

Ren: My Transdisciplinary Constructing
Dao with Yinyang Dynamism of the Self-leadership for International Chinese
Women Doctoral Students in the U.S.

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Admittedly, the gender and cultural topics of this dissertation might challenge the deep cultural, social norms, and personal values. The gender and cultural topics in this dissertation are compounded by race, age, philosophies, and history, which may cause discomfort and tension to individual readers with different standpoints. I totally understand my readers may disagree with feminist, Chinese, and my own thinking in this paper. I acknowledge my readers' views, and do not want to change anyone's views, but myself. At the end of the day, this

dissertation is to quench my curiosity and confusion about how to lead myself as a woman in this complex, challenging, and patriarchal world.

Lastly, I dedicated this dissertation to my family. Their unconditional love and support for me gave me courage to challenge myself to achieve my goals and complete this doctoral journey.

Abstract

This research explores a personal aspect of leadership: the self-leadership of Chinese women doctoral students in the U.S. This dissertation reviews current dilemmas of feminist and leadership studies and adopts a constructivist grounded theory approach to examine how Chinese women doctoral students have gone through their doctoral journey in the U.S. Through their journey, they have been transformed from intimidated Chinese girls to become international women leaders in their fields.

By critically examining and integrating both Chinese and U.S. cultures, this study reveals how Chinese women doctoral students in the U.S. face a double portion of challenges and wisdom from the two patriarchal cultures. Through a transdisciplinary lens, participants' challenges and solutions during their doctoral journeys are examined from both Western and Chinese intellectual systems. The results of this research may inspire women, marginalized individuals, and researchers to think beyond the modern knowledge system through the Western Enlightenment tradition. Insights from this study reveal how a woman can succeed in a complex and ever-changing world, which is both a social science problem, and a philosophy and ethics problem.

Keywords: feminism, women's leadership, self-leadership

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Abstract	iv
List of Figures	x
List of Tables	xii
Chapter 1: The Problem That Has No Name	1
Research Problem	5
Double Portion of Challenges from both Chinese and U.S. Cultures	6
Challenges from the Great Wall of Coping Strategies	10
Challenges from the Unknown Inner World of ICWDSUS	12
What is the Goal Worth Striving For	12
How about Women’s Wellbeing?	14
How about Women’s Values?	15
How about Women’s Self-identity?	16
How about Women’s Self-leadership?	22
Problem Statement	25
Research Purpose	28
Research Question	31
Significance of the Study	31
Chapter 2: Regret for The Past	38

Systems Knowledge: Women and Culture	41
Feminist Utopia in Patriarchal Cultures	41
Culture	46
<i>Wenhua</i>	47
Target Knowledge: Self-leadership Concept	55
Transformation Knowledge: <i>The Book of Changes</i>	60
<i>Yinyang</i> Dialectics	60
The Ease to Change	62
The Second Enlightenment	76
Chapter 3: A Yinyang Cat Might Catch the Mice	80
Step 1: Constructing Integrated Self-leadership Philosophies	83
The Package of the Self-leadership Philosophies for ICWDSUS	85
<i>Ren (human-benevolence)</i> Transdisciplinarity	88
A Respectful Moral World (<i>Jingjie</i>) and Height Psychology	91
The <i>Dao</i> with <i>Yinyang</i>	97
<i>Ren (human-benevolence)</i> Ontology	102
Step 2: Constructing an Integrated Self-leadership Methodology	106
Methodological Approach: A Qualitative Research	106
Method: <i>Ren (human-benevolence)</i> Constructivist Grounded Theory	107
Methodological Assumptions	110
Deductive, Inductive, and Abductive	110

Either Methodological Individualism and Relationalism	114
Step 3: Constructing an Integrated Self-leadership Research Process	115
<i>Ren</i> (human-benevolence) Sampling	115
Open and Partially Purposeful Sampling	115
The Inconvenience of Convenience Sampling	117
<i>Ren</i> (benevolence/human) Relational Sampling	119
Participants and the Researcher	123
Participants in the U.S.	124
Participants in China	125
The Doctoral Journey	128
Consent	132
Collecting Comprehensive Data and Interview Questions	135
Constant Comparison	142
<i>Yinyang</i> Data Analysis	146
<i>Yinyang</i> Saturating Theoretical Categories	148
Weight Differences among <i>Yin</i> , <i>Yang</i> , and <i>Yinyang</i> Codes	152
Constructing a <i>Dao</i> of Self-leadership with <i>Yinyang</i> Dynamism	157
Step 4: Constructing Integrated Self-leadership Trustworthiness and Ethical	
Issues	159
<i>Yinyang</i> Trustworthiness and Full Self-reflection	159
Ethics, Morality, and Respect	164

Methodological Conclusion	170
Chapter 4: Challenges—Adversity Leads to Prosperity	172
Part I: <i>Yang</i> Challenges—Visible Challenges are Promoting Chances!	173
Part II: <i>Yinyang</i> Challenges—Less Visible Challenges are Trickier Challenges	186
Part III: <i>Yin</i> Challenges—One’s Disaster is from One’s Own Heart	219
Chapter 5: Self-leadership—To Be and Not to Be, That is the Answer of 仁 REN (Human/Benevolence)	274
Part I: <i>Yang</i> self-leadership—Developing Herself to Achieve Her Goal	275
Part II: <i>Yinyang</i> Self-leadership—The Respect for and Including Others	296
Part III: <i>Yin</i> Self-leadership—A Woman’s Benevolent Love for Others	368
Chapter 6: Unfinishing and Restarting—My <i>Kun Dao</i> of an ICWDSUS’ Self-leading	458
Autoethnography	458
My Transdisciplinary Doctoral Journey and Self-leadership Evolution	461
My <i>Kun Dao</i> of an ICWDSUS’ Self-leadership	467
Puzzles: How to Define Women and Women’s leadership. Is Leadership Different for Men and Women?	468
My Solution to the Puzzles: <i>Kun</i> and <i>Kun Dao</i>	470
Discussion	485
Implications	492

Limitations	494
An Unfinished Finality	500
References	503
Appendices	589
Appendix A	589
Appendix B	596
Appendix C	598
Appendix D	600
Appendix E	604
Appendix F	611

List of Figures

Figure 1: The Iceberg of Challenges for ICWDSUS	26
Figure 2: <i>Yinyang</i> Generates Eight Basic Change Patterns	61
Figure 3: <i>Meng</i> (Enlightenment)	64
Figure 4: <i>Yinyang</i> Generates Everything	64
Figure 5: The Straight Way of Mother Nature and the Oblique Way of Humans	67
Figure 6: The Gate to Open the Changing Labyrinth	68
Figure 7: The 64 Stops of a Complete Change Journey	71
Figure 8: The Past, Present, and Future of Enlightenment	73
Figure 9: The Second Enlightenment to the Companion in Stop 8	77
Figure 10: The Package of the Self-leadership Philosophies for ICWDSUS	85
Figure 11: Theory, Theorizing, and <i>Dao</i>	101
Figure 12: The <i>Yinyang</i> World of ICWDSUS	143
Figure 13: The Tree of <i>Yin</i> , <i>Yang</i> , and <i>Yinyang</i> Codes	157
Figure 14: The <i>Ren</i> (benevolence/human) Transdisciplinary Research	159
Figure 15: The Transition from Yang Challenges to Yang Promotions	186
Figure 16: The Tricky <i>Yinyang</i> Challenges	217
Figure 17: <i>Yin</i> Challenges	271
Figure 18: <i>Yang</i> Self-leadership	295
Figure 19: <i>Yinyang</i> Self-leadership	365
Figure 20: <i>Yin</i> Self-leadership	452

Figure 21: Hexagram <i>Qian</i> and <i>Kun</i> in the Whole Changing System	474
Figure 22: <i>Kun Dao</i>	484
Figure 23: My Proposed <i>Kun Dao</i> of an ICWDSUS's Self-leadership	488
<i>Note:</i> Some figures contain elements adapted from free stock images	

List of Tables

Table 1: The Double Portion of Challenges of ICWDSUS	7
Table 2: The Arrangement of the Transdisciplinary Literature Review	40
Table 3: Constructing Integrated Self-leadership Methodology	83
Table 4: The Integration of Selected Philosophy	104
Table 5: The Demographics of Participants	127
Table 6: Three Parts of Different Self-leadership for ICWDSUS	275

Chapter 1: The Problem That Has No Name

I belong to myself!

-Lu Xun, Regret for the Past

At the beginning of the 20th century, the word *feminism* was first introduced to China from the Western world (Barlow, 2004; Zhu, 2015). In the 1920s, one of the earliest Chinese feminists, Lu Xun, radically pointed out that the traditional culture was the root cause of women's tragic fate (Ye, 2004). Even if a young woman accepted Western feminism to lead her own life as a "new woman," without changing societal culture, she would eventually pull back to a traditional woman's life as a sacrificing and submissive daughter, wife, and mother. In Lu Xun's novel *Regret for the Past*, the heroine, *Zijun*, received Western feminist education and wanted to lead her own life instead of being led by the traditional culture. She bravely challenged her traditional family by saying "I belong to myself! No one can interfere with my own life!" (Lu et al., 2003, p. 198). Her statement was like a declaration of independence for Chinese women with bound feet who had to rely on men for a living. However, after leaving her traditional family to pursue her "new life," *Zijun* found that she was unable to survive in the patriarchal world that had existed for thousands of years. She had to return to her family to follow others' wishes and eventually died of depression. Her simple wish to have the life she wanted instead of what others wanted her to have turned out to be the *Regret for the Past* for Chinese women 100 years ago.

In the 21st century, *Zijun*'s dream is still echoed by many Chinese women, including international Chinese women doctoral students in the U.S. (ICWDSUS), who "are happy and eager to get out of the traditional web of relationships in Chinese culture" to experience a new world (Qin & Lykes, 2006, p.188). With great ambitions, many ICWDSUS have left their homes and moved to the U.S. to pursue a doctoral education and a "new life." However, *Zijun*'s unresolved puzzle still confronts every ICWDSUS. An ICWDSUS's doctoral journey is filled with a multitude of physical and psychological challenges (Chan, 2006; Li, 2016). Many ICWDSUS are both the first members in their families to enter college and the only one or one of few ICWDSUS in their departments. As a result, neither their parents nor departments understand how to effectively help them address the challenges (Chan, 2006; Gu, 2016; Qin & Lylke, 2007).

With the best education from China and the U.S., ICWDSUS possess the most cutting-edge human capital. Their knowledge, values, and leadership will influence the development of their family, organization, society, and even the globe and the next generations (Brown & Tannock, 2009). However, there is almost no research has focused on ICWDSUS, and scarce research has focused on women in HRD and leadership fields, especially women of color (Byrd & Stanley, 2009; Hirudayaraj & Shields, 2019). With few women taking leadership positions, most leadership studies reflect male perspectives (Ashkansy et al., 2002; Batliwala, 2011; McLean & Beigi, 2016). Most adult development theories

and psychology theories also reflect men's lives and psychology (Helson & Mitchell, 2020). The progress of women's empowerment "has been painfully slow" (Chen et al., 2005, p. 1). After decades of women's empowerment interventions worldwide, most approaches have failed to achieve gender equality (Milward et al., 2015; Brouwers, 2013). Despite the intimidating large number of feminist and women's empowerment taxonomies, even feminist leaders have not clearly defined *feminism* and *women* (Buszek, 1999; Linden, 2012). Women have been overwhelmed with various waves of feminism, resulting in becoming increasingly confused (Buszek, 1999).

Echoing Chinese feminist Lu Xun's criticism against traditional culture, many Western researchers have also identified that cultural barriers are fundamental challenges for women's empowerment (McLean & Beigi, 2016; Unterhalter, 2007). However, gender culture is often related to religion, tradition, and even the deepest taboos of society, which could be "too painful to be explicitly discussed," let alone to change (Hofstede, 2011, p. 13).

The United Nations (UN) organized four world conferences on women in 1975, 1980, 1985, and 1995. Twenty-five years later, they have not found a solution to address the cultural barriers against women, so they cannot organize the fifth conference to guide women's development in the 21st century (UN Women, n.d.). After reflecting on the problems of previous women's empowerment practices, both the UN Women organization and women's

empowerment professionals are at a plateau without a solution for the old problems or a plan for the future (Mosedale, 2005; Unterhalter, 2007). Consequently, many women's problems that have "no name" continue to multiply (Friedan, 2018, p.57). In 2017, only 4.8% of CEOs in Fortune 500 companies were women. However, from 2017 to 2019, more than 25% of these women CEOs stepped down (Isidore, 2018). The women's *Great Resignation* trend has continued to expand to all working women after the pandemic in 2020. In 2021, more than one-third of women reported that they planned to leave their jobs in the next three to six months (Fox, 2021). It seems that *Zijun's* puzzle is not only challenging for ICWDSUS, but is challenging for almost all women, HRD, feminists, and women's empowerment professionals.

Eagly and Carli (2007) identified two types of cultural constraints for women's development: the institutional and individual gender bias from both a woman's external and internal worlds. In addition to initiating institutional changes (e.g., legislation, education, political rights) to give women *power over* their oppression from the external world, the new trend of women's empowerment is meant to help women gain the *power to* make her own life decisions independently by seeking solidarity to build *power with* others (Mosedale, 2005; Unterhalter, 2007). Among all types of powers, the *power within* a woman is the most fundamental power and the source of all other powers, but it has to be claimed by the individual instead of being granted from

top management (Mosedale, 2005). Therefore, the solution of *Zijun*'s puzzle relies on the efforts from both policymakers and each individual woman. Unlike policymakers, who can wait for decades for longitudinal research results to develop a policy to address women's issues on a collective level, an ICWDSUS does not have years to wait for a direction. Thus, she has to make a decision to turn left, right, forward, or backward in front of the labyrinth of challenges during her doctoral journey. An ICWDSUS must use her self-leadership to guide herself in a foreign country for survival and success.

The complexity of women's issues, the lack of research on women's adult development, psychology, and leadership studies highlight the challenges for ICWDSUS from both Chinese and U.S. patriarchal cultures. These challenges could be too complex to solve. However, finding a solution to this '*Mission: Impossible*' of the ICWDSUS could also greatly inspire women's empowerment.

Research Problem

The U.S. is most Chinese students' first choice to study abroad, and China is the number one place of origin of international students in the U.S. In 2020, 372,532 Chinese students were studying in the U.S., and about 15% were pursuing a doctorate (Statista, 2019; Zhou, 2018; IIE, 2020). However, even though ICWDSUS are probably the largest group of international women doctoral students and women's issues are a global concern, I only found one paper (Kuttig, 2012), which focused on "Chinese women international doctoral students in the

U.S.” in major databases (Google scholar, ProQuest Digital Dissertations, Academic Search Premier, JSTOR, PsycINFO). As the author of the only source that focused on ICWDSUS, Kuttig (2012 p. 39) noted that international women doctoral students “have been historically underrepresented in academia,” which echoes the lack of research on all women groups. In terms of women’s self-leadership, I only found two articles: Cooley (2008) and Suzanne et al. (2014). Thus, it is urgent to learn about ICWDSUS and women’s self-leadership and to identify the unknown, neglected, and complex challenges in patriarchal cultures.

To review the challenges for ICWDSUS from the literature, I used Crenshaw and Bonis’ (2005) concept of intersectionality to map ICWDSUS’ identity from four intersected identities: Chinese women with a Ph.D., Chinese women graduate students in the U.S., women in the U.S., and women of color in the U.S. From the research on each identity, I selected articles related to ICWDSUS, and summarized three major categories of the challenges for ICWDSUS: (a) the double portion of challenges from both Chinese and the U.S. cultures, (b) the challenges from the Great Wall of coping strategies, and (c) the challenges from the unknown inner world and self-leadership of ICWDSUS.

The Double Portion of Challenges from Both Chinese and the U.S. Cultures

Although most ICWDSUS have great academic performance, and the U.S. and China are the two largest economies in the world, “economy and gender equality are not necessarily the two sides of one coin” (Alter, 2015, para.10).

Based on the 2020 *World Gender Gap Report*, East Asia and North America are the two slowest regions in the world in terms of progress in gender equality. It would take 163 years in East Asia and 151 years in North America to close the gender gaps, in contrast to “54 years in Western Europe,” “107 years in Eastern Europe and Central Asia,” and “140 years in the Middle East and North Africa” (WEF, 2020, p. 6). Most ICWDSUS have realized the harsh oppression from Chinese culture, which is the primary reason for many ICWDSUS leaving China for the U.S. (Gu, 2016; Qin & Lykes, 2006). However, few ICWDSUS know that their *American dream* for a better life in a better world could be challenged by the *intersectionality* of discrimination from their marginalized identities as international students, women in the U.S., and women of color in the U.S. (Brazill, 2021). Table 1 shows ICWDSUS’ double portion of challenges from both U.S. and Chinese cultures. As Table 1 shows, the challenges from the U.S. culture for ICWDSUS are far more complex than the challenges from Chinese culture.

Table 1

The Double Portion of Challenges of ICWDSUS

From the Chinese culture	From the U.S. culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Blatant and direct discrimination in almost all aspects of a woman’s life (e.g., income, political power, employment, legal protection, health, workplace), indicating the sharp contrast between the rapid economic 	<p>Indirect but more complex discrimination (e.g., microaggressions) (Gu, 2016; Li, 2016).</p> <p>The intersectionality of marginalization</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. as an international graduate woman student (Brazill, 2021; Chan, 2006;

development and worsening status of women in China (Gu, 2016; Wei, 2016)

- The judgement against a woman from traditional discourse of *Three Obediences* (a woman should obey her father as a daughter, husband as a wife, and son in widowhood), and *Four Virtues* (morality, proper speech, modest manners and appearance, and diligent work) (Chan, 2006; Dickerson, 2016)
- The judgement against a woman from modern discourse of *left-over women*, who are older than 27 and unmarried, from All-China Women's Federation (Dickerson, 2016; Fincher, 2014)
- The identity struggle between an ICWDSUS and a Chinese woman following traditional *Three Obediences* and *Four Virtues*, and modern *leftover women* discourse (Dickerson, 2016)
- Insufficient governmental support after the economic reform in 1978 (Wei, 2016).
- An ICWDSUS' career and life development plans often follow their parents' or husband's plans and values plus *mianzi* (social status) instead of her own values and psychological traits (Gu, 2016; Qin & Lykes, 2006)
- Discrimination from local Chinese colleagues for overseas returnees, called *sea turtles* (Yan, 2017; Yang, 2016)
- Cannot find a job in China after returning, which is mocked as *seaweed* (Zweig & Han, 2010)
- Double rejection: rejected by both Chinese and the U.S. cultures (Yan, 2017; Yang, 2016)

Dickerson, 2016; Gu, 2016; Kuttig, 2012; Qin & Lykes, 2006; Xie, 2007)

- Relationship concerns (e.g., dating, marriage, friendship, advisor-advisee)
- Urgent mental health needs/lack of leisure
- English/academic challenges
- Educational shock (different education systems in the U.S. and China) and lack of soft skills, and different styles of oral and written communication
- Career restrictions
- Social and cultural challenges
- Financial concerns

2. as a woman:

- *Backlash* (reject feminism) (Faludi, 2009)
 - Deteriorating political and economic rights in an increasingly intense but less visible way (WEF, 2020)
 - Despite economic success, East Asia and North America are the two slowest regions in the world in terms of progress in gender equality (WEF, 2020)
 - Women having higher education than men with lower positions, income, and decision-power at work (WEF, 2020)
 - Burnout/Depression (Faludi, 2009)
 - *Catfights* (women aggressively compete with women) (Tanenbaum, 2003)
 - *Queen bee syndrome* (senior women leaders oppress women subordinates) (Seo et al., 2017)
 - *Mommy Wars* (the war between mothers and women without children as well as married and single women due to the competition at work) (Williams et al., 2014)
 - *Maternal wall* (mothers are more likely to be rejected for job and promotion opportunities) (Correll et al., 2007)
 - *Glass ceiling* (external barriers that stop women from career and leadership advancement) (Siniscalco et al., 2014)
-

-
- *Matilda effect* (scholarly achievements are often given to men scientists rather than women) (Rossiter, 1993).
 - *Glass cage* (a woman's psychological barriers holding her back) (Warrell, 2013)
 - *Imposter syndrome* (high achievers feel phony, fear failure, and have low self-confidence) (Gu, 2016)
 - *Glass cliff* (a fake promotion for a woman as the scapegoat for organizational failure) (Ryan et al., 2007)
 - *Labyrinth* (overwhelming challenges from everywhere) (Eagly & Carli, 2012)
 - *Sticky floor* (low-paying women at the bottom of the labor market without opportunity to be promoted) (Harlan & White Berheide, 1994)
 - *Sex and gender-based violence & quid pro quo sexual harassment* (supervisors use the recommendation or termination of scholarships and employment to push a woman to submit to unwelcome sexual favors) (Gu, 2016)
 - *Low career and leadership self-efficacy* (Hackett & Betz, 1981)
 - *Misleading mass media* (Wood, 1994), women's body (Hesse-Biber et al., 2006), pornographic media industry (Warshaw, 1991), and the *rape culture* (Buchwald et al., 2005).

3. as a woman of color and an Asian woman:

- *Bamboo ceiling* (stereotypes against Asians, e.g., submissive, lack of leadership potential, skills) (Hyun, 2005)
 - *Tokenism* (little support and promotion opportunities from organizations but expect women of color staff to be role models to complete heavy workloads for their race, gender, and profession) (Turner et al., 2011)
 - *Anti-Asian Discrimination and Crimes* (Kanthor, 2021)
 - *Yellow peril* overrunning the best American universities and threatening the white supremacy and other minorities,
-

such as African Americans (Chen & Buell, 2018)

- *Model (Deviant) Minority* (the stereotype that Asian Americans are good at math, obedient, “socially awkward, robotic, over-evolved human machines, and therefore subhuman”) (Castro & Collins, 2021, p.39)

- *A wedge group* (Asian Americans have been triangulated in race relations to be isolated from other races as *forever foreign*, and attract hostility from other minorities, which is used to “maintain White racial dominance” (Castro & Collins, 2021, p. 38; Kim, 1999).

- *Forever foreign*: Asian Americans are often seen as “forever foreign” (Williams et al., 2014, p.47)

The Challenges from the Great Wall of Coping Strategies

Despite the double portion of challenges and greater psychological needs compared to other international students, ICWDSUS’ coping strategies are based more on their own diligence, endurance, and their Chinese families and friends’ help (Chan, 2006; Gu, 2016; Li, 2016; Yue, 2001). Although U.S. universities offer many great student-support services for international students, Chinese students rarely use universities’ professional services but, instead, rely on their Chinese supportive system (Chan, 2006; Li, 2016; Xie, 2007; Zhu, 2016).

Admittedly, the Chinese-community-based support mechanism provides critical academic, emotional, career, and life support for ICWDSUS. However, it can also create a Great Wall that separates ICWDSUS from the non-Chinese world. Not only do non-Chinese faculty and students find it difficult to reach Chinese

students, but Chinese students who try to step out of the Great Wall will be punished, such as being envied and treated as traitors by their Chinese peers (Chan, 2006; Li, 2016; Qin & Lykes, 2006; Yan, 2017). By mostly interacting with Chinese friends, many Chinese students lose the opportunity to speak English.

With limited or even stereotypical knowledge of U.S. culture and education, plus the time difference between China and the U.S., Chinese community-based support often cannot provide timely, professional, and useful suggestions for Chinese students (Ang & Liamputtong, 2008; Li, 2016; Xie, 2007; Yoon & Jepsen, 2008). Given the limited knowledge of mental health and counseling services in Chinese culture, even when Chinese students try to seek counseling services, they are often mocked as being incapable by their Chinese community. Without adequate intercultural communication, both sides of the Great Wall lose the learning opportunities from a different culture and have ethnocentric stereotypes against the other side (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2017; Yu & Wang, 2011). The misunderstanding, low satisfaction, and even conflicts in the universities trigger more problems and stress for Chinese students.

When challenges such as English barriers cannot be solved quickly through Chinese-community-based support or one's diligence based on Confucianism, many Chinese women graduate students simply endure and conceal their concerns to maintain harmony with others (Dickerson, 2016; Hsieh,

2006; Qin & Lykes, 2006). Despite the marginalization and discrimination, most Chinese students do little to resolve their marginality. Instead, they strive to change their aspirations to accept their marginalized positions (Kuttig, 2012).

In addition to Confucian values, Daoist attitudes of allowing events to occur naturally also influence Chinese students' coping strategies (Xu, 2003). Some Chinese women students choose exercise, food, and candy to relieve their stress (Yan, 2017). However, most avoidance strategies can be maladaptive, which may temporarily help people take their minds off the problems to escape the stress. However, the problems that caused the stress remain unresolved (Endler & Parker, 1990). Without effective coping strategies to deal with their psychological concerns, Chinese students' mental health deteriorates (Xie, 2007; Zhu, 2016).

The Challenges from the Unknown Inner World of ICWDSUS

What is the Goal Worth Striving For?

For ICWDSUS, surviving in the U.S. is a complex and difficult acculturation process involving changes in behaviors, psychology, and cognition (Chan, 2006). To pass through the labyrinth of challenges from both the external and internal world, a woman must have a goal "that is worth striving for, persistence, awareness of one's progress, and a careful analysis of the puzzles that lie ahead during the complex journey" (Eagly & Carli, 2012, p. 2). However, the goals of ICWDSUS are unclear.

Face (*Mianzi*). Yang (2016) pointed out that many Chinese students study abroad to enhance their social status rather than improve their economic status. The excessive care of the external social status for the self and the whole family is called *mianzi* in Chinese, which literally means *face* (Yang, 2016). In Confucian culture, instead of economic capital, the cultural capital, which is measured by educational attainment, is the highest priority for capital attainment (*wan ban jie xia pin, wei you dushu gao*). The ranking of universities and majors, especially those of their peers, is the major criteria for Chinese students to choose their majors and universities (Yang, 2016; Zhu, 2016). Many Chinese students and parents feel they would lose *mianzi* if the university's ranking of their peers' or their peers' children is higher. With a focus on *mianzi*, the fit between a students' personality and education and future career, and other internal psychological attributes are often ignored by the students and their parents (Zhu, 2016; Yang, 2016).

Before leaving China, most Chinese students do not have a concrete goal and systematic plan for their career and life development (Zhu, 2016). Even many Ph.D. students do not know what research they should conduct after they are admitted into the Ph.D. program for a couple of years until the last year of their doctoral study (Gu, 2016). Chinese graduate students also have great difficulty making career plans and choosing their first jobs independently as they are culturally programmed to follow their parents' values, expectations, and

experiences as well as use their peers' choices in their communities as a standard (Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Jin et al., 1991; Kwan, 2009; Leung et al., 2011; Tang et al., 1999; Yang, 2016). Married ICWDSUS' career decisions are often determined by their husbands' career choices (Dickerson, 2016; Gu, 2016). Chinese feminist Liu Suola identified modern Chinese women's confusion by asking a series of questions:

What is it that you really want? Do you want to get hold of something? Or get rid of something? Perhaps you don't know. Even if you knew, perhaps you dare not speak it out. Even if you have said that, perhaps you don't believe you can do it. (Liu, 1993, p. 53)

How about Women's Wellbeing?

Without understanding the intrinsic needs of a ICWDSUS but passively following the expectations of society and others, it is difficult for a woman to achieve authentic wellbeing. Although she cannot passively follow others' expectations and must understand her own needs, a woman's wellbeing is fundamentally relational. Harvey's (2007) research found that the greatest barrier for the wellbeing of marginalized women is isolation and loneliness. Due to cultural differences and some stigma, women from marginalized groups may not be accepted by the host community, or they may not value their own identities. Chinese women graduate international students' greatest concern is also their relationships with others, such as friends, parents, husbands, children, and colleagues. However, they often feel lonely and have difficulty finding friends (Chan, 2006; Gu, 2016; Qin & Lykes, 2006). In addition to filling the gender gaps

in terms of the external education, management positions, and income of a woman, Slaughter (2012) added that women's wellbeing should also be addressed.

How about Women's Values?

The sense of success or failure depends on people's objective performance as well as a comparison between their performance and their goals (Locke & Latham, 1990; Quaglia & Cobb, 1996). What goals people want to pursue and to what extent they can achieve the goals are largely determined by human values (Coolen et al., 2002; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002), and their values are largely influenced by societal culture (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002, p.121). However, "[c]ulture is not neutral but, rather, is grounded in material relations of power" (Qin & Lykes, 2006, p.181). The construction of marginalized women in patriarchal societies is profoundly shaped by her intersectionality of gender, class, ethnicity, and socio-economic situations.

Instead of patriarchal values, little is known about a woman's intrinsic values. Faludi (1991) pointed out the deceptive prescription for women's wellbeing that societal values provide. Women can never meet patriarchal societies' values, but societal values can destroy the basic human needs of women. If women resist the societal values, they may be punished by psychological and material misery; if they accept and follow societal values, they may find that "it was a faulty cure—half fantasy half punishment—that had no

place in their contemporary lives” (Faludi, 1991, p.453). For example, political correctness in the West is like a new invisible “authoritarianism,” which pressures all individuals regardless of gender, skin color, or culture to conform to politically correct values rather than self-chosen values (Adeney, 1991, p. 210). Any attempt to examine an individual’s inner life and any different views from politically correct values can be assaulted as “being filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 19; Doria, 2017; Taylor, 2004).

Moscovici (1961/2008) also described the phenomenon of *societal anchoring*: when a dominant group’s culture uses a cultural program to prioritize one culture above all other cultures. As a result, individuals and scholars from non-dominant cultures have to react to and follow the forces of the dominant culture. The military and economic power of the West have made Asian universities borrow Western epistemology, structure, and content during the late 19th and 20th century (Liu, 2011). Although all ICWDSUS in my Ph.D. department went to Chinese universities before their doctoral journey in the U.S., their Chinese higher education is largely influenced by Western knowledge systems with Western values.

How about Women’s Self-identity?

Whether it be the Western gender identity discourse of a superwoman to solve all problems for men and satisfy all men’s needs including being a maid to

obey, a toy to entertain, an angry warrior to fight enemies of patriarchal culture, a victim to be blamed and abused (Faludi, 2009; Walby, 2013), and a cyborg combining human with machine to transcend biological binary male-vs-female gender identities (Haraway, 2006); or whether it be the Chinese gender identity discourse of woman as a sacrificing and submissive wife, mother, and daughter following *Three obediences* and *Four Virtues*, a woman hero who can *hold up half the sky*, and a *left-over* woman (Dickerson, 2016; Li, 2000; Qin & Lykes, 2006), all are probably “pseudo” (Downing & Roush, 1985, p.700). All the identities for women in patriarchal societies are the products of different forms of patriarchal culture, such as feudalistic, capitalist, socialist, or postmodern patriarchy (Stacey, 1983).

The socially prescribed pseudo identities are self-contradictory, making every woman live a paradoxical life “between needing to act as women and needing an identity not overdetermined by our gender” (Buszek, 1999, p. 38; Eagly, 2005; Faludi, 1991; Hesse-Biber et al., 2006). Women leaders are often disliked and criticized by both male and female colleagues for either presenting too communal feminine characters and lacking leadership competences, or presenting too agentic characters and lacking empathy, or being too fake by trying to show both characters. Women leaders have to be “simultaneously agentic and not too agentic (Bono et al., 2016, p. 33),” or “tough as nails and warm as toast” (Wilson, 2007, p. 23). Women scientists also need to walk on the *tightrope*

between being feminine and masculine. Science is often stereotypically connected with the masculine qualities of being objective, assertive, and self-promoting, whereas women are expected to be feminine. Thus, feminine women scientists are often accused of being incompetent, and masculine women scientists are often blamed as transgressive (Williams et al., 2014).

Being shaped as a model minority, Asian Americans in science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) are regarded as “apolitical, socially awkward, robotic, over-evolved human machines, and therefore subhuman,” which can be used as political tools to maintain white supremacy in the U.S. (Castro & Collins, 2021, p. 39). Asian-American women scientists are regarded as obedient and docile “cheap labor” (Gu, 2016, p.126; Kim, 1999). Many Asian-American women scientists are also expected to play traditional feminine roles in the workplace as the “office mother,” “dutiful daughter (p. 18)” with colleagues, or a “den mother” (p. 20) to students (Williams et al., 2014). While ICWDSUS are expected to produce high quality work with challenging workloads and little support, their male colleagues and supervisors also expect them to be docile and submissive, and sometimes ask them to do errands, such as getting coffee (Gu, 2016).

With pragmatism and instrumentalism as the assumption of a society, all self-contradictory pseudo identities for women are likely to have the same real function as a woman tool. Many women’s empowerment approaches treat women

as the means to be developed as human capital to earn money for their families, organizations, and society, rather than the ends to achieve women's wellbeing (Margolis, 2010; Unterhalter, 2007). The notion of women's empowerment has been twisted by capitalist and patriarchal cultures to mean being educationally and professionally outstanding, economically independent, fashionably dressed, facially young and pretty, bodily thin, sexually liberal, externally confident, internally burned out, and *having-it-all* woman to serve the interests of a patriarchal and capitalist society (Hesse-Biber et al., 2006; Faludi, 2009). The cheap biological woman tools are highly likely to be replaced by cheaper robot tools with artificial intelligence after 2030 (Kurzweil, 2005; Roberts et al., 2021). However, Currently, posthuman artificial intelligence researchers are struggling to understand how to shape *post-woman* identity in a patriarchal artificial intelligence world to achieve the gender equality of robots (Ferrando, 2013).

Furthermore, the globalized world has led to a greater self-identity crisis so individuals have to behave differently in different cultural contexts (Usborne & de la Sablonnière, 2014). The intersection between discourses from many cultures in the past and at the present has led to a tension between individuals' needs and expectations from different societies (Ghorashi, 2005). Situated in multiple patriarchal cultures, Asian American women, especially in STEM fields, unavoidably encounter the conflict between their self-identities and social identities (Chinn, 2002). Ang (1998) claimed that the cultural identity of

Chineseness does not include the complexity of different Chinese people inside and outside China (e.g., Taiwan, Hongkong, Singaporean Chinese, and American Chinese), nor the reality of their ever-changing life in various contexts. Instead of passively accepting the prescribed and stereotypical Chinese identity, a modern Chinese has to “break the prisonhouse of Chineseness” through negotiation and resistance (Ang, 1998, p. 241). Today’s multicultural environment no longer provides individuals with clear cultural identities (Usborne & de la Sablonnière, 2014). Therefore, individuals need to learn how to negotiate their self-identities with social identities, and must learn how to define and defend their own self-identity in society (Usborne & de la Sablonnière, 2014). Drake (1997, p. 97) asked women to “reestablish self as the unique subject, not as a collective consciousness of gender.”

However, although the *third wave* of feminism in the postmodern age has deconstructed the traditional essentialist dichotomy of the women-vs-men gender identities and emphasizes a dynamic and fluid individualism and self-identities as a solution for a woman’s self-development, this prescription is “flawed” (Cooley, 2008; Green, 2008, p.15; Grange, 1996; Renegar & Sowards, 2003). Human beings, especially women, are created to connect with each other and coevolve through different relationships (Henry et al., 2003; Qin & Lykes, 2006; Randall, 2010; Uhl-Bien, 2011). A woman’s gender war with men and other individuals, ignorance of sisterhood, *catfight* and *queen bee symptom* with other women, and

anger towards feminists, non-feminists, or anyone who cannot empower the woman all destroy her primary support mechanisms and she becomes a “centerless” self in a vacuum (Grange, 1996, p. 360; Hesse-Biber, 2012; Renegar & Sowards, 2003). Facing globalized crises in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world (Bennis & Nanus, 1985), a woman “Robinson Crusoe” is extremely vulnerable and helpless. Instead of the postmodern illusion that *anything goes*, an individual has to be responsible for all the consequences of her actions in a globalized world, where one has “infinitely many social interactions,” and the consequences of her actions could be “far beyond what we could ever imagine” (Bauman, 1993; Mason, 2001, p. 48). Even worse, a woman leader from a minority group is often used as a scapegoat who is blamed for things she has not done by the public (Ryan et al., 2007).

The worst problem of being disembedded from a woman’s relationship networks is that an “independent woman” does not know who she is. A woman’s authentic self and the core and development of her self-identity are all relational (Andersen & Chen, 2002; Cooley, 2008; Qin & Lakes, 2006; Surrey, 1991). Only when an individual woman knows her authentic self-identity can she act based on her self-awareness; and only when others accept her self-identity can others support her goals (Eagly, 2005). The self-identity formation is important and difficult, but allowing others to accept her self-identity is also important, and even harder, takes a longer process. Instead of either totally following or rejecting the

traditional self-identity from societal culture, Taylor (2004) claimed that one's self-identity development should be both embedded in a social matrix with the development of a society and transcend societal prescriptions. Unfortunately, in the postmodern age, without common ground to fit the fragmented entities together as a whole, it seems like "telling tales" to make one "bounded, separately existing individual" to build a constructive relationship with "a separately existing other" including married couples (Hosking, 2011, p. 47).

How about Women's Self-leadership?

The goals, values, and self-identities of a woman as well as most women's empowerment approaches are the products of societal cultures (Dickerson, 2016; Faludi, 1991; Li, 2000; Qin & Lykes, 2006; Stacey, 1983; Walby, 2013). Without changing the problems of societal culture, many feminist studies, institutional policies, and women's own efforts not only fail to enhance women's wellbeing in a patriarchal world, but they may reproduce, reinforce, and distribute more oppressive, patriarchal, racist, and hierarchical values and structures throughout daily discursive and interactive events in spoken or unspoken ways (Charmaz, 2014; Fairclough, 2013; Qin & Lakes, 2006). With the double portion of challenges from both Chinese and the U.S. cultures, it is almost impossible for ICWDSUS and the universities in the U.S. to understand their challenges given the two extremely complex cultures and ICWDSUS' internal world. Without a clear understanding, it is not possible to find solutions to help ICWDSUS.

Instead of being constrained from advancing due to cultural barriers with acceptance or anger, a woman should give birth to her own feminist ideals to fight her good fight with flexibility and solutions. In this postmodern age, traditional experts (e.g., teachers, researchers, HR consultants, leaders, managers) suffer from a “confidence crisis” about the knowledge of the self and the world including what knowledge can guide people’s practices (Crotty, 2004, p. 183; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Hesse-Biber, 2012). With many problems that have no names, postmodern scholars have suggested that individuals use self-reflectivity to seek their own answers (Bromley, 2012; Henderson, 1992).

An individual has to take “personal responsibility for initiating, sustaining, and evaluating growth” for self-development (Boyce et al., 2010, p. 162), go “out of the passenger seat and into the driver’s seat of one’s own development” (Petrie, 2014, p. 6), and invent one’s “own roadmap” of self-development (DuPont et al., 2003, p. 6). Despite the long-term stability of culture, individuals can “resist, circumvent, or ignore these constraints” from institutionalized values and practices, or use them for their own purposes (Charmaz, 2014, p. 269). Therefore, the relationship between an individual, society, and environment are relative, reciprocal, and changing, rather than unchangeable. In addition, individuals are not passive recipients of culture but are reflective and active social actors and social creatures (Charmaz, 2014).

Although many Western gurus (e.g., Karl Marx, Simone de Beauvoir, John Dewey, Foucault, Hofstede) have emphasized that the self is socially constructed and subject to societal culture (Dewey, 1938; Beauvoir, 1974; Foucault, 1983, p. 209; Hofstede, 2001; Marx, 2020), Manz (1983) first proposed the self-leadership theory in the West and claimed that an individual's thoughts have unlimited power. He claimed that individuals "possess the ability to make alterations in our immediate world" by using their psychological control system to manage the mind to choose different actions (p. 20). Societal culture can shape human behaviors through social interactions, but culture does not determine human agency (Blumer, 1969). Although Neck and Manz (2010) admitted that individuals are programmed by societal culture, when an individual passively accepts that others to take the charge of one's own life by blindly following others, it leads to discontentment and unhappiness. Although humans cannot totally control the results of others' actions, it must be humans, "who participate in the constitution of culture and society" (Kashima, 2005, p. 21). For example, "People do not just passively receive new knowledge," but "actively interpret it to fit their own situation and perspectives" (Nonaka, 1994, p. 30). The competent self can transcend the current obstacles to see possibilities (Denmark, 1993). Despite being social creatures, human beings can actively communicate and interact with the self and others to reflect and redirect their views and actions creatively (Charmaz, 2014). Kahneman et al.'s (2004) empirical research has shown that

individuals can actively design and control their own wellbeing and lives by constructing and reconstructing each day's chosen activities. However, to date, little research has been conducted from women's perspective (Neck & Manz, 2010).

Huis et al. (2017) claimed that women's empowerment should focus more on the individual level rather than on a collective level. To empower women on an individual level, it will take a relatively shorter time to address each individual woman's unique situation and culture more specifically than on a group level. Mosedale (2005, p. 244) contended that "while women's own struggles for empowerment have tended to be collective efforts, empowerment-oriented development interventions often focus more on the level of the individual," such as self-efficacy. Manz (1983) divided one's world into physical and psychological parts. ICWDSUS are normally focused on the physical world, behaviors, and personal effectiveness, such as being diligent to cope with English and academic barriers and they focus on GPA, publications, and the rankings of their universities to evaluate their personal effectiveness. Besides feeling lonely and anxious, ICWDSUS' psychological world (e.g., self-awareness, self-efficacy, self-satisfaction) has mostly remained hidden.

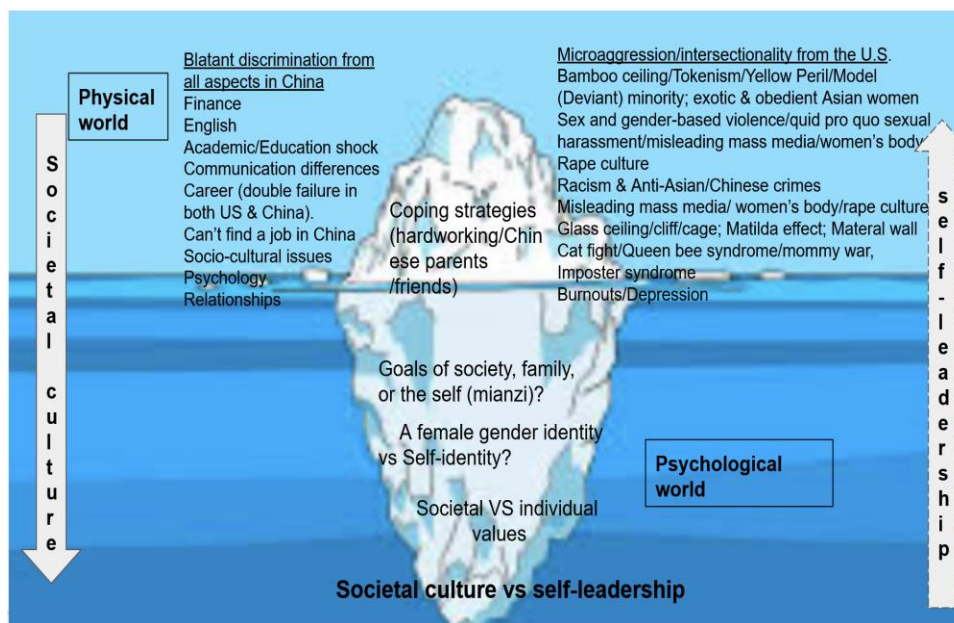
Problem Statement

The challenges for ICWDSUS are more complex than any current metaphors for women's challenges. Inspired by Edward T. Hall's (1976) iceberg

model of culture and Manz's (1983) self-leadership framework, I developed the iceberg model of the challenges for ICWDSUS to visualize the extremely complex research problem with visible and invisible challenges. My perspective of both the inner psychological and outer physical worlds of ICWDSUS is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

The Iceberg of Challenges for ICWDSUS



Note: Adapted from "Iceberg" from *pixabay.com*, filename: iceberg-3273216_640, Oct 20, 2018

Facing the huge iceberg of challenges from two patriarchal cultures to oppress ICWDSUS, an ICWDSUS must develop her self-leadership to pull herself upward for success and wellbeing. However, Manz's (1983) self-leadership theory focused on male, white organizational leaders, which does not

adequately address ICWDSUS' huge iceberg of challenges from two cultures and their internal world. Unfortunately, after decades of feminist movements, Western feminists have failed to solve the *glass ceiling* challenges. In addition, more complex metaphors about women's barriers (e.g., *sticky floors*, *concrete ceiling*, *concrete wall*, *bamboo ceiling*, *glass cage*, *labyrinth*, *glass cliff*, *imposter syndrome*) have emerged from the *glass womb* of traditional feminist knowledge (Klein, 1991). Many Western feminists admit that feminist research has failed to change gender inequality (Aronson, 2003; Buszek, 1999; Linden, 2012), and is simply "maintaining, or even exacerbating, conditions of inequity" (Calás & Smircich, 2006, p. 328). Unfortunately, the deterioration of women's situation means the deterioration of humanity due to women's close relationship to the world. The challenges for humans are becoming more aggressive from passively confusing women to actively and even aggressively attacking humans. The metaphors of *the elephant in the room*, *black swan*, and *gray rhino* reveal how such issues have been ignored by leaders, and developed to be unexpected events like the appearance of a *black swan* with the significant consequences (Taleb, 2007). These ignored dangers eventually seriously attack humans regardless of the gender—like the *gray rhino* (Wucker, 2016).

Despite the iceberg of challenges from two patriarchal cultures, many ICWDSUS have not fought to combat the challenges in a foreign world even

though they succeed at the end of their doctoral journey. However, how ICWDSUS have overcome the iceberg of challenges remains unknown.

Research Purpose

Many feminist researchers have claimed that women need practical solutions rather than political ideologies (Downing & Roush, 1985; Harding, 1987; Moran, 2013; Wilson, 2007). Liu (2011) stressed that “out of suffering comes great things” (p. 224). The double portion of challenges from both Chinese and the U.S. cultures also provides ICWDSUS with a double portion of wisdom. Lewin (1951) said that “there is nothing so practical as a good theory” (p. 169). Thus, the primary purpose of this grounded theory study is to examine how an ICWDSUS overcomes her challenges during the doctoral journey in the U.S. to construct a self-leadership theory for ICWDSUS. To examine ICWDSUS’ self-leadership from two cultures of the U.S. and China, this study uses a transdisciplinary approach with the critical integration of different cultures and disciplines. If both ICWDSUS’ bottom-up self-leadership and universities’ top-down interventions work together as a whole, the success and wellbeing of ICWDSUS and the universities will be greatly enhanced.

Despite my initial humble primary research purpose was to develop ICWDSUS, I later realized that it is an extremely complex research project to fulfill my purpose: to ground a safe theory to develop women like myself—an ICWDSUS—with Chinese higher education and U.S. graduate education. The

transdisciplinary approach with the inclusion of two cultures of the U.S. and China with a feminist lens led to constructing a transdisciplinary methodology, epistemology, and ontology to ground a transdisciplinary theory to solve ICWDSUS' challenges for sustainable self-development. Therefore, the second research purpose is to explore a Western-Chinese transdisciplinary methodology, epistemology, and ontology with a feminist lens, which critically integrates Western analytic methods and Chinese philosophy of life (*Dao*) with feminist perspectives.

In addition to the purpose for the theory-building and methodological advancement of ICWDSUS' self-leadership, today's feminist research is "not only about women but also FOR women and others" (Henderson, 1992, p. 395; Olesen, 2005). Research in any area can benefit from today's feminist research by including a feminist interpretation lens. Although this study is my dissertation project, it is also a bold intellectual humanistic project, not only for my own self-leadership theory-building to guide my life but also for my intellectual responsibility as an ICWDSUS with both Chinese and U.S. higher education for all humanity. Although I understand that this research about ICWDSUS' self-leadership will never solve all of women's challenges, I at least hope that my attempt to integrate both Western and Chinese wisdom can help ICWDSUS, women, and other individuals by first enlightening myself.

Therefore, I have to emphasize the different usage of this ICWDSUS' self-leadership theory with the most current feminist and HRD interventions. The direction of using this self-leadership theory is not an one-way direction toward one's external world, but is bidirectional towards both internal and external worlds of a person. The critical analysis of this self-leadership theory is meant to show ICWDSUS the complexity of their double portion of challenges. It is not meant to be used as a political discourse to criticize and force others to change quickly to empower women. This ICWDSUS self-leadership discourse is mainly meant to open a conversation between a woman and her inner self to deepen her self-reflectivity, and to enlighten her inner wisdom to guide her actions in the patriarchal world.

This study is also not meant to generate new HRD interventions to intervene in women's or others' lives to change others, but to generate an HRD conversation with the self for self-reflection. After critically reflecting on my proposed self-leadership theory with one's unique situation, the individual can decide what self-interventions to adopt to change the self and one's situation. Instead of building knowledge to manipulate or criticize the patriarchal world, a woman's inner wisdom can lead her to develop harmonious relationships with others through morality, learning, and communication to transform herself and her world together during a gradual, interactive, and respectful process. The self-

leadership of ICWDSUS in this study is an open-ended construction, which is always being constructed in an interactive and inclusive way.

Research Question

Corbin and Strauss (2014) suggested that grounded theory researchers have an initial research question to guide the inquiry on a phenomenon of interest without making many assumptions. Thus, I developed the initial research question to guide this grounded theory inquiry: *How does an ICWDSUS overcome the challenges in her study, work, and life to achieve success and wellbeing during her doctoral journey?*

Significance of the Study

Albert Einstein said that we cannot solve problems by using the same level of thinking that we used to create them. The Enlightenment since the 17th century enlightened humans from depending on theological and monarchal teachings in the premodern Dark Ages, to “dare to be wise! Have courage to make use of your own understanding!” in the modern age (Mokyr, 2011; Kant, 1784, para.1). Now, to enlighten individuals from being confused in the postmodern VUCA world probably requires a “second Enlightenment” (Tang, 2015, p. 2). If the first Enlightenment enlightened individuals to be independent, the second Enlightenment probably needs to enlighten individuals to be interdependent by learning HOW to “care about others” and “respect for differences” (Tang, 2015, p. 2). The second Enlightenment is not a bold concept but is already in progress.

In addition to HRD's vision of *the whole of humanity*, advocating for building global unity to combat global crises by countless social scientists from various disciplines has already heralded the coming of the second Enlightenment (Bond, 2010; Clarke, 2003; Charmaz, 2011; Smith, 2012; Tsui, 2004; Wang et al., 2022). HRD, as probably the only discipline that can engage with almost all disciplines and humans, is highly likely to be ordained at this historical turning moment as the leading discipline of the second Enlightenment.

However, in a globalized world, the Westerncentric knowledge-building system is not enough (Hsiung, 2015; Kitch, 2007). Instead of totally rejecting the old wineskin of Western knowledge or continuing to put new wine or even “the old wine in old bottles” of the first Enlightenment traditions (Agrawal, 1995, p. 420), this study creates a new lens with the integration of Western-Chinese knowledge systems as well as women's perspectives for HRD for a more comprehensive and balanced view of the world. The traditional Chinese knowledge system has already deeply influenced the Enlightenment knowledge system.

Enlightenment and Confucianism

Scholars in the 21st century may not believe that “the birth of Enlightenment” during the 16th to 18th century was “from the spirit of Confucianism” (Rogacz, 2018, p. 68). As German philosopher Leibniz (1646–1716) claimed, “None of us [Europeans] has ever wondered that there would be a

nation with more perfect ethics and a more advanced way of life than us. We found China, however, who went so far as to wake us” (Yu, 2009, p. 15). The origin of the modern Eurocentric knowledge foundation—governance, civil service, democracy, education system, examination system, philosophy, psychology, and arts—was greatly indebted to Confucianism and Chinese ancient classics, which were translated by many European Jesuits around the 16th century (Davis, 1983; Harvey, 2012; Hobson, 2004; Rogacz, 2018; Yu, 2009).

However, although Enlighteners borrowed many human development concepts from Confucianism, they rejected the core spirit of both Confucianism and Christianity, which is to maintain harmony with others by humbling and controlling selfish desires (Davis, 1983; Fuchs, 2006; Neville, 2000). Enlightenment took pride in their “enlightened knowledge,” and had the “supreme confidence in relativistic natural law” as well as achieving the quick observable results by “rational and empirical methodology” (Davis, 1983, p. 548). Consequently, Enlightenment nurtured an attitude of discontent and disrespect for authorities, as well as adversary relationships among people, which led to revolutions and conflicts down to the present time. Gender wars and methodological wars between quantitative or qualitative research paradigms, the knowledge silos among various disciplines, or cultural and racial barriers between different ethnic groups are not necessarily universal knowledge, but reflect Western culture (Liu, 2017). Chinese and other Asian intellectual systems do not value deconstruction

and division but are used to balancing opposing views, complexity, and intersectionality to construct inclusion (Kashima, 2005).

In Confucianism, after gaining utmost knowledge (*ge wu zhi zhi*) in a reductive way, Confucius asked students to use the learned knowledge to rectify one's own heart (*cheng yi zheng xin*) and cultivate one's morality (*xiu shen*) to learn how to love others instead of how to rectify and win others (CTP, 2016, Liji, Daxue: 2). If gaining utmost knowledge (*ge wu zhi zhi*) in a reductive way enlightened people to emerge in a modern age, then to use the learned knowledge to rectify one's own heart (*cheng yi zheng xin*) for self-cultivation (*xiu shen*) might enlighten postmodern individuals to learn how to "care about others" and "respect differences" in a "less destructive" way for the second Enlightenment (Tang, 2015, p. 2).

Self-cultivating (*xiu shen*)

In this study, new lenses of relational wisdom, cultures, history, and women's perspectives are added to the individualistic, Westerncentric, and androcentric HRD view to examine the diversified and interconnected global world from at least three aspects.

In terms of leadership, women's leadership, and self-leadership aspects, this study contributes valuable empirical data to women's self-leadership studies. It also provides a view of transdisciplinary Western-Chinese self-leadership for women and marginalized individuals. Given the lack of feminist-oriented

leadership frameworks in leadership studies (McLean & Beigi, 2016), this study on ICWDSUS' self-leadership could contribute to women's leadership development from both individualistic and collective perspectives.

In terms of the research paradigm and methodological advancement, this transdisciplinary study not only contributes to the limited transdisciplinary research in HRD, but also explores a new research paradigm of 仁 *Ren* (human-benevolence) social science. The integration of both Western analytic methods and ancient Chinese philosophies with women's perspectives add culture and history to the interpretation of a qualitative research paradigm. It also uses a Confucian *Ren* (benevolence/human) ontology to replace a U.S. pragmatism ontology. The "historically constructed meanings" serve as "the raw materials for new cultural creation" (Tuchman, 1994, p. 322). Instead of struggling between the positivists' belief in scientific objectivity with the detachment of researchers' emotions, which cannot represent a human's life, and constructivists' belief in the fluid subjectivity of researchers and participants with changing situations, which can never be fully understood (Hesse-Biber, 2007), *Ren* (benevolence/human) ontology does not criticize either paradigm but includes science, philosophy, culture, history, and humanity with benevolence. Therefore, HRD scholars could be better equipped with the wisdom for the second Enlightenment, in addition to the emphasis on scientific power in the first Enlightenment.

Although this research is greatly indebted to feminist and indigenous studies about the complexity of women and indigenous research, the solution in Chinese culture is not criticizing patriarchy, the fight for women's emancipation, de-westernization, or de-colonization or the tension between quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Instead, the solution is *wenhua* by using morality, learning, and communication (*wen*) to dissolve (*hua*) the barriers. *Wu hua* with an attempt to force (*wu*) others to change (*hua*) quickly could cause more negative consequences in the long run. The "feminist critique" and critique-building of feminist and social justice research cannot build practical solutions for women, but instead leads to criticism, anger, and separation among people including various feminists (Harding, 1991, p. 301; Hesse-Biber, 2007). Therefore, the critical lens in this study is only used to diagnose rather than to solve the problems. Instead of criticizing the regrets of the past, this transdisciplinary study follows the Chinese *wenhua* to seek harmony and future-oriented solutions by transcending the dichotomy of Western-Eastern knowledge systems to examine ICWDSUS' lived experiences and wisdom about how they cope with the challenges in their doctoral journey. Although I also identify as a feminist with "the uncompromising, fundamental personal and collective goal of a world that is a better place for all women" (Linden, 2012, p. 87), my dissertation research is not a feminist critique-building study, but is 仁 *Ren* (human-benevolence)-building.

In terms of the discipline and identity development of HRD, this study provides young HRD with the relational wisdom to become a mature adult. As a young discipline, HRD is experiencing “significant adolescent growing pains” including the debate on the definition, identity, practices, and foundational philosophies of HRD (Fenwick, 2004; Gosney, 2014, p. 8). Developing from a “three-legged stool” of multiple disciplines to a “theater” of integrated and orchestrated theories and practices in complex and ever-changing contexts, the physical body of the adolescent HRD has grown considerably (Swanson, 1995; Walton, 2003). The adolescent also needs further psychological development to grow from passively following or angrily rebelling against the societal culture to be a mature adult and understand how to love and build relationships with others (Erikson, 1994). With the confusion of gender, cultures, beliefs, and political and economic development, an adolescent often asks questions such as: Who am I and what can I be? The Confucian answer to these identity questions for HRD would be a human (*ren*), which means benevolence (*ren*), and a benevolent human brings about benevolence by including (*he*) others to build harmony (*he*) with others and developing morality (*de*) to gain (*de*) both benefits and wellbeing during a gradual, learning, and communicative (*wen*) changing (*hua*) process together (CTP, 2016, Mengzi, Li Lou II: 56).

Chapter 2: Regret for The Past

One is not born, but rather becomes a woman.

-Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex

A vigorous debate has been whether grounded theory researchers should ignore the existing theories to avoid contaminating the data for theory development or whether they should review the relevant literature before data collection to provide a convincing rationale and basic theoretical concepts (Dunne, 2011). Coffey and Atkinson (1996) claimed that “the open-mindedness of researchers should not be mistaken for empty-mindedness” (p. 157). “[N]o researcher is an empty vessel with no history or background” (Cutcliffe, 2000, p. 1480).

In my doctoral research, my literature review has continued to fundamentally challenge my own presumptions, proposed methodologies, and even initial findings. The turns and twists I have experienced are also what almost all feminist researchers have experienced. My literature review highlights the daunting fact that the seemingly easiest topic of a woman’s self-leadership is probably the most complex problem with intersectionality. However, almost all feminist researchers have failed to dissect the complexity of this issue. Unless I extensively study why previous women’s empowerment interventions have failed in the past, the proposed self-leadership theory of this study would simply repeat the regrets of the past without helping women, including myself. The rapidly

changing VUCA world continues to bring new challenges for women. Therefore, my literature review from past contexts does not contaminate my new theory in new contexts but points out the areas where I and other feminist researchers should not waste energy to ground the theory.

In addition to the tension in the field of grounded theory, the tension in a larger social and intellectual realm could be more daunting. Transdisciplinary research is inherently transgressive with “discourse of transgression” to multiple disciplines (Klein, 2015, p. 10). Social justice and feminist studies can easily provoke social controversy about the gender debate and painful taboos of society (Charmaz, 2014). However, the pain or taboos from culture validate the importance and urgency to examine gender culture and societal values (Hofstede, 2011). Although I chose my dissertation topic and method with a simple wish to find a solution to develop ICWDSUS and contribute to world peace, or at least the peace of my world, I later realized that I might have already become one of the “intellectual risk takers and institutional transgressors” to multiple disciplines (Augsburg, 2014, p. 233), starting from ICWDSUS, women, and scholars from my own field. Therefore, I have to use the Chinese culture (*wenhua*) to use learning, communication, and morality (*wen*) to dissolve (*hua*) the potential transgressions of other scholars for the longevity of my intellectual life. Thus, my extensive literature review provides a comprehensive knowledge base to better understand the problem that has no name in Chapter 1. I use the literature review

to lay a foundation for a safe solution and show how to face the potential angry challenges from diverse audiences with various beliefs, religions, and emotions about women's issues, China, and the U.S.

This literature review is arranged based on three types of interrelated knowledge from transdisciplinary research: systems knowledge, target knowledge, and transformation knowledge (Hadorn et al., 2008). Systems knowledge deals with the uncertain knowledge about the genesis, development, interpretation, and possible options for changing a problem. Target knowledge identifies the common good for different stakeholders and their interests to help solve the problem. Transformation knowledge is about how to design cultural, social, and other options for the change based on an understanding of the flexibility of the current infrastructure, law, power relations, people's learning capabilities, and cultural opinions (Hadorn et al., 2008). The three parts of this transdisciplinary literature review, as shown in Table 2, are based on how to change the cultural barriers for women.

Table 2

The Arrangement of the Transdisciplinary Literature Review

Types of Knowledge Reviewed	Main Content of the Section
Systems Knowledge	Women and Culture
Target Knowledge	Self-leadership Conception
Transformation Knowledge	<i>The Book of Changes</i>

Systems Knowledge: Women and Culture

Feminist Utopia in Patriarchal Cultures

In 1837, radical French philosopher Charles Fourier invented the term *feminisme* about the connection between women's status and social progress (Fourier, 1876). The word *feminism* includes almost all efforts working towards the goal of achieving gender equality with a wide range of political movements, philosophies, ideologies, cultures, and social theories (Beasley, 1999).

Historically, feminism has experienced the developmental stages of the first, second, and third wave, and is currently experiencing the fourth-wave feminism to empower women in terms of political rights, legal and social equality with men, individual differences, social media issues on the internet, rape culture, and sexual harassment and violence against women (Chamberlain, 2017; Cochrane, 2013; Henry et al., 2003; Humm, 1995; Krollokke & Sorensen, 2006; Randall, 2010; Townsend, 2009). Moran (2013) called for *fifth-wave* feminism to come up with individualized flexible solutions to women's real problems in life.

Cross-sectionally, feminism has developed some major ideologies: *radical, Marxist and socialist, liberal, cultural, postcolonial, transnational, standpoint, postmodern and poststructural, queer theories, cyberfeminism*, and others (Bromley, 2012; Calás & Smircich, 2006; Haraway, 2006; Townsend, 2009; Tong, 2013). *Radical feminism* regarded patriarchy as the root cause of women's oppression and other oppression systems (Calás & Smircich, 2006).

Liberal feminism disagrees with radical feminists' fighting against patriarchy and men and advocates for women's equal political, social, and legal rights with men through societal change. *Cultural feminism* disagrees with *liberal feminism's* emphasis on equality between women and men by pointing out the essential biological and reproductive differences between women and men, and advocates for paying female employees for parenting and childcare at home (Alcoff, 1988; Bromley, 2012). *Transnational feminism* challenges *cultural feminists'* utopian wish of building a global sisterhood by white women, and warns people that the intersectionality of globalization and capitalism leads to more gender inequity and problems for women of color (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994). *Marxist and socialist feminism* attribute women's oppression to both capitalism and patriarchy with an emphasis on private property, financial inequality, and patriarchal culture. *Standpoint feminism* emphasizes the standpoint of women and women's experience of inequity in contrast to men's lives and roles (Harding, 2004). *Postmodern and poststructural feminists* examine the relationship between gender and language, sociology, and power dynamics, and analyze the process of how societal values construct a person's gender and gender roles (Randall, 2010, p. 116). *Queer studies* "regard sexuality and gender as fundamental in ordering social and political norms in most societies" (Calás & Smircich, 2006, p. 312). Posthumanist feminist Donna Haraway founded *cyberfeminism*, claiming that the new identity of a woman is a "cyborg" (Haraway, 2006, p. 148), which is a

monster-like hybrid of part human and part machine. Women's new social world is "amodern" (Haraway, 2004, p. 77), which is half organic and half technological. Thus, women's new social relationship must include women's relationships in cyberspace.

Over the past decades, various feminist doctrines and approaches have strongly debated about women's issues (Hesse-Biber, 2007). However, even feminist leaders have not clearly defined feminism (Sigel, 1996). Some feminists say "feminism is dead," but some say "feminism is still vibrantly alive" (Giffort, 2013, p. 1). For example, they have debated "whether a prostitute is a coerced victim or an independent entrepreneur" (Kissil & Davey, 2010, p. 1). As the famous feminist, Rebecca West said:

I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is. I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat, or a prostitute (Sigel, 1996, p.1).

Many women also find the concept of feminism ambiguous so it is difficult for them to either support or not support feminism (Aronson, 2003). In addition, the stigma of feminism, such as feminists hate men and are anti-family, make people shy away from feminisms. As a result, many women do not prefer to be called feminists (Cai & Clement, 2016).

Without clear and understandable insights, women and women's empowerment professionals are facing a theoretical dilemma in their paradoxical lives. After decades of work to support women's empowerment, all women's

empowerment approaches have been criticized by scholars and practitioners from education, decision-making power, gendered power structure of society, and women's freedom to achieve their extrinsic and intrinsic needs for diverse lifestyles (King & Hill, 1997; Unterhalter, 2007). In 1995, the UN's fourth world conference on women initiated the largest women's empowerment movement, *gender mainstreaming*, on the global stage, involving 189 countries to promote women at all levels (Moser, 2005). However, 20 years later, reviews of the largest women's empowerment movement are "almost universally negative" (Milward et al., 2015, p. 75). For example, many researchers have criticized *gender mainstreaming* as an "irredeemably failed strategy" (Brouwers, 2013; Milward et al., 2015, p. 75; Sandler, 2005). The definition of gender-equality work and women's empowerment is ambiguous (McNutt & Béland, 2015). Neither practitioners nor recipients understand the expectations of gender-equality (Ylöstalo, 2016). In practice, male decision-makers with bureaucratic roles have generally interpreted gender-equality work for the local practitioners (Paterson & Scala, 2017). As a result, gender-equality work has become a performance-focused exercise or an on-off exercise to tick the gender box in diversity reports without real transformation (Carter, Dietrich & Minor, 2017). The male-dominated organizational culture remains unchanged, as organizations have often resisted gender equality, especially in decision-making (Milward et al., 2015; Ylöstalo, 2016). Without attending to the nuanced power dynamics in different

contexts, religions, and cultures, *gender mainstreaming* actually invites tensions between key public service values, including fairness, equity, and responsiveness, as well as efficiency, accountability, and neutrality (Paterson & Scala, 2017). Shifting away from the gender equal spirit of feminism, *gender mainstreaming* not only has failed to address the original feminist goals, but it could become a neocolonial project to use Western ideology to control developing economies (Clisby & Enderstein, 2017). Women of color, working-class, disabled, or lesbian and bisexual women are marginalized and excluded from a hegemonic discourse of educated white middle-class heterosexual women in a Eurocentric feminist agenda (Hooks, 2000). Without clearly defining the concepts and deliverables of women's empowerment, it is difficult to deeply evaluate the outcomes of women's equality or *gender mainstreaming* either on an organizational level or an individual level (Milward et al., 2015).

After seeing the failure of women's empowerment approaches, postfeminists have actively criticized feminists (Aronson, 2003; Bromley, 2012; Cai & Clement, 2016; Chunn, 2007; Faludi, 1991). From passively accepting gender inequality to actively accepting gender inequity, Faludi (1991, p. 2) warned women in the U.S. that "you may be free now, but you have never been more miserable." Faludi (1991) clarified that "feminism has little part in making women unhappy" (p. 453). The contrast between women's desire for gender equality and failure to break down the cultural barriers has spurred women's self-

doubt and recrimination, which are supported by the *backlash* in a patriarchal world.

Admittedly, feminist research and women's past empowerment work over several decades have significantly improved women's lives. Improving women's lives has had a wider impact on the cultural, political, and historical aspects of society (Bromley, 2012; Subrahmanian, 2005). However, as society evolves in multiple directions, feminist and women's empowerment theories and practices have become increasingly complex and contradictory (Linden, 2012; Olesen, 2005). Feminism has been unable to fulfill the goal of gender equality, and feminism may "even exacerbat[e] conditions of inequity" (Calás & Smircich, 2006, p. 328). Western feminist and women's empowerment theories and practices have not provided a solution to *Zijun's* puzzle, but they may be the cause of *Zijun's* regret for the past. An early Chinese feminist, Ding Ling, pointed out the problems of Western feminism, which has deconstructed traditional woman's identity, but failed to construct the identity of a "new woman" with effective solutions to help her survive in a more challenging new patriarchal world (Chien, 1994, p. 33). Leaving an "old" world with traditional relationships does not guarantee the entrance of "a network of agape" with all loving people around, but a new "disciplined society" with other established relations, social norms, and problems that one has to solve (Taylor, 2004, p.66).

Culture

Although many researchers have realized that the societal culture, which shapes traditional gender roles, is the fundamental barrier for women's empowerment and leadership development, they have no way to change the cultural barriers without hurting women (Bono et al., 2016; McLean & Beigi, 2016; Unterhalter, 2007). Cultures "are extremely stable over time" (Hofstede, 2001, p. 34). Among various cultures, gender culture, which people acquire from the day they are born, has the deepest roots and is the hardest culture to change (Hofstede, 2011). In addition, gender culture and cultural barriers for women are often related to tradition, religion, beliefs, and even taboos, which can be "too painful to be explicitly discussed" (Hofstede, 2011, p. 13; McLean & Beigi, 2016). Therefore, many Western scholars believe that change of an individual depends on the changes in society with constant struggles between "power and resistance" (Dewey, 1938; Beauvoir, 1974; Foucault, 1983, p. 209; Hofstede, 2001; Marx, 2020).

Wenhua

Despite the difficulty of changing cultural changes reported in Western studies, in Chinese culture, the word, *culture* (*wenhua*), implies using learning, communication, and morality (*wen*) to transform (*hua*) differences for cultural change. The ancient classic book, the *Book of Changes*, teaches people how to change step-by-step under all changing circumstances. The Chinese name for the *Book of Changes*—*Yi* (Easy/Change) means the ease to change. The *Book of*

Changes states that the ease to change is not to study complex change models but to first understand and hold on to what one should never change, which is one's morality (Xici I:1; Nielsen, 2003; Smith, 2008). Morality can guide people out of uncertain circumstances. Using a VUCA morality to face a VUCA world means that one can get lost in the VUCA world and lose the self first with identity crisis. Instead of initiating complex and systematic change, the *Book of Changes* warns leaders that change is a dangerous action with many uncertainties, so one has to start the change from easy parts rather than the whole complex system (Nielsen, 2003; Smith, 2008).

Western HRD and Confucianism-based Chinese culture have presented very different answers and results for the same human concerns. Many modern Western scientists (e.g., Joseph Needham, Einstein, and John Dewey) have wondered why "Chinese sages have not taken those steps" like Western scientists (Einstein, 1953, p. 142; Fung, 1922; Needham, 1969). Dewey's Chinese student, *Yulan Fung* (also known as Youlan Feng in Mandarin), answered Dewey's confusion and explained the different focus between Western and Chinese philosophies (Fung, 1922). Based on Fung (1922) and my literature review, I briefly compare Western philosophies with Confucianism-based Chinese philosophies in Appendix A to help HRD scholars better understand the philosophical differences between the cultures of the West and China. Hofstede and Bond's (1999) cross-cultural research also indicated that the U.S. and Chinese

cultures represent two extremes in their cultural dimensions, and developed a new cultural dimension- *Confucian dynamism*, or *long-term orientation* to differentiate Chinese culture with the short-term-oriented Western cultures (Fang, 2003). After decades of cross-cultural studies, Bond (2010a) later realized that the two opposite choices for the same human concerns revealed deep problems for the West, rather than mere cultural differences. Thus, he conducted pancultural studies to break the cultural dichotomies and introduced a field of *Chinese psychology*. Bond (2010a, p. 1) confirmed that the longevity, coherence, and size of Chinese culture has revealed the potential of Chinese culture to contribute to the global interdependencies that “will determine our planetary survival in the twenty-first century.”

Although many feminists expect to initiate “new and innovative feminist praxis” (Bromley, 2012, p. 186) to change patriarchal culture to empower women, using innovation as a solution to address problems in society cannot ignore traditions, but requires a deeper understanding of the traditional root of the problems (Tang, 2015). Many feminists are concerned that if feminist research rejected all androcentric knowledge in the past and became completely women-centered, what will the new world be and how can feminists guarantee the social stability and wellbeing of women and everyone (Harding, 1991; Hesse-Biber, 2012)? Instead of the regretting the past with anger or depression, a resilient woman could review, reflect, and research the past to readjust, revise, and refresh

her future life (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008). Thus, before discussing how to change culture, it is necessary for ICWDSUS and HRD professionals to first understand that the core cultures of the U.S. and China should not be altered and what the root problems are that need to be addressed. The core of the culture is not the artifacts (e.g., behaviors), but the invisible underlying assumptions, such as values and beliefs (Hall, 1976; Schein, 2016). Cultural change also requires changing the deep values of a group of people before they can experience behavioral changes (Hofstede, 2001).

Root Reason for Prosperity of the U.S. and China

Despite Hofstede's "static view" of culture (Hofstede, 2001, p. 454), both the U.S. and China developed rapidly from poverty to prosperity in modern history. Without a model to follow, the U.S. survived in a turbulent environment in the 18th century and built the most powerful nation in the world. Many Americans believe that the value of individualism in their culture has led to the greatness of the U.S. Individualism in the early stage of U.S. culture was based on morality and described as "a gentleman of strong mental powers...habituated to contemplation and reading...in moral reasoning ... of deep penetration and sound judgment... with a rational and firm faith in his God and Savior: He knew no other master" (Hofstede, 2001, p. 210). Max Weber in 1905 claimed that the spirit of capitalism is the spirit of diligence and accumulation based on protestant values (Weber & Kalberg, 2011). Similarly, in the past 170 years of the modernization of

Chinese culture, not only has modern Chinese had no simple models to follow to develop China, but have had numerous external and internal crises, such as wars, famine, internal questioning, doubting, and criticism. Modern China has also faced many incompatible ideologies from the West, Soviet Union, and traditional Chinese culture (Wang, 2005). As the architect of modern China, Deng Xiaoping described the journey of China's modernization as a process of *crossing the river by feeling the stones* (Faison, 1997; Vogel, 2011). The "stone" that Chinese people have felt to cross the river to modernize China is the people-oriented principle from Chinese culture, which connects an individual, family, and nation together (Xu, 2015).

Poverty and corruption are every state's original status, and it is the values of individuals, rather than science or money, that have pulled societies out of their initial poverty and corruption (Correa & Jaffe, 2015). After studying different cultures for decades, Hofstede (2001) concluded that the values of "thrift, hard work, and persistence" is the key for a society to escape from poverty and achieve prosperity regardless of cultural or political differences (p. 503). Many values, such as courage, justice, humanity, temperance, wisdom, and transcendence converge across culture and history (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005). Despite the visible cultural differences of individualism and collectivism in the U.S. and China, the starting point and development goal of the two cultures are both based on the love for people, which is the foundation of both U.S. Christian culture and Chinese

Confucian culture (Bai, 2002; Chai, 1994; Hofstede, 2001). The ubiquitous virtues provide an agreed-upon direction for leaders to strive for, and an enduring standard for everyone to examine our own hearts “to triumph over what is darkest within us” in this chaotic world (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005, p. 212).

Therefore, when women and feminist researchers initiate change to deal with the cultural barriers for women’s leadership development, whether in the U.S. or in China, the love for others, which is the root reason for the prosperity of the two cultures, should not be decentered, but should be reinforced.

Root Reason for Depression of the U.S. and China

With the societal changes of the U.S. and the PRC, the root reason for the prosperity of the two cultures—love others—changed in the 21st century to love for oneself. Max Weber in 1905 argued that with the decrease of protestant ethics and the increase in capitalism around the world, the hierarchical social structure, principles of bureaucracy, people’s values, beliefs, and worldviews evolved around capitalist production, and people were in an *iron cage* of capitalism. In the postmodern capitalist age, the pursuit of public good in the modern age has been replaced with *individual’s best peace, wealth, and freedom* and the word *people* has been replaced with *individuals* (Grange, 1996; Green, 2008),

The excessive growth of individualism not only results in “unbinding” freedom and “the decline of social obligation and collective solidarity,” but leads to an epidemic of depression and narcissism (Ehrenberg, 2014, p. 98; Mason,

2001; Taylor, 2004). Although narcissists tend to attack others to promote themselves, a narcissist is not independent nor self-confident, but relies on excessive praise from others, and follows peer pressure and social media for decisions (Ehrenberg, 2014; Taylor, 2004). Similarly, without the control of Confucian values, Chinese people do not really have freedom, but become new slaves of money (Xu, 2015). With China's focus on economic development since China's economic reform in 1978, some Chinese leaders became corrupted and ordinary people had to bribe those superiors to build *guanxi*, while putting down non-superiors at work, society, even at home with siblings to gain social resources (Hughes, 2001; Wang et al., 2002; Yao, 2002). The one-child policy in China since 1978 has made Chinese children like *little emperors* at home and created a selfish generation of Chinese youth (Hvistendahl, 2013; Tong, 2000). Chinese young adults in the 21st century have not only misunderstood Confucianism as the pursuit of *mianzi* with higher social status and money than their peers, but have also misinterpreted the economic success and individualism of the U.S. as selfishly and aggressively fighting for self-interest (Alon, 2003; Chen, 2000; Lu, 2004; Hvistendahl, 2013). Chinese people do not realize that morality-based individualism, which led to the economic success of the U.S., does not mean being selfish, but emphasizes that everyone is responsible for one's own life, and should collaborate with others as a team through social contracts (Alon, 2003; Chen, 2000). Unfortunately, Chinese young adults' selfish desire to compete with

their peers has nurtured aggressive, anxious, and depressed personality traits and behaviors (Wang et al., 2002; Yang et al., 1995). ICWDSUS have not realized the double portion of prosperity from both the U.S. and China, but, instead, they may suffer from the double portion of depression and narcissism from the two cultures.

Hofstede (2001) claimed that both collectivistic and individualistic cultures have strengths and weaknesses. Without the love for others, a collectivistic culture may foster authoritarian families to make individuals pursue *mianzi* for the ego of the self and family, and an individualistic culture can foster selfish individuals. Both the “tyranny of collectivism” or the “privatization of individualism” “represents the devil and the deep blue sea, between which societies and individuals within them try to steer their course” (Hofstede, 2001, p. 211). In the 21st century, the *stones* that individuals from the U.S. and China have used to *cross the river* have changed from Christian and Confucian values and converged at self-benefits (Grosby, 2013; Mason, 2001; Taylor, 1989). In this VUCA globalized world, an individual’s attempt to “feel the stones” of one’s selfish materialistic desires without understanding how to unite others to *cross the river* together, is highly likely to lead to being drowned in the VUCA river. An individual’s criticism for why others are faster or slower than oneself to *cross the river*, as well as one’s competition against others to be the first to *cross the river* may lead to everyone drowning in the process. With only knowledge about how to fight with others, but no understanding of how to unite others to cross the

VUCA river together, a woman “Robinson Crusoe” is probably already drowned in various waves of feminism (Buszek, 1999, p. 38) before attempting to cross the VUCA river alone in a hostile patriarchal world. Over 2500 years ago, living in a much more VUCA warring period, Confucius claimed that only a humble and moral person could get support from others to cross the largest river together (CTP, 2016, Yi Jing, Qian:2).

Being selfish is not the love for oneself (Manz, 1985). Researchers from various disciplines (e.g., leadership, culture, psychology, education) have argued that a leader or just an adult’s development, success, and wellbeing have to be achieved by considering everyone’s wellbeing through harmonious relationships (Avolio, 2007; Abu-Rayya & Sam, 2017; Berry, 2005; Day & Sin, 2011; Fasheh, 1984; Kegan & Lahey, 2016; Kezar et al., 2006; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013; Seligman, 2012; Schwinn & Schwinn, 2015; Winston & Patterson, 2006). Chinese entrepreneur Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba, claimed that instead of developing one’s intelligence quotient (IQ) and emotional quotient (EQ), everyone needs to develop their love quotient (LQ), which is the intelligence of love in the 21st century. In contrast to focusing on one’s own economic gains, love intelligence is an individual’s ability to care about others and build a harmonious group to deal with challenges together (Ma, 2017).

Target Knowledge: Self-leadership Concept

Self-leadership Concept

People must understand how to lead, influence, and transform oneself to achieve their own goals first before leading others (Ambrose, 2003; Cooley, 2008; Manz & Sims, 2001). Although scholars have reached no universal consensus of the definition of leadership, most leadership definitions have the key word *influence* (Northouse, 2015). Neck and Houghton (2006) defined self-leadership as the self-influence process through selected behavioral and cognitive strategies. As a process of influence, leadership is an outward process and an inward journey along with past events that shape one's life (Manz & Neck, 1999).

Manz (1983) conceptualized how individuals can redesign their physical and psychological world from understanding of the self and the world to realize their personal goals by bringing out their best qualities and avoiding potential failure. Manz's self-leadership framework has three parts: (a) three approaches, (b) one central focus, and (c) the result of self-leadership. To overcome challenges, one may have to do "undesirable desirables" (Manz, 1983, p. 16). Manz described three self-leadership approaches: behavioral strategies, natural reward strategies, and redesigning the psychological world. The behavioral strategies include world-altering and self-imposing strategies. The world-altering strategies indicate that people can use reminders and attention focusers, remove negative cues, and increase positive cues to alter the world. Self-imposed strategies suggest using self-control, self-regulation, self-observation, self-goal setting, self-award, self-punishment, and other practices that they impose on

themselves (Manz, 1983). Observing the self can help them develop self-awareness. Self-set goals should consider both long-term and short-term objectives. Self-award and self-punishment can also influence their behaviors. However, self-punishment emphasizes the negative results to reduce the undesired behaviors, while self-award emphasizes the positive results to increase desired behaviors.

The second approach of self-leadership is discovering and focusing on individuals' own naturally rewarding activities which tend to make them feel (a) competent, (b) self-controlling, and (c) given them a sense of purpose. Manz (1983) suggested that people incorporate natural rewards into our own life activities to increase self-motivation and make their endeavors more naturally enjoyable. In the third approach, Manz (1985) emphasized that people can use mental strategies to redesign their work processes and personal thinking about the work to make their work activities naturally rewarding. He suggested using their own thought patterns including their beliefs, imagined experience or vision, and self-talk to shape their psychological world. Their mind can guide them to act toward themselves and others (Mead, 1934). Instead of passively responding or reacting to a situation, people are active agents who can interpret and define their own situations and their own evolution. Through the specific use of language, they confer specific meanings and values to the observed realities (Mead, 1934).

Because of each person's unique interpretation of situations, their life experiences are unique, even when they face the same physical situation.

The central focus of self-leadership is behavior, which is both physical and mental (Neck & Manz, 2010; Manz, 1983). The result of self-leadership is personal effectiveness, which is defined as "our success in achieving our goals as well as our satisfaction with our work, ourselves, and our lives" (Manz, 1983, p. 90). As people's thought patterns and behaviors influence each other, changing their thought patterns will result in changing their behaviors, and changing their behaviors will lead to changing their thought patterns. Therefore, improving personal effectiveness often "call[s] for changing the entire sequence of deep-rooted stereotypical behaviors (both physical and psychological) that have been habitually matched to specific situations" (Manz, 1983, p. 69). These three self-leadership approaches have an impact on a person's behaviors, and ultimately their personal effectiveness. Therefore, Manz (1983) claimed that people "possess the ability to make alterations in our immediate world" (p. 20).

Unfortunately, Manz's androcentric and linear self-leadership with a focus on a goal did not include women leaders. Compared to men, who "ride the glass escalator" (Hultin, 2003, p. 30) to reach leadership positions in a "linear, progressive, and sequential" way (Gergen, 1990, p. 486), a linear self-development plan could lead women to hit the *glass ceiling* or fall from the *glass cliff* of an organization. Kellerman (2012, p. 1) claimed that "the end of

leadership” should consider the context and the shared power with followers. However, neither the plethora of androcentric leadership theories nor feminist studies in the West have found a solution for people (regardless of gender) to build trust with others to work as a group to cope with challenges together. Although organizations have invested heavily in leadership training and development, more than one-third of new leaders fail in the U.S. (Gurdjian et al., 2014). Being unable to find an effective way to lead the self even, leadership consultant Petrie (2015) admitted that he was depressed for a couple of years. Therefore, he conducted a year-long study on the solution to leadership development by reviewing the Western leadership literature across disciplines of education, business, law, government, and psychology, and interviewing 30 leadership experts. He ended his research with a depressing conclusion that no existing leadership models are sufficient to meet the needs of the increasingly complex future (Petrie, 2015). He finally suggested that leaders “follow Google and Buddha” to search for solutions (Petrie, 2015, p. 20). As an old Chinese saying says, *like a clay Buddha crossing a river, the Buddha is hardly able to save oneself, let alone assist others (ni pusa guo he, zishen nan bao)*. Living in a “messy moment for social research” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 15), women, men, and everyone including scholars and experts face an epistemological dilemma of how to solve “the problem that has no name” in their lives (Friedan,

2010, p. 57). Therefore, neither criticizing men nor being like a man can help a woman survive in a VUCA world (Hesse-Biber, 2012).

Since Manz (1983) first proposed the framework of self-leadership, it has developed into a normative concept. However, to date, self-leadership as an emerging academic field still “remains youthful in its conceptualization” (Zhehdorfer, 2021, p. 231). With few empirical studies, whether this Westerncentric self-leadership concept can become one’s self-utopia with regrets for the past like other Western utopias remains unknown. Zhendorfer (2021) claimed that self-leadership research should adopt a multidisciplinary and “transtheoretical approach” to include the wisdom from other fields to help develop self-leadership.

Transformation Knowledge: *The Book of Changes*

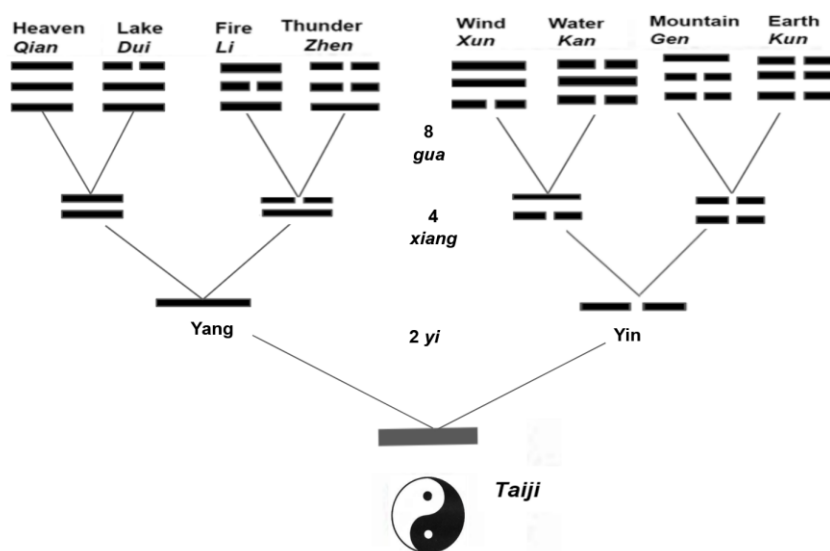
***Yinyang* Dialectics**

Unable to find solutions from chaotic modern theories, positive psychologist Jonathan Haidt compared dozens of philosophies to “find modern truth in ancient wisdom,” and concluded that Chinese *Yinyang* philosophy turned out to be the wisest idea to balance the sharp opponents together (Haidt, 2006, p. 1). *Yinyang* presents a Chinese worldview, which is quite different from Western worldview through the tradition of Enlightenment natural science or theology (Marshak, 1993). Transcending Enlighteners’ divided dualism and the confrontational Hegelian approach, *Yinyang* includes opposing *Yin* and *Yang*

forces in “a fluid, open, and non-Hegelian sense” by one “creative principle” (Nelson & Liu, 2016, p. 269). Opposite to Hegel’s dialectics with endless struggles between two opposing themes to only get the *fittest for survival* (Hobson, 2004) is the interaction between the two opposing forces—the receptive *Yin* and the active *Yang*. These forces function as a female and male to give birth to endless and exponential growth of everything in the world (CTP, 2016, Yijing, Xici I: 11; Liu, 2017). How *Yinyang* creates the basic eight changing patterns is shown in Figure 2. It is the opposite of Hegel’s racial pyramid of white supremacy with Germanic men at the top and black people at the bottom (Tibebu, 2011).

Figure 2

Yinyang Generates Eight Basic Change Patterns



The Ease to Change

The *Book of Changes*, also called *I Ching*, literally means the ease (*Yi*) to change (*Yi*). The *Book of Changes* is considered the root of Chinese culture and has inspired almost all schools of Chinese philosophies, especially Confucianism (Smith, 2012; Wilhelm, 2011). Confucius highly appreciated the *Book of Changes*, written about 500 years before Confucius was born (Smith, 2012; Wilhelm, 2011), Many symbols in the *Book of Changes* were created before the invention of the Chinese written language. To help people better understand the *Book of Changes*, Confucius wrote ten books, *Ten Wings*, to explain the *Book of Changes* in detail (Smith, 2012).

According to the *Book of Changes*, *Taiji*, which literally means the very beginning, represents the most primitive state of the order at the beginning of the universe (Ames & Hall, 2010). *Taiji* generates two complementary and polar forces—*Yin* (--) and *Yang* (—), two complementary forces generate *four aggregates* (— — — —). *Four aggregates* generate *eight trigrams* (— — — — — — — —). The *eight trigrams* represent eight natural phenomena: heaven (☰), earth (☷), thunder (☳), wind (☴), water (☵), fire (☲), mountain (☶), lake (☱) (CTP, 2016, *Yijing*, Xici I: 11). Although the natural phenomena and social phenomena are in two different material worlds (*shijie*) in the Western reductive knowledge system, the spirit of the natural and

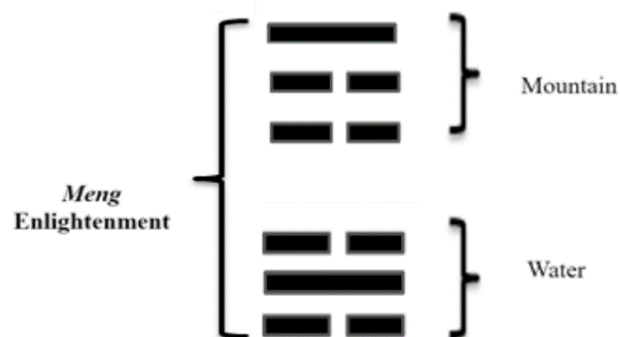
social phenomena are connected in the same spiritual world (*jingjie*) in the traditional Chinese learning system. Confucius claimed that the spirit forms things (*jingqi weiwu*), and the changes of things are not restricted to material forms (*yi wu ti*) (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Xici I: 4). He explained that the spirit of heaven (☰) is lofty, and the spirit of earth (☷) in the natural world is humble, which could also be found in the world as *Qian* and *Kun* (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Xici I: 1).

Therefore, the symbols for heaven and earth in the natural world also represent *Qian* and *Kun* in the social world with the same lofty or humble spirit. In this way, the eight natural phenomena in the natural change system resemble eight social changing forces: ☰ (Heaven/*Qian*), ☷ (Earth/*Kun*), ☳ (Thunder/*Zhen*), ☱ (Wind/*Xun*), ☵ (Water/*Kan*), ☲ (Fire/*Li*), ☶ (Mountain/*Gen*), and ☴ (Lake/*Dui*). The interaction between two natural phenomena could inspire humans to predict and lead the changes between the two relevant social phenomena in the social world with conflicting and complementary *Yin-yang* interactions and results. Instead of making predictions based on fixed models and theories or a crystal ball from supernatural power, the *Book of Changes* “indicates ways of disclosing the cadences, rhythms, and threads running through the constant change and transformation of heaven and earth that the sages imitate and effect” (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Xici I: 11.4; Nelson & Liu, 2016, p. 275).

For example, the combination of ☶ (Mountain/ Gen) and ☵ (Water/ Kan) represents Enlightenment (*meng*) in the *Book of Changes*, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Meng (Enlightenment)



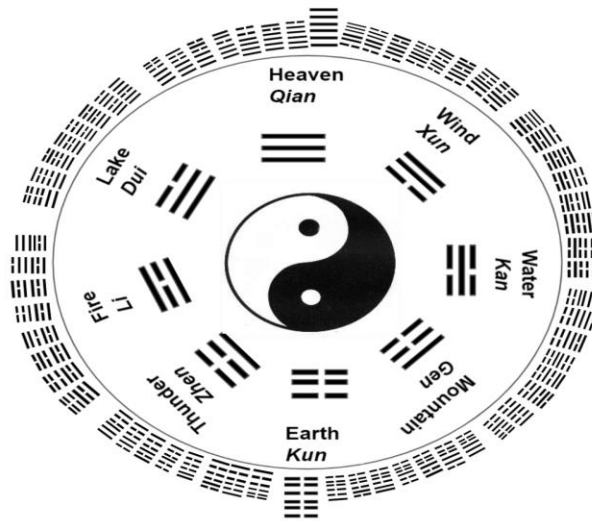
When a river is blocked by a mountain from going forward, the river will always find a way to progress, whether changing the direction of the flow along the mountain, becoming many creeks to find small paths, using the dripping water to penetrate the stones day by day, or evaporating as rain to fall from the sky behind the mountain. The natural phenomenon of how a river overcomes the obstacle of a mountain is used to represent the enlightenment of a youth from being naïve to growing to becoming strong and mature. From observing the interactions and changes of natural phenomena, humans can learn and predict how the social phenomena interacts and changes, and understand how one should navigate in an ever-changing world (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Xici I: 1).

Unlike the modern Western knowledge system, which is from human reasoning, learning in the traditional Chinese intellectual system is from mother nature (Liu, 2017). Confucius called the learning materials from heaven *tian chui xiang*, which means that heaven produces spirit-like natural phenomena for humans to observe and learn the instruction from heaven (CTP, 2016, Book of Changes, Xici I: 11).

Although *Yinyang* generates *eight trigrams* and shows people how the world develops in an exponential way, the relationship between *Yin* and *Yang* as well as the *eight trigrams* are not scientific nor confrontational, but are organic and family-like with the production of more lives. ☰ (Heaven/*Qian*) and ☷ (Earth/*Kun*) are the father and mother, whose interactions made three sons and three daughters: ☳ (Thunder/*Zhen*), ☱ (Wind/*Xun*), ☵ (Water/*Kan*), ☲ (Fire/*Li*), and ☴ (Lake/*Dui*) (CTP, 2016, Yijing, Shuogua: 10). The interactions of eight changing patterns give birth to 64 changing patterns, representing all changing patterns of the world, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Yinyang Generates Everything

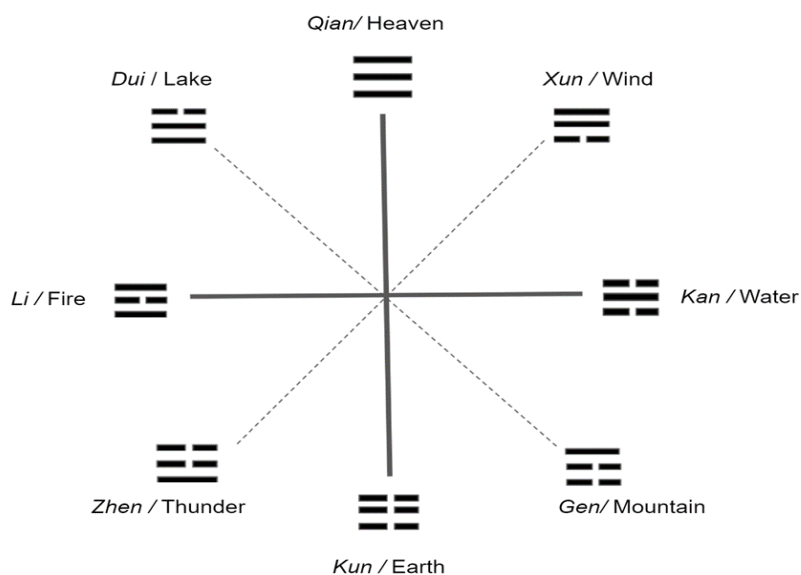


The positions of heaven (*Qian*) and the earth (*Kun*) have established two determinate positions for others (CTP, 2016, *Yijing: Shuogua:3*). Water (*Kan*) and fire (*Li*) represent the moon and the sun, which alternatively shine upon the earth from heaven at night and during the day to give light to the world (CTP, 2016, *Yijing: Shuogua:15, 16*). As Figure 5 shows, *Qian*, *Kun*, *Kan*, and *Li* form straight horizontal and vertical lines, which represent that the changing directions of mother nature are always straight and correct from a loving heart. In contrast to the extreme distinctions between heaven (*Qian*) and earth (*Kun*) and between water (*Kan*) and fire (*Li*), the mountain (*Gen*) and lake (*Dui*) connect with each other, and thunder (*Zhen*) and wind (*Xun*) compete each other (CTP, 2016, *Yijing: Shuogua:3*). As Figure 5 shows, *Gen*, *Zhen*, *Dui*, and *Xun* form oblique lines, indicating that the changing directions of the human world are oblique and need

to be corrected so they go in the right direction by following the fixed positions of the heaven and the earth.

Figure 5

The Straight Way of Mother Nature and the Oblique Way of Humans



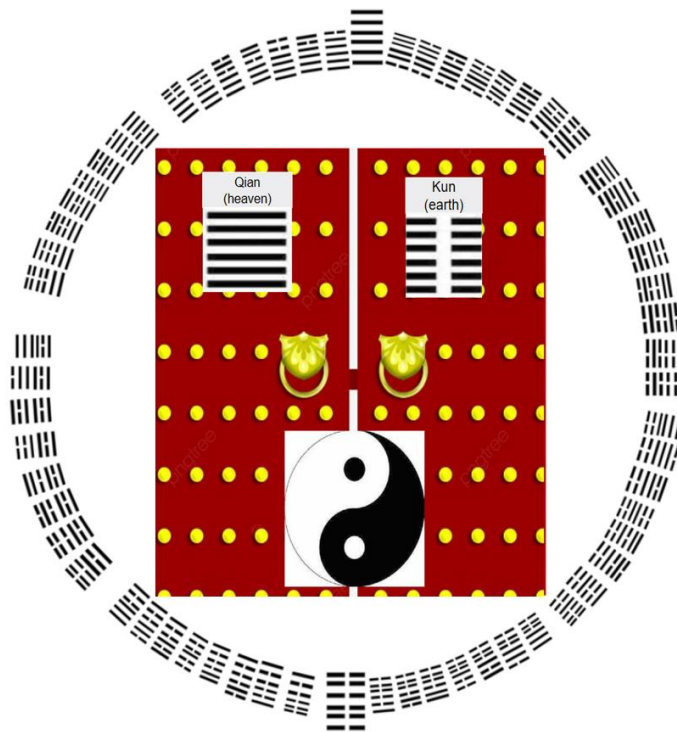
The Ease to Change (Yi) and the Two Doors of a Labyrinth-like VUCA World

Figure 4 probably visualizes a VUCA world. Unlike postmodern scholars' acknowledgement of the irrepresentability of a VUCA world, the *Book of Changes (Yi)* presents easy (*yi*) solutions for humans to lead all changes (*yi*) in a labyrinth-like world. The ease to get out of a labyrinth-like VUCA world requires one to open two doors rather than one. The two doors are the first two hexagrams in the *Book of Changes* and the only two hexagrams with pure *Yang* and pure *Yin* patterns, which are *Qian* and *Kun* (see Figure 6). *Qian* forms the phenomena of

heaven to change, whereas *Kun* follows the phenomena to produce on earth (CTP, 2016, *Yijing*, Xi Ci I:5).

Figure 6

The Gate to Open the Changing Labyrinth



Note: Adapted from door material PNG Designed by 58pic from https://pngtree.com/freepng/vermilion-ancient-temple-door-stud-material_7134736.html?sol=downref&id=bef

Confucius explained the reason the *Book of the Changes* is named “the ease to change (*Yi*)”:

Hexagram *Qian* (heaven) teaches humans the easy knowledge of change, which is as active and quick to change as the sky above humans;
Hexagram *Kun* (earth) teaches humans the simple capability, which is as humble and nourishing as the earth below humans to include and produce

everything naturally; the easy change knowledge is easy to be understood; the simple practices are easy to be followed; the easy knowledge attracts more people to follow; to follow simple practices makes achievements; the support of people enables the sustainability of the development; the achievements encourage one's development; what can last sustainably is a great person's morality; what can achieve big is a moral person's career. The principles of the *Book of Changes* are so simple but contain all the principles of the world. If one understands the change principle of the world, one can find one's position in the world.... (CTP, 2016, Yijing, Xici I:1).

The two doors of a VUCA world-- *Qian* (heaven) and *Kun* (earth) with both active self-development and inclusive support for others in Figure 6 may reveal the problem of the development of Enlighteners in the past 200 years. Through Hegel's dialectic and competitive progress, humans in the Westerncentric world have only opened one door of *Qian* (heaven) with aggressive self-development and a sword of "the crudest materialism" to kill all the competitors to climb to the top of the racial and social pyramid to be *the fittest for survival* (Ritchie, 1890, p. 74). Without the morality to include others, a human cannot even see the other door of *Kun* to include others. Without opening the door of *Kun*, Enlighteners only see the *Qian* part of a complex world, starting from aggressive ambitions and ending with wars, depression, and regrets for the past. After opening only half of a complex world, Enlighteners seem to forget that the racial and social pyramid is just a fancy tomb for a dead pharaoh. Although the *Yinyang* concept was inspired from mother nature, the *Book of Changes* teaches people how to love and develop both the self and others from how mother

nature loves and develops everything through the love based on *Yinyang* interaction in a ceaseless manner (CTP, 2016, *Yijing*, Xi ci II: 6).

The 64 Stops of a Complete Change Journey

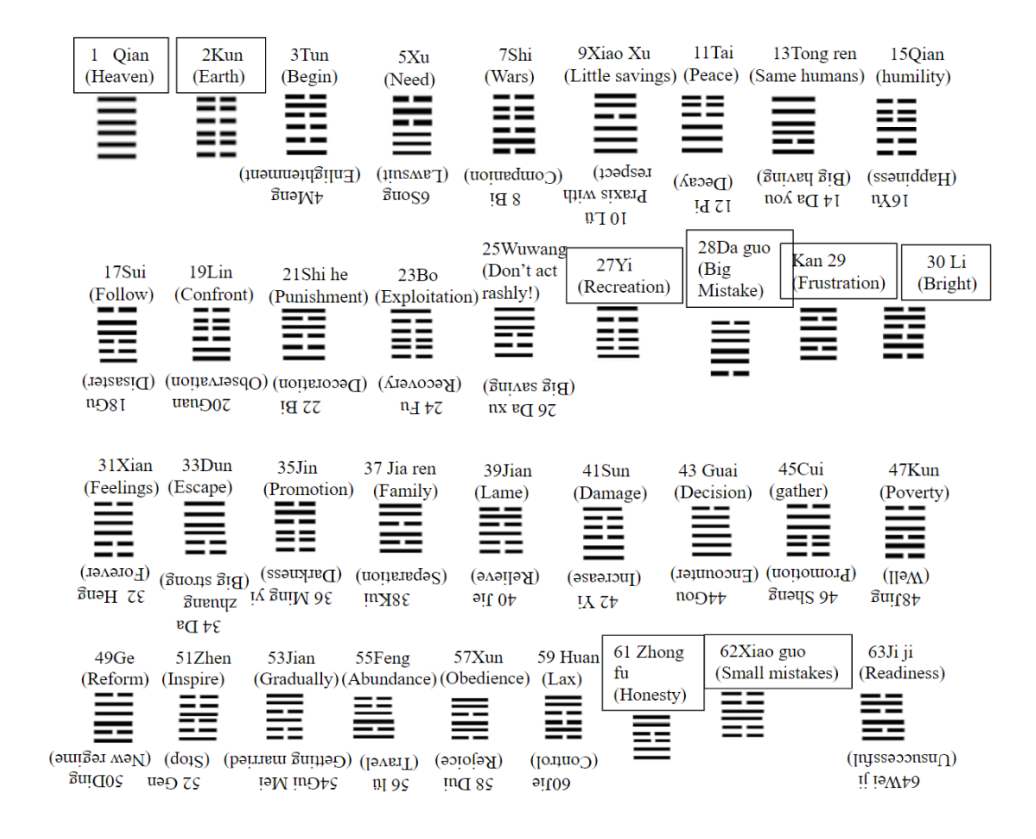
The interactions of *Yinyang* generate eight trigrams, and then 64 hexagrams, which include all changing patterns. The 64 changing patterns in the *Book of Changes* are arranged in order to present a complete change journey of one entity (e.g., an individual, an organization, a nation, or even the whole human world) as shown in Figure 7 (CTP, 2016, *Yijing*: Xugua). After one completes the whole change journey from Stop 1, *Qian* (heaven) to Stop 64, *Weiji* (fire and water) with an unfinished finality, one will restart the journey again with the refreshed activeness and diligence of *Qian* from Stop 1.

Within the 64 stops in Figure 7, a person can locate any changing situation with the current, previous, and next stops. Thus, one can check the explanations from the *Book of Changes* to understand how the current situation has developed from previous stops, and what will happen in the next stops in the future. For example, if one wants to know how to enlighten others, the person can check Hexagram 4 *Meng* (enlightenment) in the *Book of Changes* and discover why enlightenment happened in Hexagram 3 and what will happen after the enlightenment in Hexagram 5. Each change may result in both *Yin* and *Yang* results (CTP, 2016, *Yijing*, Xici I: 5). In Figure 7, among the 64 changing situations, except for the first two extreme situations with pure *Yang* (*Qian*) and

pure *Yin* (*Kun*), each situation has both *Yin* and *Yang* parts. Among the 64 stops of a complete change journey, except for eight unchangeable stops where the opposite pattern remains the same, the other 56 stops could be reversed to the opposite situation, as shown in Figure 7. Therefore, the 64 stops could be divided into eight unchangeable stops with 28 pairs of opposite stops to represent the coexistence of both *Yin* and *Yang* changes. The eight unchangeable stops represent eight unchangeable situations that everyone must experience, which are *Qian* (heaven/power), *Kun* (earth/gentleness), *Yi* (recreation), *Da guo* (big mistake), *Xiao Guo* (little mistake), *Kan* (frustration), *Li* (bright), and *Zhong fu* (honesty).

Figure 7

The 64 Stops of a Complete Change Journey



By understanding the change trajectory, people can adjust their actions and prepare for future changes accordingly. To achieve the vision of the whole of humanity, HRD professionals must prepare for many challenges during a long change journey. However, the loving heart of mother nature provides all solutions for humans to develop under all challenging situations. As long as people do not lose a loving heart for the world, the loving heart from mother nature can lead them to walk out of the labyrinth of a changing world (Nielsen, 2003; Smith, 2008).

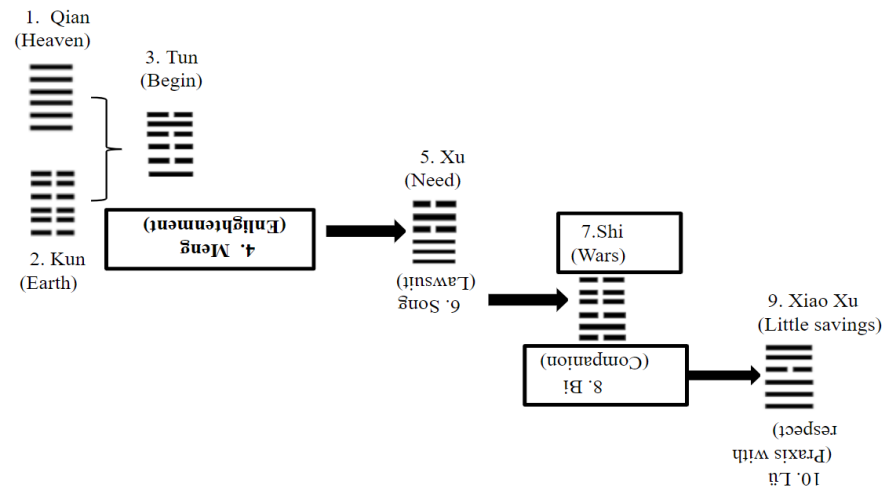
What Does Mother Nature Say about the Enlightenment and the Development of the Future?

Regarding about the future for *the whole of humanity*, Western historians have presented a pessimistic view that the postmodern world will repeat wars in the modern era with nuclear weapons to end the world (Coker, 1992); scientists hope that innovation can help; posthumanists calculated that artificial intelligence will achieve singularity to terminate biological humans by 2045 (Hawley, 2019; Kurzweil, 2005); critical theorists present angry criticisms against centuries-long social ills; and post-postmodern[ists] continue to be uncertain about what will happen in a VUCA world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 26). In contrast to these Western theorists, mother nature in the *Book of Changes* sees her children's Enlightenment in a motherly way. Mother nature criticizes no one but whispers to her children about how to transform the regret for the past to be the reconstruction for the future.

During the whole change journey of 64 stops in Figure 8, Stop 4 is Enlightenment (*Meng*). To see how Enlightenment has developed from the past to what will happen after the Enlightenment, I chose the first ten stops from the 64 stops (see Figure 8) to show the past, present, and future of the Enlightenment.

Figure 8

The Past, Present, and Future of Enlightenment



As Figure 8 shows, during the first two stops with the interaction of power and gentleness, the father *Qian* (heaven) and mother *Kun* (earth) have given birth to all the creatures to fill the world between heaven and earth, which is Stop 3, the start (*Tun*) (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Xu gua:1). *Tun* means fulfillment and the beginning of all lives. The opposite of Stop 3, *Tun (Water and Thunder)* is Stop 4, Enlightenment (*Meng*). When all things have just been born at the beginning, they must be ignorant and need to study many new things, which is the meaning of Stop 4 Enlightenment (*Meng*) (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Xu gua:2, 3). After being nurtured and educated, the young life will grow and need more resources to survive (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Xu gua: 4). Therefore, after Stop 4 *Meng* (ignorance and enlightenment), Stop 5 *Xu* (need and wait) comes. However, instead of immediately fighting with others to win more resources, the individual needs to patiently wait for the growing process like a

farmer waiting for the crops to ripen, rather than immediately fighting with others for self-development (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Za gua: 43). However, the growing needs of every life and the lack of patience to wait for the allocation of resources result in conflicts among individuals, which leads to lawsuits in Stop 6 *Song* (conflict and lawsuits) (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Xu gua: 4; Za gua: 44). To contest a lawsuit, one will surely gather the forces from the masses and form a strong army, which leads to war in Stop 7 *Shi* (the masses and war) (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Xu gua: 5). After the rise of different armies, individuals will compare different leaders and choose one to work with as peers, which leads to Stop 8 *Bi* (compare and companion) (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Xu gua: 6). An army to fight worries individuals; a team to build companionship makes people happy (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Za gua: 2). The union of different individuals leads to *little savings* in Stop 9 for the group after the destruction from war. Although a person has *little savings*, they are not great enough. Thus, the person must develop respect for others without being rude to offend others in Stop 10 *Lü* (praxis with respect) (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Za gua: 41, 42). As Figure 8 shows, the *Book of Changes* depicts the whole Enlightenment change journey from the *beginning, ignorance, enlightenment, needs, lawsuits, wars, companion, little savings, to respect*. Facing overwhelming crises from all aspects of life in the postmodern age (e.g., economic crisis, technology crisis, environmental crisis, energy crisis, trust crisis, quarter-life crisis, mid-life crisis),

numerous scholars are calling for a second Enlightenment to enlighten separated individuals to “care about others,” and “respect for differences” (Tang, 2015, p. 2), and build global unity, inclusion, and collaboration (Bond, 2010; Clarke, 2003; Charmaz, 2011; McLean & McLean, 2001).

The Second Enlightenment

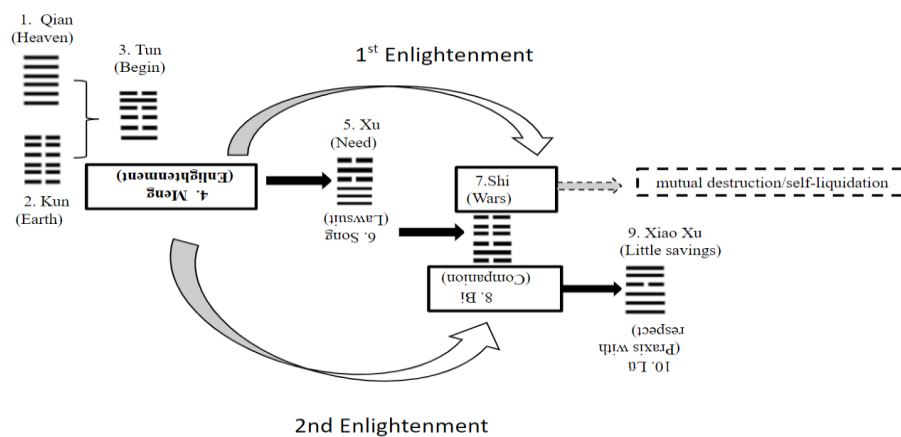
Both Western postmodernists and *the Book of Changes* acknowledge the complex and changing nature of the world, Western postmodernists have forced people to accept the “ontological politics of staying true to complexity” (Crotty, 2004, p. 195). However, the *Book of Changes* softly points to an ontological solution to stay true to the easy foundation of everything. Confucius explained that the way to understand the *Book of Changes* is to reverse the analysis from the complex current phenomena to the simple root and the early developmental stages (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Shuogua: 3). If people want to predict the future, they should go backward to the history; if they just follow the current tendency, they cannot see the future but just see the fruits of history (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Shuogua: 3). One’s developing tendency is to move to one’s opposite side to achieve *Yinyang* balance.

Although the Enlightenment in the past 200 years has left an “indelible stain” of slavery, racism, wars, and intellectual contradiction between utopian ideals and the utilitarian exploitation of others (Collins, 2019; Harvey, 2012, p. 155; Wood, 2000), the development of the world does not stop in chaos or wars in

Stop 7 *Shi* (the masses and war). Mother nature can flip the development approach of the whole of humanity in Stop 7 to Stop 8 *Bi* (compare and companion) to build companionship and cooperation. As Figure 9 shows, the first Enlightenment has equipped individuals with the knowledge from science and Enlightenment discourse, to develop nuclear weapons to fight with others. If people continue to follow the first Enlightenment discourse to create more knowledge about how to fight wars (e.g., gender war, *catfights*, and *queen bee symptom*) with other individuals in a VUCA postmodern world, the “mutual assured destruction” (Young, 1999, para.1) or “self-liquidation” (Toynbee, 1974, p. 19) will come after the wars in Stop 7. Therefore, people need second Enlightenment education to teach people how to transition from fighting with others in Stop 7 to building companionship with others in Stop 8.

Figure 9

The Second Enlightenment to the Companion in Stop 8



Instead of the division of different cultures in the modern world, before the first Enlightenment, the human world showed “surprising resemblances” across cultures (Pomeranz, 2000, p. 29). Toynbee (1973) compared the similarities of the pre-Christian Greek world and East Asia’s living worship about the deification of the diversity of nature instead of only one phenomenon. All the diverse natural phenomena (e.g., springs, trees, rivers, mountains, earthquakes) have divinity, which inspired philosophies and civilizations. Instead of viewing mother nature “as a treasure-trove of ‘natural resources’” to be manipulated by modern people, premodern people viewed nature as “a goddess, ‘Mother Earth’ with a divine nature” to respect and love (Toynbee, 1973, p. 7). Jaspers (1953/2014) called ancient history, around the 8th to the 3rd century B.C.E, the *Axial Age*. Key thinkers, such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle in Greece, Confucius and Lao Zi in China, Buddha in India, and Jewish prophets, appeared around the same period in human history, and laid a significant parallel foundation for the development of civilization in each region.

In China, mother nature used the *Book of Changes* as the textbook to point to the future development for her children of all humanity, and prepared a teacher from heaven (*tian zhi muduo*), Confucius to teach her children how to build companionship and harmony with others (CTP, 2016, *Analects*, Ba Yi: 24). In Confucianism, after learning utmost knowledge (*ge wu zhi zhi*) in a reductive way, learners should continue to learn how to use the new knowledge to rectify

their own heart (*cheng yi zheng xin*) and cultivate morality (*xiu shen*) to respect and serve others instead of winning others (CTP, 2016, Liji, Daxue: 2). The root of all development (e.g., self, family, national, and global development) is self-cultivation (*xiu shen*) (CTP, 2016, Liji, Daxue:2). Even today, for Chinese, learning is not just a means to achieve material success but “a means for self-cultivation and self-perfection” to fulfill their obligations to parents, family, and society (Hau & Ho, 2010, p. 190).

Admittedly, to learn how to use knowledge to build companionship in Stop 8 through self-cultivating to control the self can be more difficult than to use knowledge to control others to maximize self-benefits in Stop 7. If the first Enlightenment was “destructive” on a macro societal and global level (Tang, 2015, p. 2), the second Enlightenment might be an individual’s choice between cultivating and controlling the self to build harmony with mother nature and others or to continue to be the greedy “modern industrial man” in the postmodern age to exploit mother nature and others for self-benefits (Toynbee, 1973, p. 7). Mother nature does not recognize any human to subdue her. If “man insists on trying to execute it, he will commit this outrage on nature at his peril” (Toynbee, 1973, p. 7).

Chapter 3: A Yinyang Cat Might Catch the Mice

One must have good tools to do a good job.

-Analects 15.10

Witnessing the failure of European utopian philosophies and the harsh reality of wars, economic depression, and many social ills, U.S. scholars at the end of the 19th century faced a fundamental “Dilemma in Philosophy” between two types of European philosophies—analytic and continental (James, 1907/2005, p. 3). The two types of philosophies represent two types of attitudes towards the world: “tough-minded,” such as “materialistic” and “empiricist (or fact-based),” and the “tender-minded” such as “rationalistic (principles-based)” and “idealistic” (James, 1907/2005, p .3). The two opposing philosophies between the tough or tender-minded attitudes echo Chinese *Yang* and *Yin* forces. However, instead of using the love from mother nature to include opposing *Yang* and *Yin* forces, U.S. scholars use a new method of pragmatism to reconcile the clash of opposite thoughts in European philosophies. James (1907/2005) proposed pragmatism to follow both the scientific language in analytic philosophy, and the constructive, relative, or postmodern ideals in continental philosophy. Pragmatist John Dewey further promoted pragmatism in all aspects of American society, such as education, research, policy, and organizations (Grange, 1996). Without examining the inner complexity of knowledge, which pragmatists view as empty or dogmatic, science becomes the synonym of knowledge, and “truth” becomes “the

end of inquiry” (Cassirer, 1950; Misak, 2004, p. 1). People’s beliefs and actions are guided by practical benefits. Focusing on a united goal of practical benefits, Americans worked hard towards the same American dream of economic success and the U.S. economy rapidly surpassed European nations and led the world economy in the 20th century (Grange, 1996).

However, pragmatism’s simple solution with a focus on practical benefits is too weak to pull fallen human nature from the gravity of economic benefits. The “divide between idealism and practice” in Europe (Harvey, 2012, p. 175) has become even more paradoxical in the U.S. The improving the material wealth of the ruling class and the downgrading humanity continues to go diametrically opposite (Taylor, 1989). Before Dewey died, he was sad to see that American cities were “overcome by crime, violence, drug abuse” (Grange, 1996, p. 355) along with “increasing inequality” (Beach, 2007, p. 159). Although the U.S. is the largest economy in the world, 49 million people in the U.S., which means 1 in 6 people in the U.S. suffered from hunger in 2010 (Barreiro & Stone, 2013).

Using pragmatism to solve many philosophical dilemmas may be best understood as *whether a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice* by Chinese pragmatist leader Deng Xiaoping (Buckle, 2018). Deng also used pragmatism to reconcile Chinese ideological debates between using Western capitalism or Chinese socialism to develop humans and societies after Mao’s death and started China’s economic reform and rapid economic development

(Faison, 1997, para.1; Vogel, 2011). However, in the 21st century, the “mice” in the globalized VUCA world have seemed to be more difficult to catch. Neither the Western nor the Chinese way can guarantee that “cats” can catch “mice” in a labyrinth-like world without getting lost. A VUCA world may need a *Yinyang* cat with both the changing wisdom and the analytical methods to wisely and accurately catch the increasingly cunning mice.

Although today’s economy, markets, and politics in a globalized world are no longer Western-centric, unfortunately, the current knowledge-building system is still Westerncentric. Even current cross-cultural and postcolonial studies use a Western lens, such as Marxist and poststructuralist approaches, to examine non-Western worlds and people (Ackerly, 2001; Chakrabarty, 2008; Moahi, 2007; Rajan & Park, 2000; Tan, 2016). Consequently, non-Western studies may simply be a duplication of Western mainstream research paradigms without representing a globalized world (Hsiung, 2015; Hwang, 2014a). Some of the examples of the sharp differences between individualistic Western knowledge-building systems and “communal, relational, and contextual” indigenous and international “ways of knowing” are report writing vs “storytelling,” “celebrating innovation” vs “honoring tradition,” and “discrete and separate” vs “seeing stories, history, tradition, collectivities, and subjectivities as interrelated” (Charmaz, 2017, p. 37). Eckensberger (2015) called for a TRUE cultural turn of today’s research to integrate culture and mainstream methodologies. Charmaz (2014, p. 14)

challenged conventional research, which erases researchers' positions, perspectives, privileges, and interactions during the research processes, and to acknowledge "subjectivity and the researcher's involvement in the construction and interpretation of data."

Thanks to Charmaz's (2014) openness, I am able to integrate Chinese traditional learning culture into constructivist grounded theory methodology in this dissertation. Table 3 shows the four steps of how I integrated Chinese cultural elements into Charmaz's (2014) constructivist grounded theory methodology.

Table 3

Constructing Integrated Self-leadership Methodology

Steps/Objectives
Step 1: Constructing integrated self-leadership philosophies
Step 2: Constructing an integrated self-leadership methodology
Step 3: Constructing an integrated self-leadership research process
Step 4: Constructing integrated self-leadership trustworthiness and ethical issues

Step 1: Constructing Integrated Self-leadership Philosophies

In the premodern age, *philosophy* used to lead *science* to examine inner problems of humanity to formulate truth for hundreds of years (Cassirer, 1950). Since the Enlightenment, modern scholars started to use scientific reasoning to challenge the traditional truth from God and made scientific achievements in terms of helping people better control the world instead of relying on abstract philosophies. Consequently, *philosophy* started to be led by *science*, and eventually disappeared and became just "a good thing" in the postmodern age

(Grange, 1996, p. 358; Liu, 2017; Van de Ven, 2007; Tan, 2016). However, people's values and emotional responses could not be deduced or induced from empirical evidence, and then reduced to a formula through human reasoning (Liu, 2011). Although many postmodern, qualitative, and feminist researchers have strongly criticized the limitation of using modern science as the sole means to generate knowledge for humans and societies with complex subjectivity, they could not change the dominant position of natural-science-based social sciences and psychology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Harding, 1991; Pleasants, 2003).

Unlike Western culture and knowledge system, Asian traditional learning systems do not have the conflicts between qualitative and quantitative paradigms, and “do not privilege scientific methods of observation above the intuitive illumination of the original mind but rather see these as complementary forms of knowing” (Liu, 2011, p. 217). Empirical facts cannot be the only reality of the world (Hwang, 2015). The increased VUCA world calls for a more comprehensive and inclusive philosophical ground for knowledge development (Chen, 2014; Hwang, 2014a; Kitch, 2007). Indigenous researchers who study non-Western traditions “have to work at philosophical or epistemological (theory of knowledge) level to muster their arguments, as well as a practical level” (Smith, 2012, p. 353).

Unfortunately, one philosophy in either U.S or Chinese culture is not enough to cope with the iceberg of challenges for ICWDSUS from both cultures.

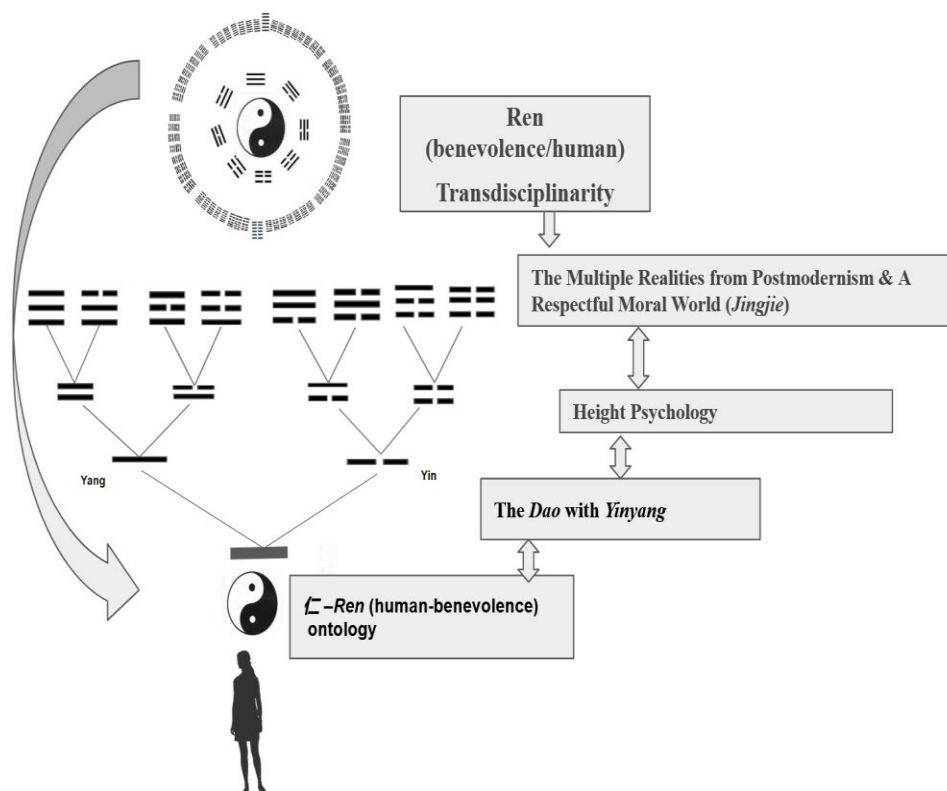
Furthermore, in addition to the exterior complexity of a globalized world, a human also experiences one's own personal epistemology growing process internally "from dualism, multiplicity, relativism, to commitment (within relativism)" (Zhu & Cox, 2015, p. 346). Unlike seeing the world from the perspective of dualism—either "right" or "wrong," accepting the multiplicity of uncertainty and diversity, and regarding everything as relativistic—a person can eventually grow into maturity with affirmed identities and the associated commitment and responsibilities (Perry, 1970). Once individuals realize their commitment from among relative multiple realities, they can engage in persistent endeavors towards the realization of their commitment. However, committed individuals acknowledge that the results of their activities are partly determined by themselves and "partly in the hands of fate" (Perry, 1970, p. 154).

The Package of the Self-leadership Philosophies for ICWDSUS

To cope with the changing complexity of an ICWDSUS' life from both her inner and outer worlds, in this study, I constructed a package of self-leadership philosophies with the commitment to *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) from both Western and Chinese culture for an ICWDSUS navigate her life as Figure 10 shows.

Figure 10

The Package of the Self-leadership Philosophies for ICWDSUS



Note: Figure contains elements adapted from stock images

Among all the philosophies, I emphasize ICWDSUS' commitment to a 仁 *Ren (benevolence/human)* ontology, which is the unchangeable foundation of the whole package of the self-leadership philosophies. Other philosophies can change based on the change of situations. As Figure 10 shows, an ICWDSUS starts her doctoral journey independently with her *Ren (benevolence/human)* ontology. Although others may influence the ICWDSUS' decision, I assume that the ICWDSUS does not rely on others but uses her independent human agency to make her life decisions. The *Dao*, with the interaction of the duality of *Yin* and

Yang, leads an ICWDSUS to interact with others and the environment, navigating both the negative and positive, gentle and strong, and inactive and active dynamics. The opposing forces of *Yin* and *Yang* complicate or frustrate an ICWDSUS' life into multiple challenging realities. While embracing diversity and multiplicity with a relativism standpoint in her material world, ICWDSUS would not adopt moral relativism in her moral world. I assume that an ICWDSUS chooses *height psychology* to use her aspiration and moral agency to transcend or overcome the challenges and pull herself up, rather than following the fallen human nature to downgrade herself for quick benefits. The multiple realities from many aspects through interactions with others and the changing environment expand the realms and complexities of an ICWDSUS' life. Eventually, an ICWDSUS may have to step out of her comfort zone with one or a few simple realities for transdisciplinary collaboration with others. The overwhelming information and networks in a VUCA world are beyond anyone's cognition, which can easily cause an ICWDSUS to get lost. Facing all the pressure and temptation, I assume that an ICWDSUS would insist on her commitment to *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) ontology to seek harmonious development with others together instead of putting down or manipulating others to maximize her self-interests. Whenever an ICWDSUS is confused about a situation in the VUCA world, she should always remember and return to her simple and unchangeable

commitment, *Ren (benevolence/human)*, which is her root to restore, refresh, and readjust herself with a new way out.

Figure 10 shows the package of the self-leadership philosophies for ICWDSUS. The following session explains how I critically selected and integrated several Chinese and Western philosophies to ground the self-leadership philosophical assumptions of this study.

Ren (benevolence/human) Transdisciplinarity

To critically integrate multiple cultures and disciplines to solve the iceberg of challenges for ICWDSUS, this study uses a transdisciplinary grounded theory as the research design. Transdisciplinarity includes non-Western interpretations and thus can destabilize the normative theory-building assumptions that are based on white, middle-class, heterosexual, and natural science-oriented Western culture (McCann & Kim, 2013). By transcending traditional cross-cultural studies with a focus on the East-West cultural differences, this transdisciplinary study focuses on the commonalities of the challenges and wisdom of all humanity across the differences of space and time.

In addition, transdisciplinarity has almost always been how Chinese culture and intellectual system have been developing. Throughout Chinese history, Confucianism-based *He-He (harmony-inclusion)* culture has involved learning, including, and harmonizing different or opposing thoughts together (Chen, 2014; Li, 2019; Liu, 2014; Zhang, 1996). The core of Confucianism, *Ren*

(benevolent/human) is inclusive, and can be married to many different ways of thinking or serving as the bridge to connect the gaps between conflicting groups (Liu, 2017). Different ideologies (e.g., Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, Mohism, Marxism, capitalism) contend against the others yet co-exist with each other; they ultimately work together to develop a “diverse and heterogeneous” Chinese culture with 56 ethnic groups (Feng & Bodde, 1966; Tjosvold et al., 2001; Zhu, 2016, p. 24). The Chinese character 仁 (*ren*- benevolent love) visualizes the inclusive function of a human’s (*ren*) benevolent love. The left part of the character represents *ren* (human 人), and the right part (二) has two horizontal strokes to represent two opposing entities. Confucius believed that a good leader should show *ren* (benevolent love 仁) by developing oneself to be a great *ren* (human 人) to contribute to the construction of a world with *ren* (benevolent love 仁) (Liu, 2017). To develop oneself is not in conflict with serving the world, but aims to better serve the world; while serving the world, the individual also grows to be a better human being (Yu, 1998). With a loving heart from mother nature, a benevolent human (*ren*) can transform opposing dichotomies to be the development for all.

Instead of using the Western-centric terminology of transdisciplinarity with a focus on building transdisciplinary knowledge for transdisciplinary benefits in a material world, this study expands the discussion from the objective

knowledge in a material world (*shijie*) to include the wisdom and human agency in a moral world (*jing jie*). I name my transdisciplinary study as *Ren (benevolence/human) transdisciplinarity* with the continuity of the current Western-centric transdisciplinary approach and the inclusion of Chinese *Ren (benevolence/human)*-based relationism (Ho & Chiu, 1998). The integration of Western individualism and Chinese relationism can include both the individuality of each woman and the relational perspective of leadership and women's lives.

Unlike the focus on seeking fixed knowledge and science as a solution in Western-centric transdisciplinarity, *Ren (benevolence/human) transdisciplinarity* emphasizes an individual's moral character-building and harmonious relationships with others, which are the foundation for a human to construct reality, knowledge, and solutions to all problems in a VUCA world. The focus of a *Ren (benevolence/human) transdisciplinary* study is not the numbers of individuals, disciplines, or benefits one can include, but the quality of *Ren (benevolence/human)*. Despite the importance of harmony, Confucius emphasized that one cannot artificially have harmony with others by compromising moral standards to tolerate improper behaviors (CTP, 2016, *Analects*, Xue'er: 12). Harmony among various disciplines and individuals must be based on *Ren (benevolence/human)*. Even when only two people are united as one in heart, their united strength is like a sharp blade that can cut through any metal (CTP, 2016, *Yijing*, Xici I: 8).

Although Charmaz (2014) and many postmodern feminists emphasize the importance of relationships, interactions, and situations, which are also highlighted in Confucianism. Participants also believed that the independence from individualistic U.S. culture should not be lowlighted. Participants strongly recognized the independent spirit in U.S. culture. Although participants' parents in this study supported the participants' choice of their major, it was based on participants' independent decision and diligence to start and finish their own doctoral journeys. Although participants appreciated the support from their parents, husbands, professors, and friends, none of them relied on others to finish their doctoral journey.

Despite the openness to almost everyone and everything, a *Ren* (*human/benevolence*) transdisciplinary study does not take a moral relative stance but maintains benevolent principles based on Confucian morality. Although *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) transdisciplinarity refuses to accept immoral views based on Confucianism, *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) transdisciplinarity disagrees with others with respect, rather than with angry criticism. Even others' problems are perceived as valuable learning material. Confucius said that whenever he walked along with two others, he could find his teachers; he would select good things from others to follow and bad things from others to avoid (CTP, 2016, *Analects*, Shu'er: 22).

A Respectful Moral World (Jingjie) and Height Psychology

Jingjie. In the Westerncentric modern knowledge-building system, whether natural or social science with objective or subjective “truth,” the assumption of the world is “material” (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 348; Pleasants, 2003). Although Clarke (2003) identified macro (e.g., nations, economies), meso (e.g., organizations, communities), and micro (e.g., individuals, families, relationships) levels to map different situations of one’s material world, and Manz (1983) identified one’s physical and psychological worlds, they only analyzed the material world from different dimensions with little discussion about a moral world.

In contrast to the focus on the material world in the modern age and the theological world in the premodern age of the West, the traditional Chinese learning system has three types of worlds: *shijie* (*material world*), *jingjie* (*moral world*), and *Tian* (*Heaven*) (Feng, 1924/2016). A human’s spiritual and moral world (*jingjie*) connects the material world (*shijie*) and heaven (*tian*) together as an integral. Both moral and material worlds are subjected to *Tian* (Heaven).

With a focus on *Ren* (*benevolence/human*), Confucianism is “neither secular nor religious,” but stays between the two extremes and actively includes the good parts and critically rejects the bad parts of spirituality and pragmatism (Liu, 2017, p. 137). Unlike the focus on the material world (*shijie*) in Western HRD, a morally superior person’s development in Confucianism commutes between transcending one’s material *shijie* (*chu shi*) and actively participates in

the betterment of the material *shijie* (*ru shi*) to meet both material and moral development of a human (Ivanhoe, 2000; Liu, 2014). Confucianism both encourages humans to try their best to develop the self and the material world and emphasizes human's respect (*jing*) for heaven/nature. This is called *the unity of heaven and humans* (*Tian ren he yi*) (Fung, 1922).

The Chinese name for Confucianism is *Ru Jia*, which refers to activities involving teaching, learning, working hard, serving parents, music, and participating in religious and traditional rites. Confucius' supernatural beliefs with the respect for heaven and the diligent work of the self are different from the total submission to divine power in the Dark Ages or the total rejection of spiritual things since the *disenchantment* of modern Western sciences. Although Confucius recognized that the *Book of Changes* was a work of divination and did not deny supernatural realities, his explanation of the divination of the *Book of Changes* was to understand the "subtle processes of the natural world" to inform humans' behaviors in a complex changing social world, rather than studying and worshiping supernatural realities and the divine power (Nelson & Liu, 2016, p. 275).

After Enlighteners excluded supernatural beings from the modern rational, scientific, and material world, the development of humans seemed to follow the falling nature of humans since the fall of Adam and Eve (Toynbee, 1973) to be more secular, utilitarian, and corrupted (Taylor, 1989). Although capitalists'

material world aims to accumulate wealth, their moral world suffers from moral poverty (Bazerman, 2020; Grange, 1996). Unlike Western individualistic worldview and knowledge-building, the knowledge development in Confucianism must serve a higher good than an individual's material development (Hwang, 2012). With a focus on a benevolent heart, Confucianism provides an aspiration to use learning to cultivate a respectable and humble personality to upgrade people's moral level, which, in turn, enables them to contribute to the benevolent social development through "the vertical dimension of moral agency (aspiration)" (Liu, 2017, p. 146). The moral aspiration in Confucianism is not the financial aspiration of upper level of wealth in the *American dream* nor the *mianzi* aspiration of upper level of social status among Chinese students. The existence, development, and the size of people's material *shijie* is determined by their moral *jingjie*: the maximization of material benefits will lead to the maximization of their self-identity and the minimization of material *shijie* with no one and nothing else but the self-interests. The minimization of their material benefits leads to the minimization of self-identity and the maximization material *shijie* including many different people and mother nature (Feng, 1944).

Height Psychology. Based on Confucianism about a human's heart, Liu (2017) proposed a Chinese neo-Confucian epistemology, *Height Psychology*, which emphasizes the aspiration for self-cultivation and social development through education. Confucius claimed that it is not a commander-in-chief nor

advanced weapons, but the aspiration of ordinary people that leads to the victory of a hard battle (CTP, 2016, Zi Han: 26). Griner and Sobol (2014) found that the aspirations of Chinese doctoral students in the U.S. enable them to overcome the known or unknown challenges to reach their goals.

Unlike Kant's total rejection of Confucianism, the neo-Confucian *Height Psychology* is a human science approach informed by Kant's philosophy and Chinese philosophies (e.g., Confucianism and Daoism) (Liu, 2017). *Height Psychology* uses the connection between noumenon (thing-in-itself) and phenomenon in Chinese philosophy to replace Kant's separation between the two domains and allows noumenal values from heaven to enter phenomenal realms through human thoughts to transcend the material world (Liu, 2017). With the Confucian belief in trying all human endeavors but waiting for the final judgment from heaven (*jin renshi dai tianming*), the neo-Confucian methodology of *Height Psychology* can bridge and transform the divide between empiricist and hermeneutical modes of inquiry to complement each other to present a more holistic world (Liu, 2017). The phenomenon that the observations in empirical studies could be explained by hermeneutical studies, which interprets a phenomenon with actions from the cultural root of certain human agency. In this way, *Height Psychology* enables social sciences to address humanity at a deeper and more comprehensive level by being both empirical and hermeneutical across

various realms of humanity (e.g., modern, tradition, materials, morality, relationship, and culture) (Liu, 2017).

By integrating Western philosophy of science and Chinese philosophy of life, Liu's (2017) *Height Psychology* was chosen as the epistemology of this study to explore a philosophical and cultural social science approach to include culture and human agency in the scientific analysis process. A morally-oriented leader within various role relational networks is the analytical focus and a living presence of *Height Psychology*. Morally centered leaders demonstrate their morality by actions, rather than moral speeches. Instead of being analyzed by science in a material world in a static and passive way, morally centered leaders can use self-reflectivity to operate and humanize science to improve the lives of both themselves and the collective in a dynamic, active, and less confrontational way (Liu, 2017). Moral leaders' moral agency and desire connect different individuals, cultures, theories, and entities together to allow both divergence and convergence with global consciousness (Liu & Macdonald, 2016). *Height psychology* not only connects the West and East, but also connects the time of the past, present, and future together by delving into the historical trajectories, which shape the behaviors and feelings in modern times (Liu, 2017). Instead of passively following Aristotelian determinism that the past determines the future or aggressively following capitalism and Hegelianism to pursue the maximization of benefits and class struggles, the human agency in history through individuals'

choices can be a source of learning, reflection, communication, and self-leadership to actively and respectfully condition present situations to aspire for the future change.

The Dao with Yinyang

Theory vs Theorizing. In the late 20th century, grounded theorist Anselm Strass brought the complexity of the social worlds, arenas, and contexts (e.g., the situations of organizations, communities, nations, and the globe) into grounded theory and contributed to a postmodern turn of grounded theory with the “tremendous fluidity” of everything (Corbin & Strauss, 2014, p. 22). With the emphasis on the fluidity of multiple realities, Charmaz (2014, p. 233) used THEORIZING in her constructivist grounded theory to replace a THEORY in classic grounded theory studies.

On the one hand, I agree with Charmaz’s (2014) criticism towards a classic grounded theory from static components of themes and her openness to use theorizing to represent the dynamic interaction and processes. On the other hand, I disagree with Charmaz’s (2014) shift from one static extreme with the neglect of actions and processes to another dynamic extreme without stable themes as foundations. Both a theory from positivist grounded theory and theorizing from constructivist grounded theory are from the same assumption of pragmatism based on practical benefits. The one-sided emphasis on static themes may miss nuanced actions, contexts, and processes to oversimplify a grounded

theory. However, the one-sided emphasis on an individual's actions, contexts, and processes overcomplicates the changing situations and misses the simple and unchangeable foundations for humans. For example, even though the parents of participants in this study were in China and knew little about the U.S., or some parents had passed away before participants completed their doctoral journeys, all participants attributed their success to their parents' support. Although parents' unconditional support may not have been observed by their actions, the parents' support for their children transcended locations, contexts, time, and even death.

Following the same pragmatic solution to the Western dualism dilemma in grounded theory, Charmaz's (2014, p. 215) answer to the research dilemmas about the theoretical sufficiency and saturation to ground a theory with multiple and fluid realities was to "be open to what is happening in the field and be willing to grapple with it." Charmaz used the metaphor of "recipes" to encourage researchers to be open to innovation. However, the solution-driven nature of the grounded theory method already assumes that a solution is needed for urgent and puzzling problems. To ground a theory should not be simply compared with making a traditional or an innovative "recipe" for "chicken soup for the soul." For me, to ground a theory for a solution is more like creating medicine to treat a serious disease; it is not about a traditional or innovative recipe but about a life-or-death prescription.

Unfortunately, postmodernists' "open[ness]" to ground a theory like making "recipes" based on an individual researcher's capability (Charmaz, 2014, p. 215) is not a research gamble, which at least has a 50% chance of winning, but could just repeat "what [historians] have already known" from modern history (Coker, 1992, p. 198). Since 1970, Thomas S. Kuhn has been urging qualitative researchers to stop ignoring many anomalous findings and crises that the current theories could not explain and should start a paradigm revolution. However, half a century later, Kuhn found that more problems have emerged without any solutions (Kuhn & Hacking, 2012). Given many research dilemmas, many grounded theorists must engage in "deceptive simplicity" to reach pragmatic and quick saturation (Morse, 2008, p. 1311). In addition to feminist researchers (Calás & Smircich, 2006; Henderson, 1992), many participants in my study also criticized the impracticality of feminist ideals, which are like "poisonous chicken soup for the soul" in a woman's real life.

To respond to "the ruins of a confident social science" (Lather, 1999, p. 152) in a VUCA postmodern world, postmodern scholars have attempted to use grounded theory "as a methodological strategy." However, "ironically too little grounded theory is actually done" (Miller, 2000, p. 400). Neither objectivist nor constructivist grounded theorists have asked their readers to use their "grounded theories as *theory*" to guide their actions, because they "just are doing grounded theory in whatever way they understand it" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 260).

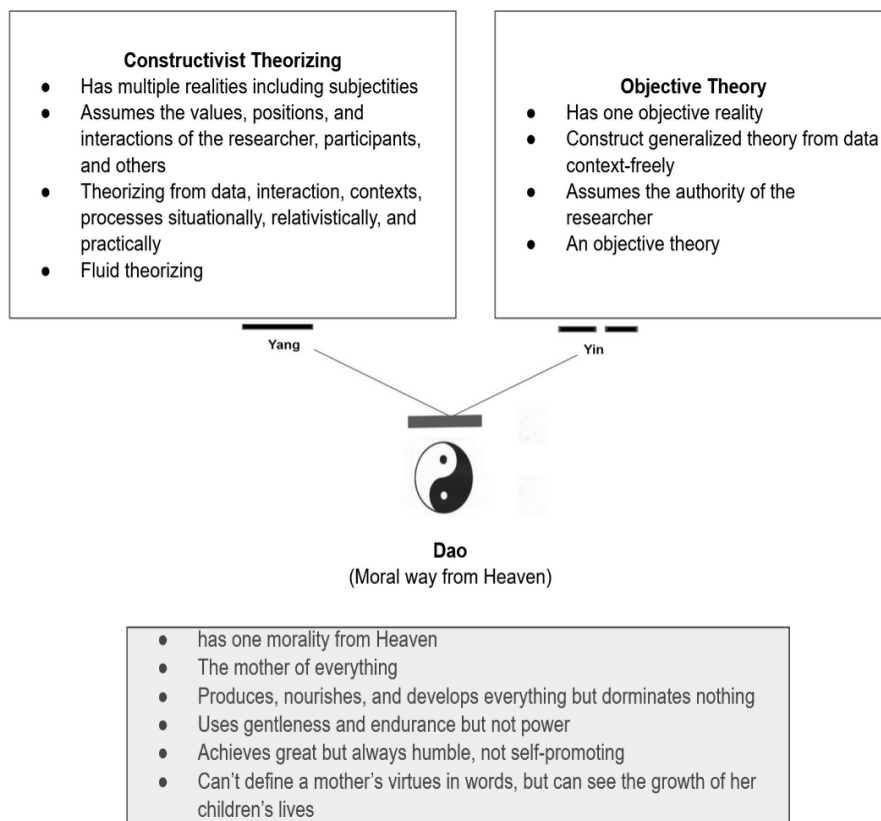
The *Dao of Yinyang*. To avoid generating a grounded theory of self-leadership to poison myself first, I must first ensure that my grounded theory research does not continue to follow the Chicago School genealogy of pragmatism from *theory* to *theorizing* (Charmaz, 2014). Without the sweetness of focusing on practical benefits, my grounded theory of ICWDSUS' self-leadership is not a tasty chicken soup, but more like Chinese herbal medicine, which tastes bitter at first, but heals the patient little by little without dangerous side effects. My grounded herbal medicine uses the Chinese *Dao* (moral way) with *Yinyang* dynamism to include both static themes of *theory* and fluid processes of *theorizing* for ICWDSUS' self-leadership. All anomalies and complexities could be understood and healed by returning to the same root of everything, *Dao*. All beings are produced from the love of mother *Dao* without being (CTP, 2016, *Dao De Jing*:1). *Dao* is not a model nor a recipe from human knowledge, but a moral way from heaven. *Dao* is one unity, which produces two opposing forces (*Yin* and *Yang*), and the interaction of *Yin* and *Yang* produces the third reality, *Yinyang*. From the interaction of *Yinyang*, everything is produced (CTP, 2016, *Dao De Jing*: 42).

Pragmatic and scientific knowledge through Western dualism logic of *either/or*, or the logic of *both/and* is too simple to solve philosophical dilemmas. Many scholars have claimed that, *Yinyang* with an *either/and* logic to include both opposing and complementary dynamics in a balanced holism is the only

epistemology to manage the paradoxes in a complex world (P. Li, 2016; Liu, 2017; Haidt, 2006; Marshak, 1993). Either/and logic includes three realities: two opposing realities, and one reality of the interaction of the two opposing realities, which can produce endless realities. Therefore, I added *Yinyang* epistemology to complement the methodological dilemma of grounded theory between grounding an objective theory or constructivist theorizing. An objective theory is less dynamic, which can be seen as the *Yin* side of *Dao*, and constructivist theorizing is more dynamic as the *Yang* side of *Dao*. Thus, the *Dao* of the self-leadership for ICWDSUS includes both the stable theories of themes and the changing theorizing of the actions and processes. In addition, the *Dao* with the morality from heaven is the unchangeable root of this research, uniting the unlimited interactions between theories and theorizing. In Figure 11, I summarized the differences between a theory and theorizing, and how *Dao* unites the two as holism.

Figure 11

Theory, Theorizing, and Dao



Ren (benevolence/human) Ontology

Despite the great commonalities of Charmaz's (2014) social constructivist view with Confucianism, the major difference between the two philosophies is Confucius' insistence on a *Ren (benevolence/human)* ontology. It may be the fundamental challenge for anyone who chooses a pragmatic ontology for practical self-benefits in a material world, or a *Ren (benevolence/human)* ontology in both material and moral worlds at the sacrifice of short-term self-benefits for long-term self-development.

With a materialistic ontology, although qualitative researchers have already pointed out many critical limitations of quantitative research, qualitative social science could also be nothing but criticism without a solution to real problems (Kashima, 2005). With a *Ren (benevolence/human)* ontology, quantitative, qualitative, transdisciplinary, and all other ways are important tools to flexibly solve problems in contexts across various worlds (e.g., material, moral, or spiritual worlds). Instead of using practical benefits as the evaluation standard in pragmatism, harmony is the goal with a *Ren (benevolence/human)* ontology (CTP, 2016, *Analects*, Xue' Er: 12). However, the state of harmony and balance is not a static result, but an ever-changing process. During the constant process of changing from being unbalanced to balanced, problems could gradually be resolved within a harmonious relational social network (Liu, 2017). The harmony among different relational networks is not fixed rules but is a flexible goal so everyone has room to develop. In Confucianism, other than the insistence on *Ren (benevolence/human)*, everything can be relative (*wu ke wu buke*) (CTP, 2016, *Analects*, Wei Zi: 8). However, the ultimate evaluation of one's *Ren (benevolence/human)* and harmony with others is not from one's external *shijie* but from one's own heart.

Although one's ontology is often silent, it is creative. Through one's "inner illumination," one can "realize the infinite creative power of the ontological principle" (Liu, 2011, p. 228). Instead of using pragmatism to create

pragmatic self-leadership, I adopt Confucius' *Ren (benevolence/human)* ontology to create benevolent self-leadership in this study. The examination of an ICWDSUS' self-leadership and psychological world is based on *Ren (benevolence/human)* morality. Without *Ren (benevolence/human)*, an ICWDSUS' actions and effectiveness to achieve her goals are not counted as self-leadership and success in this dissertation. Admittedly, Confucian *Ren (benevolence/human)* ontology often involves self-sacrifice of individuals for the common good, especially an individual woman, which may be viewed as being subservient to authority (Liu, 2017). However, beneath Confucian *Ren (benevolence/human)* ontology is a fundamental faith in the benevolence of human nature, or at least, people's potential to be benevolent.

Admittedly, *Ren (benevolence/human)* is hard to achieve and has also been criticized by many people as naïve or idealistic since Confucius' age (Hwang, 2014a). At the end of the day, Confucian *Ren (benevolence/human)* ontology is a personal choice with responsibility for the collective (Hwang, 2014a). Confucius said: "*Ren (benevolence/human)* is not a remote thing, but a human's choice if one wishes to be benevolent, and the benevolence is at hand" (CTP, 2016, Shu'er: 30).

Table 4 summarizes the key points of the integrated philosophies in the package of the self-leadership philosophies for ICWDSUS.

Table 4

The Integration of Selected Philosophies

Philosophy	Key Points
<i>Ren</i> (benevolence/human) Transdisciplinarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate Western transdisciplinarity and Chinese <i>He-He</i> (harmony-inclusion) culture • Integrate both Western individualism and Chinese relationism • An individual's morality matters first, then their knowledge and benefits • The quality of transdisciplinarity is more important than the quantity of transdisciplinarity
<i>Jingjie</i> (moral world)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate the moral world (<i>jingjie</i>) into the discussion of a material world (<i>shijie</i>) in the social science realm and a divine world (<i>Tian</i>) in the theological realm • A morally superior person (<i>junzi</i>) commutes between the material and the moral world to both develop the material world and respect the divine world (<i>ru shi/chu shi</i>) • Using a respectful attitude (rather than scientific knowledge) to integrate opposing worlds into <i>the unity of heaven and humans</i> (<i>Tian ren he yi</i>)
Height psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate science, philosophy, culture, history and human agency • Focuses on a moral leader's moral agency, which integrates different entities (e.g., cultures, ideologies, individuals), time, and spaces • To aspire self-cultivation and social development through education • Integrate empiricist and hermeneutical modes of inquiry
The <i>Dao</i> of <i>Yinyang</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use <i>Yinyang</i> dynamism to integrate one objective reality in positivism and multiple fluid realities from postmodernism • Use three realities—the stable <i>Yin</i>, dynamic <i>Yang</i>, and the combination of <i>Yinyang</i> to balance positivism's one static reality and postmodernism's multiple fluid realities

<i>Ren (benevolence/human)</i> Ontology)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate one’s development needs in both material and moral worlds • Insist that a sustainable self-development needs to balance both short-term pragmatic benefits for the individual and long-term responsibility for others • Harmony is the evaluation standard rather than one-sided pragmatic benefits. • Harmony in relational networks is not static but dynamic, constantly moving between being unbalanced to balance to solve problems and progress • <i>Ren (benevolence/human)</i> may involve self-sacrifice for group’s benefits, but <i>Ren (benevolence/human)</i> is a personal choice
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Step 2: Constructing an Integrated Self-leadership Methodology

Methodological Approach: Qualitative Research

The labyrinth of challenges for ICWDSUS cannot be explained by quantitative research, which provides numerical data and a simple cause-and-effect result. Tuchman (1994) claimed that “labyrinths may be important sensitizing devices” for qualitative social scientists (p. 317). How individuals construct their own meaning-making and make sense of their worlds are questions qualitative researchers like to answer (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). When there are inadequate theories for certain populations and phenomena, or the existing theories fail to address the complexity and changing nature of the research problems, researchers often use qualitative research to develop a theory (Creswell, 2014). For feminist and indigenous research, qualitative research is more suitable to capture multiple realities and complex relationships in depth in different contexts (Smith, 2012). In addition to presenting a holistic picture of the participants’ life, qualitative research also includes the researcher’s reflexivity and

position (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Patton, 2015). Qualitative methodology with hermeneutic, interpretative, symbolic, interactive, and constructive perspectives is deeply rooted in traditional Asian learning systems, as Asian traditional research methodology is inherently qualitative (Kashima, 2005; Liu, 2011). Actually, Confucianism and all Chinese philosophies include science (Sivin, 1990). In contrast to the reductionist and quantitative nature of Western science in separate disciplinary silos, Chinese science has an inclusive and qualitative nature, which connects objective science with humans' philosophy of life and politics (Sivin, 1990). Therefore, a qualitative methodology is chosen for this study.

Method: *Ren (benevolence/human)* Constructivist Grounded Theory

Thornberg and Charmaz (2012, p. 41) defined that “a theory states relationships between abstract concepts and may aim for either explanation or understanding.” The grounded theory method is “a good design to use when a theory is not available to explain or understand a process” (Creswell, 2014, p. 88). Grounded theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967. Grounded theory methodologists' ambition is to “comprise a systematic, inductive, and comparative approach for conducting an inquiry for the purpose of constructing theory” to inform policy and practice (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 2). Given that little empirical research has been conducted on self-leadership, especially women's self-leadership and ICWDSUS, the grounded theory method best suits

this dissertation study. As “a leading method in qualitative research” (Clarke, 2007, p. 345), the grounded theory method offers explanations, rather than detailed descriptions, to explore “why certain things happen,” and how people can “take action to alter, contain, and change situations” (Corbin & Strauss, 2014, p. 11; Patton, 2015, p. 109). Therefore, the result of grounded theory is not simply a descriptive report, but it is a generated theory.

Charmaz (2000) first presented *constructivist grounded theory* (CGT), which adopts the inductive, comparative analysis, actions, meaning making, intentionality, and an open-ended theory-construction approach from the original grounded theory. CGT treats research as a dynamic construction with both researchers’ reflectivity and participants’ view-sharing during the whole research process (Creswell, 2014). Unlike traditional qualitative research in the 20th century, which followed positivism in the 19th century with the separation of facts and values to achieve generality and universality, CGT in the 21st century adopts constructivism and interpretivism. This approach is the opposite of positivism and links the facts and values together to interpret fluid, indeterminate, provisional, and multiple realities to construct “abstract understandings” rather than cause-effect explanations (Charmaz, 2014, p. 233). In contrast to objectivist grounded theorists’ approach to analyze data in a “social vacuum” without historical, social, and situated processes, Charmaz’s constructivist grounded theory treats theorizing a grounded theory as “social actions.” The theory focuses on interactions in

particular spaces and time of researchers, participants, researchers' colleagues, target audiences, as well as the researcher's iterative practices of moving back and forth between data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2014, p. 234).

The openness of CGT “brings methodological eclecticism” to dissolve the incompatible assumptions among different methods and include various methodologies based on the need to probe the research problem (Charmaz, 2014, p. 27). The explanations that the grounded theory can offer are not necessarily limited to fixed variables and predicted outcomes, but they are open-ended and dynamic ways of knowing and growing. The construction of reality includes both “participants’ implicit meanings, experiential views” and “researchers’ finished grounded theory” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 17). Many indigenous, feminist, and social justice researchers have used the grounded theory method to study race, gender, ethnicity, history, and cultural identities at both macro and micro levels of analysis to provide implications for social change and social justice (Charmaz, 2011; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2003). The openness and inclusiveness of the CGT makes it the best method to solve the huge iceberg of challenges for ICWDSUS.

However, although the openness of CGT opens more possibilities for researchers, the morally neutral openness could open up the research to more risks and ethical issues as well. Some participants admitted immoral behaviors and views during my dissertation journey, such as plagiarism, deception, verbal and physical abuse, playing “psychological and political games” to cheat others, and

“killing a bloody path” to achieve their “end goal.” Although Confucianism is open to almost everything and includes pragmatism to maintain harmony, Confucianism does not acknowledge everything. Confucius criticized that the morally inferior *little person* (*xiao ren*) pursues practical benefits at the cost of compromising morality; a morally superior person (*junzi*) would lose practical benefits, even lives for righteousness (CTP, 2016, *Analects*, Li Ren: 16; Meng Zi, Gao Zi: 10). The ontology of my CGT research is not pragmatism, which might construct the self-leadership for a woman *xiao ren*, but Confucian *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) to construct the self-leadership of a woman *junzi*. The method for this dissertation about ICWDSUS is *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) CGT.

Methodological Assumptions

Deductive, Inductive, and Abductive

The methodological assumptions of this research are deductive, inductive, and abductive. Although normally grounded theory research has an inductive nature, the discussion and debate of self, leadership, and woman have always been conducting by everyone since the beginning of human civilization. The pre-conceived ideas could not be cleared from my mind as classic grounded theorist Glaser (1992) suggested. Unlike Glaser, grounded theorists Corbin and Strass acknowledged the pre-identified problems of literature reviews and personal experiences, which means that grounded theory has somewhat of a deductive perspective (Annells, 1997). No one is a “blank slate” and everyone views the

world and self from their own theoretical perspectives (Van de Ven, 2007, p. 104). Thus, it is natural for me and ICWDSUS to integrate the wisdom from both the West and traditional Chinese culture to continue the discussion about women, leadership, and the self to construct the self-leadership of ICWDSUS.

During the coding process, Glaser was ambiguous about whether theoretical coding should be conducted inductively from the emergent codes or apply prior knowledge as analytic schemes to deductively produce theoretical codes. On the one hand, Glaser's (1978) book *Theoretical Sensitivity* claimed that theoretical coding should be an emergent process, but grounded theorists should have theoretical sensitivity to understand many theoretical codes from known coding families, such as agency, action, power. On the other hand, Glaser (2005, p. 5) said that theoretical coding means "applying a variety of analytic schemes to the data to enhance their abstraction." If theoretical coding is an emergent inductive process, how can grounded theorists apply prior knowledge deductively (Charmaz, 2014)? If theoretical coding uses prior knowledge deductively as analytic schemes, how can grounded theorists ensure that they are creating new grounded theoretical codes rather than reproducing old theories from old coding families?

In this study, instead of forcing the research into fixed frameworks, I adopted an open, interactive, and humble attitude to include all methodological assumptions naturally and chose the best approach flexibly. I focus on data first

and then compare the emergent data with my prior knowledge and experiences. Although I have done a transdisciplinary literature review and I have my pre-knowledge as an ICWDSUS, the data analysis of this study is inductive and open to all possible theoretical interpretations through data to ground the *Dao* of the self-leadership for ICWDSUS. My literature review is mainly from English sources of Western scholars, which is not only inadequate to represent ICWDSUS with both Chinese and U.S. cultures, but many Western feminist theories were denied by my participants. Therefore, with the emergence of new phenomenon from data, I kept doing new literature review to better understand new phenomena. Thanks to the loose rather than tight research design of grounded theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007), with the emergence of data, my concepts and research design from previous literature and practices were continually updated. My new literature review and the research results keep rejecting the old feminist knowledge, and I wish I could be uneducated about women's studies as Glaser (1992) insisted. However, my study makes me realize that women's education in a patriarchal world could be more wrong than right for a woman's wellbeing, and women must have their own self-leadership to *dare to be wise* and to use their own understanding to enlighten themselves in the misleading patriarchal world.

Despite the emphasis on the induction of grounded theory research, abductive inferences with considering "all possible theoretical explanations for the data" also plays an important role in grounded theory research (Charmaz,

2006, p. 188). Abduction begins with inductive reasoning but then goes beyond induction to an “emergent, and often unanticipated theoretical direction” when researchers could not understand the data and explain “a surprising or puzzling finding” through existing knowledge (Charmaz, 2014, pp. 200, 201). As “a mode of imaginative reasoning” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 200), abduction requires researchers to consider and form test hypotheses to empirically examine all possible theoretical explanations until they find the most plausible interpretation for the surprising data. In this study, abduction was evident throughout the study. Most participants showed very different thinking from Western feminist approaches to successfully manage their lives in the U.S. However, a few participants followed feminist and diversity discourse, which led to endless conflicts with others and psychological crises with themselves.

Originally, I did not expect to use Chinese ontology and epistemology to analyze the data, but expected to follow Charmaz’s (2014) CGT method. However, with the emergence of more and more paradoxical situations, the abduction of this study triggered a methodological, epistemological, and ontological change from the CGT. As a result, I decided to use Confucian *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) ontology to change the pragmatism ontology of CGT to Chinese *Yinyang* epistemology to study the paradoxical world in an inclusive and balanced way. Instead of surprises, the abduction of my research provided many research shocks. My humblest research with a purpose to simply discover how an

ICWDSUS like me leads herself has shown the coming of a second Enlightenment. This new enlightenment enlightens individuals from building scientific knowledge to win over others for practical benefits to building *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) by including others for harmony and sustainable self-development. How people lead their own lives, like a self-author, requires that they constantly collect, interpret, analyze, and reflect data from their lives deductively, inductively, and abductively (Magolda, 2004).

Either Methodological Individualism and Methodological Relationalism

Constructing of ICWDSUS' benevolent *Dao* of self-leadership with *Yinyang* dynamism reveals a different methodology for women and feminist researchers to consider. The challenges for a woman of color in a foreign world is too complex to be solved with the static logic of both/and or either/or logic. An ICWDSUS needs to have *Yinyang* wisdom with both an individual's independence and interdependence with others throughout the changing and interactive process. With the reduction of social realities into individual representations, "methodological individualism" cannot represent the relational nature of a woman (Liu, 2011, p. 217). However, although many contemporary social scientists are shifting the paradigm "from methodological individualism to a methodological relationalism" with collective representations for group members in social contexts and relational networks (Fendt & Sachs, 2008; Ho & Chiu, 1998, p. 349), a marginalized woman in a hostile patriarchal world cannot

and should not simply and hastily move from one extreme to another extreme. Collective representations and oppression in patriarchal social contexts are often misleading and destructive for an individual and marginalized woman.

For many ICWDSUS, the primary reason for leaving China is to leave the oppression from traditional relational networks in Chinese culture to experience a new world and freedom (Dickerson, 2016, p. 31; Gu, 2016; Qin & Lykes, 2006). The complicated *guanxi* and the disrespect for individualism, especially for women, made many participants hate the thought of returning to China. *Yinyang* dynamism in this study acknowledges the strengths and weaknesses of both methodological individualism and methodological relationalism and critically integrates the two opposing methodological assumptions in a balanced way through a dynamic and interactive process of change.

Step 3: Constructing an Integrated Self-leadership Research Process

Ren (benevolence/human) Sampling

Open and Partially Purposeful Sampling. Qualitative researchers often conduct purposeful sampling to select samples non-randomly from a specifically defined population to serve the research purpose (Creswell, 2013). Purposeful sampling does not aim for generalization, but for the best understanding of the research problem. Theoretically, purposeful sampling allows the researcher to interpret the embedded meaning from interviews to deepen the researcher's understanding of the general research problem. It also provides specific examples

of the uniqueness of each participant's general social experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Purposeful sampling also works well with grounded theory's theoretical sampling, which may occur through the whole coding process to facilitate more specific data collection and verify codes and concepts until saturation of the data is reached (Annells, 1997). For example, my initial nine participants were residing in the U.S. To explore the experiences of ICWDSUS who returned to China to work, I also purposefully chose a few ICWDSUS who had returned to China to work.

However, in my dissertation study, I could only partially use purposeful sampling and left some parts open for the emergence of situations, such as how to define "Chineseness." When I attempted to use purposeful sampling to include Chinese women who had completed their doctoral journey in the U.S., every participant asked me a tough question. Who is considered a Chinese woman (Ang, 2001)? Are Taiwanese, Hong Kongese, Chinese American, Malaysian Chinese, Singaporean Chinese women, or mixed-race Chinese counted as Chinese? The inclusive nature of transdisciplinarity, CGT, and Chinese culture as well as my cultural and humanistic views of this study forced me to choose an open attitude with almost all areas of recruiting the participants. I did not use my authority as the researcher to define who should be called "Chinese" for my purposeful recruiting but I allowed the participants to emerge naturally and voluntarily from my relational networks. Although I know Taiwanese, Singaporean, and Chinese-

American women doctoral students who identify as Chinese, they were not sure if their political differences with mainland Chinese would represent the majority of ICWDSUS and they did not feel comfortable joining this study. Therefore, the criteria for participants of this study emerged naturally as follows:

1. A woman who identified as Chinese and was born and had completed her bachelor's degree in mainland China.
2. A woman who started her doctoral journey in the U.S. in the 21st century after 2000.

The Inconvenience of the Convenience Sampling. Normally, qualitative researchers first use their social and professional networks to send a recruitment email and consent statement with clear procedures to invite participants. After the researchers find a few participants, they use snowball sampling to ask participants to introduce more candidates from their networks (Kuttig, 2012; Qin, 2000; Zhao, 2019). Theoretically, the network and snowball sampling strategies from available and accessible participants are regarded as convenience sampling by researchers (Castro & Collins, 2021; Morse, 1991). However, in practice, it is not necessarily convenient.

The author of the only paper with a focus on ICWDSUS described how inconvenient the convenience sampling was to recruit ICWDSUS although the researcher herself was an ICWDSUS. After failing to recruit participants by sending recruiting emails with incentives, Kuttig (2012, p. 51) “solicited an

administrator” to connect “her students who fit the sample criteria” to join the study about ICWDSUS and their advising experiences. Embedded in obvious power dynamics, all participants in Kuttig’s (2012) research reported positive experiences with their advisors, institution, and campus without any discrimination and negative experiences. Their “perfect” doctoral experience as ICWDSUS was challenged by the research results of this study and my literature review about international students and women scientists in the U.S. (Brazill, 2021; Castro & Collins, 2021; Gu, 2016; Lee & Rice, 2007; Turner et al., 2011; Williams et al., 2014; Xie, 2007; Zhao, 2015). Although Kuttig (2012, p. 138) also realized the limitation of her sampling strategy, due to the “time constraints” of her doctoral dissertation, she admitted that she had tried her best.

Hall (1976) claimed that people from high-context cultures (e.g., China) value long-term relationships rather than explicit rules and standards. Without trusting relationships, the communication tools (e.g., emails, incentives, and consent form) that are often used in low-context cultures such as the U.S. to recruit participants, would not make people from high-context cultures trust a researcher they have never met or known. Chan’s (2006) research showed the difficulty Chinese women graduate students have cultivating trusting friends. Although I tried to use *snowball sampling* to ask my interviewees to introduce eligible friends to me, the convenient sampling strategy, *snowball sampling*, was

not convenient and did not help me make the snowball larger. In the end, no participants were recruited from the snowball sampling strategy.

Ren (benevolence/human) Relational Sampling. After failing to employ snowball sampling of passively waiting for participants to introduce me to other candidates, I actively approached potential candidates from my own professional and social network events, and I found that this inconvenient and partial purposeful sampling strategy worked the best in this study. I did not approach candidates with my clear research purpose due to their eligibility for my research, but observed eligible women first and chose then candidates whose self-leadership naturally attracted me. Instead of just recruiting short-term research subjects, I found out more about my participants and made friends with them. Although I would have preferred not to interview some participants or they did not want to be interviewed at first, after we knew more about each other, I naturally invited them to join my research, or they naturally invited me to interview them. The participants I recruited by building a *Ren (benevolence/human)* relationship directly through mutual learning about each other contributed the most to my *Ren (benevolence/human)* self-leadership theory-building.

I named my sampling strategy *Ren (benevolence/human)* relational sampling, which means to recruit a participant by building a *Ren (benevolence/human)* relationship without an intermediary and direct purpose

with a short-term objective. Unlike network or snowball sampling with a clear purpose to recruit research subjects, my *Ren (benevolence/human)* relational sampling had no direct purpose except to make the research an opportunity to build *Ren (human/ benevolence)* relationships with others by learning from each other. However, to build *Ren (benevolence/human)* relationships with others was my one-sided wish, rather than my purpose. Whether the others also wanted to build *Ren (benevolence/human)* relationships with me was up to them. Therefore, as the researcher, I had to be patient to learn from others first and identify if they wanted to build utilitarian *guanxi* to manipulate me and my research or to build a *Ren (benevolence/human)* relationship with mutual benevolence for each other. A utilitarian *guanxi* with a utilitarian opportunist perspective grounded a utilitarian theory is about how to utilize the world's resources. In other words, a *Ren (benevolence/human)* relationship with a benevolent human would ground a benevolent research result to serve the world. Although Fontana and Frey (1994) suggested that qualitative researchers build a "human-to-human relation with the respondent and the desire to understand rather than to explain" (p. 366) during the interview, the *Ren (benevolence/human)* relational sampling means that the relationship-building process with participants starts from the moment the researcher and the potential participant begin to interact, which could last a long time before the research. The longer the relationship lasts, the more trust and

understanding between the two might be constructed, and the more opportunities they will build.

Since women tend to form strong relational networks for support (Qin & Lykes, 2006), *Ren (benevolence/human)* relational sampling, which builds direct *Ren (benevolence/human)* relationships between a researcher and a participant might be effective and even be better for women than snowball sampling through intermediaries. As a novice researcher, I was not confident at first to approach potential participants to invite them to join my research and share their experiences. However, I was surprised to discover that once I directly approached women in my social and professional networks to talk about my research, regardless of their similar nationality or familiarity with me and my work, they wanted to help me even if they did not know me well. They either actively volunteered to be my research participants or they connected me to other networks if they were not eligible for my research. Although one Chinese woman immediately declined my invitation, my direct communication with her still gave her the opportunity to directly communicate with me and she immediately connected me to her Chinese academic WeChat groups in the U.S., where I could find many eligible candidates. When I told participant Luyinbi (a qualitative researcher) about my concerns about interviewing participants I did not know before, she encouraged me:

I interviewed many women whom I did not know. Many women want to talk with people. They may have been waiting for a long time to talk with a stranger who will not gossip about them. Many times, I realized that my interview gave some women the only opportunity to express themselves freely with an active listener who is not in their circles.

Luyinbi's observation and experience was also true of my participants as they liked to talk regardless of whether they knew me or not. However, the snowball sampling (i.e., uses another person as the intermediary to connect the researcher and potential participant) may increase the risk for participants from vulnerable groups to share their lives. Before the interview, two participants asked me about the fields of the other participants to make sure I would not interview women from their fields. Although qualitative researchers keep participants' names confidential, participants from the same small academic field might be able to identify each other from some details and a simple Google search. Building direct communication and a relationship between the researcher and participant through *Ren (benevolence/human)* relational sampling may help the participant better understand and trust the researcher. Such trust will contribute to the research quality.

In *Ren (benevolence/human)* relational sampling, candidates are not passively waiting to be sampled by the researcher, but they actively use the criteria of benevolence and professionalism to evaluate the researcher to help them decide if they can trust the researcher and to what extent they can share their life stories with the researcher. When I interviewed participants whom I did not

know before, I could feel that they were not open at first. However, by asking me more questions and interacting more, they started to trust me more and became more open. At the end of the interview, they not only actively discussed their deep reflections on my interview questions, but they also offered warm encouragement and useful tips for my dissertation writing and future job search.

Ren (benevolence/human) relational sampling does not follow pragmatism but benevolence. Participants are not the practical tools to finish the research, but the interview is the tool for me and participants to learn from each other as two benevolent women to create better lives for all. In addition to the research task, *Ren (benevolence/human)* relational sampling may have long-term impacts on the lives of both the researcher and participants. In my case, although at first, I invited participants to join my interview for my dissertation, in the end, *Ren (benevolence/human)* relational sampling helped me make new friends and new job opportunities.

Participants and the Researcher

“Sample size is important only as it relates to judging the extent to which issues of saturation have been carefully considered” (Bowen, 2008, p. 140). The question of how many participants would be regarded as a good sample size for saturation is a contestable question for qualitative researchers. Some researchers suggest nine participants, and some suggested 12 (Morse, 2008). Some even just interviewed four participants (Gao, 2019; Ye & Edwards, 2017). Charmaz (2014)

claimed that having a small number of interviews may be enough for a straightforward research question and having a big number of interviews does not necessarily guarantee excellent research. The number of participants and interviews depends on the research question, purpose, and the depth the researcher aspires to address (Charmaz, 2014). In addition to a researcher's original plan, I think that the emergent, open, and interactive nature of CGT during a long research journey makes the researcher also have to follow the natural changes during the research journey, rather than arbitrarily stick to the initial interview target number.

Participants in the U.S.

In this research, although I initially planned to interview six participants, nine participants kindly volunteered to join my research, who all work in the U.S. Their interviews contributed to rich empirical data about how ICWDSUS survived in a foreign world after leaving their home country, which answered *Zijun's* puzzle 100 years ago, as discussed in Chapter 1. Instead of *Zijun's regret for the past*, the audio and visual recording recorded participants' much laughter when they talked about their challenges during their doctoral journey.

However, after returning to the old world from the new world, *Zijun* died of depression in the end (Lu et al., 2003). Women in Gu's (2016) research and my first nine participants all wanted to work in the U.S., and did not want to return to China. Some participants in the U.S. told me bad stories and their deep concerns

about working in China, such as the corruption, jealousy from local people, fake contracts, plagiarism, sexual harassment, and gender discrimination. I could not help wondering if returning to their old world would mean failure or even death for ICWDSUS like *Zijun*. That question concerned me since the anti-Asian violence in the U.S. after the global pandemic made me decide to return to China.

Participants in China

After I returned to China, I met some women Ph.D. returnees from the U.S. and joined several Chinese management conferences and networks. I added four more participants who now work in China to examine their lives after returning to China. All participants in China denied that they had experienced serious unfair treatment in China although they all agreed with participants in the U.S. that the research and work environment and systems in the U.S. were still much better than China. However, they liked Chinese food much more than food in the U.S. Participants in China told me that they had better pay and titles with their American diplomas than their colleagues with domestic educations. When I asked about most ICWDSUS' deep concerns about returning to China, participant Fupan, who returned to China ten years ago, laughed and explained: "Haha! They may have been out of China for so long that their perceptions and judgments are still based on information from the past...Compared to the situation 10 years ago, China has improved very fast."

In contrast to *Zijun*'s depression and many ICWDSUS' concerns about returning to China, participants in China laughed even harder than ICWDSUS in the U.S. Wu et al. (2020) identified three levels of support for a Chinese doctoral student's success including micro, mezzo, and macro levels. In addition to the personal traits of intelligence, diligence, and self-control that all participants share on a micro level, participants in China have more supporters from peer groups, families, and friends in China on a mezzo level and enjoy more support from China's governmental policies on a macro level than participants in the U.S. Participants in China all mentioned that the Chinese government in their city value and provide special incentives to attract overseas talents. In contrast to the concerns from participants in the U.S. about safety and the anger about racism, participants in China showed strong confidence in the future with many opportunities in the Chinese job market. For example, I was shocked to hear that participant Fupan has provided online workshops on weekends, Christmas, and even Chinese New Year Day, and about half million Chinese people attended her online workshops during the holidays. Participants in China are too busy, active, and confident to be depressed like *Zijun*. They personally demonstrated how the women decided to leave the U.S. and return to China, and how they survived well in both worlds. However, the concerns of participants in the U.S. about the problems in Chinese academia are not unfounded. Participants in China also shared about the pressure and severe competition in China.

After removing the data of the first couple of pilot interviews and the interview of one drop-out participant, the data of the final study is from 12 women listed below. Table 5 shows the demographics of the 12 participants.

Table 5

The Demographics of Participants

Participants (Pseudonyms)	Age	Year Came to the U.S.	Doctoral Study Years	Postdoc/ Temp Job/ Job seeking	Specialized Field
Luyinbi	34	2012 (2012-2014 Master's degree)	2015-2018 Ph.D.	2018-2019 Temp teaching job	Education
Lily	36	2010	2010-2014	2014-2017 postdocs	STEM
Jo	39	2008	2008-2015		Education
Anna	40	2007 (2007-2009 Master's degree)	2009-2017 Part-time Ph.D.	2017-2022 Admin job	Education
JJ	31	2014	2014-2019 Ph.D.		STEM
Summer	33	2010 (2010-2012 Master's degree)	2012-2014 Ph.D.		STEM
Zixi	34	2011 (2011-2013 Master's degree)	2013-2020 Ph.D.		Education
Lora	33	2012 (2012-2014 Master's degree)	2014-2019 Ph.D.	2019-2022	STEM

Superwoman	33	2013	2013-2019	2019-2021 Job seeking	STEM
Mary	44	2006 (2006-2008 Master's degree)	2008-2011 Ph.D.		Psychology
A	32	2012 (2012-2014 1 st Master's degree 2014-2016 2 nd Master's)	2016-2019 Ph.D.		STEM
Fupan	44	2005 as the dependent of her husband 2006-2007 Master's degree	2008-2010	2010-2011	Technology

The Doctoral Journey

Although the 12 women are no longer ICWDSUS, they went through the doctoral journey as ICWDSUS in the U.S. after 2000 and described their doctoral journeys from memory. Their doctoral journey began before enrolling in the doctoral program and continued after graduation and included the journeys of others around them, so every participant had a different journey. As a critical part of participants' lived experiences, their doctoral journey connected to their previous and current situations as well as their families' and husbands' life journeys. Although this study focuses on when participants were enrolled in a doctoral program, their doctoral journey started from preparing for overseas studies to their current lives as a professional after graduation. Therefore, exploring the full journey provides a broader context of how their doctoral

journey is embedded within their life journey and how it impacts their lives, families, and children. The shape and length of everyone's doctoral journey varied greatly. For example, JJ's doctoral journey was quite linear from being a student in China to being an assistant professor in the same major in the U.S. without getting married. The doctoral journey of Participant A and Anna experienced more zigzag routes. Anna had worked and earned a master's degree in China and then earned another master's degree and Ph.D. in the U.S. In the U.S., in addition to studying, Anna had several jobs, got married, and had two children. Participant A also earned two master's degrees before pursuing her Ph.D. Participant Lily did not earn a master's degree before studying for her Ph.D. and then had two postdoc positions before becoming an assistant professor. Anna and Jo moved to several states following their husband's work. In contrast, Luyinbi's husband moved to several states following her work. Summer and her husband moved to China to work after graduation and then returned to the U.S. Mary and her husband worked in the U.S. first and recently moved back to China.

In terms of marital and family status, Luyinbi, Superwoman, Anna, Lily, Zixi, and Summer got married during their doctoral journeys. Two participants divorced after finishing her Ph.D. Zixi and Superwoman were married but had no children. Luyinbi and Summer had one child, Anna and Jo had two children, Mary had three children, and Fupan had four children.

Although one woman got married to a man, she admitted that she actually loves women. Women who have had finished their Ph.D. in the past one or two years had clear memories about their doctoral journey and provided more details. Women, who had worked for more than five years after earning their Ph.D. reflected more on the clear impacts of their doctoral journeys on their lives. Although most ICWDSUS preferred to work in academia (Gu, 2016), some women doctoral graduates started to shift their career choices from teaching and researching to industry and other careers (Huang & Shen, 2019). Although seven participants taught in universities as assistant or associate professors, four had administrative, management, or counseling roles in universities, and one started her own company.

In addition to various careers, ages, marital and family status, fields, and years of working, the demographic diversity of the participants also included religious diversity. Although the PRC is not known as a religious nation, the inclusive Confucian culture has made China open to all religions. Four women reported being religions with various religions. I myself is Christian. Most participants had some connections with church.

In terms of work status, although some participants received a Green Card (Permanent Resident Card) or U.S. citizenship after their doctoral studies, they all regarded their cultural identity as Chinese. Regardless of their current nationality on their passports, their cultural experiences in the U.S. and China varied greatly

based on the different region(s) where they were raised, educated, or worked in China and the U.S. Their husbands' cultural backgrounds from various regions also significantly influenced the married participants.

Although the lived experiences of the 12 participants and myself suffice for most qualitative research (Charmaz, 2014), considerable individual differences stood out. This study provides ethnographical and autobiographical perspectives with sustained observation, participation, interactions, and reflection from both participants as well as my own reflections. Although I have not finished my doctoral journey yet, as an ICWDSUS, my lived experiences as an insider and my reflection about my doctoral journey and interactions with participants are also included in the dissertation to conclude my *Dao* of the self-leadership of ICWDSUS.

In terms of the humanistic topic of self-leadership, no one can collect enough data to generate a universal theory. Despite my efforts, I admit that the topic of a woman's self-leadership must be a lifelong pursuit. Therefore, this is an open-ended topic with partial saturation for my proposed *Dao* of self-leadership for ICWDSUS. It is not because of my openness and judgment of saturation from my pragmatic concerns for the time constraints of my doctoral journey, but because a leader must know how to humbly follow the *Dao* from heaven that is not controlled by a human. The results of my constructivist grounded self-leadership does not give me the confidence to control my life but makes me stand

in awe of life. Although people have some control over their own situations, many situations are out of their control. One has to allow the *Dao* from heaven and others to lead the self-leader and the world together. In the *Book of Changes*, the last stop of the change journey is “unfinishing” (*Wei Ji*). The succession of the changing events never ends, and the close of the *Book of Changes* is unfinished, so one must return to the very beginning of the *Book of Changes* to restart a new change journey with new endeavors on a new level (CTP, 2016, *Yijing*, Xugua: 63). Rather than knowing everything about life, it is more fun to leave some things unknown for the next stop of life’s journey to be revealed. Charmaz (2014, p. 17) described a CGT study as an “interpretive portrayal” in contrast to a photo-like positivist theory. Thus, my CGT study about ICWDSUS looks like a Chinese ink-painting, using various degrees of black ink to draw simple patterns of a complex world on white paper. In a Chinese ink-painting, much white space is purposefully empty to leave room for viewers to revise, reflect, and resume. Bryant and Charmaz (2007, p. 22) claimed that where “one starts a grounded theory study is seldom where one ends.”

Consent

As all participants have written their dissertations, they were open and cooperative to my research. However, qualitative research was still new to most participants, especially participants in STEM fields, and it was the first time for most participants to be interviewed.

Prior to the interviews, I verbally explained the outline of the research and confirmed anonymity and confidentiality as well as my appreciation for their participation. I also sent the consent statement (Appendix D) and the interview questions (Appendix F) via email to the participants for their review. The consent statement includes a clear description of the research procedure, and informed participants that I would use Zoom to conduct the interview. Using Zoom for the interview was a new change due to the COVID-19, which was different from what I originally told the participants. Although participants all agreed to be recorded audibly, one refused to be video recorded on Zoom. One participant who had just returned to China chose to use Chinese social media WeChat to do a voice call for the interview. Since Zoom is not used in China, one participant used the Chinese equivalent of Zoom, Tencent Meeting, for the interview. Before the interview, I asked each participant to give themselves a pseudo name and chose their preferred language to be interviewed.

To REFUSE or CONSENT could mean different things for different genders and for individuals from individualistic and collectivist cultures. Rather than to refuse or consent based on one's own benefit, most participants did not consent if the result was only good for themselves with more work for me and other participants. Although some women did not like to be video recorded at first, once I explained the value of facial expressions and other non-verbal

information, they immediately refused my attempt to just record their voices and agreed to video record the interview to show their facial expressions.

In addition, signing a consent document is a Western research procedure with low-context cultural assumptions (Hall, 1976). Communication in high-context cultures (e.g., China) tend to be implicit, contextual, and relationship-oriented with fewer words and rules. In my dissertation study, the consent form had both pros and cons. Although the first potential participant enthusiastically agreed to be interviewed, her enthusiasm “to help a friend” might be hurt after I sent her the consent form via email. She never replied to me even after I sent her the second email. The cold contract-like consent form may have seemed like a legal contract for her, rather than providing warm help. Charmaz (2009) highlighted the importance of the silence of participants to the construction of a CGT research; what one does not say in certain situations may indicate what one wants to say. I interpreted this potential participant’s no-reply response as her dropping this study due to her discomfort with directly refusing to participate, especially in a written form via email. Therefore, after that incident, I adjusted the consent strategy, and just sent the consent document via email after my verbal communication without pushing them to sign first. They all replied and consented via email in a natural and informal way, and I collected the emails as both their consent and as part of the collected research data.

Although U.S. consent forms with precise and clear information for participants is new in Chinese culture, many participants appreciated the protection of their rights described the consent form. Despite the limitation of using the Western research conventions to examine non-Western women, the clarity in Western culture does help non-Western women protect their rights and work more effectively in an implicit communication culture. The open nature of CGT opens more opportunities as well as risks for a researcher and participants. Therefore, the inclusiveness of CGT and transdisciplinarity require scholars to learn from and respect both Western and non-Western cultures with both an open perspective for new opportunities and a clear mind for new risks.

Collecting Comprehensive Data and Interview Questions

Glaser and Strauss (1967) claimed that the research journey for a grounded theorist generally starts with data collection. However, my CGT research journey is the integration and the extension of many Chinese and Western predecessors' attempts to seek how to lead oneself (i.e., self-leadership). This study uses both historical materials and contemporary data from research participants to examine ICWDSUS' self-leadership to make better sense of their lived experiences throughout their doctoral journey. Glaser (1998) claimed that everything in grounded theory could be regarded as data. My data collection process made me feel like a detective to seek evidence from the details using multiple data collection methods to examine participants' self-leadership. In

addition to the interviews, considerable data emerged unexpectedly from my ethnographic research experience and non-purposeful social interactions with participants. Although semi-structured individual interviews were the primary data source of this study, their body language, facial expressions, tone, emotions, observations, field notes, online sources (Linkedin, social media, publications, videos), or participants' other artifacts were also used to obtain nonverbal data. I video recorded most participants. For most participants, I had three versions of the interview: the word version (written transcription), the mp3 audio version to analyze sound and tone, and the mp4 video version to analyze their body language and facial expressions. I read, listened to, and watched participants' interviews to analyze what they said, how they said it, and how they expressed themselves to gain a deeper understanding of their meaning. Combined with their other published materials (e.g., LinkedIn, social media, publications) and my direct interactions with them, I analyzed the data for most participants from five angles, which I call pentangulation or 5D analysis. Thus, I captured a complete story of each participant by pentangulating various types of data to compare and verify the results. The co-constructive nature of CGT between participants and the researcher through interaction also enabled me to analyze my own facial expressions, sentences, and interactions with the participants during the interview.

The interview in CGT is a method to examine the studied world and then construct a theory. Charmaz (2014, p. 56) suggested that CGT researchers use

intensive interviewing to explore participants' substantial experiences about the research problem with "a gently guided, one-sided conversation." As an ICWDSUS, I am familiar with the topic and have a similar biography (e.g., gender, race) to participants as an insider. It was not feasible for me to interview participants with little pre-knowledge about them and their prior experiences of an ICWDSUS' journey. Therefore, I developed interview strategies to take advantage of my familiarity with participants while minimizing my biases. When I interviewed participants, I adopted a deliberate attitude of humility, open-mindedness, and gentleness to encourage participants to share their doctoral journeys, which I may have taken for granted. My humble attitude to learn from participants helped me solve the dilemma when my "personal-self becomes inseparable from the research-self" (Creswell, 2003, p. 182).

For example, originally, I developed 31 interview questions based on my literature review (see Appendix E). However, during the pilot interview process, one ICWDSUS suggested me summarize and reduce the original 31 interview questions to about 10 key questions with similar question structures. Therefore, interviewees can easily understand my interview questions and answer with in-depth and thorough reflection within 90 minutes. Two participants also challenged the design of my interview questions by focusing solely on the challenges without a balanced view of the happy side of a doctoral journey.

Therefore, the final version of interview questions included ten broad interview questions, which are listed below and in Appendix F:

1. During your doctoral journey, what were the challenges in your study?
How did you cope with those challenges?
2. During your doctoral journey, what were the challenges in your work?
How did you cope with those challenges?
3. During your doctoral journey, what were the challenges in your life? How did you cope with those challenges?
4. During your doctoral journey, what were the challenges in your psychological wellbeing? How did you cope with those challenges?
5. During your doctoral journey, what did you gain?
6. During your doctoral journey, could you describe some happy memories?
7. Does your identity as a woman bring any challenges for your study, work, life, and psychological wellbeing?
8. Does your Chinese identity bring any challenges for your study, work, life, and psychological wellbeing?
9. What do you think of/How do you define women's leadership?
10. What do you think of a woman's self-leadership? How do you describe your self-leadership during your doctoral journey?

In addition to the broad interview questions, the detailed 31 questions in Appendix E were used as the interview protocol for follow-up questions. With the

development of the research, new follow-up questions kept emerging (see Appendix E). Therefore, this study did not rigidly follow a static monolithic interview protocol but allowed the main interview protocol to develop flexibly and naturally with the development of the research and the interactions between the participants and researcher. Charmaz (2014) warned grounded theorists that their intensive interviews must respect the culture including the larger social culture and the micro local culture, as well as the interviewees' situations. Since my participants are from a high-context culture, I tried to use little verbal language but used considerable encouraging body language to encourage them to think and talk more without judgment, such as smiling, curious looks, and nodding my head while murmuring "mmm." I often used "why" or "how" to follow participants in case they assumed that I understood what they meant since I had similar experiences as an ICWDSUS.

Although qualitative researchers set up the direction of an interview at first, a participant can take control of the interview later from the semi-structured and emergent interview questions (Corbin & Morse, 2003). Although CGT's *intensive interviewing* attempts to elicit substantial information from participants, my participants' research background and academic curiosity also made many of them interview me back to seek my knowledge about the interview questions that had stuck with them. Instead of pretending that I did not know about ICWDSUS' lives, I tried to minimize my answers. My controlled self-disclosure encouraged

more in-depth sharing from my participants. For example, most participants were stuck when I asked the last two interview questions about their definitions of *women's leadership* and a *woman's self-leadership*. Once participants realized the relevance of my research to their own lives as a woman and their knowledge gap as a woman leader, their professional identities as researchers immediately transformed the interview questions into discussion topics for us. Again, instead of pretending that I was ignorant of the topic of women's leadership, I honestly shared some basic concepts and dilemmas related to women's leadership to seek their views as women researchers. After summarizing basic women's leadership concepts, the participants were able to explore their answers about women and leadership from their own experiences, readings, and reflections. In this way, the interviews and research results of this study were co-constructed by me and the participants.

The first-round of formal interviews were conducted through Zoom, WeChat, or Tencent Meeting for about 90 minutes. After the preliminary data analysis from the first-round interviews, the early data and codes "were suggestive, but not yet definitive" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 199). All participants had a formal or informal second-round interview or subsequent conversations with me through Zoom or WeChat to collect further information to refine concepts. In addition, as the researcher, I also participated in new social worlds to explore the emerging concepts, codes, categories and relationships between categories for

clarification, verification, and saturation (Glaser,1998). By comparing data with relevant literature, the literature was also sampled as more data to develop the emergent concepts. Instead of arguing about conclusions from the findings, the grounded theory literature is “woven into the theory as more data for constant comparison” to further develop concepts, properties, and categories (Glaser, 1998, p. 67). After each interview and conversation, I immediately jotted down my observations, reflections, and thoughts to form the field notes to capture vital information and my fleeting views and feelings for this research. I also kept a methodological journal for my self-reflectivity to raise questions and avoid forming preconceived ideas from the initial data.

Only two participants chose to be interviewed in English, and ten chose to be interviewed in a combination of Mandarin and English. Twinn (1998) suggested that the language to analyze the transcript should be aligned with the interview language to ensure validity. Instead of translating Mandarin into English for data coding, I transcribed the interviews verbatim based on what participants said. Two transcriptions were in English, and ten in the combined Mandarin and English. All the transcripts were compared with the field notes, observations, and other data sources to accurately capture participants’ meanings. In addition to the transcripts of combined/mixed English and Mandarin during the interviews, all non-interview communications with participants including English emails, Mandarin WeChat messages and blogs, social communication with

participants, memos, observations, field notes, and self-reflection were recorded in combined/mixed English and Mandarin, which is how ICWDSUS typically communicate. Therefore, I translated the Chinese into English only when I wrote the final English report.

Bass et al. (1996) claimed that women tend to use more transformational leadership than men by being communal, relational, and inspirational to encourage high performance. In this qualitative CGT study, the flexibility and room for women participants to construct the research with the researcher allowed the participants to use their transformational leadership to help and encourage me to examine their self-leadership. Therefore, in addition to understanding women's oppression from complex contexts for social justice policymakers, the qualitative CGT method is highly suitable to study women's leadership to support each woman to actively develop herself.

Constant Comparison

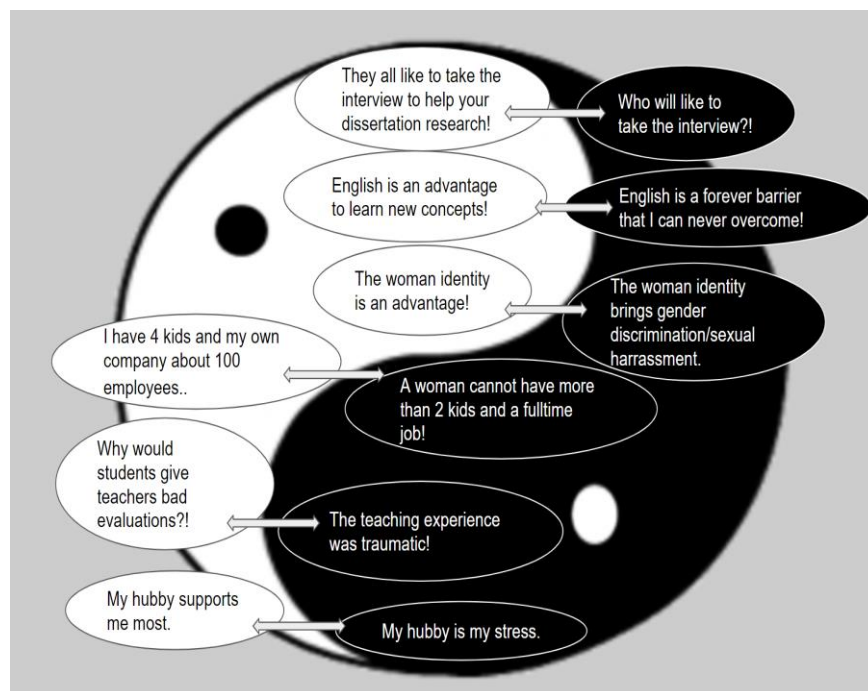
In grounded theory, the data analysis and data collection occur at the same time (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Constant comparison procedures are used with the first slice of data (e.g., interviews, observations) to compare what the researcher found and to generate concepts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As a critical part of grounded theory, constant comparison synchronizes thematic coding and theory generation. In this way, concept or theory is constantly being refined and generated. Glaser (1965, p. 439) proposed four stages for constant comparison,

which are 1) “comparing incidents applicable to each category,” 2) “integrating categories and their properties,” 3) “delimiting the theory,” and 4) “writing the theory.”

In my data analysis experience, originally, I tried to follow Glaser’s (1965) four stages of constant comparison. The first two stages of my constant comparison were as expected and aligned with Glaser’s (1965) first two stages. From the very beginning of my interviews, my constant comparative analysis immediately exposed sharp contrasts like the opposing *Yin* and *Yang* among participants. With more and more opposing phenomena emerging, a paradoxical world took shape. The following *Yinyang* diagram in Figure 12 shows how participants described the paradoxical world of ICWDSUS indicating a non-linear model.

Figure 12

The Yinyang World of ICWDSUS



However, at stage 3 of Glaser's (1965, p.439) constant comparison, when I tried to do the "delimiting the theory" by reducing and solidifying the list of categories in an inductive way before the last stage of "writing the theory," an unexpected incident happened. I realized that what participants said and what they achieved were often opposite. For example, one participant said that "English is a forever barrier that I can never overcome!" She unconfidently emphasizes that her English is horrible. However, her achievements show that she is a professor teaching management studies in English to Ph.D. students from all over the world at a top 150 U.S. university with all great teaching evaluations. In contrast, to another participant, who confidently claimed that she understood everything in English as a 60% American had traumatic teaching experiences in her very first

semester of teaching American undergraduate students, which totally scared her away from pursuing a faculty career. Therefore, I had to use abductive reasoning to analyze this paradox, and a *Yinyang* data analysis strategy emerged to analyze one phenomenon through three layers, which are visible (*Yang*), less visible (*Yinyang*), and invisible (*Yin*). From the visible *Yang* layer, English fluency seems to be a must for teaching in higher education in the U.S. However, from the less visible *Yinyang* layer, a good teaching evaluation is not necessarily only from English fluency, and could come from diligent preparation, course design, or the respect for students. In the end, from the invisible *Yin* layer, whether one has a traumatic or great teaching experience, whether a woman identity is an advantage or disadvantage, whether English is a barrier or an advantage could be from one's positive or negative attitude in one's heart.

The data from different participants was not only contradictory, but also challenged most Western-centric feminist and androcentric leadership theories. As the research progressed, constant comparative analysis was conducted at all levels of the analytic work including constant comparison between the Western and Chinese cultural differences. In the end, the CGT of this study integrated many Chinese traditional cultural elements, such as *Yinyang* concept. And before Glaser's (1965) stage of "delimiting the theory," I added a *Yinyang* data analysis stage to analyze the paradoxical world. Thus, the final grounded theory reflects *Yinyang* dynamism.

***Yinyang* Data Analysis**

The “first analytic turn” of the grounded theory process, coding labels, explains various categories that emerge from the data (Charmaz, 2014, p. 109). During the open coding process, whether or not the prior knowledge should be applied as analysis coding schemes is a dilemma for grounded theorists. On the one hand, grounded theorists should remain open to allow all possible new ideas to emerge from the data instead of using preconceived codes to categorize the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). On the other hand, theoretical codes from prior knowledge can “move [the] analytic story in a theoretical direction” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 150). Strauss and Corbin (1998) proposed the use of *axial coding* to put repeated codes into categories and subcategories. In my study, my analysis schemes were repeatedly changed with the emergence of new data. Instead of using one framework with preconceived codes, the emergence of data showed almost all major leadership frameworks with their problems and participants’ solutions. In the end, I adopted *Yinyang* data analysis strategy to solve this dilemma. On the one hand, I follow Charmaz’s (2014) emergent analytic strategies to allow the categories to emerge from my prior knowledge and from participants to form the initial analysis schemes; on the other hand, I allow new data to oppose my initial analysis scheme with new information for a balanced theoretical construction. Therefore, the analytical result of my grounded theory dissertation is half open-ended and balanced with changing dynamism.

Corbin and Strass (2014) suggested using selective coding to eliminate insignificant codes which are not present in most interviews once the saturation of codes was reached, and the storyline was clear. In this way, the remaining codes contributed to the research results and conclusions. Palmer (2013) noted that the combination of conclusions gives birth to “one concept,” which shapes grounded theory (p. 102). However, the *Yinyang* philosophy is never about one saturated concept but is at least three changing concepts: *Yin*, *Yang*, and *Yinyang*. Instead of one closed reality as classic grounded theorists have proposed or multiple parallel and fluid realities as CGT proposes, *Yinyang* data analysis generates three different but interrelated realities—*Yang*, *Yinyang*, and *Yin*—to represent visible and fluid, half visible and half fluid, and invisible and stable realities. The *Yinyang* approach allows a complex and fragmented VUCA world to be divided into three interrelated realities: *Yin*, *Yang*, and *Yinyang*. This perspective does not oversimplify the world into one objective reality to fool people and does not overcomplicate the world into countless realities to confuse people. *Yang* and *Yin* are opposing realities, and *Yinyang* reality is the interaction between the two extremes. Among the invisible and stable *Yin* reality, the moral reality, *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) unites all opposing and other realities in an open, dynamic, and balanced way.

In addition, participants’ strong research background facilitated the theoretical coding process during the interviews in an interactive way between me

and participants, rather than during my own focused coding process. Glaser (1998) suggested using *in vivo codes*, which means using the participants' special terms to link participants' fresh perspectives and codes together for theoretical development. For example, one participant defined a key word: adversity quotient (AQ). Thanks to her theoretical contribution, *AQ* was woven into my proposed self-leadership theory as a concept, even though it was not found in the literature review.

Yinyang Saturating Theoretical Categories

With the VUCA world becoming increasingly complex with multiple realities from many directions, some researchers may have to ignore the complexities and claim saturation without providing it. Facing “the unfilled promise” of grounded theory to generate a theory to guide people’s action (Charmaz, 2014, p.244), the “even exacerbating conditions of inequity” of feminist research (Calás & Smircich, 2006, p.328), and the irreconcilable Western dualism with many dichotomies embedded in Westerncentric research, I constructed *Yinyang* saturating theoretical categories to cope with those paradoxical situations in my study.

Instead of a researcher’s arbitrary judgment of the full saturation of data, my *Yinyang* perspective for saturation of the data allows some data to be saturated, some to be half unsaturated and open ended for the readers to reflect, and some to never be saturated for readers to predict and create the future

together. Instead of eliminating codes if data were not explicitly revealed in most interviews, I kept the views from both the majority and minority of the interviews as well as the views that combined the two extreme views. For example, when I talked about the challenges based on a woman's identity, most participants did not feel that they had experienced gender discrimination or sexual harassment.

However, one participant mentioned about several sexual harassment incidents including a death threat, whereas another participant thought that it was a huge advantage to be a woman in STEM fields with more help from males. Instead of removing the view from only one participant based on the majority of the views, I decided to keep the two extreme codes together: "The identity as a woman in STEM fields is an advantage," and "The identity as a woman in STEM fields is being a victim of gender discrimination and sex harassment." With two extremely opposing views, ICWDSUS can have a balanced view about the identity as a woman between the two extremes.

The overall research question of this study is "*How does an ICWDSUS overcome the challenges in her study, work, and life to achieve her success and wellbeing during her doctoral journey in the U.S.?*" Two categories were created to answer this research question: "*challenges*" and "*self-leadership of ICWDSUS*." For each category, three sub-categories emerged to represent three changing realities of each category: *Yin*, *Yang*, and *Yinyang*. The *Yang* subcategory represents visible actions and dynamic changing processes. The *Yin*

subcategory represents invisible themes and stable foundations. The *Yinyang* subcategory represents unlimited interactions and combinations between the two extremes of *Yin* and *Yang*.

The *Yin* subcategory uses *Yin* codes with noun-based themes to represent the stable foundation. It was easy to reach saturation for the *Yin* codes such as “*parents’ support*.” The *Yang* subcategory uses *Yang* codes with gerund-based actions and processes to represent the dynamic changes. It was difficult to reach saturation for the *Yang* codes, as almost all participants acted differently in their unique doctoral journeys. For example, although most “*parents’ support*” was actionless as Chinese parents could not directly help their daughters with their doctoral studies in the U.S., some participants’ parents provided direct financial and child-care support to their children. Thus, “*parents’ supporting*” is a *Yang* code for that situation. By identifying *Yin* and *Yang* codes to delimit the two opposing extremes of one phenomenon, it is not difficult to understand the combination between the two extremes. The *Yinyang* subcategory uses *Yinyang* codes with both the noun-based themes and gerund-based actions and processes. Saturation is never reached, nor does it need to be for the *Yinyang* codes but they remain open ended to the development of various situations. For example, participants with children benefited from both *parents’ support* without direct help in their doctoral studies and *parents’ supporting* with direct childcare help.

Therefore, I used the *Yinyang* code, *parents' support + parents' supporting*” to include both *Yin* and *Yang* codes.

In addition, the division of *Yin* and *Yang* is not absolute, as shown in the *Yinyang* diagram (Figure 12). *Yin* and *Yang* co-exist and change to the opposite side in a dynamic way. There are stable *Yin* aspects in dynamic *Yang* subcategories and there are also dynamic *Yang* aspects in stable *Yin* subcategories to keep the change balanced. Although I used gerund-based actions as Charmaz (2014) suggested to emphasize the actions and processes in the *Yang* subcategory, the gerund-based actions could also have a stable *Yin* side, such as character-building in *Yang* self-leadership. The characters of diligence, proactivity, and persistence are the stable *Yin* themes in *Yang* self-leadership with a focus on active actions and processes. Similarly, although I used nouns (e.g., benevolent love) to suggest the stable themes in *Yin* self-leadership, the stable themes also include and must be realized by active actions (e.g., earning a woman's relative independence by shouldering her responsibilities).

In contrast to full saturation, which shows a static research result from the data collected in the past, *Yinyang* saturation is a dynamic result, which not only shows the data analysis from previous situations but can also predict future changes. Based on *Yinyang* philosophy, everything is developing to achieve balance. Thus, one's future development tends to go in the opposite direction of the current situation to gain balance. For example, the future development of

participants with only *Yang* self-leadership with a focus on active changing might benefit from learning *Yin* self-leadership with a focus on unchangeable love for the world to achieve balanced self-development. Participants with only *Yin* self-leadership would also benefit from learning about *Yang* self-leadership to gain active momentum to change. The *Yinyang* concept tells people the *Yinyang* developmental direction of their current situations: their current challenges could eventually become opportunities, and their current advantages also have a disadvantageous side. Therefore, individuals in disadvantageous situations should not lose heart, and individuals in advantageous situations should not be proud. Between the extremes of *Yin* and *Yang*, everything is growing in a balanced and comprehensive way.

Weight Differences of Yin, Yang, and Yinyang Codes

Different word choices carry different “analytic weight” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 247). Although I used both the *Yin* code of “*parents’ support*” as the theme and the *Yang* code of “*parents’ supporting*” as the action, the weights of the *Yin* and *Yang* codes are different. The *Yin* code of “*parents’ support*” is heavier than the *Yang* code of “*parents’ supporting*.” The heavy *Yin* codes are the stable foundations to support the dynamic *Yang* codes and do not change easily. In addition, the light *Yang* codes change quickly and lead to progress, which could eventually change one’s foundation. However, without the heavy *Yin* codes, just following the light *Yang* codes can make people easily lose balance in the rapidly

changing situations. Most times, the heavy *Yin* code of “*parents’ support*” is actionless as the Chinese parents were in China and knew little about the U.S. and participants’ doctoral lives. Most participants did not tell their parents about the challenges in the U.S. Some participants’ parents had passed away. However, the *Yin* code of “*parents’ support*” was saturated quickly from all participants’ interviews. “*Parents’ support*” is the heaviest cornerstone in Chinese society to support the development of their children, and even their children’s children yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Several participants even mentioned how their mothers’ mothers supported their doctoral journeys and influenced their education for their daughters. Time, space, other people, or even death cannot easily change parents’ support for their children. In contrast, *Yinyang* codes carry the least analytic weight, which could be predicted as long as one identifies and combines *Yin* and *Yang*.

Charmaz (2014, p. 124) pointed out that “English language favors thinking in structures, topics, and themes, rather than thinking in actions and processes.” Therefore, she advised that CGT researchers use gerunds for the codes to emphasize the processes and actions, rather than the traditional way of using nouns to describe themes and topics. Link (2013) claimed that Indo-European languages prefer nouns even when the phenomenon is not a thing but a complex process. This puzzle in Western languages reflects the ontological puzzle of Western culture in terms of the separation between mind and body. Link (2013)

claimed that Chinese language avoids this philosophical puzzle by having more verbs than nouns to favor actions and processes more than structures, topics, and themes. For example, despite the emphasis on learning in Confucianism, the noun *knowledge* does not exist in traditional Chinese language, and only appears in the translation of Western modern studies. The Chinese language uses the verb, *zhi dao* (*knowing the moral way*). The noun *knowledge* is not just a thing but can be a dynamic process with open ending. However, language makes people assume that the noun *knowledge* is a static thing.

Given the phenomenon of more verbs than nouns in Chinese language, the Chinese sage Lao Zi provides a philosophical explanation. He says that *a name that can be named is not a constant and unchanging name* (CTP, 2016, Dao De Jing, 1). However, the quantitative majority should not be simply interpreted as the qualitative preferences. More verbs than nouns in Chinese language should not be directly regarded that Chinese value complex changing actions more than stable themes, and using verbs could be the solution to avoid the mind-body puzzle in the West. Chinese *Yinyang* culture puts *Yin* ahead of *Yang* to emphasize the importance of the invisible and stable foundation *Yin* for the development of the fluid, dynamic, and visible *Yang* as a *Yinyang* whole. Instead of finding one static solution to a puzzle or many active solutions to many more changing puzzles, *Yinyang* shows three keys instead of one key to solve a puzzle. *Yinyang*

combines the stable *Yin* force, active *Yang* force, and interactions of *Yinyang* forces together to ensure a dynamic, stable, and comprehensive changing solution.

Quantitatively, *Yin* codes with less dynamic themes may be fewer than *Yang* codes with complex changes in this study. However, qualitatively, as the stable foundation for participants' active *Yang* actions, *Yin* codes may be more important than *Yang* codes. For example, the *Yin* code--“*parents' support*” could be the root cause of most participants' behaviors. One participant even attributed her communication style (a *Yang* code) to her mother's influence of “expressing her view in a considerate and negotiating way.”

Although *Yin* codes are more stable and less dynamic, both *Yin* and *Yang* codes change. Although *Yang* codes change noticeably and dynamically, the changes in *Yang* codes reflect changes in superficial phenomena rather than a deep foundation. Although *Yin* codes are less dynamic than *Yang* codes, *Yin* codes also change towards the opposite direction. In contrast, a change in *Yin* codes means a change of one's foundation. For example, when most participants started their doctoral journey, they had low confidence; however, by the time they finished their doctoral journey, many participants had become more confident. In contrast, many participants mentioned that they noticed that some of their white male classmates seemed to have high confidence at first by talking a lot in the class, but their high confidence later changed to low confidence after they failed their class projects, prelims, or doctoral programs. The unnoticeable and

fundamental change of *Yin* codes can create either advantageous or disadvantageous foundational momentum leading to qualitative shifts in participants' lives.

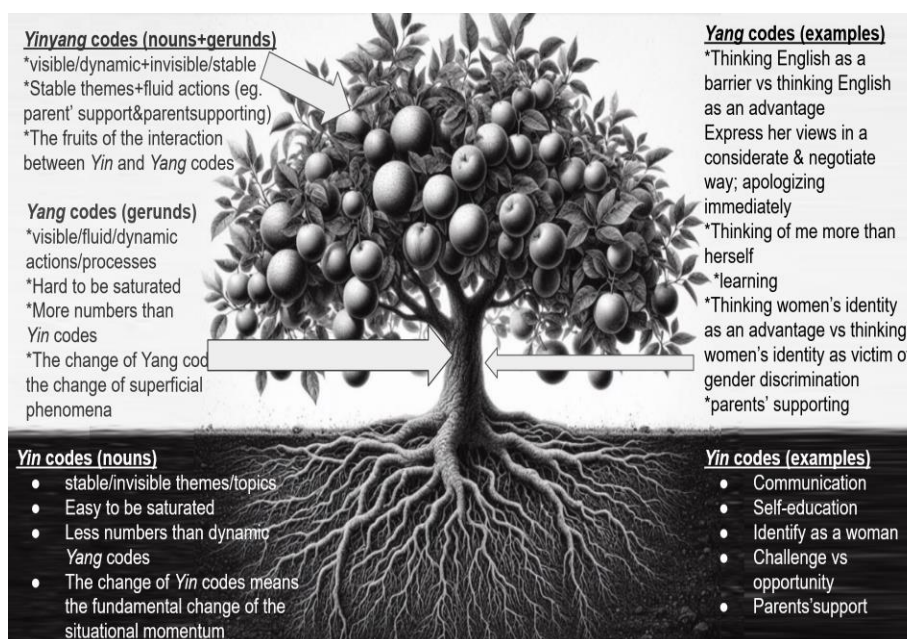
Lao Zi claimed that heaviness is the root of lightness (CTP, 2016, Dao De Jing: 26). The heavy *Yin* codes of this study are the root of the self-leadership that one should value and nourish most. The light *Yang* codes of this study are the branches of self-leading from the root of self-leadership. *Yinyang* codes are the fruits of the combination of *Yin* and *Yang* codes. If the root of self-leadership stopped providing energy to the branches, the dynamic self-leading actions would stop; if the root of self-leadership has problems, the dynamic self-leading actions can become chaotic actions and bear problematic fruit. Although when winter comes, the branches and fruit die, as long as the root exists, when spring comes, new branches and fruit continue to grow.

The tree metaphor in Figure 13 illustrates the depth, visibility, and organic relationships between *Yin* and *Yang* codes. The *Yin* codes are below the earth with invisible themes. The *Yang* codes are above the earth with noticeable actions and processes. The *Yinyang* codes are the fruit of the tree, and the taste of the fruit is the interaction between *Yin* and *Yang* codes. I used both nouns and gerunds to describe the *Yinyang* codes. The tree model in Figure 13 also illustrates the nature of Chinese organic science. Unlike Western mechanical science through Descartes' mathematical reasoning, which calculates the separated and

reductionist parts of a material world, Chinese organic science follows the reasoning from mother nature and *Yinyang* dynamism, which gives birth to unlimited possibilities (Liu, 2017; Nelson & Liu, 2016).

Figure 13

The Tree of Yin, Yang, and Yinyang Codes



Note: Adapted from the image generated with AI (Microsoft, 2023), <https://www.bing.com/images/create/a-tree-in-black-and-white-with-roots-under-the-soil/1-6572955b2140495f9cd93fea870ea26b?id=ibMcBkbLE7u0eLf904v%2FIw%3D%3D&view=detailv2&idpp=genimg&noidpclose=1&FORM=SYDBIC&ssp=1&darkschemeovr=1&safesearch=moderate&setlang=en&cc=US&PC=SANSAAND>

Constructing a *Dao* of Self-leadership with *Yinyang* Dynamism

My constructing *Dao* of self-leadership with *Yinyang* dynamics shows participants' solutions to *Zijun*'s puzzle. *Zijun*'s Western feminist ideologies helped her realize the oppression from the traditional patriarchal world but failed

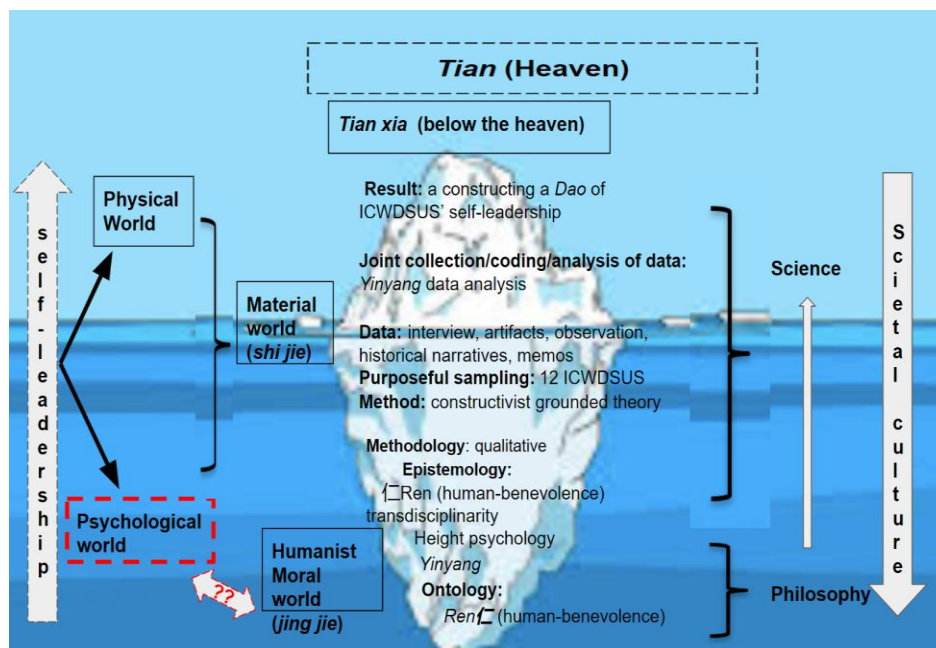
to help her survive independently in a more challenging modern patriarchal world. After cutting her relationship with her family in her old world, she cut the root for her self-growth. All participants attributed their successful doctoral journey to the support of their family. The participants reported that it was not the material form or the scientific knowledge of the family that supported them, but the benevolent love of their family that supported ICWDSUS to succeed in a foreign land.

All participants used their own self-leadership and family support as the solution to their challenges in a foreign world. Therefore, in addition to scientific or political solutions, this study offers a *Ren (benevolence/human)* solution to develop a woman's *Ren (benevolence/human)* and gain the support from her family and world to dissolve her challenges together through a gradual process. Figure 14 illustrates the research process of constructing a *Dao* of Self-leadership for ICWDSUS. This research proposes a new paradigm of *Ren (benevolence/human)* social science for women and HRD research. *Ren (benevolence/human)* social science does not mean to deny current Western-and-androcentric scientific or political social science paradigm, but to use benevolence to include scientific, philosophical, cultural, and other opposing perspectives for both knowledge and benevolence building for women and humanity. The iceberg model is used again in Figure 14 to show the invisible philosophical assumptions and complexity of the three world dimensions (material world, moral world, the world below the heaven) of my proposed *Ren (benevolence/human)*

transdisciplinary research. Although Manz's (1983) self-leadership concept emphasizes the importance of one's psychological world, his self-leadership includes little discussion about one's morality. In this *Ren (benevolence/human)* transdisciplinary research, one's moral world hides one's fundamental *Yin* challenges and *Yin* self-leadership.

Figure 14

The Ren (benevolence/human) Transdisciplinary Research



Note: Adapted from "Iceberg" from *pixabay.com*, filename: iceberg-3273216_640, Oct 20, 2018

Step 4: Constructing Integrated Self-leadership Trustworthiness and Ethical

Issues

Yinyang Trustworthiness and Full Self-reflection

Trustworthiness is used to assess qualitative methods (Adler, 2022). The *Yinyang* data analysis method leads to the *Yinyang* trustworthiness of this study naturally. Similar to the *Yinyang* saturation of this study, the trustworthiness of this study is also partial, leaving some findings open ended to allow room for readers' self-reflection.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria for trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In terms of credibility, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested using prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, member checks and other techniques to establish. I started collecting data in the winter of 2020. Since then I have spent over two years interacting with participants and following their social media publications. Through the pentangulation from multiple sources of data: transcriptions, verbal language including tone, tempo, and silence, non-verbal language (e.g., body language, facial expressions), online publications (Linkedin, Facebook, WeChat blog, publications, online videos), and interactions with me, the credibility of the visible *Yang* challenges and *Yang* self-leadership that participants and I identified are validated. I also conducted member checking for validity and an accuracy check by conducting a second-round interview, engaging in subsequent WeChat conversations, and/or sending interview transcriptions and their stories about the *Yang* challenges and *Yang* self-leadership to participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, the *Yin* challenges

and *Yin* self-leadership were invisible to and even denied by participants. The *Yinyang* data analysis portrayed two opposing types of self-leaders: *Yin* self-leaders and *Yang* self-leaders. Both types of leaders strongly denied my research results. Although *Yin* self-leaders had big achievements, they refused to acknowledge their own success and gave all credits to others; on the contrary, although *Yang* self-leaders had many traumas, they blamed all their problems on others and claimed all credits for themselves. Therefore, in terms of the invisible *Yin* part of data analysis, participants only agreed with the transcription of their interview with the disagreement of my interpretation of the *Yin* data. My personal interpretation about their personal values is based on height psychology with an insistence on morality and the pentangulation of data. I do not claim credibility for my personal interpretation about the *Yin* challenges and *Yin* self-leadership, and I understand that everyone will have different self-interpretations.

In terms of transferability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested using thick descriptions to describe actors' social actions and contexts as well as subjective explanations to help readers better understand the meanings of people's behaviors. The thick description of my dissertation shows opposing *Yinyang* psychological worlds of participants. Even though some participants have the same physical behaviors in similar contexts, their inner worlds vary greatly. For example, although two participants are both in STEM fields and said the same

sentence “How could I do this?!”, their psychological behaviors in their inner worlds are totally opposite. One felt that being discriminated against as a Chinese girl by other male STEM Ph.D. students because she thought that other men didn’t believe that she could do a challenging job as a Chinese girl; whereas the other felt being a Chinese girl in a male-dominated STEM field is an advantage. And when other male STEM Ph.D. students and professors encouraged her to pursue a Ph.D., she didn’t believe that she could earn one. It was her male colleagues’ encouragement that gave her the courage to pursue a Ph.D. Therefore, the transferability of this study is not one-sided view but opposing *Yinyang* realities in the same situation.

In terms of dependability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested using the auditing of the research process to establish. The data collection process of this study followed CGT’s data collection through interviews, interactions, and observations, which other researchers could easily adopt. However, the data interpretation, especially the invisible *Yin* side of data could vary greatly because each researcher could bring their own interpretations from their own values, backgrounds, and cultures although the visible *Yang* results might be similar to all researchers. For instance, although two participants both chose psychology classes during their doctoral journeys, one chose to study psychology because she wanted to help people who suffer from psychological challenges. The other chose to take psychology classes because she thought that psychology was the

top of the social sciences and wanted to use psychology classes to network with psychology professors to upgrade her status in social sciences to be above all others. Although I interpreted the first example as the invisible *Yin* self-leadership to lead one's sustainable self-development and the second example as the invisible *Yin* challenge to mislead one to her psychological crisis, other researchers may interpret oppositely.

The last criterion of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness is confirmability, which emphasizes the research findings are based on participants' words rather than the researcher's views or biases. However, as a contemporary qualitative research method, the CGT includes the researcher as an active participant, who brings unique cultural backgrounds and views to construct meanings together with participants. Therefore, the researcher's biases are unavoidable in CGT research. To balance the trustworthiness and the researcher's biases of this research, the *Yinyang* trustworthiness of this study only claim the confirmability of the visible *Yang* side of the results, which are validated by participants. The invisible *Yin* side of the results are not participants' views but my personal interpretation based on height psychology and the panangulation of data.

Although the *Yinyang* trustworthiness of this study only claims partial trustworthiness, it requires full reflection by both the researcher and the readers. As a researcher, I kept a reflective journal about my own experiences in this

study to enhance the trustworthiness of my study. I also encourage my readers to use their own reflections to examine the research results and come up with their own self-leadership that suits their unique situations.

Ethics, Morality, and Respect

Ethics is the foundation of the iceberg metaphor of any research although it is not as visible as the research results (Schein, 2010). The rigor and ethics to conduct grounded theory involve “a delicate balancing act” and an extremely complex research craft (Mills et al., 2006, p. 32). Grounded theory researchers have to “manage to sustain the balancing act between ‘grounding’ and ‘distancing’” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 14). Is everything data or is data everything? While the Confucianism and *Ren (benevolence/human)* ontology of this research emphasize the morality-building of a one’s internal world. The ethical issues in Western research may be more focused on the ethical behaviors and procedures of the research, whereas *Ren (benevolence/human)* emphasizes the internal morality of an individual. Therefore, the ethical discussion of this study about ICWDSUS includes both traditional Chinese and Western ethical considerations of one’s internal and external worlds.

Research Ethics

The research process of this study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Minnesota. Before starting the interview, a consent form with clear research procedures (Appendix D) and

the interview questions (Appendix F) was sent to the participants via email for their consent. The consent form included the following: the purpose and procedure of the study, guaranteed anonymity of their identities, confidentiality of their information, agreement to record their interview, their rights to stop or refuse to answer certain questions at any time without an explanation, and other related concerns. It also stated that there were no expected risks and benefits for participating in this dissertation research. This research is my independent doctoral research with neither the funding nor results being dictated by any institution, and no data I collected will be used for commercial or administrative purposes. To ensure participants' maximum anonymity, all data from interviews, artifacts, observations, field notes, and published information were recorded under participants' pseudo names. Other identifying information was changed to general, non-identifiable background of participants. For example, I used the term "STEM field" rather than a specific field to represent participants from hard science fields. Third parties related to the participants (e.g., family, work) were also protected.

Personal Morality and Respect for Others

Although my transdisciplinary grounded theory has taken a much longer time than many others' dissertations, I refused to move quickly from the empirical data with "a critical mass of anomalous findings" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 258) to generate a general recipe for a "chicken soup for the soul." I regarded my

grounded self-leadership as medicine, which I would try first. Before allowing other women to try my grounded self-leadership theory to identify problems in a collective manner, I used myself to test my constructing theory in an individualistic manner and examined the contingencies before presenting the theory to my readers. *The unity of learning and acting (zhi xing he yi)* in the Chinese traditional learning system is an individual's self-responsibility and self-cultivation (Frisina, 1989).

My learning and actions related to feminist ideals during my dissertation journey and the openness of CGT revealed both the bright and dark sides of humanity from the participants. In Chapter 2, the root reason the U.S. and the PRC could develop from initial turmoiled status to prosperity was people's love for others; and the root reason for the two nations to develop from prosperity to depression has been individuals' narcissistic love for the self (Hofstede, 2001; Xu, 2015). Similarly, the love from parents empowered participants to overcome their challenges in a foreign world to survive and succeed. Some participants' narcissistic self-love changed them from being an intimidated girl to become intimidating women to "kill a bloody road" as a social climber, who suffers from "psychological crises" or "mental illness" with the self-conflict and endless conflicts with others. Facing the same challenges from almost the same material world, participants showed two opposing values and responses. Regarding others as "useless" and "awkward" "cockroaches" and the self as the most "awesome"

and “wise” superwoman, participants with dark hearts did not believe that other participants with benevolent hearts experienced much more joyful, productive, and sustainable self-development. Regarding the self as “awkward” and others as “capable,” participants with benevolent hearts did not believe and refused to believe how good they were but wanted to learn from others to develop together. Their self-development and joy multiplied, indicating that what is truly in one’s heart will be manifested through one’s actions (CTP, 2016, *The Classic of Rites*, Daxue: 3). In this study, either benevolent or dark hearts are the root of participants’ self-leadership, which bears sweet or bitter self-leadership fruit for the self.

Instead of separating facts and values to achieve objectivity and generality like traditional positivist research, CGT does not view interviews as “a mirror of reality or a mere account” to answer a question (Charmaz, 2014, p. 91). CGT researchers use social interactions, self-reflection, and interpretivism to link facts and values to interpret a fluid, indeterminate, and provisional reality to construct “abstract understandings” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 233). Although I highly appreciate my participants’ participation in this study, I do not take a moral relativism stance to equally accept all participants’ values as my grounded self-leadership. This study is not based on pragmatism but is based on *Ren (benevolence/human)* ontology and height psychology epistemology with a focus on one’s moral agency to develop an upward moral world and moral life (Liu, 2017). Therefore, I used

my authority as a researcher to categorize the immoral values into *Yin* challenges and moral values into *Yin* self-leadership in my grounded self-leadership. These categories were invisible to participants. Participants had different moral standards as they faced moral dilemmas. Confucius taught people the golden rule of how to practice morality: “treat others the way you like to be treated” (CTP, 2016, *Analects*, Yanyuan:2; Eisenbeiss, 2012; Voltaire, 1998). Therefore, any behaviors that a participant did to others to gain self-benefit but did not want to receive from others would not be regarded as moral self-leadership in this study to develop the self. Instead, it was categorized as immoral self-mis-leadership that would lead to “psychological crises,” “collapse of both physical and psychological health,” endless conflicts with all others, and the downgrading of morality. Any behaviors that a participant did to others and wanted to receive from others for the development of all, was categorized as moral self-leadership that would lead one to achieve more academic, career, and relational success as well as psychological wellbeing.

However, I respect that participants and my readers with pragmatism or different ontologies will have opposite views about what should be regarded as ethics, morality, and the root challenges and opportunities. For example, some participants confidently shared their self-leadership as using their “high IQ and EQ” to play “psychological and political games” to deceive, manipulate, and put down “awkward” others to achieve their “end goal.” Based on utilitarian ethics,

those behaviors could be regarded as ethical if their goals were achieved and others' kindness to sacrifice one's own goal to help others could be regarded as unethical (Taylor, 1989).

The discussion about the fundamental values of participants is not meant to judge others but to reveal both the benevolent and dark sides of human nature that everyone may share regardless of individual differences. At the end of the day, my grounded self-leadership is very personal for me, starting from my own self-leadership development to lead my life. I respect each person's own self-leadership. Therefore, when I discussed participants' invisible values, which forms the *Yin* challenges in my grounded self-leadership, I used a second set of pseudo names with ICWDSUS and a special symbol (e.g., ICWDSUS \$, ICWDSUS %) to remove all physical and demographics characteristics of participants based on their ages, titles, or other identifying characteristics. By removing all demographic information, my readers, participants, or even I as the researcher could not identify who said what after years of research, which allows everyone to focus on different values and the results. In this way, my CGT study is like a Chinese ink-painting, which just uses various degrees of black ink to represent different behaviors of individuals in a complex world on white paper. Being unidentifiable to myself and participants, the anonymity of the discussion of participants' values is maximized to fulfill my promise to Western research ethics to do no harm to participants.

Methodological Conclusion

Since CGT is constructing “suggestive and incomplete” (Creswell, 2014, p. 88) and “interpretive portrayal” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 17), I do not claim that my CGT research is about a rational self-leadership. Instead, it is about responsible self-leadership. In addition, my research is not my personal truth of self-leadership, but it is my personal attempt to keep approaching my self-leading truth. I shouldered my responsibility as a researcher by conducting a comprehensive transdisciplinary literature review from multiple disciplines, recruiting a sufficient number of participants, and allowing time to be the mediator between data, my reflection, and interactions with participants from various angles, and by protecting participants’ anonymity.

Although I do not take a political stance to examine ICWDSUS’ lives, the discussion about gender, culture, Confucianism, and other philosophies may unavoidably trigger debate, anger, or attack from political or even religious perspectives. For example, in deciding whether to use *women* or *female* students in my research, many scholars have already debated this choice. I am willing to be self-critical and accept others’ criticism to better my research. However, I adopt Confucius’ response to the harsh attack towards his insistence on *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) by remaining open and non-judgmental to criticism and keeping silent if the situation became too tense for a rational discussion. Although I am willing to participate in social communication to contribute to social change

through gentle communication (*wenhua*), I refuse to participate in social debates to push changes through power (*wuhua*) as the researcher, which may trigger more tension than understanding. I focus more on my self-leadership practices and the betterment of my self-leadership since actions speak louder than words. *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) ontology is not a moral ideology to judge others but a humanistic value to cultivate the self to include others for the development of the family, group, and society together (Liu, 2014). Therefore, my proposed self-leadership is not meant to ethically judge or change others, but it is meant to inspire self-reflection for self-cultivation over time. Women have their own unique situations indicating that the plurality of women cannot be identified (Alcoff, 1988; Iannello, 2010). Thus, it is “up to each individual” to discover the ultimate answer about the self and the world (Harding, 1991, p. 312).

Chapter 4: Challenges—Adversity Leads To Prosperity

When heaven is about to ordain a great office on a person, heaven will first let the person suffer both physically and mentally. The person would experience extreme hunger and poverty. Heaven fails all the attempts of the person. Through all the hard training, the person's mind is stimulated, the person's nature is strengthened, and the person's incompetence is gone. Every human makes mistakes, and after experiencing mistakes, the person can change. Frustration makes the person distressed in mind and perplexed in thoughts, and then the person arises to change. The person collects the evidence from others' angry looks and hears the resentful words from others, then the person understands the problem. If a nation has no ministers, who stick to the laws to regulate people from inside, and has no enemy states to threaten the nation from outside, the nation is doomed to die. From these things, we see how life springs from sorrow and calamity, and death from ease and pleasure.

-Mengzi, Gaozi II: 35

Constructing the grounded *Dao* of the self-leadership of ICWDSUS

consists of two major categories: the challenges and self-leadership of ICWDSUS. Each category has three subcategories to represent three different realities of each category: *Yin*, *Yang*, and *Yinyang*. In this chapter, the iceberg of challenges for ICWDSUS from both U.S. and Chinese cultures is divided into three parts: *Yang*, *Yinyang*, and *Yin* challenges as shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Three Kinds of Different Challenges for ICWDSUS

Three Parts	Three Kinds of Different Challenges for ICWDSUS
Part I <i>Yang</i> categories	<i>Yang</i> Challenges—Visible Challenges Promote Opportunities

Part II <i>Yinyang</i> categories	<i>Yinyang</i> Challenges—The Less Visible Challenges are Trickier Challenges
Part III <i>Yin</i> categories	<i>Yin</i> Challenges—One’s Disaster is from One’s Own Heart

Part I: *Yang* Challenges—Visible Challenges Promote Opportunities

The *Yang* codes with visible, dynamic, and changing actions or processes depict a clear transitioning trajectory from visible challenges to promoting opportunities for participants. Although all participants experienced challenges including painful experiences, they all appreciated their doctoral journey and how their doctoral studies significantly promoted all aspects of their lives. After overcoming the challenges, many participants forgot most of their challenges in the past or interpreted the challenges as opportunities. Most participants described the challenges they remembered with smiles. Some participants wished that they could have been challenged even more. Some participants even challenged me to include the positive sides of their doctoral journeys. Mary said:

I’ve read all your interview questions. Your interview questions are all about the challenges. I think if you just asked me about my challenges, yes, I would tell you all my painful challenges, homesickness, cultural barriers, tears...but your readers would think that the doctoral journey has no positive sides. This is NOT TRUE! It was not that miserable...There were many positive sides of the doctoral journey. I would say at least 80% of my doctoral experiences were positive, joyful, and beneficial....The U.S. is a highly developed nation. I was telling myself, even if I did not get the degree, I had still expanded my horizons, known U.S. culture, and had many friends from the U.S. and all over the world. The conference experiences, the traveling experiences in the U.S. were all great....The U.S. gave me a great sense of achievement!

Improving is an Adaptive and Transitioning Process

Most participants had thorough preparation for English in China and did not have many English challenges. They just needed some time to get used to a new life in English. Jo said:

My English level was very good when I just came to the U.S....However, I still needed to take a transitioning process of getting used to the new life, taking courses in a new learning environment...It was just an adaptive process.

However, the transitioning and adaptive process could be awkward. JJ said:

I experienced that awkward process of starting to use English at first. For the first two years, I felt it was so hard for me to express one simple thing in English. I went to attend some happy hour events in the university. At first, they didn't understand me, and I didn't understand them. However, if you attended more and practiced more, with the accumulation of time, gradually your English would improve.

The transition and adaptive process could be painful. Anna said: "After the first and second semesters, I was used to that (the pressure). I didn't feel too hard...However, when I was in my first and second semesters at that time, I felt too painful!"

Improving Her Soft Skills

Zhu (2016) claimed that Chinese international students need both hard skills (e.g., academic and language capability) and soft skills (e.g., communication skills, critical thinking, collaboration, and teamwork), and most

Chinese students focus on improving their hard skills and ignore the soft skills.

Talking about how the doctoral journey changed her, Jo said:

During the doctoral journey, many of my soft skills have been improved, such as independence, critical thinking, self-learning capability, resilience, time management, project management, and my understanding of American culture. Actually, by the time you graduate, the knowledge you have learned in the classroom may have been old already. However, how you start a project, how you collaborate with others, your independence and collaboration, how you lead yourself all these skills should be the result of getting a Ph.D., which benefits your whole life. The knowledge and the degree you got from the doctoral journey are the secondary benefits.

Shaping a New Person

Before my dissertation interview in 2021, I interviewed Participant ICWDSUS* in 2016 for a qualitative research assignment. When I asked her about her challenges during her doctoral journey, her answers in 2016 and 2021 were totally different. In 2021, she said:

Challenges? I did not have challenges in my study,...in my work...in my life...in my psychological wellbeing...I didn't feel lonely...I didn't feel lost...no homesickness...I didn't have much stress...The coursework was not that difficult for me...I can't really think of any challenges...Because I didn't have English barriers, and it's not difficult for me to pick up new things...I do not treat new things as a challenge but as an opportunity.

However, in 2016, she said:

During the first semester of my doctoral studies, I had no advisor as I came here on a fellowship. I was pretty lost, and I didn't have many friends...Most of my friends were Chinese students, who had just come to the U.S. like me. We didn't know anyone here...In terms of choosing classes, nobody gave me any guidance, so I felt very lonely and lost. And I didn't know what the classroom atmosphere was like in the U.S...I also had a lot of tests to take for my Ph.D. program, so it was pretty difficult

for me. Also, I was not in my old field. I switched majors when I came to the U.S., so the classes were new and not easy for me as well...I had a lot of stress and anxiety during the first half of the first semester...My second year was much better, but I still had lots of coursework and I started to do research. I also had to prepare for my prelims, so I got lots of stress because of that. And, at first, I was a little bit intimidated to talk with others at first as I thought I am a foreigner, I am Chinese, I look different from others.

Talking about the changes during the doctoral journey, in 2016, when Participant ICWDSUS* just graduated, she said with great joy and satisfaction: “I felt like I became a new person! After going through all kinds of training during my doctoral journey, I became more confident. I got many publications! My professional profile was complete! Ha Ha!”

In 2021, when she had already become an assistant professor and used to her life as an assistant professor, she denied her changes:

I didn't feel much change. Maybe before, I acted a little bit intimidated. I definitely changed my behaviors, but in my heart, I never change. I am always very confident! I always believe in myself! Maybe now, I talk louder than before. I speak more confidently...When I looked for a job, I sent my materials to my first lab mate, who had worked with me before, to get his advice. He told me: “after reading your material, I felt that I never knew you. It was very different from the first impression that you gave me. You changed from someone who didn't know anything to so much involved and active in your career...you were kind of intimidated before, as you always spoke quietly and gently...now you are so confident!

Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as a person's belief in the ability to succeed in accomplishing a task and claimed that self-efficacy could be improved by gaining performance accomplishments and successful mastery experiences. Therefore, although participants were intimidated at the beginning of their

doctoral journeys, after completing their doctoral journey, their past accomplishments became a great source of self-efficacy.

Liking Her Short Height

Although Participant ICWDSUS* felt intimidated and discriminated against because of her foreign and Chinese looks, Fupan felt that her short height as a Chinese woman in front of tall white American authorities gave her the happiest memory in the U.S. Fupan said: when I took a picture with the tall American university president and city mayor at the opening ceremony of my doctoral program, we all realized that my height was only to their chests. They laughed: ‘You are so tiny!’ They all liked me. Ha ha ha...I still have that picture in my office!!! Ha ha ha.”

Becoming More Independent

Many participants said that the independent culture of the U.S. and the doctoral journey made them more independent. Anna described her biggest change after her doctoral journey:

The doctoral journey trained my independence, especially in academia. The doctoral journey made me an independent thinker. The doctoral program guided me to depend on myself to write my dissertation. You should not expect others to teach you something. You must have your own idea and defend your own idea. You can choose whatever you like to research, but you have to be able to defend your research.

Appreciating Challenges, Leading to Her Promotion

Most participants appreciated their challenges, which helped them improve. Anna said:

During my first semester in the U.S., I had to study 3 to 4 courses and teach independently for my scholarship, so all teaching tasks had to be done by myself. I was under great pressure during my first semester. However, just because of that, I immediately got a job after I graduated. Also, I had lots of pressure from my work. I gave up my normal and comfortable life and work in China and came to the U.S to start from zero. Therefore, since my second year, I started to prepare for how to get a job in the U.S. I got a job right after my master's degree in the U.S.

Shaping Her Professionalism and the Best Time of Life

Although the doctoral journey was not easy, participants appreciated the scenery of their journeys and the joy when they reached their destinations, which only belong to themselves. Mary reported happily:

My doctoral journey was the BEST time and the happiest period of my life! But my doctoral journey was too short! If let me say my changes due to the doctoral degree, my doctoral studies have shaped my professionalism in my field and provided me with the great transition from being a student to a professional now.

Finding Her Life Partner

Most participants got married and became a mother during their doctoral journey. In the four years of study for her master's and Ph.D. degrees, although Participant ICWDSUS& also felt that her doctoral journey was too short to challenge herself, she was happy that she found her life partner:

If I could do my doctoral journey again, I would challenge myself more. I could have chosen more courses or more difficult courses, or gone to a more challenging university...However, I met my husband at my university, so it was still ok. Ha! Ha!

Finding Her Life Goal

Although some participants were lucky to have a loving spouse, not all participants have a Mr. Right. Participant ICWDSUS\$ got married at the age of 24. She said:

After I got married, we immediately had a baby. However, I was still like a kid. At that time, we hadn't learned how to get along with each other in all aspects yet. All little things made me very unhappy, such as the allocation of housework, so after getting married, I started to think about what marriage means to a woman. Then I decided to do research about women and then I found my life goal. I didn't know what I wanted to do as my career for my life during my bachelor's and master's studies. I finally found my life goal during my doctoral journey. Therefore, I am EXTREMELY satisfied with my doctoral journey.

From Holding an F2 Visa as her Husband's Dependent to her Husband

Holding an F2 Visa as Her Dependent

Fupan said:

I went to the U.S. just because my husband went to study in the U.S. in 2003. I joined him in 2005 with an F2 visa. Then, I started to prepare for Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOFEL) and Graduate Record Examination (GRE) in Jan 2005, and entered the master's program in Fall 2006, and went to the Ph.D. program in 2008 and finished in 2011, and did one year of postdoc

Although Fupan did not proudly mention that her husband later became her dependent, her husband admitted in their online workshops that he graduated in 2009 and became Fupan's dependent with an F2 visa after that.

Satisfying Her Curiosity of Seeking Knowledge

All participants were driven to seek knowledge. Mary said: “My curiosity about seeking knowledge got satisfied during the doctoral journey.”

Easy Math-related Classes and Exams

All ICWDSUS in STEM fields felt that the coursework in the U.S. was “TOO easy.” Jo said: “The math-related subjects and statistics? Honestly, NO PROBLEM AT ALL!!!”

When I asked Zixi about the challenges in her study, Zixi asked me back: “Don’t you think the study in the U.S. is TOO easy for us Chinese students? We are not afraid of exams, right?”

Busy Life Leaves No Time for Psychological Challenges

The busy life for many participants, especially participants with children, gave them no time for psychological challenges, such as depression. After

Luyinbi had a child, she said:

I didn’t have enough time to sleep and rest well. However, it stimulated my time management potential. My studies became more efficient. All my time was occupied by my tasks, study, research, work, get up at night to feed the baby. If I had little time left, I just wanted to sleep. All my tasks didn’t give me any time for depression. Sometimes I felt bad, I just cried. After a short while, I felt ok.

English as a Better Communication Tool Than Chinese

Instead of regarding English as a barrier, some participants regarded

English as a better communication tool. Lily said:

I have seen many Chinese students taking notes in Chinese when they listened to English lectures in the U.S., or when they communicated with

English speakers, they translated English into Chinese in their mind first and then thought of the answers into Chinese, and then translated the Chinese answers into English, and then replied to English-speakers. That would cost them a lot of time and work to translate Chinese into English and English into Chinese... I always think in English when people talk in English, so it doesn't cost me time to translate. From the very beginning of my doctoral journey, I took notes in English, so English didn't cause any barrier for me... Also, I didn't take similar classes in China before. Many new concepts and new terminologies were new to me. I didn't even know how to translate them into Chinese at all. The only way that I could learn was to write down the words in the same way that the U.S. professors taught.

The Chinese Identity as an Advantage

Although participants mentioned the challenges from their Chinese identities, some participants mentioned the advantage of being Chinese. Mary said:

In my memory, I have never experienced any discrimination against me due to my Chinese identity. On the contrary, because of my Chinese identity and international student identity, someone introduced me to work in the international students' office at my university, and I was treated as an expert on international students' issues. If they had Chinese students or international students, who needed help, they asked for my help.

The Female Identity as an Advantage for a Woman's Career and Life

Although some participants mentioned gender discrimination, most participants never experienced gender discrimination. Some participants appreciated their gender advantage. Participant A talked about the advantage as a girl in STEM with a big smile:

There have been no challenges for me as a woman. On the contrary, my female identity has brought some help and benefits for me. Ha ha... When I asked others questions, they all liked to help me to solve my problems.

Maybe they have this deep idea that women are vulnerable, so they voluntarily like to help women more. Ha ha... Yes, in my career in a STEM field, women's status is still low. However, just because of that, people want to make a change now. Therefore, as one of the few girls in my field, it was not hard for me to get a job in my field... And there are many associations, which just help women. I have joined those associations and they provide extra help for women. Even when you apply for fundings, there are some fundings only for women. Only women can apply for those fundings... When I was still a student, I got several scholarships, which were only for women. Ha ha ha! I really think it is an advantage to be a woman. Really!!

Cultural Differences as Cultural Opportunities

All participants like American culture. Although Summer complained that her studies in the U.S. were too easy, Summer wanted her child to have an easy childhood in the U.S.:

After graduation, my husband and I worked in China for four years. I got a baby in China. It is not easy to raise a child in China. I heard many stressful parenting stories in China. I just thought it would be easier for my kid to grow up in the U.S., so we returned to the U.S. Now, I've become more laid back... I am more relaxed now... it is not like just publishing, publishing, publishing... grant, grant, grant.

When Summer first came to the U.S. after living in big cities in China, she felt her life in the Midwest of the U.S. was boring at first: "The campus was very different from my life in China. I am from a big city in China... We joked that our campus was like a cornfield, but in reality, there was probably even no corn at all there."

In contrast, the “cornfield”-like campus life was appealing to Luyinbi, who also grew up in a large Chinese city and also graduated from the same university as Summer:

I didn't have any culture shock when I just came to the U.S. On the contrary, I really like the free culture here. I grew up in a big city in China. My university in the U.S. was in a rural area, the countryside...In fall, the view is beautiful. The campus looks just gorgeous...I really like the slow pace of life and the easy relationships with others here...People would not interfere with your personal life and privacy, like people do in China. In China, people are too close with each other, and my individual life has to be intersected with others' lives...the relationships are too complicated and too close in China...That was the reason I've decided to stay in the U.S., and don't want to go back to China. I like American culture very much so I don't want to go back to China.

Fupan and her husband both graduated from the same university as Summer. At first, they were surprised to see U.S. universities and companies choose rural areas as their locations, because Chinese universities and companies normally choose big cities as their locations. After having worked in big cities in China, Fupan and her husband understood that the high living costs, air pollution, heavy traffic, high education expenses for children, and severe competition in big cities did not necessarily provide a high quality of life and more benefits. Therefore, inspired by their American university in the “cornfield,” when they returned to China, they chose a small Chinese city as the location to establish their company and home. With the lower cost but better life and work quality, they often happily introduced this idea to Chinese young people in their online

workshops who dreamed of going to big cities for career development. Also, Fudan's husband's favorite food is not Chinese food but hamburgers.

Jo, who was from Canto, China's third largest city, also liked the relaxed rural atmosphere of her U.S. university. However, I still remembered how excited Jo was after we went to Beyoncé's concert in the downtown area of the city. She told me:

Quickly! Quickly! Have you smelt the air pollution? Hurry up! Deep breathe the automobile exhaust! This is the smell of a city! When we go back to the countryside, the air quality is too good without any air pollution, and we have no chance to breathe automobile exhaust. Has the automobile exhaust reminded you of your hometown, Beijing when you were having fun in Beijing? The automobile exhaust reminds me of my hometown Canto and how I had fun in Canto. Hurry up! Take the chance to breathe in the automobile exhaust now and imagine you were the bars in Beijing and I would imagine I was in the bars in Canto

After hearing what she said, we both laughed loudly. American people around us saw two Chinese women laugh loudly without getting drunk. They also started to laugh with us without even understanding what we said. In China, people from Beijing, Canto, and other large cities always argue about which city is better than the other. However, it seems that Beyoncé's concert in the U.S., good restaurants and malls, our laughter, and the dynamism of big cities including automobile exhaust immediately dissolved all cultural barriers and disagreements among her from Canto, me from Beijing, and other people in the U.S.

Not Knowing How Lucky She Was

Li (2013) found out that the location of universities in rural areas or big cities may shape Chinese doctoral students in totally different ways. Chinese doctoral students who studied in rural areas appreciated the relaxed and friendly interpersonal relationships and great nature. In contrast, Chinese doctoral students who studied in larger cities liked the fast pace of life. In my research, six participants graduated from the same university in the “cornfield.” This group of ICWDSUS demonstrated effective collaborative self-leadership, which is quite different from the individualized self-leadership from participants in prestigious universities in large cities. Zixi said: “It must be easy for you to get interviewees as there are so many Chinese women Ph.D. students in the U.S.”

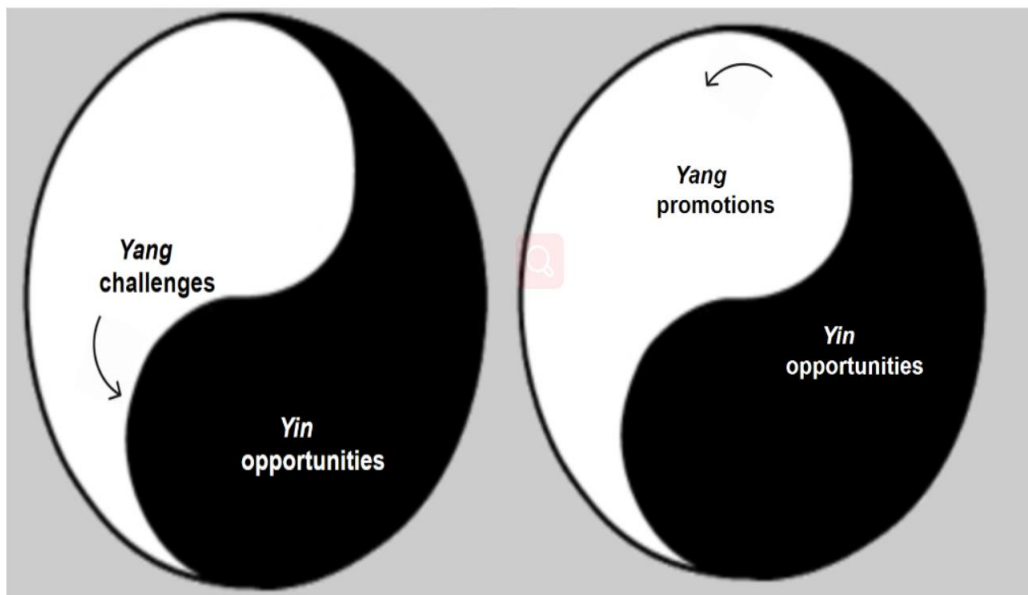
When I told Zixi there was only one paper about ICWDSUS and the author had great difficulty finding ICWDSUS, Zixi was surprised. I told the group of the “cornfield” that half participants in my dissertation were from their university, and I found that not only they had long-term friends and liked to help others, but their husbands were also from their same university. They were surprised to hear my observation about people’s long-term and supportive relationships in the “cornfield.” Summer said: “Oh, I did not...I did not realize that. Yeah. I am lucky. My husband was my classmate.” Lora smiled: “Yes, it is true. Ha ha...Not only is one of your participants my friend, but her husband is my “older brother” from my department and one year ahead of me.”

Summary of *Yang* challenges

The *Yang* challenges are visible challenges, such as English, studies, research, work, discrimination, stress, and depression. Based on each participant's unique situation, participants can have different *Yang* challenges. However, as Figure 15 shows, all visible *Yang* challenges include invisible *Yin* opportunities, which could be transition into visible *Yang* promotions. Instead of a linear change with a SMART goal in Western development studies (Jabri, 2006), ICWDSUS' transition from visible *Yang* challenges to *Yang* promotion spirals with painful struggles.

Figure 15

The Transition from Yang Challenges to Yang Promotions



Part II: *Yinyang* Challenges--The Less Visible Challenges are Trickier

The *Yinyang* codes with both visible and invisible phenomena, both dynamic actions and static themes, and both negative and positive sides depict a less visible but trickier *Yinyang* world. Without realizing the invisible *Yin* side of *Yinyang* challenges, participants could stumble due to problems that have no names. The invisible *Yin* side of *Yinyang* challenges is the seed of the future, which could help an individual predict future development. If the participants could pause and reflect deeply on the root problems of their confusion, the *Yin* side of *Yinyang* challenges could not be ignored and would reveal that they can develop into invisible *Yin* challenges. However, most participants ignored the *Yin* side of *Yinyang* challenges as “little things” but were complacent about the success of overcoming the *Yang* side of *Yinyang* challenges in the past without knowing the potential approaching unknown traumas in the future.

If *Yang* challenges would quickly transition to *Yang* promotion, *Yinyang* challenges would involve the transition from visible challenges to visible chances and require a deep transformation of the individual. However, the transition and transformation from *Yinyang* challenges to *Yinyang* chances takes a longer time than the transition from *Yang* challenges to *Yang* opportunities. The impacts of the transformation of *Yinyang* challenges on ICWDSUS are deeper and more fundamental.

An Unclear and Casual Goal

Most participants had a clear and serious goal to study abroad with thorough preparation for their English and cultural knowledge of the U.S., so they had a smooth transition to their lives in the U.S., and even enjoyed U.S. culture more than Chinese culture. However, some participants did not have a clear or serious goal to study abroad. Consequently, they failed to seriously learn from others about how to prepare for their overseas studies and despised and underestimated the challenges of studying abroad. Thus, they suffered greatly from their culture shock when they first arrived in the U.S. Participant A said:

During my undergraduate studies in China, when my roommates were all talking about going to a graduate school or studying abroad, I had never thought about those but just wanted to graduate from my undergraduate and find a job. However, my mother's friend's daughter was doing a job to help Chinese students study abroad. The tuition, TOFEL, GMAT scores were all low, so I thought maybe I could also study abroad, and later after I graduated and returned to China, I may get a better job....The only thing that I prepared for my overseas trip was to learn how to cook...Ha ha...Everyone was telling me that you must be prepared to have a difficult life abroad...I didn't listen to them. I was thinking "HOW difficult could it be to study abroad?!" I had no sense of the difficulty of going abroad at all! I didn't prepare for English at all. I didn't prepare for my studies in the U.S. at all! I just took an English vocabulary book with me to go abroad ...At first, I was thinking of just doing it and getting a degree. I didn't expect that studying abroad could be THAT hard! Studying in the U.S. is REALLY hard! The culture shock was VERY VERY VERY serious for me!!!

Lack of Training and Experience with a New Skill

Many *Yinyang* challenges related to participants' skill gaps. After developing a new skill by practicing and experiencing more, participants gained

new skills, experiences, and more confidence. Most participants found it hard to speak up in class at first although many participants spoke good English. Jo said:

As a student in social science, I had to discuss a lot in class. Like most Chinese students, I was also very silent in class at first. Unless I was fully prepared, I dared not speak up. I had not been educated to speak up in class in China. In China, we are always taught that there must be people who know better than you. Only when you are an expert do you have the qualification to talk. Therefore, it was difficult for me to speak up in class in the U.S. at first.

Although most participants in STEM fields felt that their coursework in the U.S. was easy, they admitted that STEM classes involved mostly number and did not involve much English discussion. However, as an English major in China, Mary had no English barriers in the U.S. Instead, her challenges related to math barriers: “I had never studied math in my undergraduate studies in China. Therefore, the statistics studies during my doctoral journey were hard for me at first.” However, regardless of the major, all participants reported that research was new and difficult as they had not received training about research in China. Lily said: “In the second year of my doctoral study, I started to do research. I did not know how to do research. If I could go back to my second year, I would work harder on my research.”

Summer also felt pressure to make a presentation at a conference at first, because she had no experience with presenting:

You know, it was just my first time presenting at a conference in my fourth year. Learning to present in a conference, and for my job market presentation, those were the challenging moments as it was about my

study and research, and I had never worked as a teaching assistant before. My work was mainly about research, so presenting was quite challenging for me.

In addition to the lack of academic skills, participants also mentioned their lack of some life skills. Zixi discussed her lack of driving skills:

As I could not communicate too well with English, my life was difficult at first. I had to do everything by myself, like driving, finding an apartment. I lived in Los Angeles at first. It was not like New York, where you can take the subway. I had to learn how to drive on highways. I had to use English to learn how to drive and take the driving test to get a driving license, so I was very nervous at first.

Lora also pointed out the lack of soft skills in communication for some Chinese students:

The misunderstanding and confusion are not necessarily caused by the English barrier but can be an issue of communication. Even in China with the mother language, a shy person may still have speaking problems, don't know how to talk with others, dare not to talk with a stranger.

Lack of Cultural Knowledge and Work Experience

Although some new skills can be learned in a short period, some skills and experiences take a much longer time. Fupan talked about the challenges of working in the U.S., and the importance of cultural knowledge:

There were two main challenges for my doctoral journey: English and culture. First of all, language is a barrier as you must be able to understand your work task first. Also, since you must collaborate with your colleagues to do the work, you must understand their culture. Sometimes, I really didn't understand the cultural things that they were talking about. For example, there was a famous Asian comedian, who was supposed to be known by all Americans. His name in the famous TV drama was called Dr. Fupan, which was the same as my name. Whenever they said Dr. Fupan in front of me, they laughed so loudly. I didn't get their joke. Of

course, the joke was not mocking me. It was in a friendly situation, but I just didn't know the TV drama and Dr. Fupan in that drama, so I didn't understand them, so I didn't know how to interact with them.

This cross-cultural interaction example could be considered racial discrimination and cause misunderstanding or conflicts. Without adequate and effective intercultural communication, both Chinese and non-Chinese students may misunderstand each other and display ethnocentric stereotypes against the other side. Such misunderstandings may trigger conflicts in universities and lead to more stress for Chinese students (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2017; Yu & Wang, 2011). Therefore, Fupan emphasized: "At work, to what degree, can you joke with others? How do individuals interact with each other? How to collaborate with others, those are all the problems about culture.?"

In addition to the lack of cultural knowledge, Luyinbi pointed out her lack of work experience to understand her business studies:

Also, my business classes were all about the working culture, cases, and scenarios in the U.S. and all the class discussions were based on American working culture. The professors always used the U.S. market as the case for students to discuss. Or in some global management classes, professors used the Asian market as the case. However, I didn't even know the Chinese market as I had never worked in China. Most of my classmates had working experiences. Or they were already professionals, whose companies paid for their business training courses for their professional development. I could not understand many things in the American job market. For example, some students discussed the workers union. The union was not a new thing for American students, but it was new knowledge for me. And the assignment for business courses not only required you to read a lot but also combined your work in real life with the readings to do professors' homework. It took me a long time to understand that new knowledge. If others took one hour to read three articles, I could

not even read one article in one hour. Even if I read the article, I barely understood the article. That was very hard for me. I could not get the points of the professors AT ALL. Maybe because I had no working experience to understand the professors, I was not interested in studying business AT ALL.

Closed Personality

Many participants mentioned the importance of their personalities in their self-leadership journey. Lora said:

Personality plays a very important role for a student to integrate into U.S. culture. If I am a very open-minded person, I don't care if others laugh at me. An open-minded personality can help one acculturate into a new culture easily. Without an open-minded personality, regardless in the U.S. or any new environment, even if a Chinese student enters a new environment in China, she or he might feel difficulty integrating into a new culture in China. Language is not necessarily a barrier for communication. It depends on the person's personality. If you dare not ask others questions in English, you would lose the opportunity to improve your English. When I just came to the U.S., I often asked others: "Oh. I don't know how to say this." Then I described what I wanted to say, then others would understand. When many people don't know how to express themselves, they just totally give up trying to communicate with others. Then they would lose this kind of communication opportunity. I was not intimidated to talk with native speakers. Ha ha ha.

Unlike Lora, who openly told others that she did not know anything,

Participant ICWDSUS* faced social barriers and was intimidated by talking with others at first:

If I could go back to the first year of my doctorate, I would like to make more friends, to overcome the social barrier in my mind, be more open to others, and make more friends with others. I was a little bit intimidated to talk with others at first as I thought I was a foreigner, I am Chinese. That kind of social barrier in my mind.

Avoidance Coping Strategy

A closed personality may make someone choose avoidance coping strategies to avoid facing and solving problems and allow problems to become worse and worse. Participant A said:

The teachers and students in my university were very nice and friendly. However, it was I who didn't want to talk with them at first. Ha ha. My English was bad. During my first one and a half years of study in the U.S., I didn't really speak in class. I didn't communicate with others in English at all. It was intimidating for me to talk in English. I was extremely afraid that teachers would ask me questions. However, luckily, teachers didn't ask me questions as my name is very hard for American teachers to pronounce. I was very happy at that time as I didn't want anyone to talk with me. Later, I felt that I could not always avoid. Therefore, I tried to find a job which force me to use English. From that job, my English improved. Although English is always a barrier for me, I felt more brave to speak English after that job.

Yinyang Challenges from Others

The *Yinyang* challenges from an ICWDSUS' inner self, such as their personality, could be comparatively easier to identify through the participants' self-reflection than the *Yinyang* challenges from others. Although most participants emphasized the importance of others' help, a person must examine the intention of others' "help." Destructive leadership theories have indicated that the primary objective of destructive leaders' "help" is to harm followers (Einarsen et al., 2007). Even though the intention of others' help is genuine, the results could still be destructive.

Yinyang Sides of Support from Friends and Colleagues

Although many participants appreciated the help from their friends or colleagues, there were also many invisible dangerous sides of the “help” from friends and colleagues. Participant ICWDSUS* mentioned both the positive and negative sides of the help from her male friends:

In my STEM field, I work with many men. Many male friends helped me at first. They took me to grocery stores, introduced me to their friends, and helped me integrate into American culture. However, they helped me because they wanted to date me. Once I declined, they were not interested in helping me anymore. It may not be lucky for a woman to have many male friends' help.

Participant ICWDSUS* even had a couple of serious sexual harassment experiences with death threats during her doctoral journey. Some death threats messages were sent to her from strange WeChat accounts that she did not even know who threatened to rape and kill her. She had to seek help from the university police. However, without solid proof of a crime but just threatening messages in Chinese, the university police could not help her. Therefore, Participant ICWDSUS* had to prepare pepper spray to protect herself until she moved to another state.

Women and girls are often the first targets of attack by criminals and one out of three women experience sex-and-gender-based violence (World Bank, 2019). Compared to international men students, international Chinese women students are more vulnerable to crime, especially sexual violence, which is a hard topic for Chinese women students to talk about (Gu, 2016). Gu (2016) indicated

that many ICWDSUS have experienced sexual harassment from co-workers, peers, professors, advisors, and their professional networks in various forms. Compared to physical or verbal sexual harassment behaviors, *quid pro quo sexual harassment* is most destructive for an ICWDSUS's career, when prospective employers, supervisors, or advising professors use the threat of a recommendation or termination of a scholarship and employment to push ICWDSUS to submit to unwelcome sexual favors (Gu, 2016). Unfortunately, after working as an assistant professor for one year, Participant ICWDSUS* also experienced *quid pro quo sexual harassment* from a senior male department leader, which significantly challenged her career.

Admittedly, most friends and colleagues wanted to sincerely help ICWDSUS. However, they also had biases. When I asked Participant ICWDSUS* if she had prepared for American culture before she came to the U.S., she said:

I have learned much about American culture from an American friend. Of course, her opinion about American culture was always very positive, which was not actually the case when I came here. I asked her about the sex parts in those American dramas. She said it was not true, so when I dated my ex-husband, I thought it was not like that, but see, my ex had an affair with another woman.

Although most participants appreciated the help from other Chinese, there were negative sides of always hanging out with Chinese. Many Chinese students lost the opportunity to speak English and learn American culture by only hanging

out with Chinese friends (Lin & Yi, 1997; Xie, 2007; Zhu, 2016; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006). JJ said:

As there are many Chinese and Asian students in the U.S., people like to interact with people from the same nation or the same race, which is more comfortable and convenient. Of course, you need to have a social circle with people from the same nation and same race. However, if you want to study or work in the U.S., you must step out of your comfort zone to meet new people and make friends with new people. Compared to students, who are too shy to socialize with others, after a few years, you will see the differences between their English and the English of students who are more social, although at first everyone's English was similar. They didn't want to step out of their comfort zone to make them uncomfortable, and their English didn't improve much.

Yinyang Sides of Parents' Support

Although all participants in my study felt blessed with supportive and loving parents, and strongly appreciated their parents' support for them, they also mentioned that their parents' kind advice for them may not have always been helpful but sometimes led to bad results. Participant ICWDSUS* divorced after being married for two and a half years. When I asked her what triggered her wish to get married at age 24 in her second year of the doctoral journey, she replied:

I didn't have a strong desire to get married at first, at least not as much as my parents. However, my parents always wanted someone to take care of me, especially when I was sick. So, I started to go on dating websites in my second year and got married after dating my ex for three months. However, after getting married, it was actually I, who always took care of him.

Most single participants' parents pushed them to get married to avoid being "left over." For married participants, their parents and their husbands' parents could bring more challenges for participants' work-life balance. Zixi said:

The biggest challenge for me is work-life balance. After getting married, not only do I take care of my own family, but I must take care of my parents and my husband's parents as well. During the vacation, all the parents wanted to see us. However, as a Ph.D. student, I was very busy during vacations. So, I had to balance the time to see my parents and see my husband's parents. When I was single, my parents used to push me to get married. After getting married, they pushed me to have a wedding ceremony. I was doing my Ph.D., and I had no time to prepare for a wedding ceremony! After I delayed my graduation and did the wedding ceremony, all parents pushed me to have a kid. My mother pushed me directly. My husband's mother pushed me indirectly. Now, I am also concerned about how to take care of the old parents in China if I live in the U.S.

Yinyang Sides of Support from Advisors or the Department

Although all participants appreciated their advisors' help, they also mentioned the limitations of their advisors' help. Participant ICWDSUS+ said:

My advisor is very famous in my field. His work in industry, teaching, research, everything was great in the field. However, he was too busy with industry work. I had to say that during my dissertation period, I was really tortured by him. It was not because his demand was too high, but because his requests were not consistent. He didn't read my dissertation carefully to provide instructive feedback. He just said something casually. However, as a student, I must follow him. So I did what he asked me to do and went back to him later. However, he forgot what he had told me already. He denied what he told me one week ago, one month or several months ago, and asked me to redo everything from the very beginning again. He did this several times by denying his previous instructions and asking me to redo my work. So in the end, I collapsed, both physically and mentally. I was diagnosed to have the mental illness of depression and started to take depression medication and see a psychiatrist.

In addition to being confused by advisors, advisees with mental illness could be dangerous to advisors and departments too. Although most participants sought hard to have teaching opportunities and appreciated the opportunities from their advisors and department during their doctoral journey, Participant ICWDSUS@ was upset that her department let her teach for 12 years after she graduated:

I think my department before was a HUGE disservice, for me (pause) and to the undergraduate students! Put a 27-year-old international student, who just came to the U.S. for two years, in a classroom with 76 undergraduates, most of whom were men?! And 99% were white!!! The discrimination... Yes, from those spoiled brats!...I frankly didn't know what I was talking about! What a traumatic experience! What a traumatic experience!! I hate teaching so much!!! I hate teaching undergrads to death!!! The challenges from my teaching directly, directly made me give up teaching and do what I am doing now!

After painfully emphasizing the direct correlation with her department's "disservice" for her, she described out her hatred for her department word by word: "They can't afford destroying me!...They can't afford destroying me! hur...hur...(she smiled, scoffed, and blew air from her nose).

Participant ICWDSUS@'s English in the interview with her pausing, repetition, slowing down her pace, and stress did not sound like she was talking to me in an interview, but like she was warning her department. Her angry face, tears in her eyes, creepy smile, twisted and painful facial expressions, and the way she blew air from her nose looked very scary in the video recording. My smile while interviewing her immediately froze in my Zoom recording. Hearing

Participant ICWDSUS@’s angry declaration in English that “They can’t afford destroying me!” twice, I could not help but wonder what she wanted her department to pay her for if she felt she was destroyed by the department. I have heard on the news that some Ph.D. students shot advisors and department leaders. Luckily, Participant ICWDSUS@’s department and advisor helped her with her research, which made her satisfied.

Yinyang Sides of the Services from the University

U.S. universities offer many great student support and counseling services for international students. Many participants mentioned their universities’ students’ services, such as English service, “English language partners,” and “happy hour” networking events. However, with little knowledge of counseling services, it is difficult for Chinese students to immediately trust a foreign counselor (Chan, 2006; Li, 2016; Xie, 2007; Zhu, 2016). Participant ICWDSUS+ said:

Every university has an international student center and gives every international student an advisor. I went there once. Even before I went there, I told myself “I just go there to practice my English-speaking skills.” It turned out to be just as I expected, and I only practiced five to ten minutes. The international student advisor didn’t like to talk.

Unfortunately, university’s services may harm students too. Participant ICWDSUS* called the police at midnight in 2013 when she had a noisy and drug-using roommate. Participant ICWDSUS* said:

When I called the police, the police could have told me that they could not help me since I and the roommate lived in the same apartment. It was like a domestic issue, rather than noises from neighbors. They didn't tell me that when I called the police. Instead, the police just came to my apartment and told me that they could not help me as I and my roommate lived together. Then, why did they even come if they could not help me out? So, my roommate knew that I called the police. She got more scared as she was using marihuana. It was illegal in 2012. The police probably smelled marihuana, but they didn't want to be bothered by that...After the police left, my roommate shouted all the swear words and waved a knife at me.

Yinyang Sides of the Free and Open Culture in the U.S. and China

All participants like the free, open, and diversified U.S. culture. However, they also mentioned the negative sides of freedom and openness. Participants' interpretation of "freedom" and "being open" varied greatly. Summer said:

My advisor was very supportive in a way that she gave me lots of freedom to choose my own topic and my own ways of doing things. That was great. The downside was that I wish I had more disciplined and structured guidance. I was just doing my own things, but it wasn't the most efficient way or the most rewarding way for the long run...At that time, I was happy without a boss bothering me, and got a bunch of freedom. But now, I feel, why didn't my advisor just tell me I should do this and not do that?

Although Participant A liked American free culture, she also said: "Of course, freedom can't break the law, but when they (U.S. people) broke the law, it could be really scary." Participant ICWDSUS* also talked about openness as she discussed her culture shock:

My culture shock? My culture shock was that people are too open to sex! The culture (the U.S.) is much more open than I thought. They (U.S. people) talk about sex, talk about relationships. The things that happened between me and my American ex-husband, like his affairs with other women, let me understand American culture better, such as the open

culture, the freedom culture. Either good or bad. Everybody has their freedom to do whatever they want.

Fupan had a different interpretation of being open:

Yes, Chinese people are very open to learning new things. It is very good, but the other side of being open and good at learning new things is the lack of a sense of intellectual property. As long as someone looks at your work, and thinks your work is good, they would use and spread immediately freely without paying you. Ha ha ha.

Jo also had her own interpretation of freedom and openness:

Opposite to Hong Kong, Canto is a very open city. My university in China has a motto to encourage students to freely pursue what their hearts really desire instead of what society wants them to have. During the summer vacation of the fourth year of my undergrad studies in China, my university organized us to go to Europe as exchange students for a month. It was my Enlightenment! That was real education! This was the most positive way to get rid of the innocence that you can't afford to have it anymore, really showed me the world. The atmosphere in Canto or even Hong Kong is to educate people to be world citizens. Therefore, although Canto is good and could have more resources than many places in the world, Canto for me is just an island. I wanted to see the world. I want to become a world citizen.

Yinyang Sides of Education in the U.S. and China

Some participants felt that it was hard to compare the two big education systems, which is “just like an apple to orange comparison.” Some participants felt that there were huge differences between the two systems. However, in the end, all the participants described many differences between the U.S. and Chinese education from their observations. For example, Mary returned to China in 2021 and told me that the management of students are much stricter in Chinese universities than in U.S. universities. She said:

My Chinese university also learns from the U.S. university to let undergrads use the first whole year to explore what they like most instead of letting them choose something they could not know. However, American students may not be as obedient as Chinese students. Chinese students really listen to teachers and their parents to follow the procedure of the university to graduate...The Chinese teachers are super strict with students. It was not from the teaching faculties as teaching faculties are just responsible for teaching. The Chinese universities have three special offices, which are “students department” “teaching department” and “communist youth league department” to manage students. The three offices control students tightly. There are endless student development activities and competitions to make students’ lives super busy. In China, it is really hard to enter a university. However, in the U.S., it is easy to enter a university, but hard to graduate.

Many participants mentioned that the teaching part is much more difficult in Chinese universities than in the U.S. universities, whereas the research part in U.S. universities is much more rigid than in China. Lily said: “In terms of the lecture part of a class, Chinese classes are much more difficult, strict, and rigid than American classes, although the research part in China is quite low.”

Some participants also thought that Chinese universities focus on theory while U.S. universities focus on application in the real world. Lora said:

The difference between the two systems is huge. U.S. education is more practical and designed based on solving problems in the real world. U.S. education is designed backward, starting from problems to what theories you need. After you studied in an American class, you can use it to work in real life to solve problems. However, in China, you study many theories first. However, when you want to use those theories to work in real life, you would find that you can’t use the theories to work directly. Then people would ask you “why didn’t you study those basic things in your class?”

Although all participants agreed that the higher education in the U.S. is better than China, they also mentioned that the primary and secondary education in China is better than in the U.S. Lora said:

However, this is also the advantage of Chinese education. Chinese education lays a good theoretical foundation for students' future development. Basic education in the U.S. is very bad. Chinese education before high school is much better than U.S. education before high school. Many Americans with middle school and high school education I've met here could not do basic math well, which is the problem of primary education in the U.S.

Participant ICWDSUS# further pointed out that the education differences reflect the cultural differences of the two nations:

The educational differences are from the cultural differences of the two countries, as education is part of the culture of the nation. Chinese culture is collective, conservative and hierarchical, so individuals are trained to be like slaves, who follow the arrangement of superiors. Chinese culture lacks individualism, lacks independence, lacks respect for individuality and humanity! Chinese education is too utilitarian! Chinese students just want to get education to find a job that can earn a lot of money without knowing their personalities, interests, and what they really want to do. Everything was arranged by others, so Chinese students don't know what they want to do. Although Chinese education teaches students how to memorize things and how to do exams to get high scores, the independent thinking and problem-solving skills are missing. Although they can solve old problems from their memorized and tested knowledge, they can't solve new problems independently.

Based on what participants shared, both Chinese and U.S. education have problems that educators in the two nations and ICWDSUS should be aware of.

Yinyang Sides of Women's Education and Feminism

As part of patriarchal culture, the participants both acknowledged and criticized women's education and feminism. However, regardless of participants' different attitudes about feminism, the participants are confused about how a woman should develop herself. Participant JJ mentioned how the education about women changed her:

Maybe from our childhood as a little girl, education may teach us to find a person to lead us or guide us or even save us, ha ha. When you grow up and experience more, you will find that self-lead is actually more important than being led by others. When I was a kid, I was very obedient. I dared not do courageous and risky things. I wanted to just grow up and establish a family like everyone. However, when I have grown up, I seem to be more courageous than my brother. I think education really changed me. Even how my parents educated me influenced me. My parents always emphasized education. I put work as my first priority. My bottom line about a relationship with a man is that the relationship can't influence my studies and work. Work-life balance is probably a challenge for a woman. You have your priorities for your work and life.

Although Participant ICWDSUS| is a gentle woman in a STEM field, who blamed no one in the interview, she criticized feminists' promotion of women just because of the female gender:

I think men's leadership and women's leadership should be the same in essence, but people always say they are different in reality, like women's power, girls' power. If the dream is to achieve gender equality, I don't agree that men's leadership and women's leadership should be different. Those things should not be different from gender. Sometimes, it is like feminism, women's rights, so people would say just because she is a woman, she is beautiful, so she has the women's leadership. I don't think people should have those differences. The best state of leadership should not differentiate women from men. Leadership is just leadership, not related to gender.

All women benefit from feminist work, otherwise, women could not study a Ph.D. However, few participants appreciated feminist work to promote women, and most participants criticized feminism. As a feminist researcher, on the one hand, I would say that the most hurtful challenge for me is to see women, whom feminists have risked their lives to promote, harshly criticize feminists after enjoying more women's rights that feminists have fought hard with patriarchy to gain for women. However, on the other hand, as a feminist researcher, I must listen carefully to women's criticism and seriously reflect on the problems of feminism. Although Participant ICWDSUS\$ is a feminist researcher, she admitted that her feminist ideals could not be achieved even in her home:

Even at my own home, even though I study and teach about women's empowerment and gender equality every day, I could not change my own life at my home. Biologically, I have the womb, so it must be me to give birth to the child and be responsible for all the consequences for my own body, my Ph.D. study, and my work. Naturally, I, as the mother, must spend more time taking care of the baby. Even at my home, I could not make me and my husband share the housework half and half in an equal way. This is not just because of Chinese culture. I see many American women struggle with this too.

Maki's (2015) research verified what Participant ICWDSUS\$ reported. Family significantly influences American women leaders' career development from their motivation to pursue career advancement to quitting their jobs to take care of their families. Although married women with children are often the primary caregivers at home, women without children or single women also have

work-family conflict due to their responsibilities for family members, such as taking care of their elderly parents (Maki, 2015).

Yinyang Sides of Independence

Although all participants appreciated the independent culture in the U.S., the participants reported negative sides of being too independent. Lora said:

For all my work, I do it by myself. Even for my business trip, I drove three hours back and forth by myself. U.S. culture is very independent. I've also become very independent. I would feel that I don't need others. I don't actively seek social activities. I think I am happy with myself. I am more and more like a loner. Well, as an old single woman, I am worried about marriage. My circle is too small. In addition to work, I don't have social groups. In the past two years, I haven't met more than 10 new people, so it is hard for me to find a spouse.

Summer talked about the negative side of doing research independently without her advisor monitoring her work: "I did research independently. Yes, I learned to be independent. But again, I didn't even know if I was lost or not."

Yinyang Sides of Speaking up

Although all participants dared not speak up in class at first and had to train themselves to speak up confidently, they later realized the negative sides of speaking up as well. In 2016, Participant ICWDSUS* described her culture shock: "This was another shock to me. I thought Americans were very open with disagreement, but in reality, they always nodded along even though sometimes they disagreed with you, ha ha ha ha."

With much laughter, Participant ICWDSUS* was not bothered by the invisible *Yin* side of the speaking-up in the U.S. In 2016, after she graduated, her advice for other ICWDSUS was:

As an ICWDSUS, you need to let your voice be heard, again speak confidently and speak loudly! Say things you want to say whenever and whatever! Even if in the classroom, even when the professor is teaching, it is really not scary at all! It really helps a female Chinese STEM student!

Unfortunately, without thinking about others, her loud and “confident” voice did not seem to help herself. After becoming an assistant professor, in the interview in 2021, Participant ICWDSUS* complained that she not only could not say whatever she wanted to other professors, but she could not say things she liked to say in her own class:

I didn’t understand what I said to my students in my class. Why did many students give me the worst teaching evaluation?... You know I just asked my postdoc about our conference paper, and he went to the HR to complain that I made him work during Christmas break!

Yinyang Sides of Stress or Pressure

Instead of the negative sides of stress, many participants mentioned the positive sides of stress, which “made [them] happy and progressed.” Participant A said:

My advisor gave me lots of stress to do research. He asked me to meet him each week to report my progress. I felt really good about that. Just because of his close monitor, I didn’t have time to be lazy. Whenever I had a question, my advisor immediately helped me out. My problem was immediately solved. I didn’t make any D-tours during my doctoral journey. I am very lucky to have a very good advisor... However, now I have worked for one and a half years independently as an assistant

professor. No one gives me any pressure, and I've made no new research. I don't feel happy but fearful about that. I need others to give me pressure!

Yinyang Sides as a Chinese Woman

Although some participants in STEM fields identified the advantage of being a woman scientist in finding a job in STEM fields due to the department's support for diversity, some participants also identified the challenges for them as an Asian woman. Participant ICWDSUS* admitted that her American ex-husband married her because of his "Asian Fetish." She also added: "Asian fetish is not only for romantic and sexual relationships between white men and Asian women, but also at work. When I was assertive to defend my rights, my white bosses were so furious."

With the stereotype that Asian women are submissive and quiet, when Asian women scientists behave confidently, they may receive more resistance from others than other women of color (Williams et al., 2014). Although Participant ICWDSUS* used to think her awesome publications and academic performance were her advantage in the academic job market, she was surprised to find out that other women with less or even no publications were hired, but she was rejected many times. One year after getting her current assistant professor position, she started to reflect on why she got the job:

When I went to the campus visit of my current job, I had already been flying every week for a couple of months, and I was sick, but I still had to go to my interview. Unfortunately, my flight was delayed. I arrived at the hotel at 3am, but I had to have breakfast with the job searching committee

at 7am, so I had to get up at 5pm. I didn't really sleep and barely talked during the breakfast and job interview. And you know, I basically have a soft voice, and I was sick, so all the white men on my committee thought I was a soft Asian girl, who could work diligently and obediently! That was what they were looking for, so I got my job. And now, they probably regret hiring me as I am not as soft as they expected. Now probably both the white men and white women around me wanted me to go as I always got grants but they don't.

In addition to the Asian fetish, Luyinbi described her fear of the *maternal wall* phenomena (Correll et al., 2007) that mothers were more likely to be rejected for a job and promotion opportunities:

When I look for a job, I dare not mention my family and my child to the employers. I don't think that the fact that I have a family would add any value to my job search. However, having a family will add value and confidence to my male peers when they shared their experiences with me. The employers would think the man with a family is more stable. Even at work, male employees are obviously more confident than women.

Anna also discussed her lack of social capital as a Chinese professional:

As an Asian woman, to be a leader is really hard! As the only Chinese woman in my university, I feel very lonely. I feel white faculties have more social capital or culture capital to navigate this system...ha ha ha...Life is really hard for a woman in academia. If you are not married, people would say why don't you get married and regard you as their threat at work. If you are married, people would say that you are married, and your family would influence your work.

Williams et al. (2014) identified the *mommy war* phenomenon among single, married, and married-with-children women scientists to compete for limited job positions for women.

Interestingly, the married women in this study gave single women the opposite suggestions about what a single woman should do. Participant A said: "I

have an older woman friend. She told me that for a woman, the biological constraint for a woman is real, and a woman can't get a baby when she is too old. It may already be too late for me to get pregnant (She is 32 years old). I should have listened to others before." In contrast, Participant JJ's married friends gave JJ different suggestions: "Many married friends told me to enjoy my single life now. After getting married and having children, I would have no time to do things I like to do, like traveling.

In terms of Chinese identity, Participant A said:

I didn't feel any discrimination against me as a Chinese before. I didn't feel American people had bad views about Chinese before. Wait, oh, yes, there was one time. I was at a conference. One American white guy, who I didn't know, asked me: "Why are you looking for jobs?" I said: "I need a job so I am just looking for a job." And, he just said: "You are taking our jobs" directly. I was so shocked how someone could talk to me in such a directly rude way. Before the pandemic, when others asked me where I was from, I always happily said: "I am from China!"...However, since the pandemic (she lowered her head), I started to feel some discrimination. When they asked me if I was from China now, I didn't know how to answer this question. Even when they looked at my Chinese face with that kind of hostile look (she imitated the unfriendly looks), I had a sense of insecurity. I don't like to go out now. Even when I went to a supermarket, people used a strange look to look at me. The Chinese students in my university had some strange experiences, like they hung some Chinese New Year decorations on the door of their dorms, but later they found the decorations were torn by others, and the way they tore the decorations was extremely bad, torn into the smallest pieces. You can see the hatred of the person who did those. However, the Chinese students didn't know who did that and why others did that. They felt very sad. The decorations of students from other countries were intact, but only Chinese students' decorations were all destroyed.

Yinyang Sides of a Husband

Most participants were married. A couple of participants highly praised their husbands' support, but two participants were divorced and a few participants complained about their husbands. Most participants shared that marriage is a "double-edged sword" for a woman with both support and restrictions from marriage. Jo said:

It was really really really really really an advantage to have two people in the U.S. My husband is very capable. He knows everything. He cooks, drives, has a good sense of humor, and is loving. I couldn't survive alone without my husband, seriously!!! My husband helps a lot with childcare. My husband and I are like a team, working together to develop our family. I got a promotion this year after my boss retired. Therefore, I am very busy with my new work. I am very lucky to have a supportive spouse, who really understands and supports me.

Jo used five "really" words to emphasize her husband's support for her career. Rather than the competition between a capable wife and a less capable husband in Western individualistic culture, many Chinese women leaders' husbands have "self-assured and confident" attitudes and "egalitarian values," and support their wives as the "biggest fans, cheerleaders, coaches, and mentors" (Cheung & Halpern, 2010, p. 187). However, Jo also shared the challenge of having a husband:

It was a double-edged sword to be married. Before I came to the U.S. I got the offer first and I took my husband with me to the U.S. However, we were worried that we could not be together. Luckily, he also got an offer from the university I studied. However, he didn't want to pursue a Ph.D. Therefore, after he graduated from his double master's program two and a half years later, he found a job in another state. He went back on weekends, and I went to his state during summer and winter vacations.

Later, he found a job that sponsored his H1B and then I moved to his state. There were several months we were separated.

Participant ICWDSUS[^] believed that singleness was a source of depression as an “old and single women doctoral student”:

Most of my classmates are married with children or married without a child. There were some women who didn't get married, but their ages were old...above 30...The doctoral journey was hard for them. Their temper became bad. They had depression.

After telling me her own belief in the correlation between an “old” single ICWDSUS and her depression, she smiled and asked if I had depression since I am not married. I immediately confessed:

Well, I am probably the oldest single ICWDSUS. I am in my 40s. I am sorry but I am probably older than you even, but see you are very successful as a career woman, mother, and wife. I am still struggling with my dissertation. Yes, I have depression. This is why I do this dissertation to learn from other ICWDSUS.

Luckily, my dissertation cured my depression. My dissertation shows that there is no causal relationship between singleness and depression. After conducting a longitudinal, 50-year-long longitudinal study of 142 women to discover women's adult development, Helson et al. (2020) concluded that each woman's life is unique and their personal feelings about the shared experiences are different.

Depression is not just a challenge for single women since married women can be depressed as well. In addition, heterosexual marriage can cause depression for a woman as one married participant realized she loved women after having her

first child, and it was hard for her to divorce. Also the comfort from a husband for a woman may not be more than the comfort from a cat. Although Participant ICWDSUS* divorced after a short marriage, she admitted the support from her ex-husband when they were first married:

During the first year of our marriage, I would say there was some support from him, not necessarily coming from him, but just because of the fact that I had someone during my Ph.D. journey. When I was very stressed, I could still find some support from a family and the cat with him. The cat helped me a lot...ha ha.

Despite the support, her ex's cheating and sexual relationship with another woman almost killed Participant ICWDSUS*. Divorce is not uncommon for women graduate students with about 12 % of women divorcing during their graduate studies (Price, 2006). Participant ICWDSUS\$ directly admitted: "Most of my stress is from my husband. If without him, I would not have that much unhappiness. Ha ha ha." Her laughter was not happy laughter but wry and sad.

Participant ICWDSUS?'s marriage also led her to experience gender inequity:

I had never experienced any gender discrimination in China. The culture in my hometown and my family in China are very gender equal. People treat women and men equally. Also, thanks to the one-child policy, every family treats the daughter well. However, after I came to the U.S. and married my Cantonese husband, I started to feel that women's status is soooo low!

Despite considerable criticism of China's one-child policy, the one-child policy has promoted women's career levels in China through "parental

investment, educational attainment, career, and in terms of the familial social and political participation,” which greatly improved China’s gender equality (Sudbeck, 2012, p. 55; Sun & Li, 2017). However, married life is still challenging in terms of Chinese women’s equality with their husbands at home. Participant ICWDSUS?’s husband’s traditional ideas about gender roles at home gave her much stress:

When I was pregnant with my first kid, I was too busy with my work, and I also wanted to pursue a Ph.D., my husband was not happy to see I worked so hard and could not take care of family as much as he wanted... Later he changed his job and had to go to another state, so I quit the job I liked very much and followed him to another state and started to find a new job. The new job was worse than my old job. After I spent several years on my second job and started to be promoted, my husband’s job changed again and we moved to this state. Therefore, I had to quit my career again to follow my husband to another new state. After I found a new job here, my boss and the whole department discriminated against me. The discrimination at work made me feel very bad. However, when I went home and tried to tell my bad experiences at work to my husband to seek his comfort, he was fed up with me. He wanted to divorce me, so I had both work and marriage crises during my pregnancy of the second child. And I got high blood pressure (at the age of 38). A woman leader often has a conflict between family and career development. In this regard, I have lots of tension with my husband. He is a traditional man. He doesn’t like to do housework. He gives me lots of pressure to take care of family work. Even now, while I am being interviewed by you, my husband is not happy.

When I asked Participant ICWDSUS? if her husband or parents helped her with childcare like other participants with children, to my surprise, she told me: “My 9-year-old daughter helps me take care of her baby sister now.” Although she struggled with her work-family conflict and believed that “women must make

a choice between family and career,” as the most senior woman leader in my study, Fupan had a supportive husband, a big family with four children and two old parents, and one of the biggest private consulting companies in China. Instead of work-family conflict, Fupan’s career development was supported by her family development. Fupan said: “My career success and the support from my husband and family are inseparable!”

Instead of separating family and work in individualistic cultures, Chinese society views family and work as an interdependent integral (Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Liu, 2013). Thus, the time conflicts between Chinese women’s work and family obligations do not necessarily cause work-family conflict (Yang et al., 2000).

Yinyang Sides of Smiles and Extremely Nice Treatment

Although most participants in STEM did not feel any gender discrimination in their department, Participant ICWDSUS* felt strong gender discrimination in her STEM field. When I asked her to describe why she felt she was discriminated against by her male group members, she said:

They didn’t directly discriminate or disrespect me, nor did they say something disrespectful. They just treated me in a NICER way. They just talked with me in an extremely softer tone with more smiles like they were talking to a little girl, who knew nothing, and they were the strong ones, who knew everything. Their especially NICER way to me was actually a kind of discrimination as they thought I was weaker...However, in terms of the subject we were doing, I was actually stronger than them, but they never realized that...Even though I wrote down the whole calculation for them, they were still at the mental stage where they could not understand

how “I” could do that, instead of trying to understand the SUBJECT and the solution “I” pointed for them. They were so shocked to see I could provide an answer. They were like...How could it be possible that “I” could do that but THEY couldn’t do?!...I think it was because I was a woman. As a result, I passed the Ph.D. exams with full scores. However, those guys who discriminated me didn’t even pass that exam.

Gu (2016) claimed that most ICWDSUS in her study complained about the stereotypes their male colleagues and professors held against them as docile and submissive, which was evident in daily interactions, and in conference presentations, the workplace, and academic collaborations. Summer pointed out the microaggression she experienced although she had lived in the U.S. for many years and her husband is American:

It is microaggression. Well, it is not as direct as discrimination by saying you are not as good as me, it has the undertone that “Oh you don’t really belong here!” like some comments like “Oh your English is SO GOOD!” with a surprise. They may not realize that at all, but subconsciously they sound like I don’t belong here. It sounds like it reminds me that I am different from them.

Being physically and culturally different from white people and isolated from other minorities in the U.S. as the racial or intellectual other, Asian Americans are often seen as “forever foreign” (Williams et al., 2014, p. 47), which made them incapable of assimilating into U.S. society as “true Americans” (Castro & Collins, 2021, p. 38; Kim, 1999). The racialization process of Asian Americans is ultimately about dehumanizing the personhood of Asian Americans and using whites as the standard of a full human (Shah, 2019). Through daily communication, institutional and structural racism is transmitted, reinforced, and

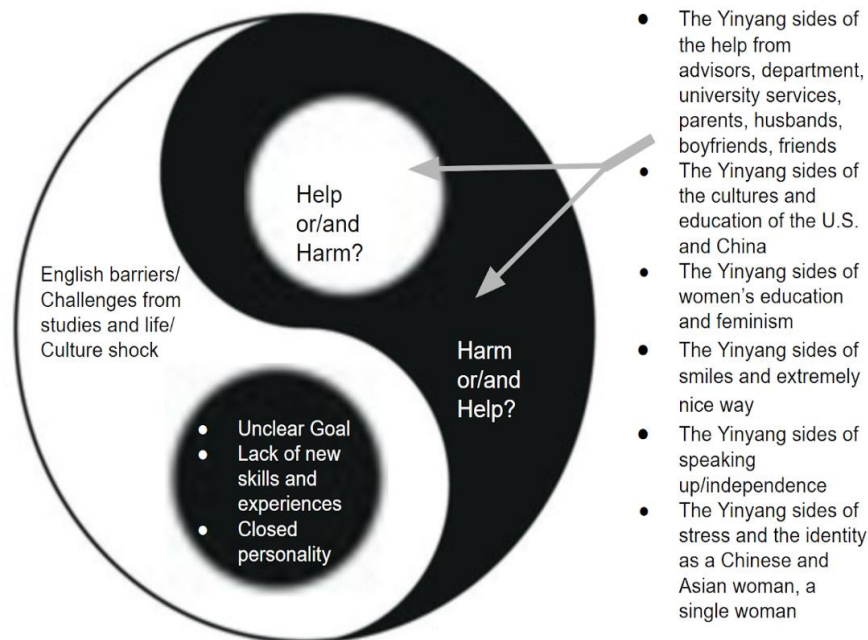
reproduced through socialization (Chang et al., 2011). In this way, people unconsciously learn, internalize, accept, and use racist practices and biases daily.

Summary of *Yinyang* Challenges

The *Yinyang* challenges including the motives and personality of the participants and others around the participants are less visible and trickier than *Yang* challenges. Figure 16 summarizes these challenges.

Figure 16

The Tricky Yinyang Challenges



As Figure 16 shows, all participants faced some similar *Yang* challenges (e.g., English barriers). In addition to the challenges from visible skill gaps, participants also have invisible challenges from themselves (e.g., communication,

acculturation, personality) and their environment. The visible “help” from others may include invisible “harm.” Therefore, an ICWDSUS may not easily and fully accept or refuse the “help” or “harm” from others without critical and independent self-reflection.

The pain and confusion from *Yinyang* challenges taught participants the existence of at least two invisible worlds: one’s deeper inner world and the other-oriented VUCA world. In Figure 16, the small dark bubble inside the big *Yang* area represents the *Yin* challenges from one’s invisible inner world. The *Yang* side of *Yinyang* challenges provides participants with a great opportunity to deeply reflect on the challenges from one’s inner world. The same challenge can cause individuals to have either painful or happy experiences. If participants took the opportunity to reflect on the root cause of their pain and confusion, the small dark bubble inside the big *Yang* area in Figure 16 would become smaller and smaller to help them better understand and control themselves. If participants ignored their pain and confusion, they would have lost the opportunity to reflect and understand their inner self, and the small dark bubble would become larger until they become visible and would be unable to control it. Unfortunately, with an obsession with their visible self-centered goal, some participants ignored all other aspects, people, and their own feelings as “little things,” and repeated or reinforced their old ways more. Compared to understanding their invisible inner world, it is more difficult to understand others’ invisible inner worlds and the VUCA world. The

big *Yin* area in Figure 16 shows bigger and more complex invisible areas than the small dark bubble of participants' inner world. Although participants could ignore their own feelings, neglecting others' feelings and many unknown worlds can result in traumatic experiences of participants.

Part III: *Yin* Challenges—One's Disaster is from One's Own Heart

Instead of blaming the visible challenges from people's external world, Confucius claimed that their disaster is not from their external world, but from their own internal world (CTP, 2016, *Analects*, Jishi: 10) and unrighteous heart (CTP, 2016, *Liji*, Daxue: 2). After overcoming both *Yang* and *Yinyang* challenges, all of the participants were promoted from an "intimidated" Chinese female students to international professionals. The higher platform brought higher levels of both opportunities and challenges for the self-leader. How participants allow their increased power and resources to influence others is the ultimate challenge of a senior leader's inner morality.

People act according to their own values (Charmaz, 2014). Their beliefs and imagined experiences about events and situations determine their responses to the external world and ultimately their life experiences (Manz, 1983). Without self-reflection about their own values, leaders' personal beliefs and values remain largely unconscious and unknown, and the relationship between their values and leadership behaviors remain unexamined and unchallenged (Branson, 2014). In terms of values about morality, which should be the core of all values, leaders

must use critical self-reflection to develop ethical virtues and moral sensitivity (Crossan et al., 2013). Facing the pressure to survive in a competitive world and the temptation for more self-interests, some participants ignored their morality related to others.

Self-centered Woman’s Neglect of “Little Things”

Facing all uncertainties, everyone has their own biases and even wrong education from the societal culture, misleading one to enter problematic situations without realizing the potential danger until the danger becomes visible.

Participant ICWDSUS| laughed when she talked about managing relationships with others:

I am already too busy with my own studies and papers. I would not spend much time managing relationships (*guanxi*) with others. I feel that it is a waste of time to manage relationships with others...ha ha ha...This is maybe the side-effect of getting a Ph.D. I would regard many things as little things that do not deserve my time to think too much...ha ha.

With much laughter and regarding relationship management with others as “a waste of time,” Participant ICWDSUS| did not realize that the “little things” may develop into significant issues that could jeopardize her comprehensive wellbeing.

After getting married and having a baby, Participant ICWDSUS\$ immediately became very unhappy:

I was so happy during my master’s time just because I didn’t think deeply about many things. I didn’t see many things as big things. I had never thought those little things would become critical issues...Consequently,

after getting married during my doctoral time, I immediately became very unhappy. My doctoral journey and my marriage made me think deeply.

In a self-centered world, participants' perspectives on the "big" or "little" things were the opposite from Confucius' calculation of big or little things. Participants' "big things" were self-centered (e.g., publications and scores) and "little things" were others-centered (e.g., roommates, racism). In contrast, in Confucianism, a self-centered person is called a *little human (xiao ren)*, who studies *little skills (xiao ji)* or *little study (xiao xue)* to gain *little benefit* (self-benefits). A group of *little human (xiao ren)* create a *little healthy (xiao kang)* community with an emphasis on individual differences (*xiao yi*) and irreconcilable conflicts between morality (*de*) for others and economic gains (*de*) for the self. An others-oriented *junzi* (morally superior person) learns *big learning (da xue)* to conquer the self to unite others to achieve *big havings (da you)* and gradually create a *big sameness (da tong)* society by including different individuals as the *same people (tong ren)* with the harmony and inclusion (*He-He*) of morality (*de*) and economic gains (*de*) sustainably without conflicts and anxieties (Chen, 2014; Li, 2019; Zhang, 1996). The differences between a *little human* and *junzi* as well as a *little healthy* and *big sameness* society are described in more detail in Appendix B and Appendix C.

Lao Zi further explained the importance of seeing the "little things" in a VUCA world. Facing the ever-changing complexities in one's external world,

instead of trying to identify the big and complex things but getting lost in a VUCA world, Lao Zi asked individuals to close their eyes and mouths towards external phenomena, but to perceive the little things from internal causes. Because perceptions of the little things are bright, using the light from their own brightness to enlighten their confusion inside, they can become illuminators to light up they way ahead in the VUCA world (CTP, 2016, Dao De Jing: 52).

However, most people ignore the invisible little things and only focus on the visible “big things.” When invisible *Yin* challenges, which were neglected as “little things,” grow to be visible and big, they will suddenly attack the unprepared individual and just one unpredictable event can bring death to their career, marriage, or even life. Lily’s Facebook page showed her regret for the sudden death of one of her alumni from her U.S. university at the age of 39, who had just been hired for an assistant professor job after going through the whole doctoral journey and several postdoc positions. Luyinbi also mentioned how sad she was about the deaths or stroke of some young scholars she knew who just found an assistant professor job. Zixi also lamented that some assistant professors she knew had passed away from COVID-19.

A Smart Woman’s Neglect of “Awkward” Others

Her “Awkward” Roommates

Although some participants confidently boasted about their “high IQ” and “high EQ” due to their “high scores,” highly ranked universities, or “awesome

publications” in the past, they experienced drama or trauma during their doctoral journey. After becoming an assistant professor, Participant ICWDSUS* denied all the challenges she had before and explained why she felt no challenges:

Those were not challenges, but just new things. However, the only time that I needed to learn a lot of new things was in my first year, because I needed to familiarize myself with new knowledge. Once I got over that phase, it was nothing! I only needed to read some literature on my own to find out the solution, that’s it!

From the *Yang* side, I applauded Participant ICWDSUS*’s courage to quickly embrace new things and new knowledge which led to awesome academic performance in the U.S. However, from the *Yin* side, in addition to new knowledge and new things, she did not know that she also needed to learn about new people and new environments. Consequently, Participant ICWDSUS* experienced drama with almost everyone, such as all her roommates, lab mate, classmates, students, advisors, supervisors, and her ex-husband. Although after becoming an assistant professor she denied that she had faced any challenges, when I asked her for more details about her doctoral journey, she described several very difficult and life-threatening situations: “I did not have challenges in my life either when I just came here...Oh, if you call that as a challenge, yes, I had difficulty finding an apartment when I first came here. It was not a challenge actually. Ha ha.” With a focus on academic and career success, she did not interpret challenges that were not directly related to her studies and work, as “challenges,” but as “difficulties” or “trouble”: “I switched from apartment to

apartment. I think I changed apartments six times during my first year. Ha ha ha... so troublesome! I had difficulty with some roommates. They were high. They were awkward! Ha ha ha...I had a lot of trouble with my roommates.”

Starting with laughing at all her “awkward” roommates, Participant ICWDSUS* remembered one incident:

One of my roommates, an American girl, she moved into my apartment when I was already living there for a while. She is American. She went to Spain as an exchange student. During that period, she subleased her apartment to a girl and a boy. I didn't even know if they were a couple, just one boy and one girl living together. They lived there until the owner went back from Spain at about the end of the semester. Later, the owner moved in. I think when she moved back from Spain, there were some jet lags going on. She could not sleep. It was midnight. I thought she was on drugs, as I could smell marihuana from her room. I called the police, but the police didn't really help, but made the girl know that I called the police, and she started yelling at me, breaking things, and knocking at my door for the whole night. She waved a knife at me when I used the bathroom... So, I had to ask my Chinese friend to come to help me and move to my friend's apartment. It was a very difficult time, as it was during my first-year final exams.

With a total focus on her academic performance in the U.S., even in 2021, Participant ICWDSUS* described this life-threatening incident as “a very difficult time” because it influenced her “first-year final exams.” Even until now, she does not realize that she ignored many potential risks for the lives of her and her Chinese friend, who went to save her from a drug-using and knife-waving roommate at midnight during her Chinese friend's final exam time.

Neuman and Baron (2005) identified passive-physical-indirect abusive behaviors of destructive leaders. In contrast to direct-physical aggression, a

passive-physical-indirect abusive leader leads a follower into an environment with potential safety risks without telling the follower about the hidden life threat. Unfortunately, most people, who helped Participant ICWDSUS* at first, later left her although her “awesome” publications remained static on her awesome CV. Ignoring the “awkward” others, her roommate drama was repeated six times with six different episodes in six different apartments until it finally ended after she divorced her “awkward” ex-husband and she started to live alone after graduation.

Her Angry Classmates

Although Participant ICWDSUS*'s two classmates during her first semester helped her to move out of her dangerous apartment, their friendship ended after just taking one class together:

I also had some issues with the African girl and the American guy, who helped me move out. As we did group projects together, the African girl always asked for my help and took advantage of me. So in the end, my advisor gave us different grades. I got an A, and they got C. So, they were very angry at my advisor and me (Participant ICWDSUS*'s voice became too soft to be heard by me)...The girl didn't do study work, so I quickly distanced myself from her. But the boy actually did a lot of work but my advisor could not identify his work from the group work. The boy felt very confused with his grade because he didn't know what was going on. And eventually, he was drifting off from me after that class (Her voice became too soft to be heard by me again), eventually he dropped his Ph.D. program...ha ha ha...The boy was not satisfied with my advisor's way. My advisor always smiled without saying Yes or No, so the boy had no clue about what my advisor really thought....ha ha ha.

Participant ICWDSUS* lowered her voice to a degree that I could not hear her when she talked about her classmates' anger at her and drifting away from her. When I was confused about and wondering how a professor could grade team members in the same group work differently, I heard Participant ICWDSUS* laugh at the confusion and dropping out of her American classmate, who had kindly helped her move out of her dangerous apartment during his final exam period. Then I collected and analyzed all participants' laughter during the interviews. Participant ICWDSUS* laughed when she talked about her own awesomeness and others' "awkwardness" (including people who had greatly helped her). Participant ICWDSUS@ only had creepy smiles when she threatened and tried to fool others. Participant ICWDSUS+ only laughed at my dissertation struggle as she struggled with hers. The rest of the participants laughed at their own "awkwardness" and were happy when they talked about their friends' achievements. Instead of laughing at their friends' failure, many participants were sad about their friends' failure during the doctoral journey.

"Crazy" lab mate

In addition to many "awkward" roommates and angry classmates, Participant ICWDSUS* also had a "crazy" lab mate from Eastern Europe. When I asked her to categorize the conflict with her lab mate into the challenges for her work, study, or life, she did not know how to categorize it: "It was not a challenge

for MY work. It was a challenge for HER work, because SHE could not understand English, and SHE blamed everything on US.”

It seems that Participant ICWDSUS* in 2021 did not understand conflict management and teamwork was an important part of her work in addition to her publications. As Fupan said, “Work is something that you must collaborate with your colleagues to do.” When Participant ICWDSUS* used “SHE” to refer to her female lab mate and used “US” to refer to her advisor, herself, and her other male lab mates, her stress on “SHE” vs “US” was already divided one team into two separate parts:

SHE was from a different culture. Because of the language barrier, her English was not good. SHE couldn't understand many things the professor said. SHE had a lot of stress... And there were a lot of misunderstandings among US. WE had a lot of difficulties communicating with her. She had a lot of stress from HER work. She couldn't make ANY progress from her work in one and a half years of her contract. In the end, my advisor screamed at her in front of everyone. He assigned her work to be taken over by me in front of her and everyone, so she started to scream even more crazily. Also, she tried to seduce all the white guys in the lab, but all the guys didn't like her, but liked me, haha... so she criticized me for stealing her boyfriend and her job even though nobody was her boyfriend ...ha ha ha...She went crazy...ha ha..(She used her index finger to point at her head to indicate the mental illness of her woman lab mate)... She was so emotional and hard to control herself. She screamed at US, especially me...I dared not go to that office during that time. I was afraid she would scratch my face or something. She was really crazy...

In the man-made modern world, education is also based on Western individualist and androcentric culture with an emphasis on competition and individualism (House, 2004). Many women are educated to compete, especially with other

women, for limited leadership opportunities (Seo et al., 2017). Consequently, the relationships among women are often competitive, hostile, and tense. With a high level of education and capabilities, women scientists' *catfights* could be more brutal with more knowledgeable, psychological, and political wars than women without a higher education (Williams et al., 2014). However, it is "suicidal politics" for "women to disown one another," which makes an individual woman even more vulnerable to struggling alone with many globalized crises in a hostile patriarchal world (Klein, 1991, p. 131).

When I asked Participant ICWDSUS* if she thought her advisor's screaming communication at the Eastern European woman postdoc with English barriers in front of everyone was miscommunication, she disagreed and adopted her advisor's screaming communication to yell at her "stupid" postdocs after she became an assistant professor. With a focus on hard skills to get high scores in exams, most Chinese students do not know about the importance of soft skills, such as communication skills, teamwork, and mental health issues (Zhu, 2016).

Compared to the "crazy" Eastern European lab mate who was from a "different" culture, Participant ICWDSUS* was lucky to have many Chinese students around her to help her transition into U.S. culture when she was still "intimidated" and "lost" with much stress about her studies. However, seeing her Eastern European lab mate struggle with the same challenges, Participant ICWDSUS* coldly stood by and "objectively" analyzed the changing process of

her lab mate's psychology from being stressed out to being "crazy." While Participant ICWDSUS* was laughing at the "craziness" of her lab mate, she did not know that her emotional coldness and lack of empathy for others are key symptoms of pathological narcissism (Day et al., 2020).

Unlike Participant ICWDSUS*'s coldness in watching her Eastern European lab mate become crazy, Participant ICWDSUS+ helped her Eastern European classmate:

I am a very kind person. In my program, there was one refugee from Eastern Europe. I helped her and provided study and mental support for her. I just could not see others suffer without offering my help although I myself was struggling with my own studies.

Feng (1944) claimed that people with a moral inner world have a moral struggle to decide if they should sacrifice themselves to help others. However, people with a utilitarian inner world do not face this moral struggle but just regard the maximization of their self-interests as utilitarian ethics.

"Confusing" Advisors

In addition to "awkward" peers, several arrogant ICWDSUS did not respect their advisors and even regarded their advisors as "not capable" or "confusing." Participant ICWDSUS* said:

My Ph.D. advisor was so confusing. He helped me greatly at first, but later he changed to be mean to me and wanted to misadvise and ruin me. He wrote bad recommendation letters for me. Also, my first postdoc advisor was like my Ph.D. advisor too, who supported me greatly at first but later wanted to ruin me without writing recommendation letters for me too. Now, my dean is like that too, who hired me but refused to write

recommendation letters for me to apply for a grant. They are all jealous of me! But I got what I wanted (my publications and my job). I didn't really care how they confused me.

Although most participants appreciated their advisors for shaping their career development, Participant ICWDSUS* believed that she shaped all her advisors' career promotion:

In the past few years, I published a lot of papers, and I contributed to my advisors' promotion. After I worked with my first advisor, he was promoted to be a full professor. The same thing happened to the second advisor. My research actually shaped the current research paths of my second and third advisors. My first and second advisors had never known about the fields I used to work. Thus, their current research paths are also heavily influenced by me. My third advisor actually wrote an email to thank me for opening a new path for him. That was very exciting. I actually never knew I could shape my advisors' path as well.

Although Participant ICWDSUS@ hated her department "to death" for more than ten years to let her teach, which gave her teaching trauma, to my surprise, her advisor didn't even know about her teaching trauma. When I asked her why she did not seek help with teaching from her advisor, she smirked and shrugged her shoulders:

I didn't even tell her that. My advisor was not capable. She had many dramas in her family. She didn't even know about my traumatic teaching experience....My advisor didn't know how to do quantitative research. I did all the quantitative research for her work!

From Challenge to Confidence and Complacency

After the visible *Yang* challenges become visible *Yang* promotion, people can become complacent when they enter a comfort zone without pressure and

urgency to learn new things (Edmondson et al., 2004). More than ten years ago, when Participant ICWDSUS? was just an international student with poor English and no friends in the U.S., she survived in a totally foreign world with a heavy study and work workload during the most challenging first semester. However, after she finished her Ph.D., gained high teaching and leadership achievements, and established her family in the U.S., both her career and marriage were almost ruined in her third job. She reflected on the reason for her downfall from her intrapersonal side:

Before my third job, I myself became a little bit proud as I became like a little leader, taught some classes, and was a full-time clinic associate professor for many years. Maybe that was why the colleagues in my third job were mean to me, put me down, and discriminated against me harshly. My original plan was to go upward for my career development in my third job. However, the reality was totally opposite to my original expectation, and I just went downward for my career destruction.

With “intellectual arrogance,” it is difficult for a highly educated individual to acknowledge their limitations and be open to learning new things from others (Haggard et al., 2018, p. 184). Davis et al. (2016) differentiated *intellectual humility* from general humility. Unlike basic humble interpersonal behaviors, such as restraining one’s ego including “modest self-presentation, and respectful interpersonal interaction,” a highly educated scholar’s *intellectual humility* has both intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects (Van Tongeren et al., 2019, p. 463). Intrapersonally, *intellectual humility* involves the scholars’ accurate self-awareness of their limitations and biases of knowledge. Interpersonally,

intellectual humility involves “regulating egoistic motives” to present their beliefs in a modest, respectful, non-defensive manner to show that they care about learning and harmonious relationships rather than demonstrating their “intellectual superiority” by always being “right” (Van Tongeren et al., 2019, p. 464). In addition to Participant ICWDSUS?’s pride in her career achievement, she admitted her pride in Chinese culture:

As Chinese, I am very proud of our culture and traditions, which is the wisdom after thousands of years...In my third job, the discrimination against me (as Chinese) was so strong...I knew if I hid my pride as Chinese in my pocket, I could survive very well here. However, I have never thought of Chinese culture as underdeveloped.

In the contexts of intercultural relationships, in addition to *intellectual humility*, *cultural humility* also determines an individual’s wellbeing both intrapersonally and interpersonally (Hook et al., 2013). Cultural humility is about people’s awareness of the limitations of their own culture. Without cultural humility, they can easily regard their own culture as superior to others’ cultures. Interpersonally, cultural humility promotes their openness and willingness to learn from other cultures (Hook et al., 2013). Although Participant ICWDSUS?’ experienced harsh discrimination, once the challenges became visible to her, her visible *Yang* challenges later became her visible *Yang* opportunities for *Yang* promotion. In 2022, I contacted Participant ICWDSUS?’ again and she happily admitted:

Yes, your member checking has been confirmed by me. Although I still have new challenges in my new job and my new job is not easy for me, I finally become an assistant professor. I was the admin staff before, at least, now nobody discriminates against me...ha ha ha...However, interestingly, when I just came here, I was so worried about my relationships with other colleagues. Even during the job interview, I had no confidence. My previous job totally destroyed my confidence. However, my colleagues all treat me well, but I have problems with my teaching now. As I have been always teaching for years, I have lots of confidence in my teaching...However, I have never thought that I would encounter teaching problems. My teaching evaluation of my first semester here was bad.

Unlike Participant ICWDSUS*, who just laughed at all others'

“awkwardness” for her “trouble” with her belief in her awesomeness, Participant

ICWDSUS? reflected on the problems from both others and herself:

I reflected and tried to find out the reason why students did not like my teaching. I should always have a respectful and fearful attitude toward others and the world. Don't underestimate anyone. Don't think of anyone as a simple person. Once you have any pride in yourself, your failure is coming.

Participant ICWDSUS?'s self-reflection and self-criticism reminded me of an old English proverb: “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall (Proverbs, 16:18). However, individualistic cultures, especially the U.S. culture, emphasize self-sufficiency, self-confidence, and self-promotion, rather than self-reflection and humility, which nurtures narcissism and regards humility as weakness (Van Tongeren et al., 2019). The narcissism part of U.S. culture also influenced some participants.

From Self-centered Pride to Others-despised Narcissism

The confusion and pain from *Yin* challenges was a critical transformation moment for participants to change their fundamental values about themselves, others, and the world, which broke their old selves and reshaped them into new selves. Would a hurting person hurt people? Or would a hurting person heal people? After experiencing painful *Yin* challenges, participants' new selves chose two different directions. Some participants became more empathetic and developed from self-centered naive girls to other-centered humble and mature women, whereas some participants gave up their "useless" empathy and became more brutal. They changed from self-centered smart girls to others-attacking woman narcissists. The former women transformed *Yin* challenges to be their most fundamental *Yin* self-leadership, engaging with more people to realize greater achievements (see Chapter 5). The latter women developed *Yin* challenges to mislead themselves to produce more *Yin* challenges with endless conflicts with others and "psychological crises" with themselves. Anna described two kinds of women leaders:

I have some great women leader role models in my mind. I always admire them and want to learn from them. However, some bad women leaders can be meaner to women. They got promotions as they pleased men and got men's support. That kind of women leaders would use their power to dictate and suppress other women or use their power to get their self-interests. However, the great women leaders I have met are very demanding for themselves. They always look energetic and professional in front of others. They really care about every individual that they lead. They really treat their subordinates equally and attentively.

Participant ICWDSUS? reflected on her discriminative experience from women and was sad to see how hurting women hurt women:

I think my supervisor as a woman of color must have been bullied since she was an international student. She was also bullied by the dean, who is a white woman. Therefore, once she had the power to bully me as a woman of color, she wanted to bully me to death from all aspects...In a discriminative and hierarchical culture, everyone learned how to suppress others. The culture here is very toxic, so I must change the job to leave this environment.

In Williams et al.'s (2014, p. 36) study, some young women scientists complained that some older senior women scientists had to "go through hell" to ascend to their senior positions and they expected young junior women to have the same horrible experience.

Unfortunately, narcissists' attacks on others are gender-and-race-equal, but power-different. After becoming an assistant professor, Participant ICWDSUS* complained about how her two postdocs disobeyed her:

They are both men. One is not from the U.S. One is from the U.S. They are both older than me. None of them listen to me, as I am a woman professor and I am the youngest. None of them yield to me!...The one, who is not from the U.S. is very stupid. After I yelled at him, he is afraid of me now. The American guy is not as stupid as the other guy. But the American guy still hasn't yielded to me. Although on the surface, he must obey me, I can feel in the heart of the American guy, he still hasn't yielded to me....

Compared to Participant ICWDSUS*'s yelling at her non-American male subordinate and her *catfight* with her Eastern European woman lab mate, Participant ICWDSUS@ just changed her hand to be like a cat paw and scratched

her desk with an aggressive look on her face with her eyes wide open to show me how she won her *catfight* in her office: “Nobody dares to bother me here! If anyone bothers me, I would let them know that I am not an easy girl!!!” As my husband said: “My promotions were achieved after I killed many cockroaches from XXX country!”

Regarding a human as a “cockroach” probably explains the reason narcissists’ attack at others is gender-and-racial equality. At least, gender and racial discrimination are for humans. Who cares about the gender, race, and life of a cockroach? A cockroach should be killed anyway.

After helping an Eastern European refugee, Participant ICWDSUS+’s delay of her graduation made her reflect on her “help” for others and her identity as a “very kind person”:

At that time, I was kidnapped by the words “I should help others.” I always told me that I SHOULD help other vulnerable people. Therefore, I put down my work and helped others, so it meant I delayed my graduation. Others appreciated my help and wrote me thank-you emails...But to help others or not is up to yourself...you can help others or you don’t need to help others.

Unfortunately, Participant ICWDSUS+’s moral struggle about whether she should be a “very kind person” to sacrifice herself to help others or not ended with her giving up being a “very kind person” and becoming a very brutal person. When I asked Participant ICWDSUS+ if it was easy for her to get a job as few people study her major in China, she smirked: “Hur hur...Forget it! You must kill

a bloody path first.” When she said that, I did not realize that I was about to be killed by her and to be the bloody sacrifice for her sacred career promotion. After the interview, Participant ICWDSUS+ asked me about some big professors’ names from my university and asked me to share those big professors’ syllabi to help her design her class. I told her that I could not send her the syllabi due to the intellectual property. She angrily replied: “F*** your F***ing intellectual property!”

Similar to Participant ICWDSUS+, Participant ICWDSUS* also changed from an “intimidated” Chinese girl, who dared not to speak up in class, to an intimidating international woman scientist, who yelled to make others yield to her. Talking about her change after divorce, Participant ICWDSUS* happily said:

My divorce totally changed me, totally flipped my life and my values! Before the divorce, I was focused on my family with him...I didn’t know what self-love meant. I didn’t love myself, so others didn’t love me either, my ex despised me, others disliked me. Everyone tried to avoid me. You must love yourself first, then others can love you later. I have my own dream to realize in my life. I must actualize myself!

With the total focus on her career and self-love, Participant ICWDSUS* definitely excluded me—someone who was not part of her STEM career—from her “everyone.” I did not avoid her but supported her during her marriage crisis. She actually avoided talking to me, when we met in a seminar as the only two Chinese. With an American last name and American accent, she was no longer an

international student but “a half American,” and she did not like to talk with me as a junior Chinese Ph.D. student. However, two years later, she emailed me and wanted to meet me.

When I met her, she cried and told me that “my husband doesn’t want me anymore.” By then, she just found out that my research was about women and she had a professional supporter during her divorce drama. Her short marriage was just about the time for her to get a Green Card. After getting a tenure-track assistant professor job, she forgot her past tears and only remembered her forever “awesomeness.” When I asked her why she married her ex-husband after just dating him for three months, she said: “At first, he was trying to praise me. He praised me a lot. So, I didn’t feel that much difficulty or much pressure from him.” Her ex-husband’s many praises were the first reason for marrying him, and after leaving a narcissist ex-husband, she learned about “self-love.”

Self-love and narcissism may seem similar but they are different, like self-confidence and pride. People’s authentic self-love and self-confidence can improve their well-being by recognizing their limitations and accepting others with their criticism (Ehrenberg, 2014). In contrast, people’s pride and narcissism go against their wellbeing by assuming that they are perfect and they strive for unconditional praise without being able to handle criticism. However, a narcissist’s “perfection” in front of others is fake and weak. Without inner security, a narcissist attacks, manipulates, takes advantage of, and puts others

down, while needing others' admiration (Day et al., 2020). Leaders in a superior position with much attention from others risk developing narcissistic tendencies (Eisenbeiss, 2012).

In 2022, Participant ICWDSUS* continued to have new conflicts with others. Her "enemies" changed from her roommates and non-American postdoc to her American department leaders and other white professors. The weapon she has used is feminist and diversity discourse. Although she laughs at the mandatory diversity training in her university as uselessness and my HRD studies as "a waste of time," she started to use the diversity discourse as her weapon to attack her white superiors for her self-interests. After finding out her department hired her non-American postdoc, whom she did not like, without listening to her objections, she was mad and contacted me to consult me and blame me:

This is definitely racial and gender discrimination! My department didn't listen to me! Can I sue them? They bullied me and discriminated against me as a Chinese woman! It is all because of you. You always ask me to talk nicely to others, so everyone thinks that I am a soft girl, who can be easily bullied! My postdoc must have bribed the department. My department is so corrupted! My whole field is corrupted!

Although I did not understand how her non-American postdoc from a third-world country would have enough money to bribe the whole department in the U.S., Participant ICWDSUS*'s attack toward her department in the U.S. for corruption sounds familiar. She also attacked the whole educational system in China for corruption. When I asked her why she left China, she said:

The reason I left China was because I don't like the educational system in China. They are very corrupted. The whole system was corrupted from faculties to administrative staff there. I have heard many stories, like the professors sleep with their students, the students could not do any research... All the things the students would do were to drink with professors in order to get fundings especially in top universities... Even like during the interview, the interview question was like 'are you able to drink and smoke? Would you like to drink with your bosses?' Those were the official interview questions. It is horrible!...so I decided to leave China for my safety.

Participant ICWDSUS* did not know that I had a participant, Lora, who also graduated from the same Chinese university as Participant ICWDSUS* and studied a similar subject. When I asked Lora about the corruption and discrimination issues in her Chinese university, such as asking students to "sleep with professors" or "to drink and smoke with professors," Lora was totally shocked: "No! No! No! Definitely not! No one sexually harassed me. I have never experienced any sexual harassment."

Instead of angrily blaming discrimination, sexual scandals, and corruption in Participant ICWDSUS*'s STEM field, Lora emphasized her own work ethics and provided a different picture of a Chinese woman hard scientist's life in her STEM field both in China and the U.S.:

In my field, most people are men. In my undergraduate, 90% of the students were male. In my masters' and Ph.D.'s programs, I rarely see women even. My field requires you doing many hard projects, experiments, and going to the difficult fields. In academia, gender discrimination is minimum. In my team, my team members all value me. They all have work ethics. They criticize or praise my work based on my work, not my gender. Of course, we discussed or debated our work, but the debate was not personal. Everyone is focused on the work. In the U.S.,

as long as you work well and produce high-quality work, I would not feel any gender discrimination. I didn't feel I can take any advantage of my female identity either. My field is very difficult. Everyone must work hard to survive. I have worked hard to survive.

It was sad for me to see that feminist and diversity discourse for the equality and inclusion of society can be manipulated as weapons by narcissists to attack others for more self-interests. Despite the importance of diversity, diversity training interventions failed to eliminate discrimination decades ago, but caused more division, a crisis of trust, and conflicts among people (Bassett-Jones, 2005; Ghumman et al., 2013; Hemphill & Haines, 1997). By forcing everyone to recognize the diverse differences and power dynamics without effective solutions to include different individuals, people just become more politically correct, but less authentic (Loury, 1994). Training can only impart knowledge to people but cannot change people's attitudes (Hemphill & Haines, 1997).

A Narcissist's Angry Criticism Becomes What She Is

Unfortunately, the institutional and structural racism and social ills can be internalized, transmitted, reinforced, and reproduced through socialization and racist practices (Chang et al., 2011). Although Participant ICWDSUS* said that she did not like the "open sex" culture in the U.S., she accepted what she criticized: "I couldn't say whether I like it or not. I just accept what I must accept." Among all participants, she was the only participant, who always used sex to attack others, especially women. Similarly, Participant ICWDSUS@

strongly criticized Sherly Sandberg's book "Lean in" and claimed: "I don't want to paint myself as an iron lady who is so strong that can do everything by herself. I don't want to show other women a sense of superiority. I want to send a message that I stand on other people's shoulders." However, Participant ICWDSUS@ kept emphasizing the importance of the "iron will" for a woman leader, a teacher, and even for a mother:

If you want to have it all, there is a price you have to pay. Iron will!
Parents with iron will and resources could provide a good education for their children. The higher social class, like me, have more resources and flexibility to provide good education for the children. If parents have no resources to survive even, how could they have the iron will to provide good education for their children?

In my study, none of the participants' parents were in the resourceful social classes, and a couple of participants had lost their mothers when they were students. However, all participants became international women professionals with higher resources and social classes. Despite Participant ICWDSUS@'s "traumatic" first teaching experience, she emphasized her teaching philosophy: "A teacher must have strong confidence (she raised her eyebrow to emphasize)! Must be tough! Must know how to maneuver hard! Must play hard tricks!"

Unlike Participant ICWDSUS@'s teaching reality of "hard tricks," teachers in my study with great teaching evaluations did not have confidence in themselves but had confidence in their students. Although she blamed her department for letting her teach after she was in the U.S. for just two years, Anna

had to teach from the first day of her first semester despite her poor English.

Instead of playing “hard tricks” to “maneuver [students] hard”, Anna played “hard tricks” to “maneuver” herself hard:

During my first semester, I immediately had to both teach as an independent instructor and study as an international student although I had just come to the U.S. and I was not an English major in China. Students complained that they could not communicate well with me. Therefore, I really practiced my English-speaking skills hard. I had five language partners to practice English. I recorded my English. Sometimes I practiced my presentation to students for 100 times. Whenever I saw someone, I asked if the person could help me practice my speaking...I spent my whole summer vacation preparing for my speaking test and passed it later, and secured my teaching position for my second year.

Participant ICWDSUS@ blamed the discrimination from the “spoiled brats” of white American undergrads, who caused her teaching trauma, whereas Anna said: “Yes, there were students who were mean and discriminative. However, most students were nice.” Participant ICWDSUS@ also thought that her lack of work experience was one reason for her teaching trauma, but Luyinbi had no work experience, strong English barriers, and many white business professionals as her students in her business class. However, she had received great teaching evaluations since she was a Ph.D. student until now as an assistant professor teaching Ph.D. student in a great university. Luyinbi said:

Since my third doctoral year, I have started to teach until now. Teaching is always challenging for me. Even now as an assistant professor for one year, teaching is still new to me...I am still in my early career...My English is bad. Sometimes, after I explained, students had no responses. I didn't even know if it was because my English was too bad or the content was too difficult. I had no working experience in any company, not even a

single day. I have never even entered or even seen a gate of any company. Ha ha.... However, I have to teach students, who are experienced professionals in companies. I have no confidence that what I teach them would really help their work (She had a dry smile on her face). I definitely could not provide any practical experiences for them, so I asked students to share their practical experiences and I just gave them the theories I knew. The class was not like “I am teaching, but is more like EVERYONE is learning”. Therefore, I have a lot of pressure when I prepare for a lesson.

Although Luyinbi’s humble self-awareness may seem like she was a bad teacher, when I asked Luyinbi if her students gave her bad teaching evaluations, she asked me back: “Why would students give a teacher bad evaluation?! If EVEN I could teach, why can’t others teach?! Others must teach much better than me.”

Like Participant ICWDSUS@, no one taught Zixi how to teach. However, unlike Participant ICWDSUS@, who did not even tell her “incapable” advisor about her teaching, Zixi actively asked for her advisor’s help before her first teaching assignment: “I didn’t know how to teach. No one taught me how to teach. I went to ask my advisor about how to teach. I invited my advisor to observe my class to give me feedback. My advisor didn’t offer to do these, I actively approached her and asked her for help.”

Narcissists are Quick to Steal and Quicker to Attack Others

When I tried to tell Participant ICWDSUS@ about other teaching realities rather than “maneuver hard” and “spoiled brats,” she immediately stopped me: “No! No! No! You totally twisted the meaning! What you said does not exist!”

Participant ICWDSUS* also had bad teaching evaluations and attributed her bad evaluations to her students' "strangeness." Although she let me finish telling her about other teaching realities instead of her screaming communication, she immediately started to attack others: "Then they must sleep with their bosses. I don't sleep with my American boss!"

It seems that in Participant ICWDSUS*'s sex psychological world, others' success is because of monetary or sexual bribery and the corruption of the department leaders. I did not continue to argue with her about her sexy psychological world. However, despite her attack of other teachers, she actually secretly used others' tips with her students and put a student's thank-you note on both her WeChat and Facebook pages to let both Chinese and American worlds know that she was a good teacher. After getting many likes from others, she confidently announced on both her WeChat and Facebook: "This is the reason why I chose to become an educator!" Her reason for becoming an educator was to be praised by people from all over the world as a "dream teacher" rather than to like all students and help their dreams come true. The inner emptiness means that a grandiose narcissist requires excessive admiration (Day et al., 2020). When I was happy about Participant ICWDSUS*'s achievement after seeing her WeChat post, she called me that night and told me the other side of her confident post:

I actually tried your way. Just be nicer to them. It works! Ha ha...But actually, only one-third of my students did the teaching evaluation. Most students just left without doing the teaching evaluation. I had 75 students

and only 25 students did the teaching evaluation. From the 25 students, who did the survey, I got a lot of positive feedback this semester. However, I also got several extremely negative feedbacks. Why?

I asked her if she just pretended to be nice to them just because she wanted a good evaluation to promote herself, which I understand, or if she was authentically nice to them because she wanted to promote them? Even if she is authentically nice to her students, they may not appreciate her, let alone if she only pretends to be nice to them. She laughed without answering my questions.

Similarly, Participant ICWDSUS+ also put her high teaching evaluations on her WeChat blog and received many likes:

My teaching gave me a great sense of accomplishment. My first teaching evaluation was A+ . It was super super high. The average score of my university was B-. The best teachers' score in the whole city was A-. Therefore, for me, who taught for the first time, it was super super high to get an A+!

However, to my surprise, one month after the interview, I found Participant ICWDSUS+'s name on a Chinese website stating that she was fired from her university due to plagiarism of other teachers' unpublished teaching materials. Instead of humbly learning from others, the strong motivation to pursue self-interests and low ethical standards as well as inner emptiness and insecurity can cause a grandiose narcissist to not hesitate to lie or steal with their "conceit and deceit" (O'Reilly & Doerr, 2020, p. 154). The high teaching evaluations on the WeChat or Facebook blogs to gain everyone's likes cannot reflect the reality of

scholarly ethics and the sustainability of a teacher's achievement. Although Luyinbin had received great teaching evaluations since she was a student, she never posted her high teaching evaluations on social media, but posted her friend's achievement on WeChat to congratulate her friend on finally getting a faculty job after a five-year job search and countless rejections.

Narcissists have Hatred for All Others

Although it is important to collaborate with others, to collaborate with narcissists is dangerous as narcissists take all the credit for themselves and blame all problems on others (Day et al., 2020). For an arrogant woman narcissist, except for herself, whether advisors or roommate, all others regardless of skin color are equally "pathetic" and "awkward." My ethical shock of this study was to hear several ICWDSUS use the F word in anger in the interviews. For example, Participant ICWDSUS@ said:

After the economic crisis in 2008, it was hard to find a job. My husband's internship job boss didn't want to hire him as they didn't want to pay several thousand dollars to sponsor the H1B visa to hire an international student. However, ironically, after my husband got another job, his old boss wanted him to go back and give him H1B and more salary. I told my husband: "Just tell him F*** you!" You know why? That job has no future! No hope! No future! No hope! (She closed her eyes to show the hopelessness of the town). The town of that job was too pathetic! Too pathetic! An outdated industrial town. People have low education there. They don't know other ways to develop. The town was only 70 mins' driving distance from Washington DC! The town was only 70 mins' driving distance from Washington DC! Can you imagine that?!

Participant ICWDSUS@ liked to use English to repeat herself. Her repetition of her English sounded like she was emphasizing how pathetic the U.S. town with “low-educated” people was, how pathetic the U.S. capital, Washington D.C, was by allowing “low-educated” people in the neighborhood of the capital, and how pathetic I was as she thought that I could not understand her wisdom by telling me once. Then, I asked her what she thought about her current state. She leaned forward in her chair and talked to me with her half-face towards me instead of using her whole face to look at me straight: “Hur...Very Trump! If you go to the border between my state and Canada, in the towns there, you can’t even see anyone drive a Japanese car. Everyone drives an American car. If you think in a positive way, it means they are very patriotic; if you think in a negative way.....” She paused to test me to see if I could follow her wisdom. After trying to answer her test, she shook her head, sighed, and said: “No! No! No! No! No! It meant they are xenophobic, America first! So they are very Trump! Again! It is tribal! My dear, remember that!”

She raised her index finger to remind me of my stupidity that I did not even understand the tribal nature of a human society. By calling me “My dear” in English several times in the interview, she made herself sound like an American grandma and me like her granddaughter, although I am actually several years older than her. From criticizing the pathetic towns and pathetic states in the U.S. to my pathetic stupidity, a narcissist puts down all others equally below her.

Narcissists' Vast Enjoyment is Seeing Others' Vast Pain

Although Participant ICWDSUS@ did not allow me to tell her other realities about her traumatic teaching, she found it ironic to see a totally different reality in her work now: “It is so ironic! It is so ironic! I hate teaching so much, but I love mentoring others so much! I vastly enjoy small group discussion and vastly enjoy mentoring!” When she used her serious face without smiling to describe her “vast enjoyment” from mentoring others, I was curious if others also enjoyed being “mentored” by her. My curiosity was immediately answered by her dragging me into her “mentee” group, and I had no clue when I became her mentee. She said: “During my two-year work experience in this job, I have MANY graduate student workers. You are one of them. Ha ha.”

She used her finger to point at my nose with a happy smile. Her use of the present tense of me still being her graduate student worker seemed to tell me about my forever subordinate reality in front of her. I realized that my less than two-week volunteer work for her organization gave her the “vast enjoyment” to have gained a free subordinate forever. She continued happily: “I established informal mentoring relationships with four of them.” By then, I realized that her “MANY graduate student workers” during her two-year work actually meant four graduate students including myself. She described her enjoyment with a serious face again: “They were grateful towards me! I love spending time with them, mentoring them, talking to them!” When she used English to express her “vast

enjoyment,” I could not help wondering about the English grammatical differences between “they were grateful FOR me” and “they were grateful TOWARDS me.” Does “grateful TOWARDS me” sound more like showing gratitude by behaviors, such as bowing towards her or kneeling down towards her majesty? Ehrenberg (2014) claimed that a narcissist needs others to bow to them to show their superiority and others’ inferiority.

Similarly, Participant ICWDSUS+ did not smile during the whole interview. However, she burst into loud laughter all of sudden when I asked her if the first semester was the most stressful time during her doctoral journey:

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha...The most difficult time was the dissertation writing time. Ha ha ha ha ha ha ...The first semester was hard. However, compared to the dissertation writing period, the first semester was nothing...ha ha ha ha ha...If I failed to get the degree, then all my 6 years of effort were all wasted. Ha ha ha.

She laughed loudly and looked at me knowing that I was still struggling with writing my dissertation. She laughed so hard that her whole face became red. After “killing” all “awkward” and “useless” others, with the inner emptiness and insecurity, a lonely narcissist does not have friends and other sources of joy. Seeing others’ vast pain seems to be the only source of a narcissist’s “vast enjoyment.”

A Narcissist’s Mental Illness

Zhu (2016) claimed that “mental illness is particularly urgent for Chinese students” (p. 64). Due to the English barriers, academic and career pressure, and

lack of attention on mental health in Chinese traditional culture, Chinese students' mental health (e.g., anxiety, distress) is much poorer than most other international students (Huang et al., 1994; Gu, 2016; Hamamura & Laird, 2014; Wei et al., 2007; Xie, 2007). Chinese graduate students normally ignore work-life balance and have few leisure activities, which are unorganized, passive, and solitary activities. The main objective of Chinese students' social activities is not to relax but to learn about academic and career information as well as how to find the temporary or permanent residence in the U.S. (Li & Stodolska, 2006). Therefore, the greatest barrier for Chinese students is psychological (Sanchez et al., 2006), and the good academic and professional performance of Chinese international students in the U.S. may involve strong "psychological costs" (Sue & Zane, 1985, p. 517).

In addition to Participant ICWDSUS+'s diagnosed mental illness, Participant ICWDSUS@ used a napkin to wipe her tears and admitted her "psychological crises" while reinforcing her "iron will":

I am telling you if I am not outstanding, I would feel sorry for three generations of my family since my grandma. My grandmother's home was so poor that only one apple had to be shared by five kids (She started to cry.) This poor family could develop all well-educated kids: My mother, my uncles, my aunts all graduated from the best university in China. My grandmother understood that education could change one's social class. So what is self-leadership? I must be outstanding! I must make my children stand out! The global pandemic has already determined 50% of the future of my children and their peers. Poor parents are struggling with survival and have no energy left for their children's education. Therefore, the pandemic will just widen the education gap of children from poor families

and rich families. You know, when my daughter was studying at home, I spent four out of seven days a week teaching my kids. I bought all the expensive educational series that U.S. kids use! I teach my kids myself! I've paid for my kids' best education! Your social class determines your resources. A woman must have a good education and must be acculturated well to be a good mum! No matter what I did for my children, I thought I should do more for them! I should have done more for my children! I am not good enough! (She started to cry again.) This propels me to work harder. Of course, this propelling comes with its toll, comes with my psychological crises. I don't want my children to endure the immense psychological crises like me (she started to cry again). My mother has never pushed me to have that many psychological crises. However, (she wiped her tears and gave an iron look), when you see the unequal world, I must have the iron will to give my children the best education!

Kets de Vries (1988) pointed out the psychological consequences (e.g., anxiety, aggression) of the leaders with a faulty understanding of the charisma and the *strong-man* image of a leader. Behind the pretend self-sufficiency and grandiosity of a narcissist is vulnerability and insecurity (Day et al., 2020, p.19). Narcissists and psychopaths are two types of destructive leaders with leader derailment in addition to bullying, tyrannical, abusive, and sadistic supervisors (Furnham & Taylor, 2004; Scheffler & Brunzel, 2020). Marks (2016) found that 21% of chief executives are psychopaths. In comparison, only 15-20% of prisoners are psychopaths (Bonn, 2016).

Admittedly, some scholars claimed that Chinese culture is a *shame culture* due to high expectations for academic and career success based on Confucianism, which makes Chinese desire perfectionism and feel shamed for imperfect performance (Hofstede, 2001; Yik, 2010). The maladaptive perfectionism for

almost perfect performance can cause great anxiety or even push Chinese to be unethical (e.g., cheating, plagiarism) to get a perfect result (Lin & Yi, 1997; Xie, 2007; Zhu, 2016; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006). However, not all Chinese share the same *shame culture*.

Participant ICWDSUS@’s “iron will” might be interpreted as the “hunger for higher positions” in Mary’s interview. Mary admitted that she had no “hunger for higher positions” and followed her inner interests to develop her career. In contrast to Participant ICWDSUS@’s crying and anger, Mary was happy and laughing during the interview. In contrast to Participant ICWDSUS@’s deep pain about the poor life of her mother’s family to share one apple, Fupan laughed when she told the whole world in her online workshop that she could barely eat two meals a day and did not have enough clothes in her poor and rural village before age 18. As the richest participant in my study, as a woman entrepreneur of one of the biggest consulting companies in China, Fupan told me about how she educated her children. Instead of giving the best meritocracy education for her kids to have all different skills to avoid adversities, Fupan wanted her children to experience adversities: “I asked my children to study piano. I don’t expect them to be famous pianists in the future, but I want to train them to have AQ (Adversity Quotient). They could only gain AQ from frustration, from being frustrated AGAIN AND AGAIN.”

I was also totally shocked to hear Fupan use “April fool’s day” to introduce her first daughter’s birthday in her interview. Normally, a Chinese mother would want her son to be a dragon and her daughter to be a phoenix (*wang zi cheng long, wang nü cheng feng*). Fupan did not seem to care that people may laugh at her daughter’s birthday on April fool’s day. Instead of emphasizing how to make her children the smartest, Fupan emphasized her children’s ethical education by showing them how to respect their grandparents at home: “Nobody can disrespect old people at home! Nobody can yell at old grandparents. Children see how we treat our parents and they would learn how to treat us when we get old.”

In contrast to the iron will, Collins (2007) found that great leaders who completed the transition from good-to-great have both strong professionalism and a modest personality, which reflects the balance of *Yinyang* dynamism. Eisenbeiss (2012) suggested that developing the modest attributes of leaders might help prevent leaders from becoming narcissistic and overestimating their capabilities and visions. However, it is difficult for a highly educated person with a narcissistic personality to change to become modest.

An Iron Woman’s Self-colonizing and Tyrannical Leadership

People’s imagined experience influence their life experiences (Manz, 1983). Irrational fear or a negative personality can originate from irrational and negative beliefs (Neck & Houghton, 2006).

An Iron Woman's Construction of a Psychological Colony

After arrogant women separate their “awesome” self from “awkward” and “useless” others, they construct their psychological colony with their iron will to climb to the top class at the cost of their psychological crisis with both strong hatred and support for the social inequity. When their identity changes from a smart girl to an iron woman, their perceptions of others’ identities might also change from being “awkward” and “useless” “little things” to being ignored or “cockroaches” to be killed. The acceptance of social ills not only leads to mental illness but also to ethical illness, which can corrupt the soul. Although Participant ICWDSUS@ hated to be discriminated against by others, she developed a discrimination chain and added disciplinary discrimination ahead of gender, race, and all other discriminative aspects:

Yes, there was gender discrimination. The *white boy club* phenomenon was extremely bad in social sciences too. However, before gender, race, and nationality, first and foremost, it is your discipline that people discriminate against you first. Even in social sciences, there are different levels. Compared to psychology, management, and sociology, which are the top levels in social sciences, my major is at the bottom of the discrimination chain. Others regard my major as the lowest level of discipline. S-o-c-i-o-l-o-g-y, not social, do you understand? S-o-c-i-o-l-o-g-y.

Participant ICWDSUS@ slowed down to teach me how to pronounce the word with the assumption that the I, a lowly person, would not even understand the high-level English word, but she forgot that I must have taken the GRE test before going to graduate school. For Participant ICWDSUS@, “discipline” means

to separate and discipline people hierarchically in a knowledge silo of higher education. For me, true knowledge should be inclusive and set people free. For me, the sociology discipline is meant to promote social justice. However, Participant ICWDSUS@'s s-o-c-i-o-l-o-g-y not only means the “top” level in the hierarchy of higher education but also rationalizes the brutal social injustice. Although Participant ICWDSUS@ hated white superiority, when I asked her if she thought that white superiority could change, she closed her eyes without even wanting to look at the “idiot,” who asked such a stupid question. After closing her eyes for one minute and 46 seconds, she gave me an English lecture about her tribal theory to support her disciplinary discriminative chain word by word slowly:

B-e-c-a-u-s-e, h-u-m-a-n-s a-r-e t-r-i-b-a-l. We are wired to be tribal! Tribal!! Tribal!!! Tribal!!!! (She started to yell louder and louder.) A human is a human because we are tribal! The tribe is ethnicity and skin colors! This is the basic instinct of a human being!!! Humans are tribal, because to survive is our instinct! Not to die is our instinct! People must fight with each other to survive! Modern societies are just different tribes! BUT FIRSTLY...

She paused, and then started to open her eyes widely and yell her “truth” at me again:

“Humans are tribal!!!!!! Because ...” She paused and yelled again, while holding both her hands in the air to worship her tribal nature of humans:

Because we need to survive in a brutal environment!!! Everyone discriminates against each other! It should be the way! It is the norm!...hur hur (Blowing the air from her nose)... YOU think it (white superiority) is gonna change any time soon? (She rolled her eyeballs and

spit on me in the Zoom interview). Oh! Forget it! ... So it (white superiority) is the norm! Nothing can change it!

Participant ICWDSUS@’s yelling of the “truth” of humans’ tribal nature in a brutal environment with her lifted hands in the air reminded me of a famous worldly destructive leader’s speech. I was scared by her faith in brutality and put my hands up to protect my throat in the Zoom recording without knowing what to say. Seeing her extremely painful but firm facial expression, I was not sure if the pain on her twisted face was from her pain of being discriminated against by others or from her determination to “kill” vulnerable others as “cockroaches” in the brutal world. Her theory of a tribal human society, which categorizes humans by a person’s biological characteristics (e.g., skin color) and rationalizes the brutal fighting of humans, is called *Social Darwinism*. If Darwinism is the “truth” of animals, *Social Darwinism* is not the “truth” but the problem of a human society by equalizing humans with animals, which caused many brutal consequences for humans, such as racism and genocide (Harvey, 2012; Leonard, 2009; Weikart, 2013).

Unlike Participant ICWDSUS@’s angry faith in the eternity of white superiority, Participant ICWDSUS? happily told me that she used her diligence to upgrade her class:

In terms of ethnicity, race, gender, and class, which determined my marginalized identity, my ethnicity and race didn’t change. However, I have changed my class. Before I was not on a tenure track, which meant I was worse than a third-class citizen in academia. Now I am a tenure-track

assistant professor, a first-class citizen. Although I am a first citizen now, an assistant professor is still at the bottom of the food chain in academia.

The hierarchy of citizenship has marked a kind of inequality in the U.S.

The first form of citizenship could date back to ancient Greek times, when citizens had a higher social status than non-citizens including women, slaves, and foreigners (Pocock, 1998). This is probably why American citizenship is so important for foreigners like ICWDSUS. This is very different from Confucianism, which only differentiates between two type of people: morally superior (*junzi*) and morally generic individuals (*xiao ren*). Therefore, individuals want to upgrade morality first in Chinese traditional culture to become a *junzi*. Even if one is not a *junzi*, one will not be a slave to be mistreated by superiors but just a morally generic little human (*xiao ren*), who only knows their self-interests. Although Confucius only identified the *little human (xiaoren)*, Western scholars seem to point out that the development direction for a *little human* is to become “petty tyranny” (Ashforth, 1994, p. 775). Although tyrannical leadership has features in common with authoritarian leadership in terms of the emphasis on the control of people and tasks, tyrannical leaders “humiliate, belittle, and manipulate subordinates” (Einarsen et al., 2007, p.212). Unfortunately, after getting a Ph.D. and a professional identity, some ICWDSUS changed from being an intimidated Chinese girl to being an intimidating international petty tyrannical woman.

An Iron Woman's Self-colonizing and Colonizing Others Like Petty Tyranny in Her Psychological Colony

Based on her ontology of a tribal society and epistemology of the brutal fighting nature among humans to survive, Participant ICWDSUS@ developed her self-colonizing methods. Although many participants happily mentioned that watching American dramas helped them understand American culture, Participant ICWDSUS@ diligently used American dramas, *People* magazine, and *Insider* magazine to educate herself about American secular culture:

You must be self-educated! You have to be acculturated! To acculturate into American culture is your job! No one owes you that! (She used her finger to point at my nose and laughed at stupid me). For example, *American Horror*, I have watched the drama from the first episode to the last. Of course, it is entertaining, but it is dark. However, to watch *American Horror* is a kind of self-education. It talks about the history of the U.S., and there are many references to the secular culture of the U.S.

I have never heard of the *American Horror* show. However, Participant ICWDSUS@'s interview in the Zoom recording is like an interview horror episode with her anger at everyone, starting with me. I am mostly illiterate of U.S. secular culture, as I spent most of my time studying Chinese classical culture, history, Torah, and African culture. My self-education in history and culture made me refuse to be colonized by her self-colonizing programs. Thus, I told Participant ICWDSUS@ about the history of the Enlightenment:

I studied the history of modernity, which is the origin of racism. It was not until Enlightenment that Westerners started to use skin color and ethnicity to classify people to rationalize slavery for capitalism. Before the Enlightenment, people only used skin color to discuss horses or other

animals. And actually, European Enlightenment was highly indebted to Confucianism and Chinese culture, and other Asian cultures. Without the paper and printing inventions from China, people could not study to be enlightened. Without the compass and gunpowder techniques from China, the great discovery age would not happen...

Participant ICWDSUS@ was quite mad to hear that white people could learn from the “low” countries, like her homeland, China, and started to defend white superiority by insulting China and all other Asian countries even more strongly than before. Finally, she reemphasized her faith in the eternity of white superiority with a personal insult at me: “White superiority is hard to change!!! You thought too much!!! Well, dear. Never think of yourself too well!!!”

Again, Participant ICWDSUS@ changed the topic from how to cope with her challenges to how stupid I was. However, this time, instead of verbally letting me know how stupid I was, her body language seemed to physically threaten me. She leaned toward her computer screen with a huge twisted face on the screen and stared at me with her creepy “smile,” which pressure me to stop even thinking of “teaching” the wise Participant ICWDSUS@ about other realities rather than “white superiority” and my lowliness. Her creepy “smile” and leaning towards me reminded me of her attitude while she yelled that her department “can’t afford destroying” her. I could not help wondering what she would make me afford if I made her feel I “destroyed” her white superiority and her superiority of knowing everything. Would she punch me as a slave or kill me as a cockroach? Luckily, it was a Zoom interview. With the obsession to get others’ unquestioning

obedience, authoritarian or tyrannical leaders threaten, abuse, or punish people who disobey them (Kiazad et al., 2010). Authoritarian and tyrannical leadership puts increased stress on followers, stops creative thinking and information sharing, and criticizes and puts down followers by showing superiority and humiliating followers (Einarsen et al., 2007).

Half a year after the interview, I decided to return to China. After knowing I refused to be “colonized” in Participant ICWDSUS@’s white superiority world and was about to leave the U.S., she asked to meet me for coffee. In the coffee shop, she asked me again why I wanted to go back to China. I said:

My research shows that the Western human development way will lead to fights and wars. How to solve the race, ethnicity issues, religious schism, benefits and moral conflicts were all figured out by Chinese *Datong* (big sameness) society...a peaceful and harmonious human development way, and I want to learn that more.

This time, Participant ICWDSUS@ was physically in front of me. Only a small coffee table was between the two of us. Again, she leaned towards me and opened her eyes widely to stare at me and yelled like she had done in the Zoom interview:

The *Datong* idea is totally opposite to the tribal human society!!! You mean humans don’t need to fight with each other and can develop?! You are such a Chinese Trump! You know all people will say you are a Chinese Trump, and laugh at you!!! You love Chinese culture just like Trump loves U.S. culture!

I responded:

That's why I will leave the U.S. I could not change that as the Chinese culture part is already me. You and others can say whatever you like to say about me. And if European Enlighteners just learned the first level of Confucianism, which is to study to gain the power from knowledge, without knowing how to use the knowledge to rectify human's falling nature, an enlightened person would use the knowledge power to attack others more powerfully, and more brutal wars would happen. And the first and second world wars and countless wars already happened. In 2019, French President Emmanuel Macron, gave Chinese President Xi the original French version of "An Introduction to the *Analects* of Confucius," which was published in 1688, and reminded the world how "The *Analects* of Confucius" had inspired French thinkers like Montesquieu and Voltaire.

Hearing that the French president recognized Chinese culture, Participant ICWDSUS@ immediately stopped her attack on Chinese culture for a few seconds with her wide-opened eyes and mouth. Then, she put her face very close to my face and opened her eyes even more widely, and started to scream in the coffee shop: "I don't agree!!! I don't believe it!!!" I thought she was about to punch me, but I refused to withdraw my body to avoid her punch. I said calmly:

I didn't want you to agree with me. Why do I need you or others to agree with me? I want you to be yourself, which must be different from me. This is the concept of *Yinyang*. *Yinyang* welcomes opponents...I have never said I have no bias, and everyone has biases. Therefore, Confucius said *Datong*, big sameness. As long as we all want to live, we can reach big sameness...Big sameness is good enough. Why do people want to use an identity to pursue the identical sameness of every different individual?

Hearing that I did not want her to agree with me to reach one common reality but wanted her to disagree with me to allow multiple realities, her mouth and eyes opened even wider than before for a few seconds. I expected her to punch me as I did not yield to her faith in white superiority and brutal tribal

society. However, to my surprise, she did not punch me but suddenly started to cry again in front of me in the coffee shop:

The George Floyd death and the Black Lives Matter makes me so afraid. I am afraid that black people could attack my community, where there are a lot of white people. I have three guns, one big gun and two small guns. I practice shooting every day. If one day black people attacked our community, I would let my husband take our kids to run and I would fight with others. I am ready to die for my children! I am the mother! I want to take care of my kids!

Maybe because I said big sameness just means that we all want to live, she remembered her concerns for her children's security. Although she believed in her iron will to climb up to the upper echelon in a brutal tribe, can her two guns, her *catfight* and *queen bee* stings be "strong" and "tough" enough to protect her little ones by killing angry oppressed people of color, whom she ignored as "cockroaches"? Humans are far more complicated than cockroaches. Even to cockroaches, humans could never conquer them. The distance and oppression from the hierarchy between a leader and followers could stimulate followers' anger, rebellious hatred, and aggression against the leader (Kets deVries, 1988). As an old Chinese saying asks: *Under an overturned bird nest, which egg could remain intact?* (CTP, 2016, *A New Account of Tales of the World*, Speech and Conversation: 5; Liu & Marther, 2002).

Participant ICWDSUS@'s iron will to be on the top of her psychological colony made her remain in an iron cage. Instead of being the authentic self with joy and authentic self-growth, the anxiety, aggression, and psychological crises of

charismatic leaders as a “strong man” proves their real identities as “prisoners of leadership” (Kets de Vries, 1988, p. 261). Cooke and Xiao (2021) identified the illusion of the “iron woman” from modern women’s education through men-dominated media. By distorting successful businesswomen as *superwomen* or an *iron women*, young women may believe that the keys to success are super-smart capabilities and “iron will” to conquer others like a man. People’s admiration for power and the illusion that a woman leader means an “iron woman” “like a man” might be the reason Elizabeth Holmes faked her voice to sound like a man’s voice and she successfully deceived the whole world for more than a decade. From the “youngest and wealthiest self-made female billionaire in America” (Forbes, 2016), to one of the “most disappointing leaders” (Fortune, 2016), Elizabeth Holmes demonstrated a reality about how a woman can perform as an *iron woman* to deceive the world including herself to rapidly climb to the top of the world and fall to the ground in the end. Chinese sage Lao Zi said: “If the iron becomes sharper and sharper, the sharpness of the iron could not keep long. The highest excellence is like water, which benefits everything without fighting” (CTP, 2016, Dao De Jing: 8, 9).

Following the popular saying of *Men are from Mars and women are from Venus*, Hofstede added that: “It is alright for a society to function that men are from Mars and women are from Venus. If both women and men are from Venus, the society will be even more stable. However, if both women and men are from

Mars, the society will fall apart quickly” (Hofstede, 2011, 21:39). Unfortunately, from a modern androcentric knowledge system with the emphasis on rationalistic standpoints and masculinity, research that appreciates the value of femininity is often regarded as irrational (Nelson & Liu, 2016).

An Iron Woman’s Games to Navigate in Her Psychological Colony

Although some participants hated social inequity, they angrily followed and developed new social inequity to climb to the top of the social hierarchy. Unlike Participant ICWDSUS* who knew nothing about psychology and just used her “screaming communication” to force her advisees to yield to her, Participant ICWDSUS@ suggested using “psychological games” to make others serve her end goal to climb to the top of her psychological colony. She said:

I took some classes from the psychology department. Therefore, how to connect my major with the major on the top level of the discriminative chain of social science disciplines, and how to use the connection, are all games! Most of the time, psychological games!

Despite the emphasis on the “iron will,” Participant ICWDSUS@ proudly played the victim role:

You can even make them feel that how my major could learn from psychology to better the “low” status of my major. Then they would have a sense of happiness like they were Jesus, who could save the poor and the needy.

She had an extremely nice but fake smile on her face to imitate how she pleased people from the higher level. It is so ironic to hear that someone plays psychological games to cheat psychology majors. She did not study psychology to

promote people's psychological health, but to develop psychological games to upgrade her class in her psychological colony at the expense of her psychological health. Instead of appreciating others' help, Participant ICWDSUS@ laughed at and manipulated others' "Jesus-like" help. She closed her eyes to emerge in her genius psychological games and used English to conclude her points, which must sound more superior than using her mother language:

Again, it is all about games! It is an art! It's wisdom! If you want to survive and thrive, you must play the game, and you must play the game as hard as you possibly can! Just like this! You satisfy their psychological needs!...During the whole communication with authorities, I would never say "I am freaking angry at you!" "You step on my boundary, I send you directly to hell." "Don't mess up with me!!!"

The "wisdom" and "arts" of ICWDSUS@'s psychological game means to suppress her true anger to play as a vulnerable victim to get authorities' sympathy to promote her, although she may "hate the [authorities] to death." A narcissist is both victim-blaming and playing the victim along with other contradictory behaviors (Day et al., 2020). However, regardless of how hard she played her "psychological games" to climb to the "top" of her social science discriminative chain. Participant ICWDSUS*, as a hard scientist, never bothered to differentiate various disciplines in social sciences but just indiscriminately regarded all social sciences as "a waste of time." Game over.

Interestingly, Mary's major was also psychology and her U.S. university was the same as Participant ICWDSUS@'s university. Mary belongs to the top-

level psychology group, from whom Participant ICWDSUS@ felt discrimination. However, during the whole interview, Mary did not mention her “top level” position nor discriminate against me or anyone as a lower person. For Mary, her initial choice to study psychology was not because of the top level of psychology in social sciences, but because she had “experienced some psychological issues” and saw other students suffer from psychological struggles. She wanted to learn psychology to help people. Mary actually gave up her “top-level” position as a professor of psychology, to which Participant ICWDSUS@ tried her best to lean in. Mary said:

In my counseling work, I found that some students had abusive parents. Parents didn't physically abuse their children's bodies but verbally abused their children's mental health. If a student had abusive parents, the student would have anyone to talk to about the challenges from both the external and internal worlds. However, if someone can guide those students, a student can use one's capability to make wise life decisions to change the life. I thought that I could help those students and make more impact than just producing publications for the sake of publications.

Mary's choice to help students in industry actually gave her more challenges:

Upon my graduation, I chose to work as a consultant in industry rather than as a professor in a university like most Ph.D. holders. Therefore, my doctoral degree didn't help me but gave me more challenges in industry at first. People thought I was overeducated and under-experienced. People thought I may only have theories without practical experience.

A Pragmatic Woman's Lazy Diligence and Derailed Leadership

In terms of how to treat others, the participants can be divided into two groups: those who work with others collectively and those who fight with others

narcissistically. However, facing the temptation of reaping benefits, participants can be redivided into two groups: those who are pragmatic to serve self-interests, and those who are benevolent to serve social interests. After four years studying a master's and Ph.D. degree, Participant ICWDSUS& became an associate professor at the age of 28. However, instead of being proud of her efficient academic success, she regretted how inefficient she was:

It was really INEFFICIENT! INEFFICIENT! Now, I look back at my doctoral journey. I wish I could spend more time figuring out HOW to do things efficiently, rather than just going ahead to try to solve the problem manually. Now I am still spending time learning how to use computer programs to better my work. I wish I could have traveled back in time and told my old self: "STOP DOING it!"....It is my biggest regret during my doctoral journey! But back then, when I was so bored and felt the U.S. studies were too easy during my doctoral journey, when the new technology was already out there, WHY did not I learn that???

I asked Participant ICWDSUS& to describe her self-leadership. She replied:

I am an extremely lazy hardworking person. I want to work hard to be lazy. I choose for what and when I become diligent or lazy. After becoming an associate professor, I started to be lazy. I was much more driven before. I think we need to tell ourselves that it is ok to be not perfect. I have not been doing well in research these past two years...I am planning to write more.

Although all participants used their diligence to complete their doctoral journeys, the ultimate purpose of the diligence for some participants was to be lazy with a more resourceful and comfortable life after efficiently climbing to the upper echelon. The founder of individual psychology, Alfred Adler, claimed that

the meaning of an individual's life is not self-interests but social interests, which is the key to one's success to solve challenges in one's life from forming meaningful relationships to be promoted (Adler & Brett, 2009). After completing the doctoral journey and being highly promoted, all of the participants faced the last challenge in my study: lazy diligence. Only about half of the participants passed all the invisible *Yin* challenges and strengthened their morality to stand firm in the face of temptations and realized sustainable self-growth. Half of the participants ignored their morality to pursue their self-interests more aggressively at the cost of hurting others and their personal morality.

While I was about to conclude that collaborative self-leaders with the support of a group were far more effective and efficient than individualistic self-leaders with the competition with others, I realized the invisible *Yin* side of collaborative self-leaders. While analyzing Participant ICWDSUS&'s data, I was surprised to realize that she was using many terms from my previous research papers although her background was not HRD and leadership. A simple Google search showed that she published several papers based on my unpublished papers, which I sent to her friend for collaboration as her friend requested. Unlike an individual destructive leader, whose destruction for the followers is from one individual, the destruction from a group of collective destructive leaders is multiplied. My feminist ideals to build "sisterhood" and collaboration with other sisters have been too naïve. I could see how the feminist utopia could end with a

war, even in my life. Williams et al. (2014, p. 35) claimed that the challenges for women are too complex to be solved by simply asking women to support other women, as it can only reinforce the traditional stereotype that “women ought to be endlessly selfless and communal.” Just like men who are not expected to always support other men, if a woman refuses to help another woman, she should not be judged as having personality problems (Williams et al., 2014).

Instead of targeting strong prey, destructive leaders prey upon naive and vulnerable subordinates who are seeking help and guidance from superiors (Einarsen et al., 2007). A destructive leader would pay attention and offer small help at first to earn the trust and loyalty of the subordinate to follow the destructive leader’s guidance, which may appear to help but was actually a conspiracy to manipulate and destroy the subordinate from the beginning. While a woman can be a victim of a destructive leader, the destructive leader can be a woman as well. A highly educated woman scholar has enough “wisdom” to play brutal “political” and “psychological games” to mislead others, especially more vulnerable women. Unlike constructive leadership, which leads to a leader’s development, *derailed leadership*, such as anti-follower behaviors (e.g., corruption, stealing, deception, bullying, humiliation, manipulation) can derail a leader (Einarsen et al., 2007). Instead of idealizing leadership, many scholars call attention to the dark side of leadership (Burke, 2006; Einarsen et al., 2007; Furnham & Taylor, 2004; Scheffler & Brunzel, 2020). Wang et al. (2022) also

pointed out the negative and risky sides of HRD to human development in addition to the HRD vision of the whole of humanity.

Although I disagree with Participant ICWDSUS@'s belief in the brutal tribal nature of society, my own experiences as the prey for other intellectual women perpetrators have revealed the dark side of humanity regardless of my personal ideals. Similar to ancient China that built both the Silk Road and the Great Wall to both connect to the world and defend themselves from being invaded, an ICWDSUS needs to have both “openness” and “social barriers” to both connect to others' help and protect herself from harm through *Yinyang* dynamism for sustainable self-development.

Summary of *Yin* Challenges

Figure 17

Yin Challenges



Figure 17 shows the invisible *Yin* challenges of one's linear and fixed self-development with a self-centered smart goal. Although Manz (1983) mapped a man's linear self-development from his self-awareness and setting up a smart goal to the end of realizing his smart goal, the man-made linear development can lead to both smart self-development and unwise self-derailment. Some participants believed in the linear connection between their self-awareness of a smart self and smart goal to have a smart life. However, their self-belief in their awesomeness and wisdom did not lead them to a smart life with comprehensive wellbeing, but it led them a self-loss in a brutal world with endless conflicts with others and psychological crises with the self. The artificial, self-centered, and linear self-development trajectory is highly likely to be derailed in a VUCA world.

If *Yang* and *Yinyang* challenges involve sweat, tears, and joy, *Yin* challenges can involve tears, blood, and hatred of oneself and others. The *Yin* challenges showed how some participants' desire to be on the top of the upper echelon in the most effective and efficient way could make their blood boil and choose to "kill a bloody path" as social climbers by cold-bloodedly manipulating and putting others down as cockroaches or preys, starting with their friends. Some participants who loyally followed and developed social ills were not leaders but were slaves of society. Following the social ills with anger and hatred, some participants started to show mental and ethical illness, which corrupted and downgraded their healthy life even though they believed that they were upgrading themselves in their psychological colony.

Chapter 5: Self-leadership–To Be and Not to Be, That is the Answer of *Ren*
(*Human-Benevolence*)

All things are from Yin to embrace Yang; the Qi (breath) harmonizes the Yin and Yang to be a balanced state (through a dynamic process).

-Dao De Jing:42

Facing an iceberg of challenges from both the external and internal worlds, should an ICWDSUS develop herself to become an iron woman to “kill a bloody path” to climb to the upper echelon or become a servant leader to serve the world down to earth? Should a woman use her independent agency or mobilize collective support to develop herself? Does the world have only one reality as “a brutal tribe” or have multiple realities with the *big sameness (Da Tong)* as everyone wants to live? Every woman seems to face the Hamlet’s dilemma: *To be or not to be, that is the question*. To this philosophical dilemma, my answer from this study is “to be AND not to be.” That is the answer of *Ren (benevolence/human)*.

To open the gate of success in a labyrinth-like world, women need three keys, rather than one: the opposing forces of *Yin* and *Yang* show the gate of the ever-changing world (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Xici II:6); and a person’s firm and unchangeable *Ren (human-benevolence)* is the root of all the *Yin*, *Yang*, and *Yinyang* forces of a person (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Heng:1). This

grounded theory of the self-leadership of ICWDSUS has three core categories: *Yang*, *Yinyang*, and *Yin* self-leadership to cope with *Yang*, *Yinyang*, and *Yin* challenges, respectively. The theoretical explanation of ICWDSUS' self-leadership is presented in this chapter in three parts, as shown in Table 6, to address three kinds of challenges presented in Chapter 4.

Table 6

Three Parts of Different Self-leadership for ICWDSUS

Three Categories	Three Parts of Self-leadership of ICWDSUS
Part I <i>Yang</i> categories	Part I: <i>Yang</i> Self-leadership—Developing Herself to Achieve Her Goal
Part II <i>Yinyang</i> categories	Part II: <i>Yinyang</i> Self-leadership—The Respect for and Including Others
Part III <i>Yin</i> categories	Part III: <i>Yin</i> Self-leadership—A Woman's Benevolent Love for Others

Part I: *Yang* Self-leadership—Developing Herself to Achieve Her Goal

Women do not passively receive external challenges, but they actively pursue their own goals for development in hostile patriarchal cultures (Giele & Elder, 1998; Jonsen, 2014). The *Yang* codes with visible, dynamic, changing actions or processes depict how participants took initiatives to actively change their visible *Yang* challenges into promotions throughout their doctoral journeys.

Setting Up and Focusing on a Goal with Linear Self-development

Most participants set up goals to overcome their challenges for their self-development. Participant JJ described her self-leadership as follows:

Self-leadership means you lead yourself to achieve a goal. As long as you have a goal for yourself, you can lead yourself to work towards your goal. After you set up your goal, you should strive for your goal with perseverance.

Participant ICWDSUS@ described her linear self-development and doctoral journey:

All my development in the U.S. was a linear development. One big thing at a time. I got the offer first, then my husband must get the offer from the same university as me. After graduating from the master's degree, he wanted to get a job and I wanted to get my Ph.D., so when I started to write my dissertation, I moved to the state where he worked and graduated and found a job. Then after we saw that we could settle down in this state, we purchased a house. After we got a house for one year, I got pregnant. Everything was based on our plan and goals.

Fupan also said: "The goal must be clear, actionable, and realistic."

Fupan's goal setting is aligned with a specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely (SMART) goal in the management field (MacLeod, 2012). With meaningful goals, women will purposefully manage everyday life, actively pursue self-development and quality relationships with others, enjoy higher physical and psychological health, and success (Friedman et al., 2007). Fupan said:

If you want to live a life like what you wish, you must focus on your goals. I made four kids during my doctoral journey, and I was just too busy to give time for depression. If you are totally focused on your goals, you can feel the rhythm of the progress of your life, you would feel fulfilled. The sense of depression would be replaced by the sense of fulfilling. During my doctoral journey, I always wrote things I planned to do on a little piece of paper at the beginning of the day. At the end of the day, I was always happy to see all the things have been done. Happiness is just that simple! I could never forget the pure and simple happiness during my doctoral journey!

Fupan's description of her simple happiness could be called *eudaimonic wellbeing*. In contrast to *hedonic wellbeing* with foci on obtaining subjective pleasure and *a pleasant life* with avoidance of pain or negative effects, *eudaimonic wellbeing* focuses on a goal of self-actualization and *a good life* with virtues and life satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Seligman, 2003). Compared to hedonic wellbeing, "Eudaimonic wellbeing is much more critical and satisfying" (Urry et al., 2004, p. 372).

Self-managing and Project-managing

Actively Preparing For Future Challenges in Advance

Chinese students are well aware of the importance of learning English and have spent a considerable amount of time and money learning English even long before they leave China, such as preparing for the TOFEL and GRE (Xie, 2007; Yan, 2017). Zixi recalled:

Since my undergraduate, I was very certain that I wanted to study abroad to broaden my horizons and have overseas study experience, so I prepared for TOFEL in my undergraduate. I have read books about American culture. I have watched many American dramas in China, which helped me acculturate into American culture. I didn't have culture shock.

Lora also discussed her preparation for lab work:

When I was just an undergraduate student, I reached out to other senior students in graduate school to understand their studies. They told me that doing experiments in a lab was the most basic skill in my major, so I contacted some teachers in my major in my Chinese university to help them do experiments in a lab in order to gain some experience to prepare for my research work in the U.S.

Summer's university in China prepared students well for their overseas studies, and she also did an internship in an American company in China:

Many classes in my university in China were taught in English. They developed the curriculum like that, so all students in my Chinese university spoke very good English. A huge proportion of my classmates studied abroad, such as the U.S. UK, Europe. Therefore, my English in China was already good, and I didn't have much trouble with English. Also, I got an internship in an American company in China. The working environment in that American company was more English-oriented. Maybe that experience helped me understand American culture better?

Fupan had no conflicts or discriminative experiences in the U.S. or in China, because she said that she had the "mental preparation" "in advance" for "the dark, not nice, and depressing side of humanity." She had prepared for what she would do if she faced racial and gender discrimination or weak group members in the U.S. She also had mentally prepared for the higher evaluations for a woman at work, family, and in society. Because of her mental preparation in advance, Fupan thought of solutions in advance and avoided potential conflicts during her doctoral journey. However, Fupan did not mentally prepare for challenges in her home country when she returned to China. She recalled: "I thought I must be a rare talent in China, so if I returned to China, it must be easy for me to find a job. However, it was SO HARD to get a job in China!"

Constructing a Positive but Active Psychological World to Face a Challenging Material World

Facing overwhelming challenges in the material world, many participants constructed a positive and active psychological world to support themselves. Zixi mentioned how she coped with psychological challenges:

I felt so overwhelmed to look for jobs, teach, publish papers, and defend dissertations. The job searching process was TOO PAINFUL! Each task was important. Each task gave me lots of pressure. How did I cope with my psychological challenges? Positive psychology! Give myself positive psychological hints.

JJ also discussed the stigma of being a leftover woman:

The pressure of being a leftover woman is from one's external world in society. Sometimes the pressure is from parents. Haha. However, if you have a positive value about being single, others can't hurt you and you will enjoy your single life.

Manz's (1983) self-leadership theory advised individuals to construct a positive psychological world through thought patterns to overcome challenges. Despite the challenges for women, many Chinese women leaders told positive stories and attributed their success to their optimistic attitude about a promising future for women's leadership development. This attitude motivated them to be diligent and pursue excellence (Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016).

Positively Self-interpreting the Challenges in a New World

Manz (1983) claimed that self-talk could shape one's psychological world. When I asked about the challenges, participants had different self-interpretations of their challenges. Fupan talked about her perception of discrimination in the U.S.:

How you interpret an event in your mind makes things different. Do you see the event through an optimistic lens or with a mentality that I am a victim? The result would be totally different. If you tell yourself that everyone judges you in a strange way, everyone does bad things to you, everyone discriminates against you, the professor doesn't like you. That would not help you solve problems. You still needed to finish your assignments. You still had to submit your assignments. Your professor would not lower the class criteria just for you. You need to have an optimistic psychological setting in your own heart. Therefore, don't set psychological limits and barriers for yourself in your own mind.

Alvesson and Billing (2009) argued that "defining women primarily as victims of patriarchy freezes the intellectual project too categorically" (p. 34). The dichotomy of the oppressors and the oppressed construct enemy-like relationships between a woman and men or other privileged people (Young, 1999). Individual psychologist Alfred Adler proposed the concept of the *creative self* (Edgar, 2006). He claimed that instead of being a passive recipient of one's experiences, every individual has the creative power to use their self-interpretation to actively give personal meaning to the experience that many people have experienced (Edgar, 2006). In this way, one can create one's life and destiny with others in society.

Realistically Analyzing Challenges and Actively Building Connections to A Resourceful Material World

A woman's material world not only challenges her but also has many resources she can develop. Facing new challenges, the participants actively built connections to their old knowledge, experience, strengths, and networks to seek support and resources. Most participants' majors in China and the U.S. were the

same or similar. Fupan studied the same major for her master's and Ph.D. degrees in the U.S. Her major was not only relevant to her work in China but was also the major that her husband studied two years before her. Therefore, her husband's six-year doctoral journey helped Fupan avoid making detours during her three-year doctoral journey.

Most participants connected with people from familiar backgrounds, such as other Chinese international students to seek help. Lora said:

After I got the offer, I had two months to prepare for my overseas trip. I searched online to find Chinese overseas student groups at my American university, and got all the help from Chinese people, such as how to find a roommate, an apartment, and how to do grocery shopping.

Summer did not have any work-life conflict, and she explained the reason:

I tried to integrate work and life a little bit. You know, take advantage of the flexibility as a faculty. I don't need to work on fixed hours as long as I get the work done. My husband also works as a faculty too in my university. ha ha. I am really lucky.

Constructing a Healthy Social World

Unlike Manz's (1983) individualized self-management, participants' self-management involved both their capabilities and collective help by actively constructing a healthy and supportive social world. Participant A highly appreciated the help from a group of Chinese students. She told her story with delight: "Definitely, my first social support group is the Chinese friends! Even before I came to the U.S., we formed a group online to connect with each other to share information. Ha ha ha."

For Participant ICWDSUS*, after her divorce, she reached out to make new Chinese friends who went to the gym together. After leaving her hubby, she developed a new hobby—swimming—and has been swimming daily since then. Swimming not only helped her quickly recover from her divorce with more energy and confidence but it gave her a network of new friends, who liked sports and were very positive. She greatly appreciated her “healthy social life.”

Working Hard, Smart, and Actively

Taking initiatives, Active Learning, Self-exploring, Self-disciplining, and Self-controlling

All participants emphasized the importance of self-agency during the whole self-leading process. Participant JJ said:

Since it is your self-leadership, most of the time it is you who should initiate all your activities rather than others asking you to set up a goal and do this or do that. You need to have an outline of the overall process of your project, like you have a proposal for yourself, when and how you should do something, at what stage, you should achieve something.

When I asked Lily how she coped with the challenges from new knowledge in her

studies, she said:

It was not necessary to read more articles, but tried to understand what the unknown points were, what the challenges, and what problems in the discipline were, and tried to find a way to solve them. Most of the time, you couldn't really find a way to solve them from textbooks. That was why it took a lot of self-exploration, self-discipline, and efforts in finding the method of study. That needed more active learning capabilities.

Mary also discussed how to get a job and emphasized the importance of being proactive:

You can't just study. You must pay attention to your environment. You have to go out of your comfort zone, so people can know you. It is good for a student to get an internship job first as it is easier to get an internship job and make the internship job a permanent job than to get a permanent job immediately. When you do your job, you can't passively wait for others to tell you what you should do. You should actively think of the potential needs of the job and what you can offer to the job.

Mary's active working attitude impressed her employers, which gave her more job opportunities during her 3-year doctoral journey.

When I asked Zixi to define self-leadership, she claimed: "During my doctoral journey, it was just my self-control and self-discipline as there was no shortcut to finish the doctoral journey." *Yinyang* dynamism shows the other side of self-discipline, which is freedom. Participants' self-discipline gave them more freedom and life choices on an international level after their doctoral journey.

Managing Her Stress, Task, and Self-care

As a mother of four, Fupan said:

As an individual, stress-management skills are unavoidable. You must have strong task-management skills, such as how I managed my pregnancy and Ph.D. studies alone. You must have your strategies to work. You must know how to prioritize your work, how to work smart, otherwise, you could get burned out easily.

Mary described how she managed her studies, pregnancy, and work alone during the first year of her doctoral studies:

I got pregnant during the first semester of my doctoral journey. My husband was in another state. I took all in-classroom classes during my

first doctoral year. I finished exams of ten classes one week before I delivered my baby. One week after I delivered my baby, I took the plane to my husband's state. Therefore, during my second year, I just needed to take online classes and take care of the baby with my husband together. During my third year, I did my internship, which was a full-time job, and finished my dissertation and got my Ph.D.

Many participants claimed that the doctoral journey was a "lonely" and "self-exploring" process "like a marathon." One must experience the physical limitations and the mental "loneliness" and stress. Therefore, one must understand how to manage one's mental and physical health, and the "rhythm of work." Both Luyinbi and Lora admitted that they could not share their stress during their doctoral journey with their parents as their parents could not help and they did not want to make their parents worry about them. Therefore, Luyinbi hung out with her friends to ease her stress. Lora said that she eased her stress independently by doing other things she likes, such as watching American dramas. JJ also used sports to ease her stress:

One good way to cope with psychological stress is to do physical exercise. I really like sports. After physical exercise, you would immediately feel different, and then you go to solve your problem with more energy. I use physical exercise to reduce my psychological stress, others may listen to music or other relaxing ways that suit different individuals. However, I think everyone must find a way to reduce stress.

Lily emphasized that she needed to develop good physical health to support her heavy workload if she did not want to die:

I felt I was about to die one time after I had been extremely busy with writing a proposal for a grant for a week. Before the submission deadline, I finished my proposal at about 3 am. I felt that my whole body became

colder and colder. The temperature of my body was just leaving my body. I felt that death was coming to me, but I could do nothing but just went to bed. Luckily, I opened my eyes the second morning...

Character Building

Diligence, Persistence, and Adversity Quotient (AQ).

Quite often, there are no smart ways or short cuts to solve problems except through an individual's diligence and persistence. Zixi said:

There was no shortcut to finishing the doctoral journey. You had to work hard. You had to persevere. No other ways. I knew some friends during my doctoral journey, they quit just because they didn't persevere. They gave up! They said: "it is enough. This is not the life I want". Even some already got the Ph.D. candidacy, but they didn't continue to the end. They didn't want to write the dissertation.

JJ also stressed the need for diligence:

When I just came to the U.S., the reading, writing, and presenting were very challenging. For each class, I had to read four or five articles and each paper was about 30-50 pages. So one week, I had to read like one book. And the seminar classes were small, with only a few students. Each student had to present their readings in the class. I had to prepare slides. How did I cope with that? Just do it! Ha ha. I had to spend much more time than native speakers to do all these.

"Just do it!" Diligence sounds like the easy and effective solution to all challenges despite the complexity of a VUCA world. It is easy to say but hard to do. Although most participants laughed when they talked about how they used their simple diligence and perseverance to overcome various challenges in their lives, the process of keeping working diligently until realizing their goals was not easy but was often painful. Participant A said:

The process to look for a job was very painful. I submitted 180 applications, but just got a few interview opportunities. When I applied for jobs, I was also writing my dissertation and teaching a class. The last semester was so exhausting for me. There was no way to cope with the pressure. I was too busy to have time to sleep or eat. I had no time to think about the pressure. There were several times that I burned out. What could I do? I just cried hard, and called my parents and my boyfriend to complain. After talking to them, I still had to continue to do what I should do. Many people didn't succeed just because they quit. If at the most difficult moment, they could hold on there, after enduring for a while, they would pass their challenges.

Before realizing the American dream (Kasser & Ryan, 1993) or the Chinese dream with a dream job, ICWDSUS may have to experience American or Chinese nightmares, or even many sleepless nights. Luyinbi also smiled:

After having a child, we don't have enough money. Our income was only 2000 dollars per month. I had to pay 800 dollars for my son's daycare. Our parents helped us take care of the kid, so we had to rent a bigger apartment. The rent was doubled after having the child, like 1000. Then we only had 200 dollars left for our living expenses. But what could we do? Just endure, ha ha.

Instead of emphasizing one's high IQ or EQ, Fupan emphasized the importance of high AQ:

After I went through my doctoral journey, I realized that what you were competing with others, especially Ph.D. studies, was not your IQ, not your EQ, but your AQ. Adversity Quotient. If one could be accepted to a Ph.D. program, it means the person's IQ is good. However, why did so many people fail to finish their Ph.D.? In my university, only 20% finished their Ph.D. Some could fail in some part of the Ph.D. journey, some could quit voluntarily. It is like a marathon, 100 people run at first, but only 20 can keep running until the end. During an adversity, you need to hold on, to endure. You need to be able to withstand loneliness, stand firm about what you are doing, be patient, be confident etc. Those things all belong to AQ. If you lack these mentalities, it is hard to complete the doctoral journey.

However, to gain AQ, ICWDSUS must often experience repeated rejection and their own self-doubt. Summer said:

For the first one or two years, I was very stressed about publication. I remembered one time when I got rejected, I ordered a big family meal from KFC, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and ate it all in front of a movie. That was how bad I used to be. Now, when I get emails saying my paper was rejected, I just do, “hum...blur...” I will not even be bothered to say a word, or feel anything. I think my skin becomes tougher over time. Now, if my paper gets rejected, I just submit it to another journal. That’s it! Things do get easier over time. At first, when I started to choose what I like to do, I always chose the things I was interested in. However, from the start of the interest to seeing the result, it is a long journey. In the middle part of the journey, it is the darkest moment, you will doubt yourself. You will start to think of giving up. Therefore, in the darkest moment, you really need self-leadership to tell yourself, that you can do it, you must keep doing it, then you can make it to the end.

Although after passing the “darkest moment,” most participants did not criticize others with anger. However, their laughter and “easy” AQ solution did not mean the process of going through the “darkest” tunnel of their journey was easy and pleasant. Participant ICWdSUS? described her feeling after trying hard to leave a very humiliating work environment:

During that period, I got up at 4 am every morning and went to McDonald's to cry for a while until 5:30 am, which was the time Starbucks opened. Then from 5:30am, I started to apply for new jobs until my husband and child got up. I did not know if I could find a new job to leave a toxic working environment during that period, but I just applied and applied every day.

During the most humiliating “darkest moment,” no one could help Participant ICWDSUS?, so she had to depend on her own diligence:

How could I cope with the discrimination at work? I could only rely on myself. I knew people said “you should build an ally, you should seek help from others!” However, when everyone was mean, who would help me? the HR, the conflict center were all connected with my boss and worked for my boss, they would not stand up for my rights unless they could use me to destroy their common enemy to serve their own interests. It was not one woman but every woman who bullied me to death at work. My male colleagues treat me nice actually. If I told you everything, I must need three days and nights. When I just came here, I trusted Alice as my friend. She was the front desk in the department. I was so naive to trust her as my friend. She was just nice to me at first as she wanted to use me and waited to see me being played by others as a fool. After she used me, I was of no use for her. She started to be mean to me. After having a fake friend, I dare not to trust anyone here. So what could I do? I could only rely on my diligence. Even my husband didn't like to hear my complaints about work and wanted to divorce me. I applied for 200 jobs until I found one job as an assistant professor. The coping strategy for discrimination is diligence. You need to separate your discrimination from what you must do. Despite your discrimination, you still have to do what you must do, and try your best to do it well.

Many Western feminists have realized that women cannot passively accept or angrily criticize gender inequity but must build sisterhood and seek others' collaboration to emancipate the self and change societal culture (Downing & Roush, 1985; Hoffman, 2006; Jack & Ali, 2010). However, the sisterhood utopia can be unrealistic and dangerous based on Participant ICWDSUS?'s experience, who was tortured by the *catfight* and *queen bee syndrome* from women of all colors and women management. Unfortunately, women's brutal attacks on other women exist for all women regardless of individual differences (Tanenbaum, 2003). When women rob other women of the social, economic, and

political power gained from past women's movements, they strengthen the patriarchal social order and values (Reinke, 2010; Wang, 2014).

Instead of blaming others but waiting for others' salvation, Participant ICWDSUS?'s choice was similar to most Chinese women leaders who use their own diligence and perseverance to transform the "darkest" moment to be her brighter future (Chao, 2011; Liu, 2013).

An Unyielding Personality

Despite the iceberg of challenges from both the U.S. and Chinese cultures and from both the inner and external worlds for an ICWDSUS, none of the participants gave up their dreams but they actively sought solutions to confront and solve their challenges to develop themselves. When Fupan told her husband that she wanted to study a Ph.D., her husband discouraged her. However, Fupan said: "It was about my personality too. In my heart, I have that unyielding spirit. The more my husband said I could not finish my Ph.D., the more I was stimulated to study for my Ph.D."

Shouldering Self-responsibility

Although all participants experienced challenges during their doctoral journey, they shouldered their self-responsibility for their choices. Zixi said:

It was MY CHOICE to study abroad to realize my dream. I was studying something I really love. When I experienced many challenges and frustrations, I had no regret for my original choice. I shoulder my responsibilities for everything I do.

Leadership=Management or Authority

Although all participants found it hard to define self-leadership and women's leadership, most participants described leadership as management with a focus on managing or controlling the self, tasks, and others to get the work done. Mary said: "For me, self-leadership is like self-management." JJ also described her perspective: "When I saw leadership, I thought it is in an organization or a group, you manage or control the group of people. Women's leadership means a woman controls or manages a group."

Participant ICWDSUS]'s understanding of leadership means authoritarian leadership:

Leadership means how you make others listen to you, to submit to you. For a man leader, he can be in an authoritative way, like "just do what I told you". Some women leaders may also have that kind of authoritarian way like a man. I really admire some women leaders who can use the authoritarian way, like "just do what I say!"

For some participants, leadership = management, managing others = to control others, and to control others = to let others submit to you. Although Manz (1983) identified self-imposed self-leadership strategies to use self-regulation, self-award, and self-punishment to impose on oneself, if one tries to impose or punish others, the person can be a dictator or tyrant regardless of gender. *Yang* self-leaders can use authoritarian leadership with the belief that to lead others means to control others powerfully to let others obey the "leader" (Hornstein, 1996; Kiazad et al., 2010). Instead of getting the task done, the real intention

behind authoritarian leaders' control is their demand for others' unquestioning obedience and their manipulation of others (Hornstein, 1996; Kiazad et al., 2010). Therefore, authoritarian leadership is also called coercive or dictatorial leadership.

Competing with and Winning Others

All the participants managed their individual tasks diligently and proactively. However, how participants treated others was totally different. *Yang* self-leaders treated others as competitors, and their motive of being diligent and proactive was to win others so they could get the best resources, rather than collaborating with others to win challenges to do a great job together. Although Participant ICWDSUS* admitted that her STEM field was starting to hire more women to promote diversity, she said:

In some STEM programs, they actually prefer Caucasian women to Asian women, even Caucasian men. In order to compete with Caucasian women and Caucasian men, I have to have more publications and I have to express myself more clearly to make my voice heard. Even for the same goal, I have to work more for that. I didn't know how others performed, but I just tried my best to work more, publish more, present myself better.

Without even understanding what others want and need, *Yang* self-leaders just prepare to fight to win others regardless of the gender or race. Diversity interventions in STEM fields have promoted women scientists, but diversity interventions have not solved the problem of workplace inclusion (Williams et al., 2014). Highly educated women scientists often have brutal competition against other women scientists to compete for limited job opportunities for women.

Summary of *Yang* self-leadership

From an intimidated Chinese international student to a confident international professional woman leader in the world, the participants' experiences empirically contradicted the belief in a socially constructed self of many scholars (e.g., John Dewey) and confirmed Manz's (1983) self-leadership concept. All the participants demonstrated that a marginalized woman of color could use her self-leadership to survive and succeed in a foreign patriarchal world.

Participants' *Yang* self-leadership (e.g., goal-setting, self-management, task management) is visible to themselves, which is similar to Manz's (1983) self-leadership. However, participants' *Yang* self-leadership also includes how they built their positive but active psychology and actions, aspirations, long-term orientation, self-care, persistent character-building, and a healthy social world to develop the self with individual diligence and help from others. Without active actions and painful perseverance to work diligently, Manz's (1983) positive thoughts about self-leadership could be just a rosy self-utopia.

In terms of unknown and painful challenges, instead of a SMART goal, Chinese doctoral students in the U.S. used their aspiration to overcome the challenges (Griner & Sobol, 2014). Confucius claimed that an army could win without a commander-in-chief, but a common person could not live without an aspiration (CTP, 2016, Zi Han:26). Zhendorfer (2021) suggested adding vision

into future self-leadership studies as charismatic and transformational leaders have a clear vision that motivates them and their followers over the long term. With the focus on clear goals and active actions to complete specific tasks, *Yang* self-leadership could be called transactional self-leadership (Bass et al., 1996). Transactional *Yang* self-leadership can help participants meet their physiological and safety needs in Maslow's hierarchy of needs to survive effectively, but it cannot help satisfy their higher level needs (e.g., love, belonging, and self-esteem). Without love, belonging, and esteem, people will suffer from anxiety, fear, eating, sleeping, and health disorders. Although Manz (1983) emphasized that his self-leadership theory is not selfish self-leadership, Maslow (1975) pointed out that physiological and safety needs (e.g., food, clothing, shelter) are selfish and almost the same for everyone. Higher level needs (e.g., love) are altruistic and unique, but they are hard to define.

An Arrogant Dragon Will Regret

Based on Manz's (1983) self-leadership theory, Zhendorfer (2021, p. 229) further defined that "self-leadership essentially speaks to our ability to self-manage the finite resources (psychological, physical, social, financial, temporal) that we each possess, in order to maximize success within every facet of our lives." Zhendorfer (2021, p. 232) claimed that self-leadership is to "chase power, not popularity" and criticized one's "need to be liked" as an "egoistic need" by making compromises for others. Although she emphasized the need to "prioritize

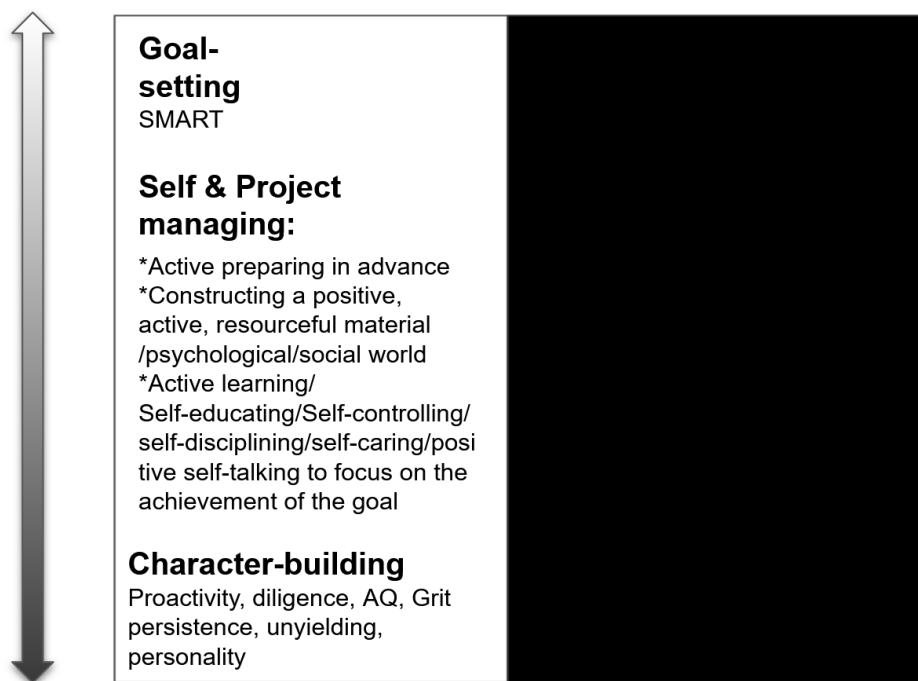
the need to realize one's vision in the most effective way possible" (Zhendorfer, 2021, p. 233), one's self-centered vision in a VUCA world is half blind through the lens of "methodological individualism" by reducing complex social realities into individual representations (Ho & Chiu, 1998, p. 349). Although Zhendorfer (2021, p. 229) urged individuals to manage "finite resources" to maximize personal success, neither the resources nor challenges are finite. One's resources and challenges are produced and reproduced with others. The Chinese *Yinyang* concept shows that everything has both positive and negative sides. The most effective and efficient way to "chase power" (Zhendorfer, 2021, p. 233) with the neglect of others could also be the most effective and efficient way to chase destruction with the conflicts from others.

Contrary to Zhendorfer's (2021) strong belief in self-centered self-leadership, the *Book of Changes* seriously warned that "an arrogant dragon would regret in the end" (*Kang long you hui*) (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Xiang zhuan, Qian:7). Although in Chapter 1, *Zijun* angrily declared that "I belong to myself! No one can interfere with my own life!" (Lu et al., 2003, p.198), her sad ending was her *regret for the past*. After decades of using SMART goal setting in the management field, people start to realize SMART goals are not smart; they are inaccurate in a VUCA world (MacLeod, 2012). Most people do not predict the future correctly and their goal setting with a linear development plan is highly likely to fail (Marshak, 1993; Jabri, 2006; Turner et al., 2022).

Figure 18 summarizes the fixed and linear *Yang* self-leadership, which consists of three major components of *Yang* self-leadership: goal setting, self and project managing, and character-building. However, Figure 18 also illustrates a large portion of the unknown world from others and the ever-changing environment, which hides many unknown risks.

Figure 18

Yang Self-leadership



Without understanding how to lead oneself to cope with the challenges from the large invisible *Yin* areas in Figure 18, *Yang* self-leadership can lead to unbalanced self-development with pride in one's unchangeable smartness. Thus,

without flexibility and resilience, *Yang* self-leaders' self-development is not sustainable. As the double arrow gradient line in Figure 18 shows, people's character, which is invisible to others, may influence their choices of self-and-project-managing strategies to achieve their visible SMART goals. People's visible SMART goals can also influence their invisible character-building process to make them more aggressive with the iron will (Li et al., 2021). The quantitative evaluation of their efficiency and effectiveness may tempt or even push them to take risks, and be unethical, unhealthy, or aggressive to quickly achieve their SMART goals. Sadly, murder, suicide, and sudden deaths around them, as well as physical and mental illness, plagiarism, scandals, and conflicts with others slowed down or stopped some Ph.D. students' doctoral journeys and original career plans. These issues are discussed in the invisible *Yin* challenges in Chapter 4. In a complex VUCA world with others, active *Yang* self-leaders need to expand their self-centered visions for SMART self-development to include others and the world for SMART(ER) mutual development by adding E as engaging, ethical, ecological and R as reevaluated and reflecting (MacLeod, 2012).

Part II: *Yinyang* Self-leadership—Respect for and Including Others

Manz (1983) claimed that personal effectiveness can be developed by adopting effective self-leadership strategies, “intelligent, purposeful, and motivated behavior and thinking,” and “positive perceptions and self-efficacy” (p. 105). Western scholars with a strong uncertainty avoidance culture believe that

people can only move forward through intentional behaviors of decision-making, goal-setting, and action plans (Adam, 2006; Manz, 1983; Zimmerman et al., 1992). These linear self-development strategies with a focus on SMART goals are echoed by *Yang* self-leaders in this study. However, with the focus on people's self-centered SMART goals and the neglect of others and an unknown world, all *Yang* self-leaders' fixed and linear self-development was frustrated by the *Yin* challenges from the ignored others and their inner world. In contrast, *Yinyang* self-leaders showed very different self-leadership to lead their self-development. With an understanding of both the visible *Yang* and the invisible *Yin* part of the world, *Yinyang* self-leaders achieved much greater personal effectiveness than *Yang* self-leaders and what the *Yinyang* self-leaders themselves originally expected. Without a specific goal, *Yinyang* self-leaders moved forward, backward, strategically stopped, or flexibly changed their original plans, but successfully achieved their goals in the end. Fupan had never thought that she would go to the U.S. Not only was she unable to speak English at first, but from a small village in China, she could not speak Mandarin even. Even after Participants Luyinbi and A studied and worked in the U.S. for more than ten years, they still thought they faced English barriers and did not think they could integrate into American culture.

Many scholars claimed that without effective English communication, it is hard for international students to follow the courses, faculty, and classmates in

class, find a job in the U.S., socialize with local people to understand U.S. culture, and work as teaching assistants and instructors (Chan, 2007; Li, 2013; Xie, 2007; Yu & Wang, 2011). However, although *Yang* self-leaders spoke great English and tried their best to integrate into American culture as “a half American,” *Yang* self-leaders had conflicts with people from all cultures with poor or traumatic teaching, working, and life experiences. In contrast, despite strong English barriers, both Participants Luyinbi and A were assistant professors, teaching Ph.D. students from all over the world without even knowing that they could receive bad teaching evaluations. As an entrepreneur, Fupan also led many white American experts and people from many cultures.

There must be other less visible self-leadership that is far more important than visible *Yang* self-leadership (e.g., individual’s skills, intelligence, and self-efficacy). The *Yinyang* codes show that *Yinyang* self-leaders have both gentleness and respect to follow others, along with the courage and resilience to refuse and lead others. Compared to self-centered *Yang* self-leaders, *Yinyang* self-leaders build harmonious relationships through respectful interactions with others to gain more resources and support from more people without resistance and conflict from others. In contrast *Yang* self-leaders take the initiative to lead the self to develop competitive advantages to win others and confidently yell at others but fail to listen to others. They desire others’ admiration but fail to respect others. They focus on self-centered SMART goals but fail to flexibly adapt to new

changes in a comprehensive world, and they boast in their “iron will” but paradoxically yield to and even develop social ills with tears and paranoia.

Without these negative perspectives, *Yinyang* self-leaders can better navigate in a complex *Yinyang* world with others together compared to a lonely *Yang* self-leader who wants to fight to win all others.

Future-oriented and Comprehensive Life Growth

Although participants with *Yinyang* self-leadership often have no short-term and ambitious SMART goals at first, they are future-oriented and target comprehensive life-long growth rather than linear career development to climb to the upper echelon. For example, Fupan described why she chose her life-long career field when she was 22: “My field can make me learn new things every day, so I can grow unceasingly. Therefore, I chose this field. I also felt the field would develop very well in the future.”

Unlike Participant ICWDSUS* who confidently said, “the only time that I needed to learn a lot of new things was in my first year,” Luyinbi focused on learning:

The whole Ph.D. journey was learning. And after that, I still need to continue to learn. My work also requires me to learn...so life-learning ha ha...You chose to do research. It means your whole life must be around learning. Learning must be an important part of your research life.

Although all participants liked studying (or they would have not pursued a Ph.D.), *Yang* self-leaders’ active learning has a clear short-term SMART goal to

produce more publications and gather resources for career promotion to the upper echelon. In contrast, *Yinyang* self-leaders pursue life-long learning for self-growth without an initial quantifiable short-term goal. Therefore, after achieving short-term SMART goals with quantitative evaluations, *Yang* self-leaders may become more complacent and find few new things to learn from others for their self-interests. However, *Yinyang* self-leaders may become more worried and find many new things that they did not know and want to learn from others. The complacency of *Yang* self-leaders causes them to neglect, despise, and refuse to learn from others. However, the worries of *Yinyang* self-leaders helps them respect others and eager to learn from others.

For *Yang* self-leaders to effectively and efficiently achieve their SMART goals to become the SMARTest in a linear and artificial SMART career trajectory to reach the top of the social hierarchy, they have to remove many “useless” things and people, including their own authentic feelings from their lives. Brutally competing with “awkward” others, *Yang* self-leaders have few friends but considerable stress, anger, hatred, “psychological crisis,” and even mental illness. In contrast, *Yinyang* self-leaders follow their authentic feelings by humbling themselves to include smart others to work together. When their SMART goals and authentic feelings are in conflict, *Yinyang* self-leaders choose their authentic feelings by changing their SMART goals, whereas *Yang* self-leaders choose their SMART goals by ignoring their authentic feelings. Although the *Yang* self-

leaders in this study kept describing their confidence, awesomeness, and iron will, they declared that they “dare not even fathom” that social ills could change, or ask for help from their advisors. Thus, *Yang* self-leaders’ SMART self-development is not sustainable given the many conflicts with others and psychological crises with themselves. Compared to *Yang* self-leaders, *Yinyang* self-leaders’ self-growth is more comprehensive given their flexibility and harmony with others.

Not Following Extrinsic Incentives, But Intrinsic Interests

Manz (1985) identified *push* and *pull* self-leadership. Motivated by extrinsic incentives, *push* self-leadership uses self-rewarding and self-punishment strategies to push the self to do undesirable things, which can only last for a short run. *Pull* self-leadership is motivated by intrinsic interests that naturally pull leaders to do desirable things, which motivates them to succeed and keep moving forward and enjoy the process. *Yang* self-leaders painfully push themselves to work hard for extrinsic incentives. *Yinyang* self-leaders pull themselves with joy to work hard for their intrinsic interests, and only use *push* self-leadership to hold on during the most difficult moments. The happy laughter and stable emotions of the *Yinyang* self-leaders in this study, and the creepy laughter, abrupt yelling, and frequent crying of the *Yang* self-leaders were in sharp contrast.

Becoming an associate professor at age 28 with a loving husband, a child, and American citizenship, Participant ICWDSUS& must be considered a *having-*

it-all woman in academia and a role model for many ICWDSUS. However, she had many regrets about her doctoral journey:

If I could do my doctoral journey again, I would not have chosen my easy university just because my university weaved my tuition. I would have gone to a much better university to challenge myself more even though I had to pay tuition. I would have regarded the financial payment as an educational investment, rather than an expense as I thought before. If you let me say now, I made a stupid mistake from the very beginning...haha...

When I asked Participant ICWDSUS& to define her self-leadership, she realized that she made the wrong choice from the very beginning:

Self-leadership means finding the right thing to do and motivating myself to do it. For a Ph.D. student, the right thing is straightforward, getting chapters of the dissertation, getting your publications, presenting your work, preparing job applications... Many of those things were not pleasant things to do, you know... (She paused for a few seconds) See, maybe that was the sign that I may have chosen the wrong topic to do from the very beginning...It should have been pleasant for me, but it wasn't.

In contrast to Participant ICWDSUS&'s unpleasant tasks as a Ph.D. student, Mary didn't follow external criteria but her own heart:

The motivation for my self-leadership is my pure curiosity. I studied things that I really liked to study. Therefore, I liked every class. I found every class interesting. The second motivation is career oriented. Yes, I had to find a career that could both raise me and make me happy. The key reason why I had few challenges in my study was my interest. Although I took a little D-tour to find out what I was interested in, once I found my interest, I just studied what I was interested in, so my doctoral GPA was 4.0. My doctoral studies were very smooth...

Unlike the *Yang* self-leaders, who forced themselves to accept what they believed they "have to accept," Lora said:

I rarely force myself to do something. I do things based on my inner interests. If I really want something, I will naturally generate interests from my heart inside instead of forcing myself to do things to achieve a goal in my external world for some purpose. My interests in my heart is probably the source of my energy to lead myself.

An Authentic Woman's Comprehensive Self-actualization

When I asked Lora to define a woman's self-leadership, she emphasized a woman's needs:

At the end of the day, it depends on what a woman needs. The definition of self-leadership must consider the needs of the person. If now, my need is to graduate, then all my decisions and actions should be around that need to graduate.

What a human needs may be best answered by Maslow's *hierarchy of needs*: physiological (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, etc.), safety (e.g. personal or financial security, employment security), belonging and love (e.g. friendships, family, and intimacy), esteem (e.g., getting respect, status, and recognition from others), self-actualization, and self-transcendence (Maslow & Hoffman, 1996). With a focus on the lower level of needs for one's short-term development, ICWDSUS may focus on the satisfaction of the physiological needs (e.g., food, clothing, shelter) and safety needs (e.g., personal or financial security, employment security). With great workload and career ambition, some ICWDSUS regarded some of their higher level of needs for belonging and love (e.g., friendships, family, and intimacy), esteem (e.g., getting respect and

recognition from others), and self-transcendence as “a waste of time” or “little things.”

Women’s authentic self-actualization can be different from men’s self-actualization. Although men tend to aspire to upward and linear career promotion for the upper echelon by winning over other competitors at work, women appreciate holistic life satisfaction with balanced self-development including both work and family through relational interactions with others (Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Liu, 2013). Zixi confirmed these perspectives in her work:

You asked about the challenges for women at work and in their lives. The challenges are all about the lack of time. As a woman, if you decide to have a family, to get married, have a kid, you have to spend time on all those things...For men, they don’t need to worry about many family development things...

Participant ICWDSUS@ further pointed out the poisonous chicken soup for women:

One thing is important, women can’t drink poisonous chicken soup for the soul! For example, Facebook chief operating officer, Sherly Sandberg wrote her book, *Lean in: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*. She is just half correct. Yes, half of her chicken soup is correct that women need to lean in. Just like me, when I just came to the U.S. and was afraid to talk at first. If I always held back, I could not progress. I must lean in, must be proactive at that moment. However, the other half of Sherly Sandberg’s “Lean in” is poisonous chicken soup. Without others’ help, it is impossible for a woman to succeed just by herself! Which woman can have all the resources that Sherly Sandberg has? I still need my mother to help me take care of my kids. My husband and I have already tried all our best, but we are half drowning and half surviving. A woman can’t have more than two kids and a full-time job! Two kids are the maximum for a career woman! That’s it!

Fupan has four kids and owned a company with about 100 employees. Although Fupan was considered a *having-it-all* woman, she was not from a resourceful social class but grew up in the poorest social class “without enough food to eat and clothes to wear” before age 18. However, she has achieved what many Western feminists dreamed of but failed to achieve. As a successful entrepreneur, Fupan directly criticized the problems of feminism:

The self-actualization for a woman is not just about WHAT she has. What does a woman’s self-actualization mean? What kind of life does a woman want to live? It actually includes many aspects, not just a successful career. Yes, a woman’s self-actualization means a woman understands her own value, her self-worth, and her independence, which is like feminism...but it is NOT ENOUGH for a woman. As what a woman wants is not just to show to others “see how successful I am! How independent I am!” A woman needs more than that...A woman needs good family life, needs the support from her big society, and needs acceptance and acknowledgment from many different critical stakeholders...The reality of feminism has been really smashing the faces of feminists. See more and more left-over women...Their situation is actually awkward and embarrassing in society...Yes, she has achieved her financial independence, her self-worth, her freedom, and other tags from outside...But she got those at the cost of what? She lost the acceptance of society from a macro level and even the acceptance of the family on a micro-level.

Fupan pointed out the main problem of feminism, which has been criticized by many feminist and postfeminist researchers after the UN’s 4th Women’s World Conference in 1995. Although humanistic psychologist Maslow spent his whole life studying human’s self-actualization, which is often regarded as success by the public, before he died, he realized that one could not actualize oneself by maximizing self-interests (Maslow & Hoffman, 1996). Many so-called

self-actualized people, with all the things that people desire to have, suffer from depression, emptiness, and drug or alcohol abuse. One's self-actualization has to be achieved by transcending self-interests and giving oneself to altruistically serve some higher goals outside a self-centered world (Maslow & Hoffman, 1996). One's service for something larger than self-interests to pursue the meaning of life has the strongest impact on one's life satisfaction (Seligman, 2003). The affirmative and critical approach of feminist's and women's empowerment approaches have pushed organizations and employers to hire and promote women. However, the tough approaches can worsen a woman's relationships with critical stakeholders even with her family members in a patriarchal society, which can disconnect a woman from the support from her family and others and make her situation more hostile and helpless (Mosedale, 2005; Unterhalter, 2007). Without others' acceptance and support, a woman's self-defined self-identity based on her self-centered self-awareness is not authentic (Eagly, 2005).

Although feminists have admitted the inability to achieve the goal of gender equality in a VUCA world (Calás & Smircich, 2006), Chinese *Yinyang* dynamism illustrates how to achieve gender balance and may be the solution to the problem of two opposite sides. *Yin* needs *Yang*'s dynamic power to initiate change. *Yang* needs the stable *Yin* to maintain balance with rapid change.

Relationship Management and Relational Leadership

In addition to individualistic diligence, Fupan highlighted the importance of relationship management for a woman's success:

It is impossible for a woman to finish her doctoral journey without the help of others. You must understand how to manage your relationships with others. This is very important. As a woman, if you want to study for your master's degree and Ph.D. and be a career woman, you can't do all these by yourself. A woman only has 24 hours a day, the same as men. However, you have to study, work, take care of a family, and take care of children. For each thing, society has stricter evaluation standards for a woman than for a man. Society is less tolerated for women than for men. Therefore, a woman must build supportive relationships with others, build supportive friendships, build supportive family relationships...all kinds of supportive relationships...the degree of stability, strength, and effectiveness of a woman's supportive relationships determines a woman's success.

It is well known that women are expected to perform more child-rearing duties than men so women have less energy to take on management roles, and fewer opportunities to develop leadership self-efficacy, which constrains women from developing their leadership potential and identities (Isaac et al., 2012; McCormick, Tanguma, & López-Forment, 2002). However, Fupan further pointed out that women have to perform more in almost every aspect at home, work, and in society with a stricter evaluation standard than men if she just wants to get what a man has. Therefore, building and maintaining supportive relationships are vitally important for a woman's success instead of criticizing and challenging the unfair treatment to ruin women's relationships with her family and people around her. Unlike men's self-development, which emphasizes independence by separating them from others' support, women's self-identity,

world views, and self-functions, which have been shaped and reshaped since infancy, focus on developing relationships with others (Andersen & Chen, 2002; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Surrey, 1991). Thus, the goal of women's self-development is to achieve "reciprocal relationality" with others (Qin & Lakes, 2006, p.179).

Although Fupan used the term *relationship management* in the interview, she also demonstrated strong *relational leadership*. Instead of being a passive relationship manager to maintain old relationships, Fupan's emphasis on active relationship-building made her a relational leader, who built and developed new and strong relationships to support sustainable self-growth. Instead of emphasizing the achievement of a fixed and clear objective by managing relationships, relational leaders' objectives, views of realities, meaning-making, behaviors, interactions with others, motivations, and identities are fluid social constructions with an emphasis on "relating and relatedness" (Dachler, 1992, p. 171). Instead of emphasizing her superior woman leader identity or my inferior Ph.D. student identity like the *Yang* self-leaders did, after hearing about my HRD major and research, Fupan sent her company information to seek my advice for her company's organizational development. After I provided some advice, she started to call me "Teacher Liu." At the end of the day, leadership is not about an individual hero but about collective sense-making within a relational group (Dachler, 1992). Unlike *Yang* self-leaders, who actively network with

resourceful people to manipulate others for their own short-term SMART goals on the material levels in Maslow's *hierarchy of needs*, *Yinyang* self-leaders develop long-term reciprocal relationships for both material and psychological needs of a human.

Building Long-term Relationships and Trust with Others Through Learning

Instead of criticizing and suffering from racial discrimination, Fupan has developed and maintained great relationships with many white American experts:

Since we already decided to return to China to open our company, when we were in the U.S., we spent all our time and money on reaching out to build collaboration with American experts, to LEARN from them, to LEARN what resources we could introduce to China, and establish trust with each other. We have maintained good relationships with those American experts for more than one decade.

With a focus on maintaining long-term “good relationships” by “learning from” others and “establish[ing] trust” with each other, Fupan and her husband’s way to build collaboration with others is the Confucian benevolent approach, rather than *Yang* self-leaders’ pragmatic networking and *guanxi*. Although Hall (1976) claimed that people from low-context cultures (e.g., the U.S.) tend to have a wide network of contacts with short-term relationships, many American experts have been collaborating with Fupan for more than a decade.

Bluedorn et al. (1992) claimed that people from different cultures see time, tasks, and relationships differently. In the U.S., people have a monochronic manner towards time and prioritize tasks over relationships and regard a linear

time schedule as the only way to work efficiently and effectively. However, polychronic culture prioritizes relationships over tasks and plans change frequently. People in China have a more polychronic manner towards time, viewing schedules as goals instead of imperatives or deadlines. Although monochronicity is easier to control and coordinate, polychronicity is more productive to build relationships and solve complex problems. With the VUCA world becoming increasingly complex, leaders must be prepared to do multiple tasks with multiple contingency plans simultaneously (Bluedorn et al., 1992). When the *Yang* self-leaders in this study acculturated into U.S. culture, they also have a monochronic perspectives towards time and focus on tasks more than relationships, such as using screaming communication to push advisees to work, thus damaging their relationships with almost all others.

Treating Others The Way You Like To Be Treated

Confucius said: “Don’t treat others the way you don’t like to be treated” (CTP, 2016, *Analects*, Yanyuan:2). Although all of the participants led themselves to complete their doctoral journeys, when they interacted with others, the *Yang* self-leaders and *Yinyang* self-leaders demonstrated very different ways to communicate with others with very different results. The *Yang* self-leaders regarded leadership as “manag[ing] others,” “mak[ing] others listen to you,” and “mak[ing] others submit to you” with the assumption that others are “awkward,” “little things,” or even “cockroaches.” In contrast, although the *Yinyang* self-

leaders also had strong self-control and self-discipline, they did not just want to always control others and situations but understood that they should first respect and follow others and situations in a natural way. *Yinyang* self-leaders regard leadership as “respect for others,” “humility,” and “life-long learning.” Lora discussed why she felt no discrimination or conflict experiences with others:

I get along with others harmoniously. How you treat others would lead to how others mirror you and treat you. I am quite easygoing with others. I follow the change of situations and am content with any situation (*sui yu er an*). I compete with nobody.

Following the Authentic Self to Build Natural Relationships Without Utilitarian

Purpose

Unlike the *Yang* self-leaders who had no friends and fight with others, starting with roommates, Luyinbi had many friends, starting with her roommates. When I asked her the secret to having many friends in 2020 and 2022, she described how she made friends:

I made friends from my heart, not because of some purpose that I want to use that person. I make a friend because, in my heart, I really want to make a friend with that person. I like that person. I made friends naturally with people around me, such as my roommates and classmates. Gradually, the circle of my friends grows little by little from people around me to people who are not around me. We hung out together, did things together, and helped each other. Naturally, we maintained the friendship. If later, our distance became too far, we didn't contact each other often, then the relationship would naturally be disconnected. I don't have too much time and energy to maintain special relationships purposefully.

Talking about the most difficult first semester in the U.S., unlike *Yang* self-leaders, who just talked about learning “new knowledge,” Luyinbi described how she made friends in a natural way:

It was the transition time. I had no time to think too much. I just studied and made friends. I made all kinds of new friends. My friends were international students. Local American business students in my class were normally professionals, who were sent by their companies to have training. Therefore, my relationship with my classmates was based on our studies and we were just classmates. My friends were international students, who had no working experience like me.

Li (2013) identified three types of friendship networks for international students with different functions. The primacy circle of friends is from co-nationals, who provide the strongest academic, emotional, and companion support. The second and third types of friends are host nationals, and international students from other countries who share recreational and other resources. Although friendship may transcend cultural differences, most Chinese doctoral students felt that they could only talk profoundly with their Chinese peers with a similar culture and needs (Kuttig, 2012). Most participants admitted that they could never acculturate into the U.S. culture. Although Summer married an American man and is now an American citizen and Zixi’s husband has American citizenship and she has a green card, they both realized how difficult it was to acculturate: “No, it is impossible to fully integrate into American culture. My good friends are all Chinese.”

Yinyang self-leaders greatly value friendship and clearly understand the differences between friends, classmates, and colleagues. They do not pretend that they have many friends by mixing friends with other contacts. Luyinbi said:

I don't mix my friends with my collaborators. For my collaborators, although I may work with them for a long time, I would not discuss my life problems with them, but just focus on our collaboration. I would not use my life problems to bother my collaborators. My friends are people with whom I also share non-work topics.

Participant A also reported that she had no American friends:

I don't have American friends. I have American colleagues, who can chat with me. However, I could not count them as my friends. The celebrities they like to talk about, the movies they like to watch, I have no ideas. Communication with American people like a friend is very hard. I can't talk about deep topics with American colleagues.

In contrast, the narcissistic *Yang* self-leaders with a primary focus on the self had no friends and did not bother to tell the differences between friends, classmates, colleagues, and other contacts. They just used "friend" to refer to any contact, even someone they just met online. After realizing that Participant ICWDSUS* had moved six times with many roommate dramas in her first doctoral year, I asked her how she found her apartments. She said casually: "The first apartment was introduced by some Chinese friends. Oh, actually, they were not my friends, just some Chinese people I just knew online."

Unlike the *Yang* self-leaders, who hide their limitations and boast about their awesomeness, *Yinyang* self-leaders do not talk about their own awesomeness, but honestly confront their limitations. When I asked Luyinbi how

she coped with her English barrier, she admitted that she could never overcome

English barriers:

I can't overcome the English barrier. I give up! Haha ...I knew with the accumulation of time, my English would naturally improve if I listened to English more, and spoke in English more. However, later, I found I already knew the English words for my work, but in non-work environments, like talking about the non-work topics in English with my colleagues, I gave up. It is not a language problem, but a cultural problem. They (Americans) are interested in their topics, such as football, all kinds of games. I didn't have this kind of sports culture in China when I grew up. So if you want to integrate into their culture, you must spend time understanding those in which you are not interested. I don't want to spend time understanding things I don't like...I have enough things I like and I have no time to do, so I give up. When my colleagues talk about sports, if I understand, I listen, if I don't understand, I just sit there. I just watch English news from time to time. Based on my work and field, I expand my English knowledge base that I need to learn gradually.

After carefully examining what Luyinbi said, I realized that she actually had no problem teaching in English although she kept talking about her English barriers. She did not boast that her English had no problems but authentically admitted that there were many things she did not know and could never know. Although she said "I give up," her "giving-up" was not passively quitting her dream with the fear of difficult challenges for her progress, but her courageous choice to be her authentic self instead of forcing herself to become "a half American" by adopting American secular culture. Luyinbi was not afraid that others might laugh at her as "dumb" when she did not understand social English conversations by "just sit(ing) there."

In contrast, in order to give up the authentic self to become “a half American” by understanding American celebrities, Participant ICWDSUS@ seriously studied American dramas and subscribed to American magazines as her “textbooks” to educate herself about American secular culture:

From 2008, I subscribed to the *People and Insider* magazines. So when I had time, I TRULY educated myself about the society, so the jokes Americans made, the slang, the celebrities they talked about... You have to be educated about this country if you want to survive in this society! If you are in hard science, you are really an expert that others want to use you so they would not destroy you. If you are in social science, and you are just a generic person, you must proactively find ways to survive!

Unlike Participant ICWDSUS@’s view, as a “generic person” in social science with strong English barriers and no attempts to integrate into American culture, Luyinbi survived very well in the U.S. as an assistant professor in social science in one of the top 150 universities. Interestingly, with full acknowledgment of the authentic self and no attempt to force themselves to learn the majority’s culture, most participants, who self-identified as “generic” or even “awkward” or “bad students,” had actually received support from people from all cultures. In contrast to Participant ICWDSUS@’s disciplinary discriminative chain, Participant ICWDSUS* was from hard science with “awesome” publications and perfect American accent. She did not see herself as “a generic person” but as an “awesome” woman hard scientist that “others want to use.” After the first semester when Participant ICWDSUS* got used to life in the U.S. with the help of Chinese peers, she stopped her WeChat account and disconnected with the

Chinese social group. Rather than regarding Chinese friends as her primary support system, she regarded her Chinese peers as “a waste of time” for her cultural integration into U.S. culture. Later, she married an American man and changed her Chinese last name to an American last name and became “we” with American people and “they” with Chinese. After her divorce, she changed her American last name from her ex-husband, and gave herself a new fake American last name on her Facebook account. Therefore, by just looking at her Facebook, people would just think she was American. By watching all American dramas, talk shows, and news without any Chinese programs, she may have understood American culture better than most Americans. With a strong American accent, she happily declared that she was “70% integrated into American culture,” and “many Chinese people call [her] ‘half American,’ ha ha ha.”

By using American dramas as the teaching materials to educate herself to be like an American, not only is the verbal language of Participant ICWDSUS@ like an American, but her body language was like copying American actresses from American dramas. She claimed that she was “60% integrated into American culture.” However, being like a 70% or 60% American did not stop Participant ICWDSUS* from having conflicts with almost everyone from all cultures including her American ex-husband. It also did not prevent Participant ICWDSUS@ from immediately being disliked by white American undergraduates when she tried to teach for the first time.

Instead of artificially making oneself become “half American” by giving up the authentic self, Participant ICWDSUS? and Luyinbi both claimed that they became a better human being during the doctoral journey. Participant ICWDSUS? said:

I experienced lots of failure during my life and my doctoral journey. When I was doing my Ph.D., I planned something, but it didn't happen as I planned. Life is not always as you have planned. HOWEVER, as long as you tried your best, as long as you worked really hard towards your goal, you would achieve something. Your achievement may not be the achievement that you have expected. However, you will achieve many good things...Even now, my hostile and discriminative environment made me learn many things, which made me become a better HUMAN BEING.

Not Artificial but Natural and Respectful Communication

Following the natural way and authentic self may make someone seem unintelligent, *Yinyang* self-leaders authentically developed themselves along with the development of others to become better human beings. After taking on a fake American last name or studying how to be the *Insider* of American culture, the *Yang* self-leaders may have looked smart and confident in front of others. However, with inner insecurity, their real lives were not an ideal but a tribal world with endless drama and conflicts.

Interestingly, although the *Yang* self-leaders artificially forced themselves to become “half American,” it did not mean that they respected or liked American culture and people. They just want to have the power and benefits in society by accepting what they believed that they “have to accept” in society. However, they

harshly criticized American students as “spoiled brats,” and laughed at the failure of the “white American boy” and “useless American advisors,” who kindly helped them at first, just like how they did to all other people regardless of the nationality or gender. In contrast, although the *Yinyang* self-leaders refused to artificially force themselves to learn American culture and make American friends for the purpose of becoming like an American, they respected American people and American culture in the same way they respected all other people regardless of the nationality or gender. The *Yinyang* self-leaders used a respectful Chinese pronoun “*ren jia (they/them)*” to refer to American people to apologize for not being able to make American friends due to their lack of knowledge about American culture. Compared to the neutral pronoun “*tamen (they/them)*” in Chinese language with the connotation of equal positions of the speaker and others, they used “*ren jia (they/them)*,” a respectful pronoun indicating the lower position of the speaker and the higher position of others. Putting the self in a lower position, Luyinbi honestly admitted her limitations in the U.S.:

I don't have many American friends. I don't understand American culture. Therefore, it is hard for me to develop deep relationships with them (*renjia*). When I worked with my American colleagues, I told them (*renjia*) that I was so sorry that my English was bad. Then they (*renjia*) immediately said: “no problem. Your English is good.” And they (*renjia*) immediately encouraged me.

Apologizing for Others

Unlike the *Yang* self-leaders, who never apologized for but often criticized others, the *Yinyang* self-leaders never criticized others but often apologized for

others, and criticized themselves. The *Yinyang* self-leaders even apologized for any potential hurt they were causing me while they were trying their best to help me. When I asked Summer if her woman identity challenged her in her work, life, and study, she thought for a while and said firmly:

NO! I have never felt any challenges as a woman in my work, life, or study. All is pleasant for me to be a woman. I am so sorry that I know you want to collect gender discriminative experience for your women's research, but I have no discrimination experience to provide for you.

During the interview, some participants paused the interview because of their other work, but the *Yang* and *Yinyang* participants paused the interview differently. When my interview time was about to come to an end, Summer apologized: "Jackie, sorry. I was cooking something in the oven. If you can finish the interview in five mins, I can wait for you, but if you need more time, I can come back." Since I still had one important question I wanted to ask, Summer saw that I was hesitant to answer her and immediately said: "I will come back."

In contrast, during my Zoom interview with Participant ICWDSUS*, she suddenly stopped without telling me anything. She was looking at her computer screen without answering my questions or saying a word. I was confused. After a while, she started to tell me without any apology: "I saw my student's email. I was answering his email."

Not Separating and Criticizing, But Including and Respecting Different Individuals as One Family

One unique leadership style of Chinese women leaders is to treat their followers as family members with emotions (Chao, 2011). During the interviews, the *Yang* self-leaders used “I” to differentiate the self from “stupid others.” The *Yinyang* self-leaders used “we” to include everyone and me. When referring to more senior Chinese peers during the doctoral journey, the *Yinyang* self-leaders called them “older sisters” and “older brothers.” In contrast, although the *Yang* self-leaders liked to boast about their high ethics along with their high IQ and EQ, such as “I don’t categorize people by their nationality and color”, they used “an American girl,” “a white guy,” “an African girl,” “an Eastern European woman,” “my STEM circle,” “my academia circle,” and “low-level people” to differentiate and put down their roommates, classmates, students, colleagues, peers, and advisors before criticizing them. However, the *Yinyang* self-leaders just called others “classmates” or “roommates” without titles indicating individual differences in color and nationality. It was difficult for me to find out the nationality and color of different individuals in the *Yinyang* self-leaders’ interviews, and I realized *they* did not like to differentiate the individual differences of others. Although Participant ICWDSUS@ “hated teaching white American brats,” when I asked Summer if it is hard to teach American students, Summer used a serious tone to help me see the commonality of students as students rather than their skin color or nationality:

Students are students. I see more commonalities for them as students rather than their nationalities. I teach undergraduate students and master's students. Undergraduate students just start to live independently, so you need to spend more time helping them transition into college life. Graduate students already know how to study, so you don't need to teach them how to study.

After Mary returned to China, I asked her about the differences between working in China and the U.S. Although Mary loved her work in the U.S., she said: "Work is work. Regardless of where I am, I work to help others."

In contrast, the narcissistic *Yang* self-leader equally regards everyone except herself as problematic. Participant ICWDSUS* said: "Men are men. It is not necessarily to be white American man, but many men are jealous of their wives like my ex."

Unlike the *Yang* self-leaders' conflicts with others and "psychological games" to win others, Lora was surprised to hear Ph.D. students discriminated and had conflicts with each other:

Why did Ph.D. students have conflicts with each other? We are all from other countries. Everyone has a difficult life. Why would students give others a difficult time? I have no conflicts with anyone. My boss is American, and my team members are from China, India, Pakistan, America, and so on. I really like the environment of my work. Everyone is united as a small family. We often go out to eat together. When I just came to my team, they immediately included me as a family member, and I also immediately integrated into this small family.

Being Tough on Herself but Soft on Others

Unlike the *Yang* self-leaders, who used a strict standard to criticize others but used an easy standard to promote themselves by attributing all their failure to

others, the *Yinyang* self-leaders used a strict standard for themselves and criticized themselves for the “bad” performance but they appreciated others. Participant A, who is unsatisfied with her English, teaching, and research, acknowledged everyone except herself. Instead of having a strict evaluation of others, she expressed a strict self-evaluation of herself:

I teach four classes per week, so I have little time to do research. The university does not require us to do much research. It is like as long as you publish two papers within five years, it would be ok. However, ha ha.. I could not do that. I still want to push myself to do more research. I want people to criticize me so I can improve.

Anna also said that the women leaders she respected, tended to be strict on themselves were nice to others:

I think women’s leadership and men’s leadership are a little bit different. Although women leaders are often decisive, they are still gentle, compared to men. Women leaders are both tough and soft. Ha ha.. Maybe it sounds contradictory. The great woman leaders I have met are very demanding for themselves, but they really care about every individual that they lead.

People could interpret Anna’s statement that “women leaders are both tough and soft” in a static way highlighting women’s long-lasting identity dilemma between behaving either feminine or masculine (Bono et al., 2016; Buszek, 1999; Williams et al., 2014; Wilson, 2007). However, people could interpret Anna’s observation about a woman leader’s being both “tough and soft” in a *Yinyang* dynamic way. If so, the long-lasting identity dilemma is probably solved. By treating others soft and being tough on oneself, it serves others’ development and wins the respect and support from others. Although Western

utopians have proposed that the ideal is to treat the self and others equally to achieve social equity, the Marxist reality is radical class struggles between the privileged and the oppressed class or the “mutual assured destruction” (Rockmore, 2018; Young, 1999, para.1). Unfortunately, the static and equilibratory state without motion in mechanics for machines is called death in biology for organic life. The *Yinyang* dynamism shows dynamic equality with the inclusion and interaction of the opposing forces for the growth of all lives. Instead of class struggles or *mutual assured destruction*, mutual assured growth is a better way.

Refusing to Acknowledge Her Help for Others

In terms of working with weak team members, the *Yang* self-leaders either refused to help others or praised themselves as “a very kind person,” and highlighted others’ being “grateful TOWARDS” them, such as writing thank-you emails to them. However, the *Yinyang* self-leaders often helped others, but refused to acknowledge that they helped others, which may indicate that others are weak and owe them a debt. Fupan said:

You cannot criticize others (*renjia*), telling others (*renjia*): “You did this wrong, did that wrong.” You can only say: “Shall we do like this? Or I could be responsible for this part, or I can be responsible for that” or use other ways to negotiate with others to achieve the goal of getting an A. Anyway, you can’t tell others (*renjia*) that s/he (*renjia*) took advantage of you. You can’t say to others (*renjia*) “you took a free ride of me.” It is YOUR GOAL as you want to get an A, not necessarily to be others’ (*renjia*) goal. Since you have a goal of getting an A for group work, you must be responsible for that group work, and work hard to achieve that

goal. And when you work hard towards the realization of the goal, during the whole process, you can't make others (*renjia*) lose their face. That was why I had no conflicts with all my classmates, colleagues, and professors and everyone liked me during my seven-year stay in the U.S.

Fupan used the respectful pronoun "*renjia*" to refer to the weak team member and "we" to include the weak member and her together as one team. In contrast, the *Yang* self-leaders used "we" to refer to the self and the strong majority and excluded the weak team member from "we." For white people or the top class, whom *Yang* self-leaders admired, the *Yang* self-leaders used the respectful pronoun "*renjia*." By including the weak members with respect, Fupan formed a large and united team to achieve a group goal. By excluding the weak members and admiring the top class in the social hierarchy, the *Yang* self-leaders separated a large group into small parts, and ended up with no friends.

Admittedly, Fupan, as a Chinese international student with English barriers in a U.S. university, could be discriminated against by her team members in the U.S. However, she did not interpret other team members' lack of cooperation as discrimination against her like the *Yang* self-leaders did. Most importantly, she did not discriminate against other weak team members but included the weak ones as a part of the whole team by offering her help without hurting others' self-esteem like the *Yang* self-leaders did.

Appreciating Others' Help (Including Others' Mistreatment)

Yang self-leaders appreciated nobody but themselves and their families. However, *Yang* self-leaders all emphasized that others' appreciation towards them by writing Thank-you letters to appreciate their help. In contrast, the *Yinyang* self-leaders talked little about their help for others, but highly appreciated others' help for them. When I asked Mary what her biggest achievement was during her doctoral journey, to my surprise, instead of being proud of herself, Mary immediately appreciated her advisor even more than ten years after graduating: "My biggest achievement was to have my advisor. I am very grateful for my advisor, who supported me a lot!"

Instead of just praising the "awesomeness" of the self and criticizing the "awkwardness" of all others, the *Yinyang* self-leaders appreciated everyone with much self-criticism and no praise of themselves. Participant ICWDSUS& must have been very super capable given that it only took her four years to earn a master's, a Ph.D. degree, find a job, start a family, become an associate professor and American citizen at the age of 28. However, unlike the *Yang* self-leaders, who had no friends or said that others' "help is not critical," Participant ICWDSUS& never mentioned any of her achievements, but highly appreciated her friends' help even when her friends' help was just to be there:

My friends helped me A LOT!! A LOT!! You know. Just to have someone to talk to, someone who has been through the same thing as you, that meant almost everything. It was not like helping you solve particular problems. It was more like just talking and hanging out...Just friendship, just you are there, I am there...

Even though Participant ICWDSUS? was abused harshly by her department, she appreciated the harsh lessons she learned, which pushed her to find a better job and become a better self. She said: “I also learned from my third job. Those challenges made me develop. I became a thought leader.”

Preparing for Both the Kind and Evil Sides of Humanity with Boundaries

Although most women are relational and like to help others and seek help from others (Andersen & Chen, 2002; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Surrey, 1991), I do not suggest that a marginalized woman should shift from using a totally individualistic self-development approach to a totally collective self-development approach with others. Some “social barriers” and self-protection are vitally important for a woman’s safety. Without knowing how to protect herself first and to what degree a woman can trust others, a woman cannot quickly help others or receive help from people she barely knows.

After finding six apartments and many unknown roommates online through unknown sources during the first year in the U.S., Participant ICWDSUS* in 2021 still told me “That was fine” with a calm tone despite her numerous roommate dramas. With a total focus on the scores of her exams, she did not know how lucky she was. In 2017, Yingying Zhang, a 26-year-old Chinese woman visiting scholar with outstanding academic performance from the best Chinese universities just started her biological lab studies and an exciting

new career at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). With all the self-confidence and busy study schedules, Yingying Zhang ran to sign the lease of her new apartment alone but hastily went into Christensen's car. Christensen was a Ph.D. student at the UIUC (Legarte & Sayal, 2022). Sadly, he kidnapped, raped, and killed Yingying Zhang. Hastily and confidently exploring a new and uncertain world alone as a young foreign woman can be dangerous. Women need to learn how to take preventative actions to prevent tragedies from happening in advance instead of only seeking punitive legal actions after a tragedy (Michaels-Igbokwe et al., 2016). When I asked Lily to give advice to new ICWDSUS, she said: "For Chinese women international students, one thing is safety. You can't make friends with anyone you meet, even though some people seem to be very earnest at the beginning." Participant JJ also mentioned that the coping strategy to avoid bad people is not to be closed but to be open to more people and be more selective to choose the good ones and avoid the bad ones. She said:

Statistically, if you only meet a few people, the chance you meet bad people would be high. However, if you expand your circles, the more people you meet, the more choices you have. You can avoid people you dislike and approach people you like, and you can find a few friends among many people. I have several social groups, like bible group, tennis club, my colleagues, and other Ph.D. students.

Although the *Yinyang* self-leaders liked to help others, they had a clear understanding of the evil or disappointing side of humanity, and let others know

their boundaries with respect for others. Although Fupan had no experience with discrimination, she said with a smile:

I clearly understand that it was not just because I didn't experience discrimination, it means that there was no discrimination in the U.S. Since my interactions with other students and professors in the U.S. were very superficial, my work and study didn't bother others' interests. Without the involvement of conflicts of interests, you would not easily have conflicts. You would not feel the not-nice part of humanity, the dark, evil, and depressing side of humans. When it comes to the allocation of scarce resources, there must be a conflict of interests, discrimination, and racism.

Maslow (1975) showed that a human being has both a self-centered selfish side and a self-transcendent altruistic side as both a devil and an angel. Regardless of cultural differences, a human being's lower-level needs (e.g., physiological and safety levels) are stronger, more imperative, and urgent to be satisfied than higher levels of needs (e.g., love, belonging) (Maslow, 1975). The deprivation of lower needs (e.g., resources safety, employment safety, economic safety) can trigger desperate defenses and emergent reactions. Rather than just focusing on the positive sides of leadership, Burke (2006) claimed that the failure of many leadership theories was the lack of exploring the dark side of leadership. Without examining the dark side of humanity, leadership theories cannot be accurate and effective (Conger, 1990).

In addition to the conflicts of interests, Luyinbi also pointed out that to get too close with others including family members would involve everyone's feelings, which can easily trigger emotional arousal and conflicts without any

rational reasons and solutions. Therefore, although she had many long-lasting friendships and got along with everyone, she understood that she must keep some respectable distance with others to avoid getting too close and too emotional. Therefore, instead of trying hard to lean into American culture, Fupan and Luyibin never wanted to completely integrate into local American life but kept their superficial and respectful relationships with others with proper distance.

Open and Inclusive Communication

Based on Days et al.'s (2014) leader and leadership development, *Yang* self-leadership focuses on participants' *intrapersonal skills* (e.g., individual skills, personality, self-development, and experiences), and *Yinyang* self-leadership focuses on both *intrapersonal* and *interpersonal skills* (e.g., communication, mentoring, appreciation, loyalty). The *Yang* self-leaders separated the "smart" self as an individual superwoman from "stupid" others by praising the awesomeness of themselves and criticizing the awkwardness of others. The *Yinyang* self-leaders included others as a united team by praising the awesomeness of others and criticizing the awkwardness of themselves. For Participant ICWDSUS*, being *open* meant being "open to sex." For Participant JJ, being *open* meant "being open to others." Participant ICWDSUS* used closed and separated communication to be closed and separated from others, and JJ used open and inclusive communication to be open and inclusive with others.

Successful conflict resolution needs active listening and communication (Wood, 2004). Therefore, I observed how participants communicated with me differently during the interviews. Authentic leaders stay true to open and transparent communication in all situations (Men, 2014). In addition to common leadership communication skills (e.g., open and transparent communication, empathy, and active listening), the communication style of *Yinyang* self-leaders is humble and self-demoting, rather than self-promoting. Showing self-confidence by “speaking loudly and confidently” or yelling could be regarded as *Yang* self-leadership communication for self-promotion by putting down or winning over others. In contrast, *Yinyang* self-leadership communication shows humility and includes others by speaking softly and humbly to develop the group to win big together. Therefore, the behaviors, communication styles, and results of *Yang* and *Yinyang* self-leadership styles are quite different. Although relationships are important for a woman’s self-development, the *Yang* self-leaders had conflicts with others. The *Yinyang* participants had no conflicts or gender discrimination and racial discrimination, but they had many collaborators, friends, and supporters.

Mehrabian’s (1981) study found that 55% of communication is through body language (e.g., facial expressions), 38% through tone, and only 7% through actual words. The three accounts of the message need to be congruent with each other for effective and meaningful communication. Therefore, in addition to

participants' verbal communication, I also examined their body language and tone in the interviews.

Active Listening and Active Empathy with a Smile

A basic communication skill is empathic understanding, and the most effective communication skill is listening (Toller, 1999). Listening is not necessarily a passive behavior of listening to the speaker's monologue, but it activates self-reflection, growth, and emotional maturation and can change one's basic values and personal philosophy (Toller, 1999). Active listening has three components: "empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard" (Levitt, 2002, p. 102). The empathy of some participants' active listening was beyond Western psychologists' "empathy." With actionable suggestions for my betterment, I call participants' empathy *active empathy*, because they cared about my overall wellbeing instead of just caring about my interview. They actively encouraged my research and also helped me and anticipated my potential needs, such as my future job search. With their help, I could co-construct my dissertation research with participants along with my career development. After listening to me, Zixi and Participant A both recommended: "Based on what you said, when you look for a job, you need to find a job that has the culture you like."

Although the *Yang* self-leaders put me down, the *Yinyang* self-leaders did not even allow me to put myself down. Although Participant ICWDSUS*, from a STEM field, criticized my social science field as "a waste of time," I admire hard

scientists. I told Lora, who is also a hard scientist: “In my family, everyone is in the STEM field. Only me, I don’t have a smart brain for science.” Lora smiled and disagreed with me: “Yeah...actually later with more study, I’ve found every major is hard. They are just hard in different ways.” Instead of correcting me with immediate criticism, Lora acknowledged my biased view first and stopped me from criticizing myself through her active empathy. Rather than top-down Jesus-like mercy, Lora’s gentle words and guidance gave me the confidence to face hard scientists.

In contrast to the *Yinyang* self-leaders’ active empathy, the *Yang* self-leaders passively answered my interview questions by just reading the interview question list without listening to me. They also angrily criticized or creepily laughed at me. Except for laughing at others, the *Yang* self-leaders rarely smiled. Their interviews focused on telling me how awesome they were and how stupid others were. Without listening to me, many times, their answers were not about my questions. However, the *Yinyang* self-leaders actively invited and listened to my opinions and included me as part of their interviews. Although the *Yinyang* self-leaders were more experienced researchers than me, they also actively listened to and learned from my research, and let me finish my point without interrupting me with their counterarguments. The interviews with the *Yinyang* self-leaders were full of happy laughter. Although most of the *Yinyang* self-leaders had never participated in qualitative interview methods, they acted like

professional interviewers and encouraged me to talk. Although Participant ICWDSUS@ blamed me for not having the “basic skills” of interviewing, to smile at and listen to others without yelling and insulting others is basic respect for others. These skills do not require a graduate level class to learn. With the focus on putting down and winning over others to climb up in the upper echelon, the *Yang* self-leaders did not see the loss of their basic respect for others, which stopped them from getting help from others.

Curiosity and Individualized Attention

Transformational leaders give individual attention to others (Bass et al., 1996). The *Yinyang* self-leaders kept stopping themselves during the interview to actively interact with me to check my situation. They were curious about my feelings and opinions by asking me questions. Participant ICWDSUS* and Lora were from similar STEM fields. Although I have known Participant ICWDSUS* for four years, she did not bother to figure out what my major, HRD means but just calls my major liberal arts, which is “low” compared to her “circle of STEM.” However, Lora directly showed her curiosity to learn from me by humbly admitting her ignorance of qualitative research and actively asking questions with a smile:

What major do you study? My field is hard science. We do data analysis and experiments, but we have never done interviews. We know little about humanity studies. We STEM people are too simple...or maybe because my level is too low, and I haven't reached a high level to understand leadership. I am very curious to learn more about what you wrote about

others' doctoral journeys and how they experienced their self-growth. I wanted to learn from others' ways how they lead themselves.

Actively Changing Herself with My Change

The *Yang* self-leaders asked me to change to suit their needs, but refused to change to meet others' needs. However, with great active listening skills, *Yinyang* self-leaders immediately noticed the change of me and changed themselves accordingly before I even asked. After hearing that Lora had experienced no gender and racial discrimination in her STEM field, which was different from what Participant ICWDSUS* told me, I was surprised. Before I asked a follow-up question, Lora saw my surprised look on Zoom and immediately explained in a humble way: "This may be because I have a big and careless heart. Maybe others discriminated against me, but I did not feel it...ha ha." However, she did not close the discussion as she knew that my research was about women and she tried her best to think of anything that could contribute to my research: "Since your research is about women, I think I should share my view about gender issues in China. Generally speaking, professors in China do not respect highly-educated women as much as professors in the U.S."

Actively Seeking Feedback from Others

With the assumption that the self is awesome, and others are awkward, narcissistic *Yang* self-leaders steal others' ideas quickly but never ask questions to learn from others or seek help from others. With the assumption that others are

awesome, and the self is awkward, the *Yinyang* self-leaders actively and humbly seek feedback from others. Participant JJ recalled:

When I started to do research, even at the first stage of choosing a topic, I had no experience of how to do the project, or any potential problems that I had no idea. Therefore, you have to communicate with more experienced researchers. Although you initiate the whole self-leading process, you still need to seek feedback and help from others, you will encounter difficulties that you need others' help. There are many things you don't know, and you must talk with others.

Actively Listening to Others with Her Own Independent Thinking and

Decisions

Although the *Yang* self-leaders claimed that they had strong confidence and competencies and had no fear of brutally yelling at their subordinates, they actually fearfully and passively followed their advisor's and societal culture. Although the *Yang* self-leaders complained that their advisors confused them during their doctoral journeys, they dared not ask their advisors to clarify their confusion, let alone seek help from their advisors. They just held grudges for years and even more than a decade. In contrast, although the *Yinyang* self-leaders said that they had no confidence and were humble with others, they were not afraid to communicate actively and respectfully seek help from others. However, although the *Yinyang* self-leaders admitted that they needed others' support, they did not passively follow others but led others with respect and independent thinking. After Luyinbi formed her independent research ideas, she actively communicated with her advisor and got support from her advisor:

After being my advisor's research assistant for one year, I started to have my own research ideas and I told my advisor and she supported me. Also, after doing the research assistant job for one year, I felt that I needed teaching experience to help me find a job, so I told my advisor that I wanted to do a teaching assistant, then I became a teaching assistant in my second doctoral year.

Although Luyinbi respected her advisor, who supported Luyinbi greatly, but Luyinbi soon realized the problem of just being a teaching assistant of her advisor and reached out to other faculty members and scholars for help:

Although the teaching assistant position was well-designed to help a Ph.D. student transition from studying to teaching, to be a teaching assistant at my university was not challenging at all as I just followed one independent instructor and the established system. I felt that I needed an independent teaching experience to get a job later, so I contacted other faculties to see if they had any teaching opportunities for me. Then they started to give me some teaching opportunities....My advisor is a full professor. She didn't need publications, so I also reached out to other experienced researchers to collaborate and learn from them. I think it is called continuous learning. Ha ha...

The word "independence" means different things for *Yang* and *Yinyang* self-leaders. I name *Yang* self-leaders' independence "iron but fragile independence," and *Yinyang* self-leaders' independence "gentle but resilient independence." The "iron but fragile independence," which focuses on self-promotion by excluding, putting down, and winning over others, could cause separation, criticism, competition, conflicts with others, and psychological crises with themselves. The "gentle but resilient independence," which is developing the self by including others, brings respect, inclusion, freedom, and mutual development for everyone. Although Participant ICWDSUS* wanted others to

listen to her voice by “speak[ing] loudly and confidently,” she complained that no one listened to her in her STEM field. In contrast, Participant A had no self-confidence to speak up, but everyone in her STEM field listened to her as a professional and supported her career development. A leader’s louder voice does not necessarily make others hear the person better. Instead of caring about if her own voice was heard by others, the *Yinyang* self-leaders care about if others’ voices were heard first.

Open But Not Transparent Communication

Although the *Yinyang* self-leaders use open and inclusive communication to include everyone, their open communication is not fully transparent communication but has boundaries. Although Luyinbi transparently and actively shared her interview skills with me, there were things that she respectfully refused to share with me. Instead of either totally refusing to share with others or totally being open to others, *Yinyang* self-leaders know what to share and what they should never share with others including family members with respect. In terms of why Luyinbi maintained long-term friendship with many different people, she told me how to maintain proper distance with friends: “I would not talk with friends about my stress to bother them but just talk with friends about other things.”

Being Both Open to Others and Following Her Own Heart

Although narcissistic *Yang* self-leaders tend to attack others to promote the “awesome” self, a narcissist is not independent, but follows societal values and relies on others’ praise for decisions (Ehrenberg, 2014; Taylor, 2004).

Although *Yinyang* self-leaders are open to learn from others, they have independent thinking. Participant JJ said:

You must understand who can help you rather than just finding one person to manage you and you become the servant of that person to do whatever the person asks you to do. It should be you, who makes your own life decisions. You must have your own opinion rather than just because others told you. As you always hear all kinds of different voices, this person thinks this way is correct and that person thinks that way is correct, if you don’t have your self-leadership, you will feel you struggle among different voices. You should not give the decision of your choice to others. In your heart, you should be clear why you make this choice.

Active Situational Followership

Hersey and Blanchard (1969) first proposed *situational leadership* to advise leaders to analyze situations and flexibly choose leadership styles based on followers’ different needs rather than a leader’s preferred style. To lead followers with low, moderate, or high competence, confidence, and readiness, leaders should choose directing, coaching, supporting, or delegating leadership styles (Thompson & Vecchio, 2009). However, Ladkin and Patrick (2022) criticized that as the products of the individualistic Western culture, most Western leadership theorizing has assumed that a heroic leader provides the vision for a group of passive and weak followers, who have no vision. However, followers are not necessarily passive and deficient. Huis et al. (2017) suggested that an woman can

serve as her own agent to initiate bottom-up change, starting with herself, then to her family and social network, and ultimately to the whole society. In my study, instead of *situational leadership*, the *Yinyang* self-leaders demonstrated *situational followership* to actively follow and lead their advisors and other scholars to help them in their unknown and changing situations. Unlike the *Yang* self-leaders, who took their own initiatives under all circumstances including unknown situations with traumatic consequences, the *Yinyang* self-leaders actively and respectfully followed others and let their own career development naturally emerge with the involvement of others and their own critical thinking. Instead of highlighting the superiority of a heroic leader among “abject” followers (Ladkin & Patrick, 2022, p.14), Chinese *Yinyang* dynamism shows that the invisible *followership* as a *Yin* force is actually more important than the visible *Yang* side of leadership.

Not Controlling but Following the Situation (shi) to Develop Her Career Naturally

Sun zi (770–476 B.C.E), the writer of the *Art of War* claimed that a wise combatant does not blame individuals for the failure of a past war, but seeks to avoid an unfavorable situational momentum (*shi*) and create a favorable situational momentum (*shi*); a wise combatant knows how to integrate energy in an environment before the war by selecting the right talents, who are aligned with the favorable *shi*, to harness the favorable *shi* to serve one’s purpose (CTP, 2016,

Art of War, Energy:5). Jing and Van de Ven (2014) claimed that a modern change agent should first analyze the changing tendency of the *shi* before acting. If the *shi* is unfavorable, instead of following the personal wish to act hastily, the change agent should purposefully utilize different external forces to create a favorable situational momentum (*zao shi*). Once the situational momentum is not against but for the change agent, the change agent can act and win a tough battle naturally.

Many ICWDSUS' career decisions follow their husbands' career choices (Dickerson, 2016; Gu, 2016). In my study, most married participants followed their husbands' career development. Although Participant ICWDSUS* regretted giving up better career options to be with her ex-husband, most participants did not regret following their husbands' career development and actively adapted to new lives quickly. They allowed their adversities to lead to their career promotion. Zixi was embarrassed to say: "I am so sorry. I know your research is about women's leadership, but my original reason to pursue a Ph.D. was just because I wanted to be with my husband, and he wanted to pursue a Ph.D." Instead of highlighting work-family conflict, Chinese women leaders desire to accommodate their traditional expectations as good wives and mothers to support their husbands and educate their children, while "negotiating for another identity" as a good woman leader (Chao, 2011; Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Ha et al., 2018, p. 9; Liu, 2013; Yang et al., 2000). Unlike the *Yang* self-leaders, who set up and

followed linear SMART goals rigidly as the only reality without changing, the *Yinyang* self-leaders responded to new changes flexibly. Great leaders seek solutions from the head and from the heart (Heifetz et al., 2009). Unlike the *Yang* self-leaders, who would only be forced to change their SMART goals by seeing “hard evidence,” the *Yinyang* self-leaders confronted their authentic concerns in their hearts with solutions for authentic life growth to diligently focus on their goals with persistence and quickly and flexibly respond to new changes. Fupan had never thought of studying abroad and just followed her husband, who went to the U.S. to study. However, once she saw everyone studying in the U.S., she also wanted to study something: “Chinese are very diligent. When I just arrived in the U.S., I was about 28 years old. I was thinking: since I had nothing to do and I saw that all other people were studying, I was telling myself, maybe I could also study something?” She immediately analyzed her challenges and identified English was her barrier to go to the university in the U.S.:

I must solve the language problem, so there were some free English lessons from the local church. I was hanging out with wives from South Korea, Japan, Arab, and Mexico every day, studying English together. I arrived in the U.S. in Jan 2005, and then prepared for TOFEL, GRE...and I applied for and got accepted to graduate school in Fall 2006.

Instead of giving up her career development for her family development, or giving up her family development for her career development, Fupan both followed and led her family and career development with flexibility to solve her work-family conflict as a woman. Although JJ, Participant ICWDSUS*, and Lora

made work their life priority and emphasized their independence and self-leadership, a family life does not necessarily harm one's authentic life-growth. Instead, it is the important foundation for promoting healthy self-development and self-leadership. Unlike the *Yang* self-leaders, who artificially forced things, others, and their own authentic feelings to change for their SMART goals, and were frustrated from "awkward" others and situations, the *Yinyang* self-leaders respectfully followed and led others and situations, and received many unexpected gifts from the situations and others in the end. When I asked Participant A why she did not directly apply for a Ph.D. instead of applying for a second master's degree and then a Ph.D. degree, she smiled:

I have always been a bad student since I was in China. I had never dared to even think that I could pursue a Ph.D. HOW COULD I get a Ph.D.? Must be TOO DIFFICULT for ME to get a Ph.D.... When I studied my second master's degree, all other students were Ph.D. students and my score of each exam of each course was always number one, so the teachers approached me and asked me to apply for a Ph.D. Therefore, during my master's period, I already finished the prelims of my Ph.D., and applied for a Ph.D. as my teacher asked me to do so. When I applied for a job in my Ph.D. field, the employer asked me if I could teach classes in my first master's field. I said ok. So in the end, my Ph.D. gave me the job interview opportunity, but my first master's degree made me have my current job, so whatever I learned was not a waste. Ha ha.

Both Participants A and Participant ICWDSUS* asked the same rhetorical question "HOW COULD I?" However, they meant totally different things. Participant A was shocked when others told her that she could pursue a Ph.D., but she doubted herself: "HOW COULD I?" In contrast, Participant ICWDSUS* was

hurt when she saw others doubt her capability: “They were like HOW COULD I answer the tough questions?”

Unlike Participant ICWDSUS*, who wanted to use her loud and confident voice to get the respect from the group but had many conflicts with others, Participant A followed the situational momentum (*shi*) of her group to progress naturally without daring to think of pursuing a Ph.D. Her group encouraged her to set up a new goal and provided solutions for her new challenges even before her doctoral journey. After getting her second master’s degree, Participant A took another two years to finish her Ph.D. and find a job. Many Chinese leaders understand the trade-off that a woman must make between a leadership role and multiple roles for the family and the self, and have little leadership aspiration and “lukewarm sentiment” about leadership development (Tsang et al., 2011, p. 320). Their “unexpected” or “accidental” promotions were often their bosses’ decisions due to these women’s reputations and virtues and their sense of responsibility and collectivism (Tsang et al., 2011, p. 319). Instead of focusing on the fixed goal and individual competencies, relational leaders emphasize the changing process and the interaction with others (Dachler, 1992).

Based on what Participant A said, when she was in a situation without any career plans with low confidence, she needed the *directing* situational leadership from authorities telling her what to do. For Zixi, when she had been in her Ph.D. program for a while and gained some skills and confidence, she needed high

directive and high supportive *mentoring* or *coaching* leadership behaviors from her advisor: “After I became a Ph.D. candidate, I started to teach. Again, my advisor was a very important mentor for me. I invited her to observe my class and gave me feedback about my teaching.”

When JJ had moderate confidence and competencies about her career choices, she needed *supporting* situational leadership from authorities with high support and participation but low directiveness. JJ said:

In my third year of my undergraduate, I had a teacher, who introduced me to my current field. He became my master’s advisor. I found my field very interesting, so I decided to pursue a Ph.D. ha ha. Although I refused my master’s advisor to pursue a Ph.D. with him in China, he supported me to pursue my Ph.D. in the U.S. and even now, I still collaborate with him. Each time when I returned to China, I met him for a meal and discussed with him some collaboration. My career path is very smooth, no big incidents like waterloo.

When Lora was about to get a job at the end of her doctoral program, she had high confidence and competencies about her career. She needed the *delegating* situational leadership from authorities with the low directive and low supportive behaviors. Her supervisor’s support was just to say the important “Yes.” Lora talked about how she found her postdoc job:

I didn’t look for my postdoc job. My postdoc boss is my Ph.D. advisor. After the graduation of the “older brother” who did my current job before finding a faculty position, I just followed the tradition of our team to take this assistant research professor position, and hoped I could find a tenure track position soon. My boss really supports our career development. Once his advisee found a job and wanted to leave, he would just support. Therefore, I had no pressure in terms of looking for a job.

Refusing Others' Discouragement with Respect

Although the *Yinyang* self-leaders gently followed their own and others' situations, they had their own independent thinking and refused to accept everything that others asked them to do respectfully, which is in sharp contrast with the *Yang* self-leaders' angry criticism and obedient acceptance of what they "have to accept." Unlike the *Yang* self-leaders' screaming communication and "psychological games," when Fupan's husband listed the many reasons to stop her from pursuing a Ph.D., she refused to follow her husband's arguments and used her own rationale and understanding. Fupan laughed when she deepened her voice to imitate her husband's tone to predict her failure:

My husband said: "I don't suggest you study a Ph.D...Just look at those milestones of the Ph, D...those difficult exams...you must have many skills, you must be able to cope with those stress etc. You can't finish..." ha ha...Then I said: "I am from the countryside. What difficulty is greater than my countryside life, when I was in my poor village without enough food and clothes. I could barely eat two meals per day. I did not have enough warm clothes to wear either... Which challenge is more difficult than those?...So since I boasted my capability, I must fulfill my promise, and I finished my Ph.D. ha ha.

Fupan also showed that she understood her husband discouraging her from pursuing a Ph.D. at first:

My husband is from northern China. Men from northern China have male chauvinism. It is real...But I felt that the reason why he did not want me to study a Ph.D. at first was because he didn't want me to be too exhausted. Once I decided to take the doctoral journey, he was just trying to think about how to help me and how to support me. For example, taking care of the kids. He delayed one year to graduate to take care of our kids, so I had

the energy to take the class and proceed in my program...The progress of my doctoral studies and my husband's support were inseparable.

Asian women in the U.S. are situated in multiple patriarchal cultures. In America, they cannot avoid the conflict between their self-identities and social identities. Thus, they have to negotiate their self-identities with traditional cultural, gender, and racial biases from multiple patriarchal cultures to reflect the multiple roles they play (Chinn, 2002; Li & Beckett, 2006).

Transforming Others' Discrimination to Realize Her Career Promotion by Her Diligence

Unlike the *Yang* self-leaders, who angrily criticized, weakly accepted, and pragmatically developed and manipulated discrimination, the *Yinyang* self-leaders refused to be affected by discrimination based on their diligence. Instead, they transformed the discrimination to be the promotion for themselves and the whole team. For Anna, the reason for her pursuing a Ph.D. was the discrimination:

After my master's degree, I got a job as a lecturer. At first, I thought as long as I taught well, people would respect me. However, soon I realized as a lecturer, others treated me as a lower level human being, compared to professors with a Ph.D. I could not submit to that AT ALL! I thought I could be a professor too, so IMMEDIATELY, I wanted to change myself. I wanted to study a Ph.D...ha ha...In my past ten years, I always worked and studied at the same time. In my last Ph.D. year, my job developed fast too. There were more lecturers and more students. I started to lead three lecturers since I had more education than other lecturers. My levels were promoted too from a lecturer to a senior lecturer, to in the end a clinical associate professor.

Refusing a Convenient Career Choice

Although most participants' Ph.D. majors were the same or similar to their undergraduate majors for economic, "convenient," "spontaneous," and "efficient" reasons, Luyinbi and Participant A changed their previous majors, and Mary gave up her old tenured track career path, and continued to search for what they really wanted. Luyinbi said: "Business studies (her bachelor's and master's studies) didn't touch my heart when I studied business. I didn't feel that I liked to continue to study business in a business school for my Ph.D. so I chose a different major."

Having Her Critical Thinking Without Angrily Criticizing Others

The *Yang* self-leaders angrily criticized others but followed the social ills with little critical and independent thinking. They had no ethical solutions to social ills that they had criticized, other than their "screaming communication" and "psychological games." In contrast, the *Yinyang* self-leaders had clear critical thinking, but they avoided angrily criticizing others. Even when they discussed their mild criticism of others' wrongdoings, they spoke in a mild and controlled way with smiles and understanding for others. With a controlled manner, *Yinyang* self-leaders did not develop social ills, but controlled the expansion of social ills. Instead of angrily criticizing or crying fearfully like the *Yang* self-leaders, the *Yinyang* self-leaders' faces and tones became serious as they seriously thought of ways to solve the problem. Unlike Participant ICWDSUS@'s angry and threatening tone about her department when she said "They can't afford to destroy me," and Participant ICWDSUS*'s attempt to use

diversity discourse to sue her department for not following her wish, Summer described her complaint with laughter:

The math in the U.S. was too easy for me. My graduate studies in the U.S. were easier than my undergrad studies in China. I was disappointed with the programs...ha ha...I was not challenged...ha ha...I was so bored at first...ha ha .. I became lazy in the U.S. ha ha...My English writing became worse than when I was in China...ha ha.

In terms of racism in the U.S., unlike Participant ICWDSUS@'s crying and yelling as she described her concerns about her children's safety, Summer became serious and analyzed the issue objectively:

I have not experienced any racial discrimination against me as a Chinese. However, I have a kid. I am worried about my kid. As an Asian American kid, if he will experience any racial discrimination later in his life, I don't know now.

Refusing to Internalize a Victim Mentality

Men (2014) claimed that when transparent and effective communication is not prevalent, facts may not be clearly defined or fully understood by people. Then gossip can become an information-sharing channel leading to miscommunication and misjudgment about a situation, which eventually creates a toxic culture. Despite the acknowledgment of the existence of discrimination, Fupan emphasized the need to control of one's inner world:

On the one hand, we may also have a psychological weakness, which is the victim mentality. Like I HEARD from others that white people discriminate against black people, black people discriminate against Asian people, Asian people discriminate against Chinese, this kind of discrimination chain. Or you could have seen other students have that kind of bad experiences, then you may also have that kind of victim mentality.

By thinking others discriminate you could not help you solve problems, you still have to submit your assignments, you still have to work.

Fupan's refusal to internalize the discrimination chain was in sharp contrast with Participant ICWDSUS@ developing her disciplinary discrimination chain. Although the *Yinyang* self-leaders did not criticize anyone like the *Yang* self-leaders and talked gently and respectfully, the *Yinyang* self-leaders did not give any credit to social ills by victimizing themselves first. Cooley's (1902) concept of *the looking-glass self* explained that people receive the self-image from the mirrors that others show the individual from past or present experiences and interactions. However, the mirror-reflected self-image is just a fleeting reflection without the ability to reproduce realities, unless people allow the imagined image to shape their responses and feelings (e.g., shame or pride) to themselves or others (Cooley, 1902). Facing the mirror reflections, their conversations with themselves, which are difficult to discern, play subtle and critical roles in evaluating and internalizing the imagined images as the real self-portraits. By choosing what enters and shapes their minds, everyone creates their own different psychological worlds (Manz, 1983). Descartes claimed that "Cogito ergo sum (I think therefore I am)" (Liu, 2017, p. 139). The core of being a woman is not necessarily to be proved by her angry criticism, screaming communication, sad tears, obedient submission, or winning others, but from her own thinking about herself as a woman and others in her inner world.

Respectful Adaptive Leadership

Heifetz et al. (2009) identified two types of work, technical and adaptive work, and proposed the concept of adaptive leadership. The challenges for technical work are clearly defined with solutions experts know. Therefore, an individual needs to receive an expert's top-down teachings to gain certain skills in technical work, and then use the new skills to execute the solution in an efficient and effective way. However, adaptive work is difficult to identify and understand as no experts know the solution to adaptive challenges (Heifetz et al., 2009). To lead adaptive changes is relational work that needs to mobilize and hold people together to tackle tough challenges. Therefore, with their focus on their individual diligence, the *Yang* self-leaders did not yield to technical challenges (e.g., English) but used their diligence to solve the challenges independently. However, they yielded to social ills. In contrast, with the support of others, the *Yinyang* self-leaders refused to yield to any challenges and actively sought solutions to challenges, even those they did not know how to describe. When I asked Luyinbi how she coped with the new challenges during the transitioning period, instead of the *Yang* self-leaders' approach of "read[ing] some literature on my own" to "find out the solutions" to the "new things," Luyinbi asked me back:

New things? I haven't experienced any new things. During each transitioning period, I have my friends, advisor, or others, who have more experiences, to guide me. In addition to my own experiences and efforts, others' support was SO IMPORTANT! Emotional support, study support, financial support, psychological support, job support, and all kinds of

support! Others' support plays a large amount of role during my transitioning period. For EACH challenge I had, they ALL provided practical and different help. And also, learning, learning IS THE WAY to help you pass through any transition from one stage to another stage. I am always learning.

In contrast to the clear definition and clear solutions to technical challenges, the definition and solutions to adaptive challenges require learning (Heifetz et al, 2009). People must learn before understanding how to solve the challenges. However, learning means very different things for *Yang* and *Yinyang* self-leaders. For the *Yang* self-leaders, learning meant “reading literature,” “educating the self,” and “working hard silently by myself.” For the *Yinyang* self-leaders, learning meant learning from all other people together. By learning from multiple sources, the *Yinyang* self-leaders could avoid or reduce the adaptive challenges even before adaptive challenges really challenged them. However, if people encounter adaptive challenges alone, their individualistic adaptive leadership often involves the loss of all parties, such as their comfort zone, job, or even life (Heifetz et al., 2009). With the belief in their own awesomeness and others' awkwardness, facing invisible *Yin* challenges, all of the *Yang* self-leaders had painful traumatic experiences.

Heifetz et al. (2009) presented a long list with at least 15 identifiable dangerous consequences (e.g., from losing one's time to losing one's life) that lead to adaptive changes due to the complexity of relationships and politics. However, they still encouraged leaders to take the risks to turn up the heat and

challenge the status quo of the organization and others by exceeding their authority and boundaries to transgress others' realm without fear of resistance and conflict with others. The key words in many key Western leadership theories are to challenge, take risks, do things beyond what is required, be charismatic, and be courageous (Bass et al., 1996; DuBrin & Ebrary, 2013). However, Chinese traditional leadership theories emphasize using learning, ethics, and communication (*wen*) to include others with respect and caution to gradually transform (*hua*) situations rather than criticize and force (*wu*) others to change (*hua*) immediately.

Unlike the *Yang* self-leaders' traumatic experiences with adaptive and invisible *Yin* challenges, Fupan's experience of coping with adaptive challenges by herself became her happiest memory and shaped her new self:

When you had no way to solve the problem and reached your limit, it was the moment for you to break your old self. I had my first child on April fool's day in 2006 and the opening ceremony of my university was in the middle of August in 2006. I had no one to help me take care of the child. She was only more than four months old. As Chinese, we are shy. We are easily embarrassed. We care about our faces. So, I had to break my shyness. I just held my baby to attend my formal opening ceremony of the university. Even the city mayor and the president of my university were both there. I was the only student, holding a tiny baby during the whole event. Nobody judged me, and everyone wanted to play with my little baby happily. At that time, I thought I broke many Chinese cultural constraints...ha ha.

Without criticizing and challenging others, the focus of how to include different individuals has made the Chinese women leaders earn support from

others to solve many adaptive changes with little resistance, conflict, or risk (Ha et al., 2018). Therefore, I added “respectful” in front of “adaptive leadership” to differentiate Chinese “respectful adaptive leadership” from Western aggressive adaptive leadership. The *Yinyang* self-leaders in my study used “respectful adaptive leadership” to earn support from others to smoothly go through their doctoral journeys without conflicts from others.

Adapting Rather Than Changing Societal Culture

Unlike Western feminist studies that encourage women to confidently criticize and change the unfair societal culture, the woman entrepreneur Fupan and feminist researcher Participant ICWDSUS\$ disagreed that an individual woman should try to change societal culture. They did not attempt to change others but wanted to adapt to the culture to achieve their goals by changing themselves. Fupan said:

In the same big environment with others, I, as an individual, never expected to, or even attempt to change a big cultural environment with deep societal and historical backgrounds. Don't try to change others. What you can change is yourself. The area that you can make a change through your own efforts is yourself. You must be able to adapt to the big environment first. After you can survive in the big environment, within the areas that you are able to control, through your hard work, you can produce a very good performance and products for others.

When I asked Participant ICWDSUS\$ how she combated the unfair suppression from the patriarchal culture, she replied: “Combat? What do you

mean? As an individual woman, you can't fight the institutional and structural inequity. I just try to adapt to it.”

Participant ICWDSUS\$’s questions made me realize that the feminist discourse of “combat” or “fight” in a patriarchal culture could be intended to emancipate oppressed women, but it could also have a tragic ending for women with regret for their past in real life, like *Zijun*. Lao Zi opposed artificial interventions to change, which may have made the situation worse, but she proposed *zi hua*, self-transforming. *Zi hua* allowed everything to transform in a natural way from the inner self rather than external pressure (CTP, 2016, Dao De Jing: 37).

Using Her Respect and Diligence to Adapt to A New Culture

For the *Yang* and *Yinyang* self-leaders, to adapt to a new culture meant very different things. For the *Yang* self-leaders, to adapt to a new culture meant unconditionally following the majority’s ways including social ills. Consequently, the *Yang* self-leaders developed more challenges for themselves and others. For the *Yinyang* self-leaders, to adapt to a new culture meant unconditionally respecting others and using their respect and diligence to transform the social ills to be promotions for everyone. Consequently, the *Yinyang* self-leaders adapted to a new culture with more opportunities for themselves. For Participant ICWDSUS*, to adapt to a new culture meant to speak loudly to force others to hear her loud voice: “I need to be more open-minded in order to adapt to the

culture. I need to be bolder, louder, speak my own mind, let others hear my opinions in order to adapt to society.” However, her loud voice did not make others listen to her, but, instead, led to conflicts with almost everyone in her life.

Fupan used her diligent work and respect for others to adapt to the new culture and earned the support of everyone including unfriendly people:

I understand the existence of discrimination in the U.S...many types of discrimination in the U.S. or anywhere...However, I have never experienced any discrimination. Everyone treated me well. I remember there was a tough, white, old guy in my department. He was very strict. Everyone was afraid of him. Everyone said he was horrible. Even though all my department agreed that he was a horrible person, I thought since his class was a mandatory class in our program, there must be a reason why students should learn that class. Therefore, I should study his class hard. I should respect this professor. I think in any culture, teachers always like hard-working students. The numbers of the pages of my notes in his class were probably the same as the textbook he wrote. ha ha haOnce the professor saw the student’s achievements from HIS teaching, he would think HIS time and energy that he spent on the student was worthwhile, and HIS expectation for the student could be realized by the student. From the progress of the student, the professor would feel HIS teaching and research were great. Although other students complained about the professor so much, he liked me very much. Just because of his class, which was his expertise area, I developed my final dissertation and my current career. He was the professor, who enlightened me about my field, which I am doing now.

With a clear goal and full preparation for U.S. studies, most participants had no culture shock and actually appreciated U.S. culture more than Chinese culture. However, without a clear goal and full preparation for U.S. studies, Luyinbi, A, Fupan, and ICWDSUS+ experienced strong culture shock. However, unlike others’ culture shock, which was mainly related to English barriers,

ICWDSUS+ had culture shock in every aspect of her life, starting on her first day in her apartment:

I did experience severe cultural shock. I think many people experienced cultural shock at first. In China, graduate students live in dorms and eat in the dining hall. When I just went to the U.S., my apartment was empty. I went out to borrow some old cooking utensils. I just put some cooking oil inside and tried to cook something. The pan was on fire and the fire alarm in my room started to make noise for a long time. I had never experienced a fire alarm. I thought “what crime did I make?” My English was bad, and the police would come to arrest me. I put out the fire and cried immediately.

ICWDSUS+ believed that “many people experienced cultural shock” just because her empty apartment gave her severe culture shock. However, the empty apartment gave Luyinbi her happiest memory during her doctoral journey. Unlike the *Yang* self-leaders, who described their roommates as “awkward” or “useless,” Luyinbi called her roommate “older sister” and described her first apartment and her “older sister” happily:

When I just moved to the U.S, the American apartment was empty with nothing inside. The older sister, whom I lived with and was older than me with more life experiences, also came to the U.S. in the same month as me. On the first day, she took me to pick up old furniture, which people had thrown outside, and we immediately put all the furniture in our apartment and our apartment became so full. Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha.

Luyinbin could not help laughing so hard that her whole body moved. Her laughter was so transmissive that I laughed with her too in the Zoom recording. The “older sister” also introduced her classmate’s roommate to Luyinbi, who later became Luyinbi’s husband. When I asked ICWDSUS+ if she had a roommate in

her new apartment like most participants, she said coldly: “My roommate was not there at that time (when her cooking pan was on fire). Even if she was there, she was useless! She could not help! She didn’t know anything and she didn’t do any housework!”

However, later in her interview, I found out that ICWDSUS+’s “useless” roommate was actually not that “useless,” but a Ph.D. student from the same department, who studied the same major, and arrived in the U.S. at the same time as ICWDSUS+. Maybe, if ICWDSUS+ would have respected her “useless” roommate more in her department, her cultural shock, and even her mental illness later and delayed graduation could have been avoided or at least less severe.

Mobilizing Others to Tackle Tough Challenges

Unlike traditional hierarchies between a leader and follower from a top-down and individualistic way, adaptive leadership provides an individual with an identity of a hybrid leader-follower identity to be both a leader and a follower (Heifetz et al., 2009). Therefore, individuals’ leader-follower relationships with others are dynamic and collective. The coexistence of two opposite identities and relationships through a dynamic process is very similar to *Yinyang* dynamism. Although JJ emphasized the self-agency to initiate her own project, she understood that there were many unknown things, and she must learn from others and seek others’ support, especially emotional support. JJ said:

Emotional support from others is really helpful, so you have to be open to others.

My job searching process was from Oct or March and was so painful. I sent many applications. I was worried if I could find a job. During that process, I talked with my parents and friends. They comforted me...The emotional support from your family and friends is very important. What you could do, you have already done, but you would still feel worried and need others' listening and comfort. Self-leading doesn't mean you have to separate yourself from others, always be a stubborn and strong individual there. Talking to others IS the coping strategy to your psychological challenges.

Although all the *Yinyang* self-leaders understood the importance of others' support, the *Yang* self-leaders only understood their own "high IQ and EQ" and others' "uselessness" and "awkwardness." When I asked ICWDSUS+ how she coped with her stress, she said:

The biggest coping strategy for my stress is to think by myself. My biggest strength is that I have a high IQ. And my high EQ shocks everyone! I can analyze everything to make myself clear! If I could not understand one thing, I did online research to see how others go through their doctoral journeys. If others could pass through their journeys, I could too. I checked some psychological tips online about how to release stress, such as putting down, accepting...those tips were helpful for my mental health.

However, her high IQ, EQ, and online mental health tips did not stop her from being diagnosed with a mental illness and delaying her graduation. The father of positive psychology, Seligman (2012), claimed that harmonious relationships with others are critically important for a person's wellbeing in all aspects, especially psychological wellbeing. JJ explained her understanding of the cause of psychological problems:

Many psychological problems for an individual are caused because the person tries to solve all problems by oneself, and refuses to open up to others. This could be from the background of the person. One may always do everything by oneself and hates to seek help from others. This is actually a very important step for one to step out of one's comfort zone to seek help from others. Human nature is to be social.

With the understanding that “human nature is to be social,” most participants had friends as part of their important support system. Narcissistic *Yang* self-leaders had no friends based on the assumption that society is a “brutal” tribe to fight with others to “kill a bloody path” to be the fittest for survival. Instead, they experienced mental illness. When I asked ICWDSUS+ if she had friends in the U.S. who could listen to her, to my surprise, she did not talk about her friends to answer my question but started to talk about her roommate:

I lived with my roommate, who was from the same department and studied the same major as me, for one and a half years. Then I separated from my roommate...Most of my friends are my classmates in my department. Occasionally, I called my friends in China and talked a bit, but very rarely. No, I have few friends in the U.S.

While I was confused about ICWDSUS+'s confusing and self-contradictory reply, I finally understood that she probably had no friends in both China and the U.S. Hellen Keller said “We live by each other and for each other; Together we can do so much; Alone we can do so little” (Lash, 1980, p. 489). Famous Confucian scholar Xun Zi (316 B.C.E.-237 B.C.E.) also claimed that one human cannot even win an ox, but the unity of a human group will become so powerful that they can overcome any crises (CTP, 2016, Xunzi, Wangzhi:19).

Withdrawing Strategically from Her Stress Zone with Active Solutions

Although Heifetz et al. (2009) encouraged leaders to take risks to challenge the status quo and realms of others, the *Book of Changes* seriously criticized the arrogance of a leader who only knows how to advance without knowing how to withdraw with the assumption that one can only live and gain without death and loss (CTP, 2016, *The Book of Changes*, Xiang zhuan, Qian:24). Consequently, an “arrogant dragon would regret” (*Kang long you hui*) (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Xiang Zhuan, Qian:7). Wise leaders know both how to proceed and how to withdraw without sacrificing their morality. Unlike the *Yang* self-leaders, who only knew how to move forward in a linear way with the “iron will” at the cost of “psychological crises” or totally giving up by “dar[ing] not even fathom” to proceed, the *Yinyang* self-leaders understood how to proceed sustainably by pausing to rest or temporarily withdrawing strategically for active reflection and adjustment to new situations. JJ talked about how to deal with psychological stress:

If you feel really bad about one thing and you keep thinking about it, it will only become worse and worse. You must find your way to let you stop and rest for a while to feel a little bit comfortable, then you can think of how to solve your problems better.

Her Active Humility as an “Inauthentic” Authentic Leader and Humble Achiever

Van Tongeren et al. (2019) claimed that the key trait for people is to realize that their own limitations is humility, which enables them to use an other-oriented and interpersonal lens to see themselves and the world. However,

humility does not mean that they lack personal opinions or are unclear people-pleasers. Instead, it means that they listen to and respect others' views (Van Tongeren et al., 2019). In this study, the *Yinyang* self-leaders humbly criticized their own “awkwardness” with their active solutions and willingness to learn from others. Daoist sage Lao Zi said: “One, who knows others, is wise; one, who knows the self, is bright; one, who conquers others, is powerful; one, who conquers the self, is strong” (CTP, 2016, Dao De Jing: 33).

The *Yang* self-leaders wanted to “chase power” (Zhendorfer, 2021, p.232) to be a powerful person to win others, but the *Yinyang* self-leaders wanted to develop themselves to be strong leaders to conquer themselves for sustainable self-growth. The *Yang* self-leaders talked about their awesomeness and laughed at others' “awkwardness.” The *Yinyang* self-leaders had no self-confidence, but displayed active self-criticism with solutions. Teaching at a university with a somewhat high ranking (among the top 600 universities) in the U.S., Participant ICWDSUS* confidently declared that “I am always very confident.” In contrast, teaching at a university with a high ranking (among the top 150 universities) in the U.S., Luyinbi humbly said that “I am always learning.” Luyinbi directly denied her self-confidence:

No, I am not a confident person. I have no confidence. However, I often persuade myself that I am not too bad. ha ha... But I am often in a self-doubt state. Luckily, maybe with my aging, ha ha, I would not be too critical of myself. When I know I am in the lowest time of my life, I would persuade myself that I am ok, I am not too bad.

She smiled shyly when she “proudly” said that she was “not too bad.”

When I asked the participants to define self-leadership, the *Yang* self-leaders immediately laughed at my silly research since “everyone knows” and they showed off their yelling power and “psychological games.” The *Yinyang* self-leaders admitted that they did not know what self-leadership meant.

Participant A’s definition of self-leadership was all about how bad she was: “My self-leadership is bad. I always need others to stimulate me. My self-discipline is bad. However, I would find all kinds of ways to stimulate me. Ha ha ha. Without others’ stimulation, I could not work well (she lowered her head to admit her incapability).” When I told Participant A that she must be too humble, she seriously denied and confirmed how bad she was: “No! I am not humble! I am just bad!” At the end of the interview, I found out that she was actually the “number one” student with all As and high recognition from others.

Authentic humility is not a performance for others, but is even unknown to oneself. Lao Zi called this kind of morality *mysterious morality*: “*Mysterious morality* means that it produces good things but does not claim to possess them; it achieves big but does not think highly of the self; it develops others but does not control them” (CTP, 2016, Dao De Jing: 51).

A simple reading of the participants’ transcripts might make it seem like the *Yinyang* self-leaders are as bad as their self-criticism, and the *Yang* self-

leaders are as awesome as their self-promotion. However, when I examined the data in detail, the reality is the opposite of their self-descriptions. Although Participant ICWDSUS* harshly criticized that the whole graduate education in China was corrupt, she actually did not go to graduate school in China. In contrast, although Mary studied in a Chinese graduate school and Summer taught in a Chinese graduate school, they both denied their “qualification to comment on such a big system of Chinese graduate education.” However, Mary and Summer’s “simple observation” about Chinese graduate school actually contributed great insights to my dissertation.

Although leadership scholars have claimed that authentic leaders hold themselves accountable for their words, actions, and decisions instead of hiding problems and weakness (Men, 2014), my data analysis results showed that none of the participants held themselves accountable for their words and actions. Self-awareness is not neutral, but includes emotions, evaluations, limits, and boundaries (Charmaz, 1991). Although Charmaz (2014) claimed that individuals tend to accept positive and ignore or reject negative reflected images from others, it was only true for the *Yang* self-leaders, who firmly believed in their own awesomeness and the awkwardness of others. With humble self-awareness, the *Yinyang* self-leaders, who authentically believed in their awkwardness and others’ awesomeness, refused to accept positive feedback but tended to learn from negative feedback others gave them.

Although Manz (1983, p.30) claimed that “habitual guilt and self-criticism can impair our motivation and creativity,” the *Yinyang* self-leaders’ habitual self-criticism was active and motivated them to continue growing from their initial awkward state to be better and better. In contrast, although *Yang* self-leaders regarded themselves as “the best,” they did not develop themselves through lifelong learning and developing, but through lifelong suppressing of all “awkward” others including their own awkward beginning, inner fear, and humble root to “kill a bloody path” to be the fittest for survival. Daoist Lao Zi claimed that: “The root of dignity is its humble start, and the root of the lofty is its low foundation” (CTP, 2016, Dao De Jing: 39). Lao Zi further pointed out a disease for people, which might be regarded as an ancient Chinese description of narcissism: “It is best for a person to know that he or she doesn’t know. It is a disease for a person to not know but believe he or she knows. A sage regards this disease as one’s own disease, so a sage has no disease. Only when one recognizes this disease, one can avoid this disease” (CTP, 2016, Dao de jing: 71).

The founder of *individual psychology*, Alfred Adler (1917), also claimed that all individuals have low self-esteem at first. Low self-esteem is the momentum to strive for a better self, called *psychological compensation*. In contrast to the *Yang* self-leaders’ fake confidence outside and real psychological crisis inside, the *Yinyang* self-leaders kept emphasizing their challenges and awkwardness but they had already solved the challenges the *Yang* self-leaders had

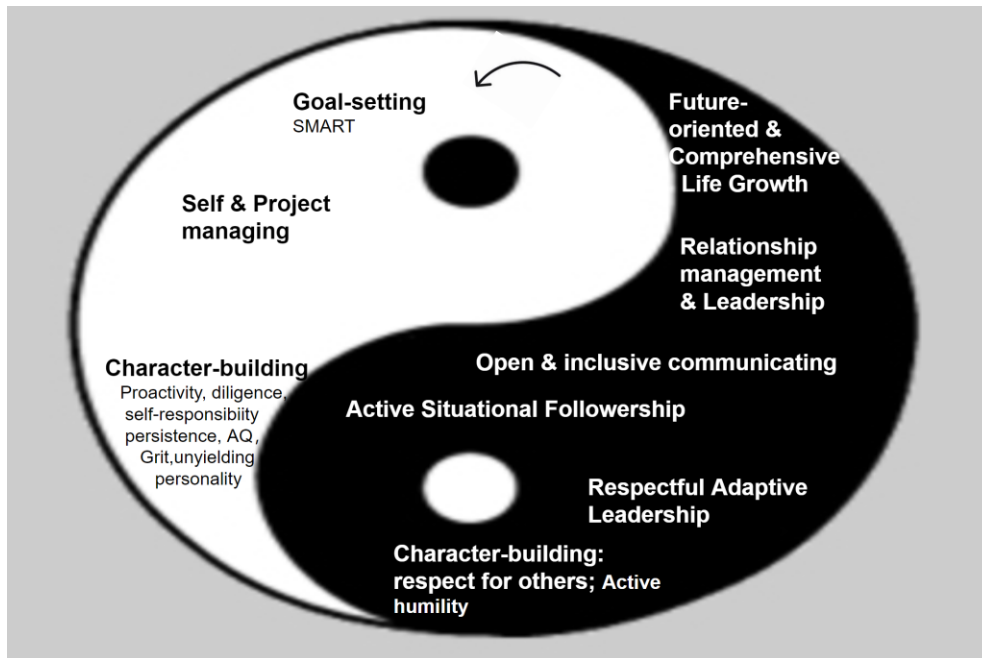
failed to solve and “dare not even to fathom” that they could solve. An insecure actor wants to perform a confident show as a hero to gain others’ applause on a stage. A humble achiever wants to perform tasks well down to gain authentic self-growth. An “inauthentic” authentic self-leader refuses to see how great she is but strives to fix her problems one by one throughout her whole life.

It is an interesting finding from my research. Participants, who did not know, sincerely thought that they knew everything and directly criticized others. Participants, who really knew, sincerely thought and directly admitted that “I don’t know” and wanted to learn from others. Confucius also described his attitude change after listening to others’ words: “At first, my way with people was to hear their words, and believed what they told me. Now, my way is to hear their words and look at their conducts” (CTP, 2016, *Analects*, Gongyechang:10).

Summary of *Yinyang* Self-leadership

Figure 19

Yinyang Self-leadership



Although Manz's (1983) self-leadership and Confucianism both emphasize one's autonomous agency, the power of a human in Confucianism is not just from an individual's self-awareness and capability, but is "derived from the process of connecting to others" (Jabri, 2006, p. 368). Figure 19 illustrates *Yinyang* self-leadership, which is quite different from *Yang* self-leadership and Manz's (1983) self-leadership. In contrast to the linear and fixed *Yang* self-leadership with one's clear SMART goal, *Yinyang* self-leadership is non-linear and dynamic with one's interactions with the situation and others. *Yang* self-leadership follows an external goal and manages the self to compete with others for "finite resources" in a self-centered world (Zhendorfer, 2021, p. 229). *Yinyang* self-leadership follows one's inner interest and situations to include others to

create infinite resources and opportunities in a comprehensive and interrelated world. Although *Yang* self-leaders believe in their own *Yang* self-leadership as the only path to success, *Yinyang* self-leadership shows many opposite realities compared to *Yang* self-leadership. While Sandberg (2013) confidently advised women to *Lean in: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*, her lean-in self-leadership, two years later, she changed her leadership by herself due to her husband's sudden death. She had to make compromises to cope with her adversities, which she described in her second book, *Option B* (Grant & Sandberg, 2017; Sandberg, 2013).

Although individuals are often told to “lean into work, to push harder and achieve more” and most people pursue wealth and fame as their life goals, the results of an 80-year-long Harvard study of adult development showed that “the people who fared the best were the people who leaned into relationships, with family, with friends, with the community” (Waldinger, 2016). Many leadership scholars have claimed that the performance of transformational leadership with a focus on individualized attention toward others is beyond expectations and more effective than transactional leadership with a focus on tasks (Bass et al., 1996). However, *Yinyang* self-leadership includes and values both transformational and transactional leadership with an emphasis on both respect for others and strict self and project management. The focus on the respect for people does not deny but demands that *Yinyang* self-leaders have stronger self and project management

than *Yang* self-leaders. Using future orientation, relational leadership, situational followership, respectful communication, adaptability, and humility through dynamic and interactive processes, *Yinyang* self-leaders balance and mobilize the development of the self and others together and have achieved Western feminists' goal to have it all, although they never plan to have it all and their humility would probably make them deny all their achievements.

It is important to note that both *Yang* and *Yinyang* self-leadership is morally neutral. Without morality to control a self-leader, if *Yinyang* self-leaders are united collectively to “kill a bloody path” for the maximization of the group's benefit, the destructive power of a war between opposing groups would be far more brutal than *Yang* self-leader's *catfight* between two individual *Yang* self-leaders with their own psychological crises.

Part III: *Yin* Self-leadership—A Woman's Benevolent Love for Others

The visible *Yang* self-leadership quickly transitions to visible *Yang* challenges to *Yang* promotion. Less visible *Yinyang* self-leadership gradually transforms less visible *Yinyang* challenges to be visible *Yang* promotion. The visible *Yang* promotion—as the successful results from participants' *Yang* or *Yinyang* self-leadership—creates the ultimate challenge for the souls of participants. Would leaders use their promotion to manipulate and put down others to serve themselves or use their intellectual power to humble themselves to

serve others? When I asked Mary to define self-leadership, she laughed and asked me: “Ha ha...I don’t know. What do you think? Self-leadership is about the direction you choose to take, I think. “

After their doctoral journey and participants’ significant promotions, they chose two opposite directions for their further self-development. Some participants became hungrier social climbers and intimidating women narcissists with sharpened SMART goals to grab more material resources from society and others. In contrast, some participants desired fewer material things and more spiritual things as humbler women servants to serve society and others to include and create more realities and possibilities. Zixi said:

The doctoral journey changed my mentality. Before going to a Ph.D. program, I was a young girl, who liked shopping, going out, and having fun. During my Ph.D. journey, my desire for material things declined. Many women probably still like material things and pursue the material things. They need men to help them achieve their life goals, or raise them. After getting a Ph.D., I don’t expect a man to raise me. I like to talk about non-material rather than material things more. I started to think there is no absolute right or absolute wrong things for many things most of the time. It is not like I must do like this, and I must not do like that.

Although all the participants faced similar challenges from the competitive physical world, no one (e.g., parents, advisors) pushed them to choose *Yang* or *Yin* self-leadership to become tyrants to “kill” others or become servants to serve others. It was participants’ intrinsic motivation to pull them toward *Yang* or *Yin* self-leadership. This section reveals servant woman leaders’ faith in using *Yin* self-leadership to serve others.

Although people's self-concept (e.g., self-awareness, self-confidence, self-image) leads to their behaviors (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), the *Yang* and *Yin* self-leaders had very different self-concepts. The *Yang* self-leaders thought of themselves as "wise" and "awesome" superwomen with "high IQ and EQ," which echoed the first trend of leadership studies in the 20th century, the *Great Man Theory* (Horner, 1997). However, after decades of research, there is no clear answer to what great quality can lead to successful leadership. Thus, the *Great Man Theory* disappeared from leadership discussions in the 21st century. However, *Yin* self-leaders think of themselves as servants. In my study, the *Yang* self-leaders with a focus on winning over others to maximize their self-interests effectively and efficiently developed and derailed themselves. Although at first, *Yin* self-leaders with a focus on serving others seemed to develop slowly by sacrificing themselves for others, after a short period, the *Yin* self-leaders sustainably and comprehensively accelerated and multiplied their self-development with the support of more people. *Yinyang* dynamism shows that the more people want to promote themselves by suppressing others, the more others will demote the leaders. However, the more leaders humble themselves, the more others promote the leaders.

For better or worse, the *Yin* codes reflect participants' unchangeable and context-free values. The *Yin* codes with invisible and static themes point to two opposing themes: one's love for the self or one's love for others. Self-love at the

sacrifice of others' interests leads to a woman narcissist's psychological crises and conflicts with others, challenging her sustainable self-development. Love for others, on the other hand, leads a humble woman servant leader to serve others to continue the development of the self and others together. The coping strategy for *Yin* challenges is *Yin* self-leadership, which can transform one's *Yin* challenges to the fundamental promotion of height psychology. Unlike traditional leadership and visible *Yang* self-leadership, where leaders follow SMART goals to serve the self and material benefits, the goal of the invisible *Yin* self-leadership is to transcend the self to benevolently serve others.

Her Love for Her Family

Confucius said: "A morally superior person focuses on the root of self-development. Once the root is established strong, all practical courses naturally grow up. Are filial piety and respect for older people not the root of benevolent love?" (CTP, 2016, *Analects*, Xue'er: 2).

Instead of the work-life conflict in Western leadership and HRD studies, especially for women leaders' career development (Cho et al., 2015; Garavan et al., 2004), the result of family development is the key evaluation of a leader's self-development, ethics, and leadership in Confucianism regardless of gender. Only when a leader successfully manages her or his own family, can they develop the qualifications to be entrusted to lead national issues (*zhiguo*) (CTP, 2016, Liji, Daxue:1-2). The family development stage is the key development stage for a

leader to learn and transform from loving the self to loving others, and even the world. Lao Zi said that “governing a big country is as delicate as cooking a small fish” (CTP, 2016, Dao De Jing: 60). Without successfully leading one’s own family first, the haste to lead the nation and globe based on imaginative ideals is dangerous and irresponsible.

Some Western researchers have also found that mothers are more productive, efficient, motivated, and resilient with higher emotional intelligence, and can get more help from the workplace and society than childless women (Ellison, 2005; Price, 2006). Today’s job of mothering is not just physical work (e.g., washing diapers and cooking), but is increasingly “cerebral,” forcing mothers to think and grow smarter than if they have no children (Ellison, 2005, p.180). Instead of hurting her career, having children can be a mother’s advantage at work. Wilson (2004) claimed that motherhood is “the best training grounds for leadership” because managing a group of children and managing a group of bureaucrats are the same process (p.9). The skills a mother has learned during the parenting process is “better than business school” (Ellison, 2005, p. 161). Therefore, rather than hindering professional development, family is actually “both a crucial support and a source of inspiration” for leadership development (Wilson, 2004, p. 9). All my participants greatly valued their families.

Her Appreciation for Her Family

Although all participants were Chinese international doctoral students in the U.S. with similar challenges in a foreign land, each participant's doctoral journey was unique. Many participants demonstrated different or even totally opposite self-leadership. However, all participants appreciated the unconditional love and support from their families, especially their parents. Lily said: "OF COURSE, my parents are my biggest support!" Luyinbi also admitted: "Without my parents' financial and childcare support, I could not finish my studies in the U.S." When I praised Jo, a senior woman manager, spent much time and energy on taking care of her children, she immediately shared the credit with her husband, and even her parents-in-law:

Even my husband's parents, they support me. They know that it is my husband who cooks for the family. At least, they have never complained in front of me like "why do you let my son cook? Why don't you learn how to cook?" It is already hard for my in-laws. I should appreciate them!

Food plays a very important role in a family's union. Cheung and Halpern (2010) found that Chinese women leaders show great gratitude for their husbands' cooking for the family as they understand the patriarchal social pressure for husbands not to cook. Anna also quickly noted that her grandparents, especially her grandma's support, was an important addition to her parents' support: "My grandparents were just middle school teachers, but they supported me. My grandma told me if I could not have the scholarship, she would give me all her life savings to let me finish my degree."

Family Support in the Darkest Moment

During the interview, Fupan divided stress into two categories: normal and abnormal stress. In her opinion, everyone has normal stress, so everyone should learn stress management skills to cope with normal stress. However, abnormal stress is beyond an individual's capability, and they need strong support from their family or loved ones. The emotional bond with family members is powerful in times of uncertainty and crisis, especially when they have negative feelings, such as fear (House et al., 1991; Shamir et al., 1993). Therefore, she said:

An individual, especially a woman, must learn relationship management. For abnormal stress, it is very important to manage relationships with others. Except for the relationships with your classmates, professor, and others outside your home, the most important relationship that you must manage well is your relationship with your family and your loved ones. The degree of harmony and support from your family and spouse is super important for you. Family support is the most helpful support for you when you are in your most helpless and hopeless situation, the darkest moment of your life. For example, maybe someone just said one thing that made me feel very mad and the person may not even know. After I told my husband, my husband helped me analyze that maybe the person didn't have a bad intention, or even if the person had a bad intention, I could think like this or do that, and I immediately felt released. Even though he just listened to me silently, it is very helpful.

It is essential for people's physical and mental wellbeing to receive and give genuine and unconditional empathy, compassion, love, and concern to people and to receive it from people, which is called social support (Gilbreath & Montesino, 2006; Avey et al., 2009; Ozbay et al., 2007). Family members are normally the primary source of social and emotional support (Pitt-Catsouphes et

al., 2007). Without the support from a stable family, it is difficult to survive in the increasingly competitive and demanding world with globalized competition, which pushes people to keep striving to improve their effectiveness and efficiency by producing higher quality work at a lower cost (Gilbreath & Montesino, 2006; Van Opstal, 1999).

The Whole Family System

Chinese women leaders' success is highly attributed to strong family support from their parents and spouses, such as childcare (Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Cooke and Xiao, 2021). When I asked Fupan how she could take care of four kids during her doctoral journey, she replied:

Chinese athletes performed well in the Olympics because of the support of the whole national system. The way we raise our kids was the whole family system. It was like assembly line work. Ha ha ha...I was responsible for the pregnancy and giving birth to the children, and my parents were responsible for taking care of the children. During the whole child-care process of the four kids, I appreciate my family's support and companionship.

Fupan's mother-in-law passed away when she and her husband were studying in the U.S. In order not to influence their studies, the mother stopped the whole family in China from telling her children in the U.S. about her health problem. Fupan and her husband only found out about the mother's death when her husband finished his studies and returned to China from the U.S.

Responsibility for Her Big Family

In addition to appreciating her parents' support, Fupan shouldered her responsibilities to take care of her old parents and young children. Fupan said:

Parents of me and my husband were all from the countryside. Not only could they not give us money to study abroad, but we had to give money to them to support them. Now, my children are older now and my parents had little education. Children don't listen to their grandparents anymore. So, in terms of children's education, I must shoulder the responsibility. So, during the day time, I work until eight or nine at night, and then go back home to continue my work at home. ha ha ha...to check children's homework, to check if they practice playing piano, and so on....

Family is the first "school" for children (Gerhardt, 2020). Many Chinese women leaders like taking their children to school, monitoring their children's studies, and celebrating their children's birthdays (Ha et al., 2018). Instead of being an iron woman or struggling between if a woman leader should demonstrate masculinity or femininity, successful Chinese women leaders, such as Fupan in my study, demonstrate strong femininity rather than masculinity.

Many feminist scholars and practitioners assume that if women could have all that men have based on the calculation of gender gaps between men and women, the goal of gender equity would be achieved (Kabeer, 1999; Milward et al., 2015; Hesse-Biber, 2007). However, before stepping down, Indra Nooyi, the former Pepsico CEO, directly claimed that "the idea of *having it all* is an illusion that comes with painful sacrifices and tradeoffs" with damage to health and family (Forbes, 2014, para.1). No one can *have it all* without giving. "The more

time one spends at work, the less time the person can spend with the family”

(Spencer, 2012, para.10).

With four children, a loving husband, old parents, a U.S. Ph.D. degree, and a big company, Fupan is definitely a *having-it-all* woman with all that many feminists have been striving for but have failed to achieve. However, unlike Western feminists, Fupan did not ask women to “*Lean in*” (Sandberg, 2013), nor asked the “economy and society” to “be structured” in a better way to support her as a woman to “*have it all and have it all at the same time*” (Slaughter, 2012, para.114). Fupan has never thought of *having it all* for herself, but thinks about shouldering her responsibilities for her family, group, organization, and society. When Fupan and her husband wanted to open their own company, she said: “We didn’t have big dreams. We were just thinking if we studied and became more professional in the U.S., we could earn more money when we returned to China to raise our family.”

One of Fupan’s 100 employees told others in their online workshop that the reason he chose to work for Fupan and her husband’s company was not because of their U.S. Ph.D. diplomas, which “could be fabricated,” but because of their big family. The employee said: “I was surprised to find out that they have four kids at first. I told myself that they could not be bad bosses if they could take care of four kids.”

Concerns about Not Being Able to be A Filial Daughter

Instead of taking their parents' support for granted, many participants felt guilty that they could not be filial daughters to take care of their parents in China. Anna said: "My concerns now are probably the concerns of many Chinese women in the U.S., which is how to take care of our old parents in China, since we choose to live in the U.S."

Support for Her Husband

In addition to the spousal support from husbands, many participants also supported their husbands although they did not mention their support for their husbands. Fupan, Anna, Mary, and Zixi all gave up their old jobs and career plans to follow and support their husbands' career plans. Luyinbi and Jo also helped their husbands come to the U.S. During the workshop that Fupan and her husband organized, they both emphasized the importance of family development for their lives and shared how they managed their family. Fupan's husband told the online participants that Fupan always advises him to eat healthy food. He also "complained" that Fupan reminds him to set a good example in front of their children. Whenever she saw her husband playing with his phone in bed, she stopped him as she did not want the children to see and copy their father's lazy style. When Fupan's husband "complained" about Fupan's strict family management, she smiled gently at her husband and listened without any comments. Her husband finally said: "Talking about family management, this is

the hero mother, a mother of four kids. She has the right to talk about family management.”

Western scholars have claimed that the stereotyped gender roles for women not only reinforce the idea of being submissive, but also undermine women’s professional competencies and career advancement (Hackett & Betz, 1981; McCormick, Tanguma, & López-Forment, 2002). Therefore, Western scholars have challenged women to transcend the traditional and stereotypical gender roles of the feminine (Hefner et al., 1976; Ossana, Helms, and Leonard, 1992). However, instead of regarding family as an enemy of women’s career development, Chinese women leaders regard family as the way to define their self-identity, primary goals and tasks, and the source of their higher level of psychological wellbeing and job satisfaction (Chao, 2011; Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Ha et al., 2018; Liu, 2013). Although Fupan manages a company and Jo manages a department, Fupan and Jo put their families ahead of their careers, unlike some participants who put career development ahead of family development. Although the interview for this study was about ICWDSUS, Jo spent half of the time talking about her children, who must be the center of her life. With the strong love for their families, Fupan and Jo spend considerable energy managing their families and say that they have no work-life conflict. Instead, the whole family supports their career development. Although some participants mentioned the difficulty in balancing work and life, they all expressed

their love for their family and actively sought effective ways to communicate with their husbands.

Family-like Friend Support

Despite the importance of spousal support, some women do not have a supportive spouse. Participant ICWDSUS\$ admitted that most of her stress was from her husband, so she could not talk with her husband about her long-term stress:

The long-term stress was from my husband, my home, finance, and finding a job. My husband's parents are from rural China and have no money to support us. Many times, my parents have to pay for our bills, but what can I do? I just took a good sleep and had some rest or went to have fun with my friends.

Without effective support from her husband, Participant ICWDSUS\$ built a family-like- friend support system, which helped her face challenges. When I asked Participant ICWDSUS\$ if she could share her stress with her parents, she said:

I rarely tell my parents about my stress. They could not help my stress, but will be stressed out by my stress, which would give me more stress. Unless things I must tell them, like I got married or got a baby, otherwise, I would not tell them about my stress. Therefore, I went to talk with my friends. Then, I would be relaxed. My marriage made me grow and made me want to make more friends actively.

ICWDSUS? had no family-like-friend support system when she experienced her career crisis, which made her husband want to divorce her. As a result, she developed high blood pressure and endured both career and marriage

crises alone during her pregnancy. Perkins and Murphy (2012) claimed that family-like relationships with team members, where one member sacrifices for another member or the whole group, can help the team survive during a crisis. Therefore, if a woman's family cannot support her during her darkest moment, she can still develop family-like friendships to support her during her darkest moment. Both Participant A and Luyinbi admitted that without help from their friends, they would not have been able to finish their Ph.D. journeys.

Collective Career Development with Her Individual Diligence

In HRD, career development is an individual-level analysis with a focus on an individual's capabilities and career development plan (Lynham & Cunningham, 2006). However, like many Chinese women leaders' career development, the participants developed their careers with both their family's and friends' collective support and their individual diligence.

Instead of angrily proceeding or angrily complaining about women's empowerment in the West, which have both failed to sustainably develop women, Fupan flexibly and respectfully navigated in both Chinese and U.S. patriarchal cultures and developed herself with the development of her husband, family, society, and even the international world comprehensively. Instead of either developing a woman's independence as a single woman criticizer to criticize gender inequity or building sisterhood allies as a woman army to fight gender inequality together as Western feminists have suggested (Downing & Roush,

1985; Hoffman, 2006; Jack & Ali, 2010; Ng et al., 1995), Fupan did not criticize others nor any society, but included others and all societies. Fupan also did not criticize but accepted her gender roles and shouldered her responsibilities as a wife and mother and prepared to work more for her children, family, and society. Instead of purposefully seeking support from others, Fupan respected others first and shouldered her responsibilities for different roles and requirements from others. Although Fupan did not expect to change others but focused on changing herself, others changed from doubting her, giving her extra work, laughing at her, to respecting and supporting her in the end. Instead of criticizing the unfair treatment from society and competing with others, Fupan's success has been from her diligence and benevolent love for her family and others. Fupan's case and the rapid economic development of China and East Asia have confirmed the effectiveness of the family-oriented Confucian development model (Fan, 2011; Lu, 2004; Tshinghua PBCSF, 2021; Wang et al., 2002; Wu, 2000; Zurndorfer, 2018).

Fupan's case may also shed light on the problems of Western feminist movements. If a woman's aggressive self-development is achieved at the cost of sacrificing a woman's family and harmonious relationships with others, then the woman's self-development is not sustainable. Although *Zijun* received feminist education and angrily challenged her traditional family, she ended up regretting the past. In traditional Chinese history, Mulan who lived in a much more

traditional time than *Zijun* and did not receive feminist education. Instead of fighting against her family and society, Mulan fought for her family and nation, and received great recognition from everyone worldwide, even now (Edwards, 2010).

Admittedly, Confucianism, as China's official dominant ideology for almost 2000 years, has been politicized for the ruling party to maintain social order, which could twist the original Confucian values from human flourishing to authoritarianism at home and in society (Liu, 2017). The impact of Western modern culture in China since the end of 19th century has removed authoritarianism from politicized Confucianism but exposed the original and lasting cultural values of Confucianism. Instead of authoritative leadership, many scholars have claimed that the Chinese indigenous leadership style is characterized by paternalistic leadership, which is rooted in Confucianism with the combination of "strong discipline and authority with fatherly benevolence and moral integrity" (Chen et al., 2015; Farh & Cheng, 2000, p. 94).

Ren (benevolence/human) Servant Leadership

Unlike the *Great Man* in the *Great Man Theory* (Horner, 1997), many researchers believe that the identity of a leader is being a servant of fellow workers, and the primary motivation of a leader is to serve (Turner, 2000; Hollander, 2009).

A Woman Servant Leader

Most participants believed that a woman leader means a “confident” and “authoritarian” superwoman with “iron will” and “high IQ, EQ, and ethics,” who can control a group and let others submit to her. Therefore, although at first all participants lacked confidence and were intimidated when they arrived in the U.S., some participants became proud and aggressive after they achieved their goals and were promoted. Only a few participants became humbler and more fearful after completing their doctoral journeys and achieving career success. Participant ICWDSUS@ and Anna both discussed how to teach students well. Participant ICWDSUS@’s perspective was playing “hard tricks” to “maneuver [students] hard,” but Anna’s perspective was to maneuver herself hard. Anna said: “Although I am a teacher, I lower my status to be like a servant when I teach. When I teach my students like a servant, my students like to give more time to my class.

Servant leadership was first proposed by Greenleaf (1977) to flip the upper echelon of an organization upside down and suggest that leaders serve others as servants from the bottom rather than leading others as a boss from the top. Servant leadership philosophy is similar to Confucianism. Confucianist Mengzi said: “To a state, the people are most important. The state comes second. The ruler is the least important” (CTP, 2016, Mengzi, Jin Xin II: 60).

Putting Her Priorities Behind Others’ Priorities

During the interview process, the *Yang* self-leaders did not hesitate to brag about their own tasks and trying their best to put me and others down to show that I along with all others were below their high IQ, EQ, and ethics. Although the *Yinyang* self-leaders were cooperative and treated me with equal respect, the *Yin* self-leaders put their priorities, even their children behind my interview, even though they are great mothers and prioritize their children in their lives. When I saw Luyinbi's son come and want to play with his mother during the Zoom meeting, I told Luyinbi that I would finish the interview quickly. However, Luyinbi refused and said with a smile: "Collect more data from me. Don't worry about my time." In the end, the interview with Luyinbi went on for two and a half hours instead of one hour. Luyinbi used the first twenty minutes to share about her interview skills with me including the mistakes she learned from her past interview experiences. She used the last twenty minutes to affirm my interview skills for my dissertation interview and shared her job searching strategies. After more than two hours, I was tired and wanted to end the interview. However, Luyinbi confirmed that I collected enough data before letting me go:

Have you collected all the data that you need for your dissertation? I am not sure if I said things that would be helpful for you. If you think of more questions, just ask me at any time you want. When I interview, sometimes I feel I haven't asked enough questions from the interviewees after the interview. Ha ha. So ask me if you have any questions. Ha ha. I am not tired. I know you must be tired as you must think. I did not need to think much. You interviewed very well! As long as you get all the information for your dissertation, it is good!

Most women tend to demonstrate more servant leadership than men (de Rubio & Kiser, 2015), and women are expected to display servant leadership behaviors more than men (Hogue, 2016). JJ used the female gender attributes to define women's leadership:

Women's leadership means the gender of the leader is a woman. Therefore, the attributes of the female gender could be integrated into the definition of women's leadership. Women leaders probably are softer than men leaders. Women probably like to consider others' opinions more than the self. Instead of just focusing on one's own ideas, like "Hey, this is my command and my opinion! What you need to do is just to do what I asked you to do!"...ha ha...women leaders tend to focus on others' ideas. I read some articles, which said women leaders are actually more human than men leaders, but I sound like I am doing gender discrimination against men now...ha ha... Women leaders seem to have a higher level of humanity, not just see the material tasks, not just care about one's own feelings, but caring about the feelings of more people, humanity...ha ha.... Therefore, my first impression of seeing the phrase "women's leadership" was that women's leadership was softer...ha ha... So my definition of women's leadership is: the capability of organizing and managing, at the same time, care the needs of more people, rather than just caring about your voice being heard or not.

JJ's view to be soft to let others' voices be heard and her self-criticism were in sharp contrast to Participant ICWDSUS*'s view to "speak loudly and confidently" to "let [her] voice be heard" and the other *Yang* self-leaders' self-promotion. Although using the female gender attributes to define women's leadership has been criticized by many feminists as a gender stereotype, JJ connected women's caring attributes with a leader's caring about others' needs. A woman has natural leadership attributes to lead others, starting with leading her children and family.

Leadership = Responsibility

Fupan used the responsibilities and different roles of a woman to define women's leadership by analyzing the phrase of *women's leadership* word by word:

The keyword of the phrase is *leadership*. *Leadership* is about responsibility. *Women* are the adjective ahead of the *leadership*. I would say the word *women* emphasizes various roles that women play at work, at home, and in society. For different roles, women have different responsibilities, and the word *women* also indicates stricter evaluation standards for women than for men from social values.

Fupan's definition of women's leadership, which has led to her success, is servant leadership. Compared to other Western constructive leadership approaches, servant leadership is a holistic leadership paradigm including a servant leader's service to employees, society, family, and even God (Sendjaya et al., 2019). With the assumption that leadership means responsibility, *Yin* self-leaders' leadership development means how they can be more responsible to serve others, which is quite different from *Yang* self-leaders' attempts to develop more power and "games" to control others.

Her Ren (benevolence/human) Service to Others and Society

Instead of focusing on self-interest, a servant leader focuses on others' interests and prioritizes followers' needs through one-on-one interactions (Eva et al., 2019). Instead of doing research to get more "awesome" publications for self-promotion in academia, JJ said: "The research is not only for yourself but for

others as well. In the end, your research has to be read and accepted by others. You must know what others think of your research.” In addition, instead of proudly announcing that “I am always very confident” like the *Yang* self-leaders, Mary said: “My self-confidence must be based on my high-quality work for others. Only when my work proves my professionalism, I can say I am confident. You let your work talk for yourself.”

Instead of arrogant self-confidence or angry blame for others and society, many of the Chinese women leaders believed in their diligence, perseverance, and responsibilities for others, which actually impressed and won the support of Chinese men leaders and others, who held original low expectations for women (Chao, 2011; Liu, 2013). Lao Zi said: “A sage does the work without arguing with others” (CTP, 2016, Dao De Jing:81)

Servant leaders are willing to serve and also be accountable for the wellbeing of their community and society (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Seeing the chaotic Chinese market, instead of criticizing and leaving China, Fupan and her husband wanted to study abroad to contribute to the betterment of the Chinese market. However, they did not boast about their contribution for China:

We have never thought that we could change or ‘save’ the industry in China. Even now, we never dare to think of that. We just wanted to take back to China some new things, at least something that our industry didn’t have before....We just wanted to do something, to bring some value to the industry, to our country a little bit...

Mary defined leadership as:

There are two parts of leadership. From the inner world of a leader, leadership means making an impact and maximizing your impact for the society based on your strength, interest, and passion; from one's external world and positions, to have a leadership title with a leadership platform is up to the needs of the situation. Sometimes, maybe you need a platform to facilitate you to maximize your impact. Leadership, from my experience, means I must find my interests and what I can create values for society, right?

Mary also asked about my opinion, assuming that everyone thought in the same way. However, instead of maximizing one's impact for social interests, *Yang* self-leaders believe in maximizing self-interests by "kill[ing] a bloody path" to put down all "awkward" others in a "brutal tribal" society. Without moral evaluation, which must be at the center of a human's identity, one's definitions of selfhood and personal vision are based on individualism and utilitarianism in a postmodern age (Taylor, 2004). Ethics becomes the tool for a utilitarian to use for more self-interests. Therefore, I added *Ren (benevolence/human)* in front of servant leadership to differentiate *Ren (benevolence/human)* servant leadership from utilitarian servant leadership.

When I asked Participant ICWDSUS* to define women's leadership, and she emphasized the importance of ethics: "A woman should develop herself towards her betterment. They should set up goals and take the efforts to lead themselves to achieve the goals with proper methods, not unethical methods." However, her "ethics" and even her faith in God could be utilitarian. As a Chinese religious person, Participant ICWDSUS* found a volunteer job to help an

American Christian teacher teach Chinese religious children English in rural China. This volunteer job helped her practice English, learn American culture, and make an American friend to help her prepare for her studies in the U.S. However, unlike the American Christian teacher's authentic service to help Chinese poor children, Participant ICWDSUS* did not like children. Participant ICWDSUS* said:

She is a Christian. She has a lot of religious friends in China. She wanted to help some poor religious families in China who couldn't send their kids to school to study, especially with foreigners. She was volunteering to teach English to elementary religious students in China. So she was looking for volunteers to help her translate. I volunteered to be her translator for just a couple of weeks, as I don't like kids, ha ha ha...but just a couple of weeks, it was a lot more helpful for me to practice English and learn American culture. I and the American teacher became friends later. But her help was not critical for me.

Unlike the *Yinyang* self-leaders' strong appreciation for friends and almost everyone, *Yang* self-leaders only appreciate themselves and their families. Participant ICWDSUS* did not appreciate her American friend's help but appreciated her own "wisdom" to do only a two-week volunteer job, which was "a lot more helpful" for her U.S. studies with minimum service for the kids. Although Participant ICWDSUS* laughed proudly when she told me how she used the volunteer job to "help" Chinese kids and thus help her prepare for her U.S. studies, she was mad when she tried to play the same I-love-helping-kids game again in the U.S. as she was rejected by a U.S. primary school:

Can you imagine? As an assistant professor, I volunteered to teach kids science in the local primary school, but they rejected me! Never mind! I don't like kids anyway. I am already too busy. I just wanted to build up my resume to show others that I volunteered to help kids.

Whether Participant ICWDSUS@'s "psychological game" to play as a poor international student to manipulate American authorities' sympathy or Participant ICWDSUS*'s "I-love-helping-kids" game to manipulate kids, both of them were not authentic. Although Greenleaf's (1977) servant leadership was inspired by how Jesus served others and Fry (2003) further proposed *spiritual leadership* to incorporate spirituality and faith into leadership theories, in practice, utilitarian ethics is the way to define ethics for most individuals (Bazerman, 2020). Utilitarian ethics does not lead people to create a moral world but can lead them to utilize ethical discourse including religion as a tool to serve more of their own self-interests (Feng, 1944). Moral knowledge cannot guide moral practices at the cost of self-sacrifice but it can lead to moral performance for more self-interests and immoral results (Harvey, 2012).

Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) drew the distinction between authentic and pseudo transformational leaders to differentiate transformational authorities like Gandhi and Hitler by highlighting the moral foundations of authentic leaders. Only authentic, rather than pseudo ethical leaders, work for transcendental goals that go beyond one's immediate self-interests "for the good of the group, organization, or the country" (Bass, 1977, p. 133). In terms of the emphasis on

ethics, servant leadership includes and exceeds transformational, ethical, and authentic leadership by adding social responsibilities for marginalized people, self-sacrifice, (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002), dedication to followers' interests, which are opposed to the interests of the servant leader and the organization (Graham, 1991), forgiving the mistakes of employees (Lu et al., 2019), promoting the wellbeing of employees and communities (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002), stewardship, work-family relations (Tang et al., 2016), strengthening of marital relationships and life satisfaction (Chughtai, 2017), and workplace spirituality (Sendjaya et al., 2019). The holism of servant leadership has made scholars portray servant leadership almost “as a panacea to any ethical issues and moral dilemmas” (Langhof & Gueldenberg, 2021, p. 538). However, Jaques (2012) criticized that most leadership theories developed from ideals and simple observations from one phenomenon and were too simple to lead complex human activities.

Langhof and Gueldenberg (2021) identified the main ethical risks of servant leadership. Although servant leadership also emphasizes the importance of morality, the moral content is ambiguous. The definitions of morality and serving others are defined by the followers. In practice, few leaders have the motivation to serve others at the cost of sacrificing their own self-interests (Langhof & Gueldenberg, 2021). Thus, it is difficult to find ethical role models from whom others can learn what ethics means to develop ethical leadership in an

organization with a focus on individual performance and organizational benefits (Bachmann, 2016). Although most leaders emphasize the importance of ethics for a leader, they often admit that they could not serve as ethical role models (Weaver et al., 2005). If a leader promotes ethical behaviors to followers, but the leader does not demonstrate the ethical behavior that the leader promotes, the leader might be perceived as a hypocrite (Brown et al., 2005). For example, facing the test of COVID-19, “leaders are repeatedly faced with almost insoluble [ethical] dilemmas” (Langhof & Gueldenberg, 2021, p. 538). In my study, although almost all participants sincerely expressed their altruistic ideals for others, such as conducting research to “improve humanity,” “help women,” “serve the public,” “contribute to our society,” “serve the home country,” or “love God,” in practice, in front of the temptation of practical benefits, some participants treated others deceptively and aggressively for their own self-benefits.

Unfortunately, most sacrificial service cannot last sustainably for either a liar’s utilitarian service for others to receive individualistic material benefits at the cost of sacrificing others’ interests, or a Jesus-like saint’s altruistic service for others by sacrificing the self for others. In contrast to a hypocrite’s lip service or a narcissist’s self-promotion of servant leadership for one’s own utilitarian purpose, participants with *Yin* self-leadership demonstrated *Ren* (*human-benevolence*) service for others with humble words and responsible commitment. Instead of being a liar or a saint, *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) servant leaders are just

benevolent humans who follow their benevolent heart—rather than only a calculative brain—to build and maintain long-term harmonious relationships with others for mutual support. Although Participant ICWDSUS* did not understand “why someone, who does not know [me], would join [my] interview?” to help my dissertation research, Luyinbi did not understand “why an ICWDSUS who went through the hard dissertation stage and understood the importance of a dissertation would not want to help another ICWDSUS’ dissertation research.” Although some participants did utilize the interview opportunity to “help” me to help themselves manipulate my research and demonstrated their destructive leadership in this study, *Yin* self-leaders answered ICWDSUS*’s question in a way that demonstrates their *Ren* (human-benevolence) servant leadership. Although I did not know Participant A before the interview, Participant A laughed happily and greeted me like an old friend when she saw me in the Zoom meeting: “I just want to help you! And maybe I can get some encouragement from you to do my research, ha ha... You also help me too!” Instead of getting short-term material benefits by harming others or sacrificing themselves by harming themselves, *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) servant leaders expect to learn from others to grow together without harming themselves or others for long-term mutual growth.

***Ren* (*benevolence/human*) Spiritual Leadership**

Leaders' ethical problems are not new topics in modern leadership theories, such as ethical leadership, but they have been discussed extensively since ancient philosophical and religious teaching (Eisenbeiss, 2012). Lily said: "The ethics that can really control humans' behaviors are from religions. Human ethics, such as don't lie and be nice, could not control humans' behaviors at the test of facing temptations." In my study, almost all the participants mentioned the influence of God or religion during their doctoral journeys. Although most participants would consider themselves atheists, none of the atheist participants attacked any religion. However, two participants with religious, narcissistic, and utilitarian beliefs just used religion to attack everyone brutally and suffered from their own crises in *Yin* challenges. Two participants in this section with religious and *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) beliefs serve others and God earnestly and happily.

Although Fry (2003) introduced *spiritual leadership* into leadership theories and the workplace, spirituality could both help and harm people the most. Most spiritual practices have their roots in certain cultures and religions (Liu & Rebertson, 2011). Without intercultural and interreligious sensitivity, leaders who develop spiritual leadership at work can culturally and religiously discriminate against followers with minority religions and infringe on their personal privacy. With increased religious diversity in the U.S., religious discrimination

has not decreased but increased (Ghumman et al., 2013) and religion- and spirituality-based discrimination is prevalent in the U.S.

In addition to “psychological and political games” to manipulate and attack people, religious games could be closest to Satan’s trick. St. Paul claimed that “even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). American historian Robert J. Hanyok claimed that Hitler, who often called himself a Christian, had “Satan’s luck” (Langhof & Gueldenberg, 2021, p. 538). Hitler’s persecution of Jews was an extreme form of Christian anti-Semitism (Weikart, 2016). Lips-Wiersma and Mills (2002) also claimed that many employees, especially employees with minority religions, fear expressing their spirituality at work. As a Chinese religious person, Participant ICWDSUS* said:

I dare not to declare my religious identity in the U.S. Christians in the U.S. always shape religious people without believing in Christianity as terrorists. Terrorists are terrorists regardless of religion. I know you are a Christian, but I have to say Christians I have met in the U.S. are so corrupted. Although there must be corrupted religious people in my religion too, the discrimination against my religion here makes believers in my religion, who bravely identify their non-Christian religious identity, strong believers. In contrast, whenever a person identifies self as a Christian in the U.S., the person feels like God and does whatever they want to do.

When I asked Participant A, who values friendship and relationships greatly, if her Chinese roommate was her friend, she smiled and shook her head gently:

At first, I tried to make friends with my roommate. I thought that we were both from China and we were roommates in the U.S., so it meant we

must be like family members in the U.S. However, later, I realized that she was not like me. She didn't like to make friends with me. She didn't want to make friends. She was more ambitious than me.

In contrast to Participant A's harsh self-criticism of herself, she rarely criticized others in the interview. Her mildest criticism of others sounded like praising others to me. I did not understand what she meant by saying her roommate was "ambitious" as "she did not want to make friends." I asked: "So you mean your roommate went to the library or labs day and night and had no time to hang out with you and make friends with others, right?" However, Participant A explained with an embarrassed smile as it must be hard for her to criticize others:

No, she went to church to meet people. In church, she could meet American people, who are more resourceful than me. She liked to make friends with people who could help her with her career. She did not like to talk with me as I could not help her with her career. She might think that I was useless. At first, I felt hurt.

Yang self-leaders cold-heartedly told me how "useless" and "awkward" their roommates were, while they angrily criticized how others discriminated against them. However, without criticizing anyone, Participant A showed me how she felt when she was regarded as "useless" and was totally ignored by her roommate. I could just see tears in her eyes from her hurt in the past with an embarrassing smile since she greatly valued friendship. When I asked Participant A why she did not go to church to make resourceful American friends from church to help her career as well, she just smiled and gave me a simple answer

without explaining or blaming anything: “No, I don’t go to church to make friends.”

With a simple “no” to answer my open-ended question, I could only guess that she might think that the church is a place with many opportunists and hypocrites to make human tools, rather than friends. If her roommate did not even talk with her, who is from the same country, but liked to go to church to pretend to love God for the purpose of gathering resourceful human tools, the church is like a utilitarian market. To treat humans as a means rather than an end is not humane nor ethical (Eisenbeiss, 2012). As a Christian, I could feel the holy anger of Jesus when he said that “Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!” (John 2:16).

The Danger of Spiritual Leadership

Unfortunately, my majority religion in God did not provide many resourceful friends in church but I felt persecuted as a Christian from the U.S. church leaders. The pandemic made me choose an online Bible study group to let me eat my spiritual food. That Bible study group was especially targeted to “help” and “mentor” Chinese international scholars to know God to be “saved” to become redemptive change agents to combat the corruption of society, which echoes my belief in God and HRD vision. However, later, I found out that the Bible study group leaders kept instilling political messages with Bible studies into Chinese young scholars, who know little about Christianity and religion in China.

For example, they would proclaim that the Chinese government persecutes Christians and Muslims. However, in the meantime, the Bible study group leaders kept insinuating the hateful message to Chinese scholars that Islam is a religion for terrorists and wrong believers and Confucianism was “stupid” teaching for the backwardness of China. Although I told the Bible group leaders about my Christian identity, they did not expect to see a Chinese Christian scholar with transdisciplinary knowledge of leadership, the Bible, Muslim, Confucianism, Chinese culture, women’s studies, history, HRD, and critical theory. They were shocked to see me using Bible verses and multiple disciplines as a multiple-edged sword rather than a double-edged sword to interpret Bible verses from both academic and biblical lenses. I said:

Jesus is the prince of peace. Jesus came to the world to save not to judge the world. How could you judge the whole China, the whole Confucianism, and the whole Muslim? Didn’t God say love one another, even love your enemies? Which Confucius’ book have you read saying that Confucius was against God? Confucianism is the Latin name that Italian missionary Matteo Ricci gave to Confucius teaching. Confucianism in Chinese is Ru Jia, which means the studies about education and rituals. Matteo Ricci and other Jesuits introduced Confucianism to Europe in the 16th century and enlightened the European Enlightenment movement in the 17th century. If you don’t believe me, just go to the Bell library of the University of Minnesota, the 1602 Ricci world map was there. The map was in Chinese. Why don’t you go there to see what the U.S. looked like in 1602? It was not the Chinese government that persecuted Christians. It was different Christian denominations, who persecuted Matteo Ricci and other Jesuits. Matteo Ricci’s tomb and many early Jesuits are still on the campus of the Central Party School of the Communist Party in Beijing, the capital of China. Would Dalai Lama’s tomb be allowed to be put in the capital of the U.S. and be protected by the U.S. government for 400 years?

My multiple-edged sword did not divide the soul and spirit of the Bible study group leaders, but made the leader mute me in Zoom and later asked me to leave the Bible study group.

Although contemporary spiritual leadership scholars have naively believed that promoting spirituality at work could improve morality, inclusion, and performance of different individuals (Fry, 2003; Liu & Robertson, 2011), British historian Toynbee reminded people of the most brutal side of religion. “Religious schism,” “fervid theological controversy,” religious wars, and the Dark Ages “[s]ince the disintegration of the Roman Empire” have failed to reach any moral conclusions (Toynbee, 1973, pp. 6, 9). Consequently, in the middle of the 17th century in England, the “founders of the Royal Society had been horrified neutrals,” who did not want to be involved in verbal or military conflicts of religions (Toynbee, 1973, p. 6). Their “moral recoil” eschewed them from confronting theological debates without any consensus on the conclusions and turned them to “pacific” scientific inquiry that could settle people’s disagreements by scientific experiments and the practical benefits that science could bring to all people (Toynbee, 1973, p. 6). However, the avoidance and pragmatic coping strategy did not solve people’s fundamental ethical dilemma, but increased their pride and greed in using scientific methods to manipulate mother nature and the world for more self-interests (Davis, 1983; Toynbee, 1973).

The dark side of leadership (Burke, 2006; Einarsen et al., 2007; Furnham & Taylor, 2004; Scheffler & Brunzel, 2020) might be best explained by Toynbees (1973, p. 6) as a human's innate "capacity and impulse to try to exploit the rest of the universe" for self-interests since the fall of Adam and Eve. The emphasis on scientific and technological progress in mass media has misled modern people to regard technological progress as social progress without noticing the backwardness of social justice and humanity, such as wars, atomic bombs, nuclear weapons, pollution, colonialism, and slavery (Horkheimer et al., 2002).

Many "major maladies" of the modern world could be traced back to a "religious cause" (Toynbee, 1973, p. 7). Although Hegel was a Christian, he blurred the distinction between "moral laws" from religion and "laws of nature" from Darwinism to support utilitarian ethics (Ritchie, 1890, p.70). What is right means what helps the survival of a particular group through "the constant elimination of the less fit" species (Ritchie, 1890, p. 64). Although enlighteners emphasized rationality and scientific objectivity, their rationale for ethics was not scientific, but religious and subjective from European superiority (Harvey, 2012). Enlighteners claimed that the "black Africans were the descendants of Cain," who were cursed by God with no civilization, and "all of the children of Noah are white," who were blessed by God with great civilization (Harvey, 2012, p. 134). Therefore, slavery, colonialism, and racism were justified as a European "moral vocation" to save low and uncivilized races; otherwise, the uncivilized race could

be replaced by a more superior race through the *natural selection for survival for the fittest* (Hobson, 2004, p. viii). The question is: In the 21st century, will the re-promotion of spiritual leadership lead to a second Dark Ages? On the day I have eaten the transdisciplinary forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge to finish my dissertation, shall I surely die? The only power that surpasses death is love as “God is love” (1 John 4:8).

Ren (benevolence/human) Love, Rather Than Narcissistic Self-love, Altruistic Love, Or Utilitarian Love

Ren (benevolence/human) love. Compared to utilitarian spiritual leadership to manipulate God for self-interests based on utilitarianism, Mary and JJ demonstrated *Ren (benevolence/human)* spiritual leadership to lead the self, others, and their difficult situations based on their faith in God and *Ren (benevolence/human)* love for others. Instead of pragmatically utilizing the Bible and church people as the tools to get more resources, Mary and JJ developed authentic relationships with God and other people. JJ said:

When I have anxiety, especially the anxiety from getting married, which I could not control, I read the Bible. That can relax me as anxiety cannot help but make things worse...The job searching process from Oct or March was so painful. I also read the Bible every week and the Bible group prayed for me until I found the job.

Mary said:

Whether in China or the U.S., I always open my home for Christian sisters and brothers to have fellowship. We read the Bible together, have food together, chat together at my home. However, I have a strong character. I

won't tell others about my vulnerability and my difficulties, so God is my best friend. Sometimes, I would feel my marriage is boring. During those difficult times, God is my best friend. God accompanies me to go through those difficult times. From God, I could find all the answers even when my husband could not help me...Although my job in China now has many problems, I still like the work. All my work is for God. Regardless of where I work, it is the job that God wants me to work.

Unlike religious narcissists who utilize religion to judge others, Mary and JJ used Christian teaching to criticize themselves internally and correct their own behaviors to be aligned with God's wish. Instead of praying in public as the Pharisees did, Mary and JJ naturally and quietly exercised spiritual reflective practices, "taking time for individual self-examination and/or communication with God" (Reave, 2005, p. 678). Although all *Yang* self-leaders and Mary said that they "have a strong character," with a focus on self-interests or social interests, being strong meant something different for Mary compared to the *Yang* self-leaders. For Mary, being strong meant that she did not want to share her vulnerabilities to bother others but liked to shoulder her own responsibility and show her happy side to make others happy. For the *Yang* self-leaders, being strong means to use the "iron will" to "kill a bloody path" and "play the game hard" as "a vulnerable victim" first to get sympathy and help from authorities to gain more resources. Although Fupan and Zixi were atheists, they demonstrated their *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) love by appreciating the English lessons and networking events from local churches and showing their respect for Christianity, Buddhism, all cultures, and all people.

The origin of human knowledge in any culture has a divine nature, indicating the infinity of divine power and the finitude of human nature (Cassirer, 1950). Although Confucius never taught spiritual knowledge, he did practice rites with supernatural beliefs (Liu & Macdonald, 2016). *Ren* in Confucianism pronounces both human (人) and benevolent love (仁), which is like the holy communion between humans and heaven with the interaction between material and transcendent elements (Bresciani, 2001). Regardless of the nationality, people can call themselves a Confucian Catholic, Confucian Protestant, a Confucian Muslim, or Boston Confucian (Liu, 2000). Confucianism can offer global relational wisdom to connect various disciplines between social and natural sciences and the realms between human agency and religions (Liu & Macdonald, 2016).

Unlike Kant's moral law, which only God knows, *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) love emphasizes the moral feeling of respect (*jing*) for heaven/nature, which not only enables Chinese to take active human endeavors to change their lives but also to respect and forgive their enemies, as the work and enemies are all created by heaven/nature (Lu, 2017). Instead of either despising, rejecting, or killing enemies for their own ego, or totally including enemies for more practical benefits, Confucianism's respect for enemies means that Confucianists recognize enemies' destructive power, so Confucianists study enemies seriously to be alert (Lu, 2017). With the emphasis on a human's moral

feeling of respect (*jing*) for others, *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) love achieves the *Hehe* (*harmony-inclusion*) of heaven/nature and human (*Tian ren he yi*), the *Hehe* of different individuals with different religions and ideologies as the *same people* (*Tong Ren*), and the *Hehe* of different cultures as a *big sameness* (*Da Tong*) society (Lu, 2017). Therefore, a big and united team is formed to achieve big things.

Narcissistic Self-love. In contrast to *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) love, which includes different individuals in both the material and the supernatural world as harmonious unity, religious narcissists' self-love disconnects and attacks different humans, the loving relationship between God and humans, and the coexisting relationships between humans and nature as confrontational disunity (Lu, 2017). Although some spiritual leadership scholars have naively believed that promoting workplace spirituality (e.g., prayer, meditation) will lead to individuals developing genuine empathy and morality for others to build interconnections and workplace inclusion (Liu & Robertson, 2011; Rozuel & Kakabadse, 2010; Zsolnai, 2010), religious narcissists only connect themselves with God to develop moral pride and disrespect for others (Lu, 2017). Unlike *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) spiritual leaders, who develop authentic benevolent relationships with God and others by becoming more humble and more empathetic for others, when religious narcissists zealously practice religious activities (e.g., prayer and fasting), they have no self-reflection to improve

morality as they assume that they are already Jesus-like (Day et al., 2020). In contrast to inclusion, “moral nobles” are “unwilling to even live with ‘immoral others’” and end up being alone (Lu, 2017, p. 118). The “independence” of a morally prideful person becomes “the knife that cuts through” all living ties to others (Scheler, 2005, p. 26). As Participant ICWDSUS* confidently declared: “I live for myself and for God! I will not live for anyone else!” In her life agenda, her parents, friends, and all others were excluded leaving herself and God. Participant ICWDSUS@ did not hesitate to attack my Christian faith along with almost everything: “I believe that my God chose me to be HIS follower. You know, you Christians have done many evil things in the world!”

Even though ICWDSUS+ professed no religion, she attributed her admission to her U.S. university with a big-name advisor to her getting “the favor from God” and she forgot to appreciate her “low” master’s degree advisor, who kindly introduced her to her doctoral advisor when the American professor visited China. Among all the self-conflicts of a narcissist, I found a narcissist’s religiosity, in talking about religious doctrines to love others and the brutal attack toward others including their friends and family members, was most paradoxical. Scheler (2005, p. 25) claimed that: “There is only one form of pride that is demonic: that is in one’s own moral value as the highest value, the pride in one’s goodness, or the vice of the fallen angel---whom the Pharisee will always imitate.”

To interpret monotheism as to subdue other religions, races, and mother nature is an “immoral, impractical, and disastrous” directive from “modern industrial man” rather than God (Toynbee, 1973, p. 7). However, monotheistic concepts and discourse have the highest patriarchal power, which could stimulate violence, oppression, ignorance, and discrimination against individuals with different beliefs and women (Alexander, 2005; Smith, 2001). Toynbee (1973, p. 7) claimed that Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and other Asian philosophies and religions offer “the most promising hope of salvaging mankind” given the emphasis on “love, benevolence, and humanity” rather than the emphasis on power and aggressiveness in Western monotheistic religions,

Altruistic Love. In addition to religious narcissists’ self-love, altruistic love is the other extreme of religious love. Altruistic love originated in the Bible and was demonstrated in how Jesus Christ served the world. The contemporary servant leadership and spiritual leadership philosophies encourage leaders to use altruistic love and self-sacrifice to serve others as an ethical leader (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Transformational and charismatic leadership are also deeply influenced by the Bible and Jesus, encouraging leaders to sacrifice themselves to create the greatest good for the greatest number of people (Northouse, 2018). In DuBrin and Ebrary’s (2013) handbook of research on crisis leadership, all crisis leadership scholars encouraged leaders to use transformational, charismatic, and courageous leadership to courageously and altruistically confront crises.

Unfortunately, the death of an altruistic leader as a martyr for organizational benefits does not mean the solution of crises, but could mean the death of the hope to solve crises. No leader is like Jesus Christ, as they are mere mortals and sinners. A leader may be able to serve others altruistically at the cost of self-sacrifice for a moment, but no mere mortal could serve others altruistically forever. A group's problems, which could be from generational and cultural problems, cannot be solved by one altruistic servant or hero's self-sacrifice. Instead of making others or the leader sacrifice, *Ren (benevolence/human) love* encourages leaders to share short-term self-interests with others to include others as a bigger team to create more long-term and comprehensive benefits (CTP, 2016, Yijing, Dayou).

“Social justice studies require looking at both realities and ideals” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 326). With the dominance of pragmatism in all aspects of the U.S. including ethics, religion, and HRD (Korte & Mercurio, 2017; Margolis, 2010; Murphey, 2005), regardless of religious narcissists' self-love, Jesus-like altruistic love for others, or HRD's vision for all humanity, they may be subjected to individuals' utilitarian love for practical benefits (Bazerman, 2020; Grange, 1996).

Unsweetened *Ren (benevolence/human) love*. Narcissistic self-love makes the self appear as perfect as God. The discourse of altruistic love makes the leader sound as holy as God. In contrast, *Ren (benevolence/human) love* in

Confucianism is so humble that it only encourages an individual to become a human (*Ren*) with benevolence (*Ren*). *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) love denies pragmatists' simple, naive, and unrealistic utilitarian love to force a human to love all people equally and indiscriminately at the same time for the maximization of individual benefits (CTP, 2016, Mengzi, Tengwengong I:5). *Ren* (*human-benevolence*) love respects a human's different feelings for family members, neighbors, other people, and other living creatures. Instead of expanding benefits from an individual to the planet based on imagination (Lynham & Cunningham, 2006), *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) love expands a person's love naturally from the love for one's own family to the love for other people and living creatures through a gradual process (CTP, 2016, Jinxin I:45). Fupan smiled and talked about discrimination in the U.S.:

Isn't it the same as in China? When you are in the same group with the same cultural background, of course, people would treat you better than an outsider with a different background. If you go to find a job, to compete for just one position with many competitors, regardless of where you are, the employer would have their preferences based on their cultural background. You can't deny this normal feeling.

Although Ardichvili et al. (2012) attributed Chinese in-group favoritism and unfairness to out-group members to Confucianism, it is human nature to treat people with a similar background and closer relationships nicer than people with different backgrounds. Instead of angrily blaming or naively "deny[ing] this normal feeling," Fupan treated the in-group favoritism of Americans and

Chinese with understanding and active solutions as well as respect for others. Therefore, she did not experience discrimination and conflicts in her work and study, but found many long-term collaborators including white experts.

Ren (benevolence/human) love is not sweet nor romantic but responsible. Rather than the inspirational verbal expression and hot emotional arousal from an individual's biological responses, Confucian *Ren (benevolence/human)* love is expressed in a harmonious way with self-control and the consideration of others and contexts, which is viewed by Western psychologists as emotional restraint (Yik, 2010). With self-control and humility, a *Ren (benevolence/human)* leader may not want to actively and aggressively approach many resourceful people to gain benefits. Although *Ren (benevolence/human)* leaders (e.g., Confucius) maintain harmonious relationships with everyone with almost no enemies, they may not have many friends. With a focus on morality rather than benefits, it can take a long time for a *Ren (benevolence/human)* leader to build friendship with others, but a *Ren (human-benevolence)* leader's friendship lasts long as well. Unlike *Yang* self-leaders, who have no friends but have "awkward" roommates, advisors, and enemies, and *Yinyang* self-leaders, who have many friends for all kinds of support, *Yin* self-leaders have no enemies nor many friends. Lora admitted: "I don't have many friends, but I have enough friends. I only have 2 or 3 good friends."

Chinese ancient philosopher Zhuangzi (369 BCE-286 BCE) claimed:

The interaction with a morally-superior person is as tasteless as water, while the interaction with a mean person is as sweet as new wine. However, the tastelessness of the morally superior person leads to affection, and the sweetness of a mean person leads to aversion (CTP, 2016, Zhuangzi, *The Tree on the Mountain*: 5).

Facing many crises and ethical dilemmas without a solution in the 21st century, ethical leadership scholars have called on Western scholars to step out of the Western-based ethical studies to learn from Eastern ethical wisdom to have a global view of ethics (Eisenbeiss, 2012; Resick et al., 2006). Over 200 years ago, Voltaire suggested that “Europeans should take Chinese as their teachers of morality” as he “found no seemingly professional dogma” other than Confucianism (Gree, 1992, p.369).

Eisenbeiss (2012, p. 792) integrated “ancient and modern moral philosophy from the West and the East—ranging from Kant, Plato, Aristotle to Tagore and Confucianism” and “of the ethics principles of the world religion—Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism,” and generated four “central ethical orientations”: humane, justice, responsibility and sustainability, and moderation orientation. Western ethical leadership research has focused on humane and justice orientations, but ignored an emphasis on responsibility, sustainability, and moderation (Eisenbeiss, 2012). Although U.S. leaders have high humane orientation values (e.g., compassionateness, charity, and altruism), the practice of their humane orientation values is only at a medium level. In contrast, although Chinese leaders do not have high humane orientation values, their practice of

humane orientation values is above medium (House et al., 2004). The U.S. values charismatic and value-based leaders, while China values responsible leaders, who walk the talk.

Eisenbeiss (2012) also claimed that the empirical-description-based social science research does not adequately reflect the long-term impact of leaders' behaviors on society and the environment in terms of social responsibility and sustainable development. With the focus on idealistic vision and the neglect of responsibilities, many problematic theories from Western mainstream social science studies "will suffer from the crisis of infinite regress" (Hwang, 2014a, p. 60).

Ontological Contraction

The Ontological Expansiveness of Benefits Based on Imagination

Eisenbeiss (2012) was surprised to discover that responsibilities, sustainability, and moderation orientations with a focus on leaders' humility, self-control, and balance, which had been emphasized in all major ancient Western and Asian philosophies and religions, have been neglected from modern ethical leadership studies. Ladkin and Patrick (2022) explained that as part of the Western knowledge system through the Enlightenment, the solipsism in modern leadership studies only considers white supremacy with the neglect of mother nature and other races. "[D]oing leadership" just means "doing whiteness" with white supremacy (Liu & Barker, 2014, p. 420). Questions about leaders'

responsibility and sustainability, such as “‘issues of consequences for whom?’ , or ‘at whose expense?’” are not considered to be a concern for white people, who are at the top of the racial hierarchy (Ladkin & Patrick, 2022, p. 12). From the very beginning of modern leadership studies, the assumption of leaders has been white people with “moral and intellectual superiority,” which granted them “the birthright as “white knights” to govern” “abject others” (Liu & Baker, 2016, p. 420). The assumption of high IQ and ethics of white male leaders connects the word, *leader* with an “all seeing, omniscient, and powerful” Jesus-like person (Ladkin & Patrick, 2022, p. 15). To perform and maintain the good leader image, the solipsism in leadership studies “unwittingly commands White people to relinquish their own instincts, intellect, identity, and creativity” (Ladkin & Patrick, 2022, p. 13). The heroicisation of white people has caused leaders to lose the motive to learn from others and has increased the narcissistic tendencies of leaders with more psychological crises with the self and aggression towards others as well as the deceptive behaviors of “private vices, public virtues” (Kets de Vries, 1988, p. 267).

Assuming white leaders are Jesus-like saviors, leadership studies have held the “ontological expansiveness” to assume the U.S. is the global leader with the superpower to lead globalization and other salient issues with “a global encroachment” (Ladkin & Patrick, 2022, pp. 13.15) based on “imaginative leadership” (Bass & Bass, 2008, p. xvii). Kets deVries (1988, p. 268) claimed that

when reality does not support leaders' idealized imagination, leaders can manipulate propaganda as "rationalization devices" to "give their actions credibility and create support, even if imaginary." The young HRD field has also inherited the ontological expansiveness with the imaginary vision of "the whole of humanity" to create an even younger NHRD despite an increasing number of unsolved "ethical dilemmas" (McLean, 2001, p. 219). Lynham and Cunningham (2006, p. 132) further expanded the NHRD imagination to the planet HRD imagination:

It seems to not do so would fly in the face of the very essence of our profession, to develop and unleash human expertise for improved outcome, be it through or for individuals, groups, organizations, families, communities, nation-states, and, yes, our planet.

Despite the "messianic sense of mission that modernists have allowed themselves" (Crotty, 2004, p. 213) to develop the globe and whole planet, the realities of all Western utopian dreams in the whole modern era were wars, economic depression, environment crises, and psychological crises, and many crises for all people in the postmodern age (Coker, 1992; Wood, 2000). The word *postmodern* signals crises (Crotty, 2004; Hesse-Biber, 2007). Based on self-benefits, pragmatism and utilitarian ethics are fundamentally in conflict with the public good and the promise of narcissistic leaders and unrealistic altruistic leadership discourse.

With the emphasis on humility, self-control, and benevolent love for others, the Confucius *Datong* (*big sameness*) approach is a centuries-long “living prototype,” including different ethnic groups, religions, and languages as unity with each individual’s *little differences* (*xiaoyi*) on an individual level and everyone’s *big sameness* (*da tong*) to pursue a good life on a collective level (*qiu datong, cun xiaoyi*) (Christensen, 2014; Davis, 1983, p. 544).

Ontological Contraction of Self-benefits

Lao Zi claimed:

To solve a difficult problem should start with solving the easy part of it. To achieve a big thing should start with achieving the detailed part of it. The fulfillment of the easy and small things would naturally lead to the fulfillment of the difficult and big things. Therefore, a great person does not do big things, but naturally achieves big things by completing the easy and small things. A person, who is easy to make a promise for a big thing, is not credible. A person, who always thinks things easy, is sure to find them difficult. A great person sees and solves the difficulty even in what seems to be easy and small, and so never has any difficulties (CTP, 2016, Dao De Jing: 63).

From the ontological expansiveness in a material world and the emphasis on objective science to calculate material benefits (Ladkin & Patrick, 2022), Western leadership means influencing others to maximize the benefits (Northouse, 2018). In contrast, Chinese leadership philosophies hold an ontological contraction perspective in one’s material world through self-control and self-cultivation in one’s moral world. Leadership in Chinese culture means to influence the self to control one’s own internal world to develop one’s morality and build harmony with others to grow together (Fung, 1922).

Confucianist Mengzi said that the person who fully understands one's heart, knows one's nature and the way to serve heaven (CTX, n.d., Mengzi, Jinxin I:1; Liu, 2017). Meng Zi claimed that every human has *Four Beginnings* (*si duan*) to develop the self:

A heart of compassion is the beginning of benevolent love; a heart of shame is the beginning of righteousness; a heart of humility is the beginning of propriety; a heart of right or wrong is the beginning of wisdom; if one can continue to develop the *Four Beginnings* from one's heart, one will have enough love to protect everyone in the world; if one denies the *Four Beginnings* from the heart, the person cannot even take care of one's own parents; if a person does not have a heart of compassion, shame, humility, or right or wrong, the person is not a human (CTX, n.d., Mengzi, Gong Sun Chou I:6; Liu, 2014).

Although Mengzi's theories greatly influenced Enlighteners' theories of morality, psychology, and economics (e.g., Adam Smith, Herder) (Davis, 1983; Sikka, 2020; Sun, 2016), the beginning of a human's development has changed from Mengzi's development of a human's compassionate heart to love others to serve heaven to Enlighteners' scientific development of one's objective brain to calculate and control the world to serve one's material benefits. The differences between Chinese and Western leadership ontologies lead to two opposite leadership development directions and results. Instead of focusing on NHRD (McLean, 2014) or "planet" HRD (Lynham & Cunningham, 2006, p.132) without a safe solution to the increasing number of HRD ethical dilemmas, Confucianism focuses on self-cultivating (*xiushen*) (CTP, 2016, Liji, Daxue:1-2).

Earning A Woman's Relative Independence by Shouldering Her Responsibilities

The ontological expansiveness in Western feminist studies could be demonstrated by the feminist goal to *have all* that men have, which is often evaluated by calculating the number of boys/men-vs-girls/women gender gaps in terms of educational, economic, and political benefits (Kabeer, 1999; Milward et al., 2015; Hesse-Biber, 2007). Instead of the imaginary leadership on a national and planet level, Western self-leadership on an individual level is also based on imaginary ideals and self-awareness to “creat[e] new and improved versions” of the self to create [our] own legends and become the authors of [our] lives” (Bennis, 2003, p. 334) to “maximize success within every facet of our lives” (Zhendorfer, 2021, p.229).

However, can an individual woman achieve what she wants to achieve or just be herself? When I asked Luyinbi to define “self-leadership for a woman,” she asked herself and immediately had tears in her eyes: “Self?” With too much work at her university and home, she has little time left for herself, so she replied: “Yes, a woman needs self-leadership. A man needs self-leadership too. But just for a woman, to be herself, she has many more barriers for her to become herself than for a man to become himself.”

Research about identity has attempted to answer the question of “Who am I?” (Leary & Tangney, 2011). A human has three kinds of identities – *personal*

identity, role identity, and social identity. Even for *personal identity*, which is about a person's unique personality and characteristics (e.g., physical appearance, and emotional dispositions), an individual rarely chooses one's own personal identities voluntarily but inherits them from parents or through dominant cultures. An individual's identity is often socially constructed in a particular culture. Most adults' identities are also tied to some roles or social identities (Kegan & Lahey, 2016). Based on one's role in relationships with other people, one's self-identity can be fundamentally relational and comparative (Tajfel, 2010). A person finds self-actualization in the congruence of a person's internal self-understanding with an external understanding of self (Rogers, 1951). Individuals experiencing self-identity conflicts may suffer from discomfort and confusion when the two are misaligned.

Although Fupan is a *having-it-all* woman with a successful career and family, she directly denied that a woman could become 100% herself as she envisioned. Fupan claimed that a woman could only earn her "relative independence" by "earning" acknowledgment from various critical stakeholders. Instead of struggling between a woman's self-identity for her own "legend" and the societal expectations for a woman, Fupan regarded a woman leader as a steward to serve her family, work, and society while developing herself. A key characteristic of servant leaders is stewardship for others, who entrust critical

tasks (e.g., money, property, and people) to the servant leader (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Fupan said:

The so-called leadership that women need, the scope and scale of the requirements, standards, and criteria of [women's leadership] are wider and deeper than men. So if let me define women's leadership, women's leadership should be the combination of a woman's capability and character. It includes women's behaviors, values, personality, and many things below the iceberg. Women's leadership has many dimensions, work, family, and society...For each dimension, there are different elements. A woman's capability and character should be developed in a way that meets the requirements for her career development, for her to build a family and maintain a family, and on a larger scale in a big societal environment, for her to have her various role-based identities with her responsibility for each role, so she can EARN both her relative independence and the acknowledgment from the societal values based on each culture's value systems, criteria, and standards...Through your collaboration with others, by your contribution to others, you would EARN others' respect, EARN your status in the group, EARN others' acknowledgment and respect. I think this is something an individual woman can control and can work on...During the whole process of working with others, actually everyone has their own evaluation in their hearts. When you treat others with humility and shoulder your responsibility, you will be regarded as reliable by others. Be responsible, be reliable.

Hollander (2009) claimed that although a woman who has a leadership role is likely to be challenged and experience "initial disadvantage" when starting to manage a mixed-sex group, the individual differences, competence, and fairness matter more than the gender (p. 78). De Lauretis (1984) brought the concept of subjectivity into the discussion of women. The unique experience of each individual, and the interaction of both the individual's outer and inner world shape the subjectivity of the person. Therefore, the subjectivity of a woman is

not determined by gender nor by the woman's "free and rational" intention; it is a continuous and evolving process of the "engagement of a self in social reality" in practice (De Lauretis, 1984, p. 182). In terms of how to be a successful woman, instead of angrily criticizing or vulnerably crying about the unfair treatment, Fupan smiled to shoulder her responsibilities for others: "To be a successful woman means she must make much more efforts than men if she wants to achieve the same level with men at work...ha ha ha... You must be prepared for doing more work in advance."

It is not enough for a woman leader's success to be like a man, equal with men, or even win over men based on gender-gap evaluations in women's empowerment discourse. A woman leader "must be ready to work harder than men." Although the gender gap in education in many countries means more women have higher education levels than men, the gender gaps in economic participation and political empowerment have been only closed by 58% and 22% , respectively (WEF, 2021). The 2019 *World Gender Gap Report* indicated that it would take 202 years to close the gender gap in economic participation, but the new data in the 2021 report showed that it would take 267.6 years to close the economic gender gap (WEF, 2019/2021). Despite women's higher education, their economic situation is deteriorating. Women's ambitious imagination to *have it all* is not enough to stop women's rapid deteriorating situation.

Lifelong Humility, Student Identity, and Diligence with Sustainable Awesomeness

Although it is hard to become awesome, it is harder to maintain sustainably awesomeness. The promotion process from awkwardness to awesomeness for all participants tests participants' humility. After making just one awesome achievement, the *Yang* self-leaders immediately became arrogant with their self-belief in their forever awesomeness, which resulted in their quick demoting process from awesomeness to awkwardness or trauma. In contrast, the *Yin* self-leaders became humbler. Confucius warned awesome leaders that the way to maintain sustainable awesomeness and maximize benefits was to suppress the self by sharing self-interests with others (CTP, 2016, Xunzi, Youzuo).

Although Fupan is already the owner of one of the biggest Chinese private consulting companies, her self-concept of herself and her husband is always humble:

I think that my husband and I have contributed a little bit to the betterment of our industry in China. In this regard, I might have a little bit of a sense of self-actualization if I use Maslow's hierarchy of needs to describe my feelings. However, we've never overestimated our capabilities. We are probably the ones, who know nothing and fear nothing. We are from the grassroots. Ha ha... We are both from poor and rural China. We don't have a strong background and resourceful *guanxi*...

Fupan's "a little bit" sense of her self-actualization in the interview might be better explained by my simple Google research indicating that she has four children, a Ph.D. degree, a postdoc, many published papers, and books, and has

established one of the largest consulting companies in China with many Chinese and international partners. There are also several office buildings and streets named after her company in most Chinese big cities. When I asked participants to give themselves a pseudonym, they normally chose a cool name for themselves, such as “superwoman.” However, Fupan insisted that I gave her a pseudonym that was good for my research. Therefore, I just used her workshop’s name, Fupan, which means performance review, as her pseudonym.

The *Yang* self-leaders had “vast enjoyment” to hear others’ praise about their high IQ, EQ, and ethics, and others’ vast pain, but they were mad to hear about others’ disagreements and achievements. The *Yin* self-leaders were happy to criticize themselves and praise others’ achievements and were unhappy to hear others’ praise about them. Participant A was so happy to talk about how bad her research was, which made her work hard: “When I see others’ research, I feel others’ research is good and mine is so bad. Ha ha ha. So, I must work hard!” When I asked her if she felt proud of herself after finishing her difficult doctoral journey, she did not disagree with me directly as she did not want to make me lose face. However, she corrected me with a serious look: “I felt a great sense of accomplishment after I finished my doctoral journey...I’ve known there is no such a thing as the most difficult thing. There are always things that are more difficult.”

During the whole interview, Fupan not only openly laughed at all her “awkwardness,” but even actively developed her innovative metaphors to make me laugh at her “awkwardness,” such as using the “assembly line” to tell me how she made four kids during her doctoral journey through her whole family system.

All participants wanted to study. However, the *Yang* self-leaders wanted to study how to get a Ph.D., a dream job, and climb up to the top of the social hierarchy in the most efficient way. The *Yang* self-leaders always behaved like the teachers of others even when they knew nothing but they pretended they knew about everything. Therefore, the *Yang* self-leaders stopped learning after they earned their Ph.D. However, the *Yin* self-leaders wanted to learn from others as others’ students even when they were the experts on the subject. The *Yin* self-leaders never stopped learning. Lily pointed out the student identity for everyone: “At one point in our life, we are all international students, we are all students, we are all new students.”

Although the *Yinyang* self-leaders did not pursue a linear self-development as aggressively as the *Yang* self-leaders and build supportive relationships to get others’ help for their promotion in an indirect way, both the *Yang* and *Yinyang* self-leaders wanted to use their “lazy diligence” to work diligently for a while to have a lazy and comfortable life. However, the *Yin* self-leaders wanted to use life-long learning and their diligence to cultivate themselves based on their life-long humility for others and the uncertain future.

Firestone (2020) claimed that crisis leadership is long-term, proactive, and preventive leadership behaviors with an emphasis on learning from errors and scenario planning to prevent potential future crises, while crisis management is short-term, reactive, and responsive management activities with little learning, reflection, and transparent communication. This is probably why the *Yin* self-leaders happily shared all their awkwardness with their active solutions to make things better for the future and they perceived no crises in their lives. In contrast, *Yang* self-leaders “confidently” talked about their own awesomeness and criticized others’ “stupidity” without the intention and sources to learn anything other than their own awesomeness and others’ “stupidity.” Consequently, without any preparation for potential risks and future changes, the *Yang* self-leaders’ lives were full of crises and even trauma.

Instead of changing to become a “new person” from an intimidated girl to an intimidating woman narcissist or a lazy professor after their doctoral journey, I was impressed to see the *Yin* self-leaders display their humility, diligence, and learning attitude even after they had achieved big to continue their progress. Instead of yelling at others or playing “hard tricks” to force others to submit to the leader, Confucius said: “A morally superior person keeps being humble until the end of life. All people submit to a diligent and humble person. A humble person can lead others to get across the biggest river together” (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Qian: 1, 2, 4).

A Gentle Little Girl and a Water Lady in a Big Wonderland

Although *Yang* self-leaders hate to be regarded as a “soft little girl” by others and want others to know their high IQ, EQ, ethics and “iron will” as a superwoman, *Yin* self-leaders think that they are just a little girl. They do not mind others’ discrimination but others’ praise for them. However, “the little girl” identity makes *Yin* self-leaders like *Alice in Wonderland*. After shrinking herself, Alice saw a wonderworld. In contrast, “the superwoman” identity with the “iron will” makes *Yang* self-leaders only see a “brutal tribal world” and the need to “kill a bloody path.” Participant A experienced many great achievements in terms of publications, teaching, scholarship, and a good tenure-track job in a STEM field. However, she always said she was bad. When I asked her if I could say she was humble, she immediately denied it:

No, I really feel in my heart that I have low self-esteem. I always think others are good and want to learn from others...others really like to help me as they can see that I am really bad. Ha ha ha...Really, in a group, if you show others that you know everything, no one likes to help you... You know it, so you do it.... I like working in a group.

Fupan’s wonderland is not only having an office as a professional but having her own office buildings and branch offices in all big major cities in China and several cities in the U.S. However, each time after Fupan taught me how she solved the dilemma for a woman that failed current feminist scholars, she smiled like a little girl with considerable shyness: “This was JUST MY OWN experience and feelings. Ha ha.”

Unlike *Yang* self-leaders, who are opinionated and force others to agree with their opinions but refuse to learn from others, *Yin* self-leaders refuse to use their own opinions to represent all others. Fupan's warmth and gentleness was very different from the *Yang* self-leaders' "confident" screaming communication and F word. Many women leaders and women's leadership theories including my first dissertation proposal encouraged women to be confident to pursue career success. However, as a successful woman leader with more than 100 employees, Fupan did not try to convince others based on her capabilities, self-confidence, and criticism of others, but by her humility, empathy, and encouragement for others to include others to form a big team. Fupan's smile with shyness actually made her look like a little girl in front of me and made me like a teacher to judge her opinion. Instead of showing off her *having-it-all*, Fupan told me all her *having-none-of-it* background without enough food, clothes, English language skills and even Mandarin, in addition to having no money, *guanxi*, and experience to do everything. When she talked about her difficult times, many times she lowered her head and admitted her limitations that she did not know how to solve the challenges, and no one could help her but her own endurance and persistence.

Instead of *Yang* self-leaders' "speaking loudly or confidently" with a yelling tone, the *Yin* self-leaders' tone was soft. Luyinbi's tone was even vulnerable. Not only did she admit that she could not use English to do the interview although she teaches Ph.D. students management in the U.S., she even

began to stutter and spoke broken Chinese sentences when she tried hard to describe her deep feelings. Sometimes, she was afraid that she might answer things that I did not ask her: “Did you ask me about this before?...ha ha. Did I answer your question?”

However, those soft women with little confidence in themselves and a little girl’s tone displayed strong confidence in others and courage to reveal their vulnerabilities to let me research them without any fear. Although the *Yin* self-leaders looked weak in everything, they empowered me the most. Interestingly, the gentle little girls empowered others but humbled themselves; whereas the assertive iron women empowered no one including themselves by suppressing others and their own authentic feelings. With a green card, Participant ICWDSUS@ angrily yelled at me about the impossibility for an international student like me without a green card to get a good job in the U.S.:

Don’t think of yourself too well! The working visa would make you understand how hard it is for you as an international student to find a job! For example, all jobs in the federal government require you to have a green card at least, preferably citizenship. Therefore, no international students can do that. Do you understand what I mean?!

In contrast, when I shared my green card concern with Luyinbi, she immediately said: “It is ok. I have no green card. No problem. You just fill in the forms that you need to fill. The HR person just wanted to know.”

Many Western scholars have criticized that “gendered talk makes a gendered life” with gendered stereotypes and gender identities (Hall & Bucholtz,

2012, p. 401). Among the participants, the *Yin* self-leaders talked softest and achieved the most; while the *Yang* self-leaders talked the loudest and achieved the least.

Western feminists often use *waves* as the metaphor to describe feminist movements with the simultaneous process of initiating transformation and being transformed (Linden, 2012). When the ocean breaks on the beach, each time the shapes of both the wave and shoreline have changed immediately by the wave moving forward, encountering barriers, retreating, and coming back again. Likewise, the Chinese women leaders, such as the *Yin* self-leaders in my study, use water as a metaphor to describe women's advancement: *The canal will be naturally formed with the flowing of the water (shui dao qu cheng)* (Brazill, 2021; Ha et al., 2018). If Western women leaders are often like iron ladies with power, Chinese women leaders are more like water ladies with gentleness, flexibility, and perseverance (Lee, 2017; Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016). The hard iron would be broken by harder cultural constraints. *Dripping water hollows out a stone (di shui chuan shi)* through perseverance rather than power. Lao Zi said: "There is nothing in the world softer than water, but there is nothing more effective than water to conquer strong things. Although everyone in the world knows the fact that the soft overcomes the hard, no one is able to carry it out in practice" (CTP, 2016, Dao De Jing: 78).

Detail-oriented Interaction

In the *Yinyang* challenges in Chapter 4, I discussed the *Yinyang* sides of the help from others. When a woman receives help from others, sometimes others' help can unintentionally hurt the woman. Therefore, I was quite impressed that Fupan paid full attention to all the details to help me without harming or criticizing me. I did not know Fupan before the interview. I just watched one of her online workshops and contacted her via WeChat to invite her to join my research. She immediately accepted my invitation with a polite and enthusiastic reply and actively helped me arrange the interview time and logistics without me asking. Although I introduced myself as a Ph.D. student, she did not treat me as a student, but addressed me as a respectful professional with a smiling emoji: “Jinfang! How do you do! I am really glad to know YOU (*nin*). Your dissertation topic is so detailed!:)”

In Chinese, there are two ways to say YOU: *ni* is you to a person who is in an equal or inferior level; *nin* is you to a person who is in a higher level. Although Fupan is probably the most senior woman leader of all the participants, she is the only participant who always used *nin* to address me to put me in a higher level than her. On the day we met, she logged into the Tencent meeting room but immediately logged out. While I was surprised why she logged out, she joined the meeting a few minutes later, and explained to me: “I realized that my Tencent account's name is my real name, not the pseudo name you gave me. So, I

renamed my Tencent account's name to be Fupan, so when you record the video, it would be Fupan, and you would not need to change it.”

During the whole interview, she called herself Fupan. Although it was my job to guarantee participants' anonymity, and I would change their real names to pseudo names when I transcribed, Fupan's active and detailed action saved me considerable work. Fupan also noticed that my Tencent account name was Jackie, rather than the Chinese name I told Fupan before. Fupan immediately changed to use my English name during the whole interview.

Once I found out she had four children waiting for their mother to go home on Friday night, I wanted to finish my interview quickly. However, Fupan did not let me stop my interview because of her. After I finished my interview, it was already after 9pm Friday evening. However, she used another 30 minutes to ask me about my dissertation and job searching situation with encouragement and suggestions. From the interview video, I could not see any tiredness and impatience from Fupan during the whole interview. She wore a beautiful red suit. The color of her coat and her lipstick matched very well, and her hairstyle was very neat. After recording many participants, who wore casual hoodies to record the interview on Zoom, Fupan looked the most professional in the video. It seemed that she prepared for all the details of the interview to ensure the success of our interview.

Reducing a Big Problem to a Smaller Problem with a Focus on One's Own

Integrity

The *Yang* self-leaders angrily criticized, accepted, expanded, and manipulated discrimination to put others down for self-promotion. The *Yinyang* self-leaders avoided talking about social ills as they wanted to expand good relationships with everyone to get relational support from others for self-promotion. However, the *Yin* self-leaders had no pragmatic and grandiose ambition to expand their self-interests either individualistically or collectively. The *Yin* self-leaders confronted the social ills in their lives with their *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) love, responsibilities, serious analysis, and active solutions for the betterment of all. Lora did not avoid talking about the social ills of both China and the U.S. However, she did not expand but tried to reduce the problems in both nations. When I asked Lora about the negative side of China, she said: “In China, if you want to do some work, you must use *guanxi* from one level to another level...However, it was 10 years ago. China probably has already changed.”

Instead of trying to expand one single negative experience to the whole population to be a big problem forever for others' sad future, Lora controlled the problem within a time frame with her expectation for a better future for others. When she talked about her challenge as a Chinese woman after the pandemic, although she mentioned the xenophobia of some local American workers with a

smile, she refused to generalize to all American people and reduced the population to a small group with her understanding of the group:

In my office, everyone has a higher level of education than me. I have not experienced any discrimination...The university has strict diversity management policies, and it is a big thing to racially discriminate against others... However, in the field with the field workers, some workers would not listen to me as they thought I was “a little girl.” Some workers said “China virus” to me...ha ha...However, they were just in a joking way, not a directly discriminative way. Not all people were like that, but just a few. Most American people are simple and nice.

Unlike the *Yang* self-leaders who angrily criticized others and expanded personal experience or just personal bias to the biggest population without a solution but voiced hatred for others, Lora laughed and told me her analysis of the problem and her solution:

Those workers have never been abroad. They didn't finish their high school education, so if they were told “China virus”, they would just say “China virus”...They had this kind of stereotype because their information source was biased. When I heard someone said “China virus” to me, I would gently explain it to them. Let them understand by the facts and let their hearts be touched by my kind intentions (*xiao zhi yi li, dong zhi yiqing*), like “well, this is not the issue, the issue is that China had the virus, but we (China) reported the virus to the world very early. If you look at the timeline, the pandemic in the U.S. was not the problem of China.”

Although the *Yang* self-leaders emphasized their iron will and had no hesitation to attack or yell at other vulnerable people to “kill a bloody path” for their development, they cried, shivered, and surrendered in when they faced social ills. However, I was surprised to find out that the gentle and “easygoing” *Yin* self-leaders, who laughed at their own “awkwardness,” “low-level,” and

“bad[ness],” were not easygoing to the social ills in their lives. Instead, they actively and wisely stood up to solve the problem. When American workers said “China virus” to Lora, she said:

As Chinese, I had to say something, otherwise, I would feel too bad. I would tell them the fact. However, I would not force the workers to listen to me. I would not argue or debate with them to force them to agree with me, as I was also afraid...ha ha...They were all strong men from the working class... Normally they would not debate with me angrily and they would end the conversation. No one wanted to break the harmonious professional relationship...I know no matter what I said, they may not listen to me. However, I still felt I had to say something when someone said “China virus” to me, but you should avoid having direct and confrontational conflicts.

Lora was very clear about how to communicate in a tense situation with the fearful respect for others and unknown situations as well as her careful interventions. Lora’s gentle but courageous communication helped American workers lessen their hostility toward Chinese people and better understand the pandemic from different perspectives. Although Lora could not solve the gender and racial discrimination in the whole society, she solved, or at least stopped or diminished the discrimination in her life. In 2022, with more reports on anti-Asian racism in the U.S., I asked Lora about how she coped with the racism against her as a Chinese woman. Instead of being scared or angry with others’ discrimination against her, she emphasized her own integrity, individual personality, and contribution to the group:

Admittedly, people on campus may follow political correctness, but in their hearts, maybe they have discrimination and I would not know. For

me, I just try my best to teach well and work well. The racial discrimination on a whole race level could be reduced to an issue between one individual to another individual. Whether others like to talk with you, work with you, or be with you is mainly up to your personality, your capability, your values for the group, and your contribution to the group...By looking at how I, as a Chinese woman, teach and work and treat others with respect, I think that others might change their negative views about China a little bit. My American students and colleagues see my hard work and my respect for others, and they would not believe that all Chinese are as bad as the mass media said. And then gradually, they can influence others around them to change the stereotypes against Chinese or Asians. People are not stupid and they have their own judgment based on their interactions with you.

Lora's story provided a case study for what *wenhua* meant by using communication, morality, and education (*wen*) to gradually transform (*hua*) and why Chinese culture (*wenhua*) was against *wuhua* by using power to force (*wu*) others to change (*hua*). In 2022, the increasingly severe Anti-Asian hatred had not bothered Lora, but promoted her to a leadership position as a Chinese woman faculty: "In my university, not only have I never experienced any discrimination but there are more diversity training and supportive policies to support Asian and Chinese. As I am a Chinese woman, I am currently taking some leadership roles in the diversity committee in my department."

Reducing Her Comment into the Scope She Knows

Unlike the *Yang* self-leaders, who expanded their personal views to represent everyone to highlight their smartness and others' corruption in their psychological colonies, the *Yin* self-leaders narrowed a big topic to the smaller scope of their own lives to provide a responsible answer. When I asked about

Luyinbi's first impression of the U.S., she corrected my question with a gentle smile: "I could not say I know the whole U.S. I could only say my impression of the state where I lived."

Her Fear

Instead of becoming prouder after completing her doctoral journey and landing a dream job, the *Yin* self-leaders became more fearful and wanted to learn more. When I asked Participant A if she was proud of herself after her doctoral journey, she instead told me her authentic fear:

The doctoral journey made me more resilient and I am able to endure more pressure. In my current job, I have no challenge. I don't have the joy after achieving a challenge, but fear. Therefore, I force myself to attend conferences to push me to do some research. I must find ways to stimulate myself to do research.

The *Book of Changes* warned leaders to be more careful after being promoted. After a person is promoted to a leadership position, it is the most dangerous moment as unknown challenges can come from all aspects of the person (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Qian: 1). Therefore, instead of being confident and proud, a morally superior person should be vigilant and careful day and night as if the leader is in danger and dare not slack off. A morally superior person works hard ceaselessly (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Qian: 1). After completing the doctoral journey, *Yin* self-leaders become "more resilient," while *Yang* self-leaders' artificial "iron will" in front of others cannot hide their increasing psychological crises.

Her Fear for Hurting Others

Confucius claimed that “Morally superior people fear heaven’s will, authorities, and sages teaching. Morally inferior people do not know heaven, so they do not fear heaven’s will. Morally inferior people also disrespect authorities and insult sages’ teachings” (CTP, 2016, Analects, Jishi:8). Although some *Yang* self-leaders claim serious religious beliefs, they do not really fear God but use God to make them look more awesome and others more awkward. The angry yelling with iron will to send others “directly to hell” shows the fear of *Yang* self-leaders to lose their self-interests and ego. *Yinyang* self-leaders like to criticize themselves and praise others with humility but have no fear. With good relationships with others, *Yinyang* self-leaders do not have enemies to attack them. With humility, *Yinyang* self-leaders do not fear losing their ego. However, in addition to humility, *Yin* self-leaders are fearful. Although most *Yin* self-leaders do not have a religion, they are fearful for not being able to serve others well in unknown situations.

Unlike the *Yang* self-leaders who highlighted their help for me to get their incentives from me, the *Yin* self-leaders gave me a new lesson about what authentic help for others is like. The *Yin* self-leaders not only wanted to help me, but they actually worried if what they told me was really helpful for me, rather than hurting me, and thanked me for helping them learn new things after they tried their best to help me. As a *having-it-all* woman leader, Fupan helped my

research greatly by carefully preparing for the interview, openly and generously sharing her personal experiences and solutions for women's challenges, and encouraging me. However, she did not help me in a top-down patronizing way by reminding me of her help for a "stupid" me nor in an equal reciprocal way for her benefits too. She helped me in an extremely humble way with her fear about the results of her help. When I asked Fupan about her leadership, she immediately denied that she had leadership although she told me about her women's leadership secrets:

For me, I can't say I have leadership. I dare not say I understand leadership...I dare not say I understand women's leadership.....but if I could be of any help for your data collection, I would love to help you. I just don't know if the data I provided would be helpful for you.... I could only think of those points. I am not sure if they can help you or not...ha ha ha...Don't worry about my time...I have learned a lot from you. Have a good weekend!

The fear of *Yang* and *Yin* self-leaders are totally opposite. The *Yang* self-leaders feared that others might not know their awesomeness and regard them as "a soft Asian girl" without fearing them. The *Yang* self-leaders' used their yelling power and "psychological games" to let others "dare not to do unfair things to [them]!" The *Yin* self-leaders feared that their limited capabilities might give the wrong information to others and hurt others. When I asked Participant A to define leadership, instead of defining leadership, she criticized herself:

My leadership skills are not good either. Although I tried my best to push myself to improve, like attending some student associations as a president...I admitted that I was not a good leader in a group. I don't like

to take control of the whole situation, but like to listen to others... The reason that I didn't want to take control as I didn't want to be responsible for the consequences. For example, if you express your view in a group meeting and people follow your view, what if bad things happened after all followed your view, so I don't like to be responsible for too many things (She made a guilty face to show she didn't like her way)... This is my weakness. So I wrote my new year's resolutions as "take more initiatives" so I can push myself to take more responsibility to shoulder some responsibilities for the group, to do some things for others, even only for a few people, even only say a few sentences, and if bad things happened, I am willing to be responsible for all consequences. A good leader must have the courage to shoulder the bad consequences. However, in this regard, I am bad...

Yang self-leaders' understanding of leadership is to "chase power, not popularity" without the "need to be liked" by others through making compromises for others (Zhendorfer, 2021, p. 232). With a focus on maximizing their self-interests and faith in their own awesomeness, narcissistic *Yang* self-leaders neglect their responsibility for others to "kill a bloody path" to win over others. Facing the negative experiences, they just blame all problems on others' faults while stealing credits from others (Day et al., 2020). The *Yin* self-leaders' understanding of leadership is "the responsibilities for many things." Therefore, Participant A admitted that she was not ready to be responsible for many unknown consequences to let others follow her views with the fear of hurting others. However, she has been taking action to improve her leadership little by little. She did not know that she actually demonstrated authentic leadership by admitting her limitations and being honest with others (Men, 2014).

Her Fearful Respect for Unknown Situations and Her Careful Preparation

Yang self-leaders have no respect for unknown situations, and only worship their own awesomeness from their past achievements. *Yinyang* self-leaders respect unknown situations by humbling themselves to seek others' help. *Yin* self-leaders fear unknown situations that they cannot control. Confucius described his talent selection criteria:

I would not work with a person, who will attack a tiger without any prepared weapons, cross a river without a boat, and die without any regret. My partner must be a person, who faces a challenge with awe and likes to think carefully about how to achieve a goal (CTP, 2016, Analects, Shu'er: 11).

Yin self-leaders refuse to hate or challenge their challenges. When I asked Participant A how she overcame challenges during the doctoral journey, she seriously denied that she overcame her challenges:

I am ALWAYS the WORST student. I am NEVER a confident person...I was never a good student even in China...Although my Ph.D. journey was really really hard, was really tiring and painful, I kept progressing. After I achieved a hard challenge, I had a great sense of accomplishment, and then I would encounter new challenges, I would be the worst again and I must work hard to catch up to make me better and better...Now if I encounter any challenge, I would say to myself as long as I try my best to endure, I could PASS through the challenge.

The action verbs Participant A used when she discussed her challenges caught my attention. She did not use “overcome,” “conquer,” “jump over,” or “embrace” to confront challenges. Instead, she used the verbs “endure,” “achieve,” and “pass through” in front of the word, *challenge*. She did not regard a challenge as an enemy to conquer, a simple hurdle to jump over, nor a friend to

embrace for quick and linear self-progress, but she sought a higher level of standard for herself to achieve deeper self-transformation through a long painful process from being the worst to becoming the best. After becoming the best, she did not stay in her comfort zone as a superwoman but chose to be the worst student again to face new challenges and started her new learning journey. Instead of *Yang* self-leaders' static self-evaluation as the best of all after just achieving one material goal (e.g., land a dream job) by winning over others, Participant A's self-evaluation was a diligent self-developing process from being the worst of all in her psychological world to repeatedly receiving an A grade in everything.

In terms of women's leadership, *Yang* self-leaders either angrily criticized gender discrimination or proudly believed that "women can win against men." Instead of criticizing or despising men, *Yin* self-leaders have fearful respect for societal culture and their challenges as a woman with serious thinking, rather than emotional responses. Participant JJ honestly admitted that she did not know about women's leadership, and shared her feelings when she heard the phrase "women's leadership": "My first response after hearing the phrase of *women's leadership* was like the challenge and the pressure for women. For a long time, people felt the leadership of women was not good."

Although Participant ICWDSUS* suffered from many challenges from study to life during her first semester in the U.S., after becoming an assistant professor, she forgot all her challenges before but just recalled her "confidence"

in her awesomeness. Instead of serious self-reflection when she had endless conflicts with her new colleagues, department head, students, and advisees, Participant ICWDSUS* laughed confidently and concluded that everyone was strange and selfish: “Why are people around me all strange and selfish? Ha Ha Ha.” Her confident laughter showed that she had no concern that I might be offended by either being included as one of strange and selfish people around her or being excluded as non-human around her as I did not belong to her high-level “STEM circle.” In contrast, Luyinbi carefully analyzed and navigated her new world with respect for others and received help from others in the end:

When I transitioned from a student to an assistant professor, I felt no one can help me. When I was a student, I had an advisor, so I could always go to ask her whenever I had a question, or I did something wrong. I knew that I had one teacher to guide me. However, after becoming an assistant professor, my relationships with others are all working relationships. No one is obligated to guide me. Everyone is a colleague. If they help me, I should appreciate it. If they don't help me, that is their right. To help you is not their duty. Therefore, when I seek help from my colleagues, I would think first if I would bother others too much or if I asked too much. My relationships as an assistant professor with other faculty members are new to me, especially as a new faculty in my early career, how to talk with my colleagues, what to talk with my colleagues, I have to think well before I speak...I fear that if I would say something wrong to hurt others. I have to think first before I talk.

Six common results of one's change management in the *Book of Changes* are to lose, gain, regret, hate, be blamed by others, or not to be blamed by others (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Xi Ci I: 3). Confucius explained: “If one keeps

one's integrity, one would never have regret, hatred, or anxiety; If one repents, one would never get blamed by others. “

When Participant ICWDSUS* faced numerous conflicts with others, she had no self-reflection about her own problems, but just continued to laugh at others' “stupidity.” She did not know that what she laughed at could be the most important lesson she should learn. The word, *to know*, is *Zhi Dao* in Chinese language, which literally means to know (*zhi*) the *Dao*. Daoism founder, Lao Zi claimed that *Dao* is hard to define, but could be detected by different people's reactions after they hear the *Dao*:

After hearing the *Dao*, scholars of the highest class earnestly carry it into practice; scholars of the middle class both believe and doubt in a degree; scholars of the lowest class laugh greatly at it. If it was not (thus) laughed at, it would not be fit to be the *Dao*.

For Fupan and Luyinbi, the reason they pursued a Ph.D. after earning their master's degrees was their fear of not knowing enough. Fupan said: “After I finished my master's degree, the more I studied, the more I felt I knew nothing. So, I started to feel fear in my heart. I became more and more panicked, so I wanted to pursue a PhD to learn more.”

Yin self-leaders's fear may be called as an *imposter syndrome*, which is common for many highly educated and capable women and individuals (Gu, 2016). However, instead of being stuck in the *imposter syndrome* in the heart by ignoring the fear or telling the world that “I am always very confident” and

“awesome” like the *Yang* self-leaders, *Yin* self-leaders chose to reflect more, study more, and be more careful and diligent. The fear of the *Yin* self-leaders during uncertain times helped them steadily transition in unknown situations from an “imposter” to an authentic and responsible professional, who was accepted by others by shouldering their responsibilities for themselves and others. In contrast, although the *Yang* self-leaders demonstrated great confidence by yelling and laughing at all “useless” others, their transitions were traumatic with their *Yin* challenges from being an intimidated girl, an arrogant woman, and to a confusing, angry, and aggressive woman narcissist with psychological crises. Confucius explained why the *Book of Changes* is named the easiness to change (*Yi*):

One’s fear can make one seek security; one’s carelessness is sure to meet with overthrow....If one can have fear from the beginning to the end, one can make no error to cause for the blame from others. This is the *Dao* of the *Yi* (ease/change) (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Xi Ci II:11).

When I tried to examine the fear and confidence of the participants, I found the key differences between *Yin* and *Yang* self-leaders. The fear and self-confidence of *Yin* self-leaders are others-oriented and future-oriented. With the understanding that one cannot fully control others and unknown situations for now and for the future, the *Yin* self-leaders did not even want to talk about self-confidence, but feared that they may not serve others well. However, the fear and confidence of the *Yang* self-leaders was self-centered and past-oriented. With the total focus on their own world and achievement in the past, the *Yang* self-leaders’

self-confidence was from their past achievement. The *Yang* self-leaders' fear was the potential loss of their benefits and ego, which they had gained in the past. Thus, the *Yang* self-leaders' confidence in the past would soon become their regret for the past and confusion for the future. When Participant A described why she was afraid of talking with American people when she just arrived in the U.S., she said with a serious look:

I am intimidated in a new environment...Even when I am in China, whenever I talk with a person I don't know, I am afraid that I may not express myself clearly enough to be understood by others, which may waste others' time trying to understand me...So in the U.S., at first, I dared not to speak in English with others.

Although both Participants A and Participant ICWDSUS* said that they were afraid of “wasting others' time,” Participant A was afraid of wasting others' time listening to her explanations, which might be unclear for others, and Participant ICWDSUS* was afraid of wasting her own time to explain to “stupid” others, who would never understand her wisdom.

Her Courageous, Active, and Patient *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) Love for Peace

Ren (*human-benevolence*) love is peaceful but active. *Yang* self-leaders have the ontology of “a brutal tribal world” and epistemology of “killing a bloody path,” and they seem to love separating from, competing with, and winning over “awkward” others. Both *Yinyang* and *Yin* self-leaders want inclusion and peace with others. Although *Yinyang* and *Yin* self-leaders may look similar, *Yinyang*

self-leaders' love for inclusion and peace is for more self-benefits, so they pragmatically avoid getting involved in social problems to avoid hurting any parties by remaining neutral. Although *Yinyang* self-leaders are not like *Yang* self-leaders, who actively criticize and develop new social ills, *Yinyang* self-leaders' love for peace is passive and their neutrality to pragmatically stand by the social ills does not contribute to the betterment of society. In contrast, *Yin* self-leaders' inclusion and love for peace is the active *Ren (benevolence/human)* love for all, so they have no hesitation to shoulder their responsibilities within their capabilities to reduce the social ills in their own lives for the betterment for all.

Ren (benevolence/human) Courage, Rather Than Narcissistic Confidence

Helson et al.'s (2020) half-century-long research about women showed that it takes more than the usual level of confidence, ambition, initiative, and an innate desire to challenge her own intellect for a woman to "lean in" in a sexist workplace. In my study, I call the unusual level of confidence to confront social ills *Ren (benevolence/human)* courage to differentiate it with narcissistic confidence. *Ren (benevolence/human)* courage looks humble without self-confidence, but they have the determination to remain their authentic self and have a *Ren (benevolence/human)* heart when they face challenges from social ills. Not only did the *Yin* self-leaders refuse to yield to social ills, but they had the courage to confront, heal the social ills, and optimistically envision a better future for all. Unlike fighting like a fearless hero in a brutal battle by killing all

competitors or enemies, *Yin* self-leaders' *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) courage is gentle, rational, and empathetic, harmonizing confrontational situations to be peaceful. When Lora talked about why she had no conflict with anyone, she smiled:

It is not because I don't have confidence. It is also up to the personality. My personality doesn't allow me to be tough to others...I could not give others a tough look and just ask others to do whatever I said. I don't want to force others. I will think about others' feelings. I get along with others harmoniously...I think my parents have also influenced me. My mother is a very gentle person, so I rarely argue with others.

However, the "easygoing" and "gentle" girl stood up in front of many American blue-collar workers to stop them from saying "China virus" with her gentle explanation and hard evidence. In contrast to *Yang* self-leaders' fighting for their self-interests by attacking vulnerable parties and playing a victim role to manipulate powerful parties' sympathy to get more self-interests and *Yinyang* self-leaders' avoidance of any conflicts to maintain good relationships with all parties, gentle *Yin* self-leaders stand up in the middle of two fighting parties to protect both parties from hurting each other and themselves. Although *Yin* self-leaders may get involved in a confrontational situation, their gentle communication, wisdom, and self-control diffused the anger and increased understanding of both confrontational sides. When Fupan described her darkest moment during her doctoral journey when her advisor could not give her advice

but just told her, “You are the researcher. If you don’t know, how should I know?” I told Fupan:

This is the problem of postmodernism in the West. Everything seems to be relative and everyone is supposed to know their own lives, but everyone is confused, even confused with their own identity with their identity crises...In Chinese culture, scholars must answer the question of HOW in addition to WHAT. Just telling people to love and trust others without telling people HOW to love and trust is a dangerous and irresponsible suggestion.

Hearing my criticism against Western culture, Fupan disagreed with me by agreeing with me first to allow me to save face and explained her advisor’s perspective with a smile:

Yeah,...but later I soon realized and appreciated the way how my advisor guided me. When my advisor accepted me as her last student, she already had breast cancer for more than a decade. During my doctoral journey, she really wanted me to graduate early, so she could retire and her physical health did deteriorate. However, she never lowered her standard to my studies just because she wanted me to graduate early, so I struggled with my studies for several years...During my final defense, she asked me the final question, which was supposed to be the most difficult question. She asked me: “What have you learned during your PhD program?” ha ha ha...I said: “I have learned patience and perseverance.” I didn’t explain even and I saw all my committee applauded, and they said: “You can graduate!”...During my doctoral journey, I was like the little monk, who went to the temple to learn, but just chopped the woods day after day, until the little monk suddenly had the revelation that she actually learned the most important thing, which is patience and persistence. That is the most important Kongfu I learned from a master for my whole life, not knowledge models. Many times, our company was almost bankrupt, but I always remembered the lesson that I learned from my advisor to be patient and persistent, our company has survived and developed each year.

Hearing my criticism against the problem of Western culture, Participant ICWDSUS@ in the U.S. immediately yelled to insult me as “Chinese Trump” and

insult Chinese culture as “primitive;” Participant ICWDSUS+ in China immediately followed me and attacked Western culture even more strongly; Participant ICWDSUS* immediately attacked both Western and Chinese cultures, but Fupan respectfully stopped my criticism and actively listened to my research about both cultures. Fupan’s way to transform a potential culture war to be a culture revelation for everyone earned my total respect.

When I asked ICWDSUS+ what she meant by saying “the image of a Chinese woman leader,” she answered me with her deep breath like my “stupid” question made her hypoxia:

Just like a normal person (deep breathe)! In this century or in the coming few decades, China would take the leadership position from the U.S. In East Asia, China is a leading country...In the internet world, women entrepreneurs in China probably more than men, at least about half.... If women can be united, as the minority and vulnerable group, women can win against men and women can become the majority and strong group. Ha ha.

ICWDSUS+ is in China and believes China is better than the U. S. and will be the best nation of the world, and Participant ICWDSUS* and Participant ICWDSUS@ are in the U.S. and believe that China is “primitive,” and the U.S. is the best nation in the world. Participant ICWDSUS* told me why she chose the U.S. for her overseas studies:

The U.S. is the best country in the world! The research and the economy are all the best in the world!...and the research quality in the U.S. is much higher and stricter than the research in China! Of course, WE (the U.S.) have more resources here. This is the most important reason I chose to study in the U.S., rather than in Canada or China.

Although Participant ICWDSUS+ and Participant ICWDSUS* may have very different political stands due to their locations, *Yang* self-leaders just want themselves to be the best. Their “successful” result is their own party “winning” over all others. Participant ICWDSUS* said:

So it was really hard to let your voice to be heard first of all as a female, What we need to do is to start from changing ourselves first, speaking more confidently and loudly...showing the male-dominated world that WE are not incapable, and actually WE are the experts in our field, WE can make contributions to our society!

By using “WE” to mean women as opposed to men, Participant ICWDSUS* already excluded men from the “WE,” who are “experts in our field” and “make contributions to our society.” In contrast, regardless of locations, *Yin* self-leaders want both China and the U.S. and everyone to be good. *Yin* self-leaders’ “successful” result is the win-win result for everyone. Unlike Participant ICWDSUS+, who saw the pandemic and felt the confidence that China would win against the U.S., and Participant ICWDSUS* and Participant ICWDSUS@, who insulted China even stronger, after Mary returned to China during the pandemic, she said: “I hope that the U.S. can control the pandemic...I still like the U.S. and I have a lot of students here in China, who want to go to the U.S. to study.”

Seeing the struggle of the U.S. during the pandemic, both Fupan and her husband are in China and have the confidence in the U.S. They described in their 2022 online workshop to about a half million Chinese attendees: “Although the

U.S. seems to have some problems since the pandemic, there are many things we can learn from U.S. culture.” Fupan and her husband’s positive message about U.S. culture would positively influence the attitude of the U.S. and half million Chinese youths and their families when the relationship between the U.S. and China becomes bad. Instead of trying to “win” over men, Lora emphasized the win-win of women’s development: “Men and women can have different gender roles at home, so the relationships between men and women should be complementary rather than competitive. It should be a win-win for everyone.”

As a successful woman entrepreneur, Fupan did not regard societal culture as her enemy to suppress her and women. Fupan was not angry with the societal gender norm nor manipulated the gender inequity and diversity discourse to get a promotion or attack others. Instead, Fupan shouldered her responsibilities as a mother, a daughter, a wife and a professional from social values and wanted to work hard to achieve acknowledgment from her family, colleagues, and society:

Just that gender norm, like women should take good care of family and children, everyone understands that, including me. I agree with this norm. A woman should lead herself to build and maintain both her independence and her harmonious relationships with others at home, at work, and in society. While trying their best to meet the quantitative evaluations for various roles of a woman, a woman should also strive to get acknowledgment from critical stakeholders.... Therefore, a woman must know how to build supportive relationships with others...

Schein (2010) identified the intertwined relationship between leadership and culture: leaders design and lead cultural change, and the new culture shapes

new leaders and leadership. The *Yinyang* self-leaders pragmatically avoided confronting social ills to maintain relational support and seek opportunities from all different parties for themselves, making little contribution to social progress. *Yang* self-leaders angrily criticized and promoted social ills to gain self-benefits and made themselves more narcissistic and made society a more corrupt and brutal tribe. Only *Yin* self-leaders peacefully and respectfully transformed the unfair social norms and opposing parties to be a more inclusive culture with greater unity to promote the wellbeing for all.

Patience

Although *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) love is active, it is not as aggressive and quick as *Yang* self-leadership with an emphasis on personal effectiveness and efficiency. *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) love is active but patient. Self-cultivating is a lifelong process. Talking about how Fupan talked about going through the long and difficult Ph.D. journey: “You must be patient. You must be able to endure the loneliness.”

Lily talked about how the university service could better help international women students, by highlighting the unrealistic help:

Don't expect too much. Don't expect you can really help a girl within a day or two, which is not realistic. People need some time to get to know each other. We need to become friends first, then we can be open to people. Especially international students, they will face a lot of culture shock. It is unrealistic for them to adapt to society immediately with American friends. It is really hard for international students to know a lot of American people. People who like to help international students should

be more open-minded and more patient to embrace newcomers with a kind of naive mindset, and introduce the culture to them, as everyone is from a different culture.

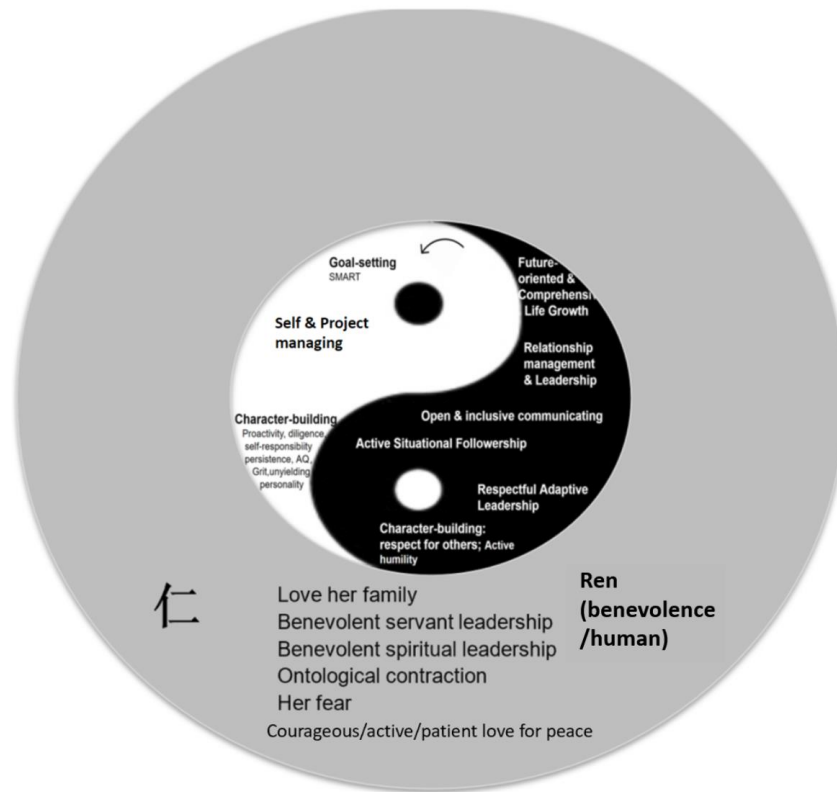
Lora also talked about how she communicated patiently with American field workers, who said “China virus” to her, but she did not angrily criticize the field workers’ discriminative words and did not accept what they said by keeping silent. Lora told me how she communicated with discriminative American field workers with patience:

For me, I don’t know how to shape an image as a tough woman leader to make others listen to me by my power immediately. I will just talk a lot to others with lots of rationales to support my points with patience and persistence until others get my points.

Summary of *Yin* self-leadership

Figure 20.

Yin Self-Leadership



Instead of simply transferring information from a leadership competence list, Day and Sin (2011) claimed that “the deepest and most fundamental level of the entire leader development process takes place in the context of ongoing adult development” (p. 547). Confucianism emphasizes “the cultivation of conscience and character through education and reflection on one’s actions,” as well as a “lifetime commitment to character building and ethical maturation” (Wang et al., 2005, p.314). Hunter (2004) also claimed that leadership development and character development are the same thing. Figure 20 shows how *Yin* self-leadership with *Ren (benevolence/human)* love (in the gray area) transcends and includes opposing *Yang* and *Yinyang* self-leadership as well as the separate

dichotomies as a whole to grow together in a balanced, comprehensive, and holistic way.

As an emerging profession, HRD's theory-building, practices, and the evolution are led by underlying philosophies (Ruona & Lynham, 2004), identifying three basic components of HRD philosophy: "being (ontology), knowing (epistemology), and acting (axiology)" (p. 153). Axiology is concerned with ethics and one's action (Ruona & Lynham, 2004). If the differences of *Yang* self-leadership and *Yinyang* self-leadership are mainly about individualistic or collective leadership competencies, which could be regarded as the methodological and epistemological differences of one's self-leadership, *Yin* self-leadership is about the ontology and axiology of one's self-leadership regardless of individualism or collectivism. Dachler and Hosking (1995) differentiated individualism-based from process-oriented leadership: an individualism-based leadership tends to take a realist ontology and assumes the existence of static objective realities, while process-oriented leadership takes a relational and constructivist ontology, assuming socially-constructing realities. Individualism-based leadership views individuals as separated and independent individuals, while process-oriented leadership views self and others as interdependent constructions through relations, contexts, and social, cultural, and historical processes. Holding a constructivist ontology, Charmaz (2002) claimed that the discrepancy between one's inner psychological world and the reality in one's

external world can be distinguished as *the self as a process* with continuity and fluidity versus *the self as an object* with stability. However, instead of regarding the self as either a static object or a fluid process in a material world, the self in *Yin* self-leadership is *Ren (benevolence/human)* in a moral world (*jingjie*). In contrast to the ontological discussion of *being* in the West, the ontological discussion in Chinese culture is loving, which is without being (*wu*). The “primordial emptiness, openness, and generative power” is the starting point of Chinese scholars’ thinking and problem-solving (Nelson & Liu, 2016, p.273).

Although the central focus of Manz’s (1983) self-leadership is one’s mental or physical behaviors, the central focus of *Yin* self-leadership is not the behaviors nor the process, but a self-leader’s heart of *Ren (benevolence/human)* love. A *Ren (benevolence/human)* heart is from and connected to the mother *Dao* (Nelson & Liu, 2016). Thus, if people follow their *Ren (benevolence/human)* heart, they can follow mother *Dao* to build their material and inner world in any VUCA environment, and the love of mother *Dao* would be manifested by their benevolent behaviors (Liu, 2017). With a benevolent heart, self-leaders act actively, diligently, courageously, and responsibly to pull themselves and society up from the original state of poverty and corruption (Correa & Jaffe, 2015). Although *Ren (human-benevolence)* love (in the gray area) is the stable foundation for a human, it is not static. The gray area in Figure 20 changes with a change in how much people can include others in a leader’s heart. With the

expansion of a benevolent heart in the gray area, the material world of a leader will also be expanded. Without *Ren (benevolence/human)* love to include the opponent forces of the material world, the opposing forces in Figure 20 would immediately be separated, divided, and then *Yang* self-leaders would immediately fight with everyone for self-benefits and *Yinyang* self-leaders would immediately engage with everyone to get benefits from all parties with the neglect of the deterioration of social ills. Without *Ren (benevolence/human)* love, neither *Yang* nor *Yinyang* self-leadership can lead to sustainable and peaceful self-development.

The growing process for a *Ren (human)* is not totally fluid and subject to the material world. A *Ren (human)* can actively lift morality upward from the misleading of a problematic material world towards the height psychology of *Ren (benevolence)* from being a *xiaoren (morally generic human)* with a focus on self-benefits, to a *junzi (morally-superior human)* with the benevolent love for others, and eventually be a philosopher-king (*wang*) to lead to a better society (Liu, 2014). A *xiaoren* likes to show off the self and life looks brilliant for now, but decays day by day; a *junzi* likes to humble the self and life looks bland for now but becomes better day by day (CTP, 2016, Liji, Zhongyong: 33). A *xiaoren*'s life journey has worries and grief; a *junzi*'s life journey grows long and prosperous (CTP, 2016, Yijing, Zagua:53). The ultimate goal of self-cultivation in Confucianism is *nei sheng wai wang* (inner sageliness and outer kingliness) (Liu,

2014). *Nei sheng* (inner sageliness) means one's morality level reaches a sage's level through self-cultivation in the inner world; *wai wang* (outer kingliness) means that one's inner sageliness will naturally attract others to follow the leader to make the whole society better (Ivanhoe, 2000; Liu, 2014).

Instead of developing a persons' utilitarian and pragmatic thoughts to gain more benefits, *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) love in one's heart is the root of *Yin* self-leaders' organic life-long growth, which would bear fruit of *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) love in one's life (Chen, 2014). Therefore, when people face social ills and temptations from their external world, they must carefully guard their original *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) heart.

Chapter 6: Unfinishing and Restarting—My *Kun Dao* of an ICWDSUS' Self-leading

The more one seeks knowledge, the more material desires one will crave for, the less morality one will have.

-Lao Zi, Dao De Jing: 48

In Chapters 4 and 5, I presented three different challenges and self-leadership from the participants. As an ICWDSUS myself, I also shared the three types of challenges. Throughout my long doctoral journey or even my life journey, my self-leadership philosophy has evolved from *Yang* self-leadership at the beginning of my dissertation journey, *Yinyang* self-leadership in the middle of my dissertation journey, to *Yin* self-leadership at the end of my dissertation journey. As a transdisciplinary researcher, I also experienced the combination of emotions of frustration, pain, and exhilaration as I sought new solutions (Augsburg, 2014, p.233).

Autoethnography

I was born at the end of 1970s in Beijing, China, when China ended the class struggles of the Cultural Revolution and started the Economic Reform to develop the economy. In the past four decades, I grew up with the growth of China's economy. Born in a loving family with many scientific researchers, I had my family's support to pursue whatever I wanted to pursue, rather than following

others in society. Although the rapid economic growth of China in the past four decades totally changed Chinese society, my parents have never changed their belief that one's self-development must be based on integrity and diligence.

Following this simple self-leadership of diligence and integrity, I went to good primary, middle, and high schools, and university in China. With the love of both Western and Chinese cultures, I went to Beijing Language and Culture University (BLCU) with a major in Teaching Chinese as a Second Language. My Chinese university gave me a good foundation of both Chinese and Western cultures as well as close interactions with people from all over the world. Although in my Chinese university, I was fascinated by different foods, arts, music, and customs from all different cultures at the BLCU, I also witnessed how the cultural conflicts between Indonesian Malaysian and Indonesian Chinese ruined my Indonesian friends and how the economic crisis negatively affected my Japanese and Korean friends. I also remembered how shocked I felt to hear my Ugandan friend's answer to my simple question-- "How many siblings do you have?" She answered me in a calm tone that "I have three sisters alive, and I also had two brothers, who died of HIV." I still remember that my English teacher in my Chinese university asked students to debate whether Chinese young people should celebrate Mao's birthday on Dec.26 or Jesus's birthday on Dec. 25, and whether to celebrate Christmas was the cultural invasion of Chinese culture. However, it seems that now nobody is bothered by that cultural dilemma

anymore, and people just enjoy the joy that different cultures bring. Chinese celebrate Christmas and Americans go to Chinese restaurants on Christmas.

After graduating from the BLCU, I had worked as a Chinese language and culture trainer for British diplomats at the British Embassy, Cultural and Educational section (British Council). As a young Chinese female teacher to teach middle-aged male British diplomats Chinese, it was the first time that I experienced strong discrimination against my age, female gender, nationality, looks, and the profession as well as its challenges against my career from both Chinese and British people. With a strong passion for Chinese culture and belief in what I was doing, not only I rejected the discrimination against me as a young female Chinese teacher, but I also changed the organizational culture to make more people value adult and lifelong learning. This experience inspired my doctoral dissertation about a woman's self-leadership. During my 10+ years of work at the British Council, I traveled not only to Europe but to many places in China as well including Ningxia Hui, Uygur autonomous regions. Once again, I was amazed by different cultures in Europe and the great diversity even in China. After spending 11 wonderful years at the British Council, I realized that my knowledge base was getting old.

Therefore, I left China and came to the U.S. in 2013 to pursue my advanced degrees. The melting pot culture of the U.S. includes almost every culture of the world, which has greatly expanded my horizon. However, in the

meantime, people from all over the world also asked why I did not get married. Although many people admired me as an international woman leader, many people also mocked me as an international woman joke that no one wanted to marry. As a very career-oriented woman, I had been neglecting my family development to pursue my career hard like a man. My career once gave me a great sense of achievement and self-confidence. However, in my forties, I started to realize that if my career development was achieved at the cost of sacrificing my family development, my career progress can't be sustainable. As a woman, could I really live like a man, or even for a man, can someone just have a career without a family and marriage? To answer my own confusion, I started this dissertation journey.

My Transdisciplinary Doctoral Journey and Self-leadership Evolution

As Chinese scholar, Wang Guowei (1977, p.50) summarized, “[t]hroughout the ages all those who have been highly successful in great ventures and in the pursuit of learning must of necessity have [successively] experiences of three kinds of *[jing jie]*”: the first state is to shoulder the responsibility alone by confronting the tough problems and starting a long and lonely journey to seek the solution; the second state is to be exhausted by the study of the problems without any regret; and the third state is to realize that the answer has just been next to the scholar after the scholar has been searching the answer for tens of thousands of

times. After experiencing the same bittersweet research journey, my own self-leadership has been evolving too.

Although I initially took a feminist approach to examine the challenges for women and how to develop women, after reviewing a large number of feminist studies, I could not find a safe solution to develop myself as a marginalized woman in a foreign world. Thus, I went to seek an answer from women's empowerment practitioners. I worked for two women's centers in the U.S. but I found that the confusion of practitioners in the U.S. is aligned with the confusion of feminist scholars. Although organizational leaders want to develop women and organizations invest considerable money in training and developing women, neither organizational leaders nor women who have participated in those women's development programs believed in the accountability of those programs (Rand, 2014). Despite the common agreement on the value of women's development among organizational leaders, women employees, and all stakeholders, the result of women's advancement through organizational women's development programs are limited. Then, I volunteered to work for a few Chinese women's development practitioners in the All-China Women's Federation to learn how Chinese practitioners developed Chinese women. Compared to the angry or confusing feminists in the U.S., Chinese practitioners seemed to happily organize women's baking or cooking classes to unite sisters together. However, the unhappy but important women issues, such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, blatant

discrimination against women, were not addressed in their work. When I tried to talk about those difficult problems, the happy Chinese feminists dared not talk about them. Without finding an answer from the angry but confused American feminists and happy but fearful Chinese feminists, I went to Uganda to learn from African feminists' work. I was very impressed by the Ugandan feminists' ingenious work. Despite the challenges for women from domestic violence, poverty, HIV, and other women's concerns, I saw how the African feminists used a collective approach to unite the resources of women, men, communities, social media, religious leaders, hospitals, schools, sports, legalization, business organizations, international organizations, and governance together to empower women financially, politically, and educationally. As a result of these experiences, like many postmodern feminists with a focus on social construction and collectivism, my own self-leadership philosophy has changed from individualistic *Yang* self-leadership to collective *Yinyang* self-leadership.

However, like many postmodern feminists' criticism against individualistic self-leadership, collective self-leadership was also criticized by individualistic *Yang* self-leaders in my study due to the danger of the *catfights* among women and the brutality of global competition. At the end of my doctoral journey, I have to admit that compared to individualistic *Yang* self-leadership, the advantages and disadvantages of collective *Yinyang* self-leadership are both multiplied. Like all utopian ideals, to build sisterhood is easy to say but difficult

to realize. Without telling women how to collaborate with others but simply telling women to collaborate with other women, the tension and heated debates starting from different feminists have probably already proved the failure of the sisterhood utopia. Although a woman has to work with others, to trust and collaborate with a destructive leader could lead to the destruction of the woman and her family.

In addition to the challenges as an international student including English, culture, and studies, my biggest challenge has been my ethical shock throughout my whole doctoral journey. Lao Zi pointed out the limitation of education: The more knowledge one has, the more material desires one will develop, and the less ethical one will remain (CTP, 2016, Dao De Jing: 48). Zhuangzi further pointed out the failure of ethical education: the person who stole a hook was killed, but the person who stole a nation became the king (CTP, 2016, Zhuangzi, outer chapters, cutting open satchels: 2). Unfortunately, my dissertation research shows that the career and leadership promotion of women not only has no solution to the harsh *catfight* and *queen bee syndrome* among highly educated women but feminist and diversity discourse can be manipulated by highly educated women narcissists to be used as weapons to attack everyone including management, other women, and men to “kill a bloody path” to create more social ills.

Without a firm ontology for morality and an epistemology about moral ways, moral teachings are not only too weak to pull the falling nature of the dark

side of humanity, but can be used as moral performance and moral weapons for pragmatic opportunists to gain more self-interests and become more immoral. Pragmatic ontology and epistemology with a focus on self-interests and practical benefits cannot support the comprehensive development of the whole of humanity, which includes both pragmatic and many more non-pragmatic needs for the self. Unfortunately, the dark side of humanity from some ICWDSUS in my dissertation is not uncommon for all highly educated women regardless of their nationality or ages during the doctoral journey.

Half a century ago, sociologists Rittel and Webber (1973) called social problems that involved moral and ethical dilemmas, gender issues, sustainability, and global concerns “wicked problems” (p.155). In a pluralistic society, there is no objective definition of equity, public good, right or wrong; and “even worse, there are no “solutions” “even if there were objective definitions (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p.155). People’s knowledge is inadequate to solve the “wicked problems,” which are unique, ever changing, complex. In addition, people do not have a chance to learn and practice “by trial-and-error”; “every solution to a wicked problem is a ‘one-shot operation,’” which leads to significant impacts to people (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p. 163). The search for scientific data-driven solutions of “wicked problems” is “bound to fail” (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p.155). In contrast to the focus on objectivity in Western science, Confucianism focuses on the subjectivity of a human (Liu, 2017). Both the benevolent and dark sides of

humanity can develop and solve wicked problems in a human's subjective world. Therefore, Confucianism promotes *Ren (benevolence/human)* to develop the benevolent side and cultivate the dark side of one's heart. With *Ren (benevolence/human)* love, the more a subjective human acts in the material world with interaction with others, the more the subjective human makes the material and moral world benevolent. Without *Ren (benevolence/human)* love but only with the dark side of humanity, the more a subjective human acts in a material world with the interaction with others, the more the subjective human could make one's material and moral world more wicked.

After realizing the problems of both individualistic and collective *Yang* and *Yinyang* self-leadership, I finally found that the most foundational self-leadership is the totally invisible *Yin* self-leadership of a woman's *Ren (benevolence/human)* love. By learning how to cultivate the self and developing a family, a woman gradually develops herself and her world either individualistically and/or collectively. My long doctoral journey is like performing a surgery on my own mentality. My research showed me the unbalanced view in feminist studies by over-emphasizing the work-family conflict and overcriticizing husbands or men. My research also reveals the importance of family and spousal support for a woman's high level of wellbeing. After finally realizing the importance of family and spousal support, I changed my feminist lens of criticizing the patriarchal world and men around me to wear a

benevolent lens to appreciate the world with men around me. And the world and men immediately look benevolent to me. After getting my dissertation done, I got married and created a family with my husband.

My *Kun Dao* of an ICWDSUS' self-leadership

Despite the problems of HRD, feminist, and diversity research, we cannot deny the contributions of HRD, feminist, and diversity scholars for humanity. My return to China shows me the even stronger urgency to develop Chinese women's self-leadership in Chinese collective culture. With blatant discrimination against me as a woman in terms of age, look, high education, and personal life in Chinese society as well as the lack of protection of intellectual property, my ethical shock continues in my home country. Following Western epistemology and American standards, Chinese academia and society are even more pragmatic and utilitarian than American society with few ethical regulations. This is the biggest reason that most participants in the U.S. refuse to return to China. Although I criticized the lack of family development in Western HRD, when I tried to see the family development of Chinese women around me, each family faces unique struggles, pains, and complexities with more ethical dilemmas that cannot be discussed in public and are far more complex than organizational development (OD) and HRD. To answer my research question (i.e., *How does an ICWDSUS lead herself to overcome the challenges in her study, work, and life to achieve her success and wellbeing during the doctoral journey in the U.S.?*) I must integrate both Western

and Chinese wisdom like the *Yinyang* dynamism to complement each other, rather than using one-sided wisdom to deny the other.

Although the participants' interviews revealed three types of self-leadership and I choose the *Yin* self-leadership as the foundation of my grounding self-leadership for ICWDSUS, like all feminist researchers, the participants were stuck with my last two interview questions about how to define women's leadership and if there are any differences between men's leadership and women's leadership. Most participants honestly admitted that they did not know how to define women's leadership although they agreed with the importance of developing women and a woman's self-leadership. Although a few participants tried their best to tell me their understanding of women's leadership, they were not confident about their answers, and they had opposing views about women's leadership. Their opposing views reflect the long-lasting puzzle about a woman's identity between being feminine or masculine. Without solving this puzzle, a gender-generic self-leadership theory for a woman might be just another product of the patriarchal culture to confuse or mislead a woman to follow men's values and behaviors to develop patriarchy rather than to develop women.

Puzzles: How to Define Women and Women's leadership. Are Men's Leadership and Women's Leadership Same or Different?

Although the central concept of feminism is about women, no definition of *women* has been agreed upon by different feminist theorists, and it is

“ontologically mistaken” to use male-dominated discourse in this patriarchal world to precisely define women (Alcoff, 1988, p. 407). The men-vs-women cultural dichotomy can actually tie an individual woman to her gender and constrain her development as an individual human being. Feminist Simone de Beauvoir claimed that “before I am a woman, I am a human being” and “what I was and what I did was not defined by my sex” (Beauvoir & Parshley, 1953, p. 23). However, contradictorily, Beauvoir also said that if she wished to define herself, she must say: “I am a woman” (Beauvoir, 1974, p. 8). Despite Alcoff’s (1988, p. 436) criticism on the lack of definition for women and the mistake to use patriarchal discourse to define women, she also criticized that a “generic genderless human theory” does not reflect women’s particular needs and challenges. Admittedly, as humans, men, women, and other genders share many commonalities. However, biologically, there are many differences in genes, hormones, brain structures between men, women, and other genders, which cause gender-specific personalities and behaviors (Couzy, 2012; Brizendine, 2006). Although Eagly and Johnson (1990) claimed that there are few gender differences in leadership behaviors, they did admit that it was much more difficult for women to take leadership roles than men. Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001, p. 795) later found that even small differences in leadership behavior, “when repeated over individuals and occasions, can produce large consequences.” The conflict between women’s professional roles as employees and family role as mothers and

wives make it difficult for women to have a linear and sequential development trajectory like men (Couzy, 2012; Gergen, 1990). Hefner et al. (1975, p.153) claimed that “[w]e are human beings first” and the genders are the “second.”

My Solution to the Puzzles: *Kun* and *Kun Dao*

Kun* \approx *Women

Although people agree about the importance of developing women, without a consistent definition about what *women* and *women's leadership* mean, feminists and participants develop women including themselves in confusing, opposing, and self-contradictory ways. Should women be agentic or docile? (Buszek, 1999; Castro & Collins, 2020; Eagly, 2005; Faludi, 1991; Gu, 2016; Kim, 1999; Hesse-Biber et al., 2006; Wilson, 2007). Should women use “screaming communication” with “iron will” to “kill a bloody path” or use gentle communication with respectful attitudes to collaborate with others? Are men's leadership and women's leadership the same so there is no need to develop women's leadership, and women can just follow men's way to lead? Or are men's and women's leadership different? If men's and women's leadership are different, how are they different?

The gender differences and related ethical issues could date back to how men and women are portrayed in religions (Hofstede, 2011; McLean & Beigi, 2016). Historian Toynbee (1973) reviewed how the British founders of the Royal Society in the 17th century used science to avoid heated debates regarding ethical

and religious disagreements. However, the avoidance strategy through science did not solve the fundamental ethical dilemma. Instead of dividing humans from mother nature to exploit mother nature's resources, a human "needs to reintegrate the [self] into the nature of which [one] is, in truth, an integral part" to find out what human means, and one can do this only through spiritual and philosophical contemplation (Toynbee, 1973, p. 7). In terms of the ethical puzzle about what a woman means, which modern scholars have failed to solve, postmodern scholars may be able to transcend human's patriarchal discourse and system by returning to the pre-patriarchal age and reconnecting human beings with mother nature to seek an answer to the gender dilemmas.

To answer the long-lasting puzzle about women's identity, I adopted the definition from the *Book of Changes*, which uses *Yin* and *Yang* to discuss femininity, masculinity, the combination of feminization and masculinization, and other gendered realities. The *Book of Changes* was inspired by mother nature as "the archaic pre-patriarchal sources" of male and female experiences (Nelson & Liu, 2016, p. 274), which can transcend both patriarchal essentialization of gender roles based on biological sex as well as gender universality and neutrality by concealing gender differences. To better understand premodern discourse with postmodern phenomena of ICWDSUS' development, I adopted a phenomenological hermeneutics method to connect the premodern study method of hermeneutics with participants' data and my interpretations. The method of

hermeneutics has been commonly used to study ancient classics in both China and the West since the premodern age (Liu, 2017). Through the interpretation of the literal meaning and implied semantic meaning of the original text as well as the reflection of researchers, people can transcend the historical limitations to understand current phenomenon in depth. Since a large part of society (e.g., humanity, morality, history) cannot be explained in mathematical language with scientific analysis, and must be explained through hermeneutics, more qualitative researchers have adopted the hermeneutics method to explore the underlying philosophical logic of phenomena and human behaviors (Kashima, 2005).

CGT also aspires to use symbolic interactionism with an emphasis on language to deepen the reflexivity in CGT (Charmaz, 2014). Instead of using “women” to repeat the debates surrounding gender in patriarchal human societies with no solutions except debates, I used the symbol of *Kun* from the *Book of Changes* to link women with mother nature. Hexagram *Kun* is the second hexagram and changing pattern in *The Book of Changes* immediately after the first hexagram, *Qian*. *Qian* and *Kun* are the only two hexagrams with pure *Yang* and pure *Yin* patterns, which are used to represent masculinity and femininity in the *Book of Changes* (CTP, 2016, Yijing, Xi Ci I:1). Instead of fixed essences of masculinity and femininity, “the gender logic of Chinese classical thought” emphasizes “a dynamic relational balance and transformative reversibility” between the two categories of men and women (Nelson & Liu, 2016, p. 267). At

the beginning of life, gender identities cannot be removed from either the social world or mother nature.

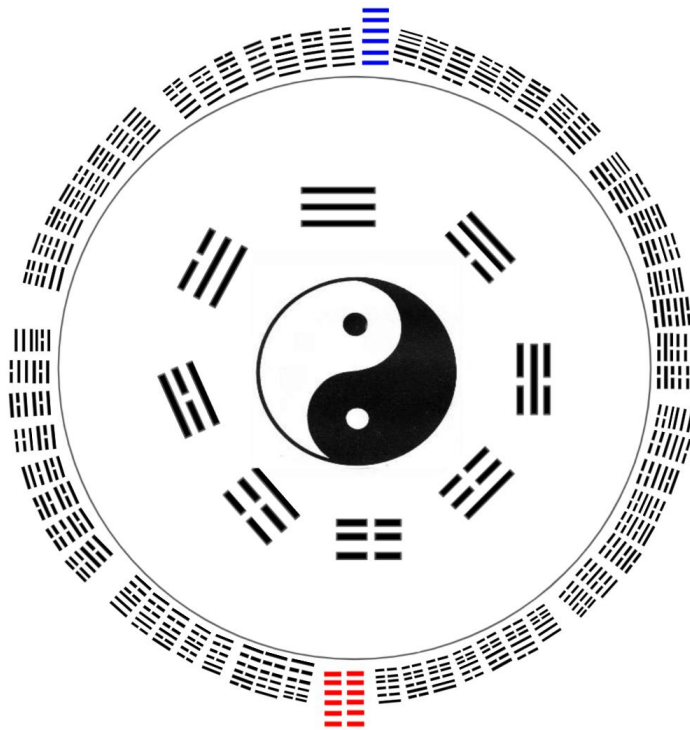
In addition to women exclusively, *Kun* is also relevant to marginalized individuals or men in a follower or disadvantageous situation. Unlike the gender norms for women from societal culture, which push women to obey fixed and oppressive gender rules, *Kun* is not about social norms but is an inspiration from mother nature for a woman to learn and reflect. It is enlightening women or marginalized individuals to navigate flexibly in disadvantageous situations and transform negativity to accomplish significant achievements in the end. Therefore, although Confucianism is male-dominated, instead of discriminating against femininity or neutralizing gender differences, Chinese intellectual traditions are more about “having a greater appreciation of the significance of gender and the feminine” than in a Western patriarchal culture (Nelson & Liu, 2016, p.267). With the unique capability of giving birth to create new life, *Yin* is always put in front of *Yang* as the beginning of *Yinyang* dynamism to encourage human agency to transform from a weak and vulnerable start to a strong and active direction. The pre-patriarchal meaning of the *Yinyang* model, which reflects matriarchy in a degree, has been masculinized and employed in Chinese patriarchal society to use patriarchal hierarchy to suppress women by claiming women’s earthly *Yin* position. However, the hierarchical interpretation is undermined by “the complementary character and the reversibility and

transformability of yin and yang;” the “dancing-like” *Yinyang* dynamism visualizes “a nonhierarchical understanding of sexual relations and gendered identities” (Nelson & Liu, 2016, p. 275).

As shown in Figure 21, Hexagram *Qian* and *Kun* represent heaven and Earth in the natural world and men and women in the social world, which are the most important two change patterns to open the whole changing world (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Xici II:1, 6). The interactions between Hexagram *Qian* and *Kun* are like the interactions between a father and mother, giving birth to all other changing patterns in their children’s world. Thus, men can learn from how heaven moves, and women can learn from how the earth includes to understand how men and women develop differently in the complex change system of the universe.

Figure 21.

Hexagram Qian and Kun in the Whole Changing System



The *Yin* patterns represent the weak and vulnerable situations. Hexagram *Kun* (earth) is at the lowest position of the changing world, which is in sharp contrast with Hexagram *Qian* (heaven), which is the top of everything with all the active and strong *Yang* patterns. Therefore, like how heaven and the Earth are different, men and women are fundamentally different although they are both important. Based on this perspective, the first thing for women's leadership development is that a woman must have the social awareness and preparation for the suppressions from all aspects of her life as shown in Figure 21. This perspective is different from a man's support from all aspects of his life. Some of the single participants in my study did not appreciate feminists' support for women as they have not seen

gender differences in education due to feminists' efforts in the past several decades. However, all married participants mentioned that compared to a man, there are higher and stricter expectations and fewer resources and support for a woman as a wife, mother, and career woman from society, work, and family. In the interview, Anna sighed: "I did not know how low a woman's position is until I got married."

Due to the importance of Hexagram *Qian* and *Kun*, which is the key to understanding *The Book of the Changes*, Confucius wrote a book on *Wenyan* to solely focus on explaining Hexagrams *Qian* (heaven) and *Kun* (earth) as well as the differences (CTP, 2016, *Yijing*, *Wenyan*). Therefore, I used Confucius' explanation of *Kun* to provide a general explanation for women's *Kun* leadership in mother nature. Admittedly, like almost all theories in a patriarchal world, Confucianism is also male-oriented. However, "elements within Confucian philosophy point toward the importance of the feminine in experiencing and conceptualizing the world," which might inspire the reconstruction of post-patriarchal discourse (Nelson & Liu, 2016, p. 274). In contrast to *Qian*'s power of actively taking the initiative to start changing projects, *Kun*'s way is to complete and have a good ending with each change:

To complete is the way of *Kun*! All things owe their birth to *Kun*. *Kun* receives the influences from heaven obediently. *Kun* includes and supports all things. Her virtues include everything without barriers. Her comprehension is wide, and her brightness is great. *Kun* includes various things and develops them to their full development. The power of *Kun*

moves on the earth without limit; *Kun* is gentle and docile. If *Kun* can stick to her virtue, she will be advantageous in the end. At first, *Kun* is confused and gets lost. However, after *Kun* finds a great leader to follow, she gets into her regular course. During her development course, she will get and lose friends. However, she will have a great ending with celebrations. The good fortune arising from resting in firm virtues corresponds to the unlimited capacity of the earth (CTP, 2016, Yijing, Tuan zhuan: *Kun*).

Instead of complaining and fighting against the suppression from the world, *Kun* includes and supports the world like the earth. In contrast to the independent, confident, and quick changes of *Qian*, *Kun* is confused and feels lost at first. After this initial confusion, she can find and follow a good leader for the right path. Instead of blaming women for their lack of confidence in a patriarchal world, a woman's confusion and feeling lost at first in a hostile patriarchal world is an important step for a woman to use her independent and critical thinking to choose the right leader to follow and to have the right path for her development. To find a supportive husband is extremely important for a woman's success, which has been emphasized by both feminist researchers and was mentioned by my participants (Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Ha et al., 2018). Although three participants highly appreciated their husbands' support, more married participants regretted getting married too quickly due to the pressure from society and their parents not to be a left-over woman. A woman's quick decision to follow others in a hostile patriarchal world could become confusion forever. *Zijun*'s quick decision to follow a man she just met and to leave her traditional family finally

led to regret for the past. In contrast to the *Yang* self-leaders' confidence in their high IQ and EQ at first, they experienced shocks, drama, conflicts, career derailment, mental illness, and sometimes even divorce. In contrast to the *Yin* self-leaders' fear, concerns, low self-confidence, and humility at first, it changed to high achievement with no trauma and conflicts but many supporters. Compared to the aggressiveness of *Qian*, *Kun* is gentle:

Kun is most gentle, but when *Kun* functions, she is resilient and strong. *Kun* is most quiet and her virtue is straightforward with integrity. After *Kun* finds a great leader, she has a regular course to pursue. *Kun* includes and transforms everything into glory. Is docility the way of *Kun*? Yes, she receives the power of her leader and acts at the proper time (CTP, n.d, Yijing, Wenyan).

In terms of women's long-lasting identity dilemma of whether a woman should be agentic or docile, Confucius provided the clear answer that docility is the way of *Kun*. Therefore, the "screaming communication" and "iron will" to "kill a bloody path" are not women's leadership but women's illusion. Few people listened to the *Yang* self-leaders' yelling as they angrily criticized and followed social ills with little independent thinking. They also struggled with psychological crises with the self and endless conflicts with others. However, the docility of *Kun* is not being passively submissive but is based on her independent thinking and morality. The gentleness and independent thinking of the *Yinyang* and *Yin* self-leaders in my study and Chinese women leaders from literature led to

harmonious relationships with others and more productivity with the support of more people.

Kun Dao ≈ Women's leadership

Leadership research has often examined leadership from aspects such as leadership competences, leadership effectiveness, destructive leadership, and leadership development process (Jaques, 2012). With a focus on the whole leadership development process, more leadership scholars have emphasized the importance of understanding the process of leadership and different leadership behaviors in different development stages and contexts (Boyce et al., 2010; Dachler & Hosking, 1995; Day & Sin, 2011).

In the 64 hexagrams of the *Book of Changes*, each hexagram has six changing levels and solutions for each level. A hexagram consists of two trigrams (Smith, 2008). The lower trigram in a hexagram is called the *subjective trigram*, representing the change that an individual can decide; and the upper trigram is called the *objective trigram*, representing the change of the environment that the person cannot control. Hexagram *Kun* has six dashed lines (☯ ☯), called *Yin yao*. The *Book of Changes* uses *chu* (beginning), 2, 3, 4, 5, and *shang* (top) to describe the timing and position of each *yao*, and number 6 to describe *Yin yao*. From the bottom to the top, Hexagram *Kun* depicts the six stages of a woman's development and what a woman should do at each development stage.

At the first level, *shang* 6, her shoes tread on hoarfrost, so she should be alert that the strong ice will come soon (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Kun: 2). Otherwise, when the hoarfrost becomes strong ice and a woman is not prepared, she cannot adjust to the strong ice immediately but will fall hard on the ice. A good beginning is half of the success. A woman must be careful about new things that are not familiar in a hostile patriarchal world. Although Participant ICWDSUS@ got the teaching opportunity when she was a Ph.D. student, which should have helped her future faculty career, she did not carefully prepare for her challenges to teach 76 white male undergraduate students for the first time as an international woman and Ph.D. student. She did not even ask her advisor about how to teach. Her haste and careless start to teaching not only gave her a traumatic teaching experience but permanently ended her teaching career. In contrast, even after teaching for several years with all the acknowledgment from all her colleagues and students, Participant A was still worried about teaching each class, especially the new online classes during the pandemic: “Especially now every class is online. I have to record my teaching. I am very afraid if I have said something wrong and I have made some grammar mistakes.... if my accent is strange.” However, with careful preparation, she has great teaching evaluations: “I have never had picky students and bad teaching evaluations. Everyone says “You have no problems with your accent. You have no problems with your speaking....”, but I still feel I could be better.”

Before traumas happened in the *Yin* challenges, the *Yinyang* challenges showed “little” signs of the future risks. However, most participants ignored the “little things” until they developed into traumas for participants.

At the second level, 6.2, after carefully starting and finding the right leader to follow, a woman should be straightforward and open to the leader with integrity in a natural way. A woman does not need to please the leader artificially (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Kun: 2). A natural and authentic woman will be advantageous in every respect. In my study, although Participants ICWDSUS* and Participant ICWDSUS@ tried hard to educate themselves to follow American secular culture to make them “half American,” their American accent, body language, and green cards did not make American people like them. They experienced endless conflicts with Americans and people from all cultures. However, although Participants Luyinbi and A refused to force themselves to learn American secular culture just to be like “half American,” they received support from Americans and people from all cultures.

At the third level, 6.3, after a careful start to find the right leader to follow, and then using her authenticity and integrity to get support from the leader, the woman would be very capable. However, in an advantageous situation, *Kun Dao* asks the woman to be humble and quiet. The quietness of *Kun Dao* is not because the woman lacks intelligence, but because of her self-control and humility. *Kun Dao* asks the woman to diligently develop her capabilities but does not show off

her excellence to others (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Kun: 4). A woman's inner beauty is far more important than her outer looks and loud voice. At the proper time, her virtues and capabilities are manifested naturally. Then, a king will hire her and entrust her with important tasks, and her wisdom will shine and be widely known to others (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Kun: 4). However, she should not claim success for herself, but continue to complete her tasks humbly. In my study, after completing their Ph.D., all participants were promoted to an international professional from an intimidated Chinese girl. However, the *Yang* self-leaders could not wait to show off their "awesomeness" and "high IQ and high EQ" to the world. Their self-identified high IQ and "awesomeness" were soon frustrated by their high level of psychological crises and many conflicts with others including derailing their careers. However, after finishing a Ph.D. and becoming an assistant professor, the *Yin* self-leaders' lifelong humility and learning helped them achieve greater accomplishment with the support from more people.

At the fourth level, 6.4, she has already become a successful woman leader. However, she is in an extremely dangerous situation. Facing challenges from visible and invisible stakeholders with conflicts of interests, she could easily be blamed by stakeholders. Instead of expanding her influence and taking new risks, she must carefully control what she says and what she does (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Kun: 5). The best state at this stage is to receive no blame or praise from different parties. By being careful, she can avoid being hurt by others

(CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Kun: 5). For Participant ICWDSUS?, after finishing her Ph.D. having rich teaching and leading experiences, she expected to take a leadership position. However, she experienced severe discrimination from her colleagues at work. When she tried to tell her husband about her mistreatment at work, he did not comfort her but wanted to divorce her. Her career crisis triggered her marriage crisis, and then the two crises as well as her pregnancy triggered her health crisis. In contrast, Participant Mary clearly said that “I understand that there are things that I cannot tell my husband.”

At the fifth level, 6.5, the woman is more senior than most people and only one step away from the top leader. To avoid being regarded as a threat to the top leader, lose the support, and be attacked from the top leader, she should respect the top leader and remain as the loyal inferior to the top leader. She should serve as the bridge between the top leader and others even though she is fully qualified to be the top leader (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Kun: 6). Although Fupan used to be a dependent of her husband in the U.S., after more than ten years of hard work, she became the president of her industry in China. Although Fupan and her husband opened their company together, on the website, 100 million U.S. dollars of the company’s registered capital is under her name and only 15 million U.S. dollars is under her husband’s name. However, when she talks with her husband in their online workshops, she has never shown her superiority over her husband and she lets her husband lead.







At the sixth level, 6.6, if the woman does not want to remain an inferior to her top leader by showing respect and loyalty to the top leader, she will continue to develop and may have a very brutal fight with the top leader. Although she will surpass the top leader to be the most senior leader, she will also terminate her development path of following the top leader. After Participant ICWDSUS* became more successful than her ex-husband, her ex-husband left her to find another woman who was less capable than him. In the end, Participant ICWDSUS* divorced her husband.

Figure 22 summarizes the *Kun Dao* in to depict the whole process of a woman's development from the *Book of Changes*.

Figure 22.

Kun Dao

Kun includes and supports the world like the earth. A careful, virtuous, natural, humble, docile, and independent follower will find the right leader to follow and achieve big in the end.

	6.6: her brutal fight with the top leader and the end of her old path with the leader
	6.5: Be loyal & respectful for the top leader
	6.4: Be extremely careful of what she says and does
	6.3: Be diligent & humble
	6.2: After finding the right leader, her development path becomes straight, wide, and big. Be natural & authentic to others
	Shang 6: Be alert & prepared for harsh challenges. Feeling lost at first. Then find the right leader

The *Book of Changes* embraces all dichotomies for mutual transformation and growth, such as the division between masculinity versus femininity, quantitative versus qualitative method, language versus mathematics, images versus numbers, imagination versus calculations, mind versus body, divinity versus humanity, emotion versus reason, and situatedness versus universal (Nelson & Liu, 2016). The language, images, and interpretation of the *Book of Changes* are not based on pragmatism with “calculative and self-interested attempts at knowing the future” to control the world, but it is “simultaneously aesthetic, cosmological, ethical, sexual, and gendered” (Nelson & Liu, 2016, p. 275). The abstract words and image of the *Book of Changes* provide direction and room for women, men, and all people to reflect and interpret their unique situations through a lens of gender and *Yinyang* balance.

Discussion

The huge iceberg of changes for ICWDSUS from both the U.S. and Chinese patriarchal cultures in Chapter 1 is divided into three types of distinctive challenges, *Yang*, *Yinyang*, and *Yin* challenges represent visible, half visible, and totally invisible challenges. Instead of separated multiple realities, the three types of challenges are distinctive but connected. The transformative and reversible character of the *Yinyang* balance enables people to predict their general development trend, so they can prepare for the future accordingly. The visible *Yang* challenges can soon lead to visible *Yang* promotion by building new

capabilities. The half visible *Yinyang* challenges not only require people to use their eyes to see the visible *Yang* part of *Yinyang* challenges but to also use their heart and mind to reflect the invisible *Yin* side of *Yinyang* challenges. The “little things” that made participants confused, concerned, and uncomfortable provided small signs and hints to reflect, understand, and prepare for the unseen *Yin* part of *Yinyang* challenges to avoid potential risks. However, almost all participants ignored the “little things,” and allowed the *Yin* side of the *Yinyang* challenges to develop as totally unseen *Yin* challenges. The trauma from *Yin* challenges forced the painful participants to have deep self-reflection about their own, others, and the world’s unseen values and beliefs. If the pain from *Yin* challenges only makes people pass on their pain to others to “kill a bloody path” so they can climb up to the upper echelon, the conflicts from others and their own psychological crises could damage their mental health and lead to unsustainable development. If the pain from *Yin* challenges makes people think deeply about how to reduce the pain for themselves and others by making themselves and the world better, they can experience a fundamental enlightenment movement in their inner world to develop their *Yin* self-leadership to enlighten them with wisdom and transform themselves and the world to become better.

Three types of self-leadership—*Yang*, *Yinyang*, and *Yin* self-leadership—are presented in this research to delineate the three types of challenges for ICWDSUS. After comparing the participants’ interviews, my interactions with

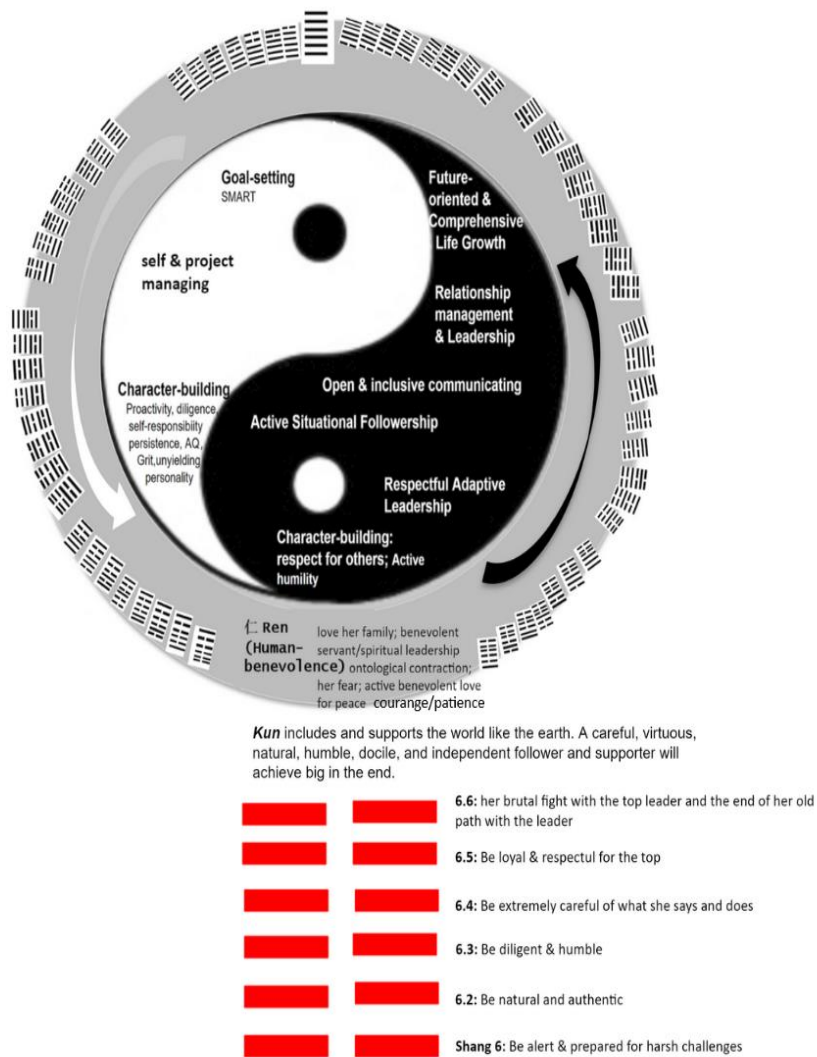
participants, and my own practices and reflection throughout my long dissertation journey, with a balanced self-development, I discovered that *Yin* self-leaders achieved the most in the end: *Yang* self-leaders gave up and lost their benevolent heart. *Yinyang* self-leaders compromised and traded their benevolent heart with others for self-interests. Only *Yin* self-leaders keep and constantly develop their benevolent heart. Therefore, I chose *Yin* self-leadership to generate my proposed *Kun Dao* of an ICWDSUS's self-leadership as shown in Figure 23. Although I respect different participants' choices to choose their own self-leadership, my proposed *Kun Dao* of an ICWDSUS's self-leadership is different or even the opposite of *Yang* self-leadership and Manz's (1983) linear self-leadership.

Instead of pursuing personal effectiveness and efficiency to achieve a material goal, my proposed *Kun Dao* of an ICWDSUS's self-leadership emphasizes the development of a woman's *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) heart along with her balanced development to achieve her short-term goals and long-term sustainable growth. Although compared to *Yang* self-leaders' linear development by confidently "killing a bloody path" with the iron will, the development trajectory in my proposed *Kun Dao* of an ICWDSUS's self-leadership is not linear but curved (see Figure 23). Therefore, for the short run, the *Kun Dao* of an ICWDSUS's self-leadership may not initially bring quick visible results. However, with balanced self-development and others' support, the achievements

of the *Kun Dao* of an ICWDSUS’s self-leadership will be comprehensive, multiplied, and sustainable.

Figure 23.

My Proposed *Kun Dao* of an ICWDSUS’s Self-leadership



My proposed *Kun Dao* of an ICWDSUS's self-leadership in Figure 23 combines both the *Yin* self-leadership model in Figure 20 and the *Kun Dao* model in Figure 22 as well as the 64 changing patterns and stops of the complete change journey from *the Book of Changes* to depict the whole doctoral journey, even life journey for ICWDSUS. Instead of listing the hard skills (e.g., English or academic skills), which varied greatly for different ICWDSUS, I listed the soft skills, character-building, and moral development as well as different development stages for ICWDSUS. They are not only relevant for all ICWDSUS but they may inspire all marginalized individuals.

For the visible *Yang* challenges, one can use *Yang* self-leadership from the white *Yang* area in Figure 23 to cope with the challenges. For the half visible *Yinyang* challenges, one can use *Yinyang* self-leadership from the *Yinyang* area in Figure 23 to cope with the challenges. For the invisible *Yin* challenges, one can use *Yin* self-leadership from the gray area and flexibly choose *Yin* or/and *Yinyang* self-leadership to cope with various challenges of changing situations. Although *Yang* self-leaders only recognize *Yang* self-leadership with a focus on an individual's capability-building, *Yang* self-leaders angrily refuse to learn from other realities. The *Yinyang* self-leaders include both *Yang* self-leadership and the relational wisdom but respectfully avoid ethical issues. *Yin* self-leaders with a focus on *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) include *Yang* self-leadership, *Yinyang* self-leadership, and everything as an integral. *Yang* self-leadership could be described

by the first change pattern in *the Book of Changes* as: A superior person constantly strives for self-perfection as heaven maintains vigor through movements (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Xiangzhuang, Qian:1). *Yin* self-leadership could be described by the second change pattern in the *Book of Changes* as “a gentle person carries the outer world as the earth with one’s broad mind” (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, Xiang Zhuan, Kun:1). The three keys that a woman should use together flexibly to be to open a VUCA world include the *Yang* self-leadership of an individual’s diligence, *Yinyang* self-leadership of the inclusion of others, and the *Yin* self-leadership of *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) love.

With the three keys, a suppressed woman as the lowest *Kun* can transform suppression from the world to become her unique power and momentum of *Kun Dao* to promote her step by step. *Kun Dao* shows a woman how to lead herself differently in different development stages, as shown in the red area of Figure 23. Unlike Manz’s (1983) pull and push self-leadership behaviors in a linear way, none of the changes in *Yinyang* dynamism are linear. Instead, they are interactive, responsive, transformative, and flowing. The transformative power of *Yinyang* dynamism gives women new choices to interact with and transform patriarchal culture rather than either passively accept or angrily challenge patriarchy. Between the two extremes of doing nothing or criticizing everything in a patriarchal culture, a woman can both follow and negotiate with the patriarchal culture (Maki, 2015). Adopting a gendered culture, respectfully, does not mean

that the gender identities are always fixed and essentialized. By interpreting the changing environment, a woman can tap into her “transformative ethics” to decide what roles she should play to nourish her life and others’ lives (Nelson & Liu, 2016, p. 282).

The black arrow in Figure 23 shows the curved development process of a woman from the lowest to the highest stages by slowly reducing the negative dark *Yin* areas. The white arrow in Figure 23 warns how a woman *Yang* self-leader declines through a curved process from the highest to the lowest by slowly reducing the positive white *Yang* areas. With her interaction with the world, her *Yin* self-leadership of *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) love also grows to include more possibilities. Although Figure 23 shows *Kun Dao* in detail about my topic, the *Dao* of the rest of the 63 change patterns and stops can be found in the *Book of Changes*.

My proposed *Kun Dao* of an ICWDSUS’s self-leadership is a dynamic half-open system. Figure 23 provides an orienting model with instructions to point out the direction for readers to reflect, practice, and self-organize their own self-leadership. However, my proposed *Kun Dao* of an ICWDSUS’s self-leading opens “hermeneutic space with infinite possibilities of interpretation” about genders, ethics, and self-leadership choices based on the interpreter’s situation and practice (Nelson & Liu, 2016, p.281).

Although in Chapter 1, I used Edward T. Hall's (1976) iceberg model of culture to depict the oppression for ICWDSUS from both the U.S. and Chinese patriarchal cultures, the *Yinyang* dynamism in Figure 23 shows a different diagram to visualize culture and the world. Instead of seeing culture as a single, cold, and lifeless iceberg with both visible and invisible oppression that fails humans, *Yinyang* dynamism highlights the sexual, gendered, and affective nature of culture, calling for a woman and anyone to learn from their opponents to form "co-agency" to expand the self and the world for comprehensive and balanced self-development (Nelson & Liu, 2016, p. 277). When ICWDSUS face the iceberg of challenges, they do not need to freeze and stop the progress nor become a cold-blooded iron woman to "kill a bloody path" to climb to the top of the iceberg with the fear of immediately falling down. My proposed *Kun Dao* of an ICWDSUS's self-leadership may offer a new imagination to transform the iceberg of challenges to mountains in Chinese ink paintings to inspire growth in her life and the world as an integral part of her life to achieve balanced and rebalanced harmony.

Implications

Although often feminists presuppose that they have the qualifications to understand women and can provide recommendations for women as a group, each woman has her own unique situation with which others cannot identify (Alcoff, 1988; Iannello, 2010). Therefore, the implications of this study are not meant to

generate new HRD interventions to intervene in the lives of women or other individuals with the attempt to judge or change others. The primary implication of this study is to inspire women to have a conversation about women's HRD through self-reflection of the epistemological, ontological, and axiological levels of her current self-leadership philosophies and challenges. After critically reflecting on my proposed self-leadership theory with her unique situations, she can decide what interventions she needs to adopt to change herself and her situation. Thus, the audience of this ICWDSUS' self-leadership theory each individual woman, especially an ICWDSUS, not a collective group of women or policymakers. In other words, the direction of using this self-leadership theory is not external, but internal. I do not suggest that an individual woman, especially an ICWDSUS, use my proposed self-leadership theory immediately without individual reflection and critical thinking. By improving a woman's self-interpretation and self-understanding of herself and the world with a balanced view, this research may have a potential emancipatory function to enlighten a woman's confusion and to solve her cultural constraints from her inner world.

Instead of building knowledge to manipulate or criticize the patriarchal world, a woman's inner wisdom can help her develop harmonious relationships with others through morality, learning, and communication (*wen*) to transform (*hua*) herself and her world together through a gradual, interactive, and respectful process. Thus, the research results may inspire women, marginalized individuals,

researchers, and educators to think in a new way about the modern knowledge system through the Western Enlightenment tradition. How a woman can lead herself to survive and succeed in a complex and ever-changing patriarchal world is not only a problem of social science, but also a problem of philosophy and ethics. The self-leadership of ICWDSUS in this study is an open-ended conversation, which is always being constructed in an interactive and inclusive way.

Limitations

As a global concern, women's issues are too complicated for one research paper to cover (Unterhalter, 2007; WEF, 2020). Despite my ambition to seek a solution for ICWDSUS in this research, almost all qualitative researchers have admitted the limitations of today's knowledge-building based on the "triple crisis of representation, legitimation, and praxis" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 19) in the postmodern age (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Crotty, 2004).

To the research results, although all participants agreed with the visible *Yang* part of the results, participants have different responses to the invisible *Yin* part of the results. *Yang* self-leaders were mad to hear that others could use a different self-leadership to achieve what they failed to achieve. *Yang* self-leaders believed in their absolute righteousness. On the contrary, *Yin* self-leaders were unhappy to hear that I praised their self-leadership. *Yin* self-leaders believed in their absolute imperfection. Although *Yinyang* self-leaders agreed with almost

everything I said, *Yinyang* self-leaders avoided all social justice topics, such as racism.

After decades of feminist research, feminists also admit that the world is too complex for feminism to provide “universal knowledge” to fulfill the goal of gender equality (Calás & Smircich, 2006, p. 328). Therefore, as a novice researcher, I would also like to remind my readers of the limited representation, legitimation, praxis, and potential risk of directly using the research results. My bias as an ICWDSUS myself, my power as a researcher, and my selection of ICWDSUS from my professional and personal circles all influence the interviews and the results.

Although I was open to all women who self-identify as Chinese and have completed the doctoral journey in the U.S. to participate in the research, I could only find participants who were originally from mainland China. Therefore, I did not include women who were born in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macao, and Chinese-American women who are 1.5 generation (born outside the U.S. but immigrated to the U.S. before teens) and 2nd generation (born in the U.S.) of immigrants, Chinese immigrants of other nations, and mixed-race women, whose parents are not both originally from China. Although all the participants in this study earned their bachelor’s degrees in mainland China, some of them now have American citizenship. Therefore, although this study includes the intersectionality of discrimination in the U.S., the complexity of “Chineseness” (Ang, 1998, p.241)

is not fully addressed in this study but is left for future studies. However, the cultural discussion about ancient Chinese sages transcends space, time, and political differences.

Although it seems like a dead end for feminist researchers to continue to seek solutions to deal with the cultural barriers for women, I also share “the uncompromising, fundamental personal and collective goal of a world that is a better place for all women” (Linden, 2012, p. 87). From “one male’s worldview,” McLean also urged HRD professionals that “we owe [gender equality] to both genders to see that happen” (McLean & Beigi, 2016, p. 263). Therefore, I chose a transdisciplinary grounded theory approach to involve multiple disciplines to examine the challenges and wisdom from both the Chinese and U.S. cultures for ICWDSUS. While this broadened scope implies a better understanding of the problems and inclusion of various disciplines, the expansion of knowledge and information is also daunting for me as the solo researcher of this dissertation project. The greatest limitation of this research is that it has no delimitation of the disciplines. I have to step into various disciplines to learn the problems and their solutions. Therefore, the depth and width of “disciplinary standards of knowledge production are sacrificed” (Hadorn et al., 2008, p. 3). As two flexible and comparatively new approaches, the period of time and unconscious dynamics of conducting this dissertation research has been much longer and harder to control than I had anticipated.

Through China's millennia-long history, the Chinese ancient sages' teachings have been interpreted and translated in countless ways from various historic contexts. I also found some errors when scholars from China and the West tried to translate and interpret the ancient sages' teachings. To help readers better understand the main humanistic wisdom from the ancient Chinese sages, I decided to compare different explanations and translations and come up with my own translations. Therefore, some Chinese historic contexts and details, which are less relative to the study, were omitted. However, to study the teachings of the ancient Chinese sages is not meant to replicate the dead lives of the sages but to learn their living wisdom (Tan, 2016). If readers want to know more about the historic details and compare my translation with the others' translations, they can go to the sources I listed to dig deeper into Chinese ancient studies.

In addition, although I chose grounded theory methodology due to my attempt to offer comprehensive explanations and solutions to the problems, Corbin and Strauss (2014) admitted that the "tremendous fluidity" of everything limits human knowledge to only partly explain the phenomena in the postmodern world (p. 22). The theoretical integration in this transdisciplinary grounded theory study expands, enlarges, and deepens the methodological directions and theoretical insights, which greatly increased my workload for this single research project. In addition, with the combination of the two new methods, grounded theory and transdisciplinarity, with many unreconciled uncertainties and disputes

(Mills et al., 2006; Timonen et al., 2018), the rigor and ethics to conduct a transdisciplinary grounded theory are “a delicate balancing act” and an extremely complex research craft (Mills et al., 2006, p.32). In this study, I used Chinese philosophies and *Yinyang* epistemology to complement Western transdisciplinarity and grounded theory, and constructed my own methodology and research ethics. The critical integration of the two very different intellectual systems undoubtedly have many limitations, such as the potential transgression for most scholars who are used to the Western knowledge system. This study is also influenced by Chinese understanding of gender, so the results of the study from ICWDSUS’ interviews may reflect a male versus female dichotomy, which may not consider non-binary gender diversity. I leave the full construction of the limitations to my readers and other researchers’ critiques.

In the end, with the focus on *Ren (benevolence/human)*, my proposed *Kun Dao* of an ICWDSUS’s self-leadership echoes Confucian philosophy and *Yinyang* dynamism. Although Confucius’ teaching has contributed to the peaceful development of China, East Asia, and even the whole world, Confucius has been both praised and criticized worldwide. Similarly, although many feminists have given up their comfortable lives at the top class of society and risked their lives to fight for women’s rights so women like my participants have equal educational rights with men, only one participant appreciated feminists’ work. Even the gentlest participants, who criticized no one, strongly criticized feminism.

Although it seems like a dead end or little return from much investment for feminists to continue to seek solutions to deal with the cultural barriers to empower women, feminists have “the uncompromising, fundamental personal and collective goal of a world that is a better place for all women” (Linden, 2012, p. 87). Therefore, I warn my readers that to choose a woman’s *Yin* self-leadership with a focus on cultivating the self to develop *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) love for others may also have negative effects for their own short-term interests. *Yin* self-leaders may lose their short-term material benefits because of their *Ren* (*benevolence/human*) love for others and may have to be prepared for lifelong diligence, learning, and even criticism from others including the ones they helped. As Confucius’ disciple Zeng Zi said: “*Ren* is my personal responsibility. The burden is heavy, and the course is long. Only with death does the course stop” (CTP, 2016, Analects, Taibo:7).

In contrast to Participant ICWDSUS@’s “psychological game” to connect to the “top” level of the psychology department to gain more benefits from top professors, Mary gave up her top level of being a psychology professor and later gave up her good career in the U.S. to return to China to help more Chinese students, which gave Mary more challenges and less benefits. Participant ICWDSUS@ may have upgraded her professional level but it caused psychological crises. Mary gave up her fancy title as a psychology professor in one of the best universities in the world but received joy in return. Each woman

must decide what goal she should pursue, what cost she wants to pay to realize her dream, and how she will lead her life (Harding, 1991, p. 312). What a woman's heart truly longs for cannot be changed by Confucianism or any ethical education, but by her own self-cultivation.

Currently, no one has the knowledge and skills to understand a VUCA globalized world. The real answer to a woman's self-leadership is far beyond one woman's single research project, but lies in the joint wisdom of more women, men, and other individuals through a lifelong quest. However, everyone must pursue self-leadership to learn how to lead themselves instead of being led by societal culture. Even humanistic psychologist Maslow (1975) admitted the limitation of his research on self-actualization:

The data is not reliable, but if we were to wait for conventionally reliable data, we would wait forever. It seems that the only manly thing to do is not to fear mistakes, to plunge in, to do the best that one can, hoping to learn enough from blunders to correct them eventually (p. 149).

An Unfinished Finality

Over 200 years ago, male Enlightenmenters misinterpreted the Bible verse Genesis I, 28, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it" as a "God-blessed license" for modern enlightenmenters to subdue the earth and other people (Toynbee, 1973, p. 6). The premodern and pre-patriarchal discourse from *Yinyang* dynamism may remind us of the first half of God's plan for humanity, "be fruitful and multiply." If the first Enlightenment has given individuals a

whole androcentric modern knowledge system and a cold brain to win others to be the fittest to survive in a tribal world through heartless competition, then competitive individuals may need a second Enlightenment to have both a cold brain and a benevolent heart to grow to maturity and to learn how to love others with both benevolent love and the dark sides to “be fruitful and multiply. ”

This study is not meant to provide ethical training to judge one’s life or a new self-utopia, which is easy to say. It is mainly for my own choice for self-cultivating and dystopian practices. I will practice my proposed *Kun Dao* of an ICWDSUS’ self-leadership towards the goal of *Ren (benevolence/human)*, which is not an ethical ideal but a serious responsibility for me to use the rest of my life to fulfill. Although my long dissertation journey is coming to an end, the ever-changing nature of the world and the *Yinyang* dynamism will never bring closure to my inquiry regarding a woman’s self-leadership. Research about women is an unfinished work in progress, remaining open and inclusive for all effective solutions for women (Hesse-Biber, 2007). The end stop of the *Book of Changes* is called “unfinishing” (*weiji*), which is calling for leaders of all genders to return to the first stop to begin a brand-new learning journey to discover answers to many new problems that have no name (CTP, 2016, *Book of Changes*, *Weiji*).

In Chapter 1 of this dissertation, *Zijun* angrily declared that “I belong to myself! No one can interfere with my own life!” and she left her old life (Lu et al., 2003, p.198). With little preparation but much naivety for the complexity of a

new patriarchal world, her dream for a new life as a new woman soon ended with her *regret for the past*. A woman's development involves both top-down policies from decision-makers and bottom-up self-leading strategies from the self. Although an ICWDSUS' self-leadership development might be a private endeavor, her self-development is not an individual or selfish project, but a collaborative construction. With the joint wisdom and efforts from an ICWDSUS and others around her, solutions will emerge to dissolve various personal, moral, cultural, and practical dilemmas and challenges. Therefore, a woman's self-leadership development must consider the common interests for the long-term sustainable development of herself, her family, organizations, societies, and even the world.

Although participants showed me how their doctoral journeys helped them realize their dreams and changed them from intimidated Chinese girls to successful international professionals, after their doctoral journeys, they have faced more complex challenges, especially the testing of their moral foundations. My new journey after this dissertation will not be an easy one either. Before leaving my old journey in my Ph.D. program, and starting a new chapter of my life, I will change *Zijun's* angry declaration to the world to serious self-talk: "I am responsible for myself. I need to have both my independence and interdependence with others for a healthy life-growth in a harmonious way."

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Appendices

Appendix A

The Comparison Between Platonian and Confucian Views about Human

Development

Common Concerns	Platonian View	Confucian View
The Way to Develop a Human	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through learning
The Purpose of Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To seek knowledge and truth (truth-seeking) to gain power to control the world to benefit the self (Fung, 1922) • For happiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To seek moral ways (way-seeking) to control the self to adapt to the world to gain harmony by sharing self-benefits with others, because there is no absolute truth. • Traditional Chinese language does not have the word, <i>Knowledge (zhi shi)</i> as a noun; Chinese language uses the verb, to know (<i>zhi dao</i>), which literally means to know the moral way • For happiness (Fung, 1922; Liu, 2017; Tan, 2016)

Happiness

- Means one's own happiness
- Happiness is about what one has
- To seek happiness from one's external world by experiments to find evidence of the world (Fung, 1922; Liu, 2017)
- People in the West struggle with three unhappy identities: (a) a sinner from theologies, (b) a hero that fights to overcome the oppression from one's environment from Enlightenment; (c) an oppressive victim and a privilege oppressor from Marxist theories (Neville, 2000)
- An unhappy person cannot build happy relationships or a happy world with others
- Means everyone's happiness, as only when everyone is happy can one's own happiness be sustainable
- Happiness is about what one is
- To seek happiness from one's internal world, so no need to do experiments to find evidence of the self and no need to get power to control the self (Fung, 1922; Liu, 2017)
- Chinese people are "rational hedonists," actively pursuing change of the self and the world, but respectfully adapt to different people and unknown worlds and patiently wait for the heavenly arrangement (Fung, 1922, p.261; Russell, 1922)
- A person's sustainable happiness only comes after everyone has happiness (Yijing: Yu, CTP)

How to Reconcile the Relationship Between Economic and Moral Reasoning?

- Morality development and economic development have been in conflict since the Enlightenment (Collins, 2019; Wood, 2000)
- According to Plato, moral relativism assumes that everyone has their own morality, so no one can judge others' morality (Gosney, 2014)
- To use pragmatic benefits to try to reconcile the conflict between morality development and economic development (Pleasant, 2003)
- Moral poverty in the postmodern age makes money become objective truth (Taylor, 2004)
- Morality (*De*) and economic gain (*De*) have the same pronunciation and share the same origin in Chinese language
- According to Confucianism, the learning of morality is one's 'big learning' (CTP, 2016, Liji: Daxue)
- The solution to reconcile moral and economic gain is to wait: quick economic gains are very dangerous instead of beneficial. Without understanding what/how much one really

needs or how to get in a moral way without harming others, one can become greedy to have it all by winning against others and cause future conflicts. One's haste to get one's economic gains is called '*little having/little benefit*,' which will come and go quickly; if one's economic needs are not selfish but reasonable and moral, others will support one to get instead of fighting to compete with the person. And everyone will share the gains to achieve '*big havings*' in a comprehensive and sustainable way instead of short-term economic gains (CTP, 2016, Yijing: Dayou)

The Method to Learn

- Through analytical philosophy reasoning and scientific methods (Liu, 2017)
- Use reductive methods to understand everything (Pleasants, 2003)
- Scientific principles from short-term data can only guide one for a short period within certain situations without being able to solve ethical dilemmas for sustainable development (Eisenbeiss, 2012; Pleasants, 2003)
- Through moral reasoning from the inspiration from mother nature (Toynbee, 1973). Chinese word 'know (*zhi dao*)' literally means 'know moral ways' and the words 'knowledge' and 'science' were not seen in Confucianism
- Only use reductive methods for material knowledge, but nurture a respectful attitude to any unknown phenomena (CTP, 2016, Analects: Shu'er).
- One's lifelong '*big learning*' of moral ways will guide one for a life time in any unknown situations (CTP, 2016, Liji, Daxue); technology is '*little learning*,' which can be quick to learn and expire, so cannot guide one for a whole life; and technology is often used for wars to destroy life (CTP, 2016, Analects: Zizhang).

- Knowledge vs Practices**
- Knowledge guides practices, and moral knowledge guides moral practices (Gosney, 2014)
 - Knowledge and practices must guide and develop each other at the same time, and moral knowledge cannot guide moral practices at the cost of self-interest; moral knowledge without moral practices becomes a game or tool to be manipulated for more self-interest (Feng, 1944)
- Family Level vs Organizational level**
- HRD analysis levels: individual, organizational, community, and society/nation/globe without family level (Garavan et al., 2004)
 - Confucianism has individual, family, nation, and world levels without organizational level (CTP, 2016, Liji: Daxue:2); Filial piety in family is the root of benevolent actions (CTP, 2016, Analects, Xue'er: 2)
 - Organizational economic benefits are the focus
 - A person's self-cultivation is the focus and the root of all levels of management (CTP, 2016, Liji: Daxue:2)

What is a Human?

- Humanism since Plato and Aristotle is self-centered and humans are defined by biological characteristics, political rights, and the intersectionality of many individual differences (Gosney, 2014)
- Pragmatism and instrumentalism regard humans as tools to serve market economy.
- Kurzweil (2005) predicts that human tools will be replaced by artificial intelligence tools by 2030 from everything and biological humans would be created by robots by 2050
- Humans are defined from social and moral perspectives and divided into only two types: morally superior person (*junzi*) and morally generic person (*xiaoren*)
- A morally superior person is not a tool (CTP, 2016, Analects: Weizheng:12); A 'human (*ren*)' should have 'benevolent love (*ren*)' for others
- Chinese ancient sages called pragmatism and instrumentalism through human reasoning as *wei* (伪 artificial) in contrast to *ren* (仁) with benevolent love from heaven (Fung, 1922)

What is/are a human's world(s)?

- 2 worlds: a divine world in religion and a material world in academia (Hesse-Biber, 2007)
- Using science to control one's material world
- 3 worlds: a divine world in heaven, a moral world (*jing jie*) in one's mind, and a material world with others together (Feng, 1944)
- Using respectful attitudes based on benevolent love to upgrade one's moral *jingjie* and using science to develop one's material world (Feng, 1944)

The Self vs Others

- The self is a sinner, who obeys God passively (Neville, 2000)
- The self is a hero, who challenges God and authorities (Davis, 1983; Neville, 2000)
- The self is a manipulator, who develops and uses the resources of mother nature, other people, and the self (Neville, 2000)
- The self is a member of a group, society, and mother nature, who maintains and develops harmonious relationships with others step by step in a gradual process of *He-He* (harmony-inclusion) to form a bigger and bigger group to achieve bigger and bigger tasks that one cannot achieve (Zhang, 1996)

- The relationship between the self and others is passive, hostile, or/and manipulative (Feng, 1944)
 - Use 'benefits' to connect with others (Taylor, 2004)
- The relationship between the self and others is active, harmonious, and mutually beneficial (Feng, 1944)
 - Use 'benevolent love (*Ren*)' to unite other people (*Ren*) to have reciprocal and long-lasting benefits (CTP, 2016, *Yijing: Dayou*); Using practical benefits to unite different people may seem natural and simple; however, the benefit (not morality)-based unity is a fake unity, which will either be broken when the benefits are gone or be broken when individuals fight with each other (including family members) to get more benefits (CTP, 2016, Ouyang Xiu ji, 151)
- Problem-solving**
- To 'fix' problems by an individual's capacities by working hard with great stress (Neville, 2000)
 - To use political movement or political correctness to pursue equity and social justice, which may actually mislead people's justice wish into a radical and violent way--either you are with me or you are against me (Hardings, 1991)
 - Social scientists don't know how to change cultural barriers (McLean & Beigi, 2016) since 'wicked problems' (e.g., social justice and ethics) have no objective definitions and cannot be solved by known knowledge or science (Rittel & Webber, 1973)
- To melt problems naturally within a group in a process with little stress and more opportunities for transformation and stronger relationships (CTP, 2016, *Yijing: Cui*); One human cannot win an ox, let alone crises (CTP, 2016, *Xunzi: wangzhi*)
 - The political power may conquer people's bodies, but cannot change their hearts; Politics (*Zheng*) means that a leader uses one's integrity (*Zheng*) to unite and lead people to a good life
 - To pursue dynamic equity from being unbalanced to balanced and harmonious state. 'Equity' is not a static state, which is regulated by fixed rules or policies to force everyone to obey, but an ever-changing state, which provides room for everyone to grow (CTP, 2016, *Yijing*)
 - Chinese word for culture is '*wen hua*,' which means using ethics and communication to transform, instead

of forcing others to change by ‘*wu hua*’

Crises

- **The root reason for all human crises:** Unknown or from others’ oppression (Kuruma, 1929)
- Karl Marx didn’t provide the root reason for crises; however, many Marxists misinterpret the reason for the crises as others’ oppression to one’s own rights, and many radical social movements have failed worldwide already (Stoddart, 2007)
- **Solutions to the crises: To Expand HRD**
- (a) to overturn the oppressive class or force others to change for social equality in Marxism (b) to expand HRD from organization to societal and global levels through NHRD (McLean, 2014) (c) No solution from postmodernists (Hesse-Biber, 2007) (d) innovation and artificial intelligence from scientists and posthumanism (Kurzweil, 2005)
- **The root reason for all human crises: one’s own selfish and greedy human nature:** Human’s overdevelopment (not underdevelopment) of the resources of nature, others, and the self, caused the crises of the environment, trust with others, burnout with the self (CTP, 2016, Yijing, Bo)
- **Solutions to the crises: Not to develop HRD**
- (a) should not use up the last resources of the world to risk, recriminate, revenge, and repeat the old problems (CTP, 2016, Yijing, Bo) (b) should rest, reflect, recover, refresh the broken relationships with mother nature, other people, and one’s mental and physical health (CTP, 2016, Yijing, Bo); (c) There are always solutions to solve crises as long as one holds an active *jingjie* (Feng, 1944) (d) Crisis (*wei ji*) in Chinese means danger (*wei*) in opportunity (*ji*) and opportunity in danger

Future

- Unknown future in postmodernism (Crotty, 2004)
 - Artificial intelligence utopia with human extinction by 2045 in posthumanism (Kurzweil, 2005)
 - A conceptual utopia-like vision of the whole of humanity in HRD (McLean, 2014)
 - **Reconstruction of a new world:** If everyone could reserve the few resources they have left to repair the broken relationships with nature, other people, and one’s own physical and mental health, after the crisis, the world would gradually reserve great resources for reconstruction (CTP, 2016, Yijing: Fu)
 - China will realize the Chinese dream and achieve a *Datong* (big sameness) society by 2049 after achieving
-

- The end of the modern phase in a nuclear weapon age from historians (Coker, 1992)
- *Xiaokang* (moderately good) society by 2021 from poverty in 1980 (Tiezzi, 2015)
- **Destruction of the old world:** if greedy and corrupt leaders in power continue to consume all resources through strife and exploitation, they will be overthrown and new leaders will arise to lead to construct a new world (CTP, 2016, Yijing: Bo)

Appendix B

The comparison between Junzi and Xiaoren from the Analects (The two types of people in Confucian in Confucian classics--Analects)

Moral evaluation standards	<i>Junzi</i> (morally superior person)	<i>Xiaoren</i> (little human)
Behavior principle	Morally superior people follow morality (Analects, Liren:16).	Morally inferior people follow benefits.
Values	Morally superior people help others, not ruin others (Analects, Yanyuan:16)	Morally inferior people ruin others, not help others
Goals	Morally superior people consider how to follow morality and rules (Analects, Liren:11).	Morally inferior people consider how to get land and benefits.
Development directions	Morally superior people seek the upgrading of morality (Analects, Xianwen:23).	Morally inferior people seek the downgrading of morality but the upgrading of material benefits.

Interpersonal relationship	Morally superior people attempt to maintain a harmonious relationship with different people but retain individual differences (Analects, Zilu:23).	Morally inferior people attempt to please and be in uniform with others, but do not try to maintain harmonious relationships.
Making friends	Morally superior people keep harmonious relationships with everyone, but do not compete with others (Analects, Weizheng:14).	Morally inferior people compete with others, but do not maintain harmonious relationships with everyone.
Temperament	Morally superior people are confident but not proud (Analects, Zilu:26)	Morally inferior people are proud but not confident.
Problem-solving	Morally superior people rely on the self as the main source of problem-solving and seek self-correction (Analects, Weilinggong:21).	Morally inferior people think others should be responsible for their own problems.
Choice when there seems to be no way	Morally superior people stick to ethics and the bottom line when there seems to be no way (Analects, Weilinggong:2).	Morally inferior people do whatever they can to survive, when there seems to be no way.
Inclusiveness	Morally superior people are open, inclusive, and poised (Analects, Shu'er:37).	Morally inferior people are calculative, worried, and hateful.
Fears and concerns	Morally superior people fear heaven's will, authorities, and sages' teaching (Analects, Jishi:8).	Morally inferior people do not know heaven so do not fear heaven's will, disrespect authorities, and insult sages' teachings.

Appendix C

The comparison between Xiaokang and Datong societies from the Book of Rites

	<i>Xiaokang (Little Healthy)</i>	<i>Datong (Big Sameness)</i>
Societal Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Selfishness ● The world belongs to few families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Selfishlessness The world belongs to the public
Management Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rules of propriety (instead of morality) are used to manage selfish people ● Rules of propriety and of what is right are regarded as the disciplines by which people manage the relationships between rulers and ministers, between fathers and sons, between elder and younger siblings, and between a husband and a wife. Based on the rules, systems are created and property is allocated. ● All rulers should be very attentive to the rules of propriety. Rulers should display their righteousness, realize their credibility, exhibit the errors, exemplify benevolence, emphasize courtesy, and show people all the normal virtues. Any rulers who did not follow this course were driven away by those who possessed power and position, and were regarded as pests by all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *People are benevolent, so management is just based on morality. *Have great morality and do everything for the public.

Social Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Everyone only loves one's own parents and children. ● There is little concerns about other people outside their own families 	<p>*Everyone does not only love one's own parents and children.</p> <p>*The aged can be taken care of until death. The strong can have jobs to do. The young can grow up. The widowers, widows, orphans, the childless, sick, and disabled are all sufficiently maintained.</p> <p>*Men have their positions, and women have their homes.</p>
Talent Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The senior positions are inherited through the family. ● Evaluation of a person's superiority is based on one's knowledge and courage. 	<p>*The virtuous persons are promoted by the public, rather than the family background</p>
Motive and Beneficiary of Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work, achievements, and the accumulation of material wealth are all for the self. 	<p>*All effort is for the public, but not necessarily for the self.</p> <p>* Don't like to waste, but don't keep all resources for themselves either.</p>

Public Safety

- City walls, suburbs, ditches, and moats are reinforced to protect the self from the attack of others. As a result of the rise of selfish schemes and conspiracies, wars also began.

* People are sincere and faithful to each other, cultivating harmonious relationships.
 *Selfish schemes, intrigues, treacheries, rebellions and robberies found no development. Thus, no need to close the outer gates.

Appendix D**Consent Statement**

My name is Jackie Liu. I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Minnesota. I am currently conducting my dissertation research about the self-leadership of Chinese International Women Doctoral Students during their doctoral journey in the U.S. The findings will fill the research gap in the studies about International Chinese Women Doctoral Students in the U.S. (ICWDSUS) and the self-leadership of women of color in the U.S. How a marginalized individual woman overcomes the complex challenges in a foreign country may inspire anyone's self-leadership development.

You are invited to participate in this dissertation research because you have completed your doctoral journey in the U.S. as a Chinese International Women Doctoral Student. Your experience during your doctoral journey will be very helpful for ICWDSUS and other marginalized individuals. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in this study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to examine the self-leadership of International Chinese Women Doctoral Students and how they overcome challenges during their doctoral journey in the U.S.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate, you will be asked a series of interview questions, which will take about 90 mins. The researcher will use Zoom or any other virtual platform that you prefer. The interview will be recorded for data analysis by the virtual platform and stored in the researcher's computer with a password. The researcher may also check your published blog, Linked in, social media, your emails with the researcher, text messages with the researcher, and other artifacts to help data analysis with your permission. Please write down which aforementioned data you would NOT like to be used for this research:

Before completing the study, you can review the transcript and analysis of your interview. You can decide which part(s) you do not want to be included in the dissertation. The recording will be destroyed once it has been transcribed into words. The written data will be destroyed once all the research is completed.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are no immediate or expected risks for participating in this research. The interview is completely anonymous and confidential. There are also no immediate or expected benefits for you for participating in this study. Your participation will allow the researcher to learn about the self-leadership of ICWDSUS, which may also inspire your self-awareness and self-leadership development.

Confidentiality:

This study ensures anonymity. Your real name will not be known throughout the research process. A pseudonym will be given to you in the dissertation. The records of this study will be kept private. No recording will be publicly available.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your decision whether or not to participate is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any interview question or withdraw at any time. And your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota.

Contacts and Questions:

The student investigator conducting this study is Jackie (Jinfang) Liu. If you have any questions, you can ask her via her email liux2774@umn.edu, and cell phone 6126442607.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you can contact Jackie Liu's academic advisor, the principal investigator of this research, Dr. Rosemarie Park via her email parkx002@umn.edu. You can also contact the Research Subjects' Advocate line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware Street S.E., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; telephone (612) 625-1650.

You may have a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Appendix E

Intensive Interview Protocol

Before came to the U.S. stage:

1. How long ago did you come to the US? Were you a full time or a part time student?
2. How did you decide to study in the U.S. and how did you choose your doctoral program? What expectations or goals did you have before you came? What did your family think about your decision of pursuing your doctorate in the U.S.?
3. What preparation did you do before you came to the U.S.?

Early arrival to the end of course work period:

4. What were your impressions and experiences interacting with this new culture and environment when you first came here?
5. How did you feel during your first semester? What difficulties did you face during your first semester? (cultural adaptation; financial difficulties; language barriers; academic or school related; social experiences, such as dating and marriage; etc.)? How did you feel when you had difficulties? What coping strategies have you tried in the first semester (dealing with acculturative stress, academic stress, etc.)? How were they helpful/not helpful? Were there things you would have liked to do beyond your

academic requirements but didn't do during the first semester? If yes, what were those things? If no, why not? If you could go back to your first semester, what changes would you make in terms of dealing with the challenges in your study, work, and life? Or other aspects? What did you think of your academic performance at the end of your first semester?

6. What did you think of your academic performance during the second academic year? Any improvement compared with the first academic year? Why? How did you feel during your second academic year? What coping strategies did you try during the second academic year (dealing with acculturative stress, academic stress, etc.)? How were they helpful/not helpful? If you could go back to your second academic year, what changes would you make in terms of dealing with the challenges in your study and life? Or other aspects?
7. Were there any critical incidents that happened during this period?
8. Have you ever experienced culture shock? What was that like?

The end of course work period to the end of written prelim period:

9. What difficulties did you face during the preparation and conducting the written prelim period? How did you feel when you had difficulties? What coping strategies did you try during the written prelim period (e.g., stress)? How were they helpful/not helpful? Were there things you would have liked to do beyond your academic requirements but didn't do during that

period? If yes, what were those things? If no, why not? If you could go back to that period, what changes would you make in terms of dealing with the challenges in your study, work, and life? Or other aspects? What did you think of your written prelim performance?

10. Were there any critical incidents that happened during this period?

The end of written prelim period to the end of oral prelim period:

11. What difficulties did you face during the preparation and conducting the oral prelim period? How did you feel when you had difficulties? What coping strategies did you try during that period (e.g., stress)? How were they helpful/not helpful? Were there things you would have liked to do beyond your academic requirements but didn't do during that period? If yes, what were those things? If no, why not? If you could go back to that period, what changes would you make in terms of dealing with the challenges in your study, work, and life? Or other aspects? What did you think of your oral prelim performance?

12. Were there any critical incidents that happened during this period?

The end of oral prelim period to the end of prospectus meeting period:

13. What difficulties did you face during the preparation and conducting the prospectus meeting period? How did you feel when you had difficulties? What coping strategies have you tried during that period (e.g., stress)? How were they helpful/not helpful? Were there things you would have

liked to do beyond your academic requirements but didn't do during that period? If yes, what were those things? If no, why not? If you could go back to that period, what changes would you make in terms of dealing with the challenges in your study, work, and life? Or other aspects? What did you think of your prospectus performance?

14. Were there any critical incidents that happened during this period?

The end of prospectus meeting period to the end of dissertation defense period:

15. What difficulties did you have from the end of prospectus meeting period to the end of dissertation defense period? What was the dissertation writing period like? How did you feel when you had difficulties? What coping strategies have you tried during that period (e.g., stress)? How were they helpful/not helpful? Were there things you would have liked to do beyond your academic requirements but didn't do during that period? If yes, what were those things? If no, why not? If you could go back to that period, what changes would you make in terms of dealing with the challenges in your study, work, and life? Or other aspects? What did you think of your dissertation defense performance?

16. Were there any critical incidents that happened during this period?

17. When did you start to look for jobs? What was the job searching process like? What difficulties have you had during the job searching period? How

did you feel when you had difficulties? What coping strategies have you tried during that period (e.g., stress)? How were they helpful/not helpful? What did you think of your job searching results? How did you land in your current job?

18. When and why did you decide to work in the U.S. after graduation? Did you think of going back to China or other nations to work? Why or why not?

Other questions:

19. What do you think about the cultural differences between the U.S. and China? What do you think about the education differences between the U.S. and China? What do you think about the differences between working in the U.S. and China?
20. Are you satisfied with your doctoral program? Why or why not? How could your university or program better support your study? What advice would you give those who want to help ICWDSUS?
21. Do you think you got what you expected or not? If not, why? Could I ask what unexpected things happened during your doctoral journey?
22. What were the biggest challenges for you to pursue your doctoral degree?
23. What is your definition of a successful graduate study experience? What are some of the most memorable moments in your transition experiences

in your study? What are some of the most memorable moments in your transition experiences in your personal life ? What are some of the most memorable moments in your transition experiences in your work? How did those moments influence you?

24. How would you describe your relationships with your advisor and faculties, classmates, Chinese peers, other international students, local Americans, family members?
25. Who influenced you most during your doctoral journey? How did they influence you? When you experienced difficulty, who did you talk to first?
26. During your graduate studies, who helped you most? How did they help you?
27. What advice would you give to CWIDS?
28. What is your definition of a leader? What is your definition of women's leadership? Do you think women's leadership should be different from men's leadership? Why?
29. How do you describe your self-leadership during your doctoral journey? How did you lead your study during your doctoral journey? How did you lead your work during your doctoral journey? How did you lead your personal life during your doctoral journey? How did you lead your relationships with your advisor, other faculties, peers, Chinese community, and family during your doctoral journey?

30. During your doctoral journey, have you encountered any challenges against your identity as a woman in your study, work, and personal life? Have you encountered any challenges against your identity as a woman from outside the US in your study, work, and personal life?
31. How do you define your self-identity? How do you describe the person you were when you just started your doctoral journey? How do you describe the person you were when you finished your doctoral journey? How do you identify your growth during the journey? How did you think the Ph.D. experience helped you grow?
32. Could I ask what your values are? Do you think the Ph.D. journey has changed your values? How so?

Appendix F

Broad Interview Questions

1. During your doctoral journey, what were the challenges in your study? How did you cope with those challenges?
2. During your doctoral journey, what were the challenges in your work? How did you cope with those challenges?
3. During your doctoral journey, what were the challenges in your life? How did you cope with those challenges?
4. During your doctoral journey, what were the challenges in your psychological wellbeing? How did you cope with those challenges?
5. During your doctoral journey, what did you gain?
6. During your doctoral journey, could you describe some happy memories?
7. Does your identity as a woman bring any challenges for your study, work, life, and psychological wellbeing?
8. Does your Chinese identity bring any challenges for your study, work, life, and psychological wellbeing?
9. What do you think of/How do you define women's leadership?
10. What do you think of a woman's self-leadership? How do you describe your self-leadership during your doctoral journey?