<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11516-020-0022-8>

Book Series: Intercultural Reciprocal Learning in Chinese and Western Education. Michael Connelly & Shijing Xu (Eds.). Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

It is a special time in which to be writing this review of a series of books that are based on a seven-year project between teachers and educational researchers in different cities and regions of China and Canada. Entitled “Reciprocal Learning in Teacher Education and School Education between Canada and China,” the project, co-directed by Shijing Xu at the University of Windsor and Michael Connelly at OISE/University of Toronto, has run from 2013 to 2020 and may now move forward into a wider circle of collaboration that enables educators, in collaboration with water scientists, to bring concerns around water and environmental sustainability into their pre-service programs and school classrooms. Before commenting on the books themselves, I would like to begin with some general points.

The first is to highlight the concept of reciprocity and how significant it has been to have a focus on mutuality of learning in the rich relationships fostered among students, teachers, school principals, teacher educators, and educational researchers in Canada and China. As a scholar of comparative education focusing on education in China, I had been engaged with the Canadian International Development Agency and the World Bank in a series of projects intended to support Chinese universities recover from the losses of the Cultural Revolution decade (1966 to 1976) not long after China’s opening up to the world under Deng Xiaoping in 1978. It was a struggle to persuade governmental and educational leaders in North America that we had anything to learn from China in the “development aid” mentality that dominated thinking at that time. How refreshing, therefore, to see a project emerge in the 21st century that recognizes and celebrates the richness of Chinese educational culture and China’s civilizational heritage and has demonstrated how much Canadian schools, teachers, and researchers had to learn from its remarkable educational traditions and the rapid economic and social development that has been spurred by its educational reforms!

Another element in the collaborations that has special significance in this era of pandemic with increased dependence on internet-based interactions has been the new sense of spatiality, as teachers, students, and researchers used digital platforms to communicate between the two sides of the world, sharing classroom experiences, examples of pedagogy, projects around water and ideas for the learning of mathematics, science and languages! This all predated the emergence of Zoom and Microsoft TEAMS in the COVID-19 era and showed the possibilities embodied in these technologies. Perhaps the greatest challenge was the 12-hour time difference, which made early mornings and evenings the best times for genuine synchronicity in communication and learning across cultures and languages!

The first book in the series, *Cross-cultural Schooling Experiences of Chinese Immigrant Families: In Search of Home in Times of Transition*, written by Shijing Xu (2017), introduces the concept of reciprocal learning among cultures with very different historical and philosophical origins through the narrative lens of cross-cultural student and family life by building on the ideas of “knowledge across cultures”¹ and “we-consciousness,”² and highlights the contribution which immigrant families can make to Canadian schools and society. The Chinese term for Canada (*Jianada* 加拿大) begins with the sound “jia” which also means home in Chinese (*jia* 家), a language that is rich in puns, given the multiple meanings of many Chinese characters that share the same spelling in an alphabetic transcription. The whole experience of making Canada home for these families is explored through observations of children at in-school and out-of-school settings, and of their grandparents and/or parents, as they volunteer in their children’s school and express opinions about the Canadian school context and learning dynamics in comparison to what they were familiar with in China’s schools. Narrative method enables Xu to capture the fluidity of people’s lives on what have been described by Connelly and Clandinin (1995) as “landscapes of experience physically, temporally and socially.”³ Her research, contextualized in

¹ Hayhoe, R., & Pan, J. (2001). *Knowledge across cultures: A contribution to dialogue among civilizations*. Hong Kong, China: Comparative Education Research Centre of The University of Hong Kong; Tu, W. (2002). 杜维明文集 [Collections of Tu Wei-ming’s works], Vols 1–5, Q. Y. Guo & W. L. Zheng (Eds.). Wuhan, China: Wuhan Press.

² Hall, D. L., & Ames, R. T. (1999). *The democracy of the Dead: Dewey, Confucius, and the hope for democracy in China*. Chicago, IL: Open Court.

³ Xu, S. J. (2017). *Cross-cultural schooling experiences of Chinese immigrant families: In search of home in times of transition*. New York, NY: Springer Palgrave MacMillan, p. 187; Connelly, M., & Clandinin, J. (1995). Narrative and education. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 1(1), 73–85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1354060950010106>

Connelly's longitudinal school-based research program, laid a foundation for the project which combines Confucianism, narrative method, and the Schwabian theory of the practical.

The next three books in the series are reviewed below to enable readers to get a sense of this flow of experience. First Xuefeng Huang's 2018 book on *Teacher Education in Professional Learning Communities: Lessons from the Reciprocal Learning Project*, which is built on Connelly and Xu's sister school network between Shanghai and Toronto schools, is reviewed by Professor Ian Westbury of the University of Illinois, a member of the project's international advisory committee. Then Ju Huang's 2018 book on *Chinese Pre-service Teacher Education through Cross-Cultural Teacher Development*, based on the Pre-Service Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Program developed at the University of Windsor with Southwest University in Chongqing China, in partnership with Greater Essex County District School Board in Windsor Canada, is reviewed below by Professor Liao Wei of Beijing Normal University, a specialist in teacher education. Finally, Nesreen Elkord's 2019 book on the *Cross-Cultural Schooling Experience of Arab Newcomer Students: A Journey in Transition between the East and the West*⁴ is reviewed by Professor Elizabeth Buckner of University of Toronto, a specialist in comparative education and on the Middle East. It moves the reader beyond the Canada-China nexus to a set of inter-cultural relations that has the potential to contribute in different ways again to Canadian schools.

At this point, I would draw the attention of readers to several more books in the series, one just published in June of 2020 and three others coming out later this year. Xiaohong Chi's book on *The Cross-Cultural Learning Experiences of Chinese Immigrant Mothers: Challenges and Opportunities for Schooling* takes us back to the first book in the series, with its emphasis on the lives of four immigrant families and particularly the experience of the mothers in their relationships with their children, the teachers, and the schools. Its use of cultural theorists, such as Liang Shuming and Lin Yutang on the Chinese side, and Benedict Anderson and Pierre Bourdieu on the Western side, takes the reader deep into the exploration of intersecting resonances from both sides. A second volume, set to appear later this year and entitled *Reciprocal Learning for Cross-Cultural Mathematics Education: A Partnership Project Between Canada*

⁴ Elkord, N. (2019). *Cross-cultural schooling experiences of Arab newcomer students: A journey in transition between the East and the West*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

and China edited by Sijia Cynthia Zhu, Shu Xie, Yunpeng Ma, and Douglas McDougall, opens up a another significant area of learning, and highlights differences in pedagogy, curricular organization and context where there is much to learn on both sides. A third one entitled *Narrative Inquiry into Reciprocal Learning between Canada-China Sisters Schools: A Chinese Perspective* by Yuhua Bu, Shan Qi, Cheng Zhong, Yangjie Li, and Yuanyuan Zhu provides a historical overview of the Dewey-Confucius connection in China's 20th century, and highlights unique dimensions of the "Life Practice School" developed by Professor Ye Lan, an influential Chinese educator in the contemporary period. Finally mention should be made of *Curriculum Making, Reciprocal Learning and the Best-Loved Self* by distinguished North American educator Cheryl Craig, who has served on the project's international advisory committee from its inception. This book is slated to come out in the series in 2021.

As we face a profound global outcry against racism and inequity as well as fears of a new cold war, it may be helpful to recollect the happenings of the 1990s when Samuel Huntington's widely translated "clash of civilizations"⁵ called forth a determination by the United Nations to name 2001 the year of dialogue among civilizations⁶. This was undergirded, in turn, by the efforts of Asian and African scholars in the 1970s to envisage a preferred future for humanity based on equity, autonomy, solidarity, and participation and demand a new world economic order.⁷ This book series illustrates the kinds of interaction that have helped us move in this direction over recent decades, while calling on us to make further strenuous efforts toward a genuine peace rooted in the embrace of these values.

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⁵ Huntington, S. (1993). The clash of civilizations? *Foreign Affairs*, 72(3), 22–49.

⁶ Hayhoe, R., & Pan, J. (2001). *Knowledge across cultures: A contribution to dialogue among civilizations*. Hong Kong, China: Comparative Education Research Centre of The University of Hong Kong.

⁷ Kim, S. S. (1984). *The quest for a just world order*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.