Moderation, modesty, creativity, and criticalness: A Chinese-American medical professor speaks.

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MODERATION, MODESTY, CREATIVITY, AND CRITICALNESS
A Chinese American Medical Professor Speaks
Gulbahar H. Beckett and Jianhua Zhang

The number of minority scholars in North American universities and colleges has increased steadily since the 1980s (Harvey, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 2002). This has resulted in some publications that explore various issues encountered by minority scholars in general (e.g., Belcher & Conner, 2001; Braine, 1999; Kingston-Mann & Sieber, 2001) and female faculty in particular (Li, 2005; Liang, 2005; Lin et al., 2004; Vargas, 2002). This body of work shows that minority faculty encounter various challenges in their work. For example, Braine (1999) describes being underappreciated as an English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor in the United States, as some of his students dropped out of his classes based on the native speaker fallacy (Phillipson, 1992) that assumes only native speakers are good language teachers. That is, despite his near-native proficiency in the English language and expertise in English language teaching, he felt his students dropped out of his courses with an assumption that, as a nonnative speaker of English, he would not be able to do a good job of teaching ESL. Similar findings are presented and discussed in Liang (2005), a study that investigates three Asian female professors' ongoing battles with linguistic, gender, racial, and cultural issues. According to the participants in this study,
their students questioned their credibility as course instructors and challenged their authority because of their accented English.

Loo and Ho (2005) provide a detailed account of their experiences with merit pay increases, promotion, and tenure. They feel their universities treated them unfairly by concealing crucial departmental policies, being overly critical of their work, and denying them the promotion and tenure they deserved because of racism. According to them, their White male colleagues with lesser qualifications were promoted and given tenure because of their race. The narrative study by Lin and colleagues (2004) includes a discussion of similar issues from different angles such as the participants' feelings of being victimized by the same gender politics and colonial ideologies. For example, one of the participants in this study felt she was regarded as a second-class citizen by her White female colleagues who took on the role of speaking for her. She writes about feeling disempowered when her dean told her that her research on her own ethnic community was not considered serious research. A second participant in this study reports being deprived of opportunities to teach higher-level graduate courses and working with good doctoral students. Another participant in the same study narrates and discusses her experience of being underappreciated by colleagues from her own ethnic and cultural background. The authors explain their experiences as legacies of race and gender politics as well as colonialism. According to them, their White female colleagues might have seen themselves as the second-best group of people (next to White men) allowed to discriminate against and speak for other people including minority women because of their colonial belief in White superiority. That is, they may have believed that, although they are women, they are still superior because they are White. Though they criticize White men for discriminating against them and others, they act as if they should also be in a superior position to judge and speak for other people.

Along a similar line, Li (2005) discusses her experiences of being a young Asian female graduate advisor at a U.S. university where she encountered disrespect and disobedience from her Asian female graduate students. According to Li, her Korean and Chinese graduate assistants did not show her the same respect they showed her White male colleagues. Specifically, her graduate assistants did not complete assigned tasks on time, talked back, entered her office without knocking, canceled meetings, and scheduled holidays on the days that they were supposed to work without consulting her as their supervisor. In contrast, one of the Korean graduate assistants showed so much respect to one of Li's White male colleagues that he said it embarrassed him that the student always walked out of his office backward. Like
Lin and colleagues (2004), Li explains these experiences as legacies of race and gender politics as well as colonialism. According to Li, her experience with graduate assistants could have something to do with the fact that women, particularly minority women, have always been marginalized in higher education. She cites U.S. Department of Education statistics showing that in 1995, 75 percent of full professors, 63.5 percent of associate professors, and 47.5 percent of assistant professors in American universities are White males. The same data source reveals that in 1999, 50 percent of college faculty were White males, 35 percent were White females, and only 5 percent were Asian/Pacific Islanders. Li speculates that such demographics can contribute to the perpetuation of White male superiority in the academe, an argument that seems to be supported by people from various ethnic and racial groups (Bassett, 1992).

The above literature review represents some of the emerging discussion of issues related to minority faculty in North American colleges and universities. However, what is noticeably missing from this body of work is an examination of issues faced by natural science faculty of Asian origin. Studying this particular population is important because it represents a significant percentage of minority faculty. For example, a National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (1998–1999) survey of 960 institutions show that Asian Pacific Islanders consist of 5.1 percent of science, mathematics, and engineering professors compared to 5.0 percent non-Hispanic Blacks and 3.5 percent Hispanics, the rest being White and other ethnic groups. This chapter bridges these gaps through excerpts from a Chinese American medical professor's narrative of her journey from being a Chinese student in China to a Chinese American professor in the United States. Furthermore, the interpretation of issues faced by minority faculty has largely been from critical perspectives such as racism, feminism, and colonialism. This may have resulted from autoethnographic studies that have been conducted mostly with social science faculty who themselves work with these theories. Interpreting lived experience of a natural science professor from other theoretical perspectives such as the Eastern Confucian and the Western Deweyan educational cultural perspectives could add to our understanding of the issues encountered by minority faculty. The focal points we discuss in the chapter include how the Confucian theory of modesty and moderation was useful in preparing Mei, the participant, to be an extremely successful student and person in China, but became a hindrance to quick success in American society.

Specifically, we illustrate and discuss how Mei aced all of her examinations in China, entered a top university at age fifteen, and came to the United States as one of a chosen elite; but also how a Confucian upbringing
that socialized her to be modest and moderate became an obstacle to passionately pursuing her studies and career with creativity. We do this using Mei’s narratives as a legitimate data source (Bakhtin, 1981; Clandinin & Connolly, 1994; Mirriam, 1998). This approach was chosen because, according to Mirriam, “meaning is embedded in people’s experiences” (p. 6), and data analysis depends on the subjective interpretation of the lived experiences of the participant (van Manen, 1990). Data interpretation was structured within Clandinin and Connolly’s (1994) typology of internal and existential conditions. The former refers to the participant’s voices and the latter to broad questions beyond participant experience. Emergent patterns (Spradley, 1980), narrative threads, and surprises were identified, and then triangulated with the participant (Clandinin & Connolly, 1994).

We apply Confucianist Eastern educational and Deweyan Western educational views (Gardner, 1989) to interpret the issues identified in the chapter. We also make useful suggestions for existing and aspiring Asian female faculty as well as for the North American universities and colleges that employ them. We believe this chapter contributes to our understanding of the trials and tribulations some Asian female faculty undergo during their journey from student to faculty. Such understanding can benefit other scholars of similar origin in their transition from their home culture to their host cultures. Universities and colleges in the United States can benefit from it in their efforts to help scholars of similar origin make a smoother transition to their new institutional cultures.

Growing Up in China and Becoming a Graduate Student, Postdoctoral Fellow, and Faculty Member in the United States

Who am I, where did I come from (physically and literally), where am I going: These are some of the questions that Mei asks herself when she is in search of her identity. In this section of the chapter, we will present some of Mei’s answers to these questions. Although these are uniquely Mei’s answers, we believe this sharing of her experience will spark further discussion of issues faced by Asian female science faculty in North America.

Growing Up in China

I grew up in the Beijing suburb where the Chinese Academy of Sciences is located. The residential areas in this suburb are intermingled with a dozen different research institutes, and my parents and most of my childhood
friends’ parents were scientists. So when I was little, I thought that everybody would grow up to become a scientist. Of course after entering school, we were told that we ought to be reeducated by humble people—workers, peasants, and soldiers—to become one of them. The Communist propaganda then was that humble people are the smartest and the most noble while intellectuals are the stupidest. When I was growing up, China had one billion people, only a small fraction of whom were intellectuals. Nonetheless, my elementary school years were arguably the best time of my life. As kids, my friends and I were allowed to spend after-school hours without adult supervision. We were latch-key children who ran around with home keys tied to chains that hung on our necks.

Not much critical and creative work was asked of my friends and me, as rote learning memorization was the prevalent teaching and learning approach then. Children were asked to read and reread the same story a million times till everyone could recite it before they could move on to another story. The rationale was that “books read a hundred times can make themselves clear and obvious.” Also, “if you remember all the three hundred Tang poems, you yourself will become a poet.”

Nevertheless, my friends and I did visit each other’s homes and we read our parents’ books. A friend of mine had the most amazing books on heavenly objects. I was particularly amazed by the pictures of galaxies and stars. We also read about how to make sophisticated calculations in our heads and competed on who could calculate the results the fastest. We read about why ink bottles can freeze and break in the winter, why one’s mirror image is upside down on the back of a spoon, and why a kid can run with the wolves and become a werewolf. At the same time, I personally liked to read novels and poetry. In my preschool years, I was locked up in our twelve-square-meter apartment whenever I was sick and was not allowed to go to kindergarten. I had nothing else to do but read newspapers, poetry, and novels. But, my thirst for natural science was never dominated by my thirst for social science.

I aced my middle school entrance exam and classes. One day, my teacher asked me to ask my mother to visit him. I was nervous about what he would tell my mother. It turned out that he recommended me to take college entrance exams without going through high school. After a crash course studying high school subjects such as chemistry, political sciences, and Chinese literature for a week, I took the university entrance exam with three boys from my school. I was the only one who passed the exam, and this resulted in my spending the rest of my teenage years at the University of Science and
Technology of China. As I did not learn high school math and science, it took me a few months to catch up with my classmates. Soon, I started excelling in physics, although by then I was more interested in the biology-related courses. However, because of the nature of university course work in China, I gained very little empirical research experience. In addition, the scientific, especially biomedical, research of the time was significantly behind that in America and Europe.

My school teachers and university advisors were all very attentive, fatherly, and gave detailed instructions about what to read and what to learn. They took pride in being responsible for their students and maintained very close guidance. My university strongly discouraged our social life, especially dating, so that we could focus on our studies. I was able to focus on my science subjects and this enabled me to graduate a year early from the university and to pass the China-U.S. Physics Examination and Application Program to come to the United States.

**Becoming a Graduate Student and a Postdoctoral Fellow in the United States**

I grew up in a country whose Communist propaganda was that capitalists exploit people and used Andersen's (1846) *The Little Match-Seller* as an example of how poor people die outside of rich people's houses on Christmas Eve. As a result, I grew up hating the Western world and wanting to liberate all the miserable people slaving away for capitalists. The irony was that, after all this propaganda, China suddenly opened her doors and sent students abroad to study. I was one of sixty biology students who passed a national competition and came to America in 1985 at age twenty.

I discovered that graduate school life in the United States was not something I was prepared for, as it resembled nothing I had experienced in China. For the entire first semester, I could not understand much of what the professors said in class. They seemed to speak very fast with heavy accents. The English they spoke was nothing like the BBC or Voice of America English we listened to and emulated in China. Still I did reasonably well with my exams as I could make use of most of the subjects I had learned in China. I also enjoyed my laboratory experiences. I chose one particular lab for my Ph.D. thesis, primarily because everything worked the first time during my rotation. My positive experiences gave me an optimistic view of graduate school life. However, once I joined the laboratory, things were not as rosy as I imagined. Many people told me that graduate school is like swimming in the ocean, you either learn to swim or you sink.
Specifically, I found graduate school in the United States to be very much an independent endeavor. For example, my Ph.D. advisor told me that he had studied with someone who took a three-year sabbatical during his study. His advisor told him that he could do anything he wanted in terms of biomedical research. So my advisor hit the library and found something to work on. When his advisor came back, he asked my advisor to write up what he had found and defend his thesis. My advisor was one of the most brilliant people in the Western world in biomedical research. I felt that I could become at least one of the best in my class, but only if a topic was assigned and everybody studied the same thing. I discovered that higher learning in the United States means choosing one's own area of study, which can determine one's success or failure. Although this way of pursuing knowledge was what I had wanted since my childhood, what I needed to do in U.S. graduate school still came as a surprise, because I was not prepared for it by my studies in China.

My advisor was from Great Britain. He was brilliant, charming, and kindhearted, but he was also hot-tempered. He was so straightforward that he even cursed and yelled. I could not develop a rapport with him for the longest period of time. One day, we had a conversation that totally changed me. He came to me and said: "Why are you always so bloody quiet? I don't see fire in your belly. Where is the passion?" "What? Passion?" I thought. Confucius said that noble people do everything in moderation. In my usual way, I bit my tongue and said nothing. He continued: "You've got to do everything in excess, work excessively hard, and play excessively hard. You've got to laugh out loud, don't hold it all in." I said, after gathering all the courage I had, "Then I may die sooner." He said, "You may die happier." "Happier?" I thought. Being happy was a sin, at least that was how I was taught as a kid. We should carry the whole world on our shoulders and make it better before we should allow ourselves to experience happiness. Well, I did not say anything to him that day. But the thought of allowing myself to be passionate and happy kept growing in me.

I was also very shy and humble when I first came to the United States, but I was eager to learn. I always sat in the front row taking notes in classes and in seminars. I took notes every time my advisor said anything to me. But I never asked any questions. I always went back and diligently studied what I was taught. One day, my advisor got really tired of hearing echoes of his own voice without any back-channeling from me. He said: "You have to ask questions. From now on, you have to ask at least one question in every one of our conversations, in every class, and every seminar." I was shocked.
Me? Posing questions to an authority, especially during seminars when the topics are something that I am not entirely familiar with? But I did it since my advisor told me to and I discovered that asking questions can be fun and empowering. I found out that asking questions forces one to think critically and creatively and that professors actually appreciate students asking questions.

My postdoctoral years were also quite interesting. I thought that I had finally got this Ph.D. and could walk on air and be confident among students, but I was humbled by the experience. Most of the fellows in my postdoc institute were brilliant. They had their own fellowships and they were independent and creative. They claimed that they published better papers than I did. Everybody was eager to do the ultimate experiment that would lead to a Nobel Prize–winning discovery. My advisor was also brilliant and outgoing. He had parties for us in his house, took the entire lab on white-water rafting and skiing trips, and held volleyball matches in his backyard. I was still my old quiet self, participated in the volleyball games, but skipped the skiing trips and the white-water rafting. In retrospect, I could have been more active and interactive, which would have allowed me to discuss new ideas with my colleagues and my advisor and to make faster and better progress in my research. I was very hard on myself during my postdoc years. I worked diligently seven days a week and almost twenty-four hours a day, thinking and dreaming about, conducting, and writing up my research. At the end of my postdoc period, I helped identify components of a large complex in terms of gene regulation and my work was part of a very significant paper. But somehow, I still did not have the feeling that I had done something really important.

*Being an Asian Female Faculty: An Even More Challenging Experience*

I have been a research assistant professor for the past eight and a half years. During this period, I faced many more new challenges as well as some exciting moments, which I share in this section. One of the questions I keep asking myself is, what does it mean to work in the natural sciences field? My work as a natural science faculty reminds me of a quotation from my teenage years: “There is no royal road in science. Only those who do not dread the fatiguing climb along the steep path have the chance of gaining the luminous summit.” I loved the saying then, but failed to fully understand the meaning of it. As a natural science professor now, I think this quotation really means that natural science involves research into the unknown. Our hypotheses
sometimes work, but they also fail at times because of limitations in technical skill or in funding and other resources. As such, I realize that natural science is hard work that requires imagination, creativity, and a 24/7 commitment even from professors.

Another question I often ask myself is, what does it mean to be an Asian female professor of natural science? As I mentioned before, people of Asian heritage grow up with Confucian doctrines: "Be moderate, be modest, be swift in action and inert in words." However, I have learned over the years that such an upbringing can become an impediment to quicker and larger success in American academia. Here, let me provide some examples, beginning with the difficulty I have with self-promotion. I worked very hard for years and waited to be discovered only to realize that, in this country, people have to promote themselves to get the opportunities they want. "Seek and thou shalt find" seems to be the way of thinking in this country. I have been promoted three times during the past eight and a half years, but all three times I had to ask for it. The first promotion was after my first National Institute of Health (NIH) grant, which I was very proud of. However, I did not get any promotion because of the grant alone. A senior faculty in the department had to ask for it on my behalf. I was too embarrassed to ask for it myself as I was taught to be modest, and "to ask what you can do for your institution, not what your institution can do for you." The other two times, I gathered up a lot of courage and asked for promotions myself. Once I got another big grant from the Department of Defense, and another time I published a high-impact article in a top journal. I asked for a promotion after finding out that other people with similar experience got promoted. I also found that some colleagues had asked for and were given extra equipment by the department. I tried to follow suit by identifying a real need and by providing a convincing argument based on the likelihood of productivity, and I actually got some equipment for my laboratory, too.

A second example of the impediments of my upbringing concerns voicing my opinion. This has been a special challenge for me as an Asian female faculty. Asian females are good listeners and we tend to think that other people have better things to say. However, I learned that I also have important things to say and people actually value my opinion if I express it and if it is worthwhile. If I do not, issues that are important to me get overlooked. For example, I suggested that we organize a national meeting at the university to stimulate collaboration and to increase the national visibility of our university. My suggestion was accepted by our program director. I remained on the committee and I suggested speakers. During one meeting, I suggested
the names of two Chinese scientists. One committee member asked: "Why do you always have to recommend Chinese?" Being my usual self, I did not say anything immediately. I did not know whether the question was meant to be humorous or something else. But clearly if I were not Chinese, the question would not have been asked. After a few more scientists were nominated and discussed, and when we still had not found an appropriate speaker, I came back to one of the Chinese scientists I had recommended. I asked "What about so-and-so? Is there anything wrong with him besides being a Chinese?" The committee agreed that he was a good scientist and strongly supported my recommendation.

A third example relating to my Asian femaleness has to do with my never wanting to say I am ambitious. At one job interview, my interviewer asked me how I was going to win my Nobel Prize. I said honestly that I did not think I could win a Nobel Prize. Another faculty later told me that I was seen as "lacking ambition." I had always thought that I should hide my "sharp edges" and achieve before making noise about it. But my only reward was not getting the job I applied for.

A fourth example has to do with teaching, which I am always nervous about. I often feel limited in how much I can do to inspire students and postdocs who are not Asian. I found my American colleagues often use humor and put a positive spin on things. Students seem to be more productive and happier in their laboratories. But I do not feel I have the kind of language skills and cultural knowledge to do what my colleagues do with their students. I feel I should try to memorize all the facts to be confident in answering questions without consulting books.

What Now?

Now that I have identified at least some of the issues that I have faced as an Asian female natural science faculty, what do I do with them? What do I do with all the missed opportunities of exchanging ideas with and learning from brilliant colleagues during my postdoc years and missed opportunities as a result of not getting critical and constructive feedback on my research and grant proposals during the first few years of my faculty career? I am now making conscious efforts to be more interactive. For example, I volunteered to play a major role in a collaborative project involving about twenty researchers, and after a lot of hard work a paper based on this work got published in a good journal. I will continue to search for improvement, and hope the experience I share here will help others like me find ways in their journey
to make unique contributions to science and society, to live more fulfilling lives, and to become better scientists and better people in general.

**Issues and Possible Explanations**

Several themes from the above have emerged (Spradley, 1980) from Mei’s narrative (Bakhtin, 1981; Clandinin & Connolly, 1994; Mirriam, 1998). One, Mei is a bright and successful person, but she would have been even more successful had there not been something in her holding her back. Two, Mei aced it all in China by listening closely to her teachers and professors as they lectured and advised, reading what they told her to read, taking notes with modesty, making it to a top university at age fifteen, and coming to America as one of a chosen elite. However, her narrative seems to suggest that those strategies became an impediment to success in American graduate schools. Three, unlike her previous experience in China, Mei found that to succeed in the United States she needed to passionately and independently pursue a field of study with creativity and criticalness as well as self-confidence and even self-promotion as a graduate student, postdoctoral fellow, and as a professor. She found that she could not just learn from authority (i.e., professors and texts) with humility and moderation. Instead, she needed to be creative, to question critically what she read and heard, and that she needed to interact and work with her colleagues to maximize her achievement. Four, Mei found that resources are something one needs to request. If there is a legitimate reason for it, the request is usually granted. Five, Mei discovered opinions must be voiced to be heard, and that suggestions put forward may be adopted. Six, ambitions must be expressed when the circumstance calls for it. Finally, Mei felt that her pedagogical resources (e.g., teaching skills as well as linguistic cultural resources) needed to be expanded.

Why did Mei encounter these issues? Specifically, why was Mei doing all the listening and reading but not questioning what she read and heard? Why did Mei not know that she could ask for resources, voice her opinion, and make suggestions? Why did she not answer her interviewer’s question confidently by saying that, as a bright scholar, she hopes to win a Nobel Prize one day? And why did Mei not use humor in her class as she wished she could? As Mei mentioned briefly in her narrative, these issues may have something to do with Mei’s Chinese Confucian upbringing that clashes with the Deweyan Western educational view that is prevalent in the United States. We will discuss this in the next section of the chapter.
Moderation, Modesty, Creativity, and Criticalness: Confucian Eastern and Deweyan Western Educational Views

Chinese social and educational cultures are heavily influenced by doctrines of Confucius (551–479 BC), who is believed to be the first great Chinese philosopher and educator. The aim of Confucianism is to bring harmony to society, thus the theory of Zhong Yong (The Doctrine of the Mean). Zhong Yong dictates that it is a virtue to be able to live in obscurity and be submerged in the mass. In fact, only people possessing lots of strength and ability can be totally fair, tolerant, and judicious and harmonious with the universe. These ideas lead to prudence, caution, and, most important, modesty and moderation. Self-promotion goes against the Zhong Yong ideas. As a result, Chinese people grow up believing that “noble people are swift in action, but inert in words,” which is also translated as “The superior man is modest in his speech but exceeds in his actions” (see www.crystalinks.com/confucius.html). Such beliefs are so prevalent that Mao Zedong even named his two daughters after the doctrine that “noble people are swift in action (Li Min), but inert in words (Li Na).” Such an influence on Mei’s upbringing may explain how Mei was modest and moderate in showing her passion for her work during class, meetings, and seminars.

Chinese educational views based on Confucius’s doctrines are significantly different from the Western view of education evolved from Rousseau, Dewey, and Piaget (Beckett, 1999). Gardner (1989) and Hsu (1981) argue that Chinese and Western cultures “embrace two radically different solutions to the dilemma of creativity” (p. 7). According to Gardner (1989), the United States “has defined itself in opposition to the past and tradition. It has looked to its frontier and to its youth to forge new and unanticipated ways of living” (p. 280). In this context, independence, critical thinking, distinctiveness, and communication skills come to be seen as fundamentally important. Chinese society, on the other hand, has been historically oriented toward tradition, and it honors individuals who have mastered proven knowledge. The Chinese believe that acquiring huge amounts of basic knowledge and skills is more important than creativity. From a Confucian perspective, acquiring historical knowledge is highly regarded because, according to this perspective, the present cannot be understood without knowledge of the past. As such, student interpretation and independent thought are not regarded as valuable. Therefore, learning from authoritative sources such as professors and texts without much emphasis on creativity and critical questioning are common in Chinese educational culture (Beckett, 1999).
Such contrasting views between the Chinese educational culture Mei grew up in and the American educational culture she adopted may account for Mei’s experience regarding reading and listening without questioning the texts and her professors, and her advisor’s frustration that Mei did not say much in class or during meetings. That is, because of her Confucian upbringing, Mei may have been quiet and unquestioning because she thought that her professors and advisors are the authority figures whom she needs to admire (Ho, 1996) and whose job it is to transmit knowledge to her. At the same time, she needs to listen quietly and receive and consume external knowledge, as a student’s role is not that of a creator of knowledge (Pratt, 1992).

A third issue we would like to explore is that of access to information, resources, and promotion. As discussed earlier, other works have reported and discussed these issues from a racial discrimination point of view (e.g., Lin et al., 2004; Loo & Ho, 2005). However, Mei’s narrative seems to suggest that this could also be a cultural issue. That is, some Asian faculty may feel that information, resources, and promotions are not so much withheld as simply waiting to be discovered when Asian faculty cease equating asking for things with challenging authority (Ho, 1996). A fourth issue is that of voicing opinion. In her narrative, Mei says she was simply shy in voicing her opinion, indicating that it is a personal trait. While that may be the case, there could be another explanation for this. That is, Mei may have been hesitant in expressing her opinion because of her Chinese Confucian socialization that encouraged face-saving, group solidarity, and the inappropriateness of shining in front of one’s peers (Flowerdew & Miller, 1995).

The point about Mei feeling she had limited resources to do a better job with her teaching and advising postdoctoral students is an interesting one. As discussed earlier, the issue of teaching and advising has been examined in other work (Braine, 1999; Li, 2005; Liang, 2005). As we will recall, Braine reports experiencing disrespect from his students because of his nonnative speaker status, which he discusses from a critical linguistics perspective. Li reports experiencing disrespect from her Asian female graduate students, perhaps because of her ethnicity, age, and gender, which she discusses from a colonial perspective. Mei’s narrative does not mention disrespect from her students, but her desire to expand her linguistic and cultural resources is an interesting one. A similar point is made by Liang (2005) who reports similar issues and expresses a similar desire. Further exploration of this issue from a cultural point of view would be interesting. That is, it would be interesting to know how Chinese female professors feel about having to increase their
resources in order to teach and advise students from other racial and gender backgrounds.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we discussed a natural science professor’s lived experience in China and the United States. Although the discussion is of one person’s experience, we know that it contributes to the emerging work on issues encountered by minority faculty in general and Asian female faculty in particular. It bridges the gap on the paucity of similar work on natural science faculty of Asian origin. This chapter can be a useful source of knowledge for aspiring Asian female graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and existing faculty as it helps them understand that it is great to have grown up with good virtues such as diligence, respect, moderation, and modesty. But, in order to continue their success in North America, they must also understand that, while keeping those good virtues, they need to learn the virtues, demands, and expectations of the North American societal and educational cultures.

This chapter should also be an informative source for North American university and college professors as well as administrators in their understanding of international minority students, colleagues, and their employees. After reading this chapter, those professors and administrators should understand that their Asian students and colleagues may appear modest and uncritical, but that does not mean that they are less knowledgeable and that they lack important opinions to voice. It means that they are exercising their good virtues by being respectful and modest. When circumstances call for it, they can be critical and voice their opinions that are worthwhile just as their North American counterparts do.

This chapter should also help various parties to understand that Asian female faculty have good virtues that need to be nurtured, but they may also need assistance and resources in their pursuit of the virtues, expectations, and demands required of them in North American institutions of higher education. The discussion in this chapter should empower these parties for their development of strategies for a more successful career in studying, professing, and administering.

References


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