

Encountering Chinese Culture Over Changing Times

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This is a personal narrative of encounters with Chinese people and experiences of the culture over a fifty-year period, from 1967 to 2017. The timing parallels closely the 50-year period and anniversary being celebrated by the Education Journal of the Hong Kong Institute of Educational Research at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. The author lived in Hong Kong from 1967 to 1978, as a young Canadian teacher employed by Heep Yunn, an Anglican girls' school. She then returned to a very different Hong Kong in 1997 to lead the Hong Kong Institute of Education in its upgrading to university level and status. In between she experienced China's opening up as a teacher at Fudan University in Shanghai from 1980 to 1982, and a more isolated China during the difficult period from 1989 to 1991 when she served as Cultural Attaché in the Canadian Embassy in Beijing. Through these experiences of dramatic change came an ever deeper engagement with Chinese culture, which has kept her active in teaching and research about Chinese education over a period of 50 years and given her a vision of what it can bring to a global world. She thus focuses on the stories of individuals whose strength of spirit enabled them to deal with integrity, courage and grace through times of extreme pressure and geopolitical conflict.

Keywords: Chinese culture; encounters; geopolitics; dialogue; resilience

It gives me great pleasure to write this essay in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the *Education Journal* of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), which was launched in 1968 just five years after the establishment of the CUHK. Over those years, it

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has published a wide range of scholarly articles in both Chinese and English that reflect Hong Kong's unique context as a cosmopolitan city that has integrated its Chinese heritage and the insights and influences of its 152 years as a British colony in interesting ways. Although I have been honored to be listed as an advisor, I have to confess that I have not contributed much but I have had a growing awareness of the journal's importance as a platform for sharing educational research and emerging debates in the field across the societies that make up Greater China.

My personal career in education stretched over the same period, beginning when I arrived in Hong Kong in June 1967, just as the Cultural Revolution was breaking out in China, and continuing up till now. There have been lengthy periods of residence in Hong Kong and shorter ones on the Chinese mainland, as well as annual visits for research and collaboration while I have been based in Canada. My first extensive stay was from 1967 to 1978, when I taught at Heep Yunn School, learned Cantonese first from a private teacher and then Mandarin at the New Asia College of the CUHK, also earned a Certificate of Education at The University of Hong Kong. When China opened up under Deng Xiaoping, I felt it was time to experience education on the Chinese mainland, so I moved to London for graduate studies in comparative education in September 1978 and then moved to Shanghai in February 1980. I taught the first two classes of university students recruited by the restored entrance examination — a fascinating time to be in Shanghai. I then completed my doctorate in London in 1984 and returned to Toronto for postdoctoral work at the University of Toronto. When I was appointed assistant professor in 1986 with the opportunity for a university-based teaching and research career, I also became involved in projects of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the World Bank to support Chinese universities as they recovered after the devastation of the Cultural Revolution. Since my doctoral research had been about Chinese universities and their interaction with the West, and I was fluent in Mandarin, I was able to step in quickly as both advisor to and participant in these projects.

The surprise that gave me a different kind of involvement in Chinese education in 1989 was an invitation by my government to serve as Cultural Attaché in the Canadian Embassy in Beijing. I was there for research just before the June 4 tragedy, and then returned in August to take up a two-year appointment at the Canadian Embassy. It was a difficult time, as no one knew whether or when China would open again. This happened finally with Deng Xiaoping's celebrated trip to Shenzhen in June 1992. Meanwhile, I felt thankful to be able to work closely with faculty and students of Chinese universities, also artists and writers,

through people-to-people contacts that were supported by the Canadian government. I was also able to connect with Hong Kong over that period and enjoyed a lengthy visit from my Chinese mum, who will be introduced in detail later in this article.

In 1991, I moved back to my academic position in the University of Toronto, expecting to settle into teaching, thesis supervision and research for the long term, all of which I loved. Also, there was ongoing support from CIDA for both joint doctoral training with Chinese normal universities and collaborative research. However, it was not long before I was once again surprised by a call to return to Hong Kong and take on the directorship of the Hong Kong Institute of Education, with a focus on upgrading teacher education to degree level and above. I took up the position in September 1997, just three months after Hong Kong's reunion with China as a special administrative region, another historic turning point. Being entrusted with this deeply sensitive responsibility for the education of teachers from kindergarten to secondary schools was an honor I had never imagined. I felt accepted in Chinese society in a way I had never experienced before. It was a challenging and demanding role that helped me develop even deeper roots in Chinese culture over the four-and-a-half years that I lived again in Hong Kong, from September 1997 to April 2002.

This rather lengthy personal narrative seemed necessary to explain the context from which I encountered Chinese culture and became attracted to it in ways that gave me a sense of Chinese identity. The word culture (文化) in Chinese means to be changed or transformed by language. Chinese characters are sometimes described as the “track of life” in contradistinction to abstract alphabetical writing systems (Hayhoe, 2017, p. 24). I believe it was my intensive involvement in study of the language in my early Hong Kong years that gave me an initial appreciation of the culture.

In this article, I will begin by sketching out some of the key features of Confucian and Daoist philosophy, as I have observed and studied them, then go on to describe the kinds of strength and agency which they made possible for Chinese people close to me in each of the periods of my life — Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s, Shanghai in the 1980s, Beijing in the difficult period of 1989 to 1991 and then Hong Kong again, in the early years of the return to China, 1997–2002.

Confucianism, Daoism and Chinese Culture

One of the most striking features of Chinese culture in my observation and experience is the ability to hold opposites in balance without the need of the kind of resolution or

synthesis that is essential to the dialectic in European thought. One can live with and accept the kinds of social hierarchy, social responsibility and moral order that are integral to Confucian views of society and the human person while also embracing the freedom and naturalism of Daoist anarchy. The balancing of these extreme opposites gives a flexibility and openness that is quite remarkable. In the early 1980s, I sat in on a course in Chinese classics at Fudan University and chose a pair of contrasting couplets for two pieces of calligraphy that have stayed with me all my life and constantly reminded me of the dynamism that underlies this tension. Both are from the ancient *Book of Odes* and quoted in the *Four Books of Confucianism*, but the second interestingly embraces a more Daoist leaning in my personal view, as expressed in the translation I made long ago, which has stayed with me over the years.

On the Confucian side:

Like the delicate carving of ivory, the way is learned;

Like the cutting and polishing of jade, the self is cultivated.

(如切如磋者，道學也；如琢如磨者，自修也。[*The Great Learning*, n.d., para. B4])

On the Daoist side:

The *Book of Odes* says: The axman is cutting the poplar tree.

In fact it is not far away. The ax handle he holds is made of poplar.

He simply needs to drop his eye. Why should he think it is far away?

(詩云：伐柯伐柯，其則不遠。執柯以伐柯，睨而視之，猶以為遠。[*The Doctrine of the Mean*, n.d., para. B13])

On the Confucian side is a commitment to a lifelong discipline of learning, similar to that of a craftsman, seeking perfection in the exercise of their craft. On the Daoist side, a sudden awareness or deep insight that comes when one lets go of this intense discipline of learning and opens oneself to see what is already in one's hand!

These opposite patterns of thought and understanding have made for a remarkable flexibility and dynamism in Chinese culture over many centuries. They were not easily understood by the Western mind. Max Weber (Weber, 1951) was deeply interested in China, although he was never able to visit. His *The Religion of China* views Confucianism as an ethic of worldliness or adaptation to the world, which did not stimulate positive economic change. It was unlike the Protestant ethic which he viewed as a dynamic force, indeed the spirit of capitalism that was responsible for significant economic achievements (Weber,

1958). This view of Confucianism resulted in its dismissal as a remnant of feudalism by some progressive intellectuals in China of the 1920s and 1930s, and ultimately its total repudiation in Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution. Ironically, just as Mao was attacking Confucianism as one of "the four olds" that obstructed social progress, such Confucian heritage societies as Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong experienced an economic transformation in the 1960s and 1970s. Harvard sociologist Ezra Vogel (1991) then turned the Weberian argument on its head, seeing the Confucian values of diligence, family solidarity and social responsibility as the underlying cause of the economic success of the Asian tiger economies.

Between these opposite views of Confucianism and its relation to modernity stood the lifelong efforts of scholars such as Tu Weiming and William Theodore de Bary. For de Bary, Confucianism was a "learning for the self." His eloquent summation of Confucian values had none of the pragmatism of Vogel's economic argument: "a sense of self-worth not to be sacrificed for any ... utilitarian purpose, a sense of place in the world not to be surrendered to any state or party" (de Bary, 1996, p. 33) and a call to fulfil one's social responsibilities. For Tu Weiming, Confucianism is "a way of learning to be human" in familial and social relationships. "The self is never an isolated individual (an island); rather, it is a center of relationships (a flowing stream)" (Tu, 1998, p. 13).

Daoism, by contrast, was seen by de Bary in opposite terms: "to the solemn rather pompous gravity and burden of social responsibility of Confucianism, Daoism opposes a carefree flight from respectability and the conventional duties of society ... a vision of other transcendental worlds of the spirit" (de Bary, Chan, & Watson, 1960, p. 48). In the tension between these two philosophical heritages lay a space for individual agency and strength that I observed in ways that were both remarkable and deeply touching over the decades of my engagement with Hong Kong over a fifteen-and-a-half-year period and the Chinese mainland over four years.

Hong Kong Sojourn, 1967 to 1978

Hong Kong was a city of refugees when I arrived in 1967, where one felt a visceral sense of the struggle to survive in many of the poorer shantytown areas. The government had created basic seven-story housing units for refugees with one room per family and one washroom per floor, and many children began working in factories as early as twelve years old. I lived with my cousin, Marjorie Hayhoe, who had a primary school called Yan Kwong

(Grace and Light) in Diamond Hill, which served the children of families in this very poor area. While helping her and two other Canadian missionaries, I also chose to support myself by teaching in Heep Yunn School, an Anglican girls' secondary school. All of the students wore the cheongsam or Chinese long dress as a school uniform, and there were patterns of order and respect for teachers that reflected both Confucian moral traditions and the school's Christian ethos. While English was the language of instruction, except for classes in Chinese literature and history that were taught in the Cantonese mother tongue, I was blessed by exposure to the communication in Cantonese that dominated all conversation outside of the classroom. There was a strong sense of propriety, encouraged by the school uniforms and close relations with teachers, also an enthusiasm to learn and learn effectively, whether it be language lessons, mathematics or music.

While I learned a lot about Chinese culture through the 11 years of immersion in this school, my experience of living with a Chinese family from the summer of 1968 to 1974 gave me an even deeper exposure. I had moved out of the complex where I lived with the older Canadian missionaries after one year, but still wanted to be nearby in order to assist them. I was fortunate to be introduced to a Chinese woman who lived just a short block away, and had a daughter who was at Heep Yunn School. Yeung Suk-ying, whom I addressed as Yungtai or Mrs. Yung (her husband's surname), was a teacher of Mandarin at Munsang, a private school. She spoke beautiful Cantonese as well as Mandarin, and the years I lived with her gave me an extended experience of immersion, mainly in Cantonese, as my Mandarin was acquired later.

Only after I had been with her for a year or more did she begin to share her life story. Then I came to see the strength and agency that had enabled her to adapt to searing experiences of family separation and loss that resulted from political circumstances entirely outside of her control. She had been born in Tianjin in 1917 to a Cantonese father from Zhongshan, who had studied in Japan. On return he moved to the modern coastal city of Tianjin, just south of Beijing and worked for the Kai Luan mining company. Her mother came from an old-fashioned family and had bound feet. She had vivid memories of her mother binding her feet before bed and father coming in to remove the bindings!

When Yungtai came to visit me in Beijing in the early 1990s, and we visited Tianjin together, she shared memories of those early years. The most vivid was of a party held there when the Cantonese people living in Tianjin welcomed Sun Zhongshan and his wife Song Qingling to Tianjin in 1924, just months before his death. It was at the People's Hotel, then

called The Hotel of the Six Nations (*Liuguo Fandian*). Yungtai remembered how her father had taken her to this party.

In 1929, when she was just 12 years old, her parents took her from Tianjin to Nanjing. In 1937, the year of the Japanese invasion, she married Mr. Yung Shu-ming, a senior Nationalist army man, and followed him as his assignments took him all over the country during the anti-Japanese War, the Second World War, and the subsequent Civil War. She gave birth to a son and a daughter over these years. From 1938 to 1939, she lived in Xi'an while her husband was posted in Yanan over the period of Nationalist-Communist collaboration against the Japanese. Later the family moved to Shanghai, after her husband had risen to a senior army position. As was the case with many Nationalist leaders in the final years of the Civil War, the oldest son was sent to Taiwan in 1948, while the rest of the family moved to Nanjing, where Mr. Yung's mother still lived. With the Communist victory in October 1949, Mr. Yung felt he must stay in Nanjing to hand over important military installations to the new Communist rulers. When they finally decided to leave for Hong Kong, two children chose to remain with their grandmother in Nanjing. She and her husband proceeded to Hong Kong, with the expectation — never realized — that they could return and bring them to Hong Kong. Taiwan was no longer an option, since Mr. Yung was seen as *persona non grata*, given the reason for his delayed departure.

They settled in the modest apartment in Hong Kong, which I was later privileged to share, and Yungtai took up a position as a teacher of Mandarin in Munsang College, while working hard to learn Cantonese. She had never had much exposure to Cantonese, though she was fluent in Shanghainese and the Nanjing dialect as well as Mandarin. Given her family's roots in Zhongshan, she told me learning Cantonese had been a pleasure. No wonder I always had a strong sense of the artistry and beauty of her Cantonese expression. Her husband found engagement in some journalistic work and it was not long before their youngest child was born, and given the name Si Ka (思嘉), inspired by Mrs. Yung's appreciation of Scarlett in the film *Gone With the Wind*. Scarlett happened to be a student in one of my classes at Heep Yunn. At the time I decided to rent a room in their home, she had gained entrance to The University of Hong Kong for studies in mathematics.

About a year after I moved in with her, Yungtai told me that her husband had gone to Macao in the first year of the Cultural Revolution and never returned, nor did she receive any message from him. In the years we lived together, I found myself constantly supported by her strength and understanding, while I reflected on what it must have meant for her to have an oldest stepson in Taiwan, whom she could not afford to visit, and two children in

China as well as a lost husband, from whom there could be no communication due to the Cultural Revolution. She focused on the teaching of Mandarin in her school and support for her daughter's university studies, while welcoming me to invite students and young people from the church into the apartment for informal parties. She gave me sound advice about my responsibilities as a teacher and my efforts to get involved in a range of Christian outreach activities. She had had some exposure to the Catholic Church but had been turned off through a disappointment with the behavior of one of the priests. Some years later she joined a Protestant Church community and found great comfort and inspiration from this fellowship. Her involvement helped me to see the overlap in values between the Christian concept of family and social responsibility and that of Confucianism.

When Yungtai's daughter Scarlett graduated from The University of Hong Kong and was preparing to move home, I decided it was time for me to move out and find another place to live. That did not prevent me from keeping in close touch with my "Chinese mum" and visiting often. I will never forget the day I called her and she asked me to come as soon as possible that she had something very exciting to tell me. I arrived at her home to find her husband had come back from the Chinese mainland, where he had been detained during the Cultural Revolution (as she had guessed). Also he had been able to connect with their children there! What a tremendous relief for her and blessing for the whole family. From 1974 until his death in 1990, Yungtai and her husband were able to live together again.

Meanwhile, I left Hong Kong in 1978 and moved to Shanghai from London, England, in the spring of 1980. Yungtai still had relatives in Shanghai, from her earlier years there, including a sister. She came to visit for an extended period, her first time to return to the Chinese mainland in thirty years and the first time to meet her mainland children again. Then when I settled in Beijing as a diplomat in the summer of 1989, she kept in touch and promised to visit. That visit came about in April 1990, as she took the ashes of her husband to his native Nanjing and then came to stay with me for a month in Beijing. We were able to visit Tianjin together, as described earlier, and also Chongqing. When I introduced her at the China Comparative Education Society's annual meeting in Tianjin, and at other academic venues in Chongqing, people were delighted to welcome my Chinese mum into the circle — something that resonated deeply with me in terms of the Confucian appreciation of family. It would not have been so natural at academic events in a North American context, I felt.

What struck me most about traveling around China with her in 1990 was her delight and enthusiasm at all the economic progress that had been made and the improvement in

people's lives that was already evident. Politically, she had been on the other side, but her love of country far overrode political considerations.

Later, during my four-and-a-half years living on the beautiful campus of the Hong Kong Institute of Education in Tai Po, she came regularly to visit and often to stay for a few days. She gave me a lot of wise advice about matters which I needed to pay close attention to in my role and responsibility as the head of a university-level institution reporting directly to the University Grants Committee (UGC), and needing to be fully accountable for all the ways in which its funds were spent.

After my retirement from the Institute in 2002, my first stop on every annual visit to Hong Kong was to see Yungtai, for some years in an apartment not far from the one I had shared with her long before and then in a pleasant nursing home on Hong Kong Island. Her mainland son visited often and she also made numerous trips to see family members on the Chinese mainland over the years after China opened.

So what did I learn of Chinese culture from Yungtai, my Chinese mum? What has stayed with me is a sense of her courage, grace and openness to life, even in the most difficult and painful of circumstances. At one point she had been the wife of a senior military leader, taken around by a car and chauffeur in the sophisticated city of Shanghai. Then in Hong Kong of the early 1950s, she served as a lowly elementary school teacher, barely able to earn enough to pay the rent on a very modest apartment, and left alone after the inexplicable disappearance of her husband. How did she manage to adapt and live a life of dignity, grace and hope — a hope that was finally realized when her husband returned and she was reunited with her children. In her life story, one can see the melding of a strong Confucian family tradition and a Christian faith that gave comfort and a sense of God's presence in all of her daily activities.

Shanghai, 1980–1982

After my 11 years living in Hong Kong, the next intense exposure to Chinese culture came when I moved to Shanghai in February 1980 to take up a position as a “foreign expert” teaching English at Fudan University for two years. Here I finally got to use the Mandarin I had studied before leaving Hong Kong as this was a national university attracting students from all parts of China. There was plenty of opportunity to hear and use the language, in addition to the local Shanghai dialect, which was very different again. Here the Chinese colleagues I worked with had lived through the painful years of the Cultural Revolution and

one could see a lingering sadness as they reenergized themselves to teach the first two classes of students selected by unified entrance examinations in 1977 and 1978. It was challenging to rebuild a high-quality curriculum for students who were academically brilliant, some coming from old intellectual families, others from revolutionary cadre families, and most having spent some years in rural areas under Maoist policies. I was startled and delighted to find they wanted to make use of whatever intellectual resources I could offer — including asking me to teach a course on Greek and Hebrew (*Old Testament*) classics as a background to literature courses where students read Milton and Shakespeare.

Students were energetic, curious and full of enthusiasm. They embraced English learning as a doorway to a world that had been denied to them for years, read voraciously and participated with delight in the creation and presentation of plays and recitation. Among them were a few auditors. One was an older English teacher from Hami in Xinjiang, who shared his life story with the younger students in the class. He had been a student at Fudan in the 1950s, already offered a promising career in the army. However, the condition was that he must break off with his fiancée, since she had family connections to Taiwan. His fellow students were deeply impressed when he told them that he had insisted on marrying her, since he loved her. As a result, he was sent to the remote town of Hami in Xinjiang to take up a position as an English teacher. He had stayed there until this opportunity to return to Fudan as an auditor opened up. The fact that he had no regrets about this decision left a deep impression on the other students in a time when there was considerable pragmatism about marriages that would be beneficial in terms of location and job appointments.

One other memory of my exposure to Chinese culture in Shanghai relates to my experience of reading *The Great Learning (Daxue)* and *The Mencius (Mengzi)* with a classmate I met through auditing a course at Fudan in the Chinese classics. I used to spend one evening a week with him and his brother at their home, reading a text aloud in Mandarin and then discussing its meaning. One evening the brothers asked me to read the text in Cantonese, since they heard I spoke that dialect. They were impressed when I did so, and then immediately said to me, “Now read it in English.” It was fascinating for me to realize that they regarded English as just one more offshoot from the core language of classical Chinese — after all it would have been possible to read it in many other dialects of Chinese as well as Japanese, Korean, or Vietnamese! It makes me think again of the Chinese word for culture, *wenhua* — being transformed by the written language!

Beijing, 1989–1991

If Shanghai had been a time of opening to the world with new visions and possibilities, Beijing in the two years after the Tiananmen tragedy was a time of closure. When I was appointed as Cultural Attaché in the Canadian Embassy in Beijing in February 1989, it was impossible to know what the situation would be like when I was to take up the position in August of that year. In May, I spent time doing research in Beijing, Tianjin and Inner Mongolia, returning to Canada just days before the June 4 events. It was a different Beijing that I returned to, somber, isolated and with a future that was uncertain. Most Western governments cut all ties to the Chinese government, but Canada decided to maintain people-to-people relations by offering financial support for student exchanges and visiting scholars traveling from China to Canada while putting official visits on hold. By this time my connections to Chinese culture and Chinese people were such that I felt thankful I could be there and be with them over this difficult period. I was also thankful to have the opportunity for travel to visit universities, television and radio stations, and other cultural institutions all over the country, given there were few official demands in Beijing.

This enabled me to see how ordinary people responded to the sudden change in circumstances. One young man whom I got to know had been a final-year graduating student in journalism at Fudan University in 1989 and was expecting an excellent job placement in a national newspaper in Shanghai or Beijing. Instead he was assigned back to his home province of Guizhou to do rural reporting, as a punishment for his involvement in the student movement. One of my assistants in the cultural program at the Embassy was from Guizhou and she met this young man while visiting her family on holiday. Together they concocted the idea of a Canadian television week for Guizhou and the young man came all the way by train to Beijing to work on the details. It was the first cultural event of this type we were able to sponsor and it was fascinating to learn how the TV programming was communicated across the province by satellite due to the mountainous terrain! For me, it signaled the resilience and hope of young people who found an imaginative way to contribute to international dialogue in spite of the difficulties of the time.

Canada was the only Western country that maintained a strong and even enhanced cultural and educational program during these two years, while the U.S. was not able to do so and France cut back its cultural relations as a way of expressing displeasure over what had happened. While traveling around, I had the opportunity to talk quietly with various scholars and students. I asked which approach they felt was appropriate, given the circumstances. I got a surprising answer that reflected the way in which Chinese culture is

able to balance a tension between opposites, as noted earlier in this article. “Both are right” was the answer I got. “It is important that France has taken a strong position to express their protest over what happened to the students, but we are glad at the same time that Canada has kept the doors open to exchange and dialogue among students, scholars and artists in both countries, as that gives us hope for the future” (Hayhoe, 2004, p. 147).

Probably the most remarkable evidence of the strength of Chinese culture that I witnessed in the 1990s was the way in which a number of older educators, who had suffered extreme indignities and even imprisonment in some cases during the Cultural Revolution, took up leadership in establishing new doctoral programs in education and rebuilding education faculties which had suffered over a period when Mao Zedong thought was the only allowed educational theory and dominated the content of the curriculum. Instead of bitterness and recrimination over all the injustices they had suffered, they were ready to forgive and put the past behind them. Through a project in joint doctoral education supported by CIDA, I was able to collaborate with leading doctoral supervisors in education in all major regions of China and experience their remarkable spirit at first hand (Qiang & Wang, 2016).

Professor Gu Mingyuan of Beijing Normal University was in Montreal for the World Congress of Comparative Education in early June of 1989, and witnessed the decision of the organizers to put off the next Congress which had been scheduled for Beijing three years later, as a result of the movement. This had serious consequences on the Chinese official side, with the China Comparative Education Society withdrawing from the World Council of Comparative Education Societies. However, Gu insisted that we continued with a CIDA-supported and recently approved joint doctoral program in spite of the circumstances. He had suffered humiliation and repression over the Cultural Revolution decade but his article on the importance of investment in human capital, in both socialist and capitalist societies, “Modern Production and Modern Education,” had been published repeatedly in the 1980s (Gu, 1981). It opened up a whole new way of thinking about education and its contribution to economic and social development.

He not only had the courage to carry forward the project but insisted that all of China’s doctoral supervisors in education, especially those in remote regions or provincial-level institutions, should be included in the project. This was a small number of outstanding older scholars who had been carefully selected on the basis of rigorous academic qualifications. Gu welcomed a Canadian emphasis on gender equity and the inclusion of as many women as possible in the project, sending two from Beijing Normal University and a total of nine

out of the 21 who joined the project. He also embraced the idea of reciprocity in learning and opened the doors to doctoral students from Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, even though CIDA saw this as an aid project, not intended to support students on the Canadian side. Thus, at a time when Chinese universities had very limited resources, Gu arranged to receive our doctoral students, connect them to Chinese supervisors, and provide for their accommodation and living expenses for as long as they wished to stay.

Another striking example of these older educators was Lu Jie of Nanjing Normal University, the first woman to be named a doctoral supervisor in education. Lu Jie's father had studied with John Dewey at Columbia University and then returned to China to teach in Shanghai in the 1930s. In the later 1940s, during the Civil War, he arranged for Lu Jie to apply for study in several excellent universities in the U.S., also secured a scholarship for her brother Lu Ping. He himself moved to Hong Kong with his wife to escape the revolutionary turmoil. Both Lu Jie and Lu Ping, however, chose to remain in China and join the Communist Party underground as they felt that was how they could serve their country. She began her studies at Ginling College, one of the Christian missionary colleges, and then graduated from what became Nanjing Normal College in 1953. Her father was happy that she had chosen to focus on education and she began as a teacher of political education at Nanjing Normal, then developed into an influential education theorist.

In 1958 her parents returned to Nanjing from Hong Kong, as they missed the family too much. One of her greatest sorrows was the treatment they received during the Cultural Revolution and their deaths in 1977 and 1978. As an urban intellectual, though a Party member from the 1940s, Lu Jie herself also suffered tremendous indignities during the Cultural Revolution. She was accused of being a member of an international spy network because of her parents having spent time in Hong Kong, and experienced the rampage of Red Guards through her home with a demand for handing over all her personal letters. When she held firm in refusing this, she was taken on numerous parades and subject to public humiliation. When asked in later years if she regretted her decision of refusing the opportunity for study in the U.S. and staying in China after the Revolution, her answer was simple. It was not a matter of choice, but the way in which her life unfolded — thus there was no question of regret.

In the years since 1978, Lu Jie developed a whole new way of thinking around moral education that encouraged consideration of the parallel transformations happening in rural and urban areas and the different demands these made on young people — a need for greater individualism in the rural areas and a new kind of collective identity in urban areas. She also

emphasized the concept of “cultural China” and the distinction between those who are culturally Chinese (*huaren* 華人) and Chinese citizens (*Zhongguoren* 中國人). She envisaged three circles — the Chinese living in Greater China, Chinese immigrants in many parts of the world, and all those interested in Chinese culture who have committed time to understand it. A major conference of Chinese from Greater China and around the world was held in 1999 and she edited a book containing its papers (Lu, 1999). Then again in 2018, another major conference around this theme was held at Nanjing Normal University. Clearly she had been thinking from an early period about what Chinese civilization could contribute to a globalizing world, and this was a continuing theme at Nanjing Normal. She had turned her back on any kind of recrimination for the suffering and betrayal she had experienced during the Cultural Revolution in favor of opening up to a whole new era of educational thought.

For both Gu Mingyuan and Lu Jie, also other influential Chinese educators of their time, one can see a pattern foregrounded in the concise autobiography which Confucius used to describe his life: At fifteen, I set my heart on learning (志於學); at thirty, I took my stance (而立); at forty, I was no longer of two minds (不惑); at fifty, I understood the mandate of heaven (知天命); at sixty, my ears were attuned (耳順); at seventy, I could have whatever my heart desired without overstepping the mark (從心所欲不逾矩) (*The Analects of Confucius*, n.d., para. 2.4).

It was my privilege, first in collaborating with them in our joint doctoral program and a follow-up collaborative research program for a period of twelve years to learn from the deeply shared values in Confucian culture and the diverse ways in which these had blossomed in distinctive areas of educational thought and different regions of the country, each with its own history. Subsequently I could interview eleven of them in order to write the *Portraits of Influential Chinese Educators* (Hayhoe, 2006), a book which I hoped would communicate Chinese educational culture to the world. I saw it as a “Confucian word made flesh.”

Hong Kong, 1997 to 2002

When I settled back down in Toronto after the two years in Beijing, and focused again on research and teaching, there was no expectation of a return to living in Asia. What a surprise it was then to be invited for interview to the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd), a newly established institution for teacher education which brought together the

five historic colleges of education that had provided two-year teacher certification courses over a long period. A new campus was under construction and there was a plan for teacher education to be raised to degree level and above after years of neglect. In the period since the early 1960s, higher education had expanded dramatically, with five publicly sponsored universities under the UGC added to The University of Hong Kong, which had a long history, and The Chinese University of Hong Kong, which had been established in 1963. Teacher education, however, had been left out of this expansion. Except for the formation of upper secondary school teachers in the two established universities, the training for kindergarten, elementary and lower secondary school teachers had remained largely outside the university. This was in spite of the fact that teacher education in the U.K. had been raised to degree level already in the 1970s!

Given the importance of the teacher in Chinese culture, I felt it was a shame that teachers should be treated in this way. The recruitment of good candidates for teaching had been systematically undermined for years as higher education expanded. Naturally all parents wanted their children to study in a university (大學) rather than a lowly college of education (教育學院). I could not resist the offer of an appointment to serve as Director of this new institution, just as Hong Kong was reuniting with China after 152 years as a British colony on 1 July 1997. I had finally found time in my life for marriage at age 50, and my husband Walter, who had recently retired, supported my decision and agreed to move back to Hong Kong with me! It opened up another dramatic experience of Chinese culture in a different time and place than the experiences of the 1980s and early 1990s.

The move of the five colleges to the beautiful new campus had been built near Tai Po under the hills of the eight immortals (八仙嶺). Not only were the natural surroundings lovely, from the mountains to the views of the reservoir and the ocean beyond, but the nine major buildings were a gentle green in color, stretched out over a curved platform set into the valley, with three stories above ground and another two stories below. From across the valley it almost looked like a Tibetan monastery. There was something symbolic about the library being in the center of this lovely complex. It made me think of the traditional Chinese *shuyuan* (書院) located in remote rural areas for reflection, study and individual nurturing under great masters who had withdrawn from official circles to serve in a quiet and indirect way.

I was stunned at the huge investment that had been made by the Hong Kong government to create this beautiful campus. What had caused them to recognize the important role played by teachers, from early childhood to all levels of education within

Chinese culture? A leading political figure and legislator, Rita Fan, commented to me that she could explain this in one word — “guilt.” Thus we had a beautiful campus, and the opportunity to focus our efforts on raising teacher education programs to degree and postgraduate level. This had to be done through rigorous accreditation exercises for each program. It also meant recruiting excellent new faculty members who were capable of research and teaching that would transform the pedagogy and curriculum in Hong Kong’s schools.

Our first focus was on developing a vision for the new institution, and I formed a committee which included faculty members, students and school principals. After six months of deliberation and numerous discussion sessions open to all faculty, staff and students, we agreed on the following vision statement:

By the early 21st century, the HKIEd will become a leading university level institution in the Asia Pacific, best known for raising the status and quality of education. We will nurture knowledgeable, caring and responsible teachers who are able to excite the interest of each and every student. As they and their students experience the sheer joy of learning, all dimensions of their potential will blossom. We will provide a creative and dynamic environment for learning and research. A culture of lifelong learning will become a reality. (Hayhoe, 2001, p. 336)

The next challenge was to express this in a short sentence that could be a constant reminder to all of us of what we were aiming at. Through a competition that was open to all members of the institute as well as Hong Kong’s schools and principals, we received many suggestions and finally decided on twelve words in Chinese and twelve in English:

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Optimizing each child’s potential through the shared joy of learning and teaching.

What became clear in this process of developing a vision was the fact that education was a field of study at the very heart of the Confucian cultural tradition. It is interdisciplinary (involving psychology, philosophy, sociology, history and economics) and thus of low status in the European tradition but central to the Confucian concern for the development of the self in interaction with others. It is an applied, rather than a pure theoretical field, the results of which are measured more in action than in theoretical advance, again fitting closely with the Confucian tradition but tending to be given little respect in the European university tradition.

In 2001 the first students who received Bachelor of Education degrees graduated, and at the same ceremony Professor Gu Mingyuan was awarded our first Honorary Doctorate of Education. I retired in the spring of 2002, but was delighted to learn that HKIEd achieved self-accrediting status in 2004. However, it was to be a twelve-year period before it was finally awarded the title of university by the UGC in 2016!

Why such a long delay? What seemed clear to me over this time was that UGC members were largely local Hong Kong academic figures or prestigious appointees from the U.K., the U.S. or Australia. They saw the comprehensive university as the model for a university, with all or most major faculties, including medicine, law and engineering as well as arts and sciences. HKIEd simply did not measure up to this definition, nor should it. They were largely ignorant of the tradition of the normal university, which never had faculties of medicine or law, and they had little awareness of the education university, a uniquely Asian type of university that had arisen in Japan in the 1950s.

I thus decided to carry out some research that would give an answer to what kind of university HKIEd should become (Hayhoe, 2002, 2016; Hayhoe & Li, 2010). Should it be a normal university or a university of education? Two deep insights came out of this reflective pursuit. One was an appreciation of the French decision after the revolution of 1789 to create normal schools or *écoles normales* in each *académie* totally separate from the university, as institutions responsible for preparing all the teachers needed for one of the world's earliest national systems of education. They realized universities, with their focus on pure and specialized disciplines of knowledge and the professions of law and medicine, were incapable of forming teachers who were to be responsible for nurturing morally responsible citizens for the new republic. The values of the normal school — morally explicit, inter-disciplinary and accountable to both society and the nation state — were quite distinct from those of the traditional university, with its commitment to knowledge for its own sake. What struck me, as I reflected on this, was how close they were to Confucian views of education, knowledge and society. My earlier research had highlighted the conflicts that arose when a European model of university was introduced to China, due to deep-rooted cultural differences (Hayhoe, 1999) Now it became clear that there was a European institution that was much closer to Chinese culture than the university and it had been created by the French. The Chinese translation for the French word “normal” expresses this beautifully — “the teacher as a model” (師範)!

The *École Normale Supérieure* in Paris was, of course, a comprehensive university in that it included arts and sciences at the highest level, alongside of education. Both the

normal school and the normal university were models that took deep roots in both China and Japan as they modernized in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, for HKIEd the model of the normal university was daunting, since it did not have departments of basic science such as physics, chemistry and biology, nor were these needed given the facilities of Hong Kong's comprehensive universities. The Education University, a model that had arisen only in Asia and that focused on the inter-disciplinary in its knowledge patterns, seemed to be a better fit. I was thus delighted when the Hong Kong Institute of Education was renamed The Education University of Hong Kong in 2016!

I had stumbled on the story of the education university when lecturing at one of China's normal universities in 2013. I met a Chinese professor who had lived in Japan for several decades and experienced Japan's educational reforms from the period of the American occupation after the Second World War. Before this time, Japan had had one normal college in each prefecture, as well as several normal universities, patterned on the French model and dedicated to forming excellent teachers for their schools. When the Americans guided their reform however, the prefectural normal colleges were accused of having nurtured an over-heated patriotism which had undergirded Japanese aggression in China and other South East Asian nations. The Americans had thus insisted on getting rid of the term "normal," something they had done when the 90 excellent normal colleges of 19th-century America were upgraded to local comprehensive universities or merged into the existing faculties of education of major universities. The Japanese were thus asked to turn all of their prefectural normal colleges into local comprehensive universities on the American model. The Americans also recommended raising all teacher education programs to degree level, which the Japanese accepted, thus Japan becoming the second country in the world in terms of the academic standing and qualifications of all elementary school teachers.

Their response to the name of these upgraded institutions was interesting and instructive, however. They insisted that they should be named universities of education (教育大學) and encouraged them to develop such cutting-edge inter-disciplinary fields as environmental studies, media studies and women's studies. Thus came to birth a purely Asian model of university, with no remnants of the European tradition to constrain it, and an ethos and orientation that reflected the best of Confucian thought.

For me, with an interest in Chinese culture that goes back more than fifty years to when I moved to Hong Kong as a 21-year-old teacher in 1967, this most recent development has been deeply satisfying. Finally, a higher learning institution has emerged in a number of

Asian countries or regions, including South Korea, the Philippines and Pakistan, as well as Japan and Hong Kong, that gives greatest dignity and respect to the field of education. It is thus capable of embodying some of the fundamental aspects of Chinese culture that have always been forced to fit into the dimensions of the German/American-derived “global research university,” the single uniform model of excellence upheld by most global ranking systems, and recognized by many Asian governments that want to see their institutions gain global recognition.

As a fully comprehensive university with a prominent faculty of education as well as arts, social sciences and science, medicine, law, engineering and business administration, The Chinese University of Hong Kong may be even better equipped to bring Chinese culture to the world, given the name it chose at its founding in 1963 and the outstanding contribution to an understanding of Chinese culture within education circles in Greater China and more widely, encouraging deeper and more profound observation of the ways in which students learn and an awareness of the ways in which this is mediated through a language system sometimes described as the “track of life” as against more abstracted concepts used in alphabetic languages (Hayhoe, 2016, p. 228). The bilingual *Education Journal* has bridged Chinese education and culture and the rest of the world in the past half century, serving as an excellent model for global dialogue.

For me, as the author of this narrative, the journey has been a kind of full circle, from my early years as a young teacher, to the much later assignment as head of an institution responsible for forming teachers who could make a difference in the experience of every child. All that I learned and experienced over those years also shaped my teaching and scholarship in Canada. I learned how to observe at a penetrating level before stepping in with solutions to problems. I learned patience and the importance of deep questions for the many doctoral theses I supervised. Most of all, I learned how valuable it was to be open to the lessons that could be learned from other civilizations. One of my proudest moments was bringing scholars from Canada, Europe and many parts of Asia to a conference in China’s Yuelu Academy in 1994 to promote an East–West dialogue. This was just one year after Huntington launched his “Clash of Civilizations” article and most of the papers were published in *East–West Dialogue in Knowledge and Higher Education* (Hayhoe & Pan, 1996).

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變革時代之中國文化緣遇

許美德

摘要

這是一篇自 1967 至 2017 年、橫跨半個世紀、與中國人民和文化體驗有緣相遇的個人敘事，時間上恰巧和香港中文大學《教育學報》的 50 周年誌慶吻合。作者於 1967 至 1978 年間以一名年輕加拿大教師僑居香港，在聖公會的協恩中學任教。1997 年，她回到一個完全不同的香港，領導向大學資格升級的香港教育學院。在此期間，她曾為上海復旦大學的教師，體會中國的改革開放（1980–1982 年）；以及加拿大北京大使館文化參贊，感受一個相對孤立、處於困難時期的中國（1989–1991 年）。跟感悟這些劇烈變化相伴的，是更深地緣遇中國文化，使她在此 50 年中積極投身關於中國教育的教學和研究，並給予她展望中國教育貢獻於世界的視野。因此，作者聚焦於一些個人故事——他們的精神力量所賦予的正直、勇氣和榮光，以面對極端壓力和地緣政治衝突的時代。

關鍵詞：中國文化；緣遇；地緣政治；對話；忍耐