (Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 32). Women started to enter administrative positions in the early 19th century; nevertheless, male dominance has persisted to today except for the elementary principalship where it has been viewed as "the natural sphere for women" as the lower grades need the natural talents of females rather than males (Hansot & Tyack, 1981, p. 12). So how did women obtain access to administrative positions? How did their career trajectories differ compared to their male counterparts?

Career Trajectories

According to Shakeshaft (1987), the essential components of traditional definitions of career involve "upward movement through the hierarchy and commitment to career demonstrated by lack of interruptions" (p. 64). Biklen (1985) contended that these definitions are based on the experience of male administrators who do not have primary familial responsibility: they do not reflect the working lives of women in schools. These definitions suggest that only administrators have careers, but teachers have jobs (Shakeshaft, 1987). Court (1997) has noted that more women reject moving into educational administration as a consequence of what they view as its masculinism and hierarchical systems of control. Reconceptualization is needed where the definition of career embraces the experiences of both women and men (Biklen, 1985).

Unlike men who start their careers with less commitment to education and teaching, women begin their careers committed to education (Shakeshaft, 1987) and accumulate more academic degrees than do males (Glass, 1992); however, their career paths are interrupted when they have to take a leave from teaching to have and raise children. The three most common ways for women to enter school administration are "through specialist positions, supervisory

posts, and elementary principalships" (Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 67). Women administrators tend to stay in these positions, which offer little opportunity or likelihood for advancement. Women achieve their first formal administrative position much older in age than men, even those men with less administrative experience (Glass; 1992; Ortiz, 1982; Paddock, 1980). Often, women turn to administration at the encouragement of someone else (Ah Nee-Benham & Cooper, 1998; Alston, 1999; Glass, 1992; Shakeshaft, 1987).

The *glass ceiling* persists up to today where men still occupy the lion's share of high-level leadership positions like secondary school principalships and district superintendencies (Taylor, 1995). A glass ceiling is a political term initially used to describe "the unseen, yet unbreachable barrier that keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievement" (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995, p. 4). Nowadays, the use of the term pertains to women and minorities in the workplace, more than just corporations. Of the United State's almost 14,000 school district superintendents, roughly 15% (approximately 2,000) are women (Glass, 2000). And the distribution of women across school level is far from even, where secondary schools have the fewest number of women principals (Gupton, 2009). Minority women administrators are working in schools serving mainly students of color (Lovelady-Dawson, 1980). Nevertheless, for minority women "who achieve the secondary principalship, an assistant or associate superintendency, or the superintendency, the career paths are somewhat different [from those of other women] and more like those of males" (Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 67). Gupton and Slick (1996) also found that most women who made it to the top line position of superintendent had career paths similar to male administrators.

Given the fact that with all other things being equal, women continue to be disproportionally underrepresented in leadership, it is safe to note that gendered ideology and discourse play a critical role in the entry and advancement of women in educational leadership. Therefore, a review of gender-centered issues relevant to educational leadership is provided next.

Gender and Educational Leadership

Research has identified the broader social and cultural factors underpinning "the reproduction of gendered dominance as a set of power relations" within schools in Western societies (Blackmore, 1989, p. 114). These power dynamics have been shown to be hindering the careers and leadership opportunities of many women (Adler, Laney, & Packer, 1993; Shakeshaft, 1987). The ideology of patriarchy, *androcentrism*, elevates "the masculine to the level of the universal and the ideal and … [honors]… men and the male principle above women and the female principle" (Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 94; also see Adkison, 1981). These masculinist images of leadership (e.g., physical strength, ambitiousness, or aggressiveness) and administration associated with economic rationality and the ability to make difficult decisions (Ah Nee-Benham & Cooper, 1998; Blackmore, 1999; Coleman, 2003) become embedded in organizational tacit rules and norms that exclude many women (Blackmore, 1999). Women, especially strong women, who have attained leadership positions create "trouble" for educational organizations: they are considered as a source of "trouble" to the male-dominated standards of management by being different (Blackmore, 1999, 2002).

Gender stereotyping and discrimination are not limited to the field of educational leadership. Women in educational administration share similar experiences with those in many other professions, which I return to later in the chapter (Carli & Eagly, 2011; Helgesen, 1990).

In the following section, I discuss gender stereotyping and discrimination experienced by women in leadership, focusing on, but not limited to, educational administration.

Gender Stereotyping and Discrimination

Gender stereotypes create "incompatibility between the beliefs about what means to be a good leader and what it means to be a woman" (Carli & Eagly, 2011, p. 108). A good leader is expected to be an expert, be able to set vision and direction, accomplish tasks and jobs, be assertive, and solve problems, which are characteristics inconsistent with prescribed gender roles of women being affectionate, nurturing, helpful, supportive, and sympathetic (Carli & Eagly, 2001). For women in leadership positions, gender stereotypes create a rupture in their identities of being a leader, and they feel overwhelmed, self-doubtful, and hopeless (Regan & Brooks, 1995). The negative stereotypes view women as emotionally unstable, fiscally irresponsible, and indecisive and therefore unable to exercise leadership (Schmuck, 1976). On the other hand, important attributes associated with most leadership roles (educational administration included) such as persistence, drive, personal dedication, aggressiveness, and emotional detachment are often considered to be masculine (Estler, 1975). Gender stereotypes create a double bind wherein women leaders may be criticized for not being agentic enough or lacking communion when they are highly agentic (Carli & Eagly, 2011). Also, as result of the double bind, women leaders' competence is questioned, and they face a double standard discriminative against them in evaluation (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). Women leaders "have to prove by their performance that they do belong … to prove success, and on a continuing basis" (Hennig & Jardim, 1977, p. 18). Additionally, women leaders encounter resistance from both men and women. Nevertheless, men are more critical of women's leadership (Eagly et al., 1992); they are

more resistant to hiring a female applicant (Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005) and working with a competent female leader (Carli & Eagly, 2011).

Even when women attain high-status positions, these positions typically bestow less authority than those of men when controlling for job status, education, and experience (Smith, 2002). Women have "less access to visible developmental assignments with high-level responsibilities – the types of assignments that are likely to lead to greater authority and future advancement" (Carli & Eagly, 2011, p. 104). More often than men, women receive assignments that are especially risky or precarious and make them more likely to fail, a phenomenon known as the *glass cliff* (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). According to Mertz and McNeely (1994), women often take administrative positions in large urban school districts that serve increasingly larger numbers of poor and minority students (NCES, 1991): where "the female employee succeeds, the system can take credit for making a good appointment; [and if] she fails, 'women cannot handle it,' … the system is not at fault" (Mertz & McNeely, 1994, p. 369). The gender stereotypes ascribe the success of a few women administrators to their uniqueness and are perpetuated when others fail. And there are times when women leaders are considered too controversial for promotion even after they have successfully turned the schools around and made improvements (Hill & Ragland, 1995).

Women leaders still receive less pay for the same work than their male counterparts (Osborne & Yarbrough, 2001). Lacking organizational support, women school leaders experience stress and feel isolated (Ortiz & Marshall, 1988; Valverde, 1980). Women are afraid to seek mentorship from other women because of the various myths about woman-to-woman relationships such as the *Queen Bee,* women who stake out their territory and become defensive

and protective if any other women come close, and other women-can't-work-with-women stereotypes (Duff, 1999; Shakeshaft, 1994).

If gender is the center that defines and influences female leadership, as many scholars have believed (e.g., Blackmore, 1999; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Young; 2003; Young & McLeod, 2001), then the question arises, do women lead differently? The possibility that women and men differ in their leadership styles is important because leadership style is a major determinant of an individual's effectiveness and chance for advancement (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). A review of existing literature on the issue of gender and leadership styles is provided next.

Gender and Leadership Styles

Research found that female leaders tend to adopt a democratic, participative leadership style, whereas their male counterparts tend to use an autocratic, directive leadership style (Adler et al., 1993; Eagly, Karau, & Johnson, 1992; Oplatka & Atias, 2007). Female leaders emphasize relational leadership and have a strong commitment to inclusiveness, interdependence, collaboration, fairness, and caring (Davenport, 2007; Fennell, 1999a; Hall, 1996; Helgesen, 1990; Regan & Brooks, 1995). Also, female leaders appear to be less influenced by hierarchy in their thinking and integrate different roles more fully (Davenport, 2007; Helgesen, 1990). Moreover, female leaders prefer to use power in facilitative ways, *power through* and *power with* (Blasé & Anderson, 1995) whereas their male counterparts prefer to use *power over* others and hierarchical control (Oplatka & Atias, 2007). Power over "reflects a linear causality in which actions done by one individual cause repercussions for others" (Fennell, 1999b, p. 25). Power-through models involve empowerment and sharing ownership, and power-with models focus on relationship development (Blasé & Anderson, 1995; Hurty, 1995). Some studies found that women leaders are reluctant to resort to legitimate powers as ways of leading their schools

(Brunner, 2000; Fennell, 1999b). Wrushen and Sherman (2008) contended that negative associations with power "is another traditional way of thinking that inhibits women in leadership positions from owning their power and using it to enhance the structure and operation of schools" (p. 465).

Disagreements exist about whether or not gender determines leadership style. Scholars for this argument rely on the idea of socialization. Life experiences lead women to favor nurturing and human relations (e.g., Ferguson, 1984). Scholars against this argument identify stereotyping as the cause. Scholars in this camp contend that organizational demographics such as tenure in the job and experiences of senior management responsibilities, as well as socialization in workplace, are the determinants (Hansot & Tyack, 1981; Carli & Eagly, 2011). Organizational socialization here, what Epstein (1991) referred to as social control, makes women's choice of leadership style a passive and forced accommodation to the working environment, differentiating it from the socialization delineated by scholars in the opponent camp as women's habitual and natural tendency for certain leadership styles that they bring into the workplace.

In contrast to the aforementioned studies, some researchers have found that women leaders display the same leadership style as men (Mertz & McNeely, 1998; Oplatka, 2001; Reay & Ball, 2000). Chapman (1975) noted that male and female leaders may display different leadership behaviors but not styles. Mertz and McNeely (1998) indicated that the male/female dichotomy is too simplistic and research on the issue of leadership requires a multidimensional approach that examines context, ethnicity, and other factors. Ascribing relational-oriented leadership styles predominantly to women perpetuates the binary opposition of masculine/feminine (styles of leadership) and places women at a disadvantage (Grogan, 1996) as

unorthodox (Coleman, 2003) and less acceptable with their alternative leadership styles (Wrushen & Sherman, 2008). Oplatka and Atias (2007) also pointed out that a starkly distinctive leadership style difference is "less likely to exist, but rather both sexes attach different meanings to the same leadership style" (p. 44). And leadership styles do change over time (Oplatka, 2001), and the differences among them are more a matter of degree (Reay & Ball, 2000).

Additionally, scholars with a more situational perspective toward leadership claim that a good leader uses both feminine and masculine styles of leadership contingent on the contexts regardless of the gender of the leader (Epstein, 1991; Pounder & Coleman, 2002). A feminine style of leadership, or the feminist attributes of leadership as Regan and Brooks (1995) called it, is comprised of caring, cooperation, collegiality, courage, awareness of individual differences, noncompetitiveness, tolerance, subjectivity, and informality whereas a masculine style of leadership means an emphasis on objectivity, logic, clarity, detachment, consequences of action, and being firm and direct (Gary, 1993, Oplatka & Atias, 2007). The integration of the male-based and female-based knowledge and practice of leadership into an integral whole, "the double helix," creates a "different and more effective [approach] than either conceptualization of leadership alone" (Regan & Brooks, 1995, p. 22).

To conclude this section, I agree with Shakeshaft (1987) where she cautioned researchers that, rather than make the case that women are better suited for school administration than are men, differences found between the sexes should be used to offer some evidence and in turn acknowledge the existence of a female organizational culture that may bode well for school improvement. She went on, noting that "Gender and sex differences in leadership style are far from understood, and need more examination" (Shakeshaft, 1994, p. 358). Questions need to be answered about female leadership styles in relation to female socialization, to organizational

culture, to the nature of the job (line, staff, and type of job) of the female administrator, to her time in position, to her age and the age of those whom she supervises, to the sex of the employees supervised, and to her place in the organizational hierarchy (Shakeshaft, 1994).

The arguments around gender and leadership style, in essence, come down to the question of what is leadership. The answer to the question is critical to understanding why certain behaviors and styles (in this case, those associated with masculinity) are deemed as appropriate for leadership roles but not others. Thus, leadership theory is explored as follows.

Leadership Theory

Traditional beliefs about leadership are based on "techniques and expertise, and decision making based on empirical evidence" (Grogan, 1996, p. 168), and thus traditional views of the qualities of effective leaders include "command, control, and task-oriented" (Erkut, 2001, p. 37). Moreover, today's leadership theories and models were primarily developed by observations of white males working in leadership positions (Buenaventura, 1997; Chin, 2007; Marshall, 1999; Murtadha & Larson, 2004). As a result of white male dominance in leadership theory, the behaviors and values of women generally and women of color specifically are missing in leadership theory and research, leaving "behaviors, background, appearance, language, and values that were different or atypical… simply dismissed as nonleadershiplike, deviant or deficient" (Marshall, 1999, p. 272). Administrators whose practices vary from the traditional models have been judged as incompetent (Marshall, 1999).

Nevertheless, on the positive side, recent development of leadership theory has recognized the value of leadership behaviors and strategies that appreciate collegial approaches and collaboration commonly associated with femininity (admittedly, the term itself is questionable, but for lack of an appropriate term I use it for now). For instance, women leaders'

aptitude for listening entails qualities of intensity, thoughtfulness, and attentiveness "[bridging] the apparent dichotomy between a bottom-line focus and a concern for people, between ends and means, between efficient and humane" (Helgesen, 1990, p. 246).

Theories of servant leadership, transformational leadership, moral leadership, and collaborative leadership reflect a new leadership paradigm that values change and connection (Shakeshaft, 1987). In contrast to the traditional top-down or self-seeking leadership approach, the servant leadership approach involves emotional intelligence and is value-based (Joseph & Winston, 2005). The servant-leader is "servant first . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 27). In an educational administration system, the overall objective of servant leadership is for people served (i.e., teachers and/or students) to grow as individuals, becoming "healthier, wiser, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants" (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 27). The ten characteristics of a servant leader are listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth or people, and building community (Reinke, 2004). Furthermore, servant leadership "incorporates the ideals of empowerment, total quality, team building, and participatory management" (Page & Wong, 2000, p. 69). Scholars found women tend to value and apply the principles of servant leadership more than men (Alston, 2005; Fridell, Belcher, & Messner, 2009).

Collaborative leadership "encompasses moral purposes…. [and] is a relational experience that is defined in practice by those involved as they interrelate with one another and the context in which they operate" (Kochan & Reed, 2005, p. 72). Currently, there is no consensus on the definition of collaboration leadership (Johnson, 1997), and it overlaps with distributed (Wallace, 1988) and democratic (Rusch, 1998) leadership concepts. Nevertheless, "[t]he ultimate goal of

collaborative leadership is to create [a] democratic learning community in which power is shared and there is a mutual belief in working together for the common good" (Kochan & Reed, 2005, p. 72). Women leaders' emphases on fairness, empowerment, caring, power sharing, and school community accord with collaborative leadership style (e.g., Coleman, 2000; Regan & Brooks, 1995).

Transformational leadership is "the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower" (Northouse, 2007, p. 176; also see Burns, 1978), and it involves four dimensions, that is, charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Transactional leadership refers to "the bulk of leadership models, which focus on the exchanges that occur between leaders and their followers" (Northouse, 2007, p. 176). In contrast to transactional leaders' reliance on contingent reward and management-by-exception, transformational leaders mentor and empower followers by encouraging them to reach their fullest potential (Carli & Eagly, 2011), and together the organization is brought to a higher level. Transformational leaders focus on the collective good (Howell & Avolio, 1993) and are future oriented (Bass, 1998). Women leaders are likely to be identified as transformational leaders (Acker, 1990; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; also see Kark, 2004). The transformational leadership style includes qualities that demonstrate a concern for the welfare of others, such as affection, helpfulness, kindness, sympathy, interpersonal sensitivity, nurturing, and gentle characteristics, which are usually associated with women (de Cascal & Mulligan, 2004; also see Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003). Studies found that women school leaders often are morality centered (Lumby & Coleman, 2007), genuinely care about their staff, assist them to do their best, and inspire allegiance both to themselves and the school philosophy (Acker, 1990);

they play critical roles in empowering teachers and building and sustaining leadership capacity in schools (Jason, 2000) and strive for creating a culture that values interdependence and connections (Acker, 1990).

In opposition to the modernist paradigm and the resulting scientific management perspective on school leadership, moral leadership is a way to situate school leadership in a broader social context (Dantley, 2005b). "It not only is conscious of issues of race, class, and gender, but also perceives the work of schools as sites committed to social justice and more genuine demonstrations of democracy in our society" (Dantley, 2005b, p. 35). Likewise, social justice scholarship in educational leadership shares emphasis on "moral values, justice, respect, care, and equity; [and] … in the forefront … a consciousness about the impact of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and disability on schools and students' learning" (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005, p. 203; also see Dantley & Tillman, 2005). In educational administration, social justice perspectives are influenced by multicultural leadership, feminist leadership, and critical African American and Latino leadership traditions (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005). School leaders in this regard emphasize both the technical and moral dimensions (Sergiovanni, 1999) often demonstrated by women, especially women leaders of color (Brooks & Jean-Marie, 2007; Vitton & Wasonga, 2009) as they lead their schools as a community where the process of "reciprocal influence [between leaders and follower] is guided by shared purposes and involves accepting roles that are connected to moral obligations" (Sergiovanni, 1998, p. 41) – the "I know what is good to do" view (Sergiovanni, 1998, p. 41).

In summary, the traditional conceptualization of leadership emphasizes scientific management and masculine behaviors (Coleman, 2003; Dillard, 1995). Without problematizing the concept of leadership itself and the gender division of labor, the discourse of female

educational leadership itself is a form of trouble because of the word *female*, implying that "it takes an extraordinary woman to do what an ordinary man does" (Blackmore, 2002, p. 56). The omission of people of color, particularly women of color, along with an inadequate analysis of the contexts in which various forms of leadership have worked, limits our ability to develop ways to improve educational opportunity for the marginalized (Murtadha & Watts, 2005).

Women of Color in Educational Administration in the United States

The underrepresentation of women of color[2] in teaching and administration can be traced back to a history intertwined with social, economic, and political discrimination against women and people of color (Edson, 1987; Shakeshaft, 1987; Wrushen & Sherman, 2008). Seldom did demographics on personnel prior to the 1970s report the number of minority workers in schools (Rury, 1989; Shakeshaft, 1987). The available historical account of women in administration "either details the experiences of white women only or obfuscates the lives of women of color by subsuming them within [demographic] statistics and reports of women in general" (Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 21). Black is the only group noted whenever minority participation in the school work force has been historically recorded (Rury, 1989; Shakeshaft, 1987).

Consistent with the scarcity of historical accounts of women of color in educational administration in the United States, other kinds of research on women of color in educational leadership are limited. Available research on women of color in educational leadership and administration is predominantly on African American women[3]. Data on Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos are "limited to a small number of broad-based surveys of school administrators" (Banks, 2007, p. 319) that have no information on the characteristics of these minority administrators (Lovelady-Dawson, 1980). In the past few years, research on Hispanic

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[2] Women of color and minority women are used interchangeably in this dissertation.
[3] African American women and Black women are used interchangeably in this dissertation.

women has begun to burgeon (Ohde, 1991; Santiago, 2008). Nevertheless, studies specific to

Asian American and Native American female school leaders are virtually nonexistent except for

a limited number of dissertations (Fong, 1984; Lee, 1998; Pacis, 2005). More importantly,

research on women of color often focuses on either gender or race and does not do women of

color justice (Banks, 2007). The intersected experiences of women of color given their gender,

race, ethnicity, class, and other social categories should be taken into consideration when

examining women's leadership experiences in educational administration.

Gender, Race and More: The Intersected World

According to Bloom and Erlandson (2003), incorporating studies of women of color into

larger studies of women is problematic because it is asking questions from a White women's

view without incorporating race and class issues into the conceptual framework. It perpetuates

"the practice of intellectual and cultural exclusion by creating the appearance of acceptance in

women's studies using an ethnic additive model" (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003, p. 344) and fails to

acknowledge that White women retain White privilege whereas women of color do not hold a

color privilege, thereby making women of color's experiences similar to women in general in

some ways but deviant from the White female experiences (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; hooks,

1984). Treating women as a collective group reflects "the dominant tendency of Western

patriarchal minds to mystify women's reality by insisting that gender is the sole determinant of

woman's fate" (hooks, 1984, p. 14). Including gender under racial categories in studies on

minorities diminishes the distinct experiences of minority women by treating men and women

similarly (Hune, 1998).

Sexism as a system of domination is institutionalized. Women of color, like White

women, suffer sexism; nevertheless, sexism "has never determined in an absolute way the fate of

all women in this society, [the United States]" (hooks, 1984, p. 5). The "common oppression" denies the truth of women's varied and complex social reality (hooks, 1984). Women of color are situated in a complex matrix of domination based on race, gender, class, politics, and economics (Collins, 2000). The lived experiences of minority women have shaped their consciousness and worldviews distinct "from those who have a degree of privilege (however relative within the existing system)" (hooks, 1984, p. 15). Crenshaw (1989) contended that for Black women the intersectionality experience is more than the sum of race and sex and any observations that do not take intersectionality into consideration cannot accurately demonstrate how Black women are subordinate. The collective treatment of women in educational leadership research denies racial, cultural, and political differences of those within the social category "women" when the category itself is socially constructed, shifting in nature, and changing over time (Blackmore, 2002).

I return to intersectionality, the guiding theory for my study, in a separate section later. Now, in the following section, I review challenges and experiences of women of color in educational administration. Women of color share similar leadership experiences with White women related to sexism; nevertheless, I have no intention of assuming sexism can be separated from other –isms (racism, classism, etc.), and I do not consider that women of color suffer sexism in a way similar to White women. Nonetheless, for the purpose of this review, I discuss separately challenges and strengths shared by all women (White women and women of color) and those distinctive to women of color in educational administration.

Succeeding in a White Man's World: Challenges and Strengths of Women of Color in Educational Administration

Women in educational administration continue to face challenges that arose in the context of an androcentric society discriminative based on gender (Blackmore, 2002): lacking career positioning (Hill & Ragland, 1995); lacking support within and outside family (Conrad & Conrad, 2007); facing conflict between home and career (Anderson, 1991; Eckman, 2004; Noel-Batiste, 2009; Smulyan, 2000; Wrushen & Sherman, 2008); struggling with limited geographic mobility (Anderson, 1991; Noel-Batiste, 2009; Ryder, 1994); facing financial constraint (Shakeshaft, 1987); struggling with stereotyped gender roles (Adkison, 1981, Biklen, 1980; Mertz & McNeely, 1998; Noel-Batiste, 2009); lacking role models, mentors, and sponsors (Crow & Matthews, 1998; Grogan, 1996; Ryder, 1994); struggling with the "good ol' boy" system (Hudson, 1994); and experiencing tokenism (Court, 1997; Shakeshaft, 1987).

Nevertheless, women administrators have demonstrated great strength in their leadership roles and have been committed to making a difference in the world (Helgesen, 1990). As leaders, they value the dignity and worth of each individual, and this ethic propels them into actions on behalf of others and making changes in schools where they work, rather than letting the bureaucratic organizations define them (Regan & Brooks, 1995). As leaders, their commitment to nurturing growth and learning in working with others, listening and sharing different views, keeping others' interest and needs in mind in planning and decision making, and involving others in preparing and implementing changes creates loyalty where teachers feel they are trusted and their ideas are valued, it increases support for decisions, and it fosters caring and productive communities of learners in schools (Fennell, 1999a; Hurty, 1995; see Armendariz-Hausen, 1995; Duran, 1982; Fong, 1984; Lee, 1993; Lindsay, 1997; Regan & Brooks, 1995; Smith, 1993;

Snearl, 1995; Spence, 1990, for similar findings on their African American, Latino, and Asian American women administrator participants).

Women leaders have learned from their personal and professional lives that they "have had to take risks, confront the possibility of failure, of not fitting the mold, of enduring the many problems of being female in a male-based environment" (Regan & Brooks, 1995, p. 30). Moreover, women leaders' capacity for integrating the public and private aspects of their lives enables them to be "well-integrated individuals with strong psychological and spiritual resources" (Helgesen, 1990, p. 33), which gives them an advantage over male leaders who do not have this demanding imperative and are "more subject to the [sic] human and intellectual alienation" (Helgesen, 1990, p. 33). Additionally, women leaders have an intuitive sense of self (Regan & Brooks, 1995). These reliable intuitions enable women leaders to move on to places that are compatible with their own firmly held beliefs and expand their influence into a larger sphere (Regan & Brooks, 1995).

Minority women educational leaders live on the margins (hooks, 1984), face "double jeopardy" (Graves, 1990), or "double whammy" (Andrews, 1993) because of their gender and race as they are hierarchically "dominated in the main by white men" (Fitzgerald, 2003, p. 434) and numerically dominated by white women. Being the outsider-within (Collins, 2000), minority female administrators confront racism and sexism from their White and their own racial-ethnic constituents, as well as complex and intersecting racialized and gendered role expectations above and beyond those expected of other administrators (Mendez-Morse, 2004; Reyes & Halcon, 1988; Rusch, 2004). Minority women (and men) confront bicultural divides between the dominant culture and their respective racial-ethnic subcultures in school administration (Ortiz, 1982). Minority women's administrative career advancement

opportunities are limited to school districts with large, minority student populations (Edson, 1987; Lovelady-Dawson, 1980; Ortiz, 1982; Sizemore, 1986; Tallerico, Poole, & Burstyn, 1994). Hispanic women face even more rigid and traditional sex-role norms and expectations than African American women (Christman & McCellan, 2008). Additionally, Hispanic women (and men) are often typecast into administrative positions of symbolic or practical significance to the minority community, such as director of bilingual education programs (Reyes & Halcon, 1988; Valverde & Brown, 1988).

Minority women's experiences with family, culture, and spiritual backgrounds influence who they are as leaders (Alston, 2005; Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Dantley, 2005a; Jackson, 1999) and prepare them for leadership early (Jackson, 1999). They rise to leadership committed to the minority communities (Lomotey, 1993; Reed & Evan, 2008; Tillman, 2004). Studies found that African American women principals consistently displayed genuine concern for their students' well-being and trusted their students' abilities to learn (Dillard, 1995; Mertz & McNeely, 1998; Reitzug & Patterson, 1998); they also showed increased sensitivity toward their students and the community's social concerns (Mertz & McNeely, 1998). The "othermothering" – the treating "biologically unrelated children as if they were members of their own families" (Mertz & McNeely, 1998, p. 220; also see Dillard, 1995; Reitzug & Patterson, 1998) stems from the concept of nurturing and protecting African American children rooted in a history of communal responsibility for these children (Dillard, 1995; Lindsay, 1997; Scott, 1991, Stewart & Jones, 1993). African American women principals perceive caring for children not as a choice, but as a lifelong responsibility (Mertz & McNeely, 1998; Scott, 1991). In contrast to White women administrators' reliance on spousal support, African American women administrators rely on extended women kinship ties for childcare and household support (Loder, 2005).

In conclusion, women and women of color in educational administration are confronted with complex racial and gender issues that they have to maneuver through while assuming their leadership roles. This is a direct result of mainstream views that are strongly influenced by perceptions, stereotypes, and cultural values. As many scholars have argued, women of color are situated in a matrix of domination based on race, gender, class, politics, and economics; therefore, incorporating studies of women of color into large studies of women or large studies on minorities fail to capture the complexifying experiences the minority women leaders have as a result of the interconnected and constructed social identities (e.g., Banks, 2007; Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Collins, 2000; hooks, 1984). The complexity of minority women's experiences in leadership requires complex theories. Recent development on intersectionality was an attempt to address the inadequacy of gender or minority research on women of color (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989).

The introduction and application of the theory of intersectionality in educational leadership has been developed for the experiences of Black women, examining the intersection of gender and race and their influence on leadership (e.g., Alston, 2005; Bass, 2009; Irvine, 1978; Reed, 2012; Reed & Evans, 2008). A significantly smaller amount of scholarship has incorporated the experience of Latinas into intersectional analysis (e.g., Anzaldúa, 1987; Hurtado, 1997). However, little has been done to include other social categories such as ethnicity into analysis to understand Asian American women's leadership experiences. Before I give a comprehensive review of intersectionality studies on women of color in educational leadership, I discuss the intersectionality theory first in the following section.

Guiding Theory – Intersectionality

In this study, I examine the leadership experiences of Asian American female administrators through the lens of intersectionality. Grounded in Black and multiracial feminist thought, the intersectionality perspective posits that race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, and species are socially constructed categories that interact with each other to produce unique life experiences corresponding with individuals' locations within interlocking "vectors of oppression and privilege" (Ritzer, 2007, p. 204; also see Collins, 1986, 2000; hooks; 1984). The intersectionality perspective conceptualizes sexism, racism, and other forms of prejudice as interrelated systems that create "multiple barriers" to power (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991, 1995; Glenn, 1999; McCall, 2005; Weber, 2001). In other words, intersectionality asserts that discrimination and disadvantages are not just additive and that categories may intersect to produce unique forms of disadvantages (Best, Edelman, Krieger, & Eliason, 2011).

The concept of intersectionality developed among sociological circles in the late 1960s and early 1970s in conjunction with the multiracial feminist movement (Ritzer, 2007). The movement, led by women of color, took the position that most feminist scholarship at that time excluded the perspectives of feminists of color and failed to acknowledge and understand how gender inequality intersected with racism, classism, heterosexism, and other forms of discrimination and oppression in ways not experienced by White women (Dill, 1983; hooks, 1984; Shields, 2008). The term "intersectionality" was first coined by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) in the article, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*, where she argued that Black women are excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because "both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately

reflect the interaction of race and gender" (p. 140). Patricia Hill Collins, another sociologist, is also credited for the conceptualization of intersectionality. In 1990, Collins published the book, "Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment," where she reconceptualized the paradigms of race, class, and gender for Black women as *the matrix of domination* or *interlocking systems of oppression*. The notion of matrix calls for "an understanding of not only singular systems of oppression, *but* how they interconnect or intersect" (Horsford, 2012, p. 17).

Key Tenets of Intersectionality

Intersectionality theory is grounded in three tenets. First, social identities (or categories) are interactive and fluid. Collins (2000) noted that "systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization" (p. 299). Intersectionality highlights questions like how race is gendered and how gender is racialized (Davis, 2008). Via the illustration of how immigrant status and language intersect with gender, race, and class to affect minority immigrant women's experiences of domestic violence, Crenshaw (1991) argued that intersectional subordination is "frequently the consequences of the imposition of one burden that interacts with preexisting vulnerabilities to create yet another dimension of disempowerment" (p. 1249). Moreover, intersectionality challenges prioritizing one form of oppression as being primary while treating remaining types of oppression as variables within what is seen as the most important system (Collins, 1986, 2000). In addition, scholars influenced by postmodern and poststructuralist perspectives acknowledge the niche of intersectionality for deconstructing normalized and static categories as it emphasizes that group membership is relational, constructed in connection to others (Staunces, 2003).

The second tenet speaks to commonality and within-group diversity, or intra-category diversity (Hancock, 2007). Commonality is grounded in the common experiences such as institutionalized discrimination and legalized marginalization shared by social groups of individuals who have the same identity such as race, gender, and class (Collins, 1998; Fineman & Mykitiuk, 1994). Commonality can be the powerhouse for collective politics as in the women's suffrage movement and the civil rights movement (Cole, 2009). Nevertheless, no social group is homogeneous (Mahalingam, Balan, & Haritatos, 2008). Within a social group, each member represents a matrix of interactive social identities, or social markers (Jaramillo, 2010; Zinn & Dill, 1996), for which each has a continuum from the individualistic to the collectivistic (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Reid, 2004) and is situated in various social locations (Hancock, 2007). Intersectionality addresses "the issues of differences among women" (Davis, 2008, p. 70) because gender stratification is not the only force affecting women nor does it affect all women in the same way (Collins, 1986, 2000). Intersectionality rejects dichotomous oppositional difference (Collins, 1986), or dualistic thinking (hooks, 1984), such as Black/White or male/female, and challenges prioritizing one form of oppression over others while treating remaining types of oppression as variables within what is seen as the most important system (Collins, 1986, 2000). The appreciation of within-group diversity does not mean elevating individualism above group analysis. Collins (1998) argued that "the fluidity that accompanies intersectionality does not mean that groups themselves disappear, to be replaced by an accumulation of decontextualized, unique individuals whose personal complexity makes group based identities and politics that emerge from group construction impossible"(p. 205). Embedded in the varied power relations are the social structures that reproduce long-standing group inequalities (Collins, 1998). Yet, empirically, scholars acknowledge the

multidimensionality of collective identity is challenging to accomplish because of the operationalization of intersectionality where researchers choose to focus on certain categories such as race and gender for practical or analytical reasons (Jaramillo, 2010; Reid & Comas-Diaz, 1990).

The third tenet is the notion of agency in context where intersectionality theory recognizes that individuals with multiple subordinate-group identities are not passive victims lacking control of their fate; rather, they are social agents whose actions and interactions are both generative of (and constrained by) social structures (Giddens & Turner, 1987). The tenet reflects the tension and dialogue between commonality and intragroup diversity as it highlights "the situated response to multiple, shifting identities interacting in particular cultural contexts and power structures" (Ospina & Foldy, 2009, p. 891). The lived experience is a form of knowing (Collins, 1990), one that Smith (1987) called an insider's sociology, through which Black women have developed a way of thinking and being that opposes oppression (Collins, 1986). As individuals who are outsiders-within (Collins, 1986) situated on the margin (hooks, 1984), subjugated groups have developed "bifurcated consciousness" (Mann & Kelley, 1997) about the contradictions they have encountered and an understanding of both the margin and the center and "both from the outside in and from the inside out" (hooks, 1984, p. ix). The situated knowledge "provide[s] angles of vision for critical insights into relations and processes of oppression" (Mann & Kelley, 1997, p. 395).

Figure 1. Three Tenets of Intersectionality

Intersectionality Analysis in Research

How intersection is conceptually operationalized by researchers varies (Carter, Sellers, & Squires, 2002; Davis, 2008). One classification, according to Purde-Vaughns and Eibach (2008), involves the additive and integrative models. The additive model assumes an individual with two more intersecting identities experiences the distinctive forms of oppression associated with each of his or her subordinate identities summed together (Almquist, 1975; Epstein, 1973). That is, the more marginalized statuses that an individual is identified with, the more cumulative the oppression (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). The additive model is under serious attack as many scholars contend that the social identities are inextricably interconnected therefore neither one form of oppression can be subtracted from nor, for that matter, added to the others (Razack, 1998; Hancock, 2007). Moreover, social identities are fluid and inseparable from the social and political context (Collins, 2000). The danger of the additive model lies in its assumption that the various types of oppression that people experience are commensurable for aggregation (Purdie-

Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Alternatively, an integrative model considers that each of a person's subordinate identities interacts holistically, meaning that people experience these identities as one (Crenshaw, 1991, 1995; Reid & Comas-Diaz, 1990; Settles, 2006; Smith & Steward, 1983).

Another more comprehensive and relevant, to this study, classification comes from McCall's (2005) taxonomy of anticategorical, intercategorical, and intracategorical approaches. The anticategorical approach is based on the deconstruction of categorical divisions. It considers categorization, in itself, as artificial and creating inequality. The deconstruction of master categories is "part and parcel of the deconstruction of inequality itself" (McCall, 2005, p. 1777). The writings of feminist postmodernists and poststructuralists are more oriented toward this approach (Hancock, 2007). The intercategorical approach, also known as the categorical approach, "begins with the observation that there are relationships of inequality among already constituted social groups, as imperfect and ever changing as they are, and takes those relationships as the center for analysis" (McCall, 2005, p. 1784). Scholars within this camp, such as multiculturalists and proponents of identity politics, provisionally adopt existing analytical categories while focusing on "the complexity of relationships among multiple social groups within and across analytical categories and not on complexities within single social groups, single categories, or both" (McCall, 2005, p. 1786). The intracategorical approach recognizes the apparent shortcomings of existing social categories and it "interrogates the boundary-making and boundary-defining process itself" (McCall, 2005, p. 1773). Yet, this approach does not completely reject social categories as does the anticategorical approach; rather it "acknowledges the stable and even durable relationships that social categories represent at any given point in time" (McCall, 2005, p. 1774). Scholars working under this approach tend to focus on people whose identity crosses the boundaries of constructed categories, in an effort to

understand the complexity and intersectionality of lived experiences of these groups (McCall, 2005). The main difference between the intercategorical and the intracategorical approaches is that the former views group boundaries uncritically while the latter seeks to complicate and use them in a more critical way. McCall (2005) considers herself and feminists of color mostly working under this tenet.

The variation of the application of intersectionality in research reflects the theoretical and methodological divergence between the two strands within feminist scholarship: postmodern-poststructuralist theory and structural theories of race, class and gender (Davis, 2008). Postmodern feminists are critical of the essentialism of gender and more concerned with finding ways to abandon categorical thinking altogether (McCall, 2005), whereas theorists of race, class, and gender are wary of the political relativism pervasive in poststructuralist thinking (Davis, 2008) where it is detached from the material realities of women's lives and too relativistic to be of use for women's concrete political struggles against oppression (Krane, Oxman-Martinez, & Ducey, 2000). Crenshaw (1995) argued that the idea of the social construction of a category such as gender or race does not deny its significance in society. On the contrary, subordinated groups need to think about how power has clustered around certain categories and is exercised against others to recognize that identity groups are "at least potential coalitions waiting to be formed" (Crenshaw, 1995, p. 377). Similarly, Collins (1998) warned that the deconstruction of categories obscures mandatory membership grounded in the hierarchical power relations of all sorts and reduces it to "personal attributes of individuals that they should be able to choose or reject" (p. 207). From a legal point, Best, Edelman, Krieger, and Eliason (2011) also contended that the social categories on which discrimination is often based and through which legal claims must be pursued have real effects, and the different outcomes across these categories are

important indicators of structural inequality and social stratification. I now turn to the application of intersectionality theory to educational leadership research in the section as follows.

Intersectionality and Women of Color in Educational Administration

Leadership and identity are closely connected (Hogg, 2001; Hogg & Terry, 2000; van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, De Cremer, & Hogg, 2005). Intersectionality studies the manner in which multiple aspects of identity may combine in various ways to construct social reality and thus provides a richer understanding of diverse leaders (Cole, 2009; Shields, 2008). Identity is the aspect of self that stands in relationship to social groups or categories of which an individual is a member (Frable, 1997). Gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and disability are salient characteristics of identity associated with social groups in organizations (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Identity is constructed, in part, through interaction with others. Leadership is also a social process (Regan & Brooks, 1995); thus, the formation of self-identity, social identity, group identity, and gender and race-ethnicity differences is particularly important in understanding leadership (Lord & Brown, 2004; Lord, Brown, & Freiberg, 1999). The interlocking components of gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and other social group memberships form a complicated web of oppression and privilege that affects how an individual leads and interacts with others (Johnson, 2006).

Adopting the intercategorical or intracategorical approach, feminist intersectionality research in leadership seeks empirical evidence for the idea that women's leadership experiences are shaped by race, ethnicity, nationality, class, sexuality, and other forms of oppression (McCall, 2005; Ospina & Foldy, 2009). The majority of intersectionality research and theorization in educational leadership has been conducted with respect to the experiences of

Black women, examining the intersection of gender and race and their influence on leadership (e.g., Alston, 2005; Bass, 2009; Doughty, 1980; Horsford, 2012; Irvine, 1978; Jean-Marie, Williams, & Sherman, 2009; Reed, 2012; Reed & Evans, 2008). A significantly smaller amount of scholarship has incorporated the experience of Latinas into intersectional analysis (e.g., Anzaldúa, 1987; Hurtado, 1997). Although this section focuses on educational leaders, research suggests similar themes across other professions where women of color are leaders (e.g., Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Combs, 2003; Miller & Vaughn, 1997; Parker & Ogilvie, 1996). The findings are by no means exhaustive. Nevertheless, my focus here is to show how intersectionality is instrumental in research on women leaders of color in education.

Using intersectionality theory, researchers can examine the unique experiences of women leaders of color in education. Double jeopardy (Irvine, 1978) or double bind (Doughty, 1980) or double whammy (Andrews, 1993) describe the additional discrimination Black women experience in educational administration, compared to Black men. The multiple stereotypes associated with gender, race, and ethnicity can trigger triple jeopardy (Sanchez-Hucles & Sanchez, 2007). Witherspoon and Mitchell's (2009) study of African American women principals revealed that race does not always trump other identities and issues, and an examination of the intersection of gender and race provides a better understanding of these women leaders' practices. For example, Mendez-Morse (2003) found that Latina school superintendents face significant obstacles in exercising their authority given their gender and race.

Intersectionality theory helps to account for the strengths and activism that women of color have demonstrated in their leadership practices. Research indicated that the intersection of gender, race, and class as experienced by Black women leaders has shaped not only their

leadership philosophy and their ability to bridge divisions, contradictions, and difference (Horsford, 2012; Jackson, 1999). Black women leaders also tend to be able to effectively navigate and function within educational systems that abound in power differentials, seek strategies, and transform power originally intended as a mechanism for oppression into an effective vehicle for change (Bass, 2009; Lorde, 1984; Murtadha & Watts, 2005; also see Collins, 1990). Black women's personal awareness of and experiences with the agony of multiple injustices have engendered empathy and an ethic of care in their leadership practice (Bass, 2009). Black female superintendents, whom Alston (2005) characterized as tempered radicals and servant leaders, have demonstrated self-knowledge, identity, historiography, efficacy, and reciprocity, as they continue to persevere and be committed to the children, the families, and the communities they serve. Black female administrators in higher education institutions in Jean-Marie, Williams, and Sherman's (2009) study have transcended racial and gender stereotypes and developed an inclusive and collaborative leadership style that builds consensus and leadership practices focused on serving the best interest of students.

The intersectionality perspective is appropriate for examining leadership because it acknowledges the connections between multiple identities and situations (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Its attentiveness to the intersection of social categories (such as race, gender, and class) enables researchers to see how power relations manifest themselves in the context of how leadership is perceived and enacted (Alston, 2005; Ospina & Foldy, 2008; Reed, 2012). Researchers should not overlook historical contexts as they contribute to and affect the power structures and give meaning to the social positions from where Black women (and men, other people of color also) enact leadership (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Lomotey, 1993; Reed & Evans, 2008; Tillman, 2004). For example, Loder (2005) found in her study that Black women

principals who "came of age during the Civil Rights Era," believed it was "their mission to bring love, mothering, and nurturing to their students, and guidance to young parents" (p. 316), and they were committed to social change and community building.

In the preceding sections, I have discussed the theory of intersectionality and its application in research on women of color, African American women mostly, in educational administration and leadership. In the following section, I focus on Asian American women and studies related to their experiences in educational administration.

Asian American Women in Educational Administration in the United States

According to Wright and Spickard (2002), there was no Asian American group before World War II except for the few "separate ethnic communities whose ancestry derived from various parts of Asian" (p. 107): these were nationality groups such as Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans. The construct of "Asian American" started in the 1940s and 1950s as the idea of a pan-Asian-American identity was initiated in Hawaii and spread to the U.S. mainland (Wright & Spickard, 2002). This Asian American panethnicity is a result of the categorization of Asian Americans as a homogeneous group, ignoring the diverse ethnic groups under this classification (Hune, 1998). By 1980, the U.S. Census listed five racial categories: White, Black, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Hispanic, and Asian or Pacific Islander. Not until 2000 was the Asian or Pacific Islander racial category in the U.S. Census separated into two categories: one being Asian and the other Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander under a 1997 Office of Management and Budget directive (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The term "Asian" refers to people having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, such as Cambodia, China, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam (Barnes & Bennett, 2002).

Asian American Women

The term Asian American women became an acknowledged label throughout academia, the publishing industry, and public policy in the late 1980s (Kang, 2002). Once used interchangeably with Asian women, this terminology has evolved through "social, political, cultural, economic and pedagogical endeavors" (Kang, 2002, p. 2).

In the history of Asians in the United States, discriminatory laws have targeted Asian American women and denied their admission into this country. Female Asians were virtually absent because of repressive immigration laws like the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Immigration Act of 1924 barring Asians from entering the United States (True, 1990). The Page Law of 1875 was passed to bar the entry of Chinese and Asian prostitutes, criminals, and contract laborers. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 is an example of a class bias against women married to Chinese laborers because the wives and daughters of wealthy Chinese merchants were allowed entrance into the United States (Ng, 1998). Asian women immigrants were also limited because of the actions of labor recruiters and traditional attitudes toward women. Most Asian males who immigrated to the United States believed it was less costly and safer to keep their wives and families in their homeland (Chan, 1991; Espiritu, 1997; Okihiro, 1994). At the end of World War II, the number of Asian American women in the United States noticeably increased because of the return of American servicemen who brought home their "war brides" (Wong, 1997). From 1966 to 1981, approximately 72,000 women from the Philippines, Korea, and Vietnam immigrated to the United States (Wong, 1997). The past four decades have witnessed a substantial increase in the Asian American population in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Nonetheless, historically, the main reason Asian women immigrated was

to be reunited with their families, although some came to look for better jobs or to seek refuge (Chan, 1991).

As part of the general Asian American population, Asian American women also face challenges associated with being labeled as model minorities. I now turn to the history on the model minority myth to help understand the context in which Asian American women live and work, one where U.S. public forums on minorities persist in neglecting the Asian American population (Carter, 2005).

The Model Minority Myth

Asians in the United States have been regarded as model minorities by the U.S. public. The model minority theory, first named by William Petersen (1966), prides Asian Americans on their perseverance, hard work, and quiet accommodation. In his 1966 *New York Times Magazine* article Petersen wrote "By any criterion of good citizenship that we choose, the Japanese are better than any other group in our society, including native-born whites. They have established this remarkable record, moreover, by their own almost totally unaided effort" (p. 21). In articles like *Look*'s "Americans without a Delinquency Problem," *Newsweek*'s "Outwhiting the White," and *U.S. News & World Report*'s "Success Strong of One Minority Group in the U.S.," claims are made that "Chinese Americans no longer occupy a minority status but fully participate in American society with its attendant economic benefits" (Change, 2000, p. 370). Despite the fact that Petersen later in the article noted Chinese and Filipinos on this list of less successful minorities, the idea spread that Asians generally work hard, send their children to college, rise rapidly in American society, and are "by any criterion of good citizenship that we choose" better than, for example, African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans (Daseler, 2000). Though Petersen did not explicit state that other minorities should emulate Japanese Americans or the

other Asian Americans, the notion of Asians as a model minority has become "a relatively unchallenged assumption about current societal reality" (Min, 2003, p. 192).

By the late 1960s, greater ethnic consciousness and political activism within the Asian community created a backlash against this image (Min, 2003). Many scholars have argued that the model minority image is dangerous to Asian American women (and men) as they are tucked into the space of nonconcerns for being "model minorities," and are rendered invisible in the research literature (e.g., Daseler, 2000; Kitano & Sue, 1973; Qin et al., 2008). The model minority myth exaggerates the achievement of Asians, obscures the tremendous diversity among Asians, denies services needed to Asians, pressures Asians to fit the "model minority" mold, and fuels anti-Asian sentiment and actions (Takaki, 1989). In their report, Reeves and Bennett (2004) noted that, while Asian Indians, Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans are doing well economically and educationally as groups, Cambodian, Hmong, and Lao suffer relatively high rates of poverty and low rates of educational attainment. Data from the U.S. Census 2000 revealed that 53.3% of Cambodians, 59.6% of Hmong, and 49.6% of Lao age 25 or older have less than a high school education. During this same period, almost 30% of Cambodians, 37.8% of Hmong and 18.5% of Lao lived under the poverty line (Reeves & Bennett, 2004). Reports on the everyday lives of Asian Americans indicate that Asians are the victims of both blatant racial violence and more subtle forms of racism (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). One particular infamous case involved Lafayette High School in Bensonhurst, New York, where Chinese and Pakistani immigrant youth were repeatedly the targets of anti-Asian violence. In 2004 the U.S. Federal Justice Department determined that Lafayette school officials deliberately ignored the "pervasive" harassment of Asian American students by their non-Asian peers (Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund [AALDEF], 2005). Moreover, embedded in the

model minority stereotype is the implicit and explicit message that the failure of African American and other minorities is due to a lack of personal determination, motivation, and hard work and is not due to the United States being fundamentally a racist society (Kitano, 1981; Ngo & Lee, 2007). Ngo and Lee (2007) noted that the model minority stereotype "is used to silence and contain Asian American[s] even as it silences other racial groups" (p. 416). Likewise, Takaki (1989) pointed out that the tenacity of the model minority myth is probably due to the very useful political functions it serves: preserving the American dream, discrediting the demands of other minorities, and justifying the social agenda for conservatives.

Merton (1957) claimed that striving for middle-class status is pervasive for all members of society. This assumes, then, that Asian Americans also strive for middle-class status; nevertheless, the difference is that Asians compete for that status with Whites under racism (Endo & Della-Piana, 1981). Asians are less likely to possess the "lineage of the social class status of the family's forebears, the length of time the family has been established in the community, wealth of possession, ethnic origin, style of living, [and] public service" (Cohen, 1955, p. 79) as the White. Despite their efforts, Asians are not completely accepted in the middle class in the sense that they do not command the same level of respect, deference, and power as their White counterparts (Suzuki, 1980). Thus, finding a niche of their own and forming a subculture deviating from the norm have become a solution for Asians for status problems (Cohen, 1955). Some studies suggest that Asian Americans voluntarily limit their representation in educational fields because of the low investment return for these alternatives as Asian Americans seek advanced degrees in fields of engineering, computer science, and physical science and land themselves in "higher" managerial and professional occupations after graduation (Cho, 1997; also see Hsia, 1988; Suzuki, 1980). Stereotyping of Asian Americans as

nonaggressive and lacking communication skills and political savvy becomes a justification against Asian Americans in promotion to upper level management including educational administration (Sue, Zane, & Sue, 1985).

Asian American Women in Educational Administration

The past four decades have witnessed a substantial increase in the Asian American population in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). However, Asian American teachers continue to represent only a small proportion of the teaching profession, and there is a significant disparity between the percentage of Asian American teachers and the percentage of Asian American students (Chong, 2002). In 2003-2004 Asian Americans only accounted for only 1.4% of all K-12 public school teachers, compared to 7.6% African American teachers, 6.2% Hispanic teachers, and 83.3% European American teachers. In contrast, Asian American students accounted for 4.6% of all K-12 public school students (NCES, 2005), and this percentage will increase as the general Asian American population is expected to grow by over 200% by the year 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The disproportionately low number of Asian Americans in the K-12 teaching force reduces the pool for leaders in the area. Also, little is known of the complexities faced by Asian American women in K-12 education, especially with respect to leadership. As aforementioned, studies specific to Asian American women in educational administration are virtually nonexistent except a limited number of dissertations (Fong, 1984; Lee, 1998; Pacis, 2005).

Based on a few studies on Asian American women in higher education, researchers found that, besides confronting challenges associated with gender, Asian American women in educational leadership face the sociocultural barriers commonly shared by other minority women, such as racial and sex discrimination, tokenism, lack of role models, and lack of access

to networks (Chu, 1980; Fong, 1984; Pacis, 2005). Asian American women (and men) are not immune to the glass ceiling (United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1992). Underrepresentation of Asian American women leaders in the academy and the dearth of qualitative work documenting their stories are noted (Huang & Yamagata-Noji, 2010; Hune, 1998; Ideta & Cooper, 2000). Asian American female administrators experience a "chilly climate" (Hune & Chan, 1997), feel isolated and invisible (Turner, 2002), have their abilities questioned, and have to work harder to prove themselves (Hune, 1998). The stereotypes of Asian American women, as submissive, quiet, and retiring, work against those who are in leadership positions and deny leadership potentials for those who aspire to leadership roles (Lee, 1998; Youngberg, Miyasoto, & Nakanishi, 2001). Asian American women administrators disproportionally concentrate in schools and districts serving mainly Asian student populations (Lee, 1998).

The model minority myth feeds the insecurities of the dominant culture where those of the dominant culture in leadership roles consider Asian American women (and men) as threats and fear that Asian Americans are taking away job opportunities from them. Additionally, Asian American women face unique cultural barriers. In Asian culture, education is highly prized; thus, Asian American women are expected to obtain an education and achieve success so as not to shame their families (Comas-Diaz & Greene, 1994). On the other hand, however, Asian American women are socialized by their own culture to tend first to the needs of significant others before their own; and self-promotion is viewed as distasteful and arrogant (Chu, 1980; Comas-Diaz & Greene, 1994; Pacis, 2005). There are some indications that education, particularly in the K-12 context, as a career is not viewed as highly prestigious as careers in medicine, law, engineering, or computer science; and Asian-American females who do seek

educational leadership positions run a risk of spending a lifetime defending their career choice to family and friends (Pacis, 2005). Figure 2 represents the main factors that contribute the limited knowledge of Asian American women in educational leadership. Nevertheless, Asian-American females who are successful in school leadership positions eventually receive praise and support from their families (Pacis, 2005).

The Dominant Black-and-White Discourse of Racial Discrimination

Stereotyping of Asian American in General

Limited Representation in Educational Leadership

Limited Knowledge of Asian American Women in Educational Leadership

The complexity of Intersected Systemic Discrimination and Injustice (e.g., Sexism, Classism, etc.)
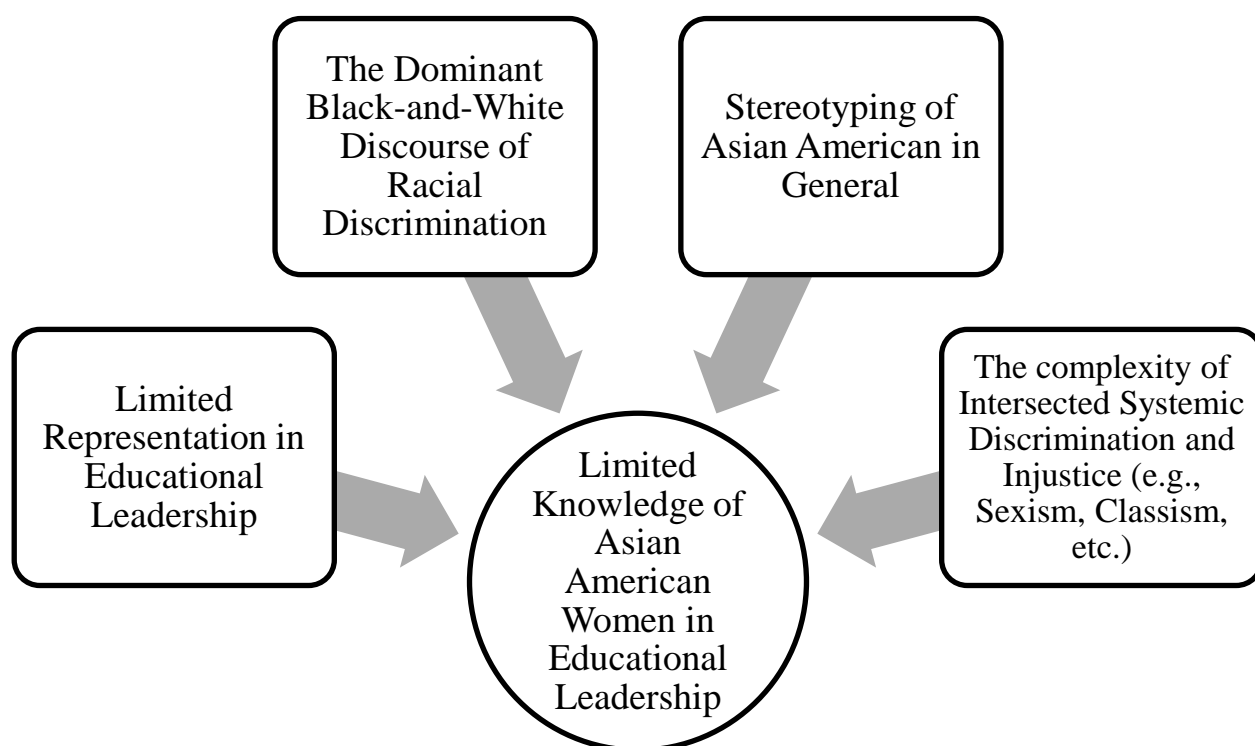
Figure 2. Factors Contribute to Limited Knowledge of Asian American Women in Educational Leadership

Limited studies of Asian American women in educational leadership reveal that Asian American women share characteristics and leadership styles with the larger population of women such as collaboration, empowerment, and community (Kawahara, Esnil, & Hsu, 2007; Pacis, 2005). Asian American women's paths to leadership roles are "a more emergent, evolving process … weaved together with their self-knowledge, growth, interests, and experiences" (Kawahara, 2007, p. 24; also see Lee, 1998). Asian American women who are successful in

educational administration are more highly educated, older than their counterparts in traditional occupations, and proficient bilingually; they display communicative skills that reflect decisive, ambitious abilities as well as assertive verbal and nonverbal behavior (Manera & Green, 1995; Yamauchi, 1981).   They show a strong internal locus of control that incorporates a combination of Asian and American value orientations and a rejection of the stereotypes attributed to them (Yamauchi, 1981). They have self-imposed high standards for excellence and perseverance in pursuing career goals (Lee, 1998; Pacis, 2005).

Rationale for Using Intersectionality for My Research on Asian American Women Administrators

My study was to examine the leadership experiences of Asian American female administrators in U.S. public schools. Before I summarize how intersectionality and available literature on women and women of color guided my study, I reiterate the three tenets of the intersectionality perspective. The three tenets are (1) the interactive and fluid nature of social identities (or categories); (2) the commonality and within-group diversity of individuals who comprise social groups; and (3) agency in context. For the purpose of my study, I focused on gender and race-ethnicity because of the real consequences these categories have for Asian American women in education leadership, a field culturally Eurocentric and androcentric and governed by middle class, and sometimes upper class, norms and values (Banks, 2007). Race has been conceptualized as a classification mainly based on "visible physical traits, while ethnicity has been seen as relating more to customs and traditions learned from ancestor[s]" (Ospina & Foldy, 2009, p. 877). Nevertheless, in practice, the boundaries between race and ethnicity are increasingly murky, and their social effects are often impossible to extricate from one another (Landson-Billings, 2000).

The intracategorical approach to intersectionality (McCall, 2005) was a better fit for my research where it allowed me, on one hand, to examine how the intersection of gender and race-ethnicity affects, if at all, Asian American female administrators' experiences as school leaders, and, on the other hand, to be free to call these social categories into question. I acknowledge that the notion of a racial category such as Asian or an ethnic category such as Chinese risks reifying false notions of monoracial or monocultural homogeneity; nonetheless, here it served as a conceptual framework in which to explore variations in the meaning that is attached to Asian American women's various statuses and identities with respect to educational leadership.

Limited research available on Asian America women indicates that Asian American women (and men) face the model minority myth that obscures their experiences as a subjugated population (Carter, 2005; Cho, 1997; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Qin et al., 2008). Like other women of color, Asian American women confront gender-race dual discrimination (Hune, 1998; Turner, 2002; Wrushen & Sherman, 2008). Many Asian American women are socialized by their home cultures to uphold traditional Asian virtues of modesty, reservation, and putting aside of personal needs to be helpful to others (Chu, 1980; Homma-True, 1997; Pacis, 2005). These attributes are "in stark contrast to traits encouraged by the dominant American culture, such as assertiveness, competitiveness and individualism" endorsed by the leadership discourse (Kim, Anderson, Hall, & Willingham, 2010, p. 455). The macro-level discrimination based on social categories helped direct my examination of the common experiences shared by Asian American female school administrators in my future research.

The acknowledgement of the multiplicity and simultaneity of social identities made me sensitive to intra-group differences. In particular, I was concerned with how my participants identify with the social categories of gender and race-ethnicity and the very interconnection of

these categories (Bilge & Denis, 2010). In a pilot study I conducted, some participants strongly identified with their respective ethnic identities while others identified with an Asian identity. The data indicated that variation is associated with participants' autobiographic circumstances with respect to upbringing, marriage, and migration. Scholars show that Asian American women vary on conceptualizations of motherhood dependent on respective ethnic cultures (Chang, 1997; Stone, Purkayastha, & Berdahl, 2006). The intra-diversity affects how Asian American females see themselves and are seen by others as a leader, which in turn can affect their leadership experiences (Chu, 1980; Pacis, 2005; Wrushen & Sherman, 2008).

Using intersectionality, I was able to contextualize Asian American women's lives, thereby recognizing the variability of factors that influenced their leadership experiences. Historical circumstances such as migration conditions and citizenship laws play an important role in understanding Asian subethnic groups' subordination in U.S. society (Glenn, 2004). Each of these initial (migration or natal) conditions creates a constellation of circumstances that position Asian American women differently in relation to leadership opportunities, development, and enactment. For instance, Filipinas were often recruited for nursing jobs, especially in the late 1960s and early 1970, because of their training in U.S.-style institutions (Chang, 1997). Given their migration history, migrant Filipina workers were more educated than men from the Philippines according to the 1980, 1990, and 2000 census (U.S. Census, 2000; Fong, 1998). In contrast, Asian Indian women came to the United States as wives of highly educated men and thus were less likely to work in professional occupations than Asian Indian men (Purkayastha, 2005). The history of colonization resulted in a disparity of English language proficiency among Asian American women, affecting experiences in positions where a foreign accent is considered an obstacle to leadership (Hune, 1998; Ngo & Lee, 2007).

Furthermore, intersectionality was instrumental for my research because it recognizes that not all women are rendered powerless (Collins, 2000) where the intersected social identities become reified or transcended on more micro-interpersonal levels (Lee, 1998; Yamauchi, 1981; Pacis, 2005). The limited literature reveals that Asian American women in educational leadership show a strong internal locus of control that incorporates a combination of Asian and American value orientations and a rejection of the stereotypes attributed to them (Yamauchi, 1981), having self-imposed high standards for excellence and perseverance in pursuing career goals (Lee, 1998; Pacis, 2005). Using the perspective of intersectionality, I could examine the concurrence of subordination and privilege to illuminate the intersecting factors that construct categorical domination in the individual situations. Simply put, what is oppression in one context may be a privilege in another. In conclusion, intersectionality provided me a tool for examination of the ambiguities of the social categories in both macro and micro lived realties.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have provided a snapshot of the history of women in educational administration in the United States and discussed the impact of gendered ideology and discourse on the entry and advancement of women in educational leadership. Under androcentrism men and the male principle are regarded as superior to women and the female principle (Adkison, 1981; Shakeshaft, 1987) and important leadership attributes such as economic rationality, aggressiveness, and ability to make difficult decisions are often considered to be masculine and therefore mutually exclusive to femininity, an essentialized description of women (Blackmore, 1999; Coleman, 2003; Estler, 1975). Though gender is the center that defines and influences female leadership, its association with leadership styles is inconclusive. The enactment of feminine or masculine styles of leadership is contingent on the personal and organizational

contexts, the nature of the task, time, and space (Shakeshaft, 1994). Recent development of

leadership has recognized the value of leadership behaviors and strategies that appreciate

collegial approaches and collaboration, commonly associated with femininity. Theories of

servant leadership, transformational leadership, moral leadership, and collaborative leadership

reflect a new leadership paradigm that values change and connection (Shakeshaft). Scholars

have found women tend to value and apply these leadership orientations (e.g., Alston, 2005;

Brooks & Jean-Marie, 2007; Kark, 2004; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Regan & Brooks, 1995).

I also reviewed the research on women of color in educational administration in the

United States and how the development of intersectionality theory helps address the complexity

of minority women's experiences as they are situated in a matrix of domination based on socially

constructed and interactive categories of gender, race-ethnicity, class, sexuality, nation, and age

(Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989; hooks, 1984; Shields, 2008). Though women of color share

similar leadership experiences with White women related to sexism, intersectionality highlights

the inseparability of sexism from other –isms (racism, classism, etc.) and unique experiences of

minority women as a result their multiply and interconnected social identities. Intersectionality

analysis in research is generally approached in three ways: anticategorical, intercategorical, and

intracategorical approaches (McCall, 2005), of which the intracategorical approach suits my

study the best as I focus on Asian American women whose identity crosses the boundaries of

constructed categories to understand the complexity and intersectionality of lived experiences of

these women.

Also discussed within this chapter is the development of the terminologies of Asian

American and Asian American women, the model minority myth, and limited literature available

on Asian American women in educational administration. Though Asian American women

share characteristics and leadership styles with the large populations of women as well confront issues common to other women of color, their unique historical and cultural circumstances complexify their experiences as leaders.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In the first two chapters, I have established the initial form and structure of the study, and also reviewed relevant literature on issues on women, women of color, and Asian American women in particular in educational leadership as well as the intersectionality framework fundamental for the study. In this chapter, I present the design and methodology of this study, including my ontological and epistemological frameworks, the participant selection, data collection and analysis strategies, trustworthiness issues, and limitations of the study. There were 11 participants involved in this study, including 4 principals, 7 assistant principals from 11 schools in 5 school systems in 2 states. A qualitative case study approach (Merriam, 1988) was used to explore these Asian American female administrators' leadership experience. More detailed description of the context of each school and the characteristics of the participants is provided in Chapter 4.

Design of the Study

Before embarking on any research project, it is important for researchers to make explicit both their ontological and epistemological assumptions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This qualitative study was rooted in an interpretative ontology and a constructivist epistemology. It was intended to produce contextualized knowledge about the Asian American women I investigated.

Ontology and Epistemology

I approached this study with an ontological framework of interpretivism and an epistemological framework of constructivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Schwandt, 1994). Ontology addresses "[w]hat is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). Epistemology answers "[w]hat is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). Under the tenet of interpretive ontology, social reality is locally and specifically constructed by humans through their action and interaction (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Rather than seeing an objective world, interpretive researchers "see the world strongly bounded by particular time and specific context" (Andrade, 2009, p. 44). Accordingly, the epistemological view of interpretive researchers assumes that "findings are literally created as the investigation proceeds" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111) – a view that has aligned itself well with constructivism which is grounded in a social design perspective on reality (Searle, 1995). Constructivism recognizes the close collaboration between the researcher and the participants while enabling participants to describe their stories (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). And through these stories the participants are able to describe their views of reality, and this allows the researchers to better understand the participants' actions (Lather, 1992).

Constructivism was the best approach for my study because it offered a perspective that honors the co-constructive, situated, and partial nature of knowledge generation and acknowledges there are *multiple* ways rather than *the* way of understanding a subject, a phenomenon, or a topic under study, given the particularity of time, space, situation, and parties involved. A constructivist framework also allowed me to look into the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of the participants – how they making meaning of it as they

live it (Schwandt, 1994). Further, a constructivist framework allowed me to acknowledge and reflect on the interaction and the relationship between my participants and me in which the meanings arose in sharing (Charmaz, 2000).

Asian American female school administrators' leadership experience is shaped by the intersected identities of gender and race (as well as other social constructed categories) that affect their meaning-making. Social constructionism argues that meaning and culture are both constructed by the members of the society and continually construct those members according the existing system. The sociocultural context in which my participants worked creates a different kind of space for Asian American women than it does for Asian American men. That space is also both like and unlike the space educational systems create for other racial-ethnic minority women. My participants' daily interactions with their colleagues, parents and students were situated within specific conditions that might be supporting or challenging their leadership and in turn shaped the participants' leadership experiences and their leadership perspectives. I also had to consider their context. The understanding of the intersectionality of gender, race and leadership of Asian American female school administrators was generated from the collective experiences of multiple school principals and assistant principals from multiple school systems. I examined both the experiences of those who were from a state with a relatively high percentage of Asian American populations and those who were from a state with a much lower percentage of Asian American populations. Those experiences helped me to build an understanding of the context-bound sense-making of leadership by the participants.

Methodology

The selection of a research methodology should best serve the research purpose and best answer the research questions (Crotty, 1998; Merriam, 2002). Because the purpose of my study

was to gain an in-depth understanding of Asian American female school administrators'
leadership experience and I was "interested in understanding how people interpret their
experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their
experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5), a qualitative case study was the most suitable method for my
study.

  Qualitative research. Qualitative research customarily occurs in a naturalistic context
(Lincoln & Guba, 1985), uses inductive analysis (Merriam, 2002), and presents data by thick
description (Patton, 1990). It allows for rich possibilities of inquiry that provide a clear and
complex understanding of people's reported experiences and observations that can contribute to
the topic of study (Suter, 2006; Merriam, 1998).

  Asian American female school administrators, partially due to their limited representation
in educational leadership, often work in contexts that refuse to acknowledge their genuine needs
and legitimate concerns and fail to provide access and support (Chu, 1980; Huang & Yamagata-
Noji, 2010; Pacis, 2005). To understand the meanings Asian American female school
administrators constructed from their leadership experiences and the views they held about their
roles and purposes as school administrators, it was important to investigate the contexts that
might support or challenge the development of their views and beliefs. Qualitative research was
advantageous for "identifying the influence of contextual factors that can't be statistically or
experimentally controlled, for understanding the unique processes at work in specific situations,
and for elucidating the role of participants' beliefs and values in shaping outcomes" (Maxwell,
2004, p. 9). Additionally, due to the limited pool of Asian American female administrators in
U.S. school systems, qualitative research provided me an effective way to garner comprehensive
information on a small sample of participants in this study (Patton, 1990).

Qualitative case study. The general objective of a qualitative case study, the particular qualitative design I selected, is to develop an in-depth understanding of the context and meaning of participants in a bounded system (Merriam, 1988; also see Punch, 2005; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003a). Case study is "a natural approach following the central tenets of qualitative research by being emic (from within the case) and holistic (the whole system in its context)" (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 205). The purpose of this study was to obtain in-depth understanding of Asian American female school administrators' leadership experiences situated in specific real-life contexts within their respective schools but simultaneously nested within the broader social and cultural contexts of individual school systems, the states, and the society in general. The characteristics of qualitative case study made it the most appropriate method for my study.

Within the general methodology of case study, this study represents a collective case study (Stake, 2005), which is also known as multi-case studies within a case study (Merriam, 1988). As a collective case study, I was interested in the leadership experiences of Asian American female school administrators. The emphasis was not placed on the selected system as the subject of the study; rather, the phenomenon of Asian American female school administrators' leadership experiences acted as the subject of the study. I decided that leadership experiences of Asian American female school administrators would be studied in the context of multiple school systems, but my goals for the study were focused on the leadership experiences. Each of the 11 Asian American female school administrators was treated as one case. The study analyzed 11 cases both individually and collectively to develop a better understanding of the leadership experience of Asian American female school administrators and their interpretation of their leadership roles.

Characteristics of a qualitative case study. Merriam's (1988, 1998) four essential characteristics for a qualitative case study – particularistic, heuristic, inductive, and descriptive – were instrumental for framing my study. The first characteristic *particularistic* is a focus on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon in the case study. This study was particularistic in that it focused on the leadership experience of several Asian American female school administrators who have led in their individual schools, within their particular communities, and over a certain period of time.

The second characteristic *heuristic* indicates that the case study provides readers with the means to understand the phenomenon under study. The study was heuristic in that it intended to help readers understand the experiences, challenges, and strategies these Asian American female school administrators used in their leadership roles and their constructed meanings of leadership given the intersection of gender, race-ethnicity, and culture. It aimed to assist readers make sense of this phenomenon from the participants' own points of view.

The third characteristic *inductive* means the examination of data in a case study relies on identifying themes, patterns, and concepts that may emerge, rather than testing a hypothesis (Merriam, 2002). This is particularly useful when little data exist or the theory has not been studied with a particular group of participants (Merriam, 2002). In this study the inductive nature of case study was particularly important in that this group of women leaders had not yet been investigated. Research on racial-ethnic minority women in educational leadership showed some potential similarities, yet until Asian American women leaders in schools were investigated, we could not know to what degree the existing theories applied to them, and what and where differences exist.

The last characteristic *descriptive* speaks to the end product of a case study, that is, a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of the phenomenon under study. Thick description is not mere detail but meanings attached by actors to that which is described, that is, the work of making sense of and describing social actions and activities within their unique context, the inscribed social discourse (Geertz, 1973, 1983). For this study, I hope that I have functioned as a vessel, bringing readers into my participants' lives through my presentation of my understanding of their world (Patton, 1990).

Pilot Study

I conducted a pilot study in 2011 in M state, a southern state. Asian American female public school administrators were identified based on the public records from the M State Department of Education. Based on one-year-old data available to me then, there were 24 Asian American female public school administrators of various ethnicities in M state. By the time I had completed my dissertation study, the number of Asian American administrators increased from 33 for 2010-2011 school year to 38 for 2011-2012 school year and to 46 for 2012-13 school year (Georgia Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2014). The composition of administrators based on gender *and* race for these school years was not available from the Office's website.

For the pilot study, I included diverse Asian ethnicities to honor these women's subjectivities, given the heterogeneity of Asian American women. Nonetheless, because the pilot study focused on the school context, and the department chair role is not a formal administrative position (Alford, Perreault, & Zellner, 2011; Kober & Usher, 2012), Asian American women who were then either school department chairs or administrators at district levels were excluded from solicitation for participation. Based on these criteria, for the pilot

study, I finalized a sample consisting of all the Asian American female principals and assistant principals at public schools in M state as of 2011, a total of 11 women. Eventually, four Asian American female school administrators (one principal and three assistant principals) from four schools at three school districts agreed to participate in the pilot study. Three of the four participants were first generation Asian Americans. That means they were foreign-born individuals who arrived in the United States after the age of 13 (Zhou, 1999). According to Zhou's (1999) classification of immigrants, the 1.5 generation includes those who were born abroad but entered the United States between the ages of 5 and 13, the second generation population consists of those born in the United States and those foreign-born who came to the United States before the age of 5, and the third generation and beyond are presumed to be born in this country. These definitions are more representative of people's identity formation based on their experiences than merely their birthplaces (Zhou, 1999).

I conducted eight face-to-face interviews with two for each participant. Each interview was approximately 90 minutes long, and I audio recorded and transcribed all eight. I analyzed the data using the constant comparative method, as well as narrative analysis, and wrote up the preliminary findings for two classes and two conference presentations.

From these studies I found that my interview guide worked fairly well. I did not know any of the four women before the study, yet each of them seemed quite open and honest with me, warming up fairly quickly about sharing some of the struggles and the unpleasant incidents in their leadership lives. Two repeated several times how good it was to have someone interested in hearing all of that. One even invited me to dine with her family members on the first day we met for the interview.

A shared racial identity between Asian American female participants and me seemed have worked to my advantage in building a rapport with them. However, the granted acceptance made my self-monitoring more challenging. I had to remain neutral in term of containing my own emotions and reactions to some of the more blatant parts of their stories. And I had to be careful not to assume shared meaning, but to probe for clarification as needed. As a constructivist, I recognized that my responses were part of the construction of shared meaning; yet I also needed to monitor myself to ensure that my emotion did not prevail over those of my participants.

The other important thing I learned in the pilot study, which I had suspected before starting, was the participants' great need to be sure of confidentiality in my reporting. Two participants made numerous comments throughout the interviews with a need for reassurance that I would not tell anyone that she said this. Being the only Asian in leadership, in the school, and even in the district made these women extremely prone to identification. I was strongly aware of that and further determined that maintaining these women's confidentiality was not only my unnegotiable responsibility but also a critical element for having a successful study.

Sample Selection

Participant selection in this study was an extension and modification based on what I had learned from the pilot study. The findings from the pilot study suggested that the lack of well-established Asian communities in M state had left Asian American female administrators limited channels for personal support; therefore, I expanded participant recruitment to include both M state and N state, the latter being a Pacific state with a well-established history of Asian communities. The inclusion of participants in N state was to help further clarify the contextualized Asian American women's leadership experiences. All of the names in the study

that refer to persons and locations are pseudonyms. Table 1 shows the percentage of Asian

population in the two states relative to the nation.

Table 1

Asian Population Comparison for 2012

Ethnic Group	M State	N State	USA
Asian alone	3.5%	13.9%	5.1%

(United States Census Bureau, n.d.)

Context

Located in the South of the United States, M state operated 181 school districts

comprised of 2,246 schools and served approximately 1.6 million students supported by over

114,800 teachers during the 2010-2011 school year. Asian student population accounted 3% of

the total enrollment and had remained fairly consistent over the years since 2008. There were

985 Asian American teachers employed statewide, accounting for 0.9% of the total workforce.

The state employed 9,838 school administrators including program directors at the school district

level, principals (elementary and secondary), assistant principals (elementary and secondary),

and school department chairs, and 0.3% were Asian Americans.

As a Pacific state, N state operated 1,044 school districts comprised of 9,919 schools and

served approximately 6.2 million students supported by over 283,800 teachers during the 2011-

2012 school year. The Asian student population accounted for 11.2% of the total enrollment.

There were 18,267 Asian American teachers employed statewide, accounting for 6.4% of the

total workforce. The state employed 23,140 administrators including principals, assistant

superintendents or principals, program directors or coordinators, and other certificated staff not

providing direct services to students, and 4.4% were Asian Americans. Table 2 compares the

Asian American populations in K-12 systems at the two states.

Table 2

State Information on Asian American Populations in K-12 Systems

State	Asian							School Year
	Administrator			Teacher		Student		
	Total	%	Female	Total	%	Total	%	
M	33	0.3	24	985	0.9	49,008	3	2010-11
N	1010	4.4	657	18,267	6.4	693,469	11.2	2011-12

Participants

For this study I used purposeful sampling so that those who were most likely to understand the phenomena under study were the ones invited to participate (Merriam, 1988). Within the parameters of purposeful sampling, I relied on a criterion-based selection process to locate the information-rich cases (Merriam, 1998), that is, Asian American female school administrators who "have the knowledge and experience about the particular focus of the study" (deMarrais & Lapan, 2004, p. 59) and were therefore able to help answer the research questions.

The three criteria for selection for the study were these:

- She is an Asian American administrator who works in public schools. There was no specification on the woman's immigrant status. The woman could have been born in the United States or born abroad and then immigrated to the United States. And as for the administrative positions, they had to be in public schools. Because of the drastic differences between public schools and private schools in terms of organization and resources, in particular, I sought women who had understood and experienced the challenges in leading public schools.

- She is a building level administrator. The position could be principal or assistant principal. She needed to have some experiences of comprehensive, school-wide work to fully understand the challenges of leading a school. The positions of school department

chair and district administrators were excluded for the purpose of this study. However, in one case the woman worked half-time as an assistant principal and half-time as a district support staff person, providing a slight outlier for the study. And, in the case of the two women who were currently special education assistant principals, both had had school-wide leadership experiences in the past. One had worked as a regular assistant principal for three years; the other had been assigned to one school on her first two-year special education assistant principalship and therefore, was very involved in the school's operations like a regular assistant principal.

- She has been in administration for at least two years. The position could have been present or past; what mattered was that the woman had accumulated a significant level of leadership knowledge and experience. One woman had less than a year's experience in her current position as an assistant principal; however, she had had more than three years as a school-site program coordinator which provided her sufficient administrative experiences at the building level.

These Asian American women could best provide answers to my research questions because they have navigated the educational system to use their leadership abilities in the school itself. Some of them have gained a clear understanding of what is required to succeed as an Asian American female leader in this kind of setting, and some demonstrated reflexivity or awareness of their leadership experiences and challenges and what they have learned about leading schools as an Asian American female.

Participant recruitment. I used different recruitment procedures in the two states. For M state, I obtained the updated public records from the State Department of Education in late 2012. When I conducted my pilot study in 2011, there were 24 (out the 33) Asian American

female administrators; women accounted 73%. As in early 2013 when the current study was conducted, the available 2011-2012 records indicated there were 24 female Asian American school administrators of which 12 were principals and assistant principals. While the number of female Asian American school administrators stayed the same for 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school years, the total number of Asian American administrators increased from 33 to 38. In other words, there was an increase in male Asian American school administrators within M state over the 2011-2012 school year. The ratio of females within the group decreased to 63%. I was aware that two of my pilot study participants were no longer in an administrative position. Among the 12 female Asian American school principals and assistant principals, those who had participated in my pilot study were not invited for participation in the succeeding study, which led to a final pool of eight potential participants (four principals and four assistant principals) for the current study. In the end, three assistant principals from M state participated in the current study.

On the other hand, for N state, partially due to the limitation of geographical distance and the much larger population of such administrators, the identification of potential participants relied on a snowball sampling strategy (Gilbert, 1993). Basically, it is a strategy involving the nomination of other potentially eligible people through study participants (Gilbert, 1993). Snowball recruitment is more effective for gaining access to the targeted population as it is based on social network logic whereby people are connected by a set of social relationships and contacts (Petersen & Valdez, 2005). Using the social networks of identified respondents, snowballing method provides the researcher with an ever-expanding set of potential participants, generating a series of referrals within a circle of acquaintance (Atkinson & Flint, 2001) which were, in this case, Asian American female principals and assistant principals of public schools in

N state. It was through colleagues (one was an Asian American principal in N state and the other was a consultant and researcher who had studied Asian American leaders in higher education) who had connections in N state, I found study participants.

I looked for participants in N state with some comparable personal backgrounds to those in M state, taking into consideration school size and grade level. On the other hand, due to the limited number of Asian American female administrators in M state, the participants from M state in this study were assistant principals. Therefore, Asian American female principals in N state were recruited to complement the cases in N state for generating a more comprehensive understanding of Asian American female school administrators' leadership experiences.

The study (as the pilot study had also been) was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Georgia. An email of invitation (Appendix A) was used for recruitment in both states. Once an Asian American female principal or assistant principal expressed her intent of participating, a consent form (Appendix B) was emailed beforehand and two copies were signed on the first interview with each of the participants, one for me and the other for the participant. Participation was completely voluntary and participants who agreed to participate were made aware that they could withdraw their consent at any time during the study. No participants withdrew in this study.

Participant demographics. The 11 Asian American women in the study all worked as principal or assistant principal in the public schools at either M state or N state. See Table 3 for a summary of participant demographics. Four were principals, though of those only one was at the high school level. Of the remaining seven women, one was a high school assistant principal, two were middle school assistant principals, and four were elementary school assistant principals. Of the four elementary school assistant principals, two were from a district in N state

where the assistant principal position at the elementary school level was specifically designated

for special education in which the administrator serves multiple schools. The women's years of

experience in education ranged from 8 to 30 years, and their years in administration ranged from

3 to 20 years. No one had led in her current position for more than five years. In terms of

ethnicity, four were Korean, three were Japanese, two were Chinese, and of the remaining two,

one was Filipino and the other was Vietnamese. All women had at least master's degrees, two

had educational specialist degrees, and two had doctoral degrees. Seven were married and four

were single. Four of the seven married women had children. In age, four were in their 30s, four

were in their 40s, and two were over 50. A few of the women from N state knew each other,

making confidentiality in the study more critical and more challenging. On more than one

occasion during my time at N state, I was asked by a few participants if I knew so-and-so, further

noting the limited number of Asian American female administrators and the closely connected

school systems. Therefore, I am not specifying individual participant's ethnicity and age in this

study. I have also eliminated or adjusted potentially identifiable features such as prior teaching

or administrative experiences or locations, in accordance with an ethic of confidentiality, so that

a participant could recognize herself but no one else could, yet the essential information for the

study is preserved (Sikes, 2006).

Table 3

Participants' Demographic Data

Position	• Principal = 4 women
	  ○ High School = 1 woman
	  ○ Elementary School = 3 women
	• Assistant Principal = 7 women
	  ○ High School = 1 woman
	  ○ Middle School = 2 women
	  ○ Elementary School = 4 women

School Size (Enrollment)*	• <500 = 2 schools • 500-1000 = 5 schools • >1000 = 2 schools
Years of Experience in Education	• <10 = 2 women • 10-20 = 4 women • 20-30 = 5 women
Years of Experience in Administration	• <9 = 5 women • 9-15 = 5 women • >15 = 1 woman
Years in Current Position	• <2 = 4 women • 2-5 = 7 women
Ethnicity	• Korean = 4 women • Japanese = 3 women • Chinese = 2 women • Filipino = 1 woman • Vietnamese = 1 woman
Highest Educational Level	• Master's = 7 women • Educational Specialist = 2 women • Doctor's = 2 women
Immigrant Generational Status	• 1st Generation = 2 • 1.5 Generation = 3 • 2nd Generation = 3 • 3rd Generation = 3

Marital Status	• Married = 7 women
	  ○ Have children = 4 women
	  ○ No children = 3 women
	• Single = 4 women

Age	• 30-40 = 4 • 41-50 = 4 • >50 = 3

Note. *This does not include the multiple schools served by the two elementary assistant principals from N state.

Data Collection

Data collection is a series of interrelated activities for gathering quality information to

answer research questions (Creswell, 1998). Multiple data sources can yield information to

provide a comprehensive perspective and to validate and cross-check the findings (Merriam,

1998). For this study, data came primarily from in-depth semi-structured interviews, plus

informal observations (when feasible), documents and artifacts, and my reflective memos (see

Table 4).

Table 4

Data Collection Methods

Data Collection Methods	Description
In-depth semi-structured interviews	Each participant: (1) 1-1.5 hours/time; (2) 2 times
Informal observations	When interviews were scheduled on the school sites • Schools' overall environments • School buildings, décor, posters, and bulletins • Participants' offices • Interactions between participants and staffs when they occurred
Documents and artifacts	Context documents related to • the schools • the participants Job descriptions Promotion policies Professional development plans
Reflective memos	My reflections and thoughts during the process of data collection and analysis

In-depth Semi-Structured Interviews

The interview method allows the researcher to understand experiences and reconstruct

events in which the researcher did not participate (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Also, the flexibility

inherent in a qualitative approach provides the space for description and meaning, as expressed

in subjects' own words. A semi-structured qualitative interview method specifically addresses the topic at hand, but also offers opportunities to explore areas the participant deems important – areas the researcher had not considered before the interview, which enables the discovery of new and unexpected sources of information (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In-depth interviews seek "*deep* information and knowledge … this information usually concerns very personal matters, such as an individual's self, lived experience, values and decisions, occupational ideology, cultural knowledge, or perspective" (Johnson, 2002, p. 104). Furthermore, Johnson (2002) noted that when the research is focused on personal experiences and only limited information sources are available, in-depth interview method should be used.

I conducted two in-depth, semi-structured interviews with each participant, using an interview guide (Appendix C). The interviews with the participants in M state were conducted face-to-face. I planned for phone interviews with the participants in N state because of the geographic distance. However, I was able to travel to N state and conducted face-to-face interviews. Eventually, I only had one phone interview. All the face-to-face interviews were conducted at the participants' offices in the schools by their choice, and each lasted about one and half hours.

With the participants' permission, two digital recorders were used to record the interviews to ensure no data were lost due to possible equipment malfunction or failure. Few written notes were taken during the interviews to create an atmosphere of trust and to focus on listening to the participants' personal stories (Oakley, 1981). In the first round of interviews I focused on discovering how the women achieved their leadership positions, how they view themselves as a school leader, and strategies and practices they have used to support their leadership along the way. Immediately after the first interview with each participant, I noted

down what I saw about the school and the surroundings, how the conversation went, my

impressions and reactions, and thoughts for follow-up questions to be added in the second

interview (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In the second round of interviews I concentrated on

exploring how the women understood their identity (or identities) and its relation to leadership. I

also probed further on what they had told me in the first interview, using follow-up questions.

No follow-up interviews after the second-round of interviews were planned, but I had indicated

to the participants at the end of their second interviews that I would email them individually if

further information or elaboration about their individual interviews were needed. All

participants agreed to possible follow-up emails, but no follow-up emails actually were made.

All interviews were transcribed with all identifiers being removed and replaced by

pseudonyms. The links between pseudonyms and participants were stored in a password-

protected file on my personal encoded external drive. And for member checking purposes

(Merriam, 1988, 1998; also see Lincoln & Guba, 1985), transcripts were sent to the participants

for review in case some addition and/or modification were needed, but no further responses were

received from the participants. The audio recordings were erased in compliance with the

guidelines approved by the University of Georgia IRB.

Informal Observations

I conducted informal observations of each participant's work site (i.e., the school and the

participant's office) on the same day of the scheduled interviews. The purpose of this was to

gain further information on context and insight into the participants' experiences. According to

Patton (2002), observation allows the researcher to participate in open, discovery-oriented, and

inductive inquiry on-site and learn things that participants are either unconscious of or unwilling

to share in the interview. Though the observations were informal and relatively brief, I was able

to witness some interactions between the participant and her teachers and students and make notes about what I had seen and heard while there. After each visit, I expanded my fieldnotes and engaged in self-reflection about the observations in relation to the interviews. The self-reflections became part of my reflective memos.

Documents and Artifacts

In addition to interviews and informal observations, I gathered documents about the districts (such as professional development, policies for evaluation and promotion, etc.), schools (such as demographics, programs, performances, etc.) and participants (such as welcome webpages, featured news stories, etc.). Newsletters and short-biographies written by the participants were collected as well, and they were instrumental in identifying more themes relevant to their leadership practice. Table 5 summaries the documents used for the study. These documents provided me with situational knowledge and helped in elaborating narratives the participants offered in interviews (Hatch, 2002) and triangulating with my field notes and reflective memos.

Table 5

Context Documents and Artifacts for the Study

Context documents and artifacts	District leadership professional development plans and programs; District policies for principal/assistant principal evaluation and promotion; District demographics and performance for the 2010-2011 school year (M state) and 2012-2013 school year (N state); School demographics and performance for the 2010-2011 school year (M state) and 2012-2013 school year (N state); Information from the school website; Class observation instruments; News highlights of the participants; principal's welcome webpages, short-autobiographies, and newsletters.

Reflective Memos

Another data source for the study was my reflective memos. Reflective memos provided me some evidence about the research process and a way to track my personal reaction to what was being discovered (Hatch, 2002) about the participants and their leadership activities and experiences. Reflective memos also served as a collection of reflective field notes where I recorded my subjective interpretations such as feelings, ideas, impressions, issues, and problems within the research (Merriam, 2002). These memos were analyzed together with the interviews and informal observations data to generate and refine codes, categories and themes.

<div align="center">

Data Analysis

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I started data analysis simultaneously with data collection, in an ongoing analytical process. Conducting both activities at the same time allowed me to make adjustments as needed along the way, develop additional questions for probing, and gather participants' thoughts about possible themes (Merriam, 1998, 2002). Each interview was transcribed as soon as possible after it was conducted. For the cases in M state, because the interviews were scheduled a week apart, I was able to transcribe the first interview before conducting the second one with each of the three participants. The same process was not feasible for the cases in N state, due to a week travel time constraint. For data analysis, I used the constant comparative method adapted from Strauss and Corbin's (1990) grounded theory approach.

Constant Comparative Analysis

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), the constant comparative method is composed of three steps: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The steps do not necessarily occur linearly. Rather, in a single coding session, a researcher, "without self-consciousness,

[may] move between one form of coding and another, especially between open and axial coding" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 58).

Open coding, as the first analytic step, "pertains specifically to the naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 62). During open coding the researcher takes apart "an observation, a sentence or paragraph, and [gives] each discrete incident, idea, or event, a name, something that stands for or represents a phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 63) and constantly compares these concepts with one another for similarities and differences to decide which belong together (Harry et al., 2005).

During axial coding, subcategories are linked to a category by means of the paradigm – a set of relationships denoting causal conditions, context, strategies, and consequences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Besides looking for evidence in the data that verifies the relationships between categories and subcategories, in axial coding, the researcher is also seeking "instances of when [the relationships] might not hold up" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 108). This is the stage where the researcher begins to interpret and abstract meaning from the data (Harry et al., 2005).

The final step, selective coding, involves the integration of concepts, formation of a core category, and building of a theory. To accomplish selective coding, Strauss and Corbin (1990) recommended five steps: explicating the story line, relating subsidiary categories around the core category, relating categories at the dimensional level, validating those relationships (between categories and subcategories) against data, and filling in categories that may need further refinement and development (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

For each participant, data from the two interview transcripts, fieldnotes of informal observations (when available), documents, and reflective memos were combined together as a set for initial open coding. At this stage, I worked to find similar or related segments. Once the

basic coding was completed, I began to compare similarly coded segments to refine and collapse the categories to better represent the data. At this stage, I worked to develop themes from refined categories. After fully exploring the individual cases, I worked across the 11 cases, linking and reassembling categories into core categories; this was the theory-building stage (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These steps were not as distinct or sequential as their description suggests; the steps were overlapping and the analytical process was iterative and recursive.

An Illustration of Data Analysis of Interview Data

In this section, I use the application of constant comparative method to interview data as an example to illustrate the analysis process used in this study (see Table 6). The transcripts were from my two interviews with one of the participants, Helen. I started with open coding her interview transcript, informal observation field notes, and reflective memos (see Table 6, First Iteration). Then I broke apart the data into segments corresponding to natural breaks in the flow of description in the transcript, field notes, and memos. Then, I grouped together similar or related segments, and constructed preliminary categories.

Once the preliminary categories were constructed, I began to build the properties of those categories (see Table 6, Second Iteration). At this stage, I continued to refine the codes of the similar or relevant segments, examine material for common themes, and integrate the properties and categories into a coherent description of what seemed to be happening. The process of theorization started when different categories and their properties became more integrated through constant comparison. The final stage is the theory development (see Table 6, Third Iteration). At this stage, I collapsed similar or related categories and removed irrelevant categories or properties to develop theoretical findings within a smaller set of higher level abstract concepts.

Table 6

Code Mapping: Three Iterations of Analysis (to be read from the bottom up)

Research questions 1, 2 and 3		
RQ.1 Sense-Making	RQ2. Purposes/Roles	RQ3.Challenges & Issues as AAWA in School Leadership
Third Iteration: Application to data set		
With provided opportunities, able to learn to maneuver and assume leadership	To make a difference through practice roles as a school leader	AAWA's uncertainty toward racism, sexism and women's leadership
Second Iteration: Pattern variables		
1A. women's passivity 1B. mentorship 1C. credibility as a leader 1D. resilience	2A. practical roles 2B. espoused life purpose of making a difference	3A. struggles with AAW stereotypes 3B. discriminative resistance toward MMD 3C. uncertainty toward women's leadership 3D. other challenges
First Iteration: Initial codes/surface content analysis		
1A. no intention for administration 1A. put on leadership roles by her principal 1A. encouraged by immediate supervisors and/or other administrators to pursue leadership 1A. inspired by role models 1A. seek no further leadership advancement 1A. focus on work at hand 1B. unofficial mentorship 1B. multiple mentors 1B. mentors' sponsorship 1B. mentors' guidance 1B. have total trust with personal mentor 1C. constant learning 1C. build relationships 1C. be fair and consistent 1C. be humble 1D. rely on faith 1D. be optimistic	2A. manage school operations 2A. supervise and evaluate teachers 2A. build relationship with teachers 2A. support teachers 2A. work with parents 2A. be a balanced leader with instruction and operation 2B. help students to be change agents themselves 2B. be a role model for other Asian America women	3A. uncomfortable working with older generation female administrators sharing her Asian ethnicity 3A. need not be so sensitive to rumors or personal attacks 3B. do not want to play politics 3B. do not like self-promoting 3B. avoid being typecast as an administrator only for a school with "her own people" 3C. hard to be a successor of a beloved male principal 3C. upset people because of my thoroughness – unlike male administrators 3D. lack of enough personnel support 3D. perceived favoritism 3D. teacher union

Note. RQ=Research question; AAWA=Asian American women administrator; MMD= "Model minority" discourse.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The notion of trustworthiness refers to the internal and external validity of the qualitative research process (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A qualitative research needs to be believable (Freeman et al., 2007). To ensure the trustworthiness of this study I used six strategies, including triangulation, an audit trail, member checks, peer debriefing and external audit, clarification of researcher's biases, and thick description. In the following sections I describe each strategy and explain how it supported the trustworthiness of my study.

Triangulation. Triangulation consists of collecting data through different methods or even different kinds of data for the same phenomenon (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003b). In this study I used multiple data sources: interview transcripts, informal observation field notes, documents, and my reflective memos. Triangulation through multiple data sources allowed me to have a more complete, holistic, and contextual representation of the phenomenon or object under study (Glesne, 2006). It helped me to minimize the likelihood of misinterpretation and bias that might result from relying exclusively on any one data collection method, source, analyst, or theory (Glesne, 2006; Yin, 2003a, 2003b). The participants were from two different states inclusive of comparable and contrast cases, which aided in triangulating the available literature on Asian American female administrators in the U.S. educational systems.

An audit trail. An audit trail is a careful record of the research process through which others can trace the work the researcher has done and check the steps the researcher has taken (Freeman et al., 2007). I kept a spreadsheet file recording the steps of my study, including, for example, how participants were found, what questions they asked about the study and me before agreeing to participation and my responses to those questions, and notes on any communication

between us. Writing reflective memo and keeping a record of coding, categorizing, and theorizing helped me to monitor my own influence on the study and provided a space for reflexivity, keeping my bias in check.

Member checks. Member checks involve taking data, findings, and interpretations back to the participants to make sure that the researcher is representing them and their ideas accurately (Merriam, 1988; Roulston, 2010). In this study, I sent transcripts to the participants for review. Though no further responses were received, in this way, these women were given opportunities to offer their perspectives and help me further develop and refine the themes (Merriam, 1988).

Peer debriefing and external audit. Peer debriefing is a process of communicating with peers to gain external reflection and input on the researcher's work. And an external audit involves examination of the research process and product by outsiders not directly involved in the research (Creswell, 1998). I had two doctoral student peers (one is in my own field and the other is in the field of language and literacy and has been a teacher for more than 20 years) who helped me think through the findings and how I presented them. My major professor has given valuable, detailed feedback from her perspective. All these procedures support the study's trustworthiness because not only have I discussed the findings and shown how the data support my claims, but also I have gained valuable feedback from both research and practical perspectives. The processes of debriefing and auditing also helped control for bias; through conversations, feedback, and suggestions I was constantly reminded of my positionalities and their potential influences in the process of knowledge construction.

Clarification of Bias. The trustworthiness of a qualitative research can be enhanced through clarification of the researcher's bias. In a format of subjectivity statement (see Appendix D), I made explicit my "assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation at the

onset of the study" (Merriam, 1998, p. 170), my positions relative to my participants, the basis for participant selection, and the social context from which data were collected (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Having written my own subjectivity statement and referring back to it during the stage of data analysis helped me to think critically about the impact my personal experiences and learning on the phenomenon as a young scholar might have on my understanding of my participants' perspectives and stories.

Thick description. Thick description helps readers of this study enter the research context, understand the findings I present to them, and assess the credibility of the study (Freeman et al., 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Good description permits transferability: readers are able to see places of similarities between their experiences and those of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Without endangering the participants' confidentiality, I provided detailed descriptions of the study contexts, data collection, and data analysis process. I also used direct quotes from participants' interviews to support my claims, allowing readers to see the world my participants described for me and to draw their own conclusions about the study.

<center>**Delimitations and Limitations**</center>

This study had three delimitations. First, I intentionally focused on the two dimensions of race and gender. Certainly, many other dimensions such as socioeconomic class, religion, age, sexual orientation, disabilities, and motherhood status could influence the women and their leadership. Second, I chose to interview diverse Asian ethnic women. I was aware that there was much heterogeneity among Asian ethnic groups and believed that more specificity could come from investigating one Asian ethnic group, such as sampling only Chinese women. However, my choice of the broader perspective allowed me to see both the shared and distinct leadership experiences related to gender, race-ethnicity, and culture. Third, the study involved

only two states. It is possible that M state may not represent other southern states and N state may not represent other states heavily populated by Asian populations. Readers should take caution in over generalizing the results found in this study.

Limitations

As with all studies, this study had some limitations (Glesne, 2006). The first limitation is my lack of relevant experience. I did not have educational leadership experience in the U.S. setting. The lack of experience might, at some level, limit my analytic and theoretical sensitivity to interview and observation data. Nevertheless, my knowledge of the literature and fieldwork experiences in the pilot study and this study might compensate for my lack of experience in the assistant principalship or principalship. Furthermore, my lack of relevant experience could also be an advantage for this study in the sense that I would have a fresh perspective, free of preconceptions formed by having relevant experience in U.S. educational systems.

The second limitation of the study related to my ability to schedule interviews with the participants in N state. My initial plan was to conduct phone interviews with the participants in the N state. Because most of the N state participants indicated that they preferred face-to-face interviews, I eventually travelled to N state. Due to my travel schedule and the participants' working schedules, plus the state testing schedule, I had to conduct two interviews every day and was only able to set apart the participants' first and second interviews only by a day. Such an intensive schedule and long hours made my concurrent data collection and data analysis more challenging. It might have affected my performance in the second interview as I became fatigued. Nevertheless, I believe that I was able to stay attentive, probe appropriately, and note down important field notes. Four of the seven participants told me at the end of the interviews that I asked good questions.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have discussed my research approach and goals for the study. Working from an interpretive, constructivist standpoint, I studied 11 Asian American female principals and assistant principals in two states. The participants were specifically chosen because of their extensive leadership experiences in the school sites, given my ability to gain access to the targeted study population. I conducted interviews and informal observations, gathered artifacts and documents, and wrote reflective memos.

Qualitative multi-case study allowed me to develop contextualized knowledge about the participants' leadership experiences and sense making. I used constant comparative analysis to see what themes would emerge. Trustworthiness of the study was supported through strategies including triangulation, an audit trail, member checks, peer debriefing and external audit, subjectivity disclosure, and thick description.

CHAPTER 4

INDIVIDUAL PROFILES OF PARTICIPANTS

The purpose of this study was to understand Asian American female administrators' leadership experiences in the U.S. K-12 school settings, with a focus on the interpretation they constructed from their professional experiences, the perceptions they held about their roles and purposes as school administrators, and the unique challenges and issues they encountered in their leadership practices. The leadership experiences of these Asian American female administrators were formed by their cultural backgrounds, family influences, and personal lived experiences. To understand the women's leadership experiences, it was important to know their upbringings, their past experiences, their views of themselves, and how past experiences influenced their current views and experiences.

This chapter provides the contexts for understanding the participants' leadership experiences. Each of the 11 Asian American female school administrators stands as an individual case where I present information on their schools and their personal backgrounds. In general, I start each individual case with a description of the school, followed by a snapshot of the woman. I then discuss the woman's upbringing, career trajectory, past and current administrative experiences, and the woman's thoughts on her identity (or identities) in relation to her professional life. All names used in the chapter for persons, schools, cities, and states are pseudonyms.

Case 1: Amanda

Amanda was the second participant I interviewed in M state. She was an assistant

principal at a high school, HG HS, in District C.

Amanda's School

Over the 2010-2011 school year HG HS had 2,668 students and 170 teachers,

administrators, and support staff. The three largest student racial-ethnic groups were White

(47%), Black (37%), and Hispanic/Latino (9%). Asian students accounted for 4% of the total

enrollment. The school district did not meet AYP in the 2010-2011 school year; however, HG

HS did make AYP for that school year. Table 7 presents the demographic and performance data

for the school in comparison to the district and the state.

Table 7

*Amanda's School-District-State Demographics and Performance Comparison (2010-2011
School Year)*

Entity Name	Enrollment	School Title I?	% English Learners	% Free* Lunches	Students Largest Ethnic Group	% Minority	% Asian	Made AYP?
HG HS	2,668	No	1.0	33.0	White	53.0	4.0	Yes
District C	15,814	N/A	16.0	52.0	White	68.0	10.0	No
M State	1,633,596	N/A	6.0	57.0	White	56.0	3.0	N/A

Note. N/A=Not Applicable; AYP=Adequate Yearly Progress, "*"=free/reduced priced.

Background

Amanda was in her thirties. She was a 1.5-generation Asian American. Amanda

characterized herself as a "strategic, futuristic, communicative, and connective" person. She was

a good observer and multitasker. She was analytical, able to diagnose a situation, and was a

good problem solver. She was able to anticipate and try to put actions in place to prevent major

upheavals from happening. She had high expectations for children. She was confident and

articulate, and she said she never felt afraid to speak her mind.

Upbringing. Amanda was born in Asia. She immigrated to the United States when she was a few months old. Her father worked and her mother stayed home to raise her and her brother. She described her parents as "very kind and soft persons with amenable personalities." While she was growing up, the family "never went on vacation." Amanda was the first in her family to go to college. She had not had much connection to the Asian community until about two years previously when she moved to M state after both her parents passed away, and she started going to an Asian church. Before that, the family lived in Z state and had almost no association with the Asian community.

Career trajectory. Amanda was a teacher for six years. She taught overseas for about one year, then came back to the United States, and taught five years at Z state. After that, she became a principal for a small school at Z state. She had relocated to M state four years previously. Before her current position at HG HS, she worked at two different schools as an assistant principal.

Prior administrative experiences. Amanda was a principal of a small school in a different state. She recalled that "[she] was very intense and focused, and [she] was a workaholic." In her late twenties, then, she "did not care what they [the teachers] thought." She remembered that "teachers were sitting back in their chair and rolling their eyes a bit, and there she was, a very young, very energetic person who was going to come in and help solve poverty and racial injustice." She felt "exacerbated resentment" from the community. In retrospect, Amanda said, "I did not last long there. What difference did I make for the children there? I didn't. And I am always aware of that."

After Amanda moved to M state, she had two assistant principalships before she came to HG HS. The one before HG HS was difficult, Amanda said,

Even though I wanted to be a good fit at [Q School], I don't think I was for the

community. I wanted it to [be a good fit]; but – I think because I was an Asian American

woman the community clashed, because they saw privilege.

At one time, her car was "vandalized when [she] came out from a parent-teacher conference."

At another time, a student's parent came in because her child had been suspended for bad

behavior, and she yelled at Amanda, saying something like "Your Asians, you get minority

status but you don't have to pay the minority price." "It is so ironic because I was a reduced-

lunch kid." Amada said, "I can relate in many ways, but that is not what people see. Is it the aura

I give off or the vibe? …. But they see privilege." She believed that, though her heart was there,

"the perception [was] powerful," and she was not sure if the perception would ever go away.

Experiences in the current school. Amanda had been in her current position for about a

year. She liked the job because she could be creative with what she did. "It is an assistant

principal position with responsibilities more like a principal," she said, "and we [the programs]

are different structures; kids are here for two and a half hours a day…. It is a far more flexible

[situation] than in the traditional high school settings." Before she came to HG HS, some

programs had always struggled with low enrollment. Now, they did not anymore. "I just love to

connect resources with needs." Amanda said, "Matching the right adviser for the right student

organization; they are doing it, and [there is] the exponential growth in student competitions."

Amanda was proud of her students:

More kids are competing in their areas and getting that experience, owning it, and having

something that they don't get at their home schools. I see that as a double hit because a

kid who didn't really have a place is now soaring and has a place.

And she believed that she worked for a good school system.

Amanda's thoughts. Amanda considered that one of the most important things for leaders was to understand their own strengths and weaknesses and had a team of people with different sets of skills who could complement them. She commented,

> I think of it as your energy bar in a video game. If I have a lot of green, [I am] fine. I am always aware that. But, if I am in the red, I need to ask [for help from] a colleague. And that is what is so great about having a diverse team.

She also believed that "a leader needs to be aware of how and what he or she does things are perceived by the public [and] be ready to make adjustments accordingly." She said, "It's an interesting dance between pushing and making those changes and being aware of what kind of social capital you have."

Amanda considered that a person's awareness and understanding of privilege was developed rather than granted because of his or her membership in historically disadvantaged groups. She commented,

> There are plenty of people of color too [who would say] that: "Race doesn't matter. I see no color." …. We are all on this journey of understanding, and that would be the nascent stage…. I surround myself with people who are at the upper ends, who understand.

She believed that "[she was] not the only one being discriminated against" and there were "privileges that [she did] not have and privileges that [she did] have." Having experienced a great deal of bias and prejudice and life threatening situations, Amanda though that being one of the few Asian American administrators and the only one female Asian American administrator in the district was "high stake," because she was "an easy target" and "wherever [she] went [she was] noticed." "I am discriminated because I am the only," she said. Nonetheless, she believed that "you have to be the change you want in the world." She said,

I'm not a victim to that [discrimination].... I'm talking about hurting kids because if

White kids are growing up and not seen [sic] a variety of role models of different races,

that hurts them. I live it [discrimination]; if this can help, then I will do it; if it in any way

hurts my career along the way, then it was a career that I was not supposed to have. I

don't fear about that. I fear only God.

Fighting against the racialized gendered stereotypes every day in her life, Amanda though that "it

is part of being a human, and it has made [her] who [she is], and that is why [she] believes in the

fight." She said, "It [discrimination] bothers me enough to get me motivated to do something

about it, and the point is that I am doing something about it."

Case 2: Bella

Bella's situation was different from the other participants in the study because she

worked as a half-time support staff person at the school district office and a half-time elementary

school assistant principal. Bella's school, MW ES, was in District E in M state.

Bella's School

Over the 2010-2011 school year MW ES had 568 students and 42 teachers,

administrators, and support staff. The school served a majority of White students (92%). Forty-

two percent of the students received free or reduced lunches. The school district did not meet

AYP in the 2010-2011 school year; however, MW ES did make AYP for that school year. Table

8 presents the demographic and performance data for the school in comparison to the district and

the state.

Table 8

Bella's School-District-State Demographics and Performance Comparison (2010-2011 School Year)

Entity Name	Enrollment	School Title I?	% English Learners	% Free* Lunches	Students Largest Ethnic Group	% Minority	% Asian	Made AYP?
MW ES	568	No	2.0	42.0	White	8.0	1.0	Yes
District E	25,807	N/A	20.0	59.0	White	45.0	1.0	No
M State	1,633,596	N/A	6.0	57.0	White	56.0	3.0	N/A

Note. N/A=Not Applicable; AYP=Adequate Yearly Progress, "*"=free/reduced priced.

Background

Bella was in her fifties. She was a first-generation Asian American. Her husband came from the same Asian ethnic background as Bella. They had two children. Bella regarded herself as "a blue-collar warm, receptive type of person." As a leader, she characterized herself as respectful, "authentic" and "compassionate." She valued lifelong learning and collaboration. She loved children and had high expectations for them.

Upbringing. Bella was born in Asia. Her family immigrated to N state when she was about eleven years old. Her parents had eight children. Back then the family "really did not have the financial means for [the children] to explore anything else other than to go to school and go home." Bella remembered that they "were pretty much swimming and sinking together as siblings" and they all "struggled in schools," but "all of [them] did make it to college." One of her younger sisters was a school principal in N state. Bella said that, from her sister, she saw the possibility that she could make a difference in education as well.

Career trajectory. Bella had been a teacher for 15 years. Before her educational career, she worked as a computer programmer for three years and she did not like it. She went back to school, got her master's degree in education and teaching certificate, and became a teacher. Her first teaching job was in Bake City in M state, when she moved there with her husband. She

taught as an elementary teacher and then as a middle school ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) teacher. When her husband got a job in Summit City they relocated again, and Bella taught in a local middle school there. At that time, Bella was also teaching Sunday schools at her Asian church in Summit City, and the church happened to be located next to the school district building. She was noticed by the district ESOL director who then hired her as a support staff person at the district level. Bella worked as a half-time teacher and half-time support staff person for about one and half years and then full-time support staff for four years. With the superintendent's encouragement Bella completed her leadership credentials.

Experiences as an assistant principal. Bella thought that working as a half-time assistant principal and half-time district support staff person was challenging. "It is not really a half-time and half-time;" she said, "the assistant principalship is not only a new territory but also a multifaceted role; it is very demanding." In the beginning, Bella had a mentor who was assigned by the district. However, the mentorship did not work out. The assigned mentor had "a total different personality and was half-time as well. [The mentor and she] were rarely there at the school at the same time." However, the teachers at MW ES were "very receptive of her as an administrator," and she was able to build a good relationship with them and parents. Due to the half-time and half-time arrangement, Bella had limited interactions with children, but she loved doing extracurricular activities with them. "Seeing their [the children's] satisfaction and seeing their smiles are huge for me," she said.

Bella's thoughts. Bella did not think that her "self-doubt" had disappeared after all these years of being an administrator. Sometimes, she still believed that being an Asian female, speaking English with an accent, and having a "soft communicative style" were "disadvantages" for her as a leader. She worried about the perception of her being "way too soft" in her

collaborative styles with teachers. But, she believed that "there is a difference between complying and sharing leadership." She said,

> I want to develop teacher leaders. When they can make the good decision without me our school will improve…. On the other hand, having them comply would make them afraid of me. Then, every time I try to give feedback the door is shut because they are nervous, anxious, and scared. They can't learn a thing that I'm trying to share. I don't want that.

"We do have to become a team," she said, "a team of learners to continue to improve in serving the parents, the community, the students, and ourselves." Bella did not think that "being authoritative is natural for [her]" and it made her "uncomfortable." She remarked,

> It [being authoritative] makes me feel like that I think myself more superior. It makes the person that I'm dealing with feel uncomfortable because I'm so sophisticated in my language. It feels like that I am separating myself more than connecting with them because they don't speak like that.

However, she did comment that, sometime, "this type of sophisticated languages is needed so that people can be more receptive of the leadership role [she has] to play."

Bella believed that, because of her background in ESOL, she was more sensitive to cultural differences within racial groups. "I value that people are different and that they come from a specific culture." She said, "I try not to go by the stereotypes [and] I have to be cognizant of my own preconceptions." In general, she did not believe that she had been discriminated against in her work because of her identity as an Asian American female administrator. However, she noted that, sometimes, in the meetings, some male colleagues would not even formally introduce themselves to her after she had introduced herself to them. She "could not help but think if that is mainly because [she is] a female or because [she is] an Asian American."

She said, "You cannot really tease out the two." She did not consider the stereotypes of Asian American women an impediment for her leadership work. Rather, she believed that the Asian culture in which she was raised, "a culture that endorses women being submissive, polite, gentle and kind" was opposite to what was needed to be a leader in education to "produce results" and "be effective."

Bella always told her students "Do not give up. See, I have to learn a new language, and if I can go to college, so can you." She was proud of being the only Asian American female administrator within the district, for "[she] can serve as a role model for Asian students, as well as English learners."

Case 3: Catherine

Catherine was the first participant I interviewed in M state. She was an assistant principal at an elementary school, SG ES, in District D.

Catherine's School

Over the 2010-2011 school year SG ES had 734 students and 59 teachers, administrators, and support staff. The school served a majority of White students (86%). The school district did not make AYP on the 2010-2011 school year; however, SG ES did make AYP for that school year. Table 9 presents the demographic and performance data for the school in comparison to the district and the state.

Table 9

Catherine's School-District-State Demographics and Performance Comparison (2010-2011 School Year)

Entity Name	Enrollment	School Title I?	% English Learners	% Free* Lunches	Largest Ethnic Group	% Minority	% Asian	Made AYP?
SG ES	734	No	5.0	30.0	White	14.0	3.0	Yes
District D	7,158	N/A	5.0	51.0	White	21.0	3.0	No
M State	1,633,596	N/A	6.0	57.0	White	56.0	3.0	N/A

Note. N/A=Not Applicable; AYP=Adequate Yearly Progress, "*"=free/reduced priced.

Background

Catherine was in her thirties. She was a 1.5-generation Asian American. Catherine was married and had two children. She considered herself fair and compassionate as a school leader and "driven as a person." She was respectful, supportive and honest, and she was attentive to people's differences. She had high expectations for students, and she had the confidence to make consistent decisions.

Upbringing. Catherine was born in Asia. When she was six years old, her family moved to M state. It was supposed to be a new start for the family, but her parents ended up in divorce. Her mother raised her and her sister alone. Despite of the hardship, her mother always made sure that the children had what they needed. Her mother valued education highly. Catherine considered her mother the most influential person in her life, who had taught her to be hardworking, independent, and respectful. Catherine was the first among all the females in the extended family (including her mother's and grandmother's generations) to go to college.

Catherine grew up in a mostly White neighborhood. The school years were difficult for her as she struggled to fit in; she literally did everything – from cheerleading to book club. Catherine believed that the whole "I don't belong" experiences "kind of forced [her] to grow up a little faster and mature more." Not until college did she begin to realize that she did not need

to be like others; she could be what she was. She said, "My views are going to differ from other people, but that doesn't make it wrong; it's just different. My peers were doing what they were taught. We had different ethics. So, we have grown into different persons."

Career trajectory. Catherine was a first-grade teacher for five years. She became very involved in the curriculum, especially after she got a master's degree in Instructional Technology. She then landed an instructional specialist position at the district level where she supported three schools with their curriculum. She had attended numerous district level meetings and strategic planning sessions that provided her a new perspective of looking at the district as a whole. During her last year as an instructional specialist, the principal at one of the three school she served left, and the assistant principal became the interim principal and was running the school all by herself. Catherine had previously been a teacher at that school, so she was familiar with the school, and she knew the interim principal and had had a good working relationship with her when she was there as a teacher. So, Catherine stepped in and assumed some of the roles as an assistant principal to help. This experience had influenced Catherine's view on the assistant principal position and she actually "fell into it a little bit."

Shortly after, the district had several assistant principal positions open, including the one at her current school. Catherine did not apply for it because she thought that her expertise was in the lower grades and the school served up to the fifth grade. But, the principal ended up calling her and asking her to come in for an interview. Catherine told the principal about the reason why she did not apply. It turned out that the other new assistant principal to be hired had had more experience in higher grades; in that way, they could divide the work and yet complement each other. Catherine accepted the job.

Experiences at her current position. Catherine had been in her current position for almost three years. She enjoyed working with the principal and the other assistant principal. Her principal was supportive:

> We communicate well with each other…. We have mutual respect; she [the principal] knows that I act and make decisions based on what's best for the child. And if I ever have a question I have no problem in asking [her].

And, "rather than being competitive with each other," she had "a nice working relationship" with the other assistant principal. Catherine felt that she could "trust" the other assistant principal and they had worked as a team. From the other assistant principal, she "[had] learned a lot about approaching people in a sweet way and directing everything in a positive light."

Catherine had a good relationship with the parents. But she did have to learn how to establish boundaries with some influential parents. With the other administrators' support, she had "built a filter to [screen] through their [the influential parents'] valid complaints." The instructional aspects of her work were getting better this year. The district had started a coaching model for teacher supervision and evaluations the previous year. At her school, the implementation of the model started with her coaching and evaluating teachers in the lower grades and the other assistant principal coaching and evaluating teachers in the higher grades. Such a division did not turn out to be effective. So, this year, she would be not evaluating teachers whom she was coaching. She thought that made the process more transparent and fair.

Catherine's thoughts. Catherine said that she did miss working in the classroom. That was why she enjoyed substituting in classes for teachers when they were away for professional development. She said,

The funny things that kids do and say, the brilliant ideas they come out with when you

talk to them and have a discussion with them… you feel the immediate connection with

them when you are there in the classroom. I do miss that part a lot.

As for leadership, Catherine believed that her view had changed over the years. She used to

think that she should "know everything and be ready to answer any questions, and be the person

that can help solve any issues brought to her by teachers." Now, she thought that being a leader

was "more about helping people find their answers and come up with their solutions." She

believed that a leader needed to "play different roles, depending on the situations and play [them]

tactfully." She said, "To a great extent, what we do in a school is a public service, and parents

are customers. So, there is a customer satisfaction piece of it that you have to play." She also

believed that a leader needed to be willing to listen: "You may be able to see a situation from an

overview kind of perspective, but, to actually be in it is different; your way may not work the

best."

In how she viewed her identity in relation to her professional life, Catherine saw herself

as an Asian American woman, but not an Asian woman. She considered that the latter was more

associated with "the more traditional" Asian culture where "women don't work, don't have

careers, and don't move up and become CEOs or in leadership roles even though they can

outperform some of the men." "I want to have a purpose in life more than just being a mother

and a housekeeper." Catherine said, "The American piece of it [the identity of Asian American

woman] puts in the opportunity that the whole point of coming to America affords to you." But,

she valued the hardworking ethic and family honor that she had inherited, she believed, from the

Asian culture. Catherine did think that she had been discriminated in her professional life

because of her race-ethnicity or gender. She said that she was aware of people's assumptions

about Asians being "smart" and "good at math or science," and she did report people making

comments to her like, "How do you know how to do that? Is it just in your Asian blood?" But

she did not feel "offended [by such remarks], because it's in a positive light. And [she thought]

that there [were] a lot of other races and ethnicities that [got] a bad reputation and that [was]

what [was] so offensive."

Case 4: Diana

Diana was the first participant in N state who responded and said yes to my invitation for

participation email. She was a principal of an elementary school, DL ES, in District A.

Diana's School

Over the 2012-2013 school year DL ES had 494 students and 24 teachers. Located in

Northeast Marshall City, Diana's school served a majority of Hispanic/Latino students (82.6%),

and Asian students accounted for only 11.7% of the total enrollment. About ninety-five percent

of the students received free or reduced lunches. During the 2012-2013 school year NC ES did

not make AYP. Table 10 presents the demographic and performance data for the school in

comparison to the district and the state.

Table 10

Diana's School-District-State Demographics and Performance Comparison (2012-2013 School Year)

Entity Name	Enrollment	School Title I?	% English Learners	% Free* Lunches	Largest Ethnic Group	% Minority	Number of Teachers	Made AYP?
DL ES	494	Yes	36.6	94.5	Hispanic/Latino	99.0	24	No
District A	655,494	N/A	26.1	75.3	Hispanic/Latino	90.8	31,417	No
N State	6,226,989	N/A	21.6	58.0	Hispanic/Latino	74.5	272,684	N/A

Note. N/A=Not Applicable; AYP=Adequate Yearly Progress, "*"=free/reduced priced.

Background

Diana was in her late forties. She was a third-generation Asian American. Her husband came from the same Asian ethnic background as Diana's. They had a son. Diana considered herself a kind, caring person. She worked hard. She was approachable, and she was a good listener and collaborator. She enjoyed being with children.

 Upbringing. Diana was born and grew up in a different state. She went to schools with high Asian student populations. Her parents valued education. They expected their children to honor the Asian culture, be respectful, and be kind. Her mother spent her whole career as an elementary schoolteacher. Diana said that she was surrounded by educators; in addition to her mother, her younger brother is a middle school instructional technology teacher, her sister-in-law is an elementary schoolteacher, and one of her cousin is a high school math teacher.

 Career trajectory. Diana was a teacher for 14 years. She taught in a different state before she relocated to and started teaching in District A. She then worked for the local district division for a short time. She did not like it, because she felt disconnected from the students. During that time other administrators at the division office encouraged her to get her leadership credentials. Diana said she was not really interested, but, because some of her friends were getting their leadership credentials she thought that it would not be a bad idea to join them and get hers. After completing her leadership credential studies, she was a special education assistant principal for eight years. Diana had applied for principal positions in the past and was not successful. About a year prior to the study, she was chosen by the district to be the principal of her current school.

 Her years as an assistant principal. Diana said that her first few years as a special education assistant principal were not easy. Her principal then, because of health problems, was

unable to provide much support. However, the principal did try to involve her in the school administration as much as possible, such as participating in parent conferences and budget management. Diana continued her own learning by "observing what and how [the principal] talked, how [the principal] treated parents, and how [the principal] organized the staff." Overall, Diana had good experiences working with the teachers. There was only one negative incident, Diana recalled. It was in her fifth year. There was some smoke in the school building; she investigated and did not find it to be a concern, so she told teachers to air out the classrooms. One of the teachers yelled at her, saying that she did not know what she was doing and they were going to overwrite her. Diana thought that was disrespectful.

In the later years of Diana's assistant principalship, because of budget cuts, she had to work at two schools. Her experiences with the two principals were very different. At one school, the principal did not ask her to take on other roles besides those related to special education. The principal said to her, "I know you are only here one or two days a week. I'm not going to ask you to do more." Diana believed that she "ended up not really knowing the students and not knowing a lot about what was going on at the school." Whereas, at the other school, the principal "really depended on [her] to help with many things." The school was much smaller, so the principal did not have any support staff. "I was overwhelmed with the additional responsibilities that the principal had put on me." Diana said, "But, looking back on it, I understand that she [the principal] did what she had to do. And I learned to juggle between responsibilities as well from that experience."

Her first year as a principal. Almost a year into her principalship at DL ES, Diana believed that she had, together with the teachers, created a positive school culture of transparency and collaboration: the teachers and administration are no longer at odds as they had

been previously. She believed that maintaining a professional relationship with teachers helps

her to do her job as an administrator, and there needed to be a balance between being relational

and being task-oriented. She was trying not to micromanage her staff, and she wanted teachers

to feel confident and empowered to solve problems, knowing she was there to support them.

While Diana continued improving her Spanish language ability in this predominantly Latino

setting, she was also learning more about the financial aspects of her job.

      Diana's thoughts. Diana reported that if it were not for the encouragement from her

principal and other administrators and the opportunities that they had given to her, she would not

have gone any further with her education and gotten into administration. As a teacher, she

thought administrators were "paper pushers." Working in the division office helped her gain a

different perspective in understanding the bigger picture of running a school. Diana believed

that her upbringing had had a great influence on how she thought and behaved as an

administrator. In her mind, everything she did as a principal reflected not only on herself but

also her family, so if she failed to do a good job as an administrator it brought dishonor to her

family. With an upbringing emphasizing that "you do not say anything bad to people, you only

say nice things," she found confronting people "an inner turmoil." But, sometimes, she worried

that being nice could "backfire" on her because people might not take her seriously.

      Diana said that she had not thought of herself as an Asian American female principal, and

she did not perceive that her race-ethnicity made a difference in her being an administrator.

However, Diana did think about gender. When she was growing up she never had a female

principal: it was always a male principal and a female assistant principal, so, she never thought

that she would be a principal one day. And she thought that gender was probably the reason that,

when she was still an assistant principal, a few students' fathers who were Armenians would not

want to speak with her about their children's disciplinary issues. She believed these fathers

thought discipline to be a male prerogative.

Case 5: Elaine

Two of the eleven participants in this study were middle school assistant principals.

Elaine was one of the two. Her school, TH MS, was in District A in N state.

Elaine's School

Over the 2012-2013 school year, TH MS had 1,918 students and 81 teachers. Located in

Northeast National City, Elaine's school served a majority of Hispanic/Latino students (99.2%).

About eighty-eight percent of the students received free or reduced lunches. In the 2012-2013

school year TH MS did not made AYP. Table 11 presents the demographic and performance

data for the school in comparison to the district and the state.

Table 11

Elaine's School-District-State Demographics and Performance Comparison (2012-2013 School Year)

Entity Name	Enrollment	School	Students				Teachers	Made AYP?
		Title I?	% English Learners	% Free* Lunches	Largest Ethnic Group	% Minority	Number of Teachers	
TH MS	1,918	Yes	19.0	88.3	Hispanic/Latino	99.5	81	No
District A	655,494	N/A	26.1	75.3	Hispanic/Latino	90.8	31,417	No
N State	6,226,989	N/A	21.6	58.0	Hispanic/Latino	74.5	272,684	N/A

Note. N/A=Not Applicable; AYP=Adequate Yearly Progress, "*"=free/reduced priced.

Background

Elaine was in her fifties. She was a third-generation Asian American. She considered

herself a straightforward person. She was good at anticipating situations and planning

accordingly beforehand. She had a sense of humor, liked to have fun, and laughed a lot. When

it came to the children in her school, nothing was too trivial for her to not take it seriously.

Elaine said, "If someone [a student] takes the time to come up to you and tell you something,

then ask questions and find out what's going on. Don't say 'stop tattling' without finding out what's going on."

Upbringing. Elaine's parents had three children, and she was the youngest. Her father was a gardener, and her mother stayed home to take care of the family. Her parents made sure that their children had good educations. Elaine said that she never doubted that she would go to college. Growing up, Elaine was a shy child, and she was always one of the quietest children in her classroom. She went to an Asian language school for only three years, and in the rest of her school years she attended regular public schools where the number of Asian students was quite small. Most of her childhood friends were White. The family attended an Asian church, but at home the culture was not strictly Asian. All the females in the extended family, her siblings and cousins, became teachers. Elaine said that she just followed the track and became a teacher as well.

Career trajectory. Elaine was a teacher for 12 years. She taught home economics and introductory computer classes. Elaine said that she did not know that she had "these leadership qualities such as planning, seeing the big picture, and problem solving," but her principal did. Her principal kept "pushing" her and providing opportunities for her to take on more leadership roles. She became a grade counselor and worked with her principal in that capacity for six years. In 1996, Elaine became an assistant principal in the same school where she had taught and worked in that capacity for six years, but with a different principal. She has been in her current school for about one and a half years.

Prior experiences as an assistant principal. The learning curve for the initial couple of years was huge, Elaine recalled. She worked 12 to 14 hours a day. She was learning all the rules and regulations about special education, plus "taking care of tons of other things she was in

charge of." On the other hand, because it was the same school in which she had first taught as a teacher and then worked as a grade counselor, she knew most of the teachers and was familiar with the daily operation and the school culture. She thus had less of a learning curve and adjustment on those aspects of the position. However, she quickly discovered that becoming an administrator in the same school where she taught had drawbacks as well. After she became an assistant principal, teachers who used to be her friends no longer socialized with her, and one of them who was a teacher union representative just stopped talking to her altogether. Elaine took it hard, but accepted it as "part of the job." There was another situation in her first-year as an assistant principal. Some of the special education teachers fell behind on their individualized education program (IEP) plans and on scheduling psychological evaluations for their students. Elaine and her principal were held responsible for those tasks by the district. Eventually, Elaine was able to get those teachers on track, but even today, she felt disappointed: "They [the teachers] were my colleagues and they have a job to do. Why didn't they do their job? When I was a teacher I did my job."

However, over the six-year period of her assistant principalship, Elaine reported a good relationship with the teachers. She supported them so that they could do their jobs, and "if [she] could do it in an easier way for them, [she] would do it in an easier way for them." She recalled that, from time to time, she was told by other administrators that she was "babying" or "giving too much" to her teachers. Elaine disagreed:

> I provide them what they need to do their job. And if I want to spend my personal time doing something for them, it's really not anyone else's concern. If it were a concern, it's mine; I don't see it is a problem.

Elaine said that it made her feel good when she could solve problems for teachers.

Experiences at her current school. Elaine had been in her current school for one and a half years. She liked working here. She commented that she shared with the other three assistant principals "the same philosophy about teaching, discipline and the students as well as about how to work with kids and teachers," and they could depend on each other. It took her some time to learn her principal's way of doing things. "In the very beginning when he said no I was 'ugh.'" Elaine said, "Then, I realize that all I need to do is to ask again. After he thought about it he would be okay with it." She believed that having a principal who "had been in her seat going through all the problems" and "understand[ing] her jobs" was helpful. Compared to her previous school, students at her present school were more difficult to discipline, but she was able to work with parents, handling issues and problems well. At the time of the study, she was in charge of the master schedule, discipline, and testing. Because she planned to retire the year following the study, she had been training the test coordinator to take on the testing part of her work.

Elaine's thoughts. Elaine said that she never thought of becoming an administrator; that was not something her generation would ever aspire to do. It was a time when a female could become only "a secretary, a teacher, or a nurse." In contrast to her principal who focused on helping other Asian Americans to assume leadership roles, she wanted to support "anybody that is good to get into administration, " and she was proud that she had helped a few along the way in her professional life. Elaine recalled that, when she was still working as a teacher under an Asian female principal, other teachers would often come up to her and say, "Dr. P [the principal] ought to know ---," assuming that "all Asians talk to each other or something." She thought that was funny.

Elaine thought that gender did play a role in how people perceived her as an administrator: "If I were a man, they would say I was stern; but as a female, I'm seen as rude." She believed that people's perceptions of Asian American female administrators were influenced by their prior experiences with them. For instance, her predecessor was an Asian American female who "cried a lot" and "rarely focused on content in an evaluation meeting." So, when Elaine took over the position, the principal and the other administrators initially "thought that [she] was just going to be like the previous one," and they kept asking her, "Are you going to be okay in handling this [meeting]? Are you going to be okay with the write-up?" Elaine thought that being a female should not be an excuse for dodging one's responsibilities as a school administrator in situations when one had to confront someone for not doing their jobs. "Time has changed." Elaine said, "I don't see limitations because of one's race and gender. It's whatever you want to be. I think the limitation is more on personal limitations, limitations you set for yourself and choices you make."

Case 6: Garcia

Garcia was the other participant in the study who worked as a middle school assistant principal. Her school, EP MS, was in District B in N state.

Garcia's School

Over the 2012-2013 school year EP MS had 795 students and 33 teachers. Located in an upper-middle class neighborhood, the school served a majority of White students. Asian students accounted for 8.7% of the enrollment. EP MS, as well as the other schools within District B, made AYP in the 2012-2013 school year. Table 12 presents the demographic and performance data for the school in comparison to the district and the state.

Table 12

Garcia's School-District-State Demographics and Performance Comparison (2012-2013 School Year)

Entity Name	Enrollment	School Title I?	% English Learners	% Free* Lunches	Largest Ethnic Group	% Minority	Number of Teachers	Made AYP?
EP MS	795	No	3.9	10.4	White	46.2	33	Yes
District B	3,415	N/A	5.7	11.7	White	46.1	142	Yes
N State	6,226,989	N/A	21.6	58.0	Hispanic/Latino	74.5	272,684	N/A

Note. N/A=Not Applicable; AYP=Adequate Yearly Progress, "*"=free/reduced priced.

Background

Garcia was in her thirties. She was a second-generation Asian American. Her husband came from the same Asian ethnic background as Garcia's. They had two children. As a young administrator, Garcia considered herself a very democratic and understanding person. She enjoyed children. She wanted to lead her own school one day, a "rainbow" school with a diversity of student populations and a holistic curriculum for life education.

Upbringing. Garcia was born in Asia. When she was three months old, her family moved to N State where she started school. Garcia's parents did not speak English and had to learn the language when they immigrated to the country, but they had high expectations for the children and valued education very much. Garcia's mother chose to stay at home to look after Garcia and make sure that she had a good upbringing. In Garcia's eyes, her parents were always supportive to her.

Career trajectory. Garcia had her first teaching experiences when she went on a mission trip during college to Thailand where she taught English for two months. Garcia thought that trip had let her "find out a lot about herself." After completing her undergraduate degree in journalism, Garcia went on for graduate studies in education to become a teacher. Garcia taught three years as an elementary schoolteacher and then worked as a school-site program coordinator

for the district for three years. During those years Garcia worked with both low- and high-poverty schools.

In the meantime, Garcia became more involved with her Asian church, and the church members said that they would like to start a school. Garcia believed that in order to make that happen they needed "someone with a legitimate degree, training, and experience," a leader. With that in mind, Garcia went on and got her doctoral degree in educational leadership. After that, Garcia applied to two assistant principal positions and was offered both. Garcia chose her current school because it was a "better fit" – it was closer to her house, and with two little children at home, it had fewer time-constraints compared to the other position in a charter school.

Her first-year as an assistant principal. Garcia had been in her present school as an assistant principal for less than a year. Garcia claimed that the experience was "scary" and "intimidating." She constantly felt the pressure to prove her leadership capacity to teachers. Garcia said that her awareness of the stereotypes associated with Asian American women made the need to "perform" more urgent, considering her current school serves a predominantly White population.

> As a young Asian American woman, I felt and still feel that I have to perform and to prove myself to others. We have a lot of White people at the school. For the most part, they are fantastic. But, there are expectations of Asian women – we are docile, we are weak, we are quiet, and we can be pushed around. I am dealing with many of this kind of battles.

Garcia also commented that, as an administrator, her younger appearance (than her age) sometimes led parents and teachers to think that she was too young for the position. In other

words, for some, she was too inexperienced to handle the job. Garcia believed that was unfair.

Nevertheless, she thought that, in general, she had a good relationship with teachers and parents,

and as long as she showed that she really knew what she was doing she would be able to gain

"the respect and legitimacy." She also thought that this was her first year and it took time for

teachers and parents to know her and develop their trust in her as a leader.

Garcia's thoughts. Garcia believed that she had been shaped by her upbringing and

teaching and administrative experiences. The hard work and self-motivation that her parents

instilled in her made her always want to do well in everything she did; that mentality probably

caused her to experience anxiety as she was trying to establish her legitimacy in her present

school. Her first teaching experiences at a magnet school greatly influenced her vision for her

own school – a school where students would learn to appreciate differences among each other

and teachers would focus on educating students as whole person. Garcia considered that it was a

loss to all children, not just Asian students, if the only role models students saw were White

individuals or the only cultures they were exposed to were associated with the White, dominant

culture; that would lead ignorance. Garcia liked the supervision part of being an administrator

because that was when she could get out of her office and interact with students, getting to know

them more. Garcia thought that she had a supportive principal who was "very open to questions

and very patient" and supportive staff who had been at the school longer than her and from

whom she could ask for help.

Garcia considered herself to be a democratic leader, and she thought that sometimes

people mistook that as a sign of weakness. But, she believed that a democratic process was a

more productive way to bring people on board with the decision to be made. Garcia wanted to

excel in what she was doing, but quietly. That was why Garcia thought that a position like the

former Chancellor of Washington DC, Michelle Rhee, was not something for her. Garcia

considered that her experiencing of discrimination and injustice as an Asian American female

administrator nowadays was more subtle as she felt that it was difficult to pin down the cause of

such experiences to her race or gender or age. She thought that connecting with other Asian

American women administrators helped her to learn how to navigate the system. However, such

a network was not available in District B. Garcia liked to think of herself as being one of the few

Asian American women in educational administration who could empower other Asian

American women who aspire for leadership. She found mentoring other women in her Asian

church was "humbling and exciting."

Case 7: Helena

There were two women in the study worked as high school administrators – Amanda in

M state and Helena in N state. Helena's school, NC HS, was a charter school in District A.

Helena's School

Over the 2012-2013 school year NC HS had 483 students and 21 teachers. Located in

Central Marshall City, Helena's school served a majority of Hispanic/Latino students (98.4%).

About ninety-seven percent of the students received free or reduced lunches. In the 2012-2013

school year NC HS did not made AYP. Table 13 presents the demographic and performance

data for the school in comparison to the district and the state.

Table 13

Helena's School-District-State Demographics and Performance Comparison (2012-2013 School Year)

Entity Name	Enrollment	School Title I?	Students				Teachers Number of Teachers	Made AYP?
			% English Learners	% Free* Lunches	Largest Ethnic Group	% Minority		
NC HS	483	Yes	7.7	97.4	Hispanic/Latino	100	21	No
District A	655,494	N/A	26.1	75.3	Hispanic/Latino	90.8	31,417	No
N State	6,226,989	N/A	21.6	58.0	Hispanic/Latino	74.5	272,684	N/A

Note. N/A=Not Applicable; AYP=Adequate Yearly Progress, "*"=free/reduced priced.

Background

Helena was in her thirties. She was a second-generation Asian American. Her husband came from the same Asian ethnic background as Helena's. Helena characterized herself as a caring and fair person. She was devoted and has a clear philosophy about education. She loved children and wanted the best for them. She was well respected in her school, and she was an experienced administrator.

Upbringing. Helena was born and raised in Marshall City. Helena's parents made conscious efforts to preserve their Asian-ethnic culture at home. Growing up, Helena was not allowed to speak English at home in front of them, and she did not learn English until she was in kindergarten. Her parents told her, "You are going to maintain the [ethnic] culture at home because that's the only place you are going to get it. Outside of home, you will have plenty of opportunities to assimilate and learn the American culture." Helena's mother was a successful business woman, and she did everything to ensure that Helena and her sister had a good education and opportunities to try out their interests outside school.

From a younger age, Helena had been very self-disciplined. She remembered that her parents never pressured her on grades because they knew she would be the first person to be disappointed, if she received a grade less than A. When she was in high school she started to

show her leadership capacity: she was the conductor for a youth choir of 45 children aged from 5 to 17 for two years, managing their practices and annual performances within the state and abroad.

Although Helena attended schools with diverse student populations, her circle of friends was ethnically homogeneous. In her K-12 education, Helena reported no encounters with explicit discrimination, injustice, or negative association related to her race-ethnicity and gender. The only incident where she believed she was discriminated against because of her race-ethnicity and gender occurred in college. She attended a study-abroad program with White female students in Europe. Whenever she made a suggestion for the group, it was always ignored or dismissed. Helena thought that she was being projected as the stereotypes of an Asian women being submissive, and she felt belittled and her voice was not heard.

Career trajectory. Helena started her career as an elementary schoolteacher and she taught for four years. During the last year of her teaching, she was getting her administrative credentials, and one of the professors in the leadership program told her that she would be a great person to coordinate all the events in high schools. It was like "a seed planted," and Helena thought that it was possible for her to be an administrator at the high school level. When one of her friends, a teacher at NC HS, told her that the school was looking for an assistant principal, Helena "looked into the school and was really invested in the school's mission." So, she applied, but she was told by the assistant principal that she was not the kind of person they were looking for: she did not have any high school experience. It was very upsetting for Helena because in her whole heart she felt that she could do it, and they did not even give her an opportunity to explain herself. So, she wrote a long email back to the assistant principal and then to the principal. In the email, she acknowledged that it would be difficult to see any potential in someone who had

only an elementary school background, but she also made a case for her passion for the school's

mission, willingness to learn, and adaptability to differing conditions. She was called back for an

interview by the principal. After several rounds of interviews, she got the job. She was an

assistant principal for NC HS for five years until about a year prior to the study; when the

principal left, she became the principal.

Helena was not interested in pursuing an administrative position in a regular district

school. She said,

> As a teacher I had witnessed lots of bureaucracy and lots of bad teachers; I was getting
>
> very burnt out. I felt like that I was doing a good job in my classroom, but I didn't see all
>
> my colleagues doing the same thing. I wanted to leave that and join the charter [school]
>
> movement where it's very mission-oriented and you have got people invested in the same
>
> goals and the mission.

Helena noted that she was very aware that she did not have much credibility back when she had

applied for the assistant principal position. But she believed that her previous successful

teaching experience in high-poverty schools proved her abilities as an effective educator. "Good

teaching is good teaching, regardless of whether you are teaching a fourth grader or an eleventh

grader." She said, "I was a little bit scared, but I was more excited because I knew I could do a

good job, or I was willing to learn whatever it takes to do a good job. That trumped my fears."

The first few years as an assistant principal. When Helena started as an assistant

principal at NC HS, the school was only in its fourth year. There were a lot uncertainties,

academically and operationally. For Helena, the first two or three years involved learning a lot

of administrative tasks. She put in extra hours – countless late nights and overnights – just to

learn operating a charter school, a skill for which none of the administrators had received formal

training. In these earlier years as an assistant principal, establishing credibility was extremely crucial for Helena. Helena remembered:

> There is one teacher who has her credentials in English, math and science for high school and is very skilled; all of our teachers look up to her as an instructional master. I had to evaluate her my first year. She didn't like me. I think she may have wanted to apply for the assistant principal position. She looked [at] me as this random person with no high school background who came and now got to evaluate her. She gave me a hard time. Before our meeting she sent me all her evaluations from previous years. In that way, she was telling me: I want you to look at these before you write my evaluation. I am a good teacher and I don't want you to give me any bad scores.

And there was another incident with another teacher in her second year as an assistant principal:

> When I told her [the teacher] that I would be her evaluator, she almost cried. She was like, "You?" I was like, "Yeah." She wanted someone who had a strong content and grade background; I was not seen as someone like that.

Helena did not take these incidents personally or get discouraged. She "tried to do whatever [she] could to help teachers forget that [she] only taught elementary school." Knowing she might not have the same level of content knowledge as some of her teachers, she would focus a lot on instructional strategies, when providing feedback to teachers. On situations where she had to address a content-specific issue, Helena said,

> Before I meet with the teacher, if I know I want to talk to them specifically, I need to have that credibility. I would actually study that standard or that unit and make sure I know exactly what it is, so when I am talking to them I can carry that conversation and understand what they are saying, and ask them questions that's very content specific.

She tried to be fair and considerate: her evaluation was based on multiple class observations and was supported with evidence; she always balanced constructive suggestions with highlights on teachers' positive aspects; and she made sure that teachers had multiple opportunities to address the areas that needed improvement. Helena said that she did it with a lot of care, and her intention was to help teachers grow. In a nonthreatening way she tried to avoid making people feel bad about themselves.

With so much to learn in the first year, Helena did not get to build relationships with teachers and staff. In the second year, both the principal and the other assistant principal left. Helena was all by herself. Even though there was an interim principal assigned to the school, she was rarely available. Helena said that was "the hardest year" in her six-year administrative career at NC HS, and she was left with "no choice but to learn very quickly about the importance of relationships. The school was just a big mess because there was no leadership." While she was doing everything to keep the school running, some people were trying to replace the leadership with a whole new administration. Helena did not quit and leave; instead, she "built a very strong coalition with teachers." Through that hardship and after all the years she remained with the school, Helena had really earned teachers' support. For instance, the veteran teacher in the incident mentioned previously who had disliked Helena was now her assistant principal and apologized all the time for how she had treated Helena the first year.

Becoming a principal for the school. The support from her teachers was the reason Helena took the principal position. She had other personal responsibilities when the principal position became available. Helena recalled that she "was very overwhelmed and was not in a mental space to go through the interview process to be a principal." However, she thought:

I owed it to them [teachers] to step up into the principal position rather than leave and have someone else from the outside come in. I know my school, the programs, their [the teachers'] problems, their [the teachers'] strengths, and the staff. That knowledge, you can't just get when you are a new person. So, I felt like it was almost an obligation for me to be the principal.

More importantly, having experienced the second year and knowing how "disruptive it could be for the school to have another leadership turnover," Helena believed that it was her responsibility to step up to the principal role and continue to help the school grow.

Helena became the principal for the school almost a year prior to the study. She had created a supportive working environment and strong staff morale. At the time of the study, she was focusing on building a student culture. Working collaboratively with teachers and staff members, she had implemented a new school-wide student discipline plan and developed a character-building curriculum. However, her college counselor quitted recently, and she was busy trying to hire a new person. Helena felt a little frustrated because her time in the classrooms supporting teachers was reduced because of the hiring.

Helena's thoughts. Helena considered that her five years' experiences as an assistant principal had made her grow a lot as a leader. For Helena, education was "a place of service," and she was here to serve the children through supporting teachers. She thought that her faith and optimism had helped her go through challenges and stay strong. Helena said there were many moments that she just wanted to give up, and then she would remind herself that "God put me in this position because He knew I could do it; He knew I could handle it" and that gave her strength to go on. She did not dwell in those moments, and she tried to look at things from different perspectives. For instance, rather than questioning why she had to go through that

worst second year, she reflected on it and thought that "the purpose of that year was for [her] to see examples of bad leadership and learn from experiencing it."

Helena did not want to be perceived as an Asian American or [her ethnicity] American, but as an individual. She believed that as long as she was true to who she was and was consistent with what she did and how she did it, her race-ethnicity and gender would not make people see her less professionally. She thought that her experiences of growing up with two immigrant parents and learning English as a second language had allowed her to help teachers to identify challenges that their English-learner students faced. On the other hand, she thought, personally, that she was very close to her ethnic roots. All her extended family remained in Asian. She grew up more tied to her ethnic community than some of the other participants.

Case 8: Irene

As noted in Chapter 3, the assistant principal position at the elementary schools in District A in N state was designated for special education. Two women participants in the study served in that capacity. Irene was one of the two.

Irene's Schools

The three elementary schools for which Irene was responsible were Alpha ES, Beta ES, and Sigma ES. All three schools served predominantly Hispanic/Latino students (99%, 98.3% and 98.5%). More than sixty percent of the students in each of the three schools received free or reduced price lunches. During the 2012-2013 school year over 100 special education students were enrolled in the three schools. None of the three schools made AYP that school year. Table 14 shows the demographic and performance data for the three schools in comparison to the district.

Table 14

Irene's Schools-District Demographics and Performance Comparison (2012-2013 School Year)

Entity	Enrollment	Largest Ethnic Group	% Minority	% English Learners	% Free* Lunches	Made AYP?	# of Special Education Student
Alpha ES	341	Hispanic/Latino	99.4	62.4	92.1	No	27
Beta ES	162	Hispanic/Latino	100	80.9	87.8	No	---
Sigma ES	796	Hispanic/Latino	99.7	64.4	95.5	No	83
District A	955,494	Hispanic/Latino	90.8	26.1	75.3	No	44,718

Note. "---": Not available, AYP=Adequate Yearly Progress; "*"=free/reduced priced.

Background

Irene was in her forties. She was a third-generation Asian American. Irene regarded herself as a lifetime learner. "You never stop learning," she said, "and you never stop getting better. If you don't try and do your best every time, then what's the point [in doing it]?" She was "passionate about her work" and she worked hard. She was approachable and is a good listener and collaborator.

Upbringing. Irene was born in Marshall City. Her parents had four children, and she was the youngest. Unlike her older siblings who grew up in an Asian neighborhood, Irene grew up in a Hispanic/Latino neighborhood. She did not have friends of her own ethnicity until she started high school. She spent one year at an Asian school, and that was the only connection she had with the Asian community. She could speak Spanish but not her Asian ethnic language.

Career trajectory. Irene was a classroom teacher for 10 years. Then she worked outside the classroom as a literacy coach for four years. As a literacy coach, she was responsible for creating professional development for teachers and administrators as well as supporting teachers in implementing the adopted reading series for the district. Subsequently with the encouragement of her principal, Irene went back to school and got her leadership credentials. When an assistant principal position opened up at her school, she applied for and got the job. She worked as a regular assistant principal, under the same principal, for three years. Since

2009, due to district budget cuts, Irene had been a special education assistant principal, working with multiple schools on special education issues.

Prior experiences as a regular assistant principal. Irene's first assistant principalship was in the school where she had worked as a classroom teacher and then a literacy coach. "The school was like a family to me because I knew everyone so well," Irene said. She lived in the neighborhood where many of the students' families lived. "I had a good relationship with the parents. Many of them saw me and felt that was a connection," she said. But she also commented that such a practice of promoting a teacher to administration within the same school was atypical in the district and the first year was difficult for her and the teachers as she was transitioning into her new role.

> The difficulty came, when I had to evaluate my friends. At the very beginning, even though they knew what my position was academically, emotionally for them and for myself, it was very difficult…. The process [supervision and evaluation] was more tentative, and it was harder to address it in a friendly but productive manner. In transition, I had to very much separate work from play. For the most part it went well, but there were some instances where some of my friends would take my evaluations very critically and very personally. I had to clarify what it meant socially from what it meant professionally…. The first year was the toughest.

There was another incident. Irene was giving instructional feedback to a teacher who was also her friend, and she remembered the teacher's reaction.

> The teacher said to her: "Well, you know, if you were my boss, I'd be worried." "But I am your boss." I said. She [the teacher] kind of stopped. I then said "*We* will work on it. So, let's move forward." And she did not say anything…. I didn't get that comment from

her again, but there was definitely some transition for her and some learning for her as
well.

Nonetheless, Irene had a strong relationship with her principal. "He is my mentor," Irene said,
"and he modeled what I wanted to see in a principal." She watched him doing collaborative
coaching and interacting with different people in the school, and she learned a lot about being a
leader from him.

Experiences as a special education assistant principal. Irene had worked as a special
education assistant principal for five years. Over this period she had worked with different
schools. At the time of the study she had been with her three current schools for two years now.
Because Sigma ES was her biggest school among the three, every week, she typically spent two
and half days there. She also spent one and half days in Alpha ES, and one day in the smallest
school, Beta ES. There were times when she had to commute back and forth between schools
within a day if there was a specific need.

Because of the nature of her position, Irene had limited contact with the general
education teachers and limited involvement with other things and activities going on in the
schools. She commended,

> Being at multiple schools is very difficult. I don't have the connection with teachers.
> Sometimes, I don't even know their name. And they don't know who I am…. For
> instance, there was this one meeting where teachers were arriving one at a time. And
> when a teacher came in, I thought [that] she was a parent. I introduced myself, and she
> said: "I know who you are." …. I felt badly about not knowing my teachers.

However, with special education teachers, Irene felt more confident. "I have always developed a good rapport with them. And when it comes to improving instruction, it [giving constructive criticism] is not a problem," she said.

Aware of the positional limitations, Irene relied on every opportunity she had with the general education teachers to create a positive relationship with them. Whenever she had a conference with a general education teacher in situations where a general education student had been experiencing some difficulty behaviorally, academically, or in health, she made sure that she had provided "a venue for discussion and collaboration among [them] where [she] could give [her] opinions or what [she] thought or knew – shared knowledge." Irene said her suggestions had been "readily received most of the time."

Irene also talked about the challenge of excessive documentation required by her job. She was supposed to have a person at each school site to help her with all the paperwork, but she ended up with none. She said,

> I am struggling getting the paperwork out within the appropriate timeline and following
>
> through with everything. The timelines are very difficult because they are legal. I don't
>
> have a person there to contact, connect, and keep me informed as to, "A parent is upset,"
>
> or "A parent wants an IEP meeting"…. It is very difficult.

Irene's thoughts. Irene understood that, as an administrator, confrontational situations were unavoidable, but she still believed that it was "emotionally draining." She wanted to be a principal someday. She mentioned that the teachers and staff in the school where she had her first assistant principalship actually had told her that they would love to have her as their principal. However, Irene preferred a different place:

Knowing what I know in the transition from a teacher to an assistant principal, I would rather go into a school that does not know me so well and where I would not have to reestablish that this is my profession and this is my personal life. I think it is better that way.

At her current position as a special education assistant principal, she believed that the impact she had on the general education teachers was limited. She said, "When you're at two to four schools and you're supervising only special education [personnel] they [general education teachers] don't necessarily see you as their supervisor, even though they know that you are academically."

When asked how she thought about her identity in relation to her professional lives, Irene said,

I don't separate, say, the Asian part and the American part. I'm very proud of having that [Asian] ancestry or culture, and I enjoy it, but I also enjoy everything else. I feel lucky enough that I have both [the Asian and American cultures].

She believed that as she grew older she "ha[d] connected more with the Asian community and [her] Asian culture" and "c[a]me to accept [herself] more." Irene did not think that people have challenged her professionally because of her race-ethnicity or gender. But she commented that there had been occasions when she was told by parents that "[she] couldn't relate" because she did not have her own children. Irene felt "that was very hurtful." She said, "I have nieces. When they were younger I would think how I would want them to be treated [in school]. So, even though I don't have my own [children], I can relate." But later, she also said,

Sometimes, I think, for the positions of principal and assistant principal, not having children makes it easier, in the sense that you have a lot of time that you could commit to

the job. But, that's not always mentally good. There are definitely pluses to having

children and being an educator.

As for Asian American women, Irene believed that, nowadays, they had more opportunities to

have their own careers and be what they aspire to; however, "there [wa]s not enough of them" in

educational leadership.

Case 9: Joanna

Joanna was the other participant (out of two) in the study who worked as a special

education assistant principal in District A in N state.

Joanna's Schools

The three elementary schools for which Joanna was responsible were Spring ES, Summer

ES, and Autumn ES. Two of the three schools served predominantly Hispanic/Latino students

(99.9% and 98.3%), and the remaining school serves predominantly Asian students (53.4%).

More than sixty percent of the students in each of the three schools received free or reduced

lunches. During the 2012-2013 school year over 100 special education students were enrolled in

the three schools. None of the three schools made AYP that school year. Table 15 shows the

demographic and performance data for the three schools in comparison to the district.

Table 15

Joanna's Schools-District Demographics and Performance Comparison (2012-2013 School Year)

Entity	Enrollment	Largest Ethnic Group	% Minority	% English Learners	% Free* Lunches	Made AYP?	# of Special Education Student
Spring ES	752	Hispanic/Latino	100	41.4	92.7	No	79
Summer ES	358	Hispanic/Latino	100	56.7	87.3	No	15
Autumn ES	238	Asian	97.1	26.5	64.8	No	13
District A	655,494	Hispanic/Latino	90.8	26.1	75.3	No	44,718

Note. Asian=Asian alone; AYP=Adequate Yearly Progress; "*"=free/reduced priced.

Background

Joanna was in her fifties. She was a second-generation Asian American. She was married and had two children. Joanna considered herself a passionate person and a constant learner. She was sharp, articulate, and a quick thinker. She believed in social justice and understood educational equity was "a very difficult battle." Joanna said,

> We know that our kids don't come to us out of isolation. They come with a whole party and our ability to impact that whole party, sometimes, is very limited. I get all that, but the fact that you have pockets of success where on paper it shouldn't be successful tells you it can be done. It's about putting the right people in the right place at the right time.

She was confident about her curriculum knowledge and considered that "[she] came in at a good time because of the shift of principals as instructional leaders in education." She loved being around students, and that was why she thought that she would never leave the school site to become an administrator at the district level where she would lose her connection with students.

Upbringing. Joanna was born in a northern state in the United States. Both her parents were immigrants, and they wanted their children to "assimilate" into U.S. society, "like everybody else." Joanna remembered that her mom did not cook any Asian ethnic food, and they did not go to an Asian church, participate in any Asian ethnic events, or stay connected with their Asian relatives. She and her brother grew up in a White neighborhood, and they went to school where they were the only children of color. Not until she reached high school did she meet a handful of Asian and African American students.

Career trajectory. Joanna had a successful career in industry before she became a teacher. But one business trip to Central America changed her life. She remembered that her party drove into a little village and pulled up to a building. She saw kids' faces cramming over a

little window. She and her colleagues got out of the van and the building was the factory. She walked in, and there were all children in the factory. The best worker the factory owner brought to her was a little 10-year-old boy, and Joanna's job was to negotiate 10 cents less than the price they offered to her. "That 10 cents was one of those kids' salary for a week." "I mean I was like I'm done. *I am done*." Joanna said, "I did it [negotiated down the price] because it was my job. I got home and I quit." She moved back with her family in Marshall City and did not know what she wanted to do. Joanna recalled, "I felt I was a lost soul."

Then Joanna met her husband and through him, she started volunteering at a non-profit organization that did consulting work with schools. By her fifth year with the group, Joanna was already the program director. She ended up doing a lot work with schools. So she decided to become a teacher. Joanna recalled, "The first time I walked into a classroom and that was it. This is home." She also said, "I made some very conscious choices about where I was going to teach, who I was going to teach, and what I was going to teach." She wanted to teach "in schools that serve students with high-needs, disadvantaged socioeconomic status, and younger learners; all of that."

Joanna was a classroom teacher for six years. Then, she worked as a literacy coach for two years. The experience of being a literacy coach outside of the classroom made her realize that she had "the potential to impact a greater number of children positively." She then became an assistant principal and worked in that capacity for two years at one school. She was placed back into a literacy coach position for the following two years. About two years prior to the study, she was, again, appointed an assistant principal. She had been with her current three school sites for about a year. Joanna said her ultimate goal was to become a principal, and the assistant principal position was a step toward that goal.

Prior years as an assistant principal. When Joanna started her first assistant principalship, the school district had already made the assistant principal position at the elementary school level specifically for special education. However, she was assigned to only one school per year in that first two-year period of her assistant principalship. For Joanna, the first year was "a very fast learning curve" because she "was not a special education teacher and [had] never taught a special education class." So, she was "learning not only how to be an assistant principal but also things about special education." But, she felt that she was "lucky" because "[she] had a very good special education team, and they taught [her] a lot about special education. Plus, [she] would ask questions about things that [she] did not know." She learned a lot, and she actually liked the experience. She said, "You take a job, and you learn it from the ground up. I liked it. I knew my kids. I knew my den ed. [general education] teachers as well as special ed. [education] teachers. I got all that experience."

Then, she was assigned to two schools. As both schools were high-need, she tried structuring her time where she would be in one school one week and the other school the next. She recalled,

> It [the time structure] was good and bad because at least when I was there for five full days, I got everything. But, then, I was gone for a whole week, and all the things, the work load happened while I was gone… the catching up…. One time, one of the two schools gave me the opportunity to do some special education based PD [professional development]. I never even fully knew all the names because at this school, I had 50 teachers and about a hundred aids. No matter how hard I tried – I gave myself quizzes or something – I couldn't remember all their names. It was horrible.

What made her job more difficult was that "at one of the school sites, [she] did not have a good special education team nor the principal's support." For instance, the principal did not want her to write up a teacher because he was a teacher union representative. The principal told her to "back off because [she] was coming on too strong." In another incident where she confronted a teacher for writing an individualized education program (IEP) and doing assessment with no assessment plan to back it up, which was wrong and illegal. The teacher claimed a disability and accused Joanna of causing it, saying Joanna had stressed her out too much. The principal did not get a grievance complaint from the teacher, so she gave Joanna a write-up. Joanna said,

> It was frustrating and discouraging because I would see kids who had the potential and were just essentially rotting it away in a classroom because there was no instruction. This was a moderate-to-severe class of students with autism; five kids, four adults, and no teaching going on, and I couldn't touch them.

Current experiences at her current schools. Joanna had been in her current position for almost a year. She spent a half day at each of the two smaller schools. Because Spring ES was the biggest school among the three schools for which she was responsible, she typically worked four days a week there. She was happy with this schedule because it allowed her to be more involved with everything that went on at Spring ES. She thought that the school had a very good special education team, giving her the flexibility to take on other administrative roles. She was able to interact with both the special education and the general education teachers, and the professional development she had provided to teachers received good feedback. She had had a few interviews for principal positions. Although she did not get the positions, she got to know and establish a good relationship with the instructional director (who was in charge of the principals).

Joanna's thoughts. Joanna said that she never thought that she had to prove to others that she should be in a leadership position because she believed that leadership was not about you having all the answers. She said,

> It involves learning; we [administrators and teachers] are going to learn together. The biggest mistake that you could make as a leader or being in a position of an authoritarian place is to come in and act as if you know it all when everybody know you don't, including yourself.

She believed that it was important for leaders to acknowledge that they did make mistakes.

> Am I going to make mistakes? Absolutely. Are we [teachers and herself] going to learn from it? Absolutely. So, let's move forward. Transparency is what I think buys me my goodwill… because I'm honoring that they [teachers] have more expertise than me.

Nevertheless, she also remarked that, once she learned, she "live[d] up to a reputation where [she was] knowledgeable" and "[she] w[ould] confront you [teachers], if you f[e]ll short on your work."

Joanna considered her prior business background as part of what had made her successful in education, first as a teacher and then as an administrator – qualities such as good communication skills, organizational skills, the sense of urgency, and an understanding of expectations. She believed that opportunities and support came when an individual showed qualities that allowed others to provide those opportunities and support. She said, "I think people are inclined to provide support for individuals when they see the person works hard, is willing to learn, admits mistakes, and takes care of them." With all the experiences she had had, during the study year, Joanna finally thought that she had "gained the authority and gotten people to see [her] as an administrator."

Joanna did not view herself as an Asian American mainly because of her lack of knowledge about her Asian ethnic culture. She was raised in a family that tried very hard to assimilate into the U.S. mainstream culture. She did not have an accent speaking English, she had dark skin, and as a result people often misidentified her race-ethnicity. Joanna believed her atypical Asian appearance was an advantage in her personal and professional lives. She said,

> They look at me and are just curious because they cannot pin it down. So, the natural instinct is to be much more curious than to have an opinion. And, that is what essentially buys me the time [that] I need to show what kind of person I am.

Joanna thought that she had experienced any discrimination and injustice due to her race and ethnicity. However, she was aware that does not necessarily mean she did not have such experiences; it could be that she "did not interpret it as that, but simply interpreted it as someone being rude because [she] had taken away the context of race and ethnicity." Joanna did talk about gender issues, and she believed that people's expectations for a female administrator differed from those for a male administrator. She thought that she was "a good counterpoint" for her principal at Spring ES because he was "more a laidback person" and she was "more to the point for business."

Case 10: Kate

Kate was the first participant referred by my connection in the N state. She was a principal of an elementary school, YB ES, in District A.

Kate's School

Over the 2012-2013 school year YB ES had 391 students and 18 teachers. Located in Grand City, Kate's school served mostly Hispanic/Latino (40.9%) and Asian (28.4%) students. Ninety-three percent of the students received free or reduced lunches. The school made AYP in

the 2012-2013 school year. Table 16 presents the demographic and performance data for the school in comparison to the district and the state.

Table 16

Kate's School-District-State Demographics and Performance Comparison (2012-2013 School Year)

Entity Name	Enrollment	School Title I?	% English Learners	% Free* Lunches	Largest Ethnic Group	% Minority	Teachers Number of Teachers	Made AYP?
YB ES	391	Yes	18.7	93.0	Hispanic/Latino	83.4	18	Yes
District A	655,494	N/A	26.1	75.3	Hispanic/Latino	90.8	31,417	No
N State	6,226,989	N/A	21.6	58.0	Hispanic/Latino	74.5	272,684	N/A

Note. N/A=Not Applicable; AYP=Adequate Yearly Progress, "*"=free/reduced priced.

Background

Kate was in her late forties. She was a first-generation Asian American. Kate considered herself "committed" and "genuine." She was respectful, responsive and caring. She had good people skills, and she was thoughtful. She liked problem-solving, and was a team-player. She had a clear understanding of instructional leadership and was a seasoned administrator.

Upbringing. Kate was born in Asia. The family immigrated to N state when she was 16 years old. Her father worked at a government agency as a manager. At the time of the study, both her parents were retired and spent most of their time in Asia. Kate considered her father "a role model" whose actions had taught her how to treat people "right and well." Kate had two sisters, and they all had received their higher education in the United States, but both of them were currently working and living in Asia. Kate started her undergraduate studies majoring biochemistry, but she did not like it. She changed to psychology, and then she had opportunities to work with autistic children. Kate loved it and ended up getting graduate degrees in psychology and special education.

Career trajectory. Kate was a special education teacher for 14 years. She then worked as a program specialist for one and half years. It was a non-administrative position, but she worked in the district office providing support to schools with their special education issues. She was then promoted to an assistant principal position and worked at one elementary school for two years. When one of her assistant principal colleagues whom she "admired a lot" became the principal for a school, Kate transferred to that school and worked there as an assistant principal for four years. After that, she was approached by the district instructional director (who was in charge of the principals) and was promoted to the principal position at her current school.

Prior administrative experiences. Kate remembered that "there was a lot of new work to learn in [her] first year of becoming an assistant principal." The principal was away for most of the year for surgeries, but she was able to learn from two retired substitute principals, "watching a lot of what they did and how they treated things and people." At her second assistant principal position, she learned much about discipline and working with difficult parents. She called her principal at that school her "true mentor" from whom she learned "integrity and a mindset or attitude, treating people with a lot of consideration."

When she started in YB ES, the school struggled with student performance and an extreme low enrollment. As a result, the school was facing being closed down. Kate said "During my first three years here, I was one of the few principals in the district where the district told us that we are welcome to transfer to a bigger school." Kate did not try to change anything in her first year there. She got to know the people. "[Her] second year, once [she] knew the people, [she] knew what [they] needed, and [they] made tremendous jump. The third and fourth year, [the school] maintained a growth of about 15 points [in performance], each year." But, to save the school, she had to increase student enrollment. She thought about adding grade levels

but was told by the district that they could not do that because they would be competing with the

local middle schools who were also struggling. She tried to start a magnet program, but with the

budget crisis occurring during that time the district was no longer approving any more magnet

programs. Then she heard about the dual-language programs from some parents and was told by

the district that, as long as they had a certain number of students enrolled, they could start a

program. From planning the program to recruiting students and teachers, Kate had only three

months to get the program going. So she had to learn everything quickly, but she and her staff

made it. The program started with two classes the first year, and it brought the overall school

enrollment up to above 300 in its second year. Not only was the school saved, but also

"continues growing by almost 100 children a year." In retrospect, Kate said, "It has been a steep

learning curve, but very gratifying, because when the parents and the school work together hand

in hand and with wonderful teachers, it's just a wonderful experience to watch the kids learn

every day."

Current administrative experiences. Kate had been in her current position for five

years. She never thought that people judged her professional work differently because of her

race and ethnicity, until recently. Because the school had one of the most well-known English-

Asian dual-language programs within the district, it had attracted more and more Asian parents

and other non-Hispanic parents, enrolling their children in the program. "That disturbs the habits

or traditions of what the old [YB ES] was, that is, everywhere you go in campus, you can speak

Spanish." Kate said, "Also, the parents [in the dual-language program] tend to be somewhat

more educated, have higher income, and be a lot more involved, because people who come to a

dual-language program tend to be self-selected people who have shopped around to choose." On

the other hand, "the Hispanic/Latino parents tend to be people who are working hard making the

ends meet; they don't have the time to be involved in the school and culturally, and they tend to feel that the school will handle everything." Despite the fact that "the majority of [the school's] money, resources and [her] time and energy, in terms of constantly looking at data and monitoring students, are spent on the English Language Learner (ELL) Program," Kate was perceived as "always working with those [dual-language program] parents, playing favoritism" by some Hispanic parents and staff members.

Facing the situation "is difficult," Kate said, "and the perceived favoritism doesn't exist because all my kids are all my kids. The kids in ELL are more at risk, and I feel they rightfully deserve more of our money and time resource." However, she also noted that this misunderstanding would not stop her from doing her job: "It doesn't really change my heart in terms of knowing what I need to do. But I am aware of the perception. And that is unfortunate." And mostly she felt frustrated because "sometimes decisions [were] made [from the top] and it [did] not appear to be about the kids at all; rather, it [wa]s all about politics." She said,

> Given my priority and by my standards, none of these [misunderstandings and politics] is
> as bad as all these dramas funneling all the way down to the kids, because I feel that no
> matter what happens we should protect the kids, providing certain space and boundary so
> they can focus on learning. That is really all they need to do…. They really shouldn't be
> exposed to or worry about all those things.

Kate hoped that the year following the study as "the school also starts an English-Spanish dual language program, and the district brings in an assistant principal who is Spanish-speaking, it will give the misperception a break."

Kate's thoughts. Kate thought that she would remain as a teacher till her retirement because "[she] loved teaching so much." She "would not have believed anyone, if they told [her]

that [she] would be a principal someday" because "it was not something that [she] had

envisioned." Even now, as the principal at a school with a very successful English-Asian dual-

language program, she still thought that it was "all really pure luck that [she] happened to

stumble into this program that [she] could truly support." For Kate, instruction was her top

priority. "Ever since [she] became the principal of [her] school, [she has] committed every bit of

resources to instruction." She said "We only have the kids here for six hours a day, so we need

to spend every shred of human resources working with them directly, and that really makes a lot

of difference."

Kate believed that being a female "affect[ed] everything [she did] in life," and "mentally,

men and women d[id] operate differently." However, she did not think that a person's gender

determined what he or she valued in leadership. She said, "I know both men and women who

are extremely sincere [and] team-oriented, and I know both men and women who are extremely

political, game players, and insincere. They really come in both sexes." She thought that

different situations in leadership called for either feminine or masculine or both leadership styles.

> You cannot assign or label certain qualities to male or female. I do know that amongst the
>
> principals many of us almost have both of those qualities. For instance, as a principal,
>
> you need and want to have a good PR [personal relationship]; you want to have the warm
>
> and fuzzy with the parents so they love the school, but you also need to be able to tell a
>
> parent straightforwardly that it is inappropriate or as a parent that is not his or her place.

Kate believed that it was important for leaders to "know who you are dealing with" and "match

different communication styles with different personalities." As for the misperception that

happened recently, Kate thought that it would "make a tremendous difference in the bonding

process," if she could speak Spanish. She said,

When you hear your home language, there is a certain warmth in your heart that cannot

be described with any intellectual reasoning. We all feel a sense of home, the closeness,

when we hear our own home language. So, it is the same with the Latino parents. If I

were someone who could speak Spanish well, they would feel differently about me, and

then I'm much closer to their heart.

She was aware that "the mentality that you have to be one of us is very strong in the

Hispanic/Latino culture." Nevertheless, she believed that she "underst[ood] where they [were]

coming from more than they th[ought] [and] g[a]ve [her] credit for."

Kate identified herself as an Asian because "a lot of [her] core values [were] from the

Asian culture," such as "[she] absolutely believe[d] in respect in school and respect in family,

and [she] absolutely value[d] education." But, she also thought that "[she] ha[d] a liberal side

coming from the Americanized part of [her] life," like she value[d] "diversity." She did not view

herself as a minority female principal nor did she believe people perceived her that way. "Asians

don't tend to be in the disadvantaged groups," she said, "and people don't tend to see us [like

that], even though in terms of numbers, we are less…. I don't think I'm perceived that way. Or,

at least, I don't perceive myself that way."

Case 11: Lori

Lori was one of the three elementary school principals in the study. Her school, GC ES,

was in District A in N state.

Lori's School

Over the 2012-2013 school year GC ES had 858 students and 38 teachers of which 22

were Asian teachers. Located in Central Marshall City, Lori's school served mostly

Hispanic/Latino students (52.9%) and Asian students (43.7%). Eighty-four percent of the

students received free or reduced lunches. In the 2012-2013 school year GC ES did not make

AYP. Table 17 presents the school's demographics and performance data in comparison to the

district and the state.

Table 17

Lori's School-District-State Demographics and Performance Comparison (2012-2013 School Year)

Entity Name	Enrollment	School Title I?	% English Learners	% Free* Lunches	Largest Ethnic Group	% Minority	Teachers Number of Teachers	Made AYP?
GC ES	858	Yes	51.7	84.0	Hispanic/Latino	99.7	38	No
District A	655,494	N/A	26.1	75.3	Hispanic/Latino	90.8	31,417	No
N State	6,226,989	N/A	21.6	58.0	Hispanic/Latino	74.5	272,684	N/A

Note. N/A=Not Applicable; AYP=Adequate Yearly Progress, "*"=free/reduced priced.

Background

Lori was in her forties. She was a 1.5-generation Asian American. She regarded herself

as a fair and humble person. "As a school leader, you need to be humble," she said. She was

observant and thoughtful. She valued hard work and capacity building. She had high

expectations for children and wanted them to be successful and change agents in their own lives.

Upbringing. Lori was born in Asia. She immigrated to a northern state in the United

States with her family when she was nine years old. Both her parents were educators. They had

three children. Lori remembered that, growing up, their lives were very structured. "Even my

summers were scheduled; we [her and her siblings] got to make our own schedules, with one

hour of this, two hours of that." She said, "If we got a blank box on our schedules, we had to fill

it [in]. We were very much disciplined." The family lived in a non-Asian neighborhood. The

only connection the family had with Asian communities was attending an Asian church. Lori

was the only one among her siblings who could speak her Asian ethnic language. All the

children attended public schools. Lori did not have friends of her ethnicity until she started college.

Career trajectory. Lori was a teacher for seven years, and she worked with the Asian-English dual-language programs. She said that she never planned to be an administrator. But, with her principal's support, she had "the opportunities to do things outside classroom through which [she] got to see what it was like to work with other administrators in a closer venue." She then completed her leadership credentials and worked as an instructional specialist at the district level for three years. She was an assistant principal for one year. Before she came to GC ES, she was a principal at another school for six years. She has been in her current school for about a year.

Prior administrative experiences. The school where Lori was an assistant principal served mostly Hispanic/Latino students. "It was difficult" because, then, Lori did not speak Spanish. And she also thought one year was not enough time for her to really fulfill her leadership roles:

> It's good to do a position for at least two to three years. The first year, you mess up a lot; the second year, you can learn from it; then, the third year you can kind of tweak and perfect what didn't go well [in] the second year.

After that, she was a principal at a different school for six years. The school also served mostly Hispanic/Latino students. However, Lori was able to learn Spanish along the way, and communication was no longer a problem. She said that the parents "appreciated that [she] would make the effort to try to speak in Spanish." She believed that she had established her credibility as a principal. She said, "I was there for six years, so, I've had their first round of kids, their second round [of kids]. So, by the second or third child they pretty much know." When working

with the parents, she wanted them to have "the same kind of passion and drive" because she believed that "education is like the only pathway out of this [situation of being] socioeconomically challenged."

Her first year at her current school. Lori had been in her current position for about a year. Compared to her previous school, GC ES was much bigger. At the time of the study, the school was experiencing issues as a result of zone changes. About two hundred students who were attending the school would have to go to a different school in the succeeding school year. These children's parents were upset. And the fact that the school has an Asian-English dual-language program has made her situation even tougher. Some Hispanic parents believed that they got "pushed out," because they were not in the dual-language program, meaning, they were not "[Lori's] own people." And some Asian parents thought that she was inconsiderate because she would not help "[her] own people." Lori believed that she was being judged not based on her work but her personal characteristics. She commented "Those are misunderstanding. If I were a non-Asian administrator, the same thing [some children having to leave] would happen, but they probably would not project that kind of misunderstanding."

In the meantime, because the teaching staffs at the school were mostly Hispanic or Asian, she was facing similar situations. Lori remarked,

> The thing is that I don't need to write off as much on my [Asian ethnic] teachers because the majority of them are actually doing what they are supposed to and working beyond. And I have some who aren't and they happen to be the Spanish-speaking teachers. Then, they say, "It's because she is [Asian ethnicity], so, she is not writing off [Asian ethnic] teachers, when I'm actually going by what the data show.

She believed that she had been "in a semi-survival mode" for the year. Nonetheless, she thought that all these issues could be temporary considering this was her first year and the whole school community was in a transitional time because of the zone changes. She believed that, as long as the teachers and she all had high expectations for students, they would overcome other issues they were experiencing. She said,

> The school has its own problems, but I don't have any teachers who don't expect from the kids what we should be expecting from them. It would be hard for me to change the expectation, if it were not there. But, if that is there, then, the rest of it should fall into place. At least, we have that.

> **Lori's thoughts.** Lori thought that she had been fortunate in her administrative career. She said,

> In my experience it has been more of what my supervisors have seen and like to see on their team and then offer me the opportunities. I haven't had to actually seek out job opportunities. Whereas, many of my friends passed the exam [leadership credential exam] the same time as I had and haven't become principals yet.

Lori believed that a person was "placed on certain positions for a reason, and if [he or she] work[ed] hard, [and] show[ed] initiatives and effort, then, when something c[a]me up, [his or her] name g[o]t spoken about." She claimed that she was always "happy with what [she] was doing" in the positions that she had been given, and "if it led to different opportunity [she] went with it." She believed that "[her] work value and product should speak for themselves." She said,

> I see [that] people can be very proficient at praising their supervising person, not in a false way, but maybe over inflated at times just to promote. That, I can't do. I'm

respectful and polite, but I won't be profusely complimentary of someone, if it's not

heartfelt. I don't self-promote or market myself for my own political advancements.

But she also thought that an individual "ha[d] to be pretty politically active" to become leaders at

the superintendent level and for Asian Americans as a group, "there [wa]s a glass ceiling" for

them to reach that level. She said that Asian Americans should "do more politics,"

"broadcasting or advertising works they are doing and/or have done;" however, she did not see

herself doing that.

> It's probably an Asian value thing; that is not considered a good quality to have, but it is
>
> not necessarily a bad thing…. I may be this in-between generation where [the older
>
> generation] is like, you just work your heart and you will get promoted, and the
>
> generation coming up [after me] is like, we should promote and we should do that.

In terms of how she viewed her identity in relation to her professional life, Lori believed that her

awareness of cultural differences allowed her to be sensitive to people's cultural difference and

adjust her leadership styles accordingly. She identified herself as an "Asian-American"

administrator, and she said,

> I don't separate it in my thinking; it's the one and the same. So, I am very different than
>
> somebody who is a principal in [her Asian country]. Whatever the [Asian ethnic] heritage
>
> I have been instilled with and the American influences are what make me different from
>
> either sides.

Nevertheless, she did not think that she had "let [herself] being an Asian and American and

being a woman administrator impact how [she] work[ed]." She thought that people should see

her work and see her as administrator first, then the Asian part.

I think that Obama would say he would want to be judged as the president first and as
African American second. Our work should be evaluated or analyzed for the work itself
first, then the Asian-ness. And the part of being an Asian-American should be a positive
factor and not a deficit.

Therefore, she advised Asian American female administrators and leadership aspirants to have a
myriad of experiences in leading different schools to avoid being typecast as an administrator
who could only be a successful leader with one's "own people."

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the comprehensive backgrounds of the 11 participants.
The women shared some similar characteristics. Most women were over 40 years old (7 out of
11) and had no children (7 out of 11). They were mostly non-first-generation Asian Americans.
Most women (7 out 11) worked in urban schools serving predominantly minority and
economically disadvantaged student populations. They were passionate about their work and
had high expectation for their students.

The women differed in their upbringing, career trajectories, and educational
administrative experiences. For instance, while some women grew up in home environments
that preserved Asian ethnic cultures, others had almost no association with Asian communities
and exposure to Asian heritages. Single women were more able than married women to follow
their career path upward throughout the school systems. It was evident that the women's
different personal and professional experiences shaped who they were and what they believed.
For instance, the women's earlier experiences of racial-ethnic and cultural discrimination and
prejudice not only had shaped their self-knowledge and understanding of difference but also their
abilities in negotiating and integrating bicultural values in supporting their leadership roles. For

certain ethnic women, religion had played an important role in their personal and professional lives. The women entered the teaching profession because of the encouragement of their church members and their belief about teaching being a Christian profession.

By showcasing each woman's journey toward educational leadership, this chapter provides contextual descriptions helpful to readers' understanding of the women's leadership beliefs and experiences.   The next chapter presents the findings of the study as they address the research questions.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

In this section, I present the findings of the study in three overarching themes which are related to the three research questions. The first theme is that, with limited opportunities, Asian American women are able to learn to maneuver the educational systems and exert their leadership roles. The second theme is that, through their day-to-day practices as school administrators, Asian American women to a large extent develop a life purpose of making a difference with the students and the social groups with which they identify. The third theme is that Asian American women continue facing challenges related to gender and race-ethnicity as well as their own uncertainty about racialized sexism and gendered leadership discourse. Each theme includes the relevant subthemes summed up from 11 cases based on the data collected through interviews, informal observations, documents, and my reflective journal. Additional findings are presented at the end of this chapter. Although presenting the themes and subthemes in this manner gives them a sense of discreteness and linearity, the reality is that they are interwoven in the participants' stories. For instance, passivity in leadership career development and mentorship where the women mostly accepted rather than sought out mentors are connected. Nevertheless, for clarity consideration, I have presented them as if they were entirely discrete.

Themes Related to Research Question I:

As School Administrators, How Do Asian American Women Interpret and Make Sense of

Their Professional Experiences?

The first theme, learn to maneuver, includes four subthemes: (1) Asian American women's passivity in leadership career development; (2) mentorship is critical; (3) credibility as a school leader; and (4) resilience. These four subthemes address research question I. In the following sections I elaborate these subthemes to show how Asian American women administrators, with provided opportunities, are able to learn to maneuver the educational systems to support their leadership activities.

Asian American Women's Passivity in Leadership Career Development

The first subtheme speaks to the Asian American women's passivity in their leadership career development. The external encouragement from people in the women's personal and professional lives was critical for the women to gain access and advance in educational leadership. The women, to a great extent, did not seek a career in leadership. Also, the women often put family first, leadership second, both chronologically and in their commitments.

External encouragement and/or role models. First, most women had no intention for moving into administration when they started their careers in education. For instance, Kate said, "I thought I would remain as a teacher till my retirement, because I loved it so much. I would not have believed anyone, if they told me that I would be a principal someday. It was not something that I envisioned." Lori also said,

> I did not plan on becoming an administrator. I don't think that there are many people
> [who] actually plan on becoming an administrator and see teaching as a stepping stone
> toward that end. I thought I would be a teacher all the way through.

The women were encouraged by family members, friends, colleagues, and other administrators, as their leadership potentials were recognized by these people. Bella said,

> The main factor that helped me make the decision [to become an administrator] is the encouragement from the people around me. If they didn't see the potentials, they wouldn't have recommended and encouraged me to go into that route [becoming an administrator].

Diana spoke similarly about her experiences:

> If it were not for these people who have encouraged me and allowed me to try different leadership roles, I don't think that I would have gone any further with my education [getting her leadership credentials], and I probably would not branch into administration.

Elaine also said,

> I always thought that I was going to be a teacher and that would be it. So, when a lot of opportunities came up I never took them…. I did not know that I had leadership qualities [such as] planning, seeing the big pictures, [and] problem solving…. It was my principal who had provided me opportunities to take on more and more leadership roles.

Likewise, Catherine's principal had recommended her for various leadership roles, such as serving on committees at the district level. For Helena, it was a professor in the leadership program where she completed her leadership credentials that "planted the seeds" and "opened [her] eyes to administrative roles."

For some women, the encouragement also came from having role models in their personal or professional lives. Bella's younger sister was a school principal, and she became Bella's role model. Bella said,

> I didn't see myself, as an immigrant, [who] had enough cultural knowledge and English language capacity to become a school administrator…. My sister was the one who had a big impact on my decision to even put my foot in the water to try it.

Kate believed that her father "was in an unspoken way setting a role model" for her:

> He worked in management in the police department. He always treated people right. Whether this is a person who is well below him, or made serious mistakes, or who has a bad reputation, he always treated people right and well…. I kind of absorb that, and it became the way that I want to interact with others, too.

Helena thought of her mother as her role model:

> My mom is a visionary leader. In my reflection of myself as a leader I can't deny that she has played a huge role in it… her influences [like] the ways she does things and the ways she gets things done.

Irene's role models were the previous generation of Asian American female administrators:

> I often think of how they have carried themselves and how they have approached their careers. I'm always amazed at that how the women always know what they want and they don't follow the stereotypes of an Asian woman. For me, in addition to them being Asian, it is their strong qualities, conviction, and hardworking that makes me believe that it is good to be an administrator.

Second, for most of the women, once they were in a leadership role, did not take initiation in extending their leadership career trajectories. Other people's continuous encouragement and provision of opportunities helped the women's advancement in leadership. Joanna remembered that, after she had been a literacy coach out of the classroom for a few years, she was still not thinking about a future in school leadership. After Catherine was promoted to

the curricular specialist position at the district level, she was "asked by [her] director to get [a] leadership credential so [she could] be qualified for administrative positions in the future." Bella recalled,

> At that time I have already been working at the district level as an ESOL support staff. My superintendent has mentioned that a few times, but I just thought that he was just saying it. One day, again, he said to me, "I would like you to get your leadership credentials." I did not respond. I just let him talk. And he said, "No, I am being serious." And I said, "Okay." So, that's how the opportunity came; it kind of fell into my lap. I wasn't going to horn and go out there on my own, with full confidence and everything to seek for it [the opportunity for advancement].

Lori's experience was similar:

> In my experience it has been more of that my supervisors have seen and would like to see [me] on their team and then offered [me] opportunities. So, I haven't had to actually seek out job opportunities…. I have always been happy with what I was doing.

Kate also said,

> I didn't mind being a teacher. I never thought that I needed to move on. I didn't mind being a program specialist; I enjoyed that work, too. I didn't mind being an assistant principal, because I love working with the principal [at her second assistant principalship] and I enjoyed the school…. I wouldn't want to rush myself.

Diana observed that she was "kicked out the nest," when other administrators wanted her to apply for principal positions. She was "placed" into her current position: "I didn't have to interview for it. This is the right place for me. It was the right time. I'm glad that I waited."

The women's responses indicate three primary factors that played into the women's passivity: lack of self-knowledge about their leadership capacity, lack of career positioning, and discomfort with initiation or self-recommendation. It is possible that all three factors can be traced back to the root of prescribed gender roles in Asian cultures and the U.S. culture. Under the ideology of masculinism in leadership, being a woman and being a leader is posed as mutually exclusive (Carli & Eagly, 2011). And, socialized by their Asian cultures, the women learned to avoid self-nominated behaviors and accept putting others' needs before their own (Chu, 1980; Pacis, 2005).

Family first, career second. The Asian American women administrators' passivity in leadership advancement also manifested itself in that they generally put family first, career second. Out of the 11 women, 7 were married. Out of the seven married women, four had children. Most of the women's children were under school age. For married women, their careers often came behind the husband's and children's needs. Bella had relocated several times because of her husband's career needs, and she said, "My children, not my work, are my life." Catherine said that initially she did not want an assistant principal position because she had two little children at home who needed a lot of her attention and care. Garcia accepted the offer at her current school over the other school because the position provided more flexibility for her to take care of two younger children at home. Irene had "put [her] becoming a principal on hold" because of her husband's health issues:

> It will not be fair to my spouse, and that certainly will not be fair to the kids, the family at the school site, or the teachers. So, I've chosen to put that on the backburner until I feel more comfortable with my situation.

The single women and those married with no children were more able to follow an upward leadership path through the school system. Kate said,

> When I first became an assistant principal, I was not married and did not have kids. So, I was flexible. And I knew because of that, I could take on more responsibilities and work longer hours, if I needed to. So, I did…. In a way I realize that I am lucky. My parents are in [Asia], and I'm not married with children, so, I can do this [focusing on my work and career]. If I had parents that needed care, then, they would be my priority. And if I had children, then, they would be my priority.

Lori had similar comments:

> I am not married. The family part doesn't really get in the way. I know some colleagues had to wait until they have started a family or their kids have reached a certain age. I don't have children, so, that is not a factor that would need to be calculated into my [career] plans.

Diana believed that it would have been more challenging, if she had a child at home, when she started her first assistant principalship: "Thank God, I did not have a little baby at home… so, less family needs." Helena was single, when she first became an assistant principal. When she became a principal, she was already married with no children. "I talked to him [her husband] about it [becoming a principal]." Helena said, "Because he also has a demanding job, we decided to delay on having children. So, I went for it."

Mentorship Is Critical

The second subtheme speaks to the importance of mentorship in the Asian American women's leadership development. Mentors played an important role in encouraging and supporting the Asian American female administrators' entrance and advancement in leadership.

The women often had multiple mentors, and they were not limited to females or people of color. However, only one woman had actively sought mentorship. When asked why they did not actively seek mentoring, most of the remaining 10 women responded that they never thought about doing that. But, two women also commented that it was uncomfortable for them to approach another person, asking for his or her mentoring.

Informal mentors. The positive mentorships the women reported were all developed informally. The women did not find a formal mentorship with a person assigned by the school districts to be effective. Bella said,

> My experience with her [the formal mentor] was not successful…. Not every mentor is going to be effective for me. If his or her leadership philosophy is different from mine, or his or her personality is way on the opposite side of the spectrum [from mine], it is not going to work…. Mine was not strategically matched up with me.

Likewise, Lori thought that the role of the formal mentor was "more of perfunctory," with whom she would not have a trustful relationship. She said,

> They [her assigned mentors] usually just checked in with me and gave me a sense of the job. But my non-official, personal mentors are the ones who have genuinely wanted to see me do well…. I would not have a complete sense of confidentiality where I could share everything with an assigned mentor.

In contrast, the informal mentorship between the women and their mentors often developed into friendship and was sustained as the women moved forward with their administrative careers. Amanda and her mentor had been friends for 11 years. The mentorship between Irene and her mentor continued, despite her no longer working with him:

Even now, when I talk to him, he's always encouraging: "When are you going to apply for a principalship?" He's always willing to help. He has offered to have me do a mock interview with his staff to see what the perception is, if I would interview for a principal position. He always offers helps like that.

Mentorship. For these women, mentors had showed respect for their work and coached and protected them as they advanced in their leadership paths. Catherine remembered,

My director [another mentor] treated me as a professional as I am. If there was an issue, I knew that I could pick up the phone and say, "Here's the situation." And I would not get yelled and screamed at, even if the situation was like "I think I screwed up."

Irene's mentor treated her like "a colleague," not "a subordinate," and really "modeled what [she] wanted to see in a principal." She remembered how her mentor (also her principal) stood by her side and protected her authority:

He [the teacher] went to the principal and said, "[Irene] said… but you didn't tell me to do that." He [her mentor] responded, "No, but she did, so you need to do it." He supported me, which helped, but my problem [in dealing the situation] did come out. Afterwards, he [her mentor] would share things like, "So and so did this… I think next time you might want to have a clear expectation… maybe we should talk about this and see how we can address it better or handle it at best we can."

Diana and Elaine both observed that their mentors provided them multiple opportunities through these not only did they realize they had what it takes to be a leader but they also put their skills in practice and tested for improvement. Diana said, "She [the mentor] included me in parent conferences, doing budget…. She knew that I needed all these different experiences."

Mentors also served as a source of guidance for the women on their paths to leadership. As Bella commented,

> You need the maturity in the work world. You need to learn about the politics, and you need to learn the rope, knowing what people value and how they perceive things. Those are very subtle things, and not too many books can spell out everything that you need to learn…. Asian American women need more mentoring and coaching with those.

Mentors used their own experiences to help the women to learn what they had learned. Elaine always remembered what her mentor had told her:

> If you want some changes to happen at the school, you target the people that are on the same wavelength as you are. Even if there are only ten out of a hundred teachers that are on the same wavelength as you are, you bring them in…. Getting those 10 people on board; they are the key players who would talk to other people.

Lori said,

> They [mentors] have genuinely wanted to see me do well. They would give me the nuts and bolts of what to do and not to do, and the parts like… the political savviness which I did not have and needed to be coached on.

Having witnessed "how [her] mentor motivated the staff and moved the school forward," Irene believed that "[she] really wanted to take part in leadership and to have an impact on schools." Amanda remarked that her mentors help her to "think differently and look at things from different angles."

Some women had other women of color administrators as their mentors. These women felt a closer tie between their minority female mentors and themselves. Amanda said,

She is Mexican American. She has been a great mentor to really talk about all the things:

race, gender, things that mill you…. She is the one that I can have conversations that I

cannot have with the other mentors. There is this baseline of an understanding that we

face things, challenges and perceptions that other people do not have and an

understanding of privileges, privileges that I do not have and privileges that I do have.

Lori's comments were similar:

Martha [pseudonym] is my personal mentor. She is Asian American. She is still working

for the district but in a different unit, I still seek advice from her. It is a friendship strong

enough that I can totally confess, saying things like, "I totally think I must stop the

situation. How do I get myself out of it?" I can be that honest.

Credibility as a School Leader

The third subtheme speaks to the Asian American women's practices and strategies in

establishing their credibility as a school leader. The women reported that learning continuously

on the job was necessary. The women also reported using relational and collaborative behaviors

as a substantive part of their leadership. The women considered hard working, humbleness,

fairness, and maintenance of a personal-professional separation essential professional ethics for

establishing their trustworthiness as school leaders. In addition, for some women, age and

whether or not they had children also stood out as the factors influencing people's perception of

their credibility as school leaders. Other strategies that the women used to build their authority

as a school leader included developing a strong leadership team and avoiding making hasty

decisions.

Continuous learning. The Asian American women in the study reported that continuous

learning on the job was needed. Kate said, "No one can be an expert in every single area. As a

leader, you have to be willing to learn constantly." Irene's comments were similar: "I don't think that there is ever a time that a person could know everything. You have to keep learning." Elaine also said, "The thing about being a school leader is that you never stop learning; everybody has their own strengths that you can continue to learn from." Bella considered herself "a self-motivated lifelong learner," and she said, "I love learning; I am not afraid to learn new things…. I want us [her teachers and herself] to become a team of learners to continue to improve." Helena believed that it was her determination to learn that "trumped [her] fears" in her path of becoming a school administrator.

The women learned about leadership from their mentors and other administrators as well as self-studies such as reading books and participating in professional development. Amanda would "talk things out with [her] mentors" and read leadership books. "The books help me to better understand my personalities and my leadership styles," she said. Bella also found reading leadership books helpful. Kate and Catherine both talked about using professional development opportunities offered by the district to improve their leadership skills. Helena would call her direct supervisor, "if [she] had any questions or needed to share an issue." Diana and Kate also learned leadership through observing their mentors' behaviors and practices. Garcia also shared her approach:

> For example, there was a disciplinary issue that I did not know exactly how to handle. I called him [the principal]. He actually came in and took over the discipline process, and I watched and observed. We debriefed afterwards. I learned how to handle a situation like this in the future.

The women also often sought advice from their peers. Irene would call other assistant principals of special education to "bounce off ideas" and for help. She said, "We have a lot similar

experiences. It helps to know that you are not the only one out there doing this kind of work."

Likewise, Lori would call her fellow principals for advice. She said, "That helps a lot because

they are in the trenches with me; they know." Diana's experiences were similar:

> When I was an assistant principal, the other assistant principals and I… we would call
>
> each other: "I have a problem. What did you do last time when you had this
>
> situation?"…. Now, I am a principal, I still call my former principals, "Help me. I know
>
> you dealt with this before. What should I do?" And they are very quick to help me.

In Catherine's situation, because of the district-wide support on coaching, she and the other

assistant principals in the county would meet once a month at each other's schools, doing

classroom observations and exchanging feedback. She also learned from her co-assistant

principal:

> She [the co-assistant principal] has a sweet way of approaching people and directing
>
> everything in a positive light, and I have learned a lot from her. I would self-evaluate the
>
> ways that I have approached the situations and said certain things, relative to hers…. I
>
> will go to her for advice, if I need [to] soften a situation.

> Another way that most of the women learned about leadership was through experience.

Joanna said,

> I knew what I wanted to do or what kind of assistant principal I wanted to become, but
>
> until I am actually doing the job, I would not be good at it. It is the same with being a
>
> principal; I know what kind of principal I want to be, I know the kinds of things I want to
>
> do, but how that plays itself out, I would not know until I actually do the job…. You take
>
> a job and you will learn it from the ground up…. Until this year that I actually see myself

as an administrator, meaning that I now get people to see me as an administrator and all the authority that goes behind it, because of all the experiences I have had.

Elaine gave her example of learning through experience: "In working with the parents, I keep trying things that I think may work and I learn throughout the process…. Knowing and having done it are two different things." Diana believed that her leadership capacity grew as she had gained more experiences. She said,

> The first year, I was in a whirlwind; I was just spinning every day and couldn't get a handle of many things. But, the second and third year, I had more experiences, and I got better and better on handling different situations on a more regular basis.

Kate recalled the time of "flying a plane while building it" when they started a dual-language program at the school:

> The teachers and I quickly learned about the dual-language program – how the system works. And through doing it, we have learned what works and what does not work. I am also learning how to manage really involved parents…. There is a lot of learning new things that I have not experienced previously.

Amanda remarked that she learned a lot from her first principalship experiences:

> When I first started [my principalship], I didn't care [how teachers thought about me]. How long did I last there? What difference did I make for the children there? I didn't. So, I am always aware of that. It is an interesting dance between pushing [your staff] and making those changes and tuning into the kind of social capitals you have.

Helena, together with the others on the leadership team, learned "on the job" about running a charter school and navigating the authorization and management systems which "[they] did not receive formal training for."

Relational and collaborative leadership practices. The women administrators in this study reported relational and collaborative behaviors as a substantial part of their leadership. The women relied on "soft skills" or "people skills" to build relationships and support instructional collaboration. Kate's response summarizes well what the women thought about the soft skills:

> If you are not good with people, no matter how brilliant you are with ideas, organization, instruction, data, and operations, nothing will work, because working in the school is all about people. It is about the little people and the big people – your staff, parents, and community members.

Relationship building. Nine women reported that a substantial part of their work was to build relationship with others. Catherine learned about her teachers' spouses' names and children's names and other little personal things, and she put treats in teachers' mailboxes. Diana would "give people hugs" and "write thank-you letters." Helena would share her personal stories with her Hispanic students and parents:

> I try to help them connect and understand that, sometimes, my experiences are not too different [from theirs], because my parents are also immigrants…. I try to find ways to make them feel at ease, welcomed… to approach them at a human level by trying to be welcoming and trying to speak their language as much as I can.

Irene would chat with her teachers casually, asking about how their families were doing or how their weekends were.

Having "an open communication," an "open door" policy, and presence was important for relationship building. "My door is always open during the school day and I told my teachers that they can come to me with any concerns." Diana said, "And every morning, I am at the

entrance, greeting." Bella also said that her office door was "open all the time." Irene gave teachers her cellphone number so they could reach her anytime they need to. Kate made effort to go to the classrooms every day. She said, "Be visible. It is important that the teachers and students know that I am there and I will show up at their classrooms some time during the day."

Relationships could also be useful for handling difficult or challenging situations. Kate said,

If you have a trustworthy and respectful relationship, when you have to have that difficult conversation the person will respect what you have to say…. You could go out there and be totally defensive or hardcore and make people walk away feeling uncared for, or you can go out there and show them that whether you can give them what they want or not, you care about them and you want to help. All of that is not about exactly *what* you can or cannot do; it is about *how* you do it.

Catherine believed that relationships helped minimize negative feelings when critiques were involved:

Having the personal relationship [with the teachers] to the point where they know that when I am at school, I am trying to be professional, especially in front of the children, having that helps. So, they understand that my feedback is not an attack on them, and that I am doing my job and I expect them to do theirs.

Bella found that relationships worked to her advantage when dealing with challenging parents: "The student had a bond with me…, so, by me having the relationship with that child I was able to win his mom over, and the problem was solved." Garcia also said, "Parent[s] are willing to listen to you and work with you, once they see that you care about their child."

Instructional collaboration. The women stressed the importance of having shared

decision making or instructional collaboration with teachers. "You cannot be like, 'This is my

way or the highway.'" Diana said, "You need to be open to suggestions." Bella also said,

> Having them [teachers] comply would make them afraid of me. Then, every time when I
>
> try to give feedback, the door is shut because they are nervous, anxious, and scared. They
>
> can't learn a thing that I'm trying to share. I don't want that…. I take time to give them
>
> the luxury of explaining, and if their rationales don't make sense, then, of course, I will
>
> give them feedback that I know. I would say: "This is not the best way, but this is how I
>
> know. What do you think?" So, it is more collaborative and communicative.

Catherine's comments were similar:

> My way is not always *the* correct way; I can offer a different point of view, listen to their
>
> points of view, and try to guide them into making a decision or choice…. With adults…
>
> for the most part, they just need a little bit more guidance versus a box…. I think, when
>
> you approach people in a partnership, they are more likely to accept what you have to
>
> share and accept you as part of their teams.

Lori observed that shared instructional leadership helped her to increase teachers' buy-ins:

> I try to bring teachers into the process so that they can see the challenges and understand
>
> what is involved. If they just hear "This is what we are doing.", but they don't see all the
>
> challenges or factors that play into it, it is harder for them to accept [the decision]. When
>
> teachers are informed along the way they are more likely to work with you.

Likewise, Irene commented that when feedback was given through discussion and with an

orientation of "collaboration and shared knowledge," it was more "readily received" by teachers.

Joanna believed that it was important to establish common grounds:

I used to have this whole idea of that I don't expect teachers to work as hard as I do and I simply expect them to do their jobs. Then, I realized that there was a fatal flaw in that notion, that is, teachers and I could disagree on what their jobs are. So, have a consensus and operate from there; it has been working well for me.

Helena recently initiated a new character-building curriculum at her school. She said, "I got the teachers on board with me…. It [Reaching a consensus] needs to be coming from a genuine place and by acknowledging that it is *we* [who are] going to do this." Every Friday, Kate would have "instructional conference with the grade level teachers, one level at a time, concentrating on the instruction and student data and brainstorming ideas addressing student needs."

Professional ethics. The Asian American women in the study reported that having professional ethics was important in fulfilling their roles as school administrators and establishing their credibility as school leaders. These professional ethics included working hard, being humble, being fair, and maintaining a personal-professional separation with others.

Work hard. The women all worked hard on their jobs. It was common for the women to work extremely longer hours at school. Elaine said that she worked "12 to 14 hours a day." In Helena's first two years as an assistant principal she "put all the nights into work," and at one point she "did not go home for two days." Kate also said,

I'm here till 9 or 10 o'clock [p.m.], quite often. On a good day, in a good season, [I am here until] maybe 7 or 7:30 [p.m.]. But, now it's the busy season; I'm here till 10 [p.m.], plus a whole day on the weekend. When people have furlough days, spring break, summer break, and winter break, and whenever I'm off the clock, I'm here working. So, I'm really never off the clock.

Joanna's weekday started at 7 a.m., but rarely stopped at 5 p.m. She said, "I can't remember how many weekends that I have spent on working. It's just too many."

The women's dedication to work also showed up in their setting high standards for their work. Kate said, "I'm committed. I want to see the school do well, and I want to see the kids do well. Therefore, I feel driven to do the best in what I can." Irene remarked that she "could be a hard ass," because she expected much more of herself in work. Likewise, Catherine said,

> I am very driven…. My efforts are all 110% on what I do…. It's hard for me to relax, and usually it has to be me reaching to the point where my body is just worn out and I get sick that I am like finally be forced to take a day or two off. I just want that sense of accomplishment.

Helena also said, "I don't think I can go into a leadership position and just do a mediocre job and be okay with it." Some women even felt badly about delegating their work to others. For instance, Diana said, "I feel like it should be my responsibility; the buck stops here with me. I should know everything."

It was evident that the women were very committed to their work. Sometimes, such a commitment and self-discipline was to the point that was detrimental to their physical or psychological health. It is possible that the women's strong work ethic was a product of cultural influences from their Asian heritages that value hard work: a product that is reinforced by the model minority myth discourse (e.g., Lee, 1996; Yu, 2007).

Be humble. Most of the women considered humbleness an important quality for themselves as a leader. For the women, being humble meant defining achievement communally and crediting others for achievement. Diana made sure that people in her school celebrated things that her students and teachers had done, not necessarily her successes. She said, "You

don't brag about yourself. If you did something good others will notice and will let you know, but you don't go out and advertise yourself." Whenever the acknowledgement of accomplishment was received, Amanda made sure to "turn the light onto the teachers and the work they have done." Catherine believed that she "earned respect" by always giving credit to teachers for what they had done, even those that were small accomplishments, and "put them on a pedestal." Moreover, the women preferred not to be "under the spotlight." Diana called it "embarrassing," because it felt like "making fanfare about [her]." Garcia said, "Doing an excellent work… is really important for me. But I just want to be *quiet* on what I am doing well."

For some women, humbleness also meant acknowledging one's weaknesses and taking ownership of one's mistakes. Kate said,

> I am not interested in hiding my weaknesses. I feel that it's okay to show weaknesses because it's only human. If you tell people that you don't have any weaknesses, people are not going to believe you anyway, because you are human.

Helena believed that being honest about her shortcomings buys her the teachers' willingness to be frank about their weaknesses. She said, "It creates a safe place for us to be vulnerable with one another." Lori said,

> I am not perfect; I make mistakes. But, I don't try to hide my mistakes. Instead, I try to bring people into the process so that they can see the challenges and understand what have [sic] been involved. I want them to be informed along the way, so they, at least, see that I did the best I could under the situation.

Joanna felt the same way, and she said, "Am I going to make mistakes? Absolutely. But the transparency is what I think buys me goodwill for others to see that I honor that they have more expertise than me and would like them to teach me." Catherine also said,

It's not so much about whether or not we make mistakes. Everybody makes mistakes. The important thing is that you apologize and take the consequences. And you learn from your mistakes, and you make changes, not repeating them.

Sometimes, some women would even put themselves down to be considered humble. Diana said,

I always tell people my faults. "I'm so bad at math."…. Or if somebody was like, "You are always so good at doing things." [I would respond:] "But, you don't see me at home or you don't see me when I'm hiding in my office, under the desk."

Lori also said, "Whatever position I hold, I usually tell people like, 'If I can do it, anybody could do it. No worries.'"

Be fair. The women considered fairness a fundamental principle that they had lived by as a leader. Helena gave her example:

I always tell my teachers that: "Anything you see in your evaluation. I don't want it to be a surprise. I am going to make sure that I talk to you about it before, that we have worked on it together." I try to make sure that I observe their classrooms as often I can; I put a lot of evidence in their evaluations…. One of the things that I do is that I ask teachers to do a self-reflection, using exactly the same evaluation tool. I want to see how they rate themselves and see if there is any congruence or incongruence between their ratings and mine. If there are some discrepancies, I look at what evidence they provide and they look at what evidence I have. And between then and the evaluation, I would try to go in their classrooms more, or ask them for more evidence of things that I might have missed, because I am not going to see everything that they do…. I do it [teacher evaluation] with a lot of care and try to be fair.

Elaine's example of fairness was about master scheduling. She said that she would rotate classes so that teachers would have a fair student assignment. Joanna's view of fairness was based on "giving someone what they need, not necessarily what they want." She explained, "A teacher may want to have a certain kind of class, but that is not what the students need. And ultimately, it is not what the teacher needs. She needs diversity in her class, because students need to have that." Lori believed that fairness involves impartial decision making, even under difficult situations. The example Lori gave related to the zoning issue that recently occurred at her school:

Because our school boundary becomes smaller, some of our kids are going to be part of a different school. But, the students in our dual-language program can stay, if the new zoned area that they would be going to does not have a dual-language program. There are misperceptions; the non-dual-language program parents are saying: "It's because she is [Asian ethnicity]; she is protecting [Asian ethnicity] students from leaving. I'm not part of that program, so she is pushing me out" …. If I were a non-Asian administrator, the zone change would still happen, but they won't project things like those…. I have to be really fair and consistent in how I deal with the whole situation, regardless of all the dramas.

Separate the personal from the professional aspects of relationships. For the women, maintaining an appropriate level of personal-professional separation was necessary to perform their leadership roles. Amanda said,

I never forget that I am the boss. I can never be their [the teachers'] friends, because at the end of the day, if someone makes a bad decision, I still got to deliver the consequences. That has had [sic] happened again and again.... I am very mindful of that. I

recently had a housewarming party and I didn't invite any staff members. I am very

aware of the line. Though I am friendly and caring, I do not confuse the line.

Bella also said,

Being at the leadership level, you have to be willing to know that it is a lonely place. It is

a place where I am not going to be able to make teacher friends at the level that they

make teacher friends with their peers; I am fully aware of that…. There has to be that

personal-professional separation, because I can't be using the language that they are

using or share issues that they are sharing. I am fully aware of that and I accept that.

Diana had similar comments:

I try not to socialize too much with teachers, because there are times that I will have to

discipline them…. I have kept my distance…. We'll do the normal Christmas party or the

staff brunch or luncheon, and I will participate in those events, but I try to keep

everything very professional.

Kate also believed that "no matter how friendly or close [her teachers and she] are, the teachers

will always see [her] as the principal." She said, "There are certain things that they [the

teachers] might talk about that they might not want to talk about with me, which is totally fine."

In Irene's experiences, establishing a personal-professional separation was critical, because she

became an assistant principal at the same school where she had taught: "The difficulty came

when I had to evaluate my teacher friends…. I had to very much clarify that, socially, it was

something and, professionally, it was something else." Catherine's situation was similar:

With some of the teachers that I am friends with, prior to becoming assistant principal,

they know that there are things that I cannot divulge to them and they don't pry. They

respect the fact that we need to have that separation. They don't ask you to cross the line, because it is about professionalism.

Second, for the women, the personal-professional separation meant keeping their personal feelings in check, that is, in the women's words, "Don't take it personally." Catherine said,

I have had several teachers – they don't talk to you, they ignore you, or they are disrespectful. I have evaluated them, I have done what I am supposed to, I told them [what they need to change], and I move on. I am still going to greet them, talk to them, if I need to, and treat them like colleagues…. You have to shake it off…. You have to try to put that personal part out of it.

Joanna thought that the separation made pushbacks and personal attacks "a little bit less painful" to handle. "But it does not mean that it did not hurt; I did cry over it," she said. Helena's comments were similar:

The negativity, pushbacks, and personal attacks… you just have to look beyond that; take the emotional part out…. I will continue greeting them, reaching out to them [and] supporting them. It is not about getting them on my side; it is about being professional. They are teachers working with kids; if they are unhappy, then the kids are going to be unhappy. I have to set them [my emotions/feelings] aside.

Other factors. Some women also reported that being a young administrator (as in one's 30s) or having no children also factored into their credibility as school leaders. Garcia believed that she had to "constantly prove" that she was not too young to have the "legitimacy" of being a school administrator. Helena said,

> I have to be *a lot more careful* about how I carry myself, how I communicate with
>
> parents, and how I conduct myself so that they never question my age or say something
>
> like, "She is doing things like that because she is young."

Catherine also said that she got "a lot of comments like, 'You are the assistant principal? You are just too young to go into a leadership position." Irene's credibility was affected by her having no children. She recalled,

> I had parents come up to me and asked if I had children. I said: "No." and they went,
>
> "Oh, then you can't relate." That was very hurtful. I don't have my own [children], but I
>
> *can* relate. I have nieces; when they were younger I would think how I would want them
>
> to be treated. Those are the same feelings and expectations that I can relate to.

> **Other strategies.** The Asian American women used other strategies to support their

leadership. The first strategy was having a strong leadership team. Amanda said,

> I always think of it as in a video game. You have a bar at the bottom of your screen that
>
> shows your energy points or blood levels. When you have a full or sufficient level of
>
> energy, your bar is green or mostly green. When it turns to red, you are in trouble. I am
>
> always aware of my levels: with certain situations or persons I have green, but with
>
> others, I have red and need to ask a colleague: "I need you to talk to this person about this
>
> and in this way." because I don't have that many points. That's why, as a leader, you
>
> should always have a team of people with diverse skillsets.

Kate felt the same way:

> For the things that I don't know how to do, I don't have any interests in proving to
>
> other[s] that I can do it, because I can't…. But the important thing is to build all around
>
> myself with people who are smarter, more organized, more knowledgeable in instruction,

and better in multitasking, people with stronger skills than I have, so that when I need

help they can contribute.

Lori also said, "You can't be good at everything. You have a team. With the areas that are not

your strengths, you delegate to the other team members. You play to your strength and they play

to theirs."

Some women spoke of the importance of avoiding rushing into conclusions or decisions.

Kate said,

For a school principal, there is nothing worse and scarier than jumping to a conclusion or

decision without having all the information needed, like what exactly happened, what is

the proper procedure to handle the situation, and what might be the consequences….

With a split-moment decision you could be very wrong and cause serious

consequences…. People with good judgment are not those who make quick judgment and

react, rather, those who know *when* to make the judgment to *buy some time* to gather

information.

Diana's comments were similar:

Don't just jump to a conclusion or a decision…. I find that if I jump to a decision right

away, it is most likely that other people come in and say, "You should have thought about

this. Why didn't you do this?" So, even though at the moment it feels like very hustle and

bustle, I have learned to not rush to a judgment or rush to a decision but give it some

time.

Resilience

Having resilience was critical for the Asian America women in the study to overcome challenges and thrive in their leadership roles. The women developed their resilience through having a strong faith and an optimistic view towards challenges and negative experiences.

Strong faith. The women in this study had different religious backgrounds. Regardless, having a strong faith or a belief system provided the women strength to overcome challenges and hardships. Catherine said,

> There is karma; how you treat people is how you are going to be treated…. I just have to believe that karma will take care of itself. It will come back around and lessons will be learned. So, I just need to do what I know is best and what I believe in, and everything else will take care of itself. And it has been.

Helena's comments were similar:

> There were many, many times that I just wanted to give up and felt like I couldn't do this any longer. In those moments I like to remind myself: Okay, God put me in this position… because He knew I could do it; He knew I could handle it. For me that has been a great source of encouragement. Through prayers and through my faith and trust in God: This is exactly where I was meant to be. I am going through this challenge, because it is going to benefit me in the long run, make me stronger, help me build more resilience, and teach me something that I know I will learn. That helps me to get through different challenges.

Lori also said,

> We [her bible study group members] were studying about Joseph on how God may not change the situation, but to bless you in the situation. So, not asking to be removed from

the difficulty or challenge, but trying to see how we can be transformed in it. It could be

frustrating and you would be like, "Give me out of this situation!" But that may not be

happening; you should think, "What can I do in the meantime to make that change

happen?"

For Bella, "respect for a human is the base of [her] faith," and that fundamental principle applied

to her professional live as well. She said, "I couldn't separate that spiritual part… it plays out in

my interaction and my decision…even if the person is irrational and unreasonable." Amanda

believed that "everything that people do stems from the sound bites of what they believe in."

She said, "I fear only God; that is what I live by."

      Optimism. The women's resilience was also manifested through their optimism when

facing challenges in their professional lives. The women learned to view things from a positive

rather than a negative perspective. Joanna said,

> Poverty in education, serving children of color…. It is a very difficult battle because we
>
> know that our kids don't come to us out of isolation. They come with a whole party, and
>
> our ability to impact that whole party, sometimes, is very limited. I get all that, but the
>
> fact that you have pockets of success where on paper it shouldn't be successful tells you
>
> that it *can* be done.

Amanda believed that challenges were "assets, because [she got] to see things that other people

would not see." She commented,

> Fighting stereotyping constantly is frustrating, but I like to think: First, I am evolved
>
> enough to see it, [because] you have to be evolved to be able see it. And second, I have to
>
> be bothered to a point that I have to choose – Am I going to be angry about it or do

something about it? .... It bothers me enough to get me motivated to do something about

it, and *I'm doing* something about it.

Helena also said,

Take the year that we didn't have a principal for example. It was a horrible year. Why

was I going through that? …. I realized that the purpose of that year was for me to see

examples of bad leaderships. I can't expect only good leadership and learn from that; I

also have to see what it is like when there's a bad leadership. It was a tremendously

challenging year, but in hindsight, I saw that I had learned so much from it. And as I had

changed my perspective on it, rather than being weighted down, I was encouraged.

Lori thought of challenges as new experiences, though they "could be difficult," they were

avenues through which "new things are learned." Bella believed that "when a person faces

obstacles in his or her life, it makes the person stronger, and it makes the person persevere."

When Irene commented on the situations where some male staff members challenged her

authority openly in the school, she said, "I like to think [of] those as good learning experiences:

you learn how to deal with people, and you learn from your mistakes." Likewise, Kate believed

that something positive could come out of challenging situations:

Problems and challenges are opportunities for change and for better and newer reborn. A

lot of times when we have to solve a problem, the outcome is better than before. The after

picture is better than before, whether it is about the kids or the instruction or the school

operating systems. I think, when you set out to work on something to solve an issue, very

often, you come up with a better idea, and especially in solving problems and dealing

with challenges in teamwork.

Section Summary

The four themes emerging to address the first research question are the women's passivity in leadership development, critical mentorship, establishment of credibility as a school leader, and resilience. The Asian American women in the study rarely sought out leadership themselves nor had a career goal for leadership. Rather, they were encouraged by family members and other administrators to enter and advance in leadership. The women to a large extent put the family's needs first, if married. With fewer family responsibilities single women were better able to follow an upward leadership trajectory throughout the school system.

Mentorship played a critical role in the women's gaining access to and continuing development in school leadership. Most women developed such relationships informally in their professional lives. These particular persons the women truly admired were former principals, fellow school administrators, directors, and superintendents. From their encouragement, the women recognized their own abilities, thought they were fit for an administrative position, and began to prepare for it. Under the mentors' coaching, guidance, and protection the women learned about the profession, school administration, as well as the philosophy and strategies of leading a school. The women did not think it was necessary to have women of color as their mentors because it was to a great extent difficult to find them. However, the women who had had women of color as their mentors acknowledged the greater trust in these relationships because of shared experiences of being a minority woman in school leadership.

The women considered credibility an essential quality for leadership. To establish credibility, the women relied on a variety of strategies and practices. On the job, they learned continuously from their mentors, colleagues, and peers, through self-studies and professional development, and through hands-on experiences. They used relational and collaborative

behaviors as a substantive part of their leadership. They worked hard, upheld the principles of

humbleness and fairness, and maintained a personal-professional separation. Two other

strategies that the women considered facilitative for assuming their leadership roles are

developing a strong leadership team and avoiding making hasty decisions.

Last but not least, the women demonstrated their resilience through having a strong faith

and an optimistic or positive view toward challenges and negative experiences. Some women

attended church regularly or described themselves as Christians. For these women, teaching was

a Christian profession and their career choice of becoming a teacher and then a school leader was

an act of fulfilling their destiny or calling in life. Moreover, the women to a great extent were

able to look at things from a positive perspective and drew strength from it to overcome

challenges and hardships in their professional lives.

Themes Related to Research Question II:

How Do Asian American Women View Their Roles and Purposes as School

Administrators?

The second theme, making a difference through practical roles, includes two subthemes:

(1) the main practical roles; and (2) an espoused life purpose of making a difference. These two

subthemes address research question II. In the following sections I elaborate these subthemes to

explain how Asian American women administrators viewed their roles and purposes as school

administrators.

Main Practical Roles as School Administrators

The first subtheme speaks to the practical roles of the Asian American women in the

study as school administrators. These practical roles included managing school operations,

supporting, supervising, and evaluating teachers, interacting with students, and working with parents.

Managerial roles. Part of the women's roles, particularly for those who were principals, as school administrators was to manage school operations. Catherine said, "You are responsible for everything in the school, from the personnel to the things like the luncheon monitors." Kate said, "We check the textbook inventory every year. Sometimes, we are short of some books because the district didn't ship us enough. We contact other schools and go pick up their extras." And she remarked that "the Title I and the bilingual compliance requirements demanded a lot of [her] time and attention." Helena said that a lot of her work involved administrative tasks such as managing payroll, budgeting, scheduling, managing student data systems, and making sure that documentation was done correctly and in time. Amanda's comments summarize well the importance of having both management and leadership in administering a school:

There's management and there's leadership, and they are different. You have to actually have both skills to be an effective school administrator.… You have to have all your evaluations completed by X date; that's management. You have to make sure that the facility is clean, that's management. You have to make sure that there are teachers in all the classrooms all the time, when the students are there; that's management. You have to make sure that reports are filed on the dates due; that's management. There are other things that call for leadership: getting people to do what you want them to do, guiding the vision of the school, and getting people fired up about the vision, believe in it and understand the parts they play in it.

In N State the elementary schools no longer have the conventional assistant principal position. While the assistant principal of special education position is responsible for all the

issues on special education, the elementary school principals had to absorb many of the responsibilities previously designated to the conventional assistant principals. In other words, the elementary school principal is responsible for almost everything except special education. Some could have one coordinator to assist with all the responsibilities, given the school has a sufficient enrollment to earn an allocation of that staff member.

Support teachers. The women considered a major part of their work as administrators was to be to support teachers in their instruction. Catherine said,

> I am here to support them [teachers]. They are the ones that are in the front lines and I am behind them. I am their coach and cheering squad, helping them do what they need to do, backing them up, and making sure that they have what they need.

Kate said,

> Teachers vary. We have some teachers who will go all out and do everything and more for the kids and the parents. These teachers, you just worship and want to duplicate them and do everything you can to support them, so that they will stay in your school…. There are other teachers who, for different reasons, are tired, whose passions were there but gone now, who are not motivated and want to do the minimum, or who are indifferent about the data showing how the kids are doing. With those teachers, I do my best to motivate and inspire, and hope that the overall group dynamic will bring them along.

Joanna believed that supporting teachers meant "understanding what the teachers can do and building on that as well as assisting them with what they can't do." She gave an example:

> I have a teacher this year; what I have learned about her is that she is amazing at the actual job of teaching, but she sucks at all the other things that go with being in the special education – the paperwork, the forms, the thinking about service, and all that. So,

my job is to make sure that she is able to do the teaching which she is really good at and to help her do the rest. So, I take on a little more of her paperwork load or based on what she has got I show her how she can do this part of her job better.

Supporting teachers also meant to empower them. Garcia believed that "the whole notion of working *with* teachers" meant that she and her teachers were "in the work of providing good and better instruction for their students *together*." "Teachers should not be afraid because they have made some honest mistakes in the change process." Garcia said, "It is a learning experience for everyone." Diana's comments were similar:

> Teachers need to have the power, too, to handle many of the discipline problems…. Whenever parents come and have a complaint… I say: "Have you gone to the teacher, yet?" …. We [the leadership team] do refer a lot of the problems back to the classroom first and, many times, they can solve it right there.

When asked how she would define her success as a school administrator, Lori said, "Seeing teachers growing in their practice and become more of a change agent in their own practice." She remembered,

> When we started training teachers on teaching algebraic thinking for kindergarteners they were very resistant: "They are only kindergarteners, and you expect them to solve math problems at that level? I am just happy if they know how to count…." But, at the end of the year they were speaking about how well their kids were doing. I chuckled to myself, thinking, "This is the same group of teachers who told me that it can't be done and now they don't even remember that part." Now, they are not only doing the algebraic thinking with the kids, but collecting journals on it and wanting more their own periodic

assessments…. It makes me feel really good seeing the changes from where they were before to where they are now.

Catherine also said,

We are trying to mold a culture of agency. It is like, you give a man a fish and he has a fish to eat for a day versus you teach a man how to fish and he has fish to eat for a lifetime…. We [the administrators] don't have all the answers. If teachers have problems, then come with their ideas or solutions, and we can talk about those options and work them out together.

Supervise and evaluate teachers. Supervising and evaluating teachers were part of the women's roles as school administrators. Helena said,

Before the school year starts we [the leadership team] look at our list of teachers and we designate who is going to coach who, based on our background, their personalities, where we want them to grow, and who would be the best fit…. At one point I was assigned about 10 to 12 teachers. I would observe… help them with some lesson planning, and give them feedback on cluster management…. When I do evaluations… I try to make sure that I am in their classrooms [doing observations] as often as I can be. I am meeting with them regularly so that whatever they see in their evaluation is not a surprise because they have already heard it before in a non-evaluation way.

Joanna also described her "straightforward" approach of supervising and evaluating teachers:

I expect pushbacks because it is their practice and/or instruction that we are talking about…. So, [if you don't agree with my evaluation], tell me what I should be looking for. And if I'm not seeing it, then tell me why and how I can support you in doing what is needed to happen.

At Garcia's school district, teachers had options of "being observe[d] like the traditional way or doing a project." For teachers who chose to do class observations, Garcia would discuss with the teachers and set up timelines for class observations. For teachers who chose to do projects, she would check with the teachers from time and time with their progress before the May deadline. She also conducted a mid-year check with all the teachers, so adjustment and facilitation could be made before she set out for final teachers' evaluations toward the end of the school year.

> Lori believed that supervision and feedback should be tailored:
>
> Some of my [Asian] teachers are in a mindset of that: I am the giver of knowledge, the classroom needs to be quiet, and the students need to do what I say. My feedback for those teachers would be more on pushing them toward more cooperative types of learning. And for some of my Spanish-speaking teachers who are all about collaborating but less or no gearing toward academic performance, my feedback is different, yet fair.

For Catherine, the responsibilities of coaching and evaluating teachers were shared between the other assistant principal and her:

> I coach kindergarten through the second grade and I evaluate the third through the fifth grade. The other assistant principal does the opposite…. Weekly, I go in the classrooms and check lesson plans. While I'm there checking lesson plans, I take five or ten minutes to observe and see what's going on and give the teacher a feedback. We do the glow-and-growth, meaning that I'll jot down on my little note, "Hey, I loved how you did this, this, and this," or, "Notice that this was happening, you might want to try..." If I see an array of issues or a pattern of things not happening, then I will have a formal talk with them to see what is going on, and then we come up with a plan.

Last, the women reported that supervising and evaluating teachers who were uncooperative or unwilling to work as hard as others can be stressful and challenging. "You thought you would not have to remind them [the teachers] of what they're supposed to do, but apparently you do." Elaine said, "It is hard to believe, sometimes, that the teachers would let themselves get away with thing that they wouldn't let their students get away with." Helena and Garcia both spoke about having teachers who were "passively aggressive." Garcia said, "She did not respond to my emails on multiple occasions. I feel as almost as if she is either being dismissive or disrespectful of me." For Joanna, work with challenging teachers became more difficult, when there was no support from the principal:

> Last year, at one of the schools, I did not have my principal's support. I was being told to back off because I was coming on too strong. I could back off, but the point is that the things still had to be done, not because of me but because of special education [regulations]. She [the principal] did not want me to write him [a teacher] up because he was a union representative. Fine, I wouldn't…. But it was my job to let her know the implications of her decisions…. For the first time in my professional career, I said to myself: "I'm only here for a year and I'm out. What's the point?"

Nonetheless, the women believed that it was important to rely on relational approaches in handling these challenging situations. Catherine thought that patience and persistence often worked to her advantage in turning the teachers around to work with her: "It will take a while, but the more I continue to be nice and consistent in interacting with the person, the more likely and sooner the other person stops [not cooperating]." Likewise, Diana, Helena and Garcia all mentioned that they continued reaching out to the challenging teachers. Diana said, "I want the teachers [to] know that I still value them as individuals. There are some skills that they need to

work on, but I am not attacking them personally." Helena's comments were similar: "I will continue to reach out to the teacher, because that is how I operate. I am not going to hold against the person…. I still care about the teacher doing well." Kate also said,

> When I have to sit down with a teacher to give some constructive criticism, my approach is always extremely supportive, respectful, and loving.… If you don't have that, someone, out of not getting into trouble, might sit there and listen to what you have to say, but deep down the person may be very resentful, may hate you and be angry, and you will not get anything out of that interaction.

Interact with students. As administrators, the women had limited direct contact with their students. Therefore, the women appreciated every opportunity that they had interacting with the children, even when they had to discipline them. Garcia said,

> One of the nice things about doing supervisions is that I can get out of my office and talk to the kids, getting to know their names, what they like or dislike.… They like you calling them by their names. They come to my office to say hi; sometimes, they fill me in on a lot of their gossips. It just makes me smile thinking about the kids…. When I am disciplining them, there are more opportunities for me to be more intentional about what I am saying… more opportunities of giving them words of life and encouraging them."

Bella also said,

> Whenever I discipline my students, I see that as an opportunity to teach them and mentor them. You get to have that personal time to talk to and explain to them how to make better choices, because the classroom teachers certainly have the same philosophy but just don't have time to mentor.

Kate had similar comments:

> The kids who I called jokingly "frequent flyers," the ones that get sent to my office a lot are the ones [who] know how much I care…. I am genuinely respectful of the kids. I don't feel that just because they are kids, they are less or I can scream and yell at them and tell them like it is. I genuinely want to teach them how they can still be respectful even when there is a disagreement.

Catherine was more than happy to cover classes for teachers, when they were away participating professional development. She said,

> I enjoy it. The funny things that the kids do and say, the brilliant ideas that they come up with when you talk to them and have a discussion with them… you feel the immediate connection with them when you are there in the classroom. I do miss that part a lot.

Bella's comments were similar:

> I love going in to the classroom, seeing the kids learn, and covering classes for the teachers…. I just feel that I am so fortunate to have these opportunities to interact with the kids. You don't get involved directly with them that much, as an administrator. One time, I went in and sat down to read a story, a second grader came and sat right on my lap – it's just heartwarming…. One time, they were studying immigration, and I shared my life story with the fifth graders; they wrote me thank-you notes, [with] some saying, "I am sorry for your obstacles in your life, but look, it made you a stronger person." They are just precious.

Work with parents. As school administrators, the women's tasks also involved working with parents. Because many of the women served at schools with predominant Latino/Hispanic populations, the challenges related to language were evident. Diana said,

Unfortunately, I'm not able to communicate firsthand with many of my Hispanic parents. If I had the language skill, it would give me a little more credo…. I don't feel like that I'm less effective as a principal because I can't speak Spanish. But I think it's a hindrance, sometimes, when I can't communicate my *true feelings* firsthand to the Hispanic parents.

Kate also said,

If I could speak Spanish, a lot of the misunderstanding and mistrust would not happen. When you speak someone's [the Hispanic parents'] home language, especially when they are not very fluent in English, it makes a tremendous difference in the bonding process…. When you have a translator sitting there translating, no matter how you might like each other as people, that creates a barrier.

Lori had similar experiences: "My first assistant principalship assignment was at a school with a majority of Hispanic populations. It was difficult because I needed a translator for a lot of my parental meetings and other things as well." Elaine, on the other hand, could speak some Spanish, and she believed that "the [Latino/Hispanic] parents are more willing to listen and work with [her], knowing that [she is] not Hispanic but trying to speak the language." Likewise, Irene, though not fluent in Spanish, thought that her Hispanic parents were more comfortable interacting with her, when she tried to speak the language.

Nonetheless, the women to a great extent reported good relationships with parents. Helena said, "I have really good relationships with parents. My dissertation was all on parent engagement and involvement in high school settings. Parents are very important for me." Irene observed that parents perceived "a connection" between themselves and her because she grew up in their neighborhood. Joanna believed that the way she approached the parents helped build

positive relationships between them: "When I interact with them, I do if from the heart and I do it with sincerity. It's my effort that the parents see and value."

The women valued parental support and involvement. Kate thought that it was important to be responsive. She answered parents' emails and phone calls, even if it was late night or on weekend. She also said,

> I always ask myself: How do I approach the parents or a parent to get them to understand that I'm really on their page and we're on the same page to support their child? How can I present the situation to get the parents to help me rather than become defensive and mad at me?

Catherine said,

> The parents are the ones raising the children. As educators we are part of their [the students'] lives, but we only see them six hours a day and we are not the ones who they will always love and respect. What the parents say is ten times more important [than what we say at school]. So, having the parents on board and backing us is extremely important…. We want parent involvement, and it really takes a partnership.

Irene created a parent education center at her school, and she conducted professional development for parents on the writing process so that they could have a sense of "what their children were going through and how to measure the progress, and when their children came home with writing assignments, they understood what their children were doing." "It was really a good feeling because I felt successful with them [the parents] and they felt welcome and involved with the school," Irene said. For Lori, with many "very pushy parents" who "are well-versed in how their children are doing academically," she tried to steer their attention more on the "psychological welfare" aspects of their children.

When working with the challenging parents, the women relied on relational strategies to reach consensus and resolve problems. Lori said,

> With my non-Asian parents, I do have to tweak how I interact with them because I am not a person of their cultures. I try to bond with them in the sense that I am empathetic to what is important to them, before I approach the problem or issue that we are really trying to deal with.

Bella also remarked,

> When parents are upset; they are like wanting to tear the building down. Even when they come in angry like that, I treat them as if I were them and their child were my child. What would I expect in the situation? I use that natural instinct because I am a mom and parent myself…. I am not intimidated by the fact that they are mad. I have learned to listen and learned to say, "How can we together resolve the problem." Those are my opportunities to show the parents that I care. Being transparent with them – they can't stay mad at the situation and with me, when I approach them in that way. Most of the time, we are able to work it out.

Helena's comments were similar:

> When I have discipline meetings with my Hispanic parents and their kids, I, sometimes, share my life stories. I try to help them connect and understand that my experiences are not too different [from theirs] because my parents are also immigrants…. I try to find ways to make them feel at ease and welcomed. I really just approach them at a human level by trying to speak their language as much as I can, if I could and address the issue at hand.

Diana recalled a situation where she had a parent who was furious about her son being referred

for transfer to another school for serious misconduct:

> I said to the parent: "If you are a parent of another student here, would you want a student
>
> like your son to be here on campus bothering your child?" She couldn't answer me. Then,
>
> I said: "So, that's why we are trying to find another school where he's going to do
>
> better… we worked it out."

The parent issues Kate faced stemmed from the well-recognized Asian-English dual-language

program at her school. Kate explained,

> For a long time, this school felt like a Latino community. With the dual-language
>
> program… it is hard for the Latino parents to watch that gradually things have changed.
>
> Some parents want to attribute something negative for the reason, and automatically, they
>
> – I guess, part of human nature, we like to find a place to point our fingers – started to
>
> form misunderstanding: this [Asian] principal, she came and now she wants to make it a
>
> [Asian] school and squeeze out the Spanish-speaking people. There are a lot of those hard
>
> feelings. It has been difficult…. But I will continue be frank and with all due respect, not
>
> to criticize…. When I see those parents I will still greet them and strike a conversation
>
> with them…. It does not change my heart in terms of knowing that I am here for their
>
> children and for them.

Irene also commented,

> In my position [assistant principal for special education] I try to be upfront about that: we
>
> are all here as advocates for the child…. I've had some instances where the parents come
>
> in and you can tell they're very stressed already, but if I acknowledge that they are doing
>
> what they think is best and I understand that, they seem to calm down. I explain, "I

understand that you're doing what you think is best for your child, and I am doing what I think is best for your child. So, keep that in mind that we can disagree but let's move forward." Even with the most adversarial parents, which luckily I haven't had that many, that seems to put them at ease and make the whole meeting [Individualized Education Program meeting] a little bit easier to go through.

Espoused Life Purpose of Making a Difference

The Asian American women had espoused a life purpose of making a difference as their ultimate goal as school administrators. It was a purpose that was supported through their practical roles and surfaced as dedication that motivated the women to thrive in their professional lives. It was not only the students' lives the women wanted to impact, but also the disadvantaged social groups with whom they were identified.

Life impact. The women reported that they went into public education wanting to make a difference, and being a school administrator became a way allowing them to make a bigger impact beyond individual classrooms. Garcia said, "As an administrator, you get to work with kids and adults, and I really like that. I work with the kids, not just to give them factual knowledge but to impact their lives." Lori's comments were similar:

I know it seems very cliché, but at the end of the day you do make an impact on someone's life; I am not sure that anybody else's job can say that. It may be long range… and it is hard to appreciate that sometimes, but… when you see them [the students] do really well it makes you feel that all is worth it.

Helena believed that as a classroom teacher she "only had agency over [her] students," but, as a school administrator, she "can potentially impact the whole student body." Joanna said,

After I became a literacy coach I got to see a very different view of education; I realized that in the classroom I impact 30 kids a year, but outside the classroom I have the potential to impact a greater number of kids positively; that's where I wanted to go.

Kate also said that after "having some opportunities to exercise some of [her] leadership skills," she realized that "as a school leader and with those leadership skills she could influence more people and make bigger changes for more children and adults."

For these women, fulfilling the purpose meant to have high expectations for the students and to advocate for the students' interests. Amanda quoted George W. Bush and said that she "[had] no tolerance for the soft bigotry of low expectations." Diana said, "I am here for the students, so every decision I make, I remember that." Kate remarked,

The misunderstandings [of me] are difficult, but I am okay; I know what I am doing…. But, the thing is – I actually have Latino kids came to me and asked, "My mom went into a meeting and she came home and said that you want to send away the Hispanic kids. Is it true?" It is one thing that adults have misunderstanding and dramas, but it is another thing when they pass it down to the kids…. Sometimes, decisions are made and they do not appear to be about the kids at all; the whole process is messy and all politics… it is frustrating. But, none of those is as bad as the funneling down the dramas to the kids, because I feel that no matter what happens we should protect the kids and give them space so they can focus on learning because that is really all they need to do…. They really shouldn't be exposed to or worry about all of that.

Elaine believed that a school leader should do what is the best for the students. She said, "It's not a popularity contest; you should say no, if you believe what [is] being asked for is not in the benefit of the kids. That's it, period." Irene expected her teachers to "care" about their students:

I want teachers to connect with their students; I want them to really think about what they would want if this were for their own child…. I expect them to consider each child as their own. Their students are with them for six hours; sometimes, that's more than how much the children see their parents. I do expect them to care.

Joanna's comments were similar:

I believe in the right of every student to be able to access education…. Going into a school site and improving student learning, but for all students, because it's what they deserve…. I want to make sure that they have quality instruction [and] they leave my school with the appropriate skills and thinking and exposure to what's out there so that they have the tools to try and pursue what's best for them.

Helena believed that there was no place for "mediocre" for a school leader who was there to serve the students. She said,

Because I love my students, I want the best for them. I expect teachers to teach with a lot of passion, drive, and love. Love means having empathy, wanting equity for the kids, understanding them and their needs, and addressing them, instead of blaming or having low expectations.

The women also acted on the purpose by being role models for their students. Amanda wanted to be a role model for all the children. She said, "It hurts all the children, not just children of color, if they grew up and had not seen a variety of role models of different races." Bella's comments were similar:

You need students to be able to look up to an Asian woman and say, "She didn't just learn English, become a teacher and stop there." I want them to see that I had the obstacle of learning English, and to see that they can go to college and become a teacher, if they

want to. It is more than just becoming an administrator; it shows them that they can

become a leader in any area, not just in administration for education.

Also, she constantly reminded herself and her staff that they needed to be role models for their

students.

Moreover, the women's dedications to the students gave them strengths to face

challenging and difficult situations. Bella remarked that her love for her students gave her

strengths to "withstand their parents' reservations and rage." Kate thought that her commitment

for her students allowed her to stay strong in facing tough situations:

> I felt frustrated that they [some parents] wouldn't see…. I thought: How can you say I
>
> don't care? Where do you think all the work comes from? …. The kids are the same;
>
> everybody else was the same, except the principal – I know that teachers are the ones
>
> doing the work, but you have to see that the principal cares and puts in a lot of work to
>
> facilitate these changes…. But, in my heart I have never had a doubt that, no matter what
>
> the parents are saying out there, my job here is to serve the kids…. That makes it easier to
>
> accept whatever is going on…. I am not going to do less with the kids.

Amanda was willing to bear the burden of fighting against various discriminations and injustices

for her students:

> I live it, a lifetime fight against the discriminations and injustices. If that is what it takes,
>
> on my part, to make a difference in my kids' lives, I do it. If that means my career will
>
> get hurt along the way, then it is a career that I am not supposed to have…. I don't fear
>
> that.

Group uplift. The women had espoused a life mission of uplifting the marginalized

groups that they had embraced as part of their identities. Amanda said,

My identity as an Asian American female shows the complexity of *who I am*…. For

every identity that I have taken in my life experiences, I use whatever the capacity that I

have to make things better, whether it is for women, Asians, the working class… the

disenfranchised groups that I know is part of my identity, or any part of my Venn

diagram or mosaic that has been my life experiences. As someone who is in a position of

influence, I feel that it is my responsibility to make sure that the situation [for the group]

is better than how I found it.

Bella also said,

It is a calling…. I want other people to see that English learners can succeed; they can

one day lead a school and meet the English language learners' needs and the

economically disadvantage[d] children's needs. I really consider myself in the two

categories.... My parents have eight children and we really did not have the financial

means…. People often perceive Asian women, especially [Bella's ethnicity] women, to

be nail manicurists…. I'm embarking on a different profession to serve and to set a role

model for other Asian students, especially for English learners…. I feel that my role as a

school administrator is instrumental to represent the groups in a new way. It is rewarding

to make an impact with my life.

Garcia had been mentoring other Asian American women, and she hoped that these women

could feel "empowered to seek leadership in education," knowing where she "was and is now."

Section Summary

The two themes that emerged to address the first research question are the women's

practical roles as school administrators and the espoused life purpose of making a difference.

These Asian American women considered their everyday work to involve managing school

operations and working with teachers, students and parents. While ensuring smooth functioning of the school was imperative, the women focused greatly on assisting and empowering teachers for quality instruction. They considered the task of students' discipline as an opportunity for growth and mastery. They valued the parents and community for their integral involvement and importance to the school.   Relying on relational practices, the women turned challenges to opportunities for building consensus and creating more inclusive schools for students, teachers, and parents.

Moreover, the women have taken up a life purpose of making a difference in students' lives and with the marginalized groups they have embraced as part of their identities. The women considered themselves role models and advocates for these populations. Their dedication to students became their strength to persevere through challenging situations.

Themes Related to Research Question III:

What Are the Challenges and Issues the Women Face as Asian American Females in

School Leadership?

The third theme, the Asian American women's uncertainty toward sexism, racism, and women's leadership, includes three subthemes: (1) struggling with the stereotyping of Asian American women; (2) discriminative resistance to the model minority myth discourse; and (3) uncertainty about women's leadership. These three subthemes address research question III. In the following sections I elaborate these subthemes to illustrate the coexistence of the Asian American women administrators' resistance and uncertainty toward sexism, racism, and women's leadership.

Struggling with the Stereotyping of Asian American Women

The first subtheme speaks to the issues that the women had encountered as a result of the stereotyping of Asian American women. The women reported that they were aware of the different types of stereotypes associated with Asian American women. Struggles with racial and gender discrimination and injustice were evident.

Awareness of stereotypes of Asian American Women. The women were aware of the different stereotypes associated with Asian American women. Amanda said,

There are three stereotypes: one is a very submissive [and] demure, one is the Chinese militant, and the third is the sexy kitten. I am very aware of the multimillion dollar porn industry of Asian females… the social stereotype of Asian females as sexual objects.

Diana had similar comments:

One stereotype of Asian American women would be submissive, like she will cook for you, be quiet, and walk 10 paces behind you… or like a demure, submissive wife. The second one is that Asian women are so exotic. Then, there is the dragon lady one, going to be conniving and evil. And [there is] the super, hyper-intelligent one with a Ph.D. in engineering or five doctorates.

Kate was aware of the stereotypes of Asian American females as "meek, quiet, soft, and submissive or as the overachievers who have gone to the Ivy League universities themselves and push their kids to go to the Ivy Leagues." Irene, Garcia, and Helena all talked about the stereotype of the submissive Asian American females. Irene said, "People expected Asian American women to be submissive and quiet." Garcia said, "We [Asian American women] are expected to be docile, weak, and quiet; and can be pushed around." Helena said, "In general,

Asian women are stereotyped to be docile and submissive, always very nurturing, and tend to cater to others more."

Struggles with stereotyping. The women all had encountered situations where they believed the discrimination against them might have something to do with the stereotypes of Asian American women. While some women were able to articulate the stereotypes of Asian American women as the cause for their struggles, others were less certain. Amanda believed that "things were different for Asian American women" and they were "easy targets for personal attacks." She commented,

> My cars got vandalized twice…. I've been questioned in situations related to dealing with money where I don't think a White male counterpart would face…. I confronted the supervisor and I expressed that I felt the questioning was based on a stereotype of tricky Asians in manipulating things and that it did not sit well with me. I don't know if the person got that, but I felt very good about myself that I was able to articulate that and how it happened [and] manifested itself in that way again. It [stereotyping] manifested in other ways, too. I have feedback all the time: I am harsh or cold; I have too high expectations, [like] the "Tiger Mother." People say that I say mean things with a smile – the questioning of my sincerity I believe is linked to the stereotype of "You can't trust an Asian."

Elaine also remarked, "People say it is an Asian female thing; 'She just thinks she is perfect.' I was called 'Miss Perfect,' a lot. No, I just try to do a good job." Irene believed that people she worked with were less receptive to her at the beginning, because her personality did not fit the stereotype of the submissive Asian American females. She said, "They did not know what to make of me. And they don't always like it, because it is not what they expect." Garcia said that

she felt a constant pressure of "proving" herself to others in the school, while "battling" with people's stereotypes of Asian American women. She also said that such discriminatory incidents were never "blatant":

> There were more like the subtle cues. They made you wonder: … if I were White and old, would this happen? If I were a guy, would this happen? If I were an Asian guy, would this happen? So, you don't know where it's coming from. Is it because of me as a person or because of how I look like?

Diana had encounter situations when the parents would not speak to her and respect her authority because she was an Asian female.

Discriminative Resistance toward the "Model Minority" Discourse

This subtheme speaks to the issues that the women administrators encountered as a result of racial discrimination and injustice toward Asian American as a group, predominantly, the model minority discourse (MMD). The women were more receptive to certain aspects of the MMD such as valuing education and working hard than the others like technical excellence. And the women did not demonstrate equal awareness and resistance to racism and/or sexism on the individual level.

     Ambivalence about the MMD. The women in the study did not reject the MMD as a whole. Certain parts of the MMD were considered untrue whereas others were recognized by the women as truthful statements of their experiences. All women rejected the discourse of Asians being good at mathematics. Diana said: "I tell others that I'm not good at math. And they would be, 'What? You are Asian. You should be able to do math well.' Not me." Irene also said, "People say to me that Asians don't have negative stereotypes: They are hard-working; they are smart; they do really great in math…. I mean, every stereotype is negative, because I'm not good

at math; actually, I'm horrible in math." Some women believed that such a discourse denied their effort for their accomplishment by treating capacity as an innate trait. Catherine said,

> People already have assumed that I was going to climb and end up in a role [higher leadership position] at the county, because Asians are smart or they are really good at math or science. No, I have to work just as hard as everyone else, if not more. There are people [among Asians] that their brains just work that way, and you get lumped in with them because of your ethnicity…. I work in educational technology… people would make comments like, "How do you know how to do that? Is it just in your Asian blood?" And I'm like, really? That's your response. No, I learned along the way.

Other than the math aspect, the women to a great extent bought into the MMD: Asian Americans are hardworking, academically successful, and have overcome barriers to be socioeconomically prosperous. Catherine said,

> We put aside our pride and go and do the work that provides for our families, whatever the job may be. But in the U.S., you have people that would say, "I'm not working at McDonald's." I mean, if it is a job and it's open and it is going to help put food on the table for your children, then you do it. There is nothing wrong with that. The honor in it is the fact that you are willing to take care of your family that you chose to have. Everybody is going to be up and down on their lucks [sic], but you do what you have to make it work. That is not happening here with some – "Oh, I'll have more kids and they'll just send me another check." I don't get that… and I don't believe in that. You sign it out to do the work, you do the work; you give it all you have and you contribute. That is how the world goes.

Bella and Elaine both talked about how Asian Americans tend to work hard to accomplish what

needs to be accomplished. Referring to the idea that Asian American females nowadays could

have a career other than "teacher, nurse or secretary" Elaine said, "I don't see any limitations

because of one's gender and race. It's on whatever you want to be. I think the limitation is more

on personal limitation, limitation you set for yourself [and] the choice you have made." Amanda

also said,

> The clash was not on race, but socioeconomic…. In my experience it has been the
>
> individual who has low education and low socioeconomic status [who] has a problem
>
> with me. It is so ironic because I was the first in my family to go to college and when I
>
> was in elementary school, I had the reduced lunch ticket.... There have been lots of
>
> conversations about this resentment of African Americans of Asian[s], saying you get
>
> minority status but you don't have to pay minority price.

Kate also seemed to agree with the MMD:

> Even though Asians are minority in numbers, Asians are not minority in terms of the
>
> school district's demographic data. The school district's data point out African
>
> Americans and Latinos as the disadvantaged groups. Asians don't tend to be in the
>
> disadvantaged groups and people don't tend to see us as the disadvantaged group….
>
> Socioeconomically, the Asians are not in that group. Academically, Asians usually
>
> perform pretty strongly. So, I don't think people see me as this minority woman principal
>
> working. Or, at least I don't perceive myself that way.

Catherine did not think that the MMD was "offensive" because "it is in a positive light." She

thought that "there [were] a lot of other races and ethnicities that [got] a bad reputation and that

[was] what [made] it offensive."

The racially discriminatory discourse about Asian Americans' lack of social skills was noted by the women as well. Irene believed that this stereotype of Asian Americans could put the group in disadvantage, especially working in the field of education when relations matter greatly. Elaine, on the other hand, did not found the discourse to be untrue: "For the most part, Asian males do not have social skills…. They don't know how to talk to people and how to interact with people in a nice way."

Family influences. All women indicated that the influences they received from their parents and the values their parents instilled in them from a young age shaped their educational and leadership beliefs and actions. All women came from families that valued education. All women mentioned that their pursuit of higher education was expected by their parents. Diana said that "going to college was expected from my parents." Elaine's experience was similar:

> It was like that you are supposed to get good grades…. It was never a question of whether or not you are going to college; it was you are going to college…. My mom never made me wash dishes, clean the house, etc… she just made me go to school.

Garcia also said,

> Education is a deeply rooted thing in my mom's life. It is something that both my parents value. She [the mother] would always say that school is good. She never said no. They never questioned my choices or anything; they always encouraged higher learning.

Catherine grew up in a single parent household, and she said,

> Even though she [Catherine's mother] was raising us all by herself, education was always her number one. She tried to put away savings as much as possible to help us because I was going to college. That was never a question for her.

Most women's parents had high expectations for them. Some expected the women to have careers in medicine, law, and engineering rather than teaching. However, the positions of assistant principal and principal in a school are more highly regarded than the task of teachers. Garcia recalled that when she got accepted to one of the teacher education programs in an Ivy League university, her mom was not impressed, "You are going to the graduate school at [X] just to become a teacher? You've got to be a principal." Garcia said,

> Now, she [the mother] says that she is pretty impressed with how I kind of sought my own way, though it is not what she would have imagined. She had expected a career more like be a doctor, a lawyer, or a pharmacist.

Some women mentioned that their parents did not place this kind of high expectation on them; they just wanted their children to be what they wanted to be as long as they were happy with what they were doing. Helena said,

> My parents had expectations for me to do my best in everything, but they didn't necessarily have expectations for me to be a doctor or a lawyer or things like bringing in all straight A's. They never pressured me like that.

"My parents never said anything like, 'Go out and become a principal.' They are just very supportive in anything that I do," Irene said.

In addition to parents' influences, the women's husbands also contributed to affecting and encouraging the women's efforts toward their leadership goals. Catherine said, "Without his support, I definitely would not have the accomplishment I have now. I don't know how many times he pushed me, 'You can do it. I think you'll be great at it. You can lead.'" Garcia thought that "having a husband that has been on board with [her] all along" was essential in her path to leadership. Diana's experiences were similar:

My husband really pushed me…. I went to two interviews [for a principal position] for

about three years and didn't get them. But he kept encouraging me; he goes, "Don't

worry; the right one will come along." It is great having a spouse saying things like, "You

are already doing that kind of work. Why don't you go for it?" or "I'll take care of the

boy; we'll make it work." That was reassuring. It is encouraging knowing that we can do

this together.

Helena also said,

He is very interested in what I do at work and very supportive in what I do…. He is a

sounding board for me. He has been through this entire journey with me, through the

doctorate program, my first year as an administrator, the extremely difficult second

year…. So he has seen me grow, and he has grown with me and has supported me

throughout the entire journey. I couldn't have done it without him being there saying,

"You can do this," or giving me advice and encouragement, or telling me that you

shouldn't have that.

Joanna felt "really fortunate that [she had] a husband who understood her and how [he] helped

[her] set [her] boundaries." "He very rarely complains;" Joanna said, "he is always very

supportive."

Despite the support from their parents and husbands, the women, especially those who

have children, still felt that they were expected to be the primary bearer for the household and

childbearing responsibilities and expected to fulfill their roles at home and at work successfully

(Anderson, 1991; Eckman, 2004; Wrushen & Sherman, 2008). Garcia said,

I have two children; I do focus on my family, but at the same time I am working fulltime. So, the situation is that how can I do well here and do well at home. And there is still an expectation that I have to take care of my work and family and do both well.

Diana's situations were similar:

I don't think I have been balancing the two well. But, my husband and I have worked on getting really good child care for my son…. I leave the house at 6:30 or 7:00 a.m., and he is still getting ready for school. But, in the evenings, I really try to spend time with him and not do much school work. And on weekends I really try not to bring work home, but sometimes it is inevitable.

Irene also remarked,

One thing I learned from my previous principal is that you have to let go of your job and you have to take care of your family and yourself. I try to leave work on time, and I try not to bring work home; I try to have a balance. But it's not always successful.

Articulated understanding of racism. Two women articulated their understanding of racism. Amanda said,

My baseline of considering whether or a person understands racism is that the person is confident talking about it, because there are plenty of people of color, too, would go, "Race doesn't matter. I see no color." They are just like a White person who sees no color…. I am not personally going to end injustice in this world, but I am going to do my part: not contribute to it and squash it whenever I can.

Joanna commented,

I never experienced, to the best of my knowledge, any sort of discrimination. However, then, I went for the leadership program, and they talked a lot about race and ethnicity and

all of that. And the notion that when you deny your race and ethnicity, you are essentially cutting off a part of yourself that informs who you are. It made me reflect on the fact: Is it possible that, in my life, because of what I look like I have experienced discrimination and et cetera, but I didn't interpret it as that, but simply interpret it as someone being an asshole because I have taken away the context of race and ethnicity? And in doing that, was I better off or worse off? Sometimes, I think I have the answers; sometimes I don't.

Uncertainty toward Women's Leadership

The third subtheme represents how the educational communities and the Asian American women themselves reacted to women's leadership. First, despite the contributions that the women had made to their schools, the educational communities continued reflecting uncertainty toward women's leadership. And second, the women themselves were ambivalent about women's leadership. On one hand, the women understood that leading a school required a variety of leadership styles and that different situations called for different leadership styles. On the other hand, they bought into the gendered leadership style discourse, demonstrating reluctance and discomfort in using leadership styles that are considered masculine and strategies that would associate themselves with power. Also, the women often referred to personal reasons as the causes for their experiencing challenges and issues in their professional lives.

Educational communities' uncertainty toward women's leadership. Despite the contribution the Asian American female administrators made to their schools and districts, the educational communities that these women were part of continued casting doubts about women's leadership. The women's legitimacy in leadership positions was questioned, their leadership capacities were dismissed, and people tended to credit other personal characteristics as the reasons the women had achieved professionally as a leader.

Amanda recalled that when she was accepted for a very competitive leadership fellowship, some people believed that she "did not earn it" and she got in because she was the only female. When she was offered a middle school assistant principal position, rather than acknowledging that "[she] had been in the leadership fellowship and has administrative experience in middle schools as the reasons for the hire," similar comments were made. Diana said that a lot of people still could not accept that "a female can be *the* administrator of a school." Bella said that, at meetings, she had to "be really articulate or really assertive with a really assertive gesture in order to make a point and to be heard." She believed that male leaders were treated differently and certain leadership styles were valued more:

> People above me thought that I was too soft or too friendly…. I feel like the mainstream culture depicts a different set of criteria. People tend to view an assertive leader as being authoritative or potentially an influential icon…. Male administrators have more permission or are more accepted, if they start to sound a little more sophisticated right off the bat. They can be direct and they are allowed to say the things that they want to say right off the bat, with no patting.

Elaine was told by other administrators that she should stop "babying" the teachers with her relational practices.

When the women's approaches or styles were more forthright, they were perceived as "coming [on] too strong," and needed to "soften up." Joanna remembered,

> I contacted a colleague who is a principal to get advice before the interview [for a principal position], because it was a school where she was an assistant principal. She said, "You are driven; I like that, because that's the kind of person I can work with. But when you go to interview, you need to let them see your *soft side*." I was like, "What's

that supposed to mean?" "*Smile…*"…. I did not get the job, but the director I interviewed

with called me and said, "You started off and sounded all serious; I was worried. But as

the interview went on you had lightened up. And they [the hiring committee] got to see

that. That was great."

Elaine's experiences were similar:

I got a presence; I don't know if it's a stern presence; it's a presence that seems to

intimidate people. If I were a man, they would say that I was stern, but as a female, I'm

seen as rude. The same thing, but one is seen being stern, and the other is seen being

rude.

Kate said that people had been upset with her being firm and felt that she was "such a dragon

lady with all the demands" or "too forceful like a man." Irene believed that people tended to

view her "straightforwardness" as "difficult to get along." She said, "I have to show that I am

approachable…. I smile, extend my handshake, and [do] things like that."

Some women also mentioned the lack of women in the higher leadership positions. Diana

said that there were more female administrators at the elementary level, but very few at the

secondary and district levels. Joanna and Kate both mentioned that the majority of the school

principals at their district, District A, were men.

Magnified visibility. Three women reported the magnified visibility that they had

experienced for being "the only" Asian American female school administrator in their respective

school district. Amanda said that the pool of Asian American female administrators in public

school was "very small and narrow." It was almost impossible for others to not know who she

was. She was very aware that her reputation was always on the line: "my situation is more high

stakes, because people remember me." She said, "I am not saying this with a big head. It was actually unfortunate, but everyone in the country knows who I am." Catherine also commented,

> I have only met him [the superintendent] once, but he remembers me, because I am the only Asian person he has met…. It is hard to not know the only Asian person in the administration. There are expectations that come with that; you get that automatic persona of that you are supposed to be a certain mold.

Likewise, Garcia said,

> It would be impossible for him [the superintendent] to not know me. It is a very different paradigm shift…. The things you do and the words you say just become hard to miss. In your mind, you know [that] you have to perform, because people are judging you, probably more than just you personally…. But, sometimes, I like being the only one; I could see myself as a trailblazer, because there is not an abundance of us [Asian American female administrators], yet.

Sexism is the forefront issue. The women to a great extent considered sexism, rather than racism, as the forefront issue in their professional lives and for the profession of leadership as a whole. Diana said,

> The district has female administrators of different Asian ethnicities. We are pretty equal. And I don't see any difference from being Latino or African American. But, when you say "female" that is the part [being different]. A lot of people are still learning, "Okay, you can be a female and be the administrator of a school."

Joanna said,

> Before Michelle Rhee, we [Asian American women] had never had a female superintendent. The question is that, with all the criticism and the storm she got, has she

gotten it because she is a woman? Forget about being Asian, because I think that,

between the two, being a woman trumps being an Asian. Her leadership styles are – from

what I have read about her – she is a man in a skirt. Because she is in a skirt, she is

getting the pushback that you wouldn't give to a man.

Lori had similar comments: "Michelle Rhee from DC… her work is seen in a very different light than the other superintendents who possibly have tried the same thing. Maybe just because she is a woman, her work is almost vilified."

Asian American women's own uncertainty toward women's leadership. The women's ambiguity about gendered leadership styles was the first indication of their uncertainty towards women's leadership. The perspective of gendered leadership styles assumes a natural association between women and leadership styles characterized as being relational-oriented and indirect and between men and those as being task-oriented and assertive. The women in the study to a great extent found that it was "unnatural" for them to use more direct leadership styles typically associated with men. Bella said,

Reading a lot of books and building a little more confidence in using that leadership

language [assertive and/or direct styles]. It's not natural. I feel like that it's so natural for

the men…. I feel like [that] in the elementary level, women do not really have a

disadvantage to become an administrator…. You may have to come across as a really

strong leader, not a soft personality type, to be at a middle or high school level.

Helena's comments were similar:

My nature is that I'm very nurturing and caring. While that's great for fostering

relationships, as a principal, sometimes, I would have to make some difficult decisions

and follow through. That could be very difficult as it may go against my nature.

Likewise, Catherine thought that "women tend to be more nurturing." Kate believed that "more men than women aspire to become leaders." Joanna believed that she, as a woman, had been "a good counterpoint to the male principals" that she had worked for, because "men have a different type of accessibility."

The women also felt insecure about their relational leadership practices. Garcia was concerned that her collaborative decision-making process could be seen as "a sign of weakness." Helena felt compelled to be "tough" because "people [would] equate [her] being nice to being lenient." Diana also thought that "being nice could backfire on [her]." Lori worried about her orientation to details, because it was "upsetting" for teachers as they "prefer male principals [who] don't tend to notice as much details."

The women's uncertainty toward women's leadership also manifested through their discomfort and resistance to any behaviors that could suggest or increase the power disparities between them and others. Bella said,

> Males are more authoritative. They are more viewed like the intellectual thinkers.… It's not natural for me to sound authoritative and like an intellectual.… I feel uncomfortable. I know the vocabulary, but when I use it, it makes me feel like that I think I'm more superior and makes the person that I'm dealing with feels [sic] uncomfortable that I'm so sophisticated in my language. I feel like that I separate myself rather than connect with them, because they don't speak like that.

Diana did not like to introduce herself as an elementary school principal:

> I don't want people to know [I am a principal], like I'm in a power position. Sometimes, I wonder why I am embarrassed.… I shouldn't be embarrassed; I shouldn't have to hide it, but I just don't want my position as a principal to affect how people talk to me.

Nonetheless, Kate, in contrast with the other participants, showed a clear understanding of the non-fixated association between gender and leadership styles as well as the situation-relevance in using certain leadership styles. She said,

> Leadership styles are more about a person's core beliefs as a human, not about being a man or a woman…. I am warm and nice, but I also know male principals who are warm and nice. I can also be very direct, when the situation calls for it…. Many of us [principals] have both of those qualities…. You can't always be hardcore, nor always warm and fuzzy; you need to know who you are dealing with and pick an approach that matches the person so they can accept what is needed to make the difference.

Personal reasons as causes for challenges and issues in professional lives. The Asian American women in the study often referred to personal reasons as causes for experiencing challenges and issues in their professional lives. Amanda remarked that her strong personality was probably part of the reasons that she was "often" perceived by others as "a commandant, a field marshal, or a dictator." Diana thought that because of her "soft personality" she was less fit for being an administrator beyond the elementary level. She also believed that her upbringing had caused her discomfort in confronting teachers:

> This is how I was brought up; you don't say anything bad to people and you only say nice
>
> things. So, it is difficult for me to sit and tell a teacher that she or he is not up to par.

Irene commented that her "straightforward personality" could lead people to think that she was "less approachable" than her colleagues.

The women also alluded to their lack of certain knowledge and capacities for the negative experiences they had encountered in their professional lives. Joanna believed that if she could "read the recipients a little bit better" she could adjust, and then people would not take her

"decisiveness" in a wrong way or feel that "she was coming too strong." Garcia commented that she should take partial blame for what happened with people being disrespectful and dismissive of her authority as a leader:

> Things could be different, if I had more content knowledge on the [Z] program. In my prior school, I showed my intelligence by helping teachers with content, instruction… I did a lot professional development, so I was able to garner respect by doing that. But here, I haven't had a chance to do that, yet.

Section Summary

The three themes that emerged from addressing the third research question are struggling with the stereotypes of Asian American women, the women's differential resistance to the "model minority" discourse, and the school systems and the women themselves' uncertainties toward women's leadership. The women were aware of the stereotypes of Asian American women and found themselves still subjected to stereotyping in their professional lives. The women felt pressured to prove themselves to others that they were competent and were qualified for their positions.

The women to a large extent did not consider the overall "model minority" discourse negative and detrimental to their roles as school administrators. Except for rejecting the part portraying Asians as mathematically talented, the women considered themselves to be hardworking and driven persons, striving to achieve personal and professional goals. The women did not necessarily view themselves as a *minority*. The family influence on the women's career choice was evident.

Last, the women faced external and internal struggles with women's leadership. Externally, the women had to fight others' questioning of their leadership abilities, doubting their

leadership styles and practices, and resisting their very presence. Internally, the women showed signs of internalization of the masculine orthodoxy of leadership. The women felt discomfort using power and leadership styles associated with masculinity. Moreover, the women are inclined to self-blame rather than look for systemic roots for challenges and issues happening in their professional lives.

Additional Findings

The additional findings generated by the study include the shadow of the preceding principal, teacher union involvement in school matters, and distinctive challenges for women assistant principals of special education.

Shadow of the preceding principal. The principals in the study reported that the establishment of their leadership authority required overcoming the remaining influences from the preceding leaders. Helena said,

> I didn't want to be necessarily blatantly compared to the previous principal, because I am going to do things very differently and my leadership style is very different. Everyone loved and had a lot of respect for the previous principle, but he was very different from me. I didn't want people to be like, why is she doing it like this, or it used to be done like this. So, I wanted a transition, kind of a reset: I am coming in now and this is my style.

Lori observed,

> The previous administrator was very nurturing. That's good, but the other side of it is that I have to enforce a lot of things that should be enforced but were not, when I come in…. It is difficult to follow a beloved principal…. it is a tougher role to fit in. It is easier to take the place after a hated principal, because there is more room for you to something differently.

Diana's comments were similar:

> The former principal had her own feelings about discipline [sic] students; she was very
> much about nurturing and being kind. But, the point is that we also need to have
> structures; the children need know that they are accountable for their actions…. I am
> setting a different tone here.

Teacher union involvement in school matters. The women reported challenges related
to the teacher union. Joanna said, "In education, you have so many constraints. You are going to
walk in and get whoever you get. And if you don't want those people, then, to get them out is
very time-consuming." Lori remembered the conversation between a visiting regional manager
of Merrill Lynch and herself during a school site visit:

> "Say you want to let go a teacher and then hire a new one, how quickly can you do that?"
> he asked. "It does take time to write off a teacher and let him or her go," I said. He then
> said that, in their profession, they got the cream of the crop from all the universities who
> studied business, but the hires had a three- or six-month probationary period, and if they
> did not make their goals or projections they were let go. And I thought, "Oh, that is a
> little bit scary but good." That is how quickly they can let somebody go. If other
> professions have that kind of high accountability, then shouldn't we? Education is a
> profession where we are impacting our future. There has got to be a happy medium
> somewhere in between theirs and in education.

Kate had similar comments:

> Teacher unions, sometimes, also make roadblocks for doing honest work…. I can see
> certain degrees of protection is [sic] needed, because there are good and bad teachers and
> there are good and bad principals. There are principals who might abuse personal powers

in hiring and firing and there might be principals who might have favoritism and nepotism, so protection is needed. But, I think, sometimes, the system overdoes it a little bit, so that you can't even touch teachers who really are not doing the children any favor in the service, and that is not good.

Distinctive challenges for assistant principal of special education. The women who were the assistant principals of special education in the study reported three pronounced organizational challenges. The three organizational challenges are: (1) lack of opportunity to build relationships with teachers as well as the students, (2) excessive documentation burden, and (3) diminishing opportunity for career advancement.

Because the women had to split their time among multiple schools, they were left with limited time and venues for relationship building with the staff in general and the non-special education teachers in particular. Diana said that she "ended up with not really knowing the students, and knowing what was going in the schools." Taking her experience in the 2011-2012 school year for example, Joanna explained,

Did the teachers actually know who I am? No, they might recognize me in passing, but they didn't *know* me. Did they come to me? No, because they didn't know me…. In one of the schools I was responsible for, I had 50 teachers and over a hundred aids. No matter how much I tried, I gave myself little quizzes or something else; I know their faces, but I couldn't remember all their names. It was horrible.

Irene's situations were similar:

Being at multiple schools is very difficult…. They [general education teachers] don't necessarily see you as their supervisor and yet at the same time, they academically know that you are…. I don't feel like that I have as much of an impact. I have an impact with

my special education teachers… but with the general education teachers, they don't know

me; sometimes, they don't even know my name.

The second organizational challenge was the excessive documentation burden involved in

the special education that the women faced. Irene said,

By [X law], the paperwork, such as notifications, assessments, plans, and records of

contacting with the parents has to be maintained. For each school site, I'm supposed to

have one clerk specifically helping me with the paperwork, but I don't have any. I am

struggling with getting the paperwork out within the appropriate timeline and following

through with everything. And the timelines are legally bounded. Without any help, it's

very difficult.

The last challenge related to the diminishing opportunities for leadership development

and career advancement. Irene commented,

The position [assistant principal of special education] is no longer necessarily viewed as

the next step to principalship…. Our professional development is only on the surface….

For instance, my colleagues and I have not received in-depth training on Common Core,

when everyone knows that we are going that direction…. What I see happening is that the

people who are in the position and want to move up are trying to get other experiences so

they can quickly get out of the position.

Furthermore, Irene thought that the group was left to "build capacity on [their own]," as the

district did not provide support such as workload relieves or training schedules easily fit into

these assistant principals' work schedules. Joanna also spoke about the lack of networking

opportunities in the position: "Many of us do not have the luxury of having access to people who

have influence like the directors [the district personnel in charge of principalship]; they don't get to know us."

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have presented three main findings from this study of Asian American female principals and assistant principals. First, the women to a large degree were passive in their entrance and advancement in school leadership. Their career trajectories show that they usually begin leadership as a result of others' encouragement. The women in general put family first, if they are married. Single women are more able to follow an upward leadership path through the school system. Mentorship is essential for the women for it provides sponsorship and guidance as the women learn to lead and navigate the leadership landscape. The women rely heavily on relational and collaborative behaviors for their leadership practices. They have maintained professional ethics and demonstrated resilience in their leadership roles.

The second finding is that the women consider their daily function as a school administrator is for the purpose of making a difference with the students and the social groups embodied in their identities. The women's practical roles to a large degree consist of managing school operations, disciplining students, supporting, supervising and evaluating teachers, and working with parents. Acting as a role model and an advocate, the women have embraced a life mission of affecting the students' lives and uplifting the disadvantaged groups that these women themselves have taken on as part of their identities.

The third finding is persistent uncertainties toward racialized and gendered discourses and women's leadership in school systems, including among the women themselves. The schools in this study span over two states, five districts, and the levels of elementary, middle, and high. Still, in each case there are signs of stereotyping of Asian American women and Asian

Americans as a group as well as uncertainty about women leaders. The women themselves, too,

express some buy-ins of the model minority discourse and ambivalence about their own

leadership and tend to blame personal traits and capacities for the challenges they encounter.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of the study was to understand the leadership experiences of Asian American female school administrators and their meaning construction of their professional lives. Eleven Asian American female school assistant principals and principals from two states in the United States participated in the study.

Three research questions guided this study. First, as school administrators, how do these women interpret and make sense of their professional experiences? Second, how do they view their roles and purposes as school administrators? Third, what are the challenges and issues they face as Asian American females in leadership? Data collection involved in-depth interviews, informal observations, documents and artifacts, and reflective memos. Using the constant comparative method adapted from Strauss and Corbin's (1990) grounded theory approach, inductive qualitative analysis focused on these women administrators' leadership experiences and their own interpretation of the experiences. Previous empirical studies on the leadership experiences of Asian American women in school administration were virtually nonexistent in the literature except a limited number of dissertations (Lee, 1998; Pacis, 2005). As a result, this study sought to provide insight into Asian American women's leadership experiences for interested stakeholders (e.g., central office and build-level administrators, teachers, civic leaders, professional organizations, and other educational professions) and to inform policies associated with K-12 school leadership preparation, professional development, and access to and equity in leadership.

In this chapter, I provide a summary of the findings, a discussion of the findings in relation to the existing literature on Asian American women in educational administration in particular as well as women and women of color in educational administration in general. I then offer conclusions and some implications for theory, practice, and future research.

Summary of Findings

The findings presented here encompass the experiences and beliefs of the 11 Asian American female school administrators who participated in this study. Three major findings were generated from this study:

1. The women to a large degree lacked of career positioning; however, with encouragement and mentorship, they were able to gain access and learn to maneuver the educational systems to assume their leadership roles.

2. The women viewed their roles as school administrators as managing the school and leading people in the school: that is, work with teachers, students, and parents. Through those practical roles, the women believed that they were on a lifetime mission to make a difference on their students' lives and to uplift the social groups embodied in student identities.

3. The women continued confronting racial and sex discrimination in their professional lives as well as their own uncertainties toward racialized sexism, gendered racism, and women's leadership.

Discussion and Conclusions

The findings from this study reveal that the Asian American women shared similar career trajectories. The women participants, as Shakeshaft (1987) found, began their careers committed to education and teaching. Court (1997) claimed the perceived masculinism and hierarchical

systems of control of educational administration to be the reason for the women's resistance to moving into educational administration. This claim is not support by the current study. Rather, the women participants' lack of self-knowledge stood out to be the primary reason for initial consideration of administration. Many women in the study did not know that they had leadership potential. Through others' encouragement and provision of opportunities for them to take on leadership roles, the women came to more self-knowledge, interests in leadership and administration, and preparation and experiences in leadership and administration. The women's paths to leadership roles were, as Kawahara (2007) and Lee (1998) found, a more emergent, evolving process interlaced with their self-knowledge, growth, interests, and experiences.

Career Trajectory and Leadership Development

The literature indicates that women often turn to administration at encouragement of someone else (Ah Nee-Benham & Cooper, 1998; Alston, 1999; Glass, 1992; Shakeshaft, 1987). This study confirms the literature. The external influences from people in the women participants' personal and professional lives had a great impact on their path to school administration. All women came from families that valued education. In Asian culture, parents have high expectations of their children, their education, and future; thus Asian American women are expected to obtain an education and achieve success so as not to shame their families (Comas-Diaz & Greene, 1994). A higher value is placed on careers in law, engineering, and medicine than in teaching (Pacis, 2005; Rapaido, 2011). Nevertheless, positions of school principal and assistant principal are regarded as more prestigious than teaching. Because the women in this study were successful in school leadership positions, they, as Pacis (2005) and Kim-Qvale (2012) found, eventually received praise and support from their families. For instance, Garcia's mother was disappointed that she went for a major in education, but later was

proud of her for what she had achieved. However, the expectation most women participants received from their parents was to do what they wanted as long as they were content with their choices rather than making them into a career choice of becoming a lawyer or a medical doctor. The women learned from their parents about the high value of education, and some had their parents as role models for being a leader. Parental influences laid a solid foundation for the women's personal characteristics and their future road to education and leadership. However, all women reported that their families did not stress their racial-ethnic minority status. In addition to the parents' influence, other family members such as husbands and siblings also played a role in encouraging the women participants for educational administration.

The women in this study all entered school administration through specialist positions, such as the instructional coach or the language program coordinator. This confirms Shakeshaft's (1987) observation that the three most common ways for women to enter school administration are through specialist positions, supervisory posts, and elementary principalships. Most women achieved their first formal administrative positions late in age (in their forties), but some women, such as Catherine and Garcia, had their first assistant principalship in their early thirties. A possible explanation for that is that these two women worked in a subject area where Asian Americans were perceived to be "legit:" educational technology and the Asian-English dual language program. A trace of the model minority myth was evident, as many women in this study commented in the interviews that people tend to associate Asians with competencies in mathematics, technology, and science. Most women in this study were non-first-generation and could not speak their respective Asian ethnic languages. As Hispanic women (and men) are often typecast into administrative positions of symbolic or practice significance to the minority community, such as director of bilingual programs (Reyes & Halcon, 1988; Valverde & Brown,

1988), Asian American women in this study who served in similar administrative capacities could be filling a similar function. Nonetheless, discrimination and injustice based on race-ethnicity could de facto work to some Asian American women's advantages, allowing them to move upward in their leadership path quicker than others. For instance, shortly after Catherine received her master's degree in instructional technology, she was promoted to the district as an educational technology specialist for she was told, though jokingly by the human resources personnel, that she was innately ready for the position.

The women in the study, as Hill and Ragland (1995) noted, lacked career positioning. The women to a great extent were passive in career advancement. They tended to accept a given position rather than seek for one; they were reluctant to showcase their own work and achievement and viewed self-promotion as distasteful and arrogant (Chu, 1980; Pacis, 2005; Rapaido, 2011); and they inclined to delay their decisions in moving forward with their administrative careers for lack of full confidence in their leadership abilities, which resonated with Kim-Qvale's (2012) study where the researcher found that personal confidence was one of the reasons that her Asian American participants pursued a career as principals. Married women in this study put the needs of their husbands and children before their own (Chu, 1980; Comas-Diaz & Greene, 1994; Kim-Qvale, 2012; Pacis, 2005). Single women in the study were better able to move upward in their administrative career paths throughout the school systems.

Unlike what Lee (1998) found in his study on Asian American female administrators, the women in this study did not concentrate in schools and districts serving mainly Asian student populations. It is possible that the difference is due to the change over time: a wider pool has been developing among Asian American women administrators since Lee's study reported 15 years ago. The difference also could be partially explained by the sample selection of particular

school districts. However, the women's conscious choice to serve in particular schools, I argue, was the more influential factor for the contrast between the current study and the literature. Joanna was a purchaser for big companies in the fashion industry. Helena started as a *Teach for America* teacher and served in high-needs schools. Both women had witnessed inequity and difference in their early careers. These experiences led to their later decisions to serve in schools with predominantly socioeconomically disadvantaged student populations. Both women worked in schools with a majority of Latino/Hispanic populations. While Joanna and Helena's choices were more of self-directed, Amanda and Lori's consideration for serving a variety of schools came with a need to avoid of "being typecast" as an administrator only good for "their own people."

The current study found that mentorship was critical for the women participants' leadership development (Conrad & Conrad, 2007; Pacis, 2005). Mentors provided the women with sponsorship, guidance, and protection (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000). The study did not find that the women were afraid to seek mentorship from other women because of the various myths about woman-to-woman relations such as the Queen Bee and other women-can't-work-with-women stereotypes, noted by other studies (Duff, 1999; Shakeshaft, 1994). The women's comments suggested that the mentor's gender was not the primary factor in having a successful mentorship. The women had both male and female mentors, and it was not absolutely necessary to have minority mentors. Several explanations for that are possible: First, there are much fewer women of color in administration who can potentially be mentors. Second, the foundation for a healthy mentorship, as the women participants noted, depends more on shared beliefs rather than racial-ethnic identities. Third, having women of color mentors is not essential but can be helpful in talking about sensitive issues that mainstream administrators may not

understand and solving administrative problems that mainstream administrators may not experience. Last, the women made a distinction between formally assigned and informally developed mentorship; they valued the latter and found them to be a trustful relationships based on compatibility and commonality in experiences and personal and professional philosophies.

Challenges

The findings from the study indicate that the Asian American women participants continued to confront sexism, racism and other sociocultural barriers. Like the Filipino American school leaders in Rapaido's (2011) study, the women in this study struggled with a double bind created by gender stereotypes; they were criticized for not being agentic enough or for lacking communion when they were highly agentic (Carli & Eagly, 2011). For instance, when Elaine used her personal time to help teachers with their paperwork, she was criticized for "babying" her teachers. Bella was told that she was "too soft" on her teachers with her collaborative approaches. Joanna, on the hand, was told to "back off" because she was "coming [on] too strong." Such scrutiny and criticism, pressuring the women to conform the gendered characteristics, also mirrors the greater gender disparity beyond elementary schools: men still occupy the majority of leadership positions in secondary and district levels. At the elementary school level, nurture is valued and deemed appropriate and essential; therefore, women are fitting rather than violating gendered roles when taking on an administrative position. Whereas, the general discourse of leadership at the secondary school level is more associated with order and masculinity – "a man's work," women school administrators are viewed as "stepping over" their gendered roles. Women are censured if they demonstrate leadership styles and behaviors nonconforming the gendered expectations. For the women administrators at the secondary schools, such as Bella, Elaine and Garcia their relational leadership behaviors which were

viewed as associated with femininity were criticized and considered undesirable. In contrast, when the women administrators at the elementary schools such as Lori, demonstrated leadership behaviors that are traditionally considered as qualities associated with men they were reprimanded and pressured to behave more "gender appropriate" like a woman. Moreover, the women's abilities were questioned, and they had to prove themselves on a continuous basis (Hennig & Jardim, 1997; Hune, 1998). Amanda is an example. When she got accepted to a very competitive leadership fellowship, people thought that was because she was the only female candidate. When she was offered a middle school assistant principal position, people thought that was because she was the only Asian female. Amanda said, "People just don't see that – I have been in the leadership fellowship and have administrative experience in middle schools. They don't see that as the reasons for the hire." Tokenism was not a concept alien to the women participants in this study; they were aware that. However, tokenism did not surface as a notable challenge in their professional lives. Rather, the projected "tokenism" became a vehicle for others to deny the women's competency and subsequently their eligibility for advancement.

The stereotypes of Asian American women, as submissive, quiet, and retiring, continued to present themselves by people in the educational systems, working against the women participants (Lee, 1998; Youngberg, Miyasoto, & Nakanishi, 2001). Some women participants were told by colleagues and students' parents that they did not behave appropriately like an Asian American woman because they were too direct or too loud. For instance, when Joanna went for a job interview, she was told that she needed to "soften up" and "smile." Other stereotypes of Asian American women as being "manipulative" or "overly driven" also subjected the women in this study to racialized gender discrimination. The women were also expected to uphold the traditional Asian virtues of motherhood and seniority from their own racial-ethnic

constituents (Chang, 1997; Chu, 1980; Pacis, 2005). For instance, when Lori got the principal

job at her current school, she was confronted by a colleague who shared her ethnicity and had

more years in administration, demanding that she "excuse [herself] from accepting" the offer.

The colleague claimed that Lori, being a junior administrator, meant that her disruption of "the

turn" was unacceptable. As for Irene, she was perceived as unable to relate by some of her

students' parents because she did not have children of her own. Not conforming to these

racialized gender roles and racial-ethnic subcultures subjected the women to others' questioning

of their credibility as school leaders. Though most women participants in the current study were

not the first generation immigrants, their professional lives were not immune to the influence of

the gendered roles embedded in the Asian traditions. An investigation of the gender composition

of the teaching workforces in the top three Asian countries (that is, the Republic of Korea, Japan,

and the Republic of China) from which my participants' families migrated reveal that though

women tend to dominate the teaching force men tend to dominate the administration. Table 18

presents the gender compositions of the K-12 school personnel in the three countries. The

gender disparity in educational leadership in the Asian societies could intensify the issues of

sexism while overshadowing racism, as the women in the study in general tended to be more

aware of and articulate about sexism than racism.

Table 18

Gender Compositions of K-12 School Personnel in Three Asian Countries

Country (School Year)	School Classification	Number of Teachers	Number of Female Teachers	% Female	Number of Principals	Number of Female Principals	% Female
Republic of China (2013-2014)	Preschool	45,296	44,701	98.69	----	----	----
	Primary	97,450	68,273	70.06	2,650	797	30.08
	Lower Secondary	52,451	35,888	68.42	738	242	32.79
	Upper Secondary	37,842	23,029	60.86	344	85	24.71
	Total	233,039	171,891	73.76	3,732	1,124	30.12
Japan (2013-2014)	Kindergarten	106,125	98,295	92.62	9,323	5,116	54.88
	Primary	385,065	238,024	61.81	20,441	3,810	18.64
	Junior Secondary	234,064	97,752	41.76	9,560	568	5.94
	Senior Secondary	226,814	68,168	30.05	4,974	344	6.92
	Total	952,068	502,239	52.75	44,298	9,838	22.21
Republic of Korea (2005-2006)	Kindergarten	----	----	----	----	----	----
	Elementary	147,567	112,151	76	5,695	531	9.3
	Middle	100,555	65,361	65	2,642	294	11.1
	High	----	----	----	----	----	----
	Total	----	----	----	----	----	----

Note. ----: Statistics not available. Sources: the Ministry of Education of the Republic of China, the Statistics Bureau of Japan, Kim et al. (2006), and UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2006). According to the newest statistics on the website of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea, the ratios of female teachers for 2013-2014 school year were 98.3 for kindergartens, 75.1% for elementary schools, 65.7% for middle schools, and 44.3% for high schools. No information was available for the gender composition for school principals for that school year.

The literature notes that Asian American women (and men) are not immune to the glass ceiling (Huang & Yamagata-Noji, 2010; Hune, 1998; Ideta & Cooper, 2000). In this study, only one (out of 11) women participant was a charter high school principal. The women noticed that men still occupy the lion's share of high-level leadership positions like secondary school principalships and district superintendencies in their school districts (Gupton, 2009), and there was no Asian American at the superintendent level in their school districts. The women's comments in the interviews suggested that the stereotypes of Asian Americans as lacking communication skills and political savvy persisted as a justification against Asian Americans in

promotion to upper level educational administration such as superintendency (Sue, Zane, & Sue, 1985). However, the women, socialized by their own culture that self-promotion is distasteful and arrogant (Pacis, 2005; Kim-Qvale, 2012), found it difficult to be "politically active." For instance, Lori said,

> There is a glass ceiling for us [Asian Americans] to reach the level of superintendency. You have to be pretty politically active. We should do more politics… broadcasting the work we are doing and have done. But I just don't see myself doing that. It's probably an Asian value things; that is not considered a good quality to have. But it is not necessarily a bad thing, right?

Takaki (1989) argued that the model minority myth overstresses the achievement of Asians, pressures Asians to fit the "model minority" mold, and feeds anti-Asian sentiment and actions. The women participants' experiences confirm Takaki's claim. For instance, Kate said that people tend not to view Asian Americans as minorities because of the group's academic success. In her school district, Kate said, African Americans and Latino/Hispanic Americans, not Asian Americans, were considered as minorities. A student's parent yelled at Amanda, shouting, "You, Asian Americans, get minority status but do not have to pay the minority price." For many, Amanda commented, the category of Asian American was attached with privileges. Irene was told that Asian Americans "do not have negative stereotypes." Catherine was told that because technology was "in her Asian blood" her good work was expected.

The women's confrontation with the model minority stereotypes, however, did not necessarily lead to their rejection to the "model minority" discourse. Throughout the interviews, the women's emphasis on self-reliance, hard work, and educational success of Asian Americans was indicative of their buy-ins of the model minority myth. The tenacity of the model minority

myth in containing Asian Americans and silencing other racial minorities was evident (Ngo &

Lee, 2007). Though the women referred to their own struggles with mathematics as a

counterargument to the stereotypes of Asian Americans under the "model minority" discourse, I

argue, it reveals the women's internalization of the gender-based stereotype that women have

weaker mathematics ability (Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999). In contrast to the literature on

Black and Latino women (e.g., Rusch, 2004; Reyes & Halcon, 1988), the women in this study to

a great extent did not consider racism a dominant issue in their professional lives. Rather, the

women attributed many of their problems and challenges to sexism. There are three possible

explanations for the disparity. First, racial discrimination in the United States is still perceived

as predominantly a Black-and-White issue (Carter, 2005; Kitano & Sue, 1973; Lee, 1996).

Asians are often lumped together with Whites in research and in media. While the society has

acknowledged the marginalization of Latino/Hispanic populations, in addition to the Black-and-

White issue, Asians are far from being considered a legitimate minority. As Amanda shared in

her interview, people had told her that Asian did not have to pay a minority price. If minority

status is not associated with Asians, then, whether for the women who worked in a school with

mostly white populations or those who worked in a school with mostly Latino/Hispanic

populations, racism would become irrelevant. Second, the model minority myth, as a powerful

discourse in racism against Asian Americans, could become less obvious in the context of

leadership as its portrayal of Asians being hardworking, driven, and perseverant overlaps the

qualities desired from a school administrator. Pragmatically, the women would be seeing racism

as a less negative effect on their professional lives. In contrast, sexism, mostly manifested

through the stereotypes of Asian American women and questioning of women's leadership, had

more direct negative impact as the women tried to assume their leadership roles. Third, most

women (9 out 11) were from Asian ethnic groups (that is, Korean, Japanese, and Chinese) that were doing well economically and educationally in the U.S. society (Reeves & Bennett, 2004), a status that could reinforce the model minority discourse as the women had reckoned on their family history and their own upbringing.

The findings of the study also reveal that the women tended to personalize the problems they encountered. The women thought that their struggles and issues were traceable to their personality, upbringing, professional training, or some other personal faults. Joanna thought she had to change her communication style to suit her male colleagues' preferences. Bella thought her personality was to blame for the men not hearing her. Garcia thought her unequal professional training accounted for the lack of recognition she received for her work. Irene thought her problems had to do with her sensitiveness to others' comments. Amanda thought her personality and her attitudes and ability to "separate the job from personal" were to blame for her problems. In each case the women, despite of their awareness of gender, racial-ethnic, and other discrimination, seemed unwilling to put the systemic oppression upfront as the root for their struggles. "People know that once they pull out the race card, they are immediately wrong. So, I don't think that is the problem. I just need to be able to look beyond it and know to whom I am approaching," Kate explained. One woman, Amanda, had a minor in women's studies and was able to speak about her experiences in relation to the systemic discrimination and injustice in gender, race-ethnicity, and class. Nevertheless, she still believed that the struggles that she experienced had to do with something particular and personal about her, like her demeanor or attitudes. The women's belief that the struggles and issues were personal parallels the findings of Cole (2010) on African American women leaders in corporations that the women tended to blame themselves for their problems. Different from the women in Cole's (2010) study,

isolation and lack of awareness cannot explain the Asian American women's tendency of personalizing their problems in this study. An alternative explanation can be that personalization is a coping strategy for the women. Rather than thinking the problems they encountered are systemic and far beyond their efforts to handle, personalization gave the women a sense of efficacy that they could do something about their situations and bring possible changes. As aforementioned, in order to lead, the women in the study did resist to some degree the racialized gender roles and stereotypes and hierarchal structures in leadership. However, they were unable to make substantial impact on the system for they were socialized by the system and constantly surveilled and "corrected," if they "deviated" from the norms, within the system.

The literature indicates that Asian American women administrators feel isolated and invisible and lack access to networks (Chu, 1980; Pacis, 2005; Rapaido, 2011; Turner, 2002). Though these findings were supported by the pilot study, they are not supported by this study. A possible explanation points to the generational and geographic differences between the women participants in the current study and those in the pilot study. Almost all the pilot study participants (except one) were first generation immigrants; they had no extensive families as their support systems. As a southern state, M state had not witnessed a substantial increase in Asian populations and school communities during the time period that these women had taught and then administered as early as late 1970s. In contrast, most of the participants in the current study were not first generation immigrants; they were able to rely on immediate and extensive families for support. They mostly entered the teaching force in late 1980s and became administrators in mid1990s or later. By then, the United States had a considerable increase in Asian populations overall. For N state, such an increase was more prominent as it has been historically a major destination for Asian immigrants. Whether for M state or N state, such

demographic changes, together with a continuous advocacy from the leadership scholars pushing

for leadership gender equity and diversity, could influence the school systems to become more

receptive to Asian American women into administration than they were decades ago.

Opportunities for networking were more likely to be accessible to these women. In M state, the

three women participants were from different school districts. Catherine's district encouraged

communication and collaboration between schools. Teachers and administrators were given time

and opportunities to visit each other's schools, observe each other's work, and confer and

collaborate with each other. Bella's position as a half-time assistant principal and half-time

district support staff gave her opportunities to make connections with people within and beyond

her school. Amanda's district was one of the largest school districts in the M state. In contrast

to the other women in the study, Amanda sought her own mentors and used well the professional

development and networking opportunities offered by the district. In N state, almost all women

participants were from District A, which was home to a very strong professional organization

with a considerable number of Asian American administrators as its members. District A also

had well-established partnerships with the leadership preparation programs in the surrounding

universities, which led to a network of alumni among school administrators. The one participant

from District B, Garcia, used to work for District A. Though she observed that her current

school district was too small to provide networking opportunities, she was able to rely more on

the networks established previously with people in District A. The women regarded the

professional association and networking with other administrators as important in supporting

their daily functions as school administrators and further developing their leadership capacities

(Conrad & Conrad, 2007; Kim-Qvale, 2012; Rapaido, 2011; Young & McLeod, 2001). No

women spoke of isolation and invisibility in this study. Rather, the women participants in M

state commented that they were "extremely noticeable." People remembered them because they were the only Asian American female administrators within their respective school districts. The magnified visibility led intensified scrutiny. Under the microscope were not only the women themselves and their words and actions but also those of the individuals associated with the women. As Amanda had commented in the interview, "the stakes are much higher" for these highly visible Asian American female administrators, because even a minor mistake they make is unlikely to be forgotten and forgiven by others.

In contrast to Conrad and Conrad's (2007) finding of women leaders' lack of within-family support, the women in this study had support from their husbands and extended family members. Not only did the women's husbands encourage them to further their administrative careers but also shared childcare and household responsibilities. This is in contrast to African American women administrators' reliance on extended women kinship ties for childcare and household support (Loder, 2005). However, the Asian American women participants' extended families also helped out with those roles. For instance, Garcia called childrearing "an affair for the big family." In Asian cultures, the grandparents often take a role in helping raise the children. Most women participants in this study were not first generation Asian Americans, and the geographic closeness to their own parents made within-extended-family support accessible to them.

Strengths and Resistance

Nevertheless, Asian American women administrator participants to a large extent showed a strong internal focus of control that incorporates a combination of Asian and American value orientations and a rejection of the stereotypes attributed to them (Yamauchi, 1981). As many women participants commented in the interviews, they were embodied with both the values of

hard work, family honor, and education in Asian cultures and the values of choice and freedom in the American cultures. As Irene commented, the Asian and American parts were inseparable; she was both. Furthermore, the women's "Asian American" identity construction varied with their autobiographic circumstances with respect to upbringing and migration. The first generation women tended to identify more with their Asian ethnic identities than the other generations. The women whose parents raised them with a goal of acculturating into the U.S. mainstream culture felt more strongly about their American identity than those whose parents stressed preserving a home environment closely connected to their Asian ethic roots. Joanna is an example. As she was growing up, her parents did not cook Asian ethnic food, the family did not socialize with people who shared their ethnicity, and Joanna and her siblings were not taught about the traditions and customs of her Asian background society. Joanna could not speak her Asian heritage language. And people could not figure out her ethnicity just by her appearance because she did not have features typical for her ethnicity. "People look at the two of us [Joanna referring to herself and me – the interviewer]," Joanna said, "and they know, okay, Asian. But I would not necessarily call myself an Asian American because I really don't know much about my [Asian ethnic] culture." But, later in the interview, Joanna also noted that studying about race and ethnicity in her graduate studies in leadership had led her to reflect on her own life:

> The notion that when you deny your race and ethnicity, you are essentially cutting off a part of yourself that informs who you are…. In my life…, I have taken away the context of race and ethnicity… in doing that, was I better off or worse off? Sometimes, I think I have the answers; sometimes I don't.

In contrast to Joanna's experience, Helena grew up in a home environment where she was told by her parents, "You are going to maintain the [ethnic] culture at home because this is the only

place you are going to get it." The family lived in an Asian community and attended an Asian church regularly. Helena and her siblings were fluent in their Asian heritage language. Helena said in the interview that she felt very close to her ethnic roots and was proud to identify with her ethnic identity. According to Ospina and Foldy (2009), race is "a classification mainly based on visible physical traits," and ethnicity relates "more to customs and traditions learned from ancestor[s]" (p. 877). The women's responses resonate with such a distinction. More importantly, the women's experiences showed that their realization of racial-ethnic identities were emergent, unique, and personal.

The women participants in the study also demonstrated self-imposed high standards for excellence and perseverance in fulfilling their duties as school administrators (Lee, 1998; Pacis, 2005; Rapaido, 2011). They worked very hard, they had a passion for learning, they were strong in faith, and they were able to view things from a positive perspective. The influence of minority women's spiritual backgrounds on their leadership has been noted in the literature on African American women leaders (Alston, 2005; Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Dantley, 2005a; Jackson, 1999), but not in the limited studies on Asian American women leaders. This finding contributes to the current literature on Asian American women in educational leadership as it notes that for certain Asian ethnic groups, religion played a more if not central role in their leadership knowledge, development, and practices. The women indicated that their life experiences of the bicultural divides (Ortiz, 1982) (that is, the dominant culture and their respective racial-ethnic subcultures) helped them become who they are today and brought richness and hope to the society, especially the school community. As researchers have found with other administrators who are women of color (Bass, 2009; Tillman, 2002; Trujillo-Ball, 2003), the women participants in this study served as role models to encourage minority students to pursue their

dreams and to work hard and seek opportunities for future success. Like other African American (Mertz & McNeely, 1998; Turner, 2004), Mexican American (Harding, 1991; Mendez-Morse, 2003), and Asian American women administrators (Fong, 1984; Pacis, 2005), the women in this study learned from their minority status to examine the world from different perspectives. Their personal awareness of and experiences with the agony of multiple injustices had helped them to understand their students, especially minority group students, and immigrant families and communities better and appreciate diversity more. The women were better able to relate to minority group students, their parents, and communities and better help teachers to empathize with minority students and their parents. Consistent with research findings on African American women administrators (Alston, 2005; Mertz & McNeely, 1998; Reitzug & Patterson, 1998), the women participants also displayed a genuine concern for their students' well-being and trusted their students' abilities to learn, showing sensitivity toward their students and the community's social concerns. The women had high expectations for their students. As the women had expressed in the interviews, they wanted the best for their students. For these women, the most rewarding thing was to see their students succeed academically and in life.

The women in this study to a great extent emphasized relational leadership and had a strong commitment to fairness, collaboration, empowerment, and community (Kawahara, Esnil, & Hsu, 2007; Pacis, 2005). Unlike what Manera and Green (1995) and Yamauchi (1981) found in their studies on Asian American women administrators, the women in this study did not all display communicative skills that reflect decisive, ambitious abilities as well as assertive verbal and nonverbal behaviors. The women participants shared characteristics with the larger population of women: they demonstrated great strength in their leadership roles and were committed to making a difference in the world (Helgesen, 1990); they valued the dignity and

worth of each individual (Regan & Brooks, 1995); and they were committed to nurturing growth and learning in working with others, listening and sharing different views, keeping others' interest and needs in mind in decision making, and involving others in preparing and implementing changes (Armendariz-Hausen, 1995; Hurty, 1995; Lee, 1993; Lindsay, 1997; Snearl, 1995). Some women in the study, as Brunner (2000) and Fennell (1999b) found in their studies of women leaders, were reluctant to resort to legitimate powers as ways of leading their schools. For instance, Bella regarded herself as a "blue-collar" school administrator; she believed that power signaled superiority and was hesitant in using her legitimate power as a school principal to push things through with teachers and parents.

Nevertheless, the women also demonstrated persistence, drive, personal dedication, and emotional detachment in their professional roles. According to Estler (1975), these attributes are often considered to be masculine. It is possible that the women took on these attributes as result of social control (Epstein, 1991). In other words, the women were socialized by workplace norms and culture into conforming to the orthodoxy of masculinity in leadership (Hansot & Tyack, 1981; Carli & Eagly, 2011; Coleman, 2003). A more plausible explanation, I believe, is that the women's leadership styles were a co-product of socialization (Ferguson, 1984) and social control (Epstein, 1991). In other words, the women participants' gender socialization, organizational cultures, and situational factors such as their school demographics, their positions (as a principal or an assistant principal), their time in the position, and the broader sociocultural discourse at the time and place, all played a role in their development of leadership styles. Most of these women grew up in a home environment that maintained gendered roles where the father dominates and makes the decisions and the mother takes care of him and the children. The women were taught that they needed to be pleasant and be nice. Life experiences had led the

women to favor nurturing and human relations (Ferguson, 1984). Many women commented in the interviews, being relational and communal felt "natural" to them. As the women brought their relational, participative leadership styles into their roles as school administrator their styles were censured. The women were criticized for being "too soft," "weak," "indecisive," or showing "lack of authority." Gender stereotypes created a rupture in the women's identities for being a school leader (Regan & Brooks, 1995), and the women felt self-doubtful; many said that attributes associated with a masculine style such as assertiveness, objectivity and an emphasis on consequences of action (Oplatka & Atias, 2007) were "unnatural" to them. Regardless, the women learned to use both feminine and masculine styles of leadership to support their roles as principals or assistant principals. And the women who were the more experienced administrators, such as Amanda, Helena and Kate, appeared better able to integrate the male-based and female-based knowledge and practice of leadership into an integral whole, "the double helix," (Regan & Brooks, 1995) in leading their schools. The women's continuous learning on the job also helped them to see the value of both feminine and masculine styles in good leadership. In addition, the influence of the broader social contexts on the women's leadership should not be ignored. One of the most controversial things occurring in educational administration during the time that this study was conducted concerned Michelle Rhee, the former chancellor of District of Columbia Public Schools. It happened to coincide that multiple women in the study spoke about her as the victim of sexism. Joanna said, "Because she [Michelle Rhee] is in a skirt, she is getting the pushback that you wouldn't give to a man." Lori also said, "Her [Michelle Rhee's] work is seen in a very different light than the other superintendents who possibly have tried the same thing…. Because she is a woman, her work is almost vilified." For the women participants, Michelle Rhee's experiences signaled what could

happen to them. It constantly reminded the women the power of a patriarchal society and the danger of not conforming to the gendered roles.

Leadership Orientations

Despite the challenges and the ambivalences the women confronted in assuming their leadership roles, they have used leadership behaviors and strategies mirroring servant leadership, transformational leadership, moral leadership, and collaborative leadership. Some women used certain leadership behaviors and strategies more frequently than the others. During the interviews, some women were able to articulate their leadership styles and others named the same leadership styles differently. With some women, their leadership orientations were also reflected in their school documents such as mission statements, the principal's welcome webpage, and school program descriptions.

According to Greenleaf (2002), the overall objective of servant leadership is for people served (i.e., teachers and students) to grow as individuals, becoming "healthier, wiser, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants" (p. 27). All women had applied the principles of servant leadership such as "empowerment, total quality, team building, and participatory management" (Page & Wong, 2000), and many observed putting themselves last to make sure to meet the needs of teachers so that they can serve their students. Bella, as I view it, demonstrated the most characteristics of a servant leader. She called herself a servant leader. She mentioned that her wanting to serve "trumped her fear" and brought her to leadership. She was proud to serve the people she served, she placed high value on collaboration, and she wanted to build a community of learners to better serve the students' and the parents' needs. All these matched the descriptions of servant leadership.

The Asian American women in the study also demonstrated transformational leadership. They focused on empowering teachers and building and sustaining leadership capacity in their schools (Carli & Eagly, 2011). For instance, Amanda connected the best person for a program and let the person be in charge. Elaine looked to develop and support teachers who could see the value of being involved in the change process and who wanted to willingly do the transformation, the ones she called the early adopters. The women in the study, as Shields (1996) noted, were able to help community members to articulate and examine their beliefs about the needs of students and the purpose of education, and about "the school it is" and "the school it should be." For instance, Kate wrote on her school's welcome webpage,

> In the school's calm, nurturing atmosphere, we all work to provide our students the kind of learning environment where they not only receive quality academic instruction but also develop into well-rounded, independent, and responsible citizens…. I am committed to facilitating and providing teachers the opportunities to collaborate with each other in instructional planning and working with data strategically to meet every student's needs…. I believe in the collective intelligence and creativity of our school community to make [YB ES] a school where children develop academically and socially to their fullest potential.

The women genuinely cared about the welfare of their students, teachers, and students' parents (de Cascal & Mulligan, 2004), and they strived for a school culture that values interdependence and connections (Acker, 1990). They were future oriented (Bass, 1998) and attentive to different group needs (Kellerman, 1984). All these qualities parallel the findings of Carli and Eagly (2011) that transformational leaders mentor and empower followers by encouraging them to reach their fullest potential and together the organization is brought to a higher level. These

qualities also speak to the four dimensions of transformational leadership: charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration (Burn, 1978; Northouse, 2007).

Besides servant leadership and transformational leadership, collaborative leadership and moral leadership were also used by some women participants in this study. Kochan and Reed (2005) noted that collaborative leadership "encompasses moral purposes…. [and] is a relational experience that is defined in practice by those involved as they interrelate with one another and the context in which they operate" (p. 72). Dantley (2005b) noted that moral leadership situates school leadership in a broader social context as "it not only is conscious of issues of race, class, and gender, but also perceives the work of schools as sites committed to social justice and more genuine demonstrations of democracy in our society" (p. 35). Women participants' emphases on fairness, empowerment, caring, and school community accord with the collaborative leadership style (Coleman, 2000). Also, the women to a large extent showed a consciousness about the impact of various social justices on schools and students' learning (Dantley & Tillman, 2005). For instance, Joanna observed that students "don't come to [schools] out of isolation," and the social injustices do not stop at the school gate. Moreover, as other women leaders of color (Brooks & Jean-Marie, 2007; Vitton & Wasonga, 2009), the women participants in this study showed an emphasis on leading their schools as a community, fulfilling roles that were connected to moral obligations (Sergiovanni, 1998). While all women encouraged their students to live up their full potentials and to take ownership in their schools and communities, some also embraced a group-uplift purpose – all reflected in the notion of "I know what is good to do" that is core to moral leadership (Sergivanni, 1998, p. 41).

To conclude, the influences from the family, society, and school system, both positive and negative, intertwined to shape the Asian American female school administrators' identities

and professional experiences and contributed to their self-knowledge and understanding and

practice of leadership. The systemic power relations of inequality in race-ethnicity and gender

are infused with the white male dominance of leadership and have real effect on the Asian

American women's leadership development. The women, when coming to leadership through

the system, having learned to lead within the system, and getting advanced by the system, cannot

successfully resist the intersected oppression on their own. Their agency to fully assume

leadership and fight against the oppressive system is a co-operant process of survival, the "I have

to" and resistance, the "I want to and can."

The Application of the Intersectionality Theory

McCall's (2005) intracategorical approach to the application of the intersectionality

theory was instrumental for this study. Under the intracategorical approach, the impact that

social categories represent at any given point in time is acknowledged. Such impact manifested

through common challenges and issues experienced by the Asian American women in the study

as they lived in a society that posed a monoracial and monocultural discourse toward Asian

Americans in general and Asian American women as a group. As noted in the study's findings,

there were commonalities among the Asian American women participants' upbringings, career

trajectories, leadership development, and professional lives as school administrators. The

women encountered similar gender and racial discrimination and injustice in exercising their

leadership roles. Yet, the reported within-group diversity challenges the tendency to simplify

these women's experiences into one "Asian American women" experience. The women differed

in where, when, and how they grew up, attended school, started teaching, and becoming an

administrator, as well as what and how they understood gender, race-ethnicity, self, and

leadership. Their experiencing of and resisting to racialized sexism cannot be isolated and

simplified into boundaries of gender and race-ethnicity. The intracategorical approach had helped direct my attention to the uniquely contextualized sociocultural and personal factors contributing to each of my participants' understanding and realization of her identity in leadership as I developed my understanding, analyses, and interpretations of the women participants' experiences and sense making.

As for the second tenet of the intersectionality theory – the interactivity and fluidity of the social categories, the intracategorical approach allowed me to focus on Asian American women participants whose identities crossed the boundaries of constructed categories of gender and race-ethnicity to investigate the complexity and intersectionality of their lived experiences, while questioning the nature of these social categories. Under the term "Asian American," a variety of cultural heritages and immigration experiences were denied. And under the "model minority" stereotype, the differences among Asian Americans were dismissed, minority groups were posed against one another, and the stratification of the U.S. society based on socially constructed categories was obscured (e.g., Lee, 1996; Ngo & Lee, 2007). Scholars such as Rong and Preissle (2009) noted that Asian American is a demographic category rather than an ethnic or racial category. In the study, not all women identified themselves as Asian Americans. The women's identity construction was a continuum, with one end being either Asian or American and the other being the integrated and unique "me." This is not say that the women were immobile once reaching a certain point on the continuum. Rather, the women continued to negotiate with the forces in their environments and modified and contested their understanding and construction of the social boundaries. Such a process was time consuming and messy in a sense that it was nonlinear and even more spiral and recursive. The women's stories reveal that under certain circumstances, an endorsement of "Asian American women", allowed them to gain

support and better navigate the system when their number was limited and social pressure to conforming gendered and racialized roles was tenacious. With the women who had better support systems, they tended to be more comfortable to distance themselves from that panethnic identity and claim for a new identity embracing individuality, integrity, and cultural integration.

The intracategorical approach was also helpful in examining the women's resistance to gender and racial-ethnic discriminations. Though the women's narratives suggested the resistance tended to be limited and was often for others, the approach's focus on contextualized agency and social group identification allowed me to seek possible relations between the women's individual incidences, the broader social and political power structures of the U.S. society, and the circumstances under which the study was conducted. For instance, many women in the study referred to Michelle Rhee as they spoke about being an Asian American woman in educational leadership. Controversies surrounded Michelle Rhee could, for some women in the study, deter them from fighting (or portraying themselves to me as) openly against racism and sexism, and could, for others, fuel their determination to fight strategically. Contextual factors not only influence the scope and extent of the women's resistance to racial and gender discrimination but also their presentation of their experiences, thoughts, and beliefs to me in the study.

Though the intracategorical approach was essential in my analysis, the application of the approach was not without challenges. For the purpose of this study, I focused on gender and race-ethnicity related issues in the women's leadership experiences. It was challenging to isolate and examine the women's experiences with respect to gender and race-ethnicity when the intersectionality is concerned with the multiplicity and interactivity of all social categories. In some cases, I was able to include other social categories (though to a less extent) in my analysis.

For instance, I discussed about ageism and motherhood in the challenges that some women had encountered in their professional lives. But, in other cases, the complexity involved was far beyond the scope of the current study and my capacity.

Implications for Future Research, Practice, and Policy

This research adds to the established knowledge of women of color in educational leadership by examining closely the leadership experiences of Asian American women administrators of public schools. In particular, it sought to understand the impact of gender, race-ethnicity, and leadership on the women's knowledge, development, and practices as school leaders. The findings of this study suggest potential areas for future research and offers implications for practice and policy.

Implications for Future Research

The findings of this study clearly show that intersected gender and race-ethnicity complexify the Asian American women's position in the hierarchy of educational leadership and the women's understanding and enactment of leadership. But most participants in this study did not consider that they had suffered "double jeopardy" (Graves, 1990) because of their gender *and* race-ethnicity. The women considered sexism rather than racism a prominent force shaping their leadership experiences. Some women even interpreted the well-publicized feature of Michelle Rhee's experiences as a manifestation of sexism and ignored the race-ethnicity factor. Because of the relatively small sample size in two states in the United States, replicative studies on a large scale or using an expanded pool of types of Asian American female administrators would help test the pervasiveness of these findings. Does racism become more prominent as the school district administrative environment becomes more political and the leadership becomes more homogeneous in gender and race-ethnicity? Do Asian American male administrators only

see racism? What are the similarities and differences in the perceptions and explanations from both genders? What contextual factors contribute to the differences? A further investigation of these questions is warranted. Moreover, as this study focused on the experiences and beliefs of Asian American female school administrators, it would be beneficial for future research to include the voices from the staff, parents, and other community constituents about "Asian American female school administrators" and their views of the group's leadership practices.

This study made an attempt to address the within-group diversity under the umbrella identity of Asian American women. The findings suggest that the women's individual acculturation process within the home in particular has influenced the women's self-knowledge and leadership development. Certain critical incidents were found to be particularly influential in the women's development of leadership orientation for social justice. Further investigation is needed to examine all facets of the women's autobiographic circumstances such as acculturation, migration, education and professional training, in relation to their gender, racial-ethnic, and cultural identity construction, leadership orientation, and capacity for integrating bi-culture values in supporting their leadership.

Additionally, the study finds evidence indicative of group differences between the women geographically and ethnically. The intensified visibility was only noted by the participants from M state as a result of their being-only Asian women status. A strong religious background was found to be particularly relevant to the women of specific ethnicities, although the necessity to protect confidentiality precludes reporting this data. Further studies on Asian American women of different ethnicities will shed light on the similarities and differences, if any, there are among the women's leadership understanding and experiences. More research on Asian American female school administrators in similar and contrasting geographic locations

will help further our understanding of the women's leadership development situated within historically and culturally constructed communities.

Implications for Practice

First, implications for practice speak to university-based leadership preparation programs. The findings of this study revealed that the Asian American women lacked self-knowledge and were passive in seeking mentorship. Leadership preparation programs can effectively address that by helping the program enrollers (whether they are potential leadership candidates or aspirants) better understand their leadership potentials and beliefs and encouraging and educating them on building and maintaining a successful mentorship. In terms of the curricular, the focus on leadership diversity and social justice is not only necessary but also essential. Opportunities for the program participants to voice, converse, and reflect on relevant issues given their personal experiences in relation to the broader sociocultural, economic, and political contexts are imperative and should be integrated into the curriculum. Asian American women in this study noted the importance of experiential learning. Therefore, for leadership preparation programs, internship needs to be a core (rather than secondary) component and strategically designed so that it can benefit school administrator candidates and aspirants, the minority groups in particular, the most. Through shadowing and first-hand experiences, the candidates and aspirants will learn what other successful minority female administrators do every day and learn the different ways that these administrators handle things and deal with issues successfully.

Second, implications for practice point to the need for concern with leadership development in school districts. In this study, Asian American women's lack of trust and reported incompatibility with their formal mentors suggest that the current mechanism of organizational socialization through mentoring has limited, if not absent, contribution to the

women's leadership development. Therefore, the districts may consider involving the potential

mentees in the mentor selection process where their needs and career goals serve as the main

consideration for mentor-mentee matching. Also, more flexibility may be needed where both the

mentor and the mentee are given a period of time and opportunities to interact and test the

compatibility with each other before entering a formalized stage of mentorship. Moreover, it is

not enough to appreciate the importance of providing professional development opportunities;

increased attention in tailoring them to minority women administrators is also called for. For

instance, different approaches and strategies could be used to identifying not only those teachers

who are women of color teachers aspiring for leadership but also those who are performing

leadership but not in a way that recognizes their leadership capacities. Districts will benefit by

helping both groups learn about leadership and connect with personal and professional growth.

To change the ideology of masculinity and Eurocentrism in leadership, the districts may also

benefit from bringing the district-level administrators and school-level administrators and/or

aspirants together to learn about leadership styles and examine their preferences for and

misperceptions about certain leadership approaches and attributes.

Last, the implications for practice relate to the Asian American women themselves. The

findings of this study suggest that it is important for an Asian American female administrator to

sustain positive views about her experiences and be a change agent herself by asking herself how

she can make things better. She should seek professional development and network

opportunities, especially with other administrators because they are good resources for

information and advice. She should seek sponsorship and mentorship from those in whom she

can confide and who can guide and develop her. She needs to have confidence in herself,

surround herself with a team of capable people, and delegate and ask help when needed. She

needs to be visible and accessible as well as understand the community that she serves and build connections with parents, staff, students, and other community constituents. For Asian American women who aspire to leadership, it is important to have a clear career positioning and take steps to make it happen. These steps can include pursuing graduate studies in leadership, becoming a teacher leader within and beyond her school, working hard, and excelling in what she is doing. Also important for an aspirant is to develop a network so she can garner resources and find opportunities to take on leadership roles at school and district levels. Last but not least, Asian American women in both groups need to be reflective about their actions, beliefs, and interaction with others and be a self-motivated learner.

Implications for Policy

Scholars have noted the importance of differentiated strategies to attract and retain Asian Americans into education and subsequently educational administration (e.g., Chong, 2002; Goodwin, Genishi, Asher, & Woo, 2006; Rong & Preissle, 1997). No evidence was found in this study suggesting that the school districts had employed tailored policies and strategies to attract, encourage, and support Asian American female teachers who aspire to become school administrators, and to provide more assistance to those who are already in administration. The women in this study shared similar career paths that offer limited opportunity or likelihood for advancement (Shakeshaft, 1987). New policies and strategies need to be introduced to recruit and support qualified Asian American women. For example, policymakers in school districts may consider culturally-aligned recruitment methods that could help communicate to Asian Americans that self-nomination is appropriate. Recruitment through religious organizations may be considered as well. In the meantime, higher education institutions who play an irreplaceable role in preparing the pool of potential administrator candidates would make a more profound

contribution by promoting multiculturalism and leadership for social justice in a deeper level through program curriculum and faculty structure, evaluation, and promotion.

Undeniably, organizational socialization serves the purpose of familiarizing newcomers with the existing culture, values, and operation of the organization. On the flip side, it can become a form of social control that perpetuates the power relations in effect and deter "deviance." It is time for school districts to reexamine their organizational values and revisit their policy and procedures related to organizational socialization and to consider how to develop and support school administrators as leaders and change agents for equity and social justice rather than being just conformers.

Concluding Thoughts

Asian American women have made contributions to their schools, communities, and the society. But seldom did we hear about their stories and acknowledge their contribution. I took a journey with each of my participants and witnessed their happiness, frustration, struggles, and hope and passion for the future to come. In my participants, I see shadows of myself as well as commonality and diversity among them, but more possibilities for union and agency. From a girl to a woman, from an either-or struggle to a both-and-more ease with self, and from an individual to a leader, the path can vary in the time it takes from one end to the other, in the number of turns it has in between, and in the type of companion presented, but the path should never be undertaken alone.

As Asian American women and women of color, be brave in what you believe, feel, and think. Speak from your mind and heart about your trials and tribulations. Connect with each other; chase your dream, even if it seems to be "atypical" and embrace life events. It is the process of personal and social change that can make the difference in one's world. Such

difference can be the greatest of all successes or viewed as failures by others. The end resolve can still be the same; you learn to grow and build success in your life be it personal, academic, intellectual, intimate, or societal based.

Social change is everyone's responsibility. As we demand equity and justice from the society, we also need to reflect on the roles we have played in the current state. Thanks to my participants, my dissertation is the first step to my reflection. And quoting Mahatma Gandhi, "Be the change you wish to see in the world," let all of us fight fearlessly and hopefully.

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APPENDIX A

Invitation Email for Participation

Dear Colleague:

My name is Jia Liang. I am a PhD student in the Educational Administration and Policy program in the College of Education at the University of Georgia. I am looking for Asian American female leaders in K-12 public schools who would consider participating in a potentially valuable study.

The educational leadership literature available on Asian American women is very limited and there isn't much information about how Asian American women lead successfully in K-12. By talking to Asian American female school leaders, I hope to learn more about their experiences in leadership, their understandings of leadership, and how these understandings impact leadership practices. The focus of the study really lies on each individual female administrators and I has no intention to collect any particular information on students and teachers or any information on performance or alike.

This is my dissertation study. As a participant in this study, you will be asked to complete two to three interviews (approximate an hour each) with me. All information obtained will be treated confidentially.

I welcome the opportunity to talk with you, and to answer any questions you may have. Please contact me at gliang09@uga.edu or (706)372-5938. I appreciate your willingness to participate, and I will forever be indebted to you.

Best,

Jia

Jia Liang
University of Georgia
Email: gliang09@uga.edu

APPENDIX B

Participant Consent Form

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted for a doctoral dissertation in the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy at the University of Georgia. For this project I will be doing interviews and using official records, school newspapers/newsletters, and school websites to examine the leadership experience of Asian American women administrators in public schools. The research will be supervised by Dr. April Peters, the academic advisor of the researcher.

The purpose of this research project is to help the researcher learn more about Asian American women administrators' experience in leadership, their understandings of leadership, and how these understandings impact leadership practices. All information obtained will be treated confidentially. Only pseudonyms will be used during data analysis and report writing. During the time of the study and beyond, any identifying information, the hard copies and/or electronic files will be kept separately and locked. Audio recordings will be transcribed and analyzed and then destroyed to eliminate the possibility that study participants could be identified.

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to complete two to three interviews (approximate an hour each) with me. I will record your responses with an audio recorder. I anticipate minimal risks in that you will be answering questions during interviews; you can stop or decline to answer any questions at any time. Interviews will be conducted in a location of your choice. In the case where face-to-face interviews are infeasible, phone interviews will be arranged at a time of your choice. Also, I will not press you to respond to questions that appear to make you uncomfortable.

Individual participation may result in a better understanding of one's belief in leadership and own identity as an Asian American woman leader. The policymakers and educational practitioners may become more informed about genuine needs and legitimate concerns of Asian American women leaders as well as access and equity to those who aspire to leadership. Results will provide needed additions to the cannon of scholarship and research in the women leadership literature.

Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can ask to have all the information that can be identified as yours returned to you, removed from the research records, or destroyed. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at (706)372-5938. I hope you will enjoy this opportunity to share your experiences and viewpoints with us. Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,

Jia Liang

Dr. April Peters
Assistant Professor, Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy
University of Georgia
alpeters@uga.edu

For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 629 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

APPENDIX C

Interview Guide

I: Experience

1. Tell me stories about how you came to be a principal/assistant principal in your school?
    a. What influenced your choice?
    b. Who encouraged you?
    c. What concerns/barriers did you have?
    d. What or who helped you?

2. How would you describe yourself as a school leader? Explain.
3. Let us talk about your very first day on the job (leadership position). What was it like for you?
    a. Your feelings
    b. How did your teachers react?
    c. How did your students react toward you?
    d. What are the contexts (school performance, pressure, etc.)?

4. Think of a typical work day in school and tell me about it.
5. Describe your interactions with teachers. Can you give me some examples?
6. Tell me about your relationship with teachers.
7. Describe for me your interactions with students. Can you give some examples (both negative and positive)?
8. What has worked well for you as a school leader? What has been challenging?
9. Think of a particular time when you were particularly successful as a principal/assistant principal/department chair and tell me about it.
10. Think of a specific time when things were challenging for you as principal/assistant principal/department chair and tell me about it.
11. Think of a time when you felt particularly supported and tell me about that.
12. Think of a time when you didn't get the support you wanted. Tell me about that.
13. How do you think you have changed as a school leader over years?

II: Identity

14. How would you describe yourself (as a person)?
15. What and who are some of the key influences in your life?
16. Describe for me what the Asian American and (nation/ethnicity) represent to you (feelings, key events)?
17. How important is your Asian American background in your life? Explain.
18. Is there anything else we haven't discussed that you would like to discuss?

APPENDIX D

Subjectivity Statement

Contemporary fieldwork suggests that "elements of the fieldworker's personal biography are not only socially relevant to those studied, but also fundamentally shape the researcher's interpretive and theoretical interests in the field settings" (Weiss, 1994, p. 185). As an international student from China, I have been in the United States for more than seven years, giving me advantages of understanding both U.S. culture and one Asian culture intimately. Memories are still fresh from when I was seeking role models but could not find one, and when I was teased for being a Chinese woman. Though I am not a U.S. citizen, I am an Asian who studies and lives in U.S. society and shares with these Asian American female school administrators similar experiences of being both a model minority and a stranger alienated in the educational systems. Though I have no experience in principalship or assistant-principalship, my aspiration to educational leadership and ongoing extensive study in women of color and leadership have enabled me to relate to Asian American female school administrators in terms of their multilayered struggles over gender, race, and culture. As a researcher, I am an "outsider" observing and analyzing the reports of women about themselves and their leadership experiences to obtain understandings of how Asian American female school administrators interpret and make sense of their professional experiences and view their roles and purposes as school administrators. Due to the similarities I share with my participants, I consider myself an "insider" as well. My participants may trust me because I am Asian.

Being a "relative insider" (Harry et al., 2005) in the field of education and studying a topic in which I have considerable investments, it is likely that my preconceived beliefs and perspectives will be brought to bear on the data. Nonetheless, my reflexivity seeks to bring

preconceived beliefs into the dialogue rather than to omit or ignore them. I am also aware that I am an "outsider" in another sense. I was born and raised in China, and my foreign status somewhat legitimates my treatment as an outsider, whereas, these Asian American women principals are citizens who were born in or immigrated to the United States and have lived most of their lives in the country. The status difference could put me at a disadvantage in examining perspectives typically related to their "outsider-within" (Hune, 1998) experiences. Furthermore, my alien status could limit my sensitivity toward the impacts of the special intergenerational factors on these Asian American female school administrators. I am aware that my empathy to Asian American women could make me more vulnerable to biases. Extra caution is necessary during interviews where emotions are likely involved in participants' responses. Having my study premised on constructivism I believe both my participants' and my interpretations have a place in the final report.