

Constant Learning, Reflecting, and Adjusting

Experiences of Asian Scholars in U. S. Advertising Education

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Abstract

Both Asian advertising graduate students and faculty members attending higher academic courses or working in U.S.A. face cultural and linguistic challenges that may cause real difficulties in their lives in their host country of U.S.A. Systematic research is needed to address those challenges and to expand our theoretical understanding of diversity in advertising education. Such research may help Asian graduate students and scholars to succeed in U.S. higher education. Hence, a phenomenological study was conducted to explore Asian advertising faculty members' experiences as educators and scholars in the U.S. A broad research question of the study is "What is Asian faculty members' lived experience of being advertising faculty members in U.S. higher education?" In order to answer the research question, sixteen in-depth interviews were used to collect data. Findings revealed three major themes regarding Asian scholars' experience in U.S. advertising education: "Being a Student: Adjusting to U.S. Educational System," "Being a Teacher: Building Confidence," and "Being an Asian Teacher: 'I am Who I am'." Theoretical and practical implications are offered.

Keywords: *Asian faculty, Advertising scholar, Qualitative research*

Introduction

The number of Asian scholars and students in the U.S. has greatly increased in recent years (Yook 2013). In particular, Asian faculty members and graduate students have a significant presence in advertising education (aaasite.org 2018). However, limited research has been conducted to explore Asian scholars' experiences in U.S. higher education (for example Li and Beckett 2006; Yook 2013). Similarly, little research has investigated faculty members' teaching and research experiences and perceptions of advertising education (for example, Robbs and Broyles 2012). No study has specifically examined Asian scholars' experiences in advertising education.

Both Asian advertising graduate students and faculty members face cultural and linguistic challenges that may cause real difficulties in their lives. Comprehensive and systematic research is needed to address those challenges and to expand our theoretical understanding of diversity in advertising education. Such research may help Asian graduate students and scholars to succeed in U.S. higher education. In addition, this kind of research may also enrich our understanding of acculturation phenomena in the context of advertising education. Thus, the purpose of the current study is to fill the research gap by investigating Asian faculty members' experiences as educators and scholars in the U.S.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework: Acculturation

Acculturation is one of the most complex concepts in cross-cultural psychology. According to Berry (1997), acculturation refers to “the general processes and outcomes of intercultural contact” (p.8). Based on a comprehensive review, Berry (1997) found that psychological acculturation is influenced by numerous group and individual level factors in both the society of origin and the society of settlement with different outcomes. One long-term outcome is adaptation, which refers to individuals’ or groups’ psychological, behavioral, social, and cultural changes in order to respond to environmental demands. Whether or not immigrants could successfully adapt to the new cultural context is closely related to their selection and adoption of different acculturation strategies. Basically, four acculturation strategies were identified in the literature (Berry 1997, 2002; Nguyen and Benet-Martínez 2007).

The first acculturation strategy is assimilation. Immigrants who adopt this strategy don’t wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures. The second acculturation strategy is separation. Immigrants who adopt this strategy hold on to their original culture and try to avoid interactions with the other culture. The third acculturation strategy is integration. Immigrants who adopt this strategy try to maintain their original culture as well as seek daily interaction with other cultures. The last acculturation strategy is marginalization. Immigrants who adopt this strategy don’t want to keep their original cultural identity; neither do they want to interact with other cultures. According to Berry (2002), although the marginalization could be the strategy that immigrants choose to deal with their acculturative situation, it could also be caused by failed attempts at assimilations in addition to failed attempts to participate in the larger society. In other words, immigrants give up their original cultural identity and don’t adopt the core values in the host country. For example, independence, equality, informality, and directness are deemed as the core values of American culture. By contrast, harmony, benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom, honesty, loyalty, and filial piety are considered as the core values of Chinese culture. If a Chinese immigrant chooses marginalization as his/her acculturation strategy, he/she may not hold the above Chinese values. At the same time, he/she doesn’t adopt American values either.

As an important social group of immigrants, Asians unavoidably experience the process of acculturation and select different acculturation strategies to immerse into the new culture. The U.S. higher education environment, a unique context, provides a cultural environment for Asians to experience the dynamics and fluidly process of acculturation.

Asians in the U.S. Higher Education

Li and Beckett (2006) examined Asian female scholars’ lived experiences in Western academic discourse. Their book addresses the sociocultural, political, academic, and personal issues that Asian female scholars encounter in higher education in cross-cultural contexts. The authors identify two overarching themes that are fundamental for understanding Asian female scholars in the Western academy. First of all, Asian female scholars struggle with the double-edged sword of gender and “model minority” stereotypes. In addition, they experience barriers that are specific to their profession.

Yook (2013) addressed the challenges of college and graduate students in U.S. higher education. For Asian college students, the challenges include communication apprehension, language proficiency, accent, the act of speaking, unfamiliarity with public speaking, politeness and assertiveness, plagiarism, and asking for help when needed. In addition, Asian graduate students reported challenges such as language issues in seminar format classes, independent research, “Pigeonholing” and “Self-pigeonholing,” and professional conference attendance and presentation.

Yook (2013) also discussed issues facing Asian female scholars. Similar to Li and Beckett (2006)’ findings, she found that the two major issues that Asian female scholars have to deal with are cultural differences and credibility issues. Yook (2013) proposed to address the above two issues to provide a welcoming climate for female Asian faculty, to establish equitable practices so that Asian women are not assigned the labor-intensive courses, to develop equitable procedures for tenure and promotion, and salary

increases, to offer workshops tailored to Asian female scholars, and to provide the mentoring program for Asian women.

The above two books offer a comprehensive overview and discussion of Asian faculty in the U.S. academy in general. Are the same patterns present in advertising academia? Before answering the question, it is necessary to review the current research on the crucial context of advertising higher education.

Teaching Advertising in Higher Education

A limited number of qualitative studies have been conducted on teaching in advertising higher education (for example, Robbs and Broyles 2012; Farnda and Clarke 2004; Desai, Damewood and Jones 2001; Worley et al. 2007). Robbs and Broyles (2012) conducted qualitative research to examine the key characteristics of award-winning teachers in advertising higher education, their larger goals and values and how those goals have evolved over time. They conducted 15 in-depth interviews among exemplary teachers in the advertising academia and found four major themes:

1. Teaching is an evolutionary process with larger goals and overall approaches evolving as a result of both a conscious effort to improve and a gradual maturation process.
2. As teachers mature, inspiring and motivating students become significantly more important than delivering content.
3. Being personally committed to the students' success and connecting with them individually play the most critical role in motivating students and creating a positive learning experience.
4. Believing in students not only helps teachers succeed, but is also what motivates them to continue to invest time and energy in their teaching (p.7 – p.8).

Focusing on students' perspectives, Faranda and Clarke (2004) conducted a qualitative research on how students define an outstanding professor in the context of marketing courses. Specifically, 28 in-depth interviews were conducted among business students, and five themes were emerged: rapport, delivery, fairness, knowledge and credibility, and organization and preparation.

From the perspective of a consumer-oriented approach, Desai, Damewood and Jones (2001) compared marketing students and faculty members' views on the importance of various teaching related issues such as faculty-student interaction, general classroom management, student-initiated activities, and faculty-initiated activities. They found that students and teachers' views differ regarding different teaching related issues, and they suggested that if teachers in marketing and related fields view their students as customers and themselves as professional educators, they should be able to use information gathered in their study to be better teachers and to be seen by students as good teachers.

Concentrating on the instructional communication competence, Worley et al. (2007) conducted an ethnographic study on award-winning communication teachers. Sixteen participants were recruited for their study and on-site observations and in-depth interviews were used to collect data. Based on their findings, Worley et al. (2007) drew three major conclusions: first, award-winning teachers understand the ebb and flow of the classroom context; second, award-winning teachers use a wide repertoire of communication behaviors; and, finally, award-winning teachers emphasize relationships.

No study to date has been conducted to examine Asian faculty members in advertising higher education. With the increasing diversity of U.S. higher education and significant presence of Asians in advertising academia, it is imperative to examine Asian scholars' experiences in advertising higher education to enrich our understanding of this particular social group to shed light on the diversity in advertising academia. Based on the research purpose of the study, an overarching research question was proposed:

What is Asian faculty members' lived experience of being an advertising faculty member in U.S. higher education?

Methodology

The population of the current study is defined as Asian advertising faculty members, who come from Asian countries, have been working in the US higher education, with a rank of assistant professor, associate professor, or professor, and are currently teaching advertising or advertising-related courses. Purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were used to recruit participants. The criterion for sufficient sampling is saturation, that is, the point at which no new concepts and themes emerge (Corbin and Strauss 2015).

In total, 16 participants from different universities in the U.S. were recruited as participants (see Table 1). Those 16 participants are from four Asian countries and cultural areas, teaching in different types of universities (public vs. private, research intensive vs. teaching oriented, main campus vs. branch campus), with various years of teaching experience. Among the 16 participants, six are males and ten are females; one has the rank of full professor, two are associate professors, and the rest are assistant professors. In-depth interviews were used to collect data. According to the most recent international scholar database of the American Academy of Advertising (aaasite.org 2018), more Asian females are working in the advertising education than Asian males. Therefore, our sample well represents this imbalanced gender distribution of Asian advertising faculty members in the U.S. higher education. All the interviews were conducted either through online chatting software of Skype or telephone. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. To provide an accurate record of participants' comments, all the interviews except one who declined, were audio-recorded and transcribed. Data analysis followed the principle of phenomenological reduction (Moustakas 1994), and several measures were used to ensure the quality of the study (Creswell 2013).

Table 1. Profile of Participants

	Gender	Rank	Year of Teaching	Type of University	Cultural Areas
Melinda	female	Assistant Professor	5	Public and Research One	East Asia
Suzanne	female	Assistant Professor	6	Private and Research One	East Asia
Joshua	male	Assistant Professor	5	Private and Teaching Oriented	East Asia
Kristen	female	Assistant Professor	4	Private and Research One	East Asia
Taylor	male	Assistant Professor	5	Public and Research One	East Asia
Emily	female	Assistant Professor	3	Public and Research One	East Asia
Douglas	male	Assistant Professor	1	Public and Research One	East Asia
Sarah	female	Assistant Professor	4	Public and Teaching Oriented	East Asia
Paige	female	Assistant	4	Public and Teaching	East Asia

		Professor		Oriented	
Erica	female	Assistant Professor	1	Public and Research One	East Asia
Mathew	male	Assistant Professor	4	Public and Teaching Oriented	East Asia
Alex	female	Assistant Professor	5	Private and Teaching Oriented	East Asia
Shelby	female	Assistant Professor	5	Private and Research One	East Asia
Justin	male	Associate Professor	8	Public and Research One	Southeast Asia
Rachel	female	Associate Professor	7	Pubic and Research One	East Asia
Tyler	male	Professor	24	Public and Research One	East Asia

Findings

Being a Student: Adjusting to U.S. Educational System

Most participants had some professional experiences in advertising, marketing or mass media. The professional experiences more or less influenced those participants to come to the U.S. to study advertising. Some participants also had English language training experience at a young age, which influenced them to study abroad. Moreover, there are different personal, social, and cultural motivations for those participants to pursue their graduate study and advance their education in the U.S. For example, Joshua, an assistant professor working in a private university, said his major motivation to migrate to the U.S. to study advertising was to learn advanced advertising theories. By contrast, Alex, an assistant professor who came from China, told a different story of how she made a decision to pursue her post-graduate study in the U.S. In her case, her family exerted a significant influence on her choice.

Before I started my graduate study, I worked for an advertising agency for about 6 years in Korea as an account executive. ... You know, because advertising is highly developed in the U.S. practically and theoretically. Actually, advertising in Korea is not a very developed area but in the U.S. advertising is quite developed especially in academia. So it is the only country that I can learn the theoretical background of advertising.

(Joshua, male, assistant professor, South Korea)

Well, my situation is a little different coz I am the only child in my family. So I was not the only decision maker to come to the United States and study abroad. I was influenced by my parents. They wanted me to have some sort of international experience.

(Alex, female, assistant professor, P.R. China)

Regardless of what motivated those participants to come to the U.S., once they started their graduate study in this unfamiliar country, how to successfully adjust themselves to the U.S. educational system became the biggest challenge for those young ambitious Asian scholars. Although the specific forms of challenges differ, basically, all the challenges could be grouped into three categories: *language, culture,*

and *academy*. At the same time, within each category, based on participants' background, variations and nuances exist. Suzanne, who is a Korean senior assistant professor teaching in a private R1 (research intensive) university, vividly described her linguistic challenge in the academic setting.

Personally, I would say that my past experience living in the U.S. and my habit of reading English books and stuff definitely helped me reduce experiencing challenges. Still, speaking English was something I had not practiced so much in Korea. So, the speaking part was something that bothered me a bit. Also, we as Koreans don't have many discussion-based classes in college. In the U.S., it was a very stressful process to actively participate in group discussions.

(Suzanne, female, assistant professor, South Korea)

Similarly, for the cultural challenge, the cultural differences the participants felt came not just from the U.S. and their home countries, but also from the regional subcultures within the U.S., and different cultures of master and doctoral programs. The cultural differences would make the participants feel alone or isolated, as voiced by Kristen, a South Korean assistant professor working in a public and research oriented university.

I think I had some challenges, but they are different between at University X Master's program and University Y, Ph.D. program. In University X, I did not have much trouble or challenges since most of my friends and half of my class groups were Koreans. Only 20% of them were American students and the rest was like from Korea, China, Taiwan, etc., so it made me insensitive to cultural challenges. In University Y, it was way different. The village and town were different. All white Americans. For instance, when I entered a subway, I could feel that all white Americans looked at me in a weird way. On campus at University Y, almost 90 % were white and just made me feel nervous. You know the feeling of "all alone".

(Kristen, female, assistant professor, South Korea)

Academic challenges for the participants included finding research topics, methodological training, discussion-based courses, and writing academic papers.. In other words, how to become an Americanized scholar was the biggest challenge for those Asian graduate students. Paige, a Chinese assistant professor working in a public, teaching intensive university recalled different challenges she experienced as an international doctoral student.

Um, the first challenge for me is to learn what is the American style of doing research, especially methodology. I have learned the American style methodology: the scientific quantitative research methodology when I was in my master's degree in linguistics. But linguistics uses a lot of qualitative research methods. But here there is a strong tradition of quantitative research methods. It took me a while to learn basic statistics because I came from an art and humanity background in China. ... And the second challenge is writing academic paper. I don't think it's a language issue but it's a language issue to certain standard because English is not my first language. But the most challenging issue is the structure of the paper. The way of communicating scholarly research reports within the academia circle. So that was a bigger challenge. I have been learning throughout my Ph.D. as well as I am teaching right now.

(Paige, female, assistant professor, P.R. China)

While overcoming all types of challenges and moving forward their graduate studies, all the participants also had the opportunity to receive some teaching experience before they started their career in academia. All the participants believed teaching experience in their graduate program helped them to better position themselves in the job market and to form a foundation to become a better teacher in their career.

In the U.S., as a master student, I did not have much of a chance to teach as TA. In my Ph.D., I had just one experience of teaching a Media Planning class at University Y in my second year. Not much teaching

opportunities were provided to Ph.D. students at University Y. Now as an assistant professor at University Z, Media Planning class is what I've taught several times.

When the researcher asked the participant: "What does your teaching experience mean to you?" The participant answered:

Well, I think it was very important thing to me. The experience. It helped me find a job. Also, my teaching experience at University Y helped me find student differences between University Z and University Y students. [What kind of differences?] As you know, University Y is a state university, and University Z is private school. Class size, number of students, semester-based vs. quarter-based. More direction is required in University Z. I taught the same [media planning] course at University Z, but I was bit surprised that feedback and reactions were way different. Students at University Z seemed that they need more directions/guidelines and longed for more care.

(Kristen, female, assistant professor, South Korea)

From the participants' description, it seems that in their graduate study, they tend to adopt the assimilation strategy to facilitate their acculturation process. Although those participants' previous direct or indirect experiences of U.S. culture and language propelled them to choose the U.S. as their destination for academic advancement, the unfamiliarity of the cultural and educational system seemed to lead them to temporarily forget their original culture in order to quickly assimilate themselves into the new culture.

Being a Teacher: Building Confidence

According to the participants, it is not easy to be an educator in U.S. advertising academia. From those participants' experiences, being a teacher is an accumulative learning process, in which they are gradually building confidence and finding comfort. During the learning process, like all new faculty members, they have to deal with many specific aspects of teaching.

An interesting observation of the courses taught by the participants reveals that almost every participant has taught media planning. Some participants even mentioned that the media planning was their default course. Media planning is a required course at most American universities for advertising undergraduate students to understand media terminology, interpret syndicated research, gather audience measurements, conduct competitive analysis, create and evaluate marketing/media objectives and, ultimately, design effective, integrated media plans to deliver advertising messages. Generally, the media planning course involves many calculations, and compared to other advertising courses, the media planning course is more math and number oriented. With regard to the course preparation, most of the participants followed a systematic process to prepare their courses. At the same time, they also leave a certain degree of flexibility to change, update, and adjust their course contents.

Okay, so my default course would be media planning. So that's something I've been doing all the time and something that I don't mind doing over and over. That's my default class. In addition to that, the other class I would teach would be a graduate theory class or graduate seminar on consumer psychology or undergraduate seminar on consumer psychology or digital communication strategy. These are the courses I've been teaching.

(Emily, female, assistant professor, Taiwan)

First, I choose a textbook for a class. Then develop PPTs relevantly. I adopt the textbook format for my PPTs, but I try to change it by including new concepts, new examples, etc. I sort of disliked the way some faculty taught a class with their PPTs which is identical with the textbook content. My class is somewhat different in that the main required textbook is just for background knowledge, and my lectures expand beyond the textbook by presenting new material. ...I try to include latest news, exciting relevant articles and some entertaining factors into my classes so that I can make them engaging. Exciting and entertaining are the two most important factors that overcome the dull style of the textbook.

(Suzanne, female, assistant professor, South Korea)

For conducting and managing classes, data of the current study show it is a learning and evolving process for those participants. With their teaching experiences accumulated, those participants tend to change and adjust their course contents and formats based on the nature of the courses and their students' feedback. They also developed different strategies to deal with different class management issues. Moreover, it is also a personal growth process for those participants to experience from self-doubting and self-criticizing to finding and building confidence and comfort in classroom. The following quotes from Melinda who is a senior assistant professor working in a public, research one university well demonstrated this self-learning process.

The first two years were very tough. No teaching experiences explained it. Whenever students seemed not attentive to my lectures, I was more likely to believe that "is this because of my skill of speaking English?" I guess this is a common problem among international faculty, and it made me feel very frustrated and gloomy, which negatively affected my teaching quite a long time.

Based on the participant's answer, the researcher encouraged the participant to offer more details by asking: "Can you give me specific examples?" Then she further explained: "Of course, texting issues, using laptop during class time, etc. But, I noticed these behaviors seemed to go away gradually when I systematically prepared for my classes."

When the participant was asked "What do you mean by systematically?" She indicated:

Clearly identify the purpose of each class, try to develop more confidence of teaching, using clickers to go around the classrooms. Bad behavior dissipated. I believe it is a kind of "mutual" reaction between students and faculty. Not just a problem of students or faculty. The more confidence I equip, the better class and course.
(Melinda, female, assistant professor, South Korea)

All the participants tend to use different measures and methods to evaluate their students and themselves. When evaluating their students' learning, they used both formal and informal methods in and outside classrooms. Similarly, when evaluating their own teaching, they also rely on both formal and informal measures to obtain feedbacks. For example, Taylor, who is an assistant professor teaching in a public research university, discussed how he evaluated his courses using both formal and informal measures.

Well, I feel it when students do well on their exams, and given assignments. Sometimes, formally or informally, they give feedback about my courses, making me agree that I am doing a good job. For instance, last semester, they did poorly on a test, but this semester they performed well, etc. Also I can sense it from their facial expressions too. Eye-contact, giving a nod, etc. Additionally, there are formal peer evaluations on my teaching. My colleagues visit my class and observe my teaching. When I get good feedback from them, I feel that I am on the right track. Also, those who teach the high level courses in my advertising department sometimes give me positive feedback from one or two students' who took my classes before. "Today I covered some issues in media planning, and they seemed to follow them very well," is a kind of an example.
(Taylor, male, assistant professor, South Korea)

Regarding the student-teacher relationship, a gender difference was emerged from the current set of data. Although in general most participants perceive themselves as nice and friendly to their students, female Asian faculty members are more likely to develop and maintain a closer or friend-like relationship with their students while the male Asian faculty members tend to keep a distance and maintain a more professional relationship with their students. From Emily and Justin's descriptions, we can clearly see the difference.

Yes, I'm approachable and friendly, and that's what I get from my students. They feel comfortable to call me and talk to me and stop by my office.
(Emily, female, assistant professor, Taiwan)

Well, my relationship with my students is very professional. I usually don't want to be friend with my students because they will see me differently if I try to be their friend. They may think if you are my friend, you should give me good grade. So I don't want them to think in that way. I always keep a more professional relationship.

(Justin, male, associate professor, Cambodia)

In addition to learning to be a good teacher, another key issue for Asian higher educators is how to balance teaching and research. Data of the current study revealed that: first, those participants believed that the relationship between teaching and research is that those two factors inform each other; second, while novice faculty members have a hard time balancing teaching and research, senior faculty members are more skillful and strategic to deal with those two key components in their academic career. As a junior faculty member in a public university, Joshua's experiences and reflections are very different from Justin's, an associate professor in the same type of university who knows well how to balance teaching and research.

So making the balance between teaching and research is really important. As I told you before, this is my second semester. So I spent too much time to prepare my class. I don't have my class slides yet. Every class I gave class slides and class materials. So preparing classes is kind of hard for me right now. I don't have much time to prepare for my research. So right now it is really hard to make some balance for teaching and research. After this semester and next semester, I will be teaching the same class. Maybe from the next semester, I would have some time to prepare my research. Then I can start my new research.

(Joshua, male, assistant professor, South Korea)

I have two research assistants to come with research projects. So I have a lot of help. Most time I do research during breaks. In the school year, I work on those research projects like submitting conference papers or revising journal papers. During the breaks especially the summer break, I usually do research project such as doing literature review. This is how I balance teaching and research.

(Justin, male, associate professor, Cambodia)

With regard to the acculturation strategy, during the stage of learning to be a U.S. teacher, the participants were likely to adopt the assimilation strategy as well. Similar to their graduate study phase, a sense of unfamiliarity forced them to discard their previous cultural background to survive and succeed in their new social role as a faculty member. Different from their graduate study, a gender difference was emerged during this stage. In general, female Asian faculty members seem to be more uncertain and unsecured than their male counterparts.

Being an Asian Teacher: "I am who I am"

Although all the participants felt cultural differences when they first arrived in the U.S., they experienced limited cultural shocks in both day-to-day encounters and academic situations. This is probably due to some participants' study abroad experiences in their formative ages, and their learning and knowledge of the U.S. culture when they were in their home countries. An interesting finding of the current set of data is that generally female Asian scholars are more conscious of and sensitive to their cultural identity than their male counterparts. When asked her feelings to be an Asian faculty member, Suzanne discussed her bad experiences and strategies to deal with the situation.

Hmm... At the very beginning of my teachings at University S, I felt like that students tended to look down on me? Maybe was I too sensitive? As you know, I am Asian, female, and young which has something to do with the feeling. I felt some humiliation. ... My first experience teaching at University S was horrible. A couple of groups in my advertising class where other-major students were involved behaved rudely to me, challenged me, which tended to ruin my feelings and my class. Everything will be alright, alright was the only way I could cope with them. I just tried to solve the problem by myself, which was not the right way to act on those issues. I now know that if I am not seen as confident in front of them, they would

play with me and look down on me. Now, I am feeling more confident than before, and I intentionally speak strongly and insist that I am in charge.

(Suzanne, female, assistant professor, South Korea)

While the participants didn't think that the Asian culture has a significant influence on their teaching and research, they tended to believe that the Asian culture is an indispensable part of their social identity, which signals who they are thus impacting their teaching and research in a subtler way. When discussing the influences of their culture on their teaching and research, they acknowledged both advantages and disadvantages, and tried to transform the disadvantages into advantages. For example, Sarah discussed how Asian culture benefited her teaching and Taylor recounted his mentality shifting experiences from trying to be an American professor to staying to be a Korean advertising professor.

I think there are differences. But the differences are good and bad. The bad thing is that they think I am Asian, am foreigner, thus less respect for me. That's something I feel that way. But sometimes I think it's good because a lot of students are interested in Asian culture especially Asian and Chinese markets are booming in those years. If I show them some Asian advertising and show them how culture in the way that advertising is executed, it could be some asset to me when I teach.

(Sarah, female, assistant professor, P. R. China)

When I came to this school, my teaching evaluations score was a 3.7, which was one of the lowest in the school. I thought about this. I mulled over and over. I concluded that I was trying to be an American teacher. Acting like American faculty who is free to speak English, such a good facilitator of in-class discussion. I feel like I can't be. We are too late to be. So, my strategy became "be myself." My positioning is just "be me." "Be a Korean professor." On the first day of every class, I tell my students that "I am Korean. I use broken English. Tell me always if you don't understand my English." Also, I tried to bring in more international aspects of advertising and marketing concepts, examples, and Korean TV commercials. So my suggestion is "don't try to be American professor." Don't forget that you are Korean and Korean faculty who teaches in the US.

(Taylor, male, assistant professor, South Korea)

Based on their own experiences, the participants offered specific and useful advice for Asian graduate students or teachers new to the field. Similar to the challenges in their graduate studies, the advice could also be categorized into *language*, *culture*, and *academy*. Again, variations and nuances exist in each category. When asked her advice for advertising graduate students and new faculty members, Paige extensively discussed the subculture differences between students from her previous and current institutions. By understanding her students at a deeper level, she adjusted and established different teaching goals. Similarly, Melinda vividly described how her "student-centered" strategy helped her survive and succeed in U.S. classrooms.

When I was in University M, every student comes to your classroom with an expectation to get an A. But here students are very realistic. They know they have family duty. Sometimes they only want to get a B or C because that's the best they can do. That's their goal. My role is to help them to get B but not push them to get an A because that's what their resources allow them to do, and don't punish them if they don't try to get an A. There are so many obstacles and barriers in their lives. ... because students here often study and work at an early age and they need help not to find a job but to find a career. So that's my goal: to help them find career, to help them to find something that they are interested in and they would like to do in the rest of their lives.

(Paige, female, assistant professor, P. R. China)

Well, be confident. In managing classes, not only be confident, but you should not be too sensitive to students' small reactions. Like I said, be student-centered. Get yourself out of "self-centered" teaching, which makes you feel comfortable and beneficial to your students.

How to make a good harmony with your students comes from how much you care for your students. Further, you should make a good community and companionship with your colleagues, and your fellow faculty.

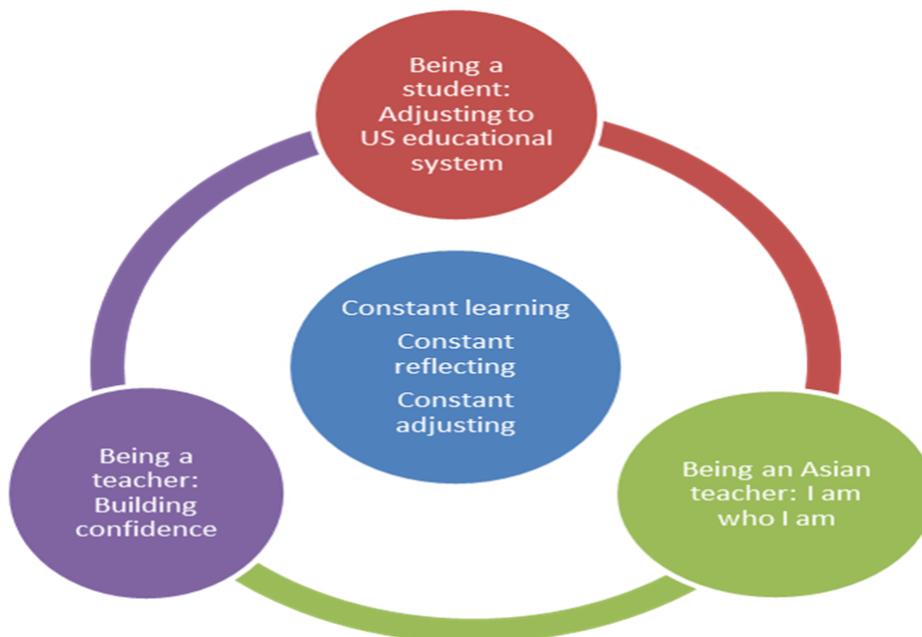
(Melinda, female, assistant professor, South Korea)

When those participants recognized and acknowledged their cultural identity, they tended to adopt the integration as their acculturation strategy. While they were open and embracing the new culture, they also tried to keep and maintain their original culture. Moreover, they took full advantage of their cultural heritage to help them to become a confident and successful advertising scholar in the context of U.S. higher education.

Discussion

In a phenomenological study, a major purpose is to produce clear and accurate descriptions of a particular aspect of human experience (Polkinghorne 1989). In the current study, the central phenomenon under consideration was Asian scholars' experiences in the U.S. advertising higher education. For a phenomenological investigation, one critical goal is to establish of the knowledge of essences by the intuitive integration of fundamental textual and structural descriptions into a unified description the phenomenon as a whole (Moustakas 1994). As shown in Figure 1, further analysis revealed an overarching theme that unified the descriptions and reflected the essence of the particular phenomenon is the “*constant learning, reflecting, and adjusting.*”

Figure 1: Asian faculty members' experiences in U.S. advertising higher education



Constant Learning

Learning is a major theme that integrates Asian advertising scholars' academic experiences in different life stages. During their graduate studies, those ambitious Asian scholars were learning about using a different language in academic and everyday situations; studying the nuts and bolts in the unfamiliar educational system; and, obtaining knowledge of cultural and subcultural differences. During their academic career, those participants kept learning and evolving from being a teacher, to being a good teacher, and eventually to being a good Asian teacher.

Constant Reflecting

In order to survive and succeed in the U.S. advertising academia, those Asian advertising scholars also engaged in a self-reflective process, in which they were constantly thinking and rethinking their learning, teaching, personal and professional growth goals and strategies, their social roles, and their cultural identities. During their graduate studies, the participants were constantly comparing and pondering their educational experiences in different cultural contexts, and trying to find the most effective strategies to facilitate their learning experiences. During their academic career, the participants kept conducting internal inquiries regarding their social roles as an advertising professor and an Asian scholar, and trying to find a balancing point to integrate their different social roles.

Constant Adjusting

Based on their learning and reflecting results, and the evaluations and feedbacks from multiple sources, those Asian advertising scholars were consistently navigating and adjusting themselves in order to find a comfortable and confident position in the U.S. higher education system not only as a qualified advertising scholar but also as a proud Asian. During both their graduate studies and teaching careers, they generated different strategies to overcome various linguistic, cultural, and academic barriers.

Theoretical Implications

As the first research exploration of Asian advertising scholars' experience in the U.S. higher education, the current study expands previous research in several ways:

First, the current study examined the acculturation theory in the context of advertising higher education. Findings suggested that Asian advertising faculty members took both the assimilation strategy and the integration strategy to navigate and adjust themselves to the new educational system as a student and a faculty (Berry 1997, 2002; Nguyen and Benet-Martínez 2007). One of the most important theoretical contributions of the study is to uncover the dynamics and nuances of the Asian advertising scholars' acculturation process, as well as revealing the essence of this phenomenon.

Second, findings of this study revealed that similar to previous studies on Asian students (Li and Beckett 2006; Yook 2013), Asian advertising graduate students experienced similar linguistic, cultural, and academic barriers and challenges during their graduate studies. However, data of the current study uncovered the complexity and dynamics for each category of challenge faced by Asian scholars in advertising academia. For example, in addition to recognizing the cultural differences between the U.S. and their home countries, Asian advertising scholars also realized the constraints of subcultures (Skelton 2005).

Third, similar to the exemplary advertising teachers (Robbs and Broyles 2012), according to those Asian scholars, teaching is also an evolutionary and gradual maturity process in which they are gradually finding comfort and building confidence. Different from the exemplary teachers in advertising, however, in the life-world of Asian scholars, the process is also an evolving process for those Asian scholars to navigate and confirm their cultural identity with regard to their position and experience in the advertising higher education.

Fourth, although data of the current study uncovered that Asian female advertising scholars were more conscious of their cultural identity, they didn't experience or feel many biases or discriminations discussed by the previous studies (Li and Beckett 2006; Yook 2013). This might reflect that the overall tolerance of diversity in U.S. higher education has been significantly improved especially in regard to Asians. This might also signal that compared to older generations, the new generation of Asian immigrants is more confident and less sensitive to discriminations.

Finally, consciously or unconsciously, those Asian advertising scholars are applying a variety of strategies identified by excellent teachers (Bain 2004; Stephenson 2001; Yair 2008; Worley et al. 2007) in their daily teaching practices. In addition, they also developed some specific strategies to deal with issues caused by their cultural identities. For example, one strategy that they deal the accent issue is to emphasize their talent of multi-linguism.

Practical Implications

The current study also has several practical implications for new advertising graduate students or novice advertising faculty members, especially those who come from Asian countries. Participants of the study provided a variety of useful and inspiring advice and suggestions for Asian graduate students and faculty members new to the field. For example, for the accent issue, those participants mentioned two specific strategies. The first strategy is “acknowledging but not apologizing,” which means Asian faculty members should be aware of and admit their accent, and openly discuss it with their students at the very beginning of the semester. But at the same time, Asian faculty members shouldn’t make a big deal of their accent but learn to live with it because their accent is an integral part of their cultural identity. The second strategy is to emphasize the fact that Asian faculty members’ ability to speak more than one language to gain appreciation, admiration, and respect from their students. For teaching strategies, one of the insightful strategies mentioned by the participants is the formation of “student-focused” mentality. Asian faculty members have to know the characteristics of their student population, be aware of students’ needs and wants, and adapt their teaching approaches to them accordingly.

Limitation and Future Research

Several limitations should be noted: Although the intention of the research is to explore Asian advertising faculty members’ experiences in the U.S. higher education, only scholars from limited number of Asian countries were recruited. Asia is a big and diverse geographical location where many cultures co-exist. Future research may recruit advertising faculty members from more Asian countries and cultural regions to expand the findings from the current study.

Similarly, although the participants of current study well represent Asian advertising faculty members from different types of universities, with various years of teaching experiences, and at all three levels of professorship, senior Asian faculty members are less representative in the current set of data. Future research may conduct similar study among Asian advertising faculty members with significant teaching experiences to compare with the current study.

Additionally, the current study mainly focused on Asian advertising faculty members’ teaching experience. In the U.S. higher educational system, research and service are also crucial components of a faculty member’s academic experiences. Future research could explore Asian faculty members’ experiences of research and service as well as the relationships among all those three components to obtain a more complete picture of Asian advertising scholars’ academic experiences.

Finally, the current study only focused on advertising scholars in the U.S. On a more general level, future research could extend the findings of current study by examining pedagogical cooperation between educational institutions of different countries and between students and scholars of varying ethnic, social and cultural background

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